STEPHEN SMITH BIRTH CENTENARY

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP RELEASE FUNCTION

19th DECEMBER, 1992 11-00 a.m.

Gorky Sadan, Calcutta

Organised by

Stephen Smith Birth Centenary Celebration Committee

Under auspices of

PHILATELIC CONGRESS OF INDIA

PROGRAMME

- Presentation of Flower Bouquet to the Honoured Guests
- Welcome Address and Introduction of Stephen Smith by
  Dr. D. J. Banerjea, Convenor
  Centenary Celebration Committee
- Address by Shri P. Gupta, President
  Centenary Celebration Committee
- Address by Shri B. K. Poddar, President
  Indian Stamp Dealers' Association
- Address by Shri S. B. Bhattacharya,
  PMG, Calcutta Region, Dept. of Posts
- Release of Stephen Smith's stamp and address by
  Shri D N. Jatia, President
  Federation Internationale de Philatelie
- Inauguration of special cover cancellation and address by
  Shri A. K. Chakrabarti, Chief Postmaster General
  West Bengal Circle Dept. of Post
- Vote of Thanks by Shri Suvra Chandra
  Organising Secretary, Centenary Celebration Committee
- TEA

STEPHEN SMITH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

Organised under auspices of Philatelic Congress of India

Gorky Sadan, 3 Gorky Terrace, Calcutta 700 017

Purnendu Gupta
President

15th December 1992

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this ceremony to mark the Stamp Release of Stephen Smith, father of Rocket Mails in India. As a philatelist it had been my desire and must have been the desire of every philatelist of this city that this stamp should be released from Calcutta. This would be most fitting tribute that philatelists in particular along with others could pay to this pioneer astro-philatelist who devoted a major portion of his carrier and life at Calcutta.

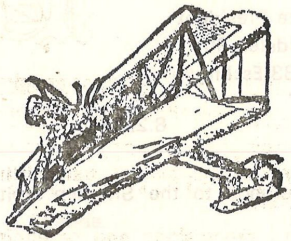
However, I would not hesitate to say that I have deep regrets that this function could not be organised on 14th February 1992 which date his birth centenary completes due to several practical problems and procedural delay. But our continued efforts have finally paid off and a stamp could ultimately be released today.

I take this opportunity to thank you all and the postal department for finally realising the importance of the occasion and releasing the stamp.

Yours sincerely,

P. Gupta
President
Centenary Celebration Committee

THE AUSTRALIAN AIR MALL SOCIETY (INC.)



GPO Box 954
Adelaide
South Australia 5001
Fax : 61 8.231 7506

29 January 1992

Mr. P. Gupta
President
Stephen Smith Centenary Celebration
Calcutta

Dear Mr Gupta,

The President and Members of the AUSTRALIAN AIR MAIL SOCIETY are pleased to join with the ISPC Friendship Society in honouring the Centenary of the birth of Stephen Smith. May his memory and wonderful achievements live forever in the annals of the aerophilatelic history of India and indeed of the world.

Nelson Eustis,
Hon. Secretary

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE PHILATELIE

Section for Astrophilately

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

The STEPHEN SMITH CENTENARY CELEBRATION, organized under the auspices of the Philatelic Congress of India, devoted to one of the substantial early rocket-pioneers, is highly welcomed by astrophilatelists.

The period when in the 30ies a group of experimentors strived for the aim of transmitting mail by use of rockets plays an important role in Astrophilately.

By developing different kinds of rocket technics — units and propulsions and equipping their tiny rockets not only with mail but also with scientific instruments and others more, they paved the way for later outer space science and spaceflight.

Ing. STEPHEN Hector Taylor-SMITH, who performed his rocket experiments in India and Sikkim during the 30ies until the end of the 2.worldwar, ranks with the most important pioneers who were engaged with realizing transmission of mail by rockets.

His efforts to provide people in flood areas as soon as possible with medicine, food, newspaper clippings and mail by means of rockets, brought significant technical achievements and scientific findings.

He was the first who succeeded in transporting living beings like a cock and a hen, a snake and mices in his rockets, proving that they can survive weightlessness, 20 years before the Soviet Union sent their space dogs aloft.

It may be of special interest for the youth that Stephen Smith devoted a number of rocket experiments to Boy Scouts, by transmitting Messages to their founder Chief Baden-Powell and his wife and performing propaganda rocket launches in the presence of hundreds of Boy Scouts and his Excellency Chief Scout of India.

The 'Stephen Smith Centenary Celebration' may contribute that the interest in this fascinating beginning and the later progress in space exploration arise amongst the philatelists in India, known as a very active country in space research with nowadays state-owned facilities of rocket sites, where covers of event with postmarks of date and place of rocket-launches are available and with cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma, who performed a successful space-flight within the USSR / INDIA Intercosmos-program, together with Russian cosmonauts.

It was Stephen Smith who fascinated the Indian people in the 30ies by realising Rocket-mail and visualising future conquest of space.

Astrophilately gives us the possibility to record his outstanding work and to demonstrate by philatelic objects, that his dreams of spaceflight and spacemail came true.

With best wishes for a very successful 'Stephen Smith Centenary Celebration'.

Beatrice Bachmann
Leader of the
Section for Astrophiiately

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AERO-PHILATELIC SOCIETIES
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIETIES AEROPHILATELIQUES
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER AERO-PHILATELISTEN-VEREINE
FEDERACION INTERNATIONAL DE SOCIEDADES AEROPHILATELICAS

Jan. 28, 1992

Mr. Purnendu Gupta
President
Gorky Sadan 3 Gorky Terrace
Calcutta 700 017
India

It is one of the aims of FISA, the International Federation of Aerophilatelic Societies, to cherish the memory of the pioneers of Aerophilately. Stephen Hector Taylor-Smith, commonly known as Stephen Smith, was one of them. Collectors all over the world are familiar with his name because he was a pioneer and historian of Aerophilately and also the first experimenter of Rocket Mails in India.

