

Postal History of Colonial Victoria's Overseas Mail Routes

Purpose & Scope

This exhibit illustrates the evolution of Victoria's foreign-mail routes from the mid 1830s, when it was the Port Phillip District of New South Wales, through its colonial years from 1851 to 1901, when Victoria became a state under Australian federation. The evolution of foreign mail routes demonstrates how:

- The advent of steam packets alleviated reliance on slow, unscheduled private sailing ships.
- Advances in steamship technology led to longer and more challenging routes.
- Routes were impacted by Victoria's 1851 gold rush, the Crimean War, and the Franco-Prussian War.
- Changes in postal rates and postal treaties influenced a sender's choice of mail route.

Historical Background

Victoria is nearly as large as the United Kingdom, yet in 1836 the Port Phillip District's non-native population was only 224. The population grew to 3,511 by 1838, to ~50,000 by 1848, then to 1.2 million by 1901.

Port Phillip opened its first post office in 1837, shortly after which the city was renamed Melbourne—*the primary port and departure point for nearly all of Victoria's foreign mail*. Overland mail to Sydney was available by January 1838, but took at least four days and was subject to aboriginal attacks, so most early mail to or via Sydney went by ship.

Early attempts at scheduled service—the Toulmin packets in the 1840s, and the Australian Royal Mail in the early 1850s—were unreliable and unprofitable. Better steam-packet service emerged by 1854, but was lost when British-flagged steamships were commandeered for the Crimean War. Clipper ships filled the gap, each voyage a global circumnavigation from Liverpool, via the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn.

Steam packets returned in 1857 to the old overland route from Suez to Alexandria. The “long sea route” from Alexandria to Southampton remained an option, but many senders were willing to pay more for faster service via Marseille. The Marseille route was closed by the Franco-Prussian War, so was replaced by a route via Brindisi. When the Suez Canal opened, through service was available from Melbourne to Naples.


A series of transpacific steamship services began in 1866, but most such attempts failed. By 1870, monthly steam service to San Francisco was available. By 1893, Victorians could use the “All-Red-Route” from Sydney to Vancouver, then via the Canadian-Pacific Railroad to the eastern seaboard for a transatlantic packet.

Organization

Each section in this exhibit represents a mail-route period, listed in chronological order by the timespan *in which a route was most active*. The date ranges listed below are those of the covers shown in this exhibit. The format requires some routes to appear twice due to the steam-transport hiatus caused by the Crimean War.

Frames 1, 2	1838-1854	Various routes under sail and by early contract steamships.
Frame 3	1854-1856	Clipper ships, due to loss of steamships during the Crimean War.
Frame 4	1857-1871	Post-war return of steamship service, via Southampton or Trieste.
Frame 5	1857-1870	Steamship service via Marseille or Cape of Good Hope.
Frame 6	1870-1896	Steamship service via Marseille or Naples.
Frames 7, 8	1851-1901	Pacific routes via Callao, Panama, San Francisco, or Vancouver.

Understanding the Format

- Rarity notes, *in blue*, are based on the exhibitor's research and 30-year census of Victoria's postal history.
- Pale blue text boxes provide background information on postmarks, rates, routes, ships and mail contracts.
- Covers framed *in red* are especially noteworthy for rarity and/or historical significance.
- Sailing data are from newspaper archives in AU, NZ, GB, and the US., and Tabcart's ANZUK volumes.
- Covers with expert certificates are noted by “e.”
- Background information based on the exhibitor's research is noted by a small blue book icon: 

Via Sydney by Revenue Cutter



Weribee, 8 May 1838

Paid 3d ship-letter fee

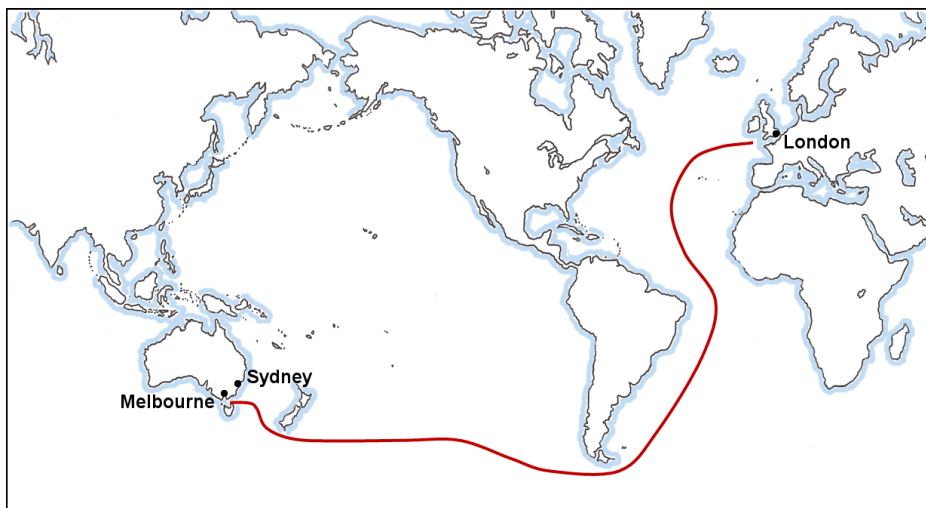
Revenue cutter *Prince George*, Melbourne 21 May to Sydney

Barque *Cecilia*, Sydney 8 September to Deal, arrived 22 January 1839

London rated 1/4 due: 4d India letter rate, 1s inland from Deal to Exeter

Received 26 January 1839 **260 days**

Two earlier foreign-mail letters are recorded from the Port Phillip District



Ships passed south of New Zealand to ride the Southern Ocean’s strong westerlies—the “roaring forties.” In the North Atlantic the route veered westward to avoid adverse winds and currents along the African coast.

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

Via Cape Horn Direct

Paid 3d ship

Barque *Platina*
Melbourne 18 May
London, 25 October

London 8d due, ship letter

Received 25 October
161 days



Melbourne, 18 May 1841

Overland to Sydney



Melbourne, 30 November 1844

Paid 1/6
1/3 inland, 3d ship

TOO LATE for
Shamrock, so sent
overland to Sydney

Brig *Hind*
Sydney 17 December
London 30 June

London 9d due
8d ship, 1d inland
Edinburgh 1 July

241 days

TOO LATE

reverse

Prior to 1855, when Victoria adopted the 6d uniform rate, a 3d fee was charged for all letters by ship, whether incoming or outgoing. The fee paid for no part of a letter's journey, and was simply a revenue source for the Victoria post office.

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

Via Cape Horn Direct



Melbourne, 26 March 1842

3d ship fee PAID AT / MELBOURNE
Brig *Sarah Bell*: Melbourne 4 April, Liverpool 13 August
Liverpool rated 8d due for ship letter

Received in Edinburgh 15 August 163 days



Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

Via Melbourne & London



Geelong, 8 February 1845

Paid 7d
4d inland to Melbourne
3d ship

Ship *Royal George*
Melbourne 14 February
Deal 30 June

London 8d due, ship

Leith 2 July

145 days

Steamer to Tasmania, then by sail via Sydney to London

Paid 3d, ship

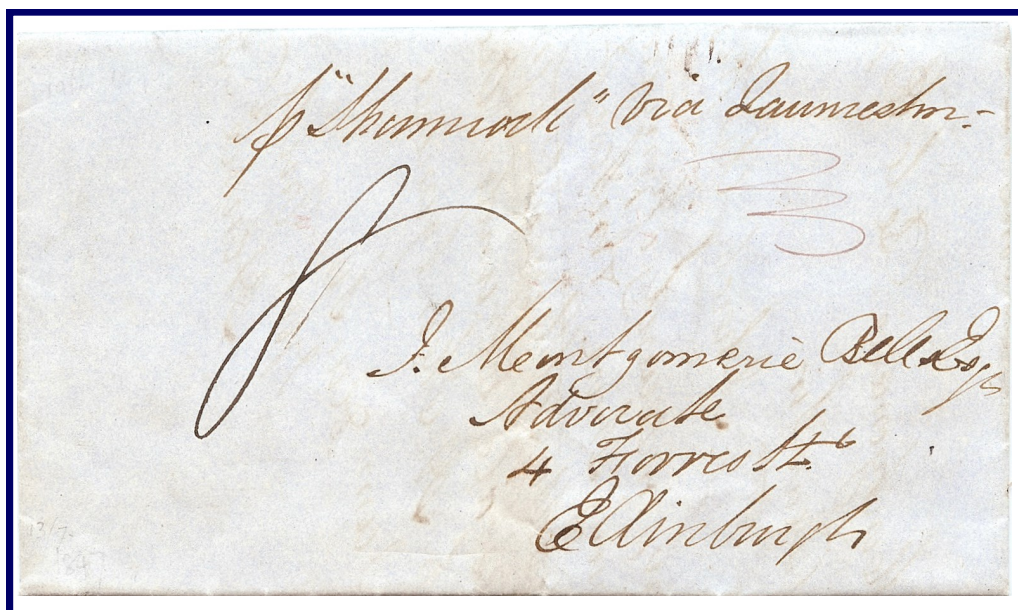
Steamer *Shamrock*
Melbourne 13 July
Launceston 16 July

