

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Meeting on Zoom, Saturday 22nd February 2025

Presentation by Laurence Kimpton

The Flying Boats *Centaurus* and *Aotearoa* 1937-1940

Survey Flight of Imperial Airways Short S.23 flying boat 'Centaurus' to Australia and New Zealand, December 1937 - February 1938

Commanded by Captain John Burgess. Departed Southampton 3rd Dec. 1937. Arrived at Sydney on 24th Dec. Flew to Auckland on 27th Dec. Flights made to other ports in New Zealand. Returned to Sydney on 10th Jan. 1938. Visited Melbourne, Adelaide & Hobart. Return flight to UK departed Sydney on 27th Jan.



'Centaurus' at Lyttleton, the port for Christchurch

One of 12 Air Mail Society of
NSW covers flown by
'Centaurus' from Sydney to
Auckland and return.
Postmarked at Sydney on 24th
January 1938. signed by
Captain John Burgess and the
crew of 'Centaurus'.

Australia. New Zealand.
New Zealand. Australia.
per Imperial Airways Flying Boat.
"Centaurus." G. ADUT.
Sydney. Auckland. 27.12.37. 9hrs. 10.min.
Auckland. Sydney. 10. 1.38. 10hrs.
Captain. J. W. Burgess. Commander.



HUDDER'S (PTY.) LIMITED
AIRWAYS BUREAU
44 PITT STREET, SYDNEY
Ernest A. Crome
Cavendish St.
Stanmore, N.S.W.



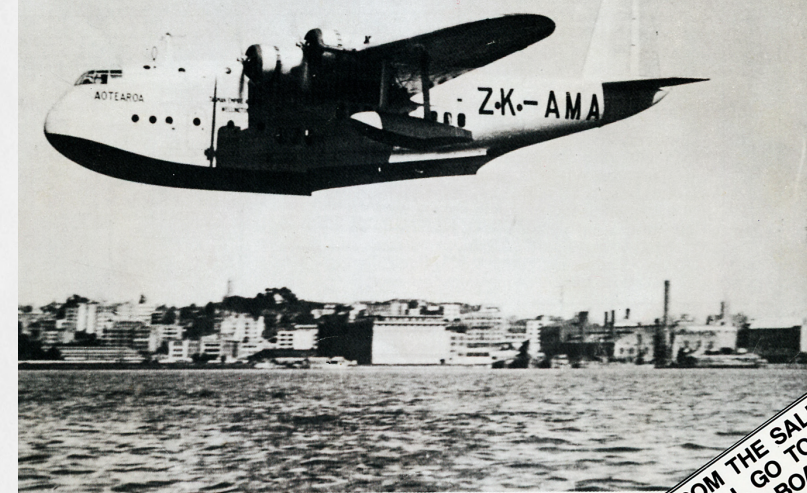
Captain John Burgess

The Delivery Flight of TEAL Short S.30 flying boat 'Aotearoa' to New Zealand, 1939