It is a great privilege and honour for me to express the gratitude of all aerophilatelists for the initiative of the ISPC Friendship Society and to extend our sincere wishes for a successful Centenary Celebration.

Roland F. Kohl
President FISA

GOOD WISHES

I am very happy to learn that the philatelists of Calcutta are organising the birth centenary of Stephen H. Smith. I wish the function all success.

Col. L. G. Shenoi
President, Philatelic Congress of India
Bangalore

I regret that due to unavoidable reasons I shall not be able to attend the functions for the success of which I send my good wishes.

Brig. D. S. Virk A.V.S.M (Retd.)
Vice-President, Philatelic Congress of India
New Delhi

I regret very much my inablity to attend, owing to ill health. I however send my best wishes for the success of your celebration.

B. B. Paymaster I.C.S. (Retd.)
President, Philatelic Society of India
Bombay

I am glad to learn that the Stephen Smith Centenary is being celebrated in Calcutta. It will give me great pleasure to be of any service to the organizers of this grand function.

B. C. Luhadia
Luhadia Stamp Auctions
Jaipur

It is heartening to know that a befitting exhibition and other programmes are being organised as part of Centenary Celebrations of this great aerophilatelist. I wish grand sucess to the exhibition and other programmes being organised in this connection

Ajeet Singhee
Hyderabad

I am sure the event organised to hold a function, exhibition and an issue of Souvenir, is the result of international understanding. I wish the function all success and thus pave the way to greater success in the matter of promotion of philately.

V. N S. Rau
Past President, Philatelic Congress of India
Madras

STEPHEN SMITH BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

President

Mr. Purnendu Gupta

Vice Presidents

Mr. Sydney Kitson | Mr. B. K. Poddar | Mr. Amal Bose

Convenor

Dr. D. J. Banerjea

Organising Secretary

Mr. Suvra Chandra

Members

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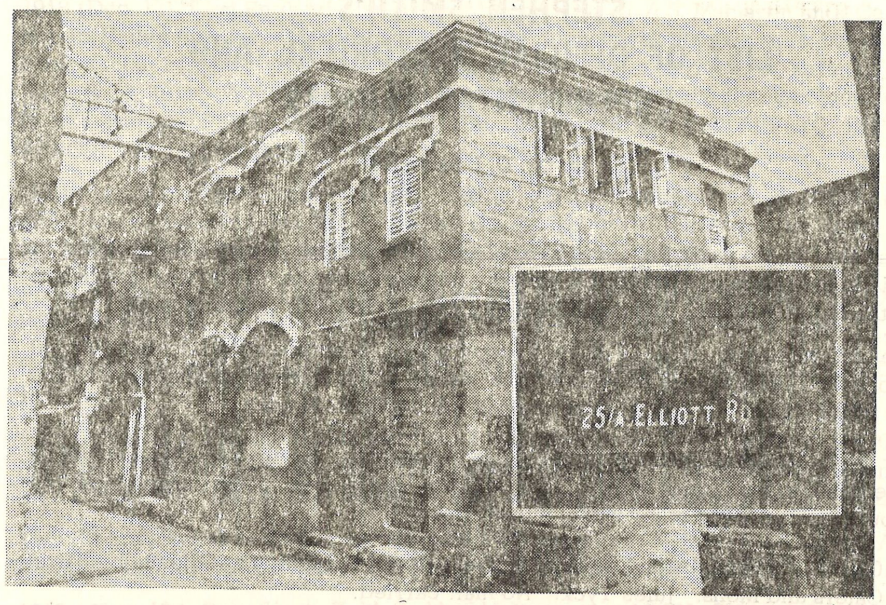

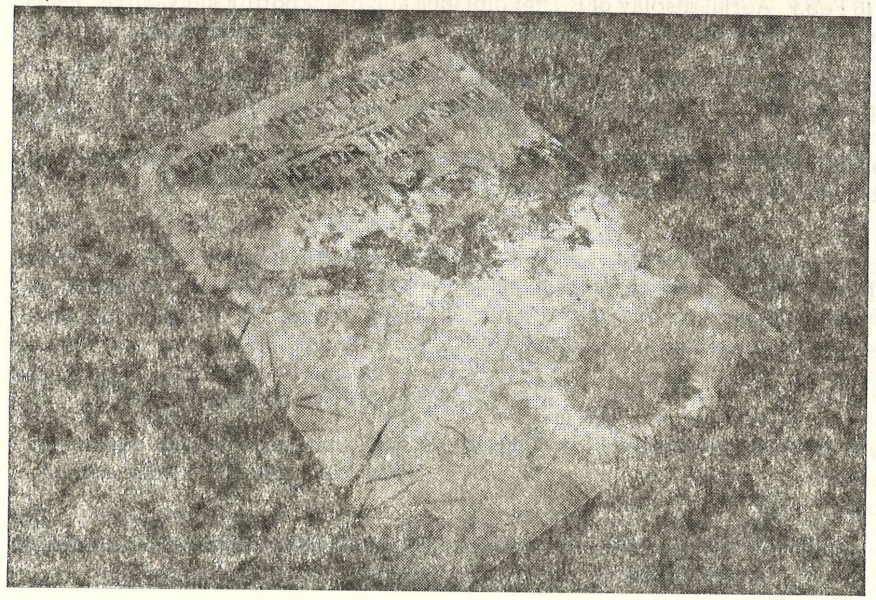

STEPHEN SMITH'S LIST OF OFFICIAL, HISTORICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL FLIGHTS

by Dr. D. J. Banerjea

Some time in the early thirties Stephen Smith published a list of First Flights in India in the shape of a catalogue, with the title given above. This was published by the Indian Air Mail Society without any date, writer's or printer's name.