Barque *Maid of Cashmere*
Launceston 25 July
Sydney 30 July

Ship *Thomas Arbuthnot*
Sydney 27 August
London 18 January

London 8d due, ship

151 days



Melbourne, 12 July 1847

Via Cape Horn

British Contract Sailing Ship

The Toulmin Packets

Privately Carried Overland to Sydney

Out of the mails
to Sydney, where
paid 3d ship

Packet *Caledonia*
Sydney 5 April
London 28 August

London rated 1/- due
for unpaid packet letter

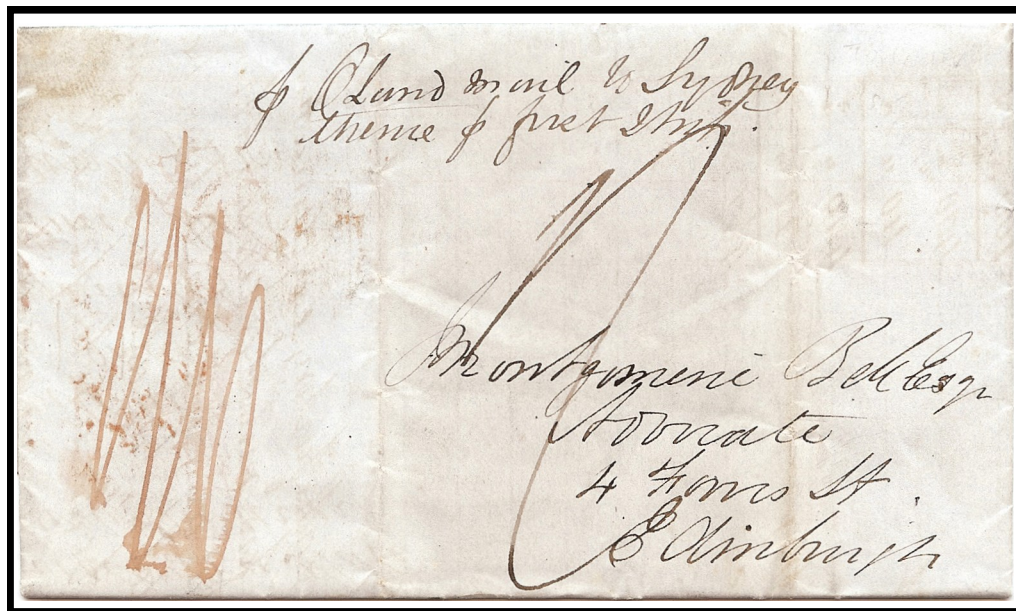
Received 28 August

162 Days



Melbourne, 20 March 1847

Overland to Sydney by Post



Melbourne, 14 November 1848

Paid 1/6 to Sydney
1/3 overland
3d ship

Packet *Sir Edward Paget*
Sydney 12 December
Gravesend 26 April

London rated 1/- due
for unpaid packet

Received 28 April

167 days

In June 1843, brothers Henry and Calvin Toulmin contracted with the Admiralty to provide monthly mail service from Gravesend to Sydney at £100 per voyage. Mail to other Australian destinations would continue to go by private ship.

Return packet service was unavailable until January 1846. The Admiralty terminated Toulmin's contract in April 1849, intending to connect Sydney with the P&O far east line at Singapore. ***That connection never materialized.***

Wreck of the Achilles



Melbourne, 15 March 1847

Paid 6d, double 3d ship-letter fee, ½ to 1 oz.

Barque *Achilles*, Melbourne 19 March, wrecked on the Brazilian coast on 21 June

Mails transferred to Rio de Janeiro Packet *Express*, arrived at Falmouth 29 July, London 31 July

London rated 5/6 due: double 2/9 packet rate from Rio

Received at Glasgow 1 August 140 days

The only recorded cover from this wreck, not listed in Australasian Wreck Mail

Discovered by the exhibitor

PACKET LETTER

London, reverse

“The barque Achilles, of London, from Port Phillip, got on the English Bank at Pernambuco, on June 21, and by assistance from the Express was got off, but in a sinking state: her cargo would be discharged: her mails are come home by the Express.”

London Daily News, 2 August 1847

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

Via Cape Horn Direct



Melbourne, 8 February 1850

Paid 3d ship

Barque *Senator*
Melbourne 11 February
London 7 June

London 8d ship

Received 8 June 1850

121 days

**Earliest recorded use
of an adhesive on
Victoria foreign mail**



Via Melbourne & Cape Horn

Paid 5d
2d inland to Melbourne
3d ship

Ship *Thomas Lowry*
Melbourne 15 October
London 20 March

London 8d due, ship

Received 20 March

125 days

**Thomas Lowry had
previously sailed as
a Toulmin Packet**



Seymour, 13 October 1850

Although the Port Phillip District was not carved off from NSW to become a new colony until 1 July 1851, the colonial government in Sydney required Victoria to design, print and issue its own adhesive postage stamps by 1 January 1850.

Newspaper rate to Ireland

Paid 1d newspaper rate

Ship *Nile*

Geelong 2 February

Mails ashore at Falmouth

Gravesend 6 June

London rated 1d due

Dublin 8 June 134 days



Census records only
3 pre-1860 wrappers



Geelong, 25 January 1851

Earliest letter from Victoria to the United States



Paid 3d ship

Ship *Lysander*

Melbourne 28 January

London 23 May

Steamship *Asia*

Liverpool 24 May

New York 4 June

London debited 32¢ to U.S.

16¢ ship letter

16¢ transatlantic

New York rated 37¢ due

32¢ debit from London

5¢ inland to Missouri

Received 7 June 134 days



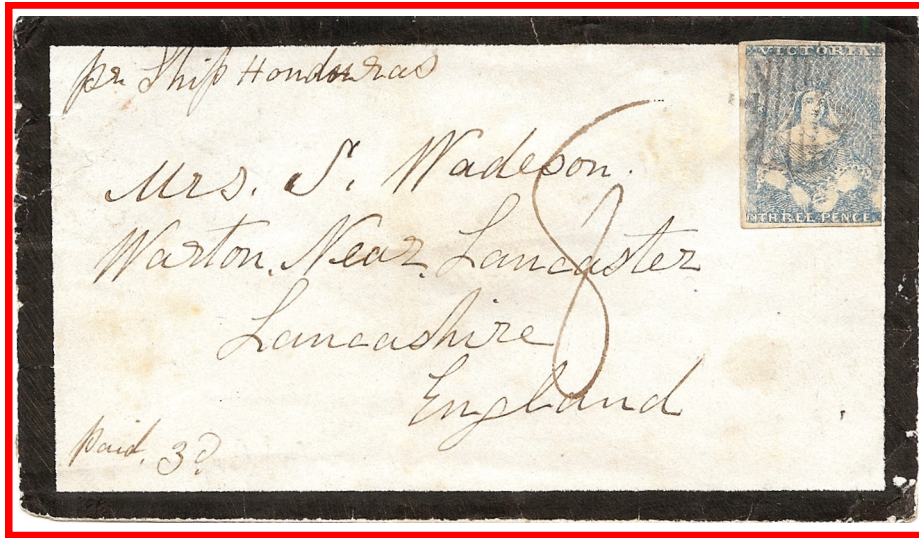
Melbourne, 25 January 1851

By paying only the 3d outgoing ship-letter fee, Australians could send unpaid mail to countries with which the UK had a postal treaty, the cost paid by recipient. Only 15 Australian covers were sent to the U.S. under the 37-cent rate.