Delivery Diary "Aotearoa" New Zealand's No 1



R. S. Peek
R. MacNamara
B. Knee
S. J. Bradshaw
G. W. Brown
Capt. J. Burgess
W. J. Craig
G. Cussans
R. Phillips

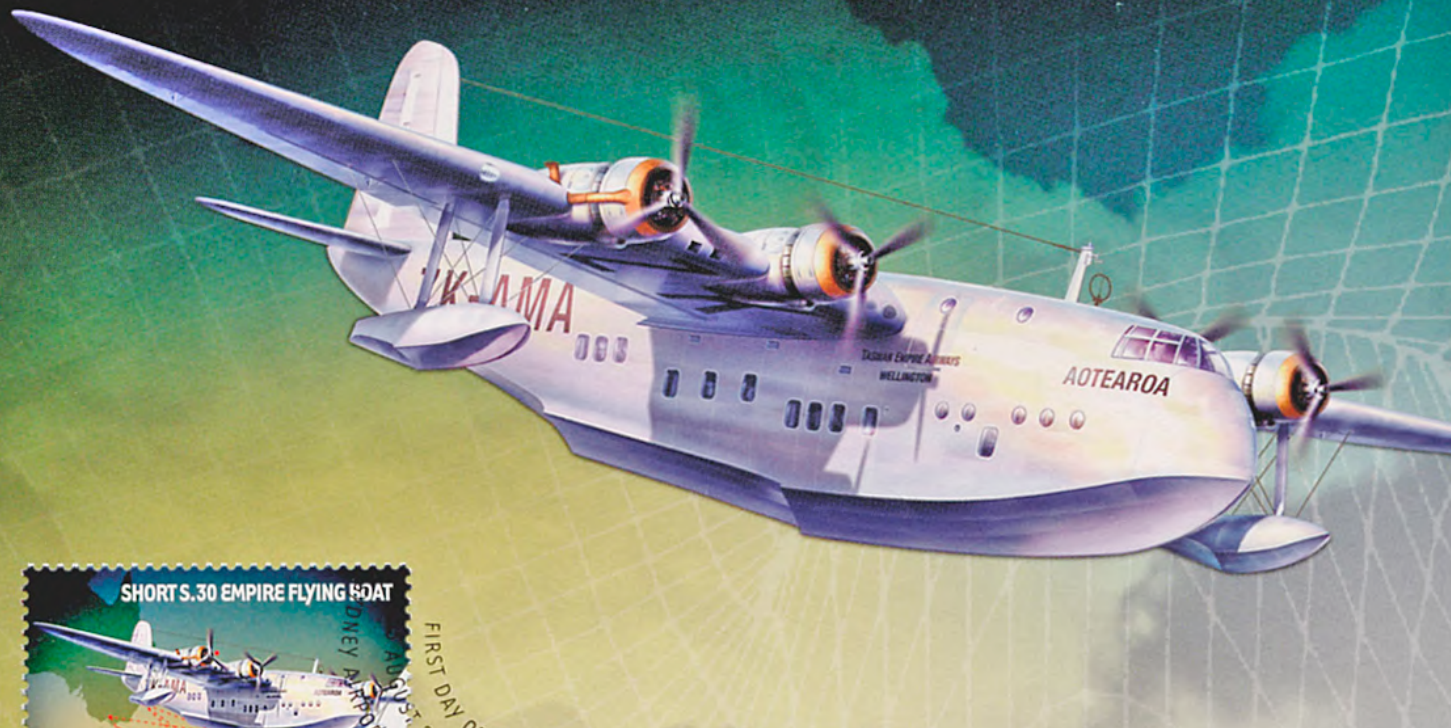


1939

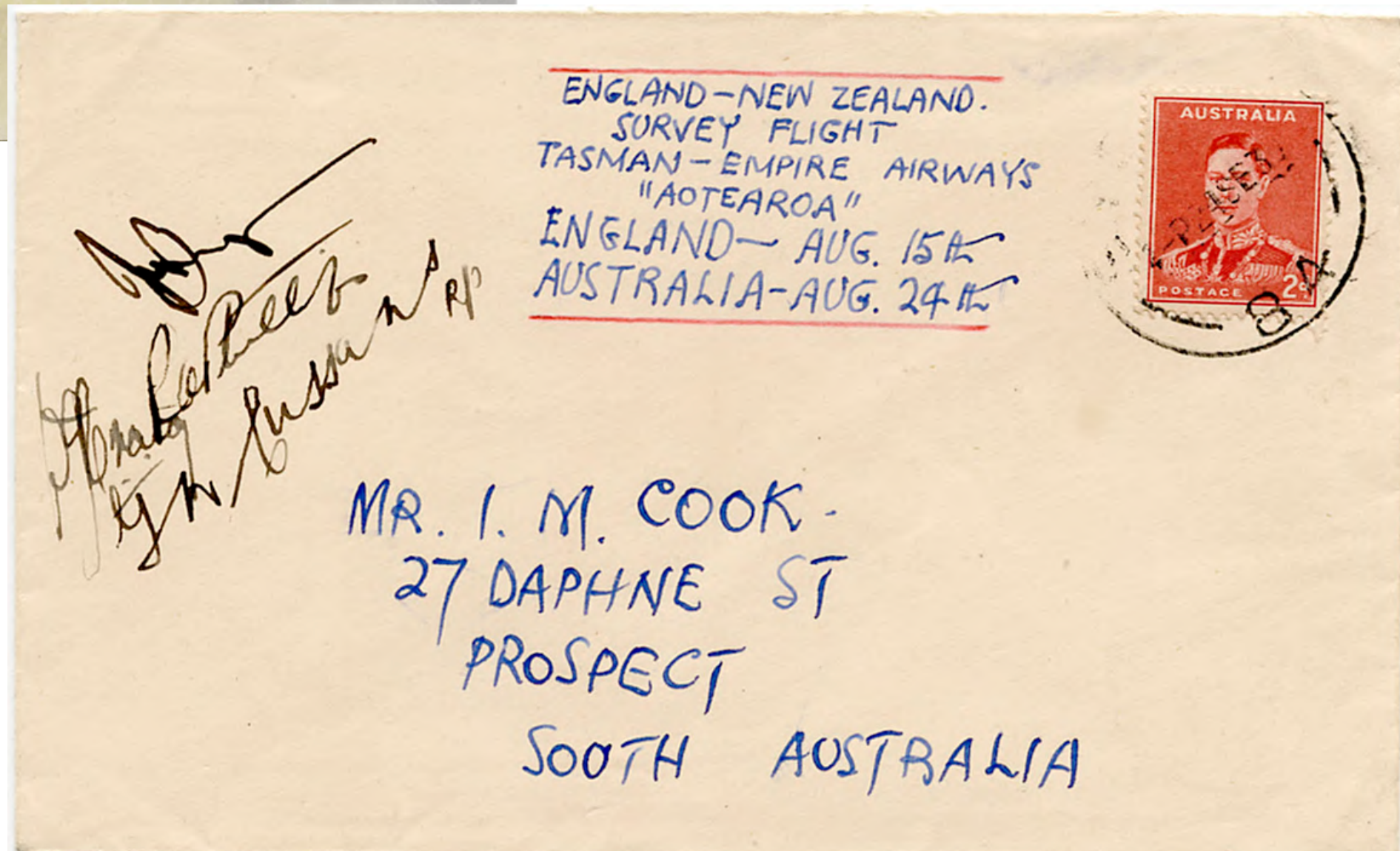
ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE
OF THIS DIARY WILL GO TO
THE "SOLENT FLYING BOAT
PRESERVATION SOCIETY"

'Aotearoa' Delivery Diary,
produced in 1989 by Gerald
Brown who had flown on
the delivery flight as
autopilot specialist of
Smiths Aircraft Instruments

The Delivery Flight of TEAL Short S.30 flying boat 'Aotearoa' to New Zealand, 1939