The list was upto 1931. I have a copy which was presented to Late Mr. Jal Cooper. The catalogue does not give detail about cachet, postmark etc, but has valuations of all covers written in red ink by Smith himself.

For the Dr. Smith Centenary, I take this opportunity to update this list with a little detail to the flights, some of them did not carry mail, some information but about postmarks and other useful information.

1910 (Dec. 28) First Aerial Display in India. Aerial Exhibition at Calcutta by Baron de Caters and Mons. Jules Tyck. No mail carried.

1911 (6 Feb.) Aerial display of Bristol biplanes at Barrackpore Race Course, near Calcutta by Capt. Dixon and Mons. Henri Julero. No mail carried.

1911 (Feb. 18) First Official Aerial Post in the World. Carried by Mons. Henri pecquet in Humber-Sommer biplane (Smith described the plane as a de Havilland biplane) from Allahabad to Naini. Special official cachet in red. Total number of covers and cards carried were 6500. A large card depicting the pilot and the machine and signed by the aviator were flown. Only a few exist.

1913 (Jan. 8) Great Calcutta Aerial Exhibition. Flight by French aviators Mons. Marc Pourpe and Mons. Verminck. Special cards inscribed "GREAT AERIAL EXHIBITION 8TH JANUARY 1913 - MESSRS. G. VERMINCK & M. POURPE - A SOUVENIR FROM 20,000 FEET ABOVE CALCUTTA - PRICE Re. 1. were air-dropped. Only six are believed to exist.

1918 (Nov. 29 to Dec. 12) First flight Egypt - India, made by Capt. Ross Smith from Heliopolis (Cairo) to Karachi in Handley Page 0/400. During December the aircraft continued it's journey to Delhi, Allahabad and Calcutta. 43 covers for Karachi bear a special cachet "BROUGHT BY FIRST AERIAL MAIL CAIRO - KARACHI 10TH DECEMBER 1918".

About 30 letters destined for Delhi bear "CARRIED BY FIRST AERIAL MAIL CAIRO - DELHI DEC. 1918".

1918 (Dec. 13) First England - India flight began. Major A.S. Maclaren and Capt. Robert Hailey flew from Martlesham to Karachi in several stages, in a Handley Page V1500 biplane, 'The Old Carthusian'. The plane arrived at Karachi on January 16, 1919. A few items of mail bear a special cachet with the date altered in manuscript "FIRST THROUGH AERIAL MAIL GREAT BRITAIN TO INDIA KARCHI 17.1.1919." in three lines.

1919 (Jan. 9) Military flight Baghdad - Delhi. About 50 letters from Baghdad and Basra were carried in this flight. Cachet impressed in red-violet on the front of the letter and another on the back. Only six are known to exist.

Front cachet "F.P.O. 55 9 JAN 19" in circle and POSTAL SERVICE M.E F. AERIAL POST BAGHDAD - DELHI PER HANDLEY PAGE AEROPLANE in four lines.

Cachet on the back in circle "CARRIED BY AERIAL MAIL BAGHDAD - DELHI JANY 1919".

1919 (Oct. 14) Etienne Poulet and Jean Benoist left Paris in a Caudron G4 'La Mouche' (The Fly) for Australia. The flight was abandoned at Moulmein, Burma on 9 December. Manuscript notations and a three line cachet applied to covers.

Two different types of cachet were applied in purple "PAR POSTE DE'AIR / PAR FAVEUR DE/M POULET" and "BY AERIAL POST THRO / M POULET".

1919 (Nov. 12) Ross Smith, Keith Smith, J.M. Bennett and W.H. Shiers left London in a Vickers Vimy O-EAOU and arrived in Darwin on 10th December winning the £10,000 England - Australia Air Race. Mail was taken aboard at England and at all intermediate stages including India. Some covers received a three line cachet applied by Keith Smith. Some were signed by the crew members and some bear stamps of different countries and of Australia.

1920 (Jan. 8) R.J.P. Rarrer and J.C. McIntosh, originally air race entrants left London in a DH9 'PD' and arrived in Darwin on 21 August. They brought a few items of mail from Chahbar, Persian Gulf to India.

1920 (Jan. 23) Karachi - Bombay Air Post. An experimental air post service was started from Karachi to Bombay, with a night stop at Rajkot, by DH 10s of 97 Squadron R.A.F. An air surcharge of 12 annas per ounce of mail were levied. Special cachet in black applied to the mail. A total of 14 trips were made upto 9th March, when services ceased sustaining a loss of Rs 60,000. Total mail carried 3730. Stephen Smith's figures are 2729.

1920 (Feb.) First newspaper flight in India. From Bombay to Poona by Nieuport Nighthawk G-EAEQ. No mail known.

1922 (May 24) London - Lukhifi Char (Sunderban) by Capt. Blake and Capt. Macmillan. This was a proposed world flight. But the seaplane crashed at the char, terminating it. A small number unofficial mail were carried.

1923 (Dec 5 & 6) Emergent flight Ambala - Simla. by R.A.F. Only official mail carried. Three known.

1924 (May 7) Karachi - Pipar by Portuguese aviators. Plane left Lisbon for a projected flight to Macao. On arrival at Karachi a small bag of mail was picked up. But the machine crashed at Pipar and the mail was posted at Jodhpur and sent on by ordinary route.

1924 (Nov. 14) Pioneer Dutch flight from Amsterdam to Batavia by Van der Hoop. Mail Carried Calcutta - Akyab, covers prepared by Stephen Smith. 25 carried.