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

First shipment of Australian gold



Paid 3d ship-letter fee

Barque *Honduras*
Melbourne 29 August
Gravesend 2 January

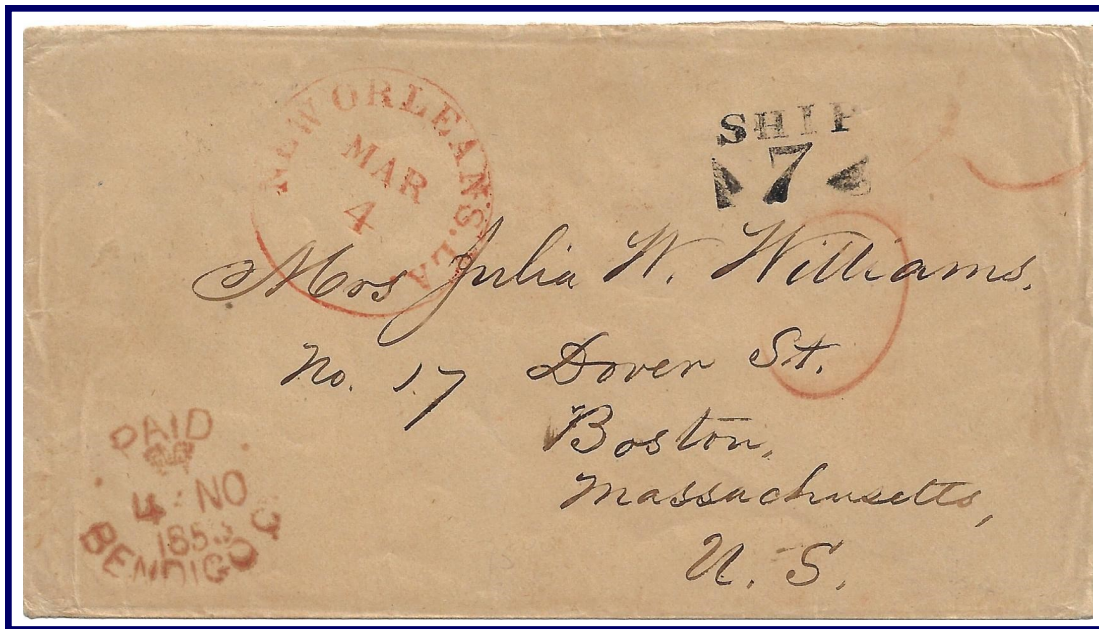
London rated 8d due
for ship letter

Received 3 January

156 Days

Melbourne, 29 August 1851

Mail landed at New Orleans



Bendigo, 4 Nov 1853

Paid 5d: 2d inland, 3d ship

Ship *John McKenzie* : Melbourne 27 November, New Orleans 4 March 121 Days
New Orleans rated 7¢ due: 2¢ ship, 5¢ inland to Boston

The first gold shipped from Victoria was by the Barque *Honduras*, Capt. Silver. *The Times* reported her arrival at Gravesend on January 2nd "...with samples of gold from the Clunes diggings at The Pyrenees."

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

Via London & Liverpool

Paid 3d ship letter fee

Ship *Marlborough* :

Melbourne 30 June

London 29 September

London 32¢ debit to US

Cunard Canada:

Liverpool 1 October

Boston 14 October

New York 15 October

New York rated 37¢ due

16¢ UK ship fee

16¢ transatlantic

5¢ U.S. inland

108 days



Melbourne, 30 June 1853

Earliest recorded use of New York's 37 rating postmark

Circumnavigation from London



Melbourne, 23 March 1854

Paid double 3d ship fee
1/2 to 1 oz.

Endorsed for *Prince Albert*; but sent
via *Samuel Boddington*

Melbourne 25 March
London 21 July

1/4 due: double ship fee
127 days

**Prince Albert was
delayed until 3 April**

Samuel Boddington had arrived at Melbourne on 1 February and was followed in that month by 195 additional arrivals. Her departure on 25 March was one of only two ships to sail direct for London in that month. Most vessels via Cape Horn for London, Liverpool or Glasgow called at intermediate ports such as Sydney or Callao.

Tasmanian Feeder Line to the Mails in Melbourne

Tasmania to Melbourne for Liverpool



Fingal, 14 August 1854

Paid 8d for inland and Ship to Melbourne

Steamer *Royal Shepherd*
 Launceston 16 August
 Melbourne 17 August
 Ship *Mermaid*
 Melbourne 18 August
 Liverpool 18 November

Dublin 20 November
 Dalkey 21 November

98 days

Tasmania to Melbourne for Liverpool

Paid 4d to Melbourne
 Steamer *Clarence*
 Launceston 16 April
 Melbourne 17 April
 Ship *Eagle*
 Melbourne 29 June
 Liverpool 28 September
 Chester 29 September
 Forwarded to Lawton
 9d due: ship & forwarding
 168 days

Endorsed for Croesus, which was damaged inbound from S'otn



Hobart, 14 April 1854

Ships for England direct from Tasmania were very infrequent, even after the advent of long-distance steamers. Tasmanian mails for England and Europe were usually taken to Melbourne from Launceston by weekly coastal steamers to catch the next "homeward" ship.

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

To the United States via British packet service at Liverpool

Paid 3d ship

Ship *Kent*

Melbourne 28 February

London 24 May

London 19¢ debit to US

Cunard *Niagara*

Liverpool 27 May

Boston 8 June

Liverpool 19¢ debit

Boston 24¢ due

Received 8 June

124 days



Melbourne, 5 February 1854

To France by British open mail via London



Melbourne, 3 May 1854

Paid 1/- ship

Ship *Essex*

Melbourne 8 May

Plymouth 1 September

London sent onward in
open mail, unpaid

Paris 3 September,
15 dec. due for
transit and inland

Received 8 September

129 days

Carried privately from Sydney to Melbourne



Paid 3d ship

Ship *Francis Henty*
 Melbourne 11 October
 London 8 February
 Collins Line *Atlanta*
 Liverpool 11 January
 New York 27 January

New York 37 cents due
 16¢ incoming ship
 16¢ transatlantic
 5¢ U.S. inland

109 days

Sydney, 17 September 1853

Victoria quadruples the 3d ship fee

Paid 1/- ship

Endorsed for *Harvey*, but
 sent on ship *Eagle*
 Melbourne 30 June
 Liverpool 28 September

90 days

**Harvey brought 80,000 oz.
 of Victorian gold for
 the Royal Treasury**



Melbourne, 26 June 1854

On 1 May 1854, GPO Melbourne increased the ship fee from three pence to one shilling to raise funds for construction of new post offices; 35 were built in 1854 alone. Population growth was averaging 70,000 annually.