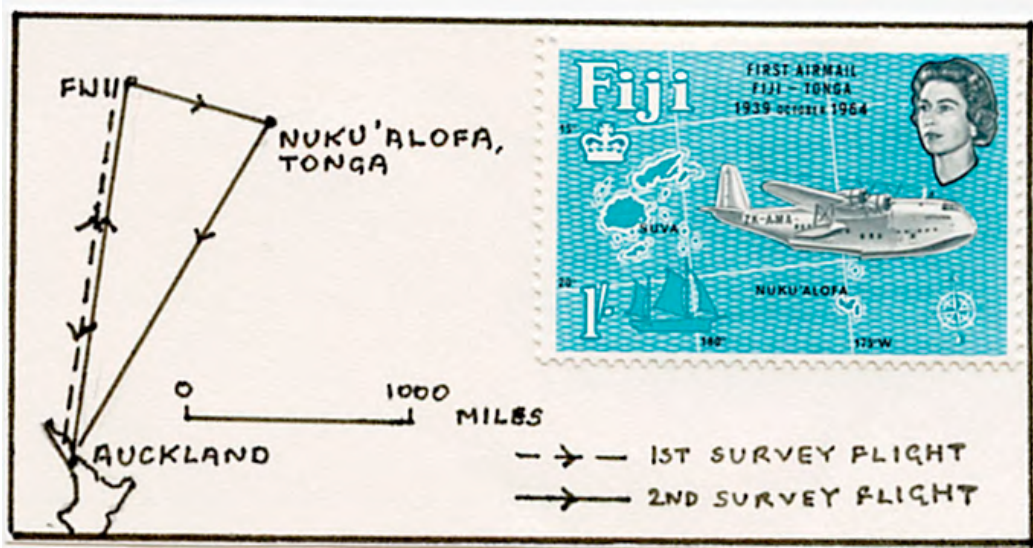


Cover flown from England on the delivery flight of 'Aotearoa' to Australia & New Zealand. Not unloaded at Sydney or Auckland, flown on survey flight to Fiji (7th-10th September) & back, then to Sydney (24th Sept.) where it was posted to Adelaide. Signed by Captain John Burgess & 2 crew members.