1925 (Jan. 19) Demonstration flight by R.A.F. Risalpore - Calcutta and back under the command of Wing Commander R.C. Pink. A large circular unofficial cachet was applied in pink

Total number carried :-

Ambala - Calcutta - 14
Calcutta - Ambala - 35
Calcutta - Nowshera - 89

1925 (Feb. 5 - 12) Anglo-Indian Air Survey Flight. At various stages of this flight by Sir Alan Cobham, letters were privately carried by either the pilot or the mechanic, Arthur Elliot. These were either initialled or autographed and received in addition to various unofficial cachet or labels as souvenirs of the flight. Following is a list of those known to exist. :-

Croydon - Rangoon - 2 covers
Calcutta - Akyab - 34 covers (5 Feb.)
Akyab - Rangoon - 49 covers (5 Feb.)
Calcutta - Melbourne - 38 covers
Rangoon - Calcutta - 32 covers (8 Feb.)
Jalpaiguri - Calcutta - 5 covers
Calcutta - Delhi - 40 cards (15 Feb.)
Calcutta - Karachi - 68 covers (15 Feb.)
- 32 cards (15 Feb)
Calcutta - London - 87 covers (15 Feb.)
- 31 cards (15 Feb.)
Calcutta - Paris - 3 covers (15 Feb.)

1925 (May 13) Calcutta - Melbourne by Italian seaplanes led by Marquis de Pinedo. A private mail for Rangoon and Melbourne were given to the commander. These were all impressed with a violet cachet showing the map of India with an aeroplane inset with the inscription "ITALIAN WORLD AIR FLIGHT". The covers were originally signed by the pilot, but as Stephen Smith was unable to contribute Rs 20 per cover for Melbourne for Italian charities, de Pinedo cut off the portion bearing his autograph. The mutilated covers were duly delivered to the Italian Consulate at Melbourne and returned to the senders, but at no stage these covers passed through the post. Following is the list of covers.

Calcutta - Rangoon the entire mail of 124 covers and 32 cards were not delivered, presumed to have been lost.

Calcutta - Malbourne - 93 covers

1925 (June 10) Quetta - Hindubagh and return. Owing to heavy rains which washed away all means of communication between these two towns, mail was transported by R A.F. planes on 10th & 12th June. 12 covers are known to exist.

1925 (Dec. 31) Demonstration flight over Calcutta by R.A.F. planes dropping about 3000 military notifications with the cachet "DELIVERED BY AIR OVER CALCUTTA". Majority were destroyed

1926 (Jan. 2) Calcutta - Risalpore return flight by R.A.F. planes. Some vignettes showing an elephant and an aeroplane were designed by Stephen Smith and reproduced photographically by Messrs. Edna Lorenz, to the number of 220 after which the plates were destroyed. Letters were also impressed with a purple cachet inscribed "HAWASE - BY AIR". The mail consisted of :-

Calcutta - Patna - 69 covers
Calcutta - Risalpore - 51 cards
Calcutta - Rawalpindi - 5 covers

1926 (Jan. 22) Karachi - Risalpore by R.A.F. Special cachet applied. No postmarks, stamps defaced by red ink. 40 covers.

1926 (April 4) Copenhagen - Tokyo by Danish aviators Botved and Herschend. Mail carried from Calcutta eastwards. Unofficial cachet "BY DANISH FOKKER AEROPLANES 1926 - CALCUTTA - RANGOON" and seal of the Danish Consulate.

Calcutta - Rangoon - 78 covers
Calcutta - Bangkok - 41 covers
Calcutta - Tokyo - 31 covers carried upto Ninghai in China, where bandits destroyed the plane.

1926 (April 24) Part of light by Spanish airmen Capt. Lorringa and Capt. Gallaeza from Madrid to Manila.

They brought one cover from Madrid and reaching Calcutta on 19th April. Capt. Loriga signed and posted it. They also carried 26 covers from Karachi to Calcutta. The mail from Calcutta had a private cachet "BY SPANISH BREGUET BIPLANE - FIRST FLIGHT CALCUTTA - MANILA 18TH APRIL 1926".

Calcutta - Rangoon - 51 covers (24 April)
Calcutta - Manila - 43 covers (24 April)

1926 (July 23) The Karachi - Calcutta - Rangoon - Melbourne stage of the second Air Survey conducted by Sir Alan Cobham Private cachet read "BRITISH FLIGHT - ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA 1926. PILOT SIR ALAN J. COBHAM. CARRIED FROM KARACHI TO CALCUTTA". 43 covers on this leg. Calcutta - Rangoon - 45 and Calcutta - Melbourne 38 covers were flown of which 35 were lost in Australia (Smith puts a big question mark in red ink . On the return flight to England, Calcutta was reached on 20th September and a small mail carried westwards. :-

Calcutta - Allahabad - 12 covers
Calcutta - London - only one cover addressed to King George V

1926 (Dec 21) Special air mail Baghdad - Karachi carried by de Havilland Moth planes. 465 items of mail had a special cachet "IRAQ TO INDIA : BY LIGHT AEROPLANE WITH MESSRS. STACK & LEETE".

1926 (Dec. 26) Start of U.K. - India survey flight by Imperial Airways with Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for Air as a passenger in a DH 66 Hercules G-EBMX. The aircraft Delhi on 8th January 1927. The aircraft was named 'City of Delhi' by Lady Irwin, the Vicerine on 10th January. Mail carried :-

Croydon - Delhi - 15 covers
Karachi - Delhi 27 covers
Karachi -London 48 covers on the return leg on 18 Feb.

1927 (Jan. 23) Karachi - Basra-Cairo air mail service started. Official Air Post cachet "AIR MAIL SERVICE - BASRA-CAIRO (KARACHI G.P.O.)" was used. Two types cachet were used - A. rectangular cachet in violet or black (the latter being first used 18.2.27) and B. a circular cachet in black.

1927 (Feb. 14) Flights by Messrs. Stack & Leete to India. Official cachet "AIR MAILS - INDIA BY LIGHT AEROPLANE - KARACHI G.P.O." was used. Mail carried :-

Karachi - Lahore - 60 covers
Karachi - Delhi - 900 covers

1927 (Feb. 17 to 22) Royal Air Force Display. An official circular cachet was used. "ROYAL AIR FORCE DISPLAY 1927" with the name of the different places involved in the flight. Stages were Risalpore - Delhi, Kohat - Delhi, Ambala-Delhi, Quetta - Delhi, Lahore - Delhi, Karachi - Delhi, Peshawar - Delhi and return from Delhi to all the above named destinations.