Via Cape Horn

Private Sailing Ship

UK raises ship fee for incoming mail from Victoria

Paid 1/- in cash
(Vic. rate eff. 1 May 1854)

Ship *Eagle*
Melbourne 30 June
Liverpool 28 September

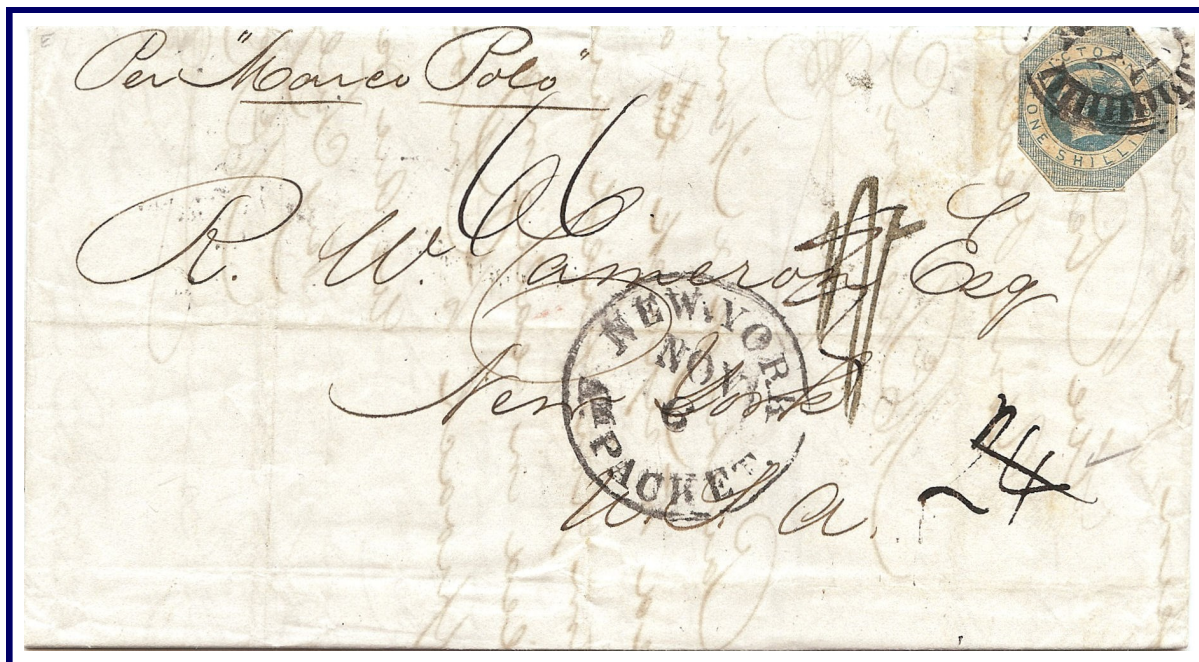
Liverpool 8d due, ship

Received 29 September

Last arrival from Victoria
before implementation
of the British uniform
rate of 6d on 1 Oct 1854.



Melbourne, 24 June 1854

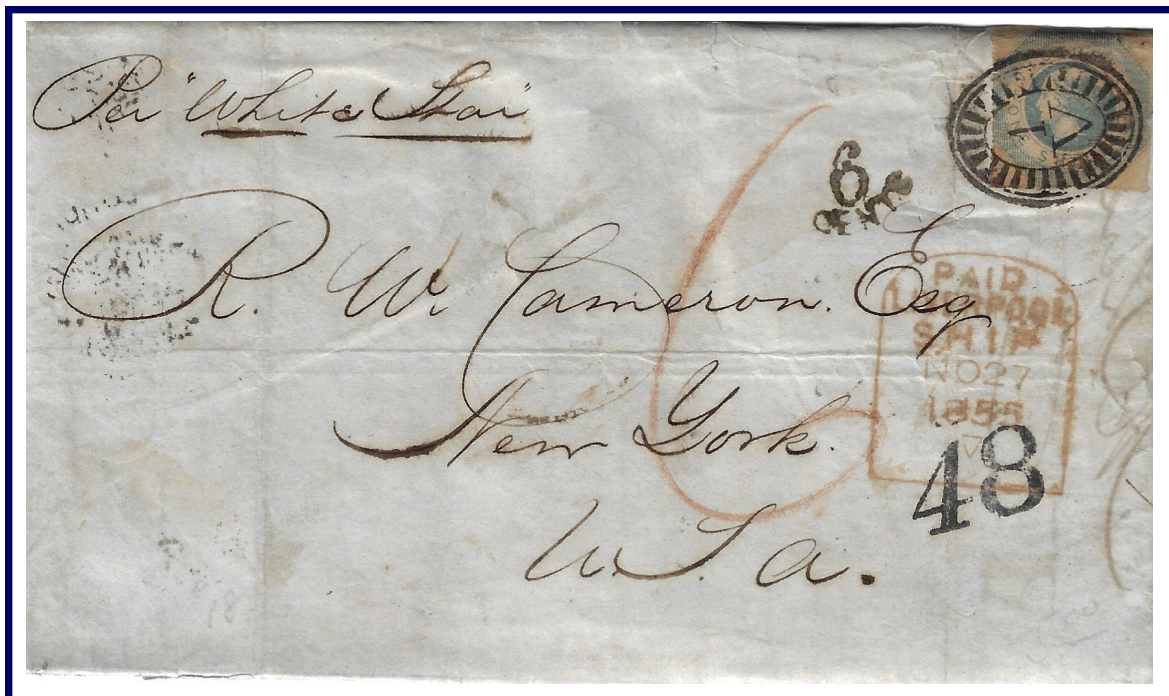


Melbourne, 21 July 1855

Ship *Marco Polo* : Melbourne 22 July, Liverpool 20 October; retaliatory rate of 1/- due; New York incorrectly rated 66 cents due: 2 x 12¢ British uniform rate; 2 x 16¢ American Packet; 2 x 5¢ inland

To pay for 41 new new Post Offices built between 1850 and 1854, Victoria quadrupled the 3d ship fee on 1 May 1854. When GB introduced the 6d uniform rate on 1 Oct 54, Victoria did not comply, so London doubled the 6d rate for Victoria's mail. Victoria relented, lowering their rate to 6d on 1 Jul 55. London then reverted to their 6d rate on 7 Nov 55.

Victoria adheres to the 6d Paid to Destination rate



Melbourne, 31 August 1855

Sender paid 1/-, double the 6d paid-to-destination rate, for 1/2 to 1 oz.

Red **6**: Victoria credit to Great Britain for 50% of the cost for a non-contract sailing

Non-contract clipper Ship *White Star*: Melbourne 31 August, Liverpool 27 November
Collins Line *Baltic*: Liverpool 1 December, New York 19 December

Liverpool debited the United States *6/CENTS* for double British inland

New York rated **48** cents due, double the US-GB 1848 treaty rate:

6 cents: British inland

32 Cents: transatlantic

10 cents: U.S. inland

The 6d "retaliatory" rate was withdrawn by Great Britain on 7 November 1855

Clipper ships—fully rigged vessels flying many thousands of yards of canvas—occasionally called at Melbourne as private ships since late 1853. Because each voyage was a global circumnavigation, their experience at rounding both the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn would serve them well when in 1854 many British steamships were commandeered by the Admiralty for use in the Crimean War.

Via Cape of Good Hope

Contract Steamship

The Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company

The first contract steamship sailing from Australia



Geelong, 21 September 1852

Paid 5d: 2d inland, 3d ship

ARM *Australian*, Melbourne 28 September, Plymouth 11 January 1853
London rated 1/- due for packet Received 12 January 114 days

Letters carried on any of ARM's three contract voyages are rare.

The First Steam Packets

After years of lobbying by Australians and the GPO about lack of steamship service, the Admiralty awarded mail contracts to two companies, each of which would sail a different route. One line, to be operated by the **Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company**, would sail round voyages via the Cape of Good Hope.

ARM was to sail between Plymouth and Sydney every other month, with calls at St. Vincent, Cape Town, King George's Sound (Western Australia), Adelaide, and Melbourne. Time under way between Plymouth and Melbourne was not to exceed 73 days, with financial penalties for lateness.

ARM made only three contract voyages before her contract was cancelled in March 1853 for non-performance, as her fastest outbound voyage took 96 days. She made three additional voyages via Cape of Good Hope as a private ship.