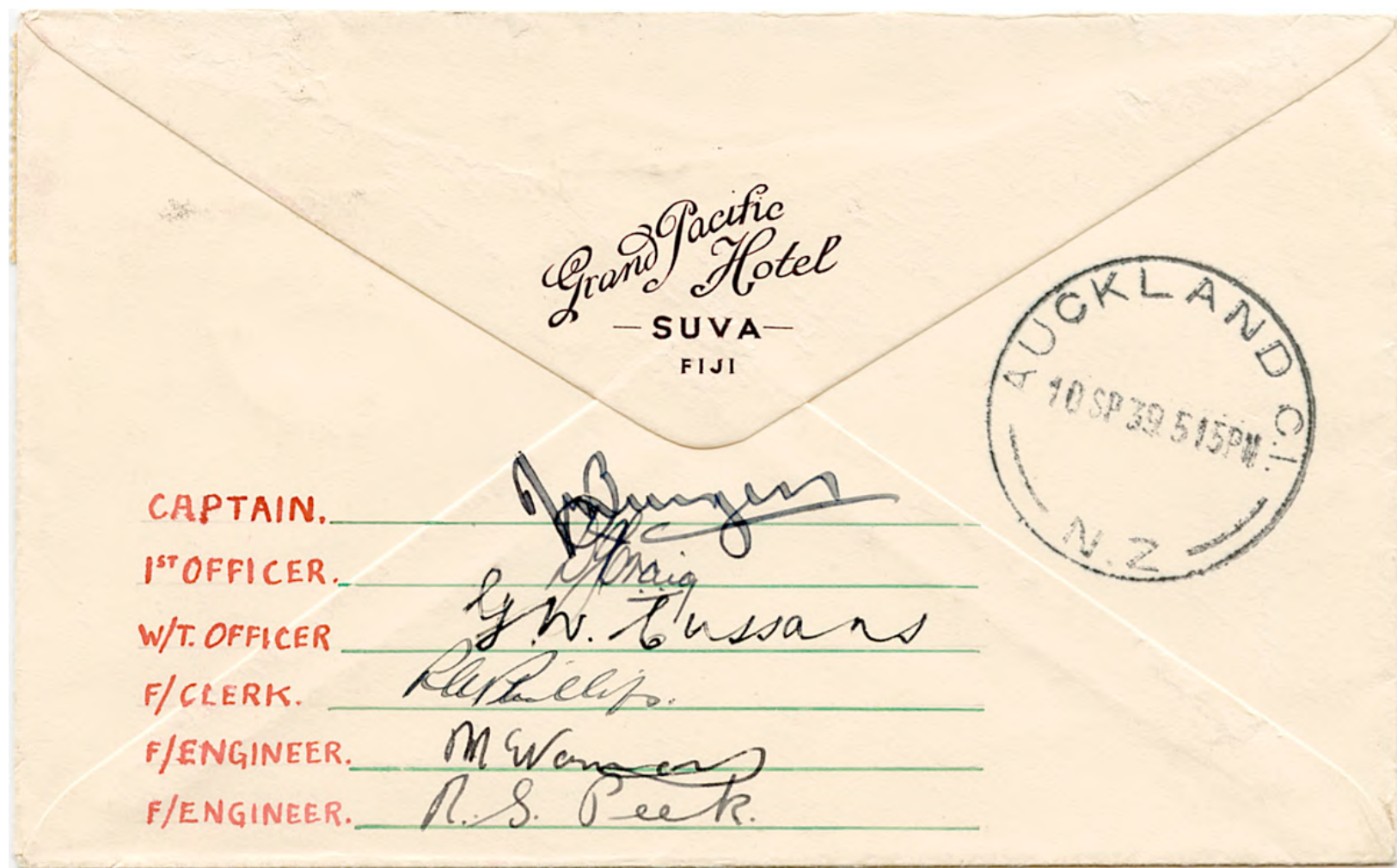


The Survey Flights of TEAL Short S.30 flying boat 'Aotearoa' to Fiji and Tonga, 1939

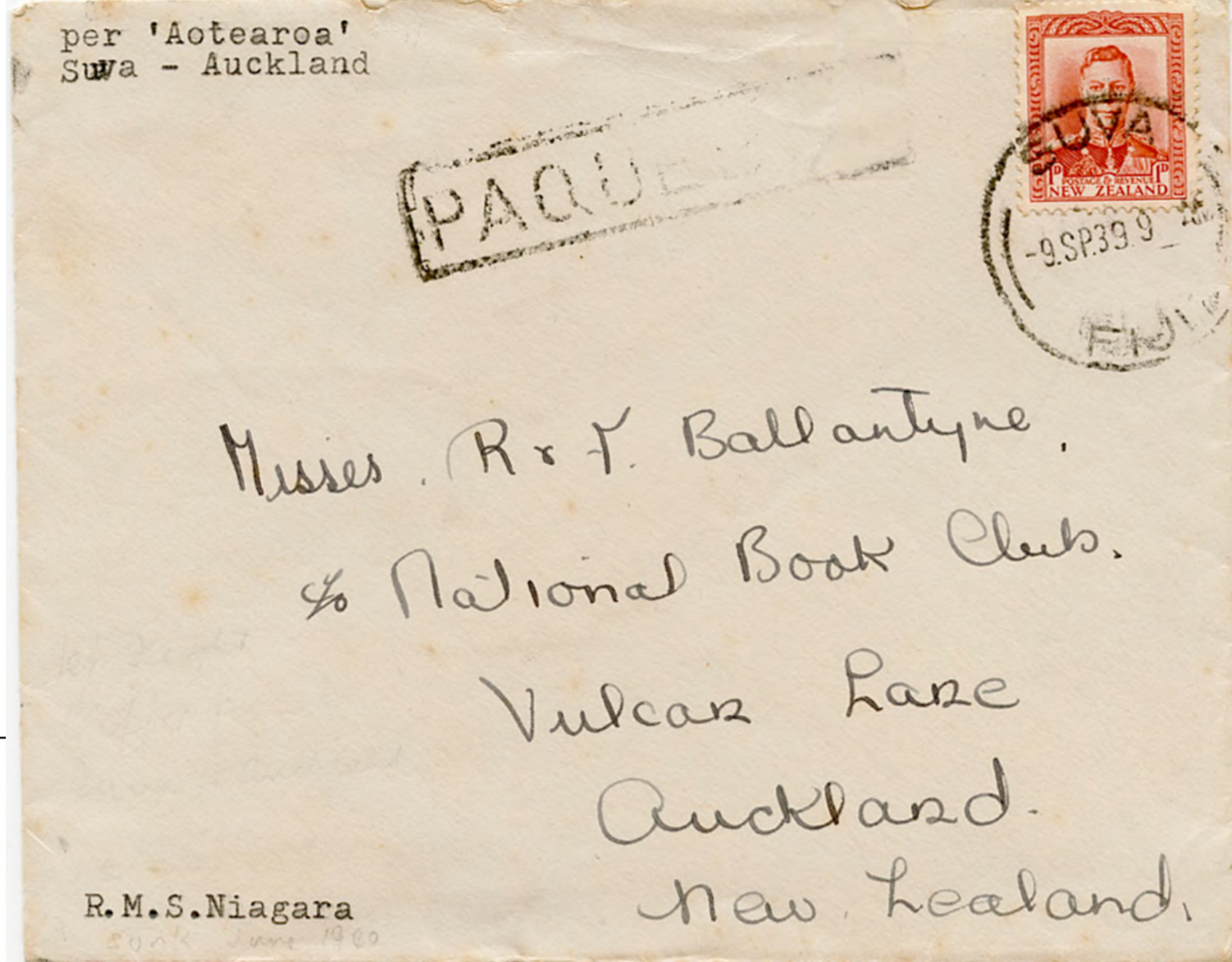
Cover flown from Suva to
Auckland by 'Aotearoa' on
first survey flight, 9th-10th
September 1939. Signed by
Captain John Burgess & crew.



