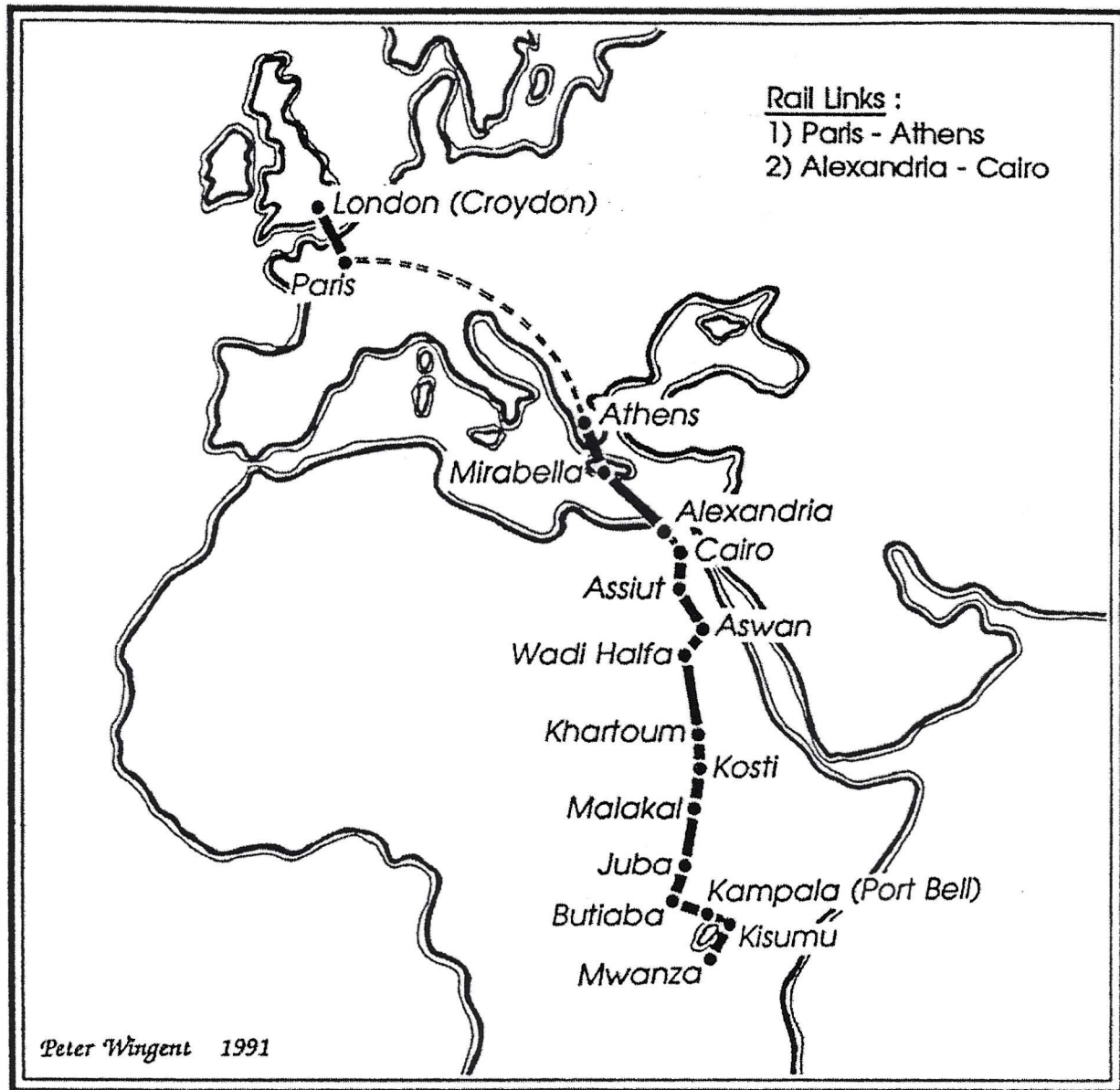


IMPERIAL AIRWAYS FIRST FLIGHTS, London – Mwanza - London, 1931



Map showing the route used by Imperial Airways from February 28 to March 19, 1931

As Imperial Airways was created in 1924, the British Government selected this airline for the development of aerial communication within the Empire. Initially, a route was opened to Egypt in 1927 and eventually to India in 1929. The service was extended in February 1931 from Cairo to Kisumu in Kenya and across Lake Victoria to Mwanza in Tanganyika, the railhead of Tanganyika railways. The weekly England – East Africa flight took 10 days to cover the 5,124 miles. It was intended to extend service to Cape Town in South Africa later in 1931.

Since 1929, Imperial Airways provided England – India service on a weekly basis. Passengers were flown from London to Paris to Basel, Switzerland. The Italian government refused to allow British aircraft to enter Italy via France. Also, flying over the Alps was not practical, thus passengers, freight and mail were transferred by train to Genoa. From there, Short S8 Calcutta flying boats were used to Alexandria, Egypt via various ports of call.

This exhibit shows a large variety of First Flight covers and commercial mail that were on the two flights from London to Mwanza and Mwanza to London, as well as a few items that somehow missed the flights. Unusual items and those of special interest are shown highlighted with a red border. Also, this exhibit is the first in a series of first flights to Africa, the others being flights to/from Cape Town and London between December 1931 and February 1932.