Via Cape of Good Hope

Contract Steamship

The Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company

Second of three contract sailings



Paid 3d
2d inland
3d ship fee

ARM *Sydney*
Melbourne 11 December
Plymouth 16 March

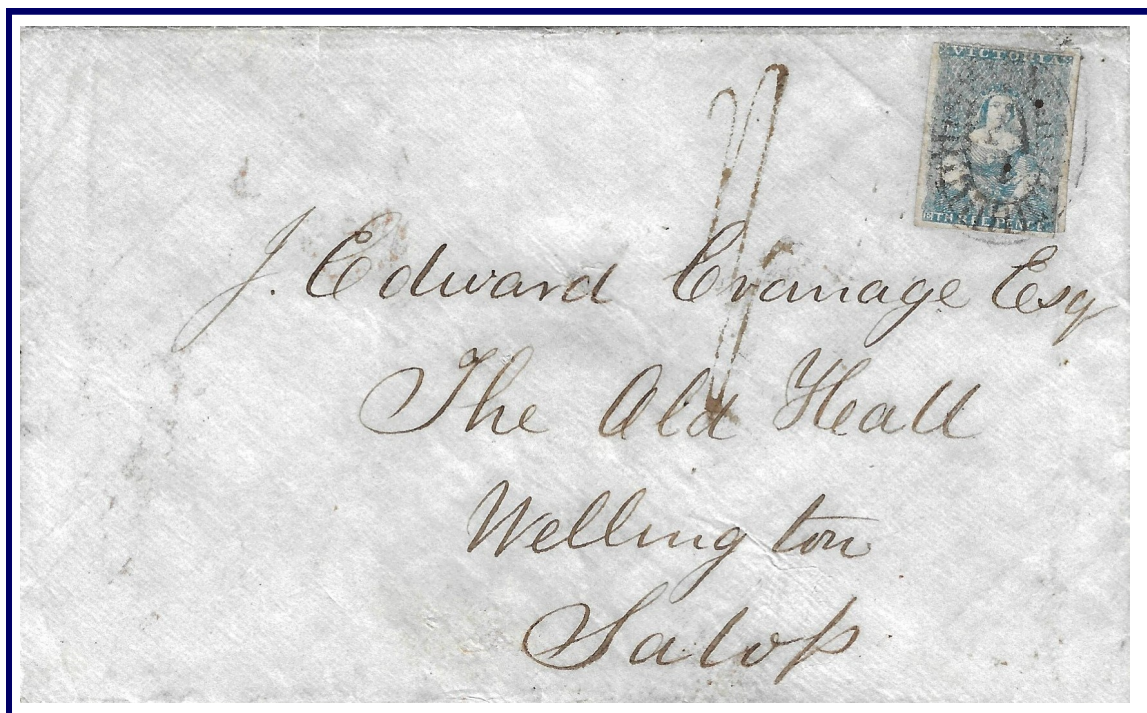
London rated 1/- due, packet

Received 19 March

114 days

Melbourne, 22 November 1852

Second of three contract sailings



Melbourne, 6 December 1852

Paid 3d ship fee

ARM *Sydney* : Melbourne 11 December, Plymouth 16 March

London rated 1/- due, packet 135 days

Via Cape of Good Hope

Noncontract Steamship

The General Screw Steam Ship Company

First homeward sailing by the Company



Melbourne, 1 May 1853

Carried out of the mails from Melbourne to Liverpool by Adams Express
GSS *Harbinger*, Melbourne 22 May, Southampton 18 August, via Mauritius and Cape of Good Hope
Paid 1/- by forwarders Edwards, Sanford & Co.; Liverpool credited 5¢ to U.S.
Cunard Europa, Liverpool 20 August, Boston 31 August; New York marked PAID

Received 1 September

123 days

Called at Mauritius, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and St. Vincent (Cape Verdes)



finest of 3 recorded



General Screw Takes Over Australian Royal Mail Steam Navigation Co's. Route

In March 1854 the PMG contracted with General Screw to provide service lost when the Admiralty terminated ARM's contract. Steamers were to sail every two months from Southampton to Melbourne via the Cape of Good Hope, with return either via Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. Only the first return went via The Cape of Good Hope. Only four of nine trips were under contract, which was annulled when steamships were commandeered for the Crimean War.

Via Cape of Good Hope Noncontract Steamship / Contract Steamship
 The General Screw Steam Ship Company

Second of six non-contract sailings by the company



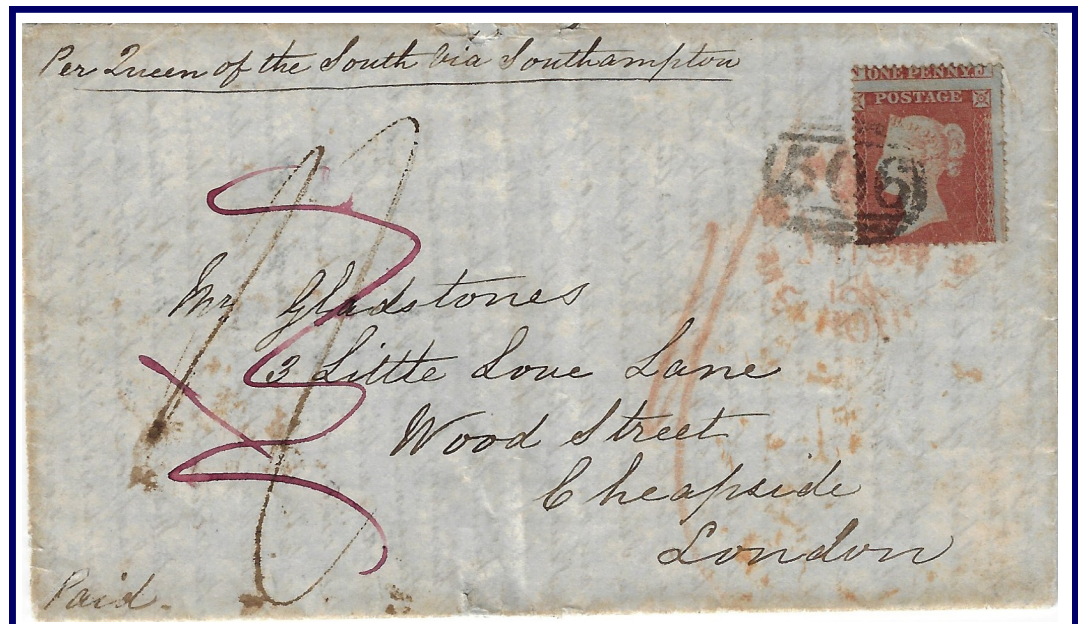
Paid 6d, 2 x 3d ship fee
 GSS *Argo*
 Melbourne 24 August
 Plymouth 27 October
 London to Basel via the
 French mail
 Basel 390 rappen due,
 3 x 130, 15-22½ grams
 Received 30 October
 73 days
 World's first global
 circumnavigation
 by a steamship

e

Melbourne, 19 August 1853

First homeward contract sailing

Paid 1/- ship letter fee
 GSS *Queen of the South*
 Melbourne 22 July
 Southampton 13 Oct
 London rated 1/- due for
 packet, then corrected
 1d paid for forwarding
 to Margate (reverse)
 Received 25 October
 100 days