1927 (June 25) Amsterdam - Batavia first commercial flight by Dutch airline KLM. Pilots J.G. Geysondorffer and J B. Scholte. Mails was posted from Calcutta eastwards and westwards on the return leg :

Calcutta - Rangoon 48 covers, Calcutta - Batavia - 31 covers
Rangoon - Calcutta (9th July) - 50 covers
Calcutta - Karachi (14 July) 15 covers, Karchi - Baghdad 5 covers and Karachi - Amsterdam 33 covers.

1927 (June 27, July 2) Flight over Calcutta by Moth Aeroplane. On the first flight 10 postcards and one letter was carried, they bear the following two cachets :-

1) CARRIED BY D.H. MOTH G-EBMO AEROPLANE
2) A miniature representation of the Moth

Also the pilot's initial W.H.V (W.H. Vetch) on each item. On the second flight on 2nd July 276 letters and 49 postcards were carried. They have the following inscription in red. "This letter was carried over the City of Calcutta and its environs by the famous DH G.E.B.M.O., the diminutive aeroplane which won the KINGS CUP in 1926 and made the historic flight from London to Delhi in 1926-1927".

1927 (July 15) Experimental flight by Capt. Vetch from Calcutta to Shillong, where the plane crashed. The mail have a private cachet in violet reading

DH MOTH Aeroplane
G.E.B.M.O.
AIR 15th July 1927 MAIL
CALCUTTA - SHILLONG

Stages Calcutta - Dacca - 19 covers, Calcutta - Cherrapunji 35 covers and Calcutta - Shillong - 55 covers.

1927 (May 20) RAF began a first attempt to fly non-stop U.K. - India Flt. Lt. Carr and Flt. Lt. Gilligan left Cranwell in a modified Hawker Horseley day bomber J8607. They were forced down in the Persian Gulf 45 miles south east of Bandar Abbas after flying 3,420 miles in 34½ hours. Three covers were flown from London.

1927 (Oct. 18) The Indian stage of Paris - Saigon flight by Capt. Leon Challe. 4 covers were flown from Allahabad to Calcutta on 18th October. The bear the violet stamp of the French Consulate General at Calcutta. On the return trip the following mail was picked up from Calcutta and had various private cachet and labels :-

Calcutta - Allahabad - 1 cover and 18 cards
Calcutta - Karachi 55 covers
Calcutta - Paris 26 covers and London 67 covers.

1927 (Dec. 21) Flight of the Red Rose. Mail carried from Calcutta to Akyab, Singapore and Australia by Mrs. Keith Miller and Capt. Lancaster. Private cachet by Stephen Smith :-

Calcutta - Akyab - 32 covers, Calcutta - Rangoon - 52 covers,
Calcutta - Singapore - 12 covers and Calcutta - Australia 37 covers, of which 34 were lost in Australia.

1928 (Jan 1) Empire Cruise by four Southampton Supermarine flying boats on their way from England to Australia. The flight was commanded by Commander Cave-Brown-Cave. Unofficial cachet and labels were used. Mail carried :-

Bombay - Colombo - 11 cards, Calcutta-Akyab (3 Feb.) - 89 covers and 63 cards, Calcutta - Rangoon-92 covers

1928 (Feb. 13) Cologne - Calcutta by Capt. Oto Koenecke. Mail carried Ettawah - Calcutta on the Indian stage. 24 letters bearing a salmon label.

1928 (Feb. 14) England - Australia by Capt. Bert Hinckler. The plane was an Avro Avian. On 14th February Hinckler left Karachi eastwards. He carried six cards but forgot to post them at Bundaberg, Australia. However these cards bear Bundaberg postmark of 4th July 1928. By postal sanction he carried Air Mail postcards from Calcutta to Rangoon (17th Feb.)

1928 (March 17) Basra - Cairo. First flight with covers bearing Indian Air Mail labels. Very scarce.

1928 (March 24) First Flight of Indian Air Mail by Marseilles - London Air Route. Covers and cards (Number not known).

1928 (14 May) Paris - Akyab by French airmen Capt. Pelletier D'Oisy and Lieut. Claude Gavib. Mail intended for Rangoon from Calcutta. 77 covers and 44 cards bearing unofficial labels and cachet. Plane crashed at Akyab.

1928 (Sept. & Oct.) Experimental flights by K.L.M. from Amsterdam to Batavia. In all 5 flights were arranged.

The First Flight commanded by Capt. Koppen carried a mail bag consisting of 84 letters and 27 postcards from Calcutta to Rangoon on 20th September. He charged an Air Fee of Rs. 3 and annas six. The mail carried a cachet in green ink INDO BURMA FLIGHT (Figure of an aeroplane)

BY DUTCH PLANE
1st Official Mail

The second flight commanded by Commander Moll, He carried 8 cards from Karachi on 21st September to Bandung. No postal sanction was received.

The third flight commanded by Flt. Lt. Prellwitz crashed at Kanpur. Mail for Rangoon to be carried on this flight was prepared at Calcutta with postal sanction. These consisting of 87 covers and 56 cards were later carried by the fourth flight. They bear a cachet in violet reading "3RD PLANE CRASHED AT CAWNPORE CARRIED BY 4TH OFFICIAL MAIL PLANE H. . .N.A.O.F." in a box.

The fourth flight commanded by Capt. Waltman arrived at Calcutta on 11th October and carried the bag meant for the 3rd flight and 96 more letters.

The fifth flight commanded by Capt. Smirnoff did not carry any mail.