12 covers endorsed with
details of the flight were flown,
together with about 500 items
of ordinary mail which had
accumulated at Suva.



Cover flown from Suva to
Auckland by 'Aotearoa' on first
survey flight, 9th-10th September
1939. Paquebot handstamp on NZ
stamp. Flap of cover printed
'R.M.S. Niagara'



'R.M.S. Niagara' owned by Union
Steam Ship Company of New
Zealand. Operated Sydney-
Auckland-Suva-Honolulu-
Vancouver

Per Tasman Empire Airways Flyingboat "Aotearoa"
 leaving Suva about 6am. Sunday 22nd to Tonga
 same day, leaving there Monday morning to
 arrive Auckland ^{U.S.C. of N.Z. M.}
 Monday afternoon 23rd Oct. ^{Suva} 21st Oct. 1939.

Dear Family

This isn't going
 to be a real letter. We have
 the flyingboat "Aotearoa" leaving
 tomorrow morning for Tonga &
 Auckland and one of the chaps
 will post this in Auckland on
 Monday. Unfortunately, I am
 not able to put anything on the
 envelope to indicate how it is
 going.

We had a real thrill
 yesterday - the boat went to
 Lauoka & on her return, made a
 couple of short flights to give a
 few people a joyride. Betty &
 I were among the fortunate ones

Cover flown from Suva to Auckland, via
 Tonga by 'Aotearoa' on second survey flight,
 21st-23rd October 1939. Signed by Captain
 John Burgess & Maurice Clarke, Manager of
 Union Airways of New Zealand, who was a
 passenger on the flight. Enclosed letter from
 an employee of the Union Steam Ship
 Company of New Zealand

Less than 200 covers endorsed with details of the flight
 were flown from Suva to Auckland via Tonga (very
 few were signed), together with about 1800 items of
 ordinary mail which had accumulated at Suva.



Per "Aotearoa"

Maurice Clarke
John Burgess



Mr D.A. Butler

c/o S. Innis Esq

Union Steamship Co of N.Z.

Auckland N.Z.



Cover flown from Nukualofa, Tonga (pmk.22nd October 1939) to Auckland (b/s 23rd October). Signed by Captain John Burgess & First Officer D J Craig.

About 250 covers were flown from Tonga, to Auckland. Very few were signed.

Cover flown from Nukualofa, Tonga (pmk.22nd October 1939) to Auckland (b/s 23rd October). Signed by Captain John Burgess & Maurice Clarke, Manager of Union Airways of New Zealand, who was a passenger on the flight.

1st Tonga—New Zealand

Air Mail

PER

"Aotearoa"

John Burgess CAPTAIN.
D J Craig FIRST OFFICER.