Melbourne, 15 July 1854

Via Cape of Good Hope

Non-Contract / Contract Steamship

The General Screw Steam Ship Company

To London for the Lisbon Packet

Paid 2/7
 1/- ship-letter fee,
 1/7 London to Portugal

GSS *Croesus*
 Melbourne 10 September
 S'hampton 14 December

British packet to Lisbon
 3 January 1855

Porto rated 490 reis due

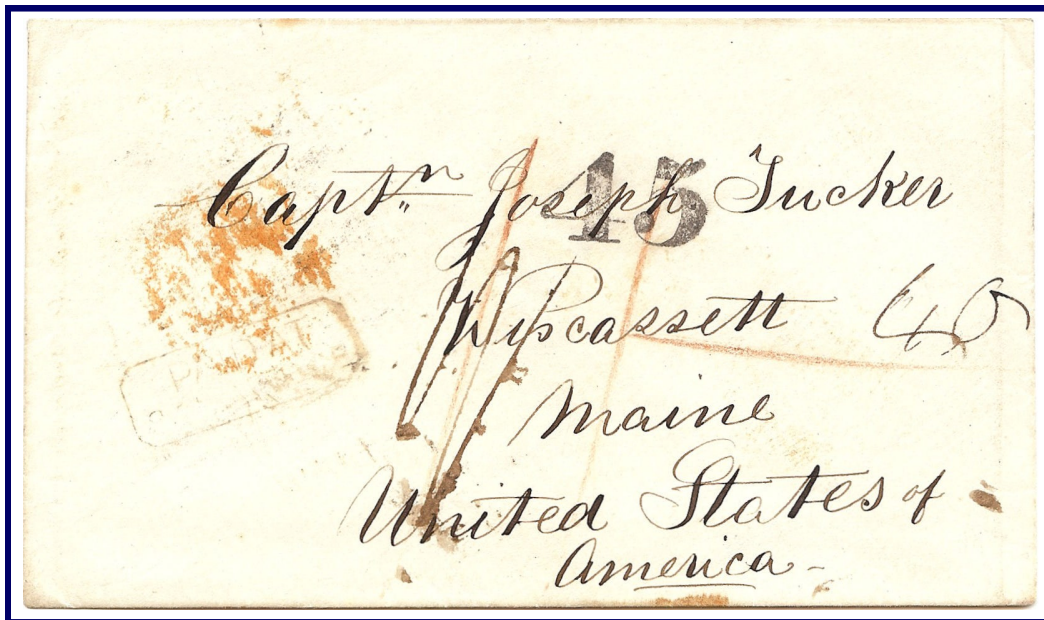
Rec'd 14 January 128 days

Two pre-UPU covers to Portugal are recorded



Melbourne, 9 September 1854

To Maine via London, Liverpool & Boston



Sandridge, 28 September 1854

Paid 1/- ship-letter fee

GSS *Lady Jocelyn*
 Melbourne 1 Oct.
 Southampton 1 Jan.

London 40¢ debit to U.S.
 24¢ incoming packet
 16¢ transatlantic

Cunard *Canada*
 Liverpool 6 Jan
 Boston 19 Jan

Boston added 5¢ inland,
 45¢ due

Received 21 January

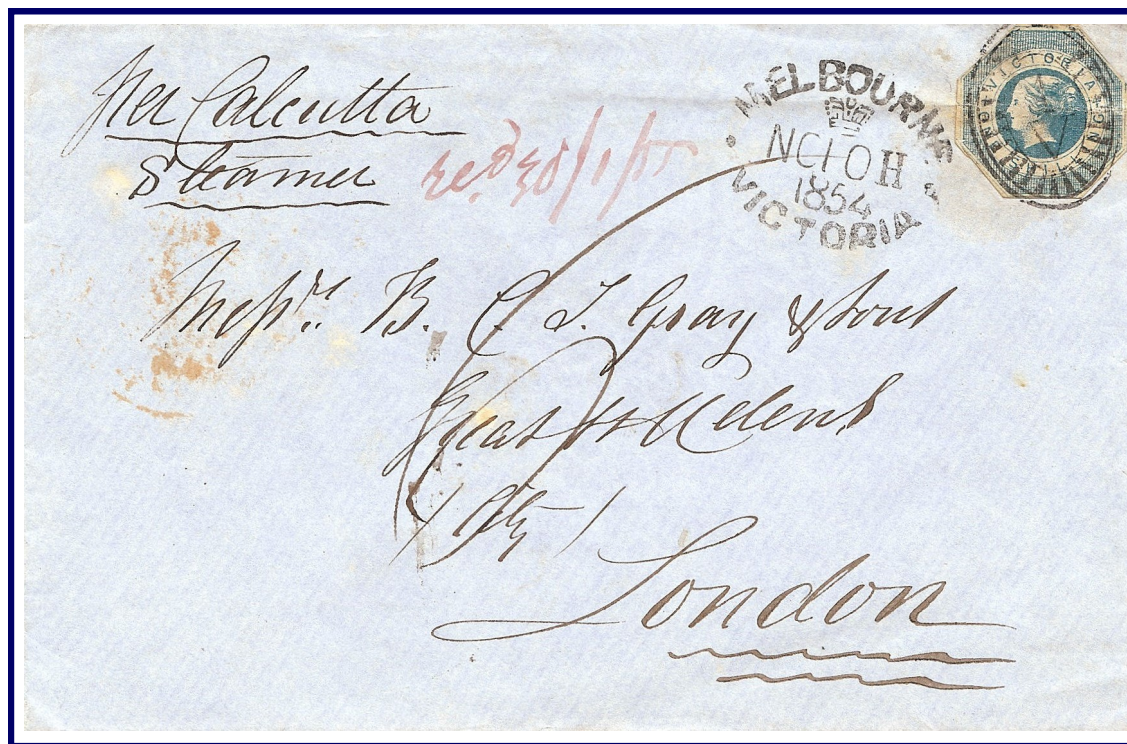
116 days

Via Cape of Good Hope

Contract Steamship

The General Screw Steam Ship Company

Great Britain Institutes a Six Pence Uniform Rate



Melbourne, 10 November 1854

Paid 1/- Victoria ship-letter fee, effective 1 May 1854
GSS *Calcutta*, Melbourne 12 November, Plymouth 28 January

London treated the letter as unpaid and rated **6d** due.

Received 30 January 1855 82 days

The third of four homeward contract sailings by General Screw

The Paid-to-Destination Uniform Packet Rate

The 6d uniform rate per 1/2 oz. became effective on 1 October 1854. It included all charges to destination anywhere in the British Empire, and could be prepaid or unpaid; partial payment was not permitted. The rate comprised 1d to each country for inland and 4d to the country paying the packet. For non-contract sailings each country would receive 3d.

Under the accountancy rules accredit to the receiving country would be marked on each letter. Letters absent such a credit would be treated as unpaid.

Via Cape of Good Hope

Sailing Ship / Non-Contract Steamship

Via Mauritius, Under Sail



Paid 6d uniform rate

Sent via Mauritius

Brig *Lavinia*

Melbourne 28 July

Cape Town 10 November

Cape Town rated 8d due
for ship letter

125 days

Kilmore, 8 July 1855

Direct to Cape Town, By Steam

Paid 2/-, 1/2 to 1 oz.

Non-contract
steamship *Pacific*
Melbourne 16 April
Cape Town 5 June

Cape Town rated 8d
due for ship letter

50 days



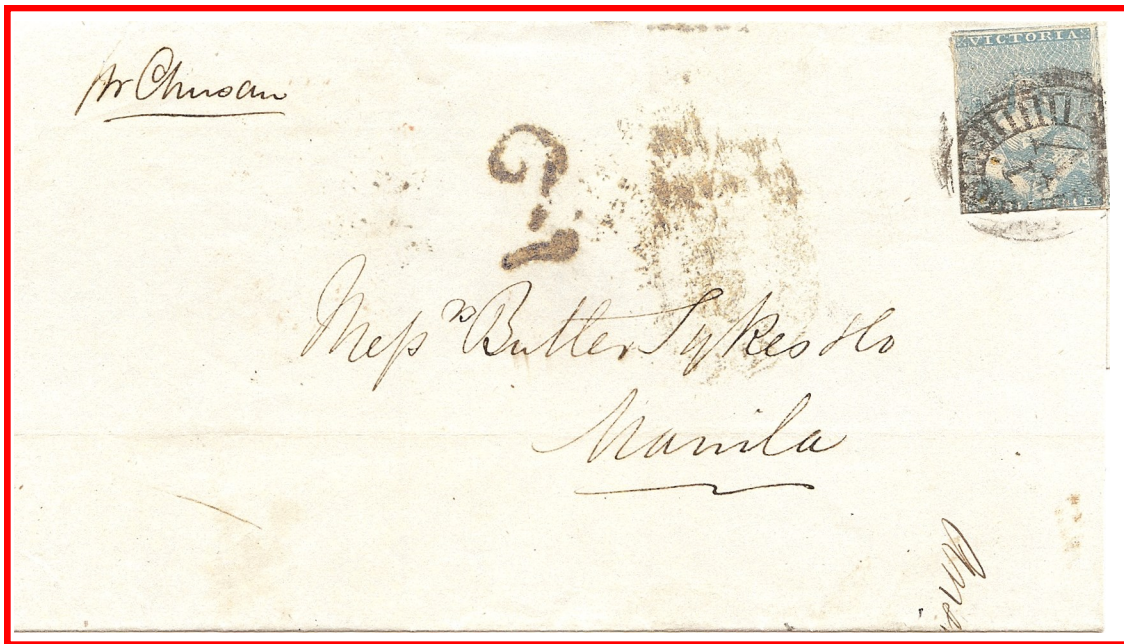
Melbourne, 16 April 1855

Via Singapore

Non-Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Experimental voyage to Singapore



Melbourne, 2 January 1853

Paid 3d ship-letter fee
P&O *Chusan*, Melbourne 3 January, Singapore 4 February
Ship *Bombay*, Singapore departure unknown, Manila 20 February
Manila rated 2 reales for inland
Received 20 February 49 days

The first P&O contract voyage from Australia
Earliest recorded letter from Victoria to The Philippines

The first P&O Contract: via Singapore and Suez

The P&O contract of 1 January 1853 combined the existing route between England, India, Singapore and China with a branch from Singapore to Sydney via Melbourne. Bimonthly Southampton–Sydney sailings alternated with ARM service.