1928 (27 Sept.) Berlin—Tokyo by Capt. Baron von Huenefeld. He left Calcutta on 30th September carrying the following mail :—Calcutta - Bangkok 46 cards and Calcutta - Tokyo 47 cards. Unofficial cachet.

1928 (Nov. 10) The fifth Dutch flight landed at Calcutta on the return leg. He dropped two mail bags from Batavia to Calcutta. Number not known. He did not carry any mail from Calcutta.

1928 (26 Dec.) Mail carried by Dutch flight from Amsterdam commanded by Capt. Driennelaer and Flt. Lt. Fryne. Small quantity of X'Mas mail carried Karachi - Calcutta. They had a special black and orange Air Mail label. No cachet. Covers were autographed by the pilots.

1928 (Jan.) During the evacuation of Kabul of the refugees by Royal Air Force planes, very limited amount of mail was carried for various legations. Smith originally writes

Only four are known to exist. But the figure four was struck out in red ink and the figure of 8 written with the following in his handwriting.
A.....Kabul to Peshawar..... 7 Known...../1500
B ... Peshawar to Kabul..... 1 Known...../2500

1929 (Feb. 5) German World Flight by Capt. Baron Friedrich von Koenig Warthausen, the 'Boy Pilot'. On the way to Calcutta he carried 8 cards from Teheran. These were not posted at Teheran. The cards bear German & Indian stamps. Across the German stamp the Baron has written the name of his plane KAMERAD with hid initials V.K. The cards were posted at Calcutta on 29th January. He also carried four postcards Karachi - Jodhpur and 15 cards on the Karachi - Calcutta sector. Due to unavoidabe circumstances the baron could leave Calcutta before 5th February but the mail intended tc be carried by him were postmarked 15 January 1929 ;—

Calcutta - Akyab - 2 covers and 39 cards
Calcutta - Rangoon—1 cover and 57 cards
Calcutta - Bangkok—1 cover and 26 cards
Calcutta - Singapore—1 cover and 25 cards
Calcutta - Tokyo - 7 covers. All had unofficial cachets

1929 (Feb. 6) Inauguration of Bengal Flying Club at Calcutta. Special large size cards showing the flying club training plane were printed and a violet triangular cachet was used. 250 carried.

1929 (March 30) Imperial Airways inaugurated weekly U.K. - India Air Mail and passenger services. The initial route was Croydon-Paris-Basle by Argosy. Basle-Genoa by train, Genoa-Rome-Naples Corfu-Athens-Suda Bay-Tobruk-Alexandria flown with Calcutta flying boats ; Alexandria-Gaza-Rutbah Wells-Baghdad

Basra-Bushire-Lingeh-Jask-Gwadur-Karachi flown with DH 66 Hercules plane. London Karachi journey time was 7 days, fare £ 130 and the air mail surcharge was 6d. The first westbound service left Karachi on 7th April. Imperial Airways printed special souvenir envelopes, flown bothways.

No special cachet. Black circular cachet BY AIR only.
Mail carried Karachi-London-above 12,000.

1929 (24 - 26 April) First non stop flight England-India. Cranwell to Karachi, 4,130 miles flown in 50 hours 37 minutes by the Fairey long-range monoplane J9479. Pilot and navigator were Sq. Leader A.G. Jones-Williams and Flt. Lt. N.H. Jenkins. This was an attempt to fly to Bangalore and establish a world long distancerecord, but defeated by strong headwinds. Small private mail carried from U.K.

1929 (May 21) Calcutta-Siliguri via Darjeeling. First flight made by Bengal Air Transport Company. Covers were cancelled with a violet cachet "BENGAL AIR TRANSPORT Co. LTD.—FIRST FLIGHT" Of the 78 covers carried, 14 were not cancelled until they reached Darjeeling. A small quantity of ENGLISMAN newspaper specially printed for the flight were also carried. Return journey was on the next day. 7 covers carried.

1929 (June 14th) Flight to commemorate the tenth anniversary of first trans-Atlantic flight by Alcock & Brown. Made from Dum Dum aerodrome, Calcutta by Capt. B.S. Leete. Special cachet in violet was applied. 298 carried. Some covers were autographed by the K.L.M. pilot Capt. J B. Scholte

1929 (June 25) Flight made by the first British Lady pilot in India, Miss Joan Page, Dum Dum-Naihati-Dum Dum in DH Moth plane. A special envelope was printed in blue and gold, Miss Page 250 of these covers, signed fifty of them There was a private cachet

1929 (June 30) First flight of Indian Air Mail via Perth — Adelaide Air route. 100 coverc and cards carried.

1929 (August 4) First flight of Imperial Airways Karachi — Genoa. Covers and cards - number not known.

1929 (Nov. 4) Official Air Mail stamps issued by India for use in the India.
— U. K. Air route. These stamps were used on subsequent flights.

1929 (Nov. 3) Imperial Airways Karachi — Athens. 24 carried.

1929 (Dec. 29)Imperial Airways service extended upto Delhi via Hyderabad (Sind) and Jodhpur. This was the first regular internal Air Mail route. Flight effected by the newly formed Indian State Air Service, a subsidiary of I.A. Some of the mail from London on 27th Dec. bear a blue one line cachet "BY DELHI AIR MAIL".

A special official cachet reading "AIR MAIL KARACHI-DELHI FIRST FLIGHT was applied at Karachi & Jodhpur and used as a canceller at Hyderabad. Special covers were printed and some covers have a one line blue caxhet "BY CITY OF DELHI AIR LINER". The first return flight from Delhi to Karachi was on 30th December by the City of Baghdad.

A Special cachet reading "DELHI—KARACHI FIRST FLIGHT" was applied at Delhi & Jodhpur and used as a cancellation at Hyderabad. By error the outward cachet KARACHI — DELHI was used in some covers at Jodhpur (one Known) and at Hyderabad, of which a few copies are knewn.

For a few days in March 1930 a circular cancellation reading only 'AERODROME" and the date was used at Karachi. But examples are extremely scarce.