Mr I. Turnill

Tasman Empire Airways

Mechanics Bay

Auckland

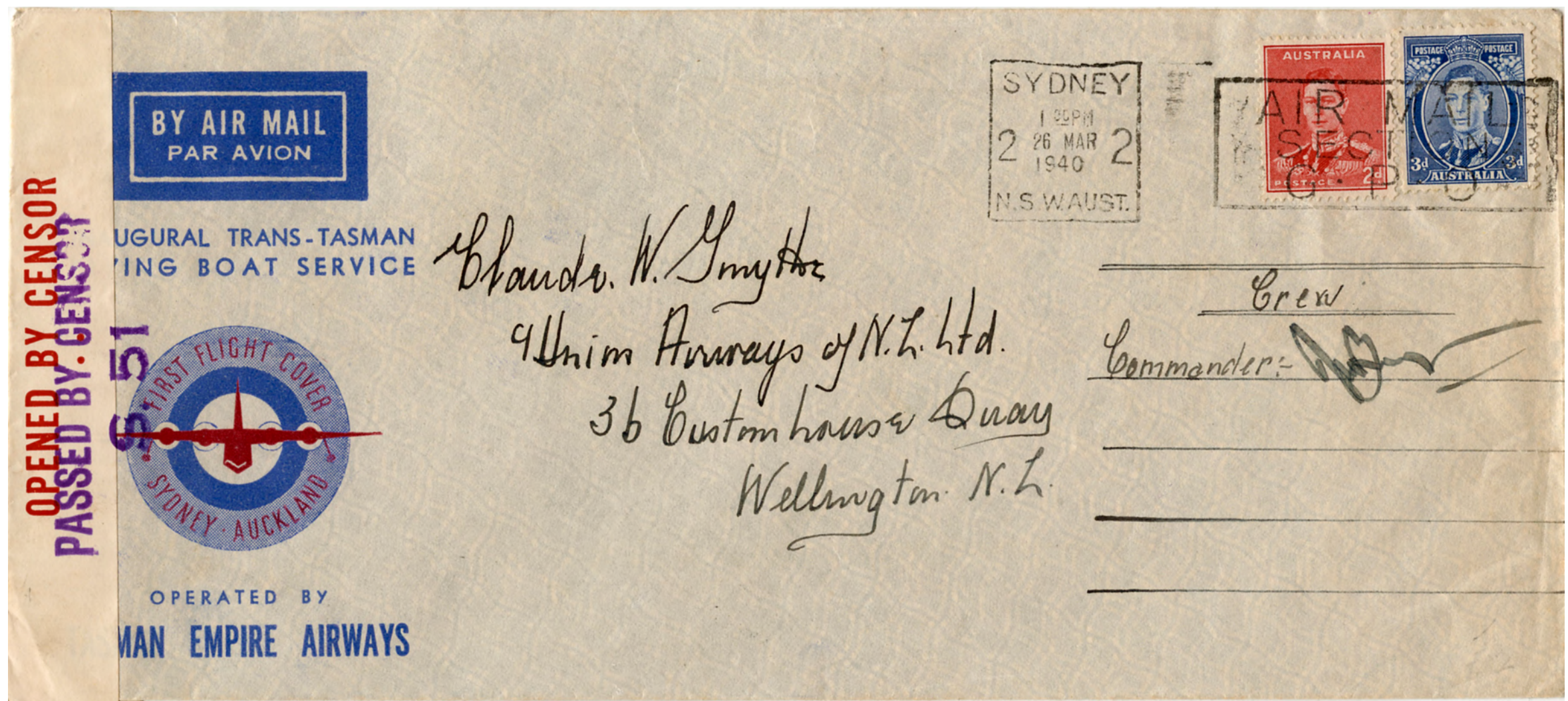
New Zealand.