In late 1852 P&O sent two ships—the *Chusan* and the *Formosa*—to Australia to have them in position at the start of the contract. Three non-contract experimental voyages were then made, all of which carried ship letters. The Singapore branch was used only until July 1853, after which sailings went directly to Galle.

In all, the P&O carried three non-contract and 12 contract mails from Australia to England. Service was discontinued in January 1855 when P&O's ships were commandeered by the Admiralty for use in the Crimean War.

Via Southampton

Private Sailing Ship / P&O / Admiralty Packet

To Bombay and Suez for British packet to Southampton



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Mount Macedon, 21 September 1851

Paid 5d: 2d inland, 3d ship

Ship *Troubadour*, Melbourne 4 October, Galle 7 December, Bombay arrival unknown

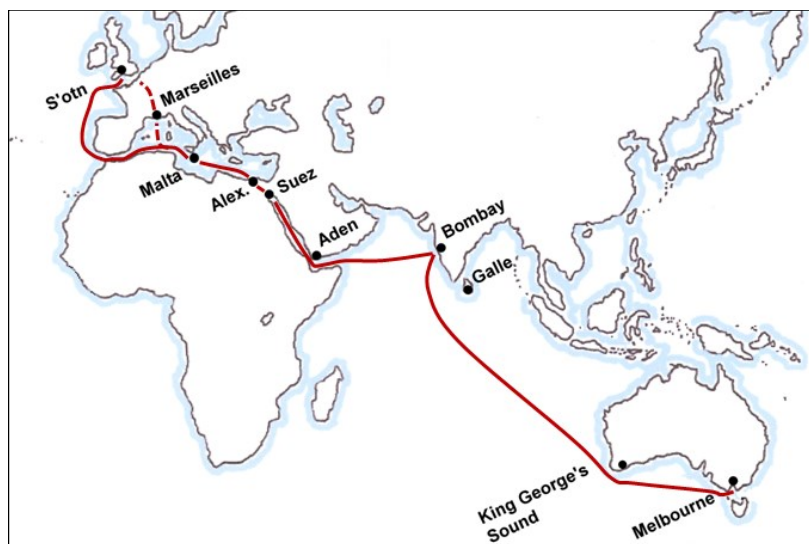
P&O *Achilles*, Bombay 17 February, Aden 25 February, Suez 4 March

Admiralty packet HMS *Medusa*, Alexandria 21 March, Malta 26 March

P&O *Sultan*, Malta 26 March, Southampton 5 April

London rated 1/4 due: 1/- packet, 4d India letter

Received 5 April 197 days



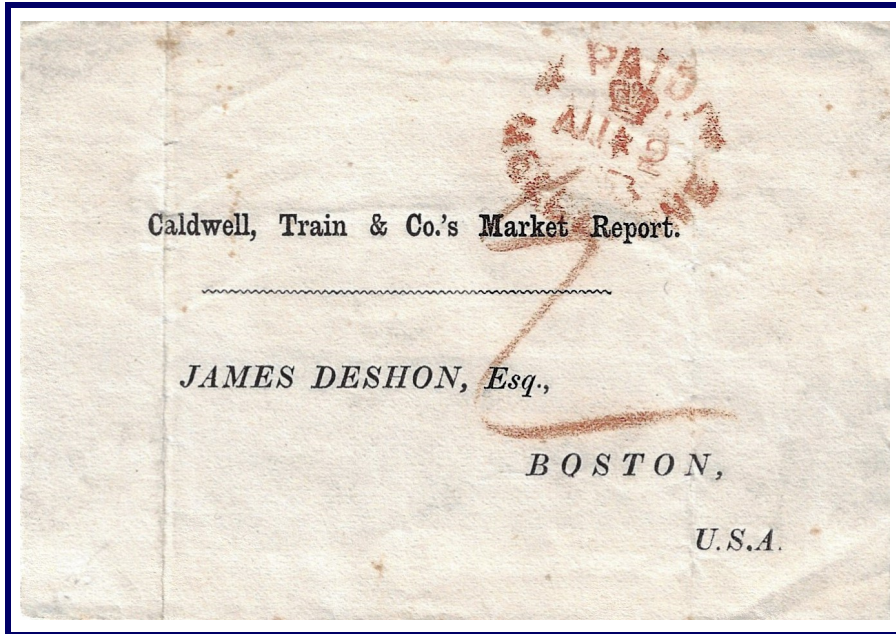
Ships on this route sometimes called at King George's Sound, Galle, or Aden.

Via Southampton

Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Printed Circular



Melbourne, 2 August 1853

Paid 2d for parcel bundle of two or more circulars.