The following number oare known to have been flown in the Karachi — Delhi and return :

Karachi — Delhi (about 600), Hyderabad — Delhi (about 50),
Jodhpur — Delhi (about 50). Delhi — Karachi (about 400),
Delhi — Croydon (about 1250). Delhi — Athens (20).

1930 (March 9) Calcutta –Alomoda. Section of flight from Croydon to California by Van Lear Black. private cachet. 26 carried.

1930 (April) "AERODROME" cancellation at Quetta.

1930 (May 1) Date of issue of Air Mail Envelope of 8 Annas.

1930 (August 10) Emergency Air Mail by R.A.F. Reti Jacobabad. This emergency service was operated due to floot between Sultankot and Shikarpore. Service stopped on 9th September. Ordinary postal cancellation. Some etiquttes prepared by stephen Smith used in some covers.

1930 (Oct.) World flight by the Hon'ble Mrs Victor Bruce. Mail carried between Karachi — Rangoon. Private cachet. Scarce stages are Jodhpur — Calcutta 29th Oct. (10) covers and Calcutta — Rangoon 30th Oct, (5) covers.

1930 (Oct. 5) The airship R 101 crashed near Beauvais, France on the maidan U.K. —India (Karachi) flight. Mail meant for India destroyed in fire.

1930 (Nov. 4) Flight by Royal Air Force India—Strait Settlements. Covers flown :

Karachi — Calcutta 4 Nov. (25), Karachi — Bangkok 7 Nov. (10)

four covers for Bangkok bear the impression of the PHYA THAI Palace, Bangkok in red of 8 Nov.. Delhi — Allahabad (32), Delhi — Calcutta (72), Calcutta — Bangkok (64).

on the return flight : Calcutta — Delhi 18 Nov. (43), Calcutta - Allahabad (36), Allahabad - Delhi 22nd Nov (73), Delhi — Jodhpur 1st Dec. (8) Singapore — Calcutta (6), to Delhi (13), to Karachi (13).

1930 (Nov. 24) Mail carried Calcutta – Rangoon by the French avaiatrix Mlle. Maryse Hilsz on the Paris — Saigon route.
Private cachet, 39 flown.

1930 (June 7) Poland — India. In connection with I.A. service connecting with mail Polish at Vienna. Special cachet in red, blue, green or violet "BY SOCIETIE'S LOT AND IMPERIAL AIRWAYS LOT POCZTOWY. FIRST AIR MAIL 7-vi 1930. POISKA VIA WIEN, INDIA" Warsaw – Karachi (54) and
Warsaw – Delhi (7).

1930 (Nov. 8) Paris—Saigon via Calcutta and Rangoon. Special flight by aviators Goulette and Lalouette. Special cachet in red and green inscribed "VIVE LA FRANCE — Raid PARIS – SAIGON 1930" Number unknown.

1930 (Dec. 6)Karachi — Victoria Point carried by the 36th Squadron of R.A.F. flying from Calshot Backstamped at Victoria (point 16. 12. 30 10 carried, afew were autographed by the squadron commander A. W. Mylne.

1930 (Dec. 21) Calcutta — Shaiba carried by Mr. Abul M. Murad from Calcutta, who intended to compete for the £ 500 prize offered by HH the Agha Khan, for the first to make a successful solo flight Karachi — Cape Town. The mail bore Special coloured cachet and was disfollows : — Gaya (27).

Allahabad (6), Delhi (32), Karachi (16) and Shaibah (6). Capt. Murad crashed at Shaibah in an old war trench and had to abandon his flight. On the Shaibah covers, he has writiien " Crashed at Shai bah in black ink on the stamp. The mail was brought back to India by I.A.

1930 (Dec. 30) Chandernagore to Saigon. Trial flight by Air Orient. Covers are postmarked 1931 (Jan. 17) 17. 12. 30 and backstamped 19. 12. 30. Number not known.

Marseilles—Saigon via India. Opening of the regular air service by the French airline Air Orient. No official cachet, but mail left at the Air Union offices at Paris & Marseilles received a doubte line circular cachet in black or blue reading AIR ORIENT." 'PREMIERS SERVICES REGULIERS—FRANCO—INDOCHINE—VIA

Indian stages Calcutta—Rangoon Some covers were obliterated by a two line cachet in purple reading "CIE AIR ORIENT—PREMIER VOL DE MARSEILLES A SAIGON. "with the outline of a tiger above and an elephant below. 82 carried. 150 covers without the above cachet were aldo flown One the return leg 35 covers were flown Calcutta—Jodhpur. on Feb. 6. All covers bear a similar pri vate cachet Figure of a tiger FIRST FLIGHT Figure of a horse 1931 (Feb. 25) First despatch of Indian Air Mail by the Kondon—Mwanza service by I. A. connecting at Cairo.

1931 (March) Aerodrome Jodhpur circular cancellation prior to 1 April.

1931 (March 24) Flight by America aviators Ross Hadley & John E. Pratt. Private cachet in re dand violet. Covers flown :— Karachi — Calcutta (18), Agra — Calcutta (1) Calcutta – Akyab 28 March (35) and Calcutta – Rangoon (45). some are signed by the pilots.

1931 (April 3) Calcutta – Sydney mail carried by the Britis airmen G.P. Fairbairn & K. Shenstone flying out from England. Private Covers flown Calcutta—Singapore (20), Port Darwin (43) and Sydney (4).

1931 (April 13) Experimental service Bombay—Goa by Portuguese airmen. Special cachet inin three lines in violet "FIRST AIR MAIL FROM BOMBAY TO POR UGUESE INDIA". Small number of covers carried.

1931 (April 14) The first night flight of the Indian air mail over the Basra—Baghdad section of I.A. London Karachi service. Nu, ber of covers not known.