AIR MAIL

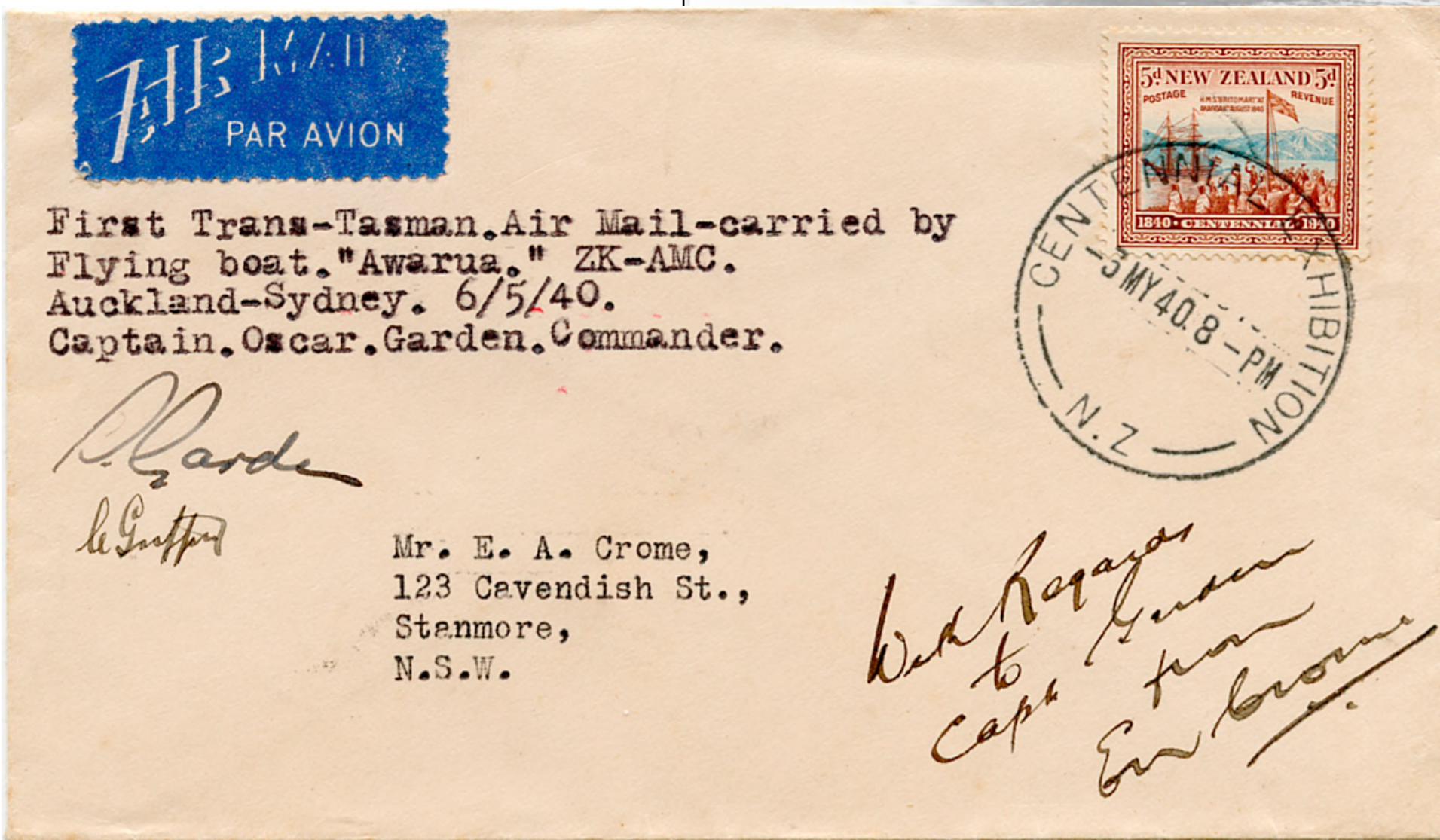
Inauguration of TEAL Trans-Tasman service, 27th April 1940

Postcard of 'Aotearoa' flown on first TEAL service from Auckland (pmk. 22nd April 1940) to Sydney (b/s 30th April). Signed by Captain John Burgess & First Officer D J Craig.

Cover flown on first TEAL service from Sydney (pmk. 26th April, over one month before the flight) to Auckland (b/s 3rd May 1940). Signed by Captain John Burgess.



Short S.30 'Awarua' (at
Hythe before delivery to
New Zealand?)



Cover flown on first TEAL
service from Auckland to
Sydney operated by
'Awarua' (pmk. Centennial
Exhibition, 3rd May 1940,
b/s Enmore, NSW, on 7th
May) Signed by Captain
Oscar Garden & First
Officer C Griffiths.



TEAL's Short S.30 flying boats 'Awarua' and 'Aotearoa' at Auckland.

In January 1942 'Awarua' under the command of Captain Burgess flew from Auckland to Honolulu via Suva, Canton Island and Palmyra Island, carrying Walter Nash, NZ Resident Minister for USA. The pilots' debriefing report stated that mail which had accumulated at Auckland was carried. On the return flight 'Awarua' survived an attack from a US Navy fighter, having been mistaken for a Japanese flying boat.