P&O *Chusan*

Melbourne 3 August

Singapore 4 September

P&O steamers to Southampton

Malta to Galle

Madras to Suez

Euxine to S'otn

Cunard *Arabia*

Liverpool 5 November

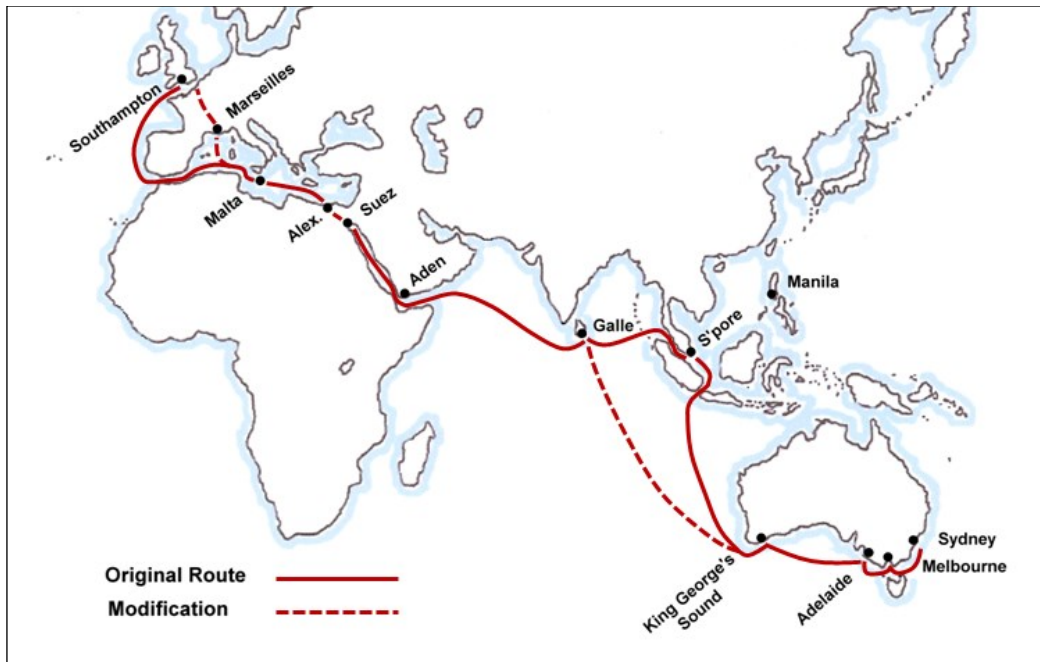
New York 17 November

Received 18 November

109 days

The last of three contract sailings via Singapore

The Experimental Route Via Singapore



Via Southampton

Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company



Paid 1/- ship-letter fee

P&O *Norna*
Melbourne 26 July
Galle 21 August

P&O *Bentinck* to Malta
P&O *Nubia* to Southampton

Southampton rated 1/- due,
the packet rate

Received 6 October

77 days

Melbourne, 22 July 1854

Paid 1/6
1/- ship-letter fee
6d registered

P&O *Norna*
Melbourne 25 Nov
Galle 24 Dec

P&O *Bombay*
Galle 28 Dec
Suez 16 Jan

P&O *Tagus*
Alexandria 23 Jan
Southampton 10 Feb

Received 12 February

99 days



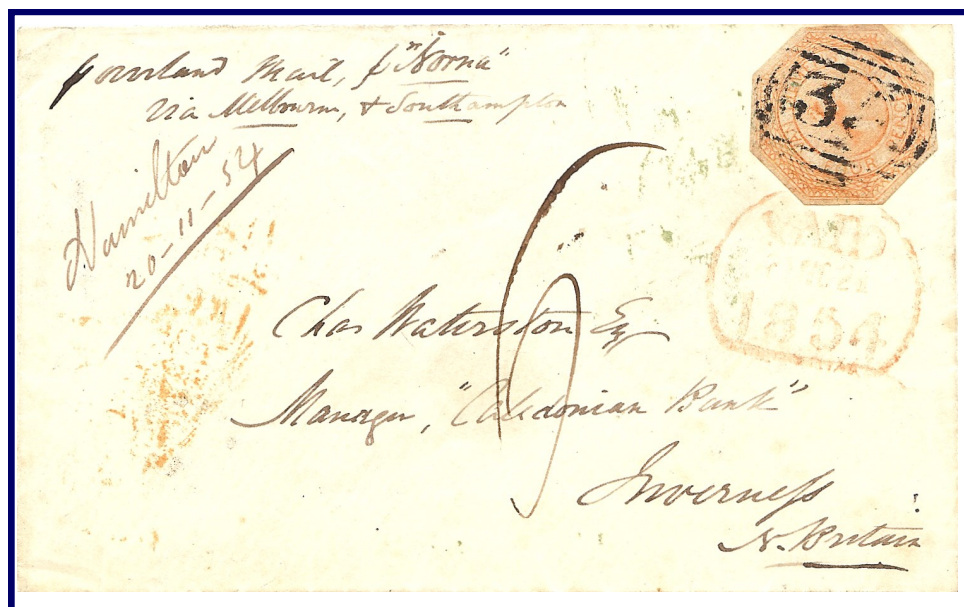
Avoca, 11 November 1854

Via Southampton

Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Tasmanian Feeder Line to the Mails in Melbourne



Hamilton, 21 November 1854

Paid 4d, outward ship-letter rate

Coastal steamer *Black Swan*: Launceston 23 November, Melbourne 24 November

P&O *Norna*, Melbourne 25 November, Galle 24 December

P&O *Bombay*: Galle 28 December, Suez 16 January

P&O *Valetta*: Alexandria 23 January, Southampton 10 February

London rated 6d due, the uniform British rate effective 1 October 1854

Received in Scotland 18 February 1855



reverse

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Austrian-Lloyd steamship from Alexandria to Trieste



Melbourne, 28 January 1854

Paid 3d ship-letter fee

Madras : Melbourne 30 January, Galle 23 February

Bengal : Galle 28 February, Suez 15 March

Austrian Lloyd *Bombay* : Alexandria 20 March, Trieste 25 March

Prussian closed mail to London Received 31 March 63 days

Earliest recorded Australian letter via Trieste



In 1848 Austrian Lloyd started monthly service from Alexandria to Trieste, biweekly from 1851.

The British postal agency in Alexandria handed closed Australian bags to the Austrian Lloyd P.O. for Prussian closed mail via Trieste. Mails went by rail to the exchange office in Aachen, then to Ostende for ferry to London. Belgium's payment to Prussia for unpaid letters was on a bulk-weight basis, per the 1852 U.K.-Prussian Convention.

This letter arrived four days ahead of the mail via Southampton. Although arriving two days later than the mail via Marseilles, it cost the addressee only 1/-, 1/3 less than via Marseilles for a letter weighing 1/4 to 1/2 ounce.

Via Marseille

Private Sailing Ship / Admiralty Packet

To Bombay and Suez for Overland Mail via Marseille



Melbourne, 8 October 1842

Paid 6d, double the 3d ship-letter fee to Sydney
Ship *Candabar*, Sydney 6 October, Colombo 14 January, Bombay 1 February 1843
East India Co. steamer *Atlanta*, Bombay 3 February, Suez 21 February
P&O packet *Great Liverpool*, Alexandria 25 February, Malta 3 March
Admiralty steam packet *Acheron*, Malta 3 March, Marseilles 8 March
London 13 March: 6/2 due: 2 x 1/10 British rate, 3 x 10d French transit

Received 14 March

158 days

Earliest recorded letter from Victoria to Bombay



reverse



Bombay

From at least 1842, private sailing ships advertised mail service northward to Calcutta. From there letters went overland to Bombay for the Far East mails via P&O Royal Mail packets to Suez. After the overland trip to Alexandria, mail could go either direct to Southampton direct or overland via Marseille. Early mails via India thus left Australia as ship letters and arrived in England as packet letters.

Via Marseille

Contract Steamship

The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company

Via Singapore and Suez

Paid 3d ship fee

Chusan to S'pore

Malta to Galle

Madras to Suez

Euxine to Malta

Valetta to Mars.

Arr. 26 October

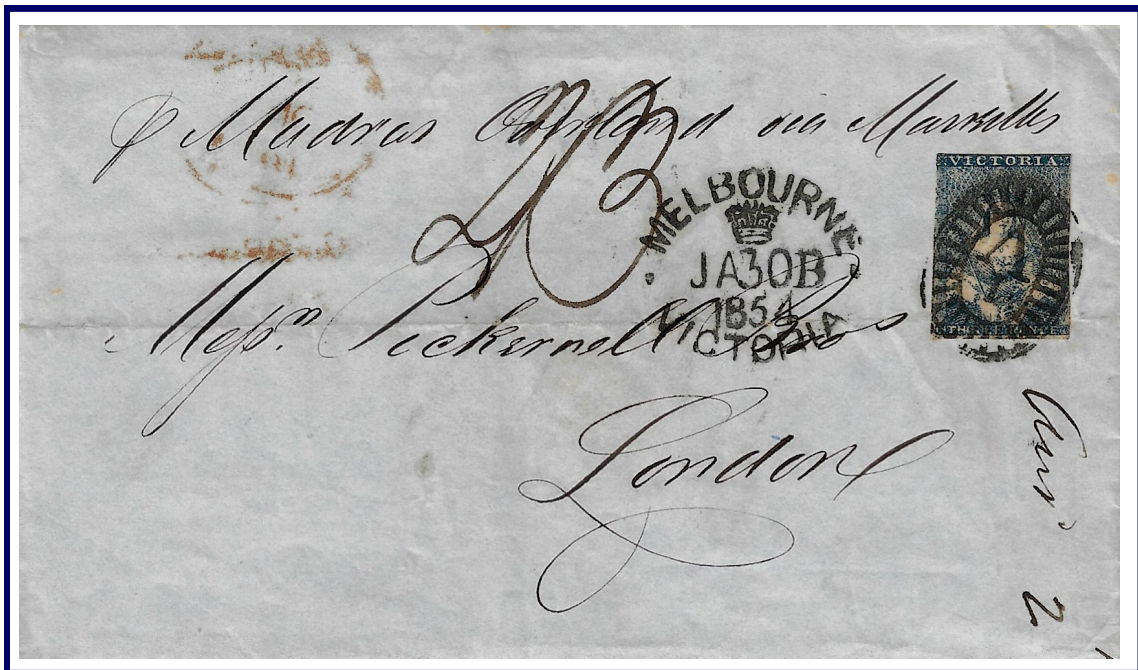
88 days

16 decimes due



Melbourne, 30 July 1853

Via Ceylon and Suez



Melbourne, 30 January 1854

Paid 3d ship fee. Madras: Melbourne 30 January, Galle 23 February
 Bengal: Galle 28 February, Suez 15 March / Ripon: Suez 20 March, Malta 24 March
 Valetta: Malta 24 March, Marseille 26 March, received 28 March 64 days

Received 28 March London rated 2/3 due (1/4 to 1/2 oz.)