1931 (April) The first experimental flight of Imperial Airways from England to Australia. Pilots R. P. Mullard and H. W. C. Alger. The flight arrivedxat Carachi on 12th April. Covers flown in stages :—

Karachi—Allahabad 14.4 Number not known
Karachi – Calcutta (72), to Akyab, Rangoon Victoria Point, Singapore, Port Darwin and Australian cities.
Jodhpur to Allahabad, Calcutta (25), Akyab and as above.
Delhi—Allahabad, Calcutta (85) and as above.

Allahabad—Calcutta (148), Akyab (6), Rangoon (32). Victoria Point (5) and eastwards. Calcutta—Akyab (32). Rangoon (228), Victoria Point (30—, Singapore (57) Port Darwin (91) and Australian cities (127).

A special small cachet in black was used * FIRST AIR MAIL BURMAH—AUSTRALIA".

1931 (April—May) Return flight of the First Experimental Service of Imperial Airways Pilote from Port Darwin Sir Charles Kingsford Smith in his famous plane 'Southern Cross' and from Akyab Capt. Attwood.

A cachet similar to described above was used from Rangoon with the destination altered to England instead of Australia. Mail carried Rangoon—Akyab (13), Calcutta (225),—Allahabad (60), Delhi, Jodhpur (30), Karachi, & Croydon (39), Akyab-Calcutta (42), Allahabad (25), Delhi (50), Jodhpur (10), Karachi, Croydon (39), Calcutta—Allahabad(142), Delhi (123), Jodhpur (44), Karachi (60), Croydon (aboit 300). Allahabad—Delhi (50), Jodhpur (25), Karachi (60) and Croydon. The mail from Karachi to croydon went by regular I.A. service. Only 50 covers were flown to Afhens. Imperial Airways printed special envelopes for the flight. Mails flown Rangoon—Athens (20) and Calcutta—Athens (30).

1931 (May 5) The Second Experim emtal Service to Australia by I. A. It followed the same route to Port Darwin snd arrived there on 11 May. Mail carried to various points in this flight are more scarce.

1931 (May 1) First Air Mail Athens - Karchi by K.L.M. 26 carried 1931 (May 20) First Air Mail Corfu - Karachi. 47 carried.

1931 (July 1) Delhi - Karachi. Owing to a temporary suspension of the air service of Indian State Air Services, mail from Delhi & Jodhpir were conveyed to Karachi by a Puss Moth plane of Delhi Flying Club. Pilot Capt. Duggan. Private cachet.

1931 (July 15) Special printed air mail post cards of the value of four annas were issued and first used between Bombay & Croydon via Karchi.

1931 (August) Karachi-Calcutta. Flight by Mr. & Mrs. Day on the route Croydon-Sanghai. Black cachet in four lines and red cached KARACHI - CALCUTTA. The mail included one autographed letter from Berlin. Mail backstamped Calcutta 11.8.31. Six carried. As Mr. Day was ill and hospitalized Calcutta, the flight was delayed until 3rd Sept, when they took off for Akyab. Covers carried Calcutta-Akyab (28) and Calcutta- Rangoon (14).

1931 Covers bearing the DELHI CIVIL AERODROME were flown,

1931 (Oct 3) First Air Mail Athens-Calcutta by K.L.M. arriving on 10th Oct. All mails received agents cachet in red or violet "ATHENS-CALCUTTA KONINKLIJKE LUCHTVAART MAATSCHAPPIJ". 51 covers flown. After the first the mail for towns in India further than Karachi, until 3rd June 1993. When the mail carriage was recommended.

Stephen Smith's ctaalogue ends with the Emergency flight of Delhi flying club. I have carried through the flights upto the end of 1931. It seems Dr. Smith in his catalogue has missed many earlier important flights, some of them appear in his books, Indian Airways Parts I to III, others are not mentioned at all. Still it was a great effort to piece the flights of the pioneer aviators, whose adventurous spirit brought them to India and without the First Flight Covers so meticulously prepared by Dr. Smith, many would have gone to oblivion.

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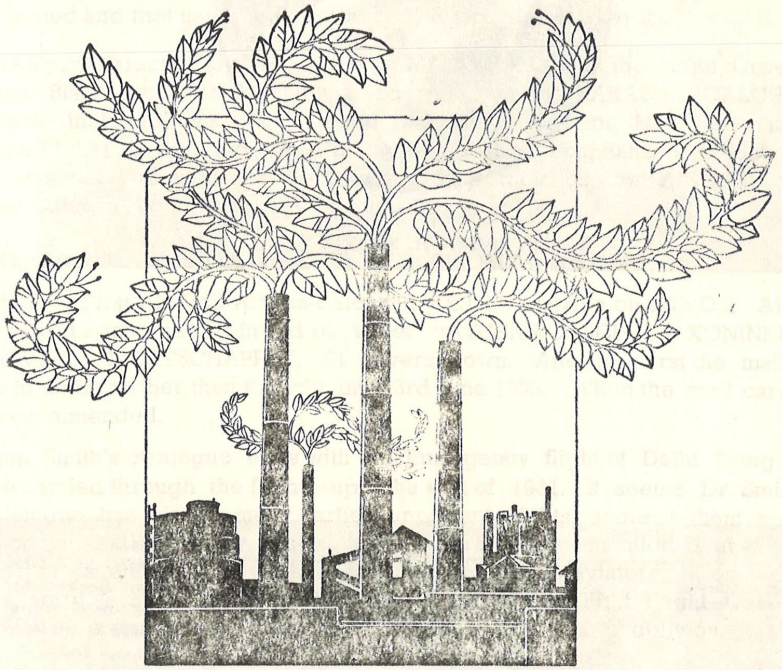
The plant that has grown into many, many trees.



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A commitment that is reflected in Tata Steel's active efforts to preserve the ecological balance in its environs. Afforestation programmes and reclamation of barren lands have been undertaken in the areas around Jamshedpur and the Company's mines and collieries.

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