

Special flight Croydon to Calcutta 1922

On Empire Day, 24 May 1922, the pilots Major Blake, Capt MacMillan and Capt Malin, left the Croydon aerodrome, on a proposed world flight.

The route was as follows: Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Pisa, Naples, Corfu, Athens, Alexandria, Ramlet, Bushire, to Bander Abbas, Chahbar, Karachi, Quetta, Lahore, Delhi to finally reach Calcutta after 93 days. There the crew decided the aircraft, a D.H.9, was not fit enough to enable them to continue. The aircraft was auctioned locally.

The crew reached Bandar Abbas 18 July and continued on 19 July towards Chahbar and Karachi where they landed the same day. At Chahbar the crew signed a limited number of the Persian 5 ch postal stationary card and brought them along to Karachi. The mail was handed over to the postal authorities next day, 20 July, and was consequently cancelled before delivered to the addressees.



It is interesting to note that Chahbar had up to 1920/21 an Indian post office which then was closed down. The Persian postal services took over. However, the cancellation used in Chahbar on the mail for Karachi on 19 July 1922 was the old Indian one used at Chahbar! Why this special mail was not cancelled with a Persian cancellation is not known. One explanation is that this far off place, which is Chahbar, had yet to receive a proper Persian stamp.

Flight

1922 May 24th, Croydon - Calcutta in stages, of proposed World flight by Major Blake & Capt. Macmillan, co-pilots and Capt. Malin photographer in a DH9 with Siddeley Puma engine.

See extract from 'Indian Airways Vol 11, by Stephen S. Smith, 1927', founder of the Aero Philatelic Club of India, the authority on Indian and related airmails.

Aircraft

Maximum speed 110mph, economical speed 90mph (winds considerably affecting ground speed) range 4 1/2 hours maximum (Puma engines unreliable).

Precursory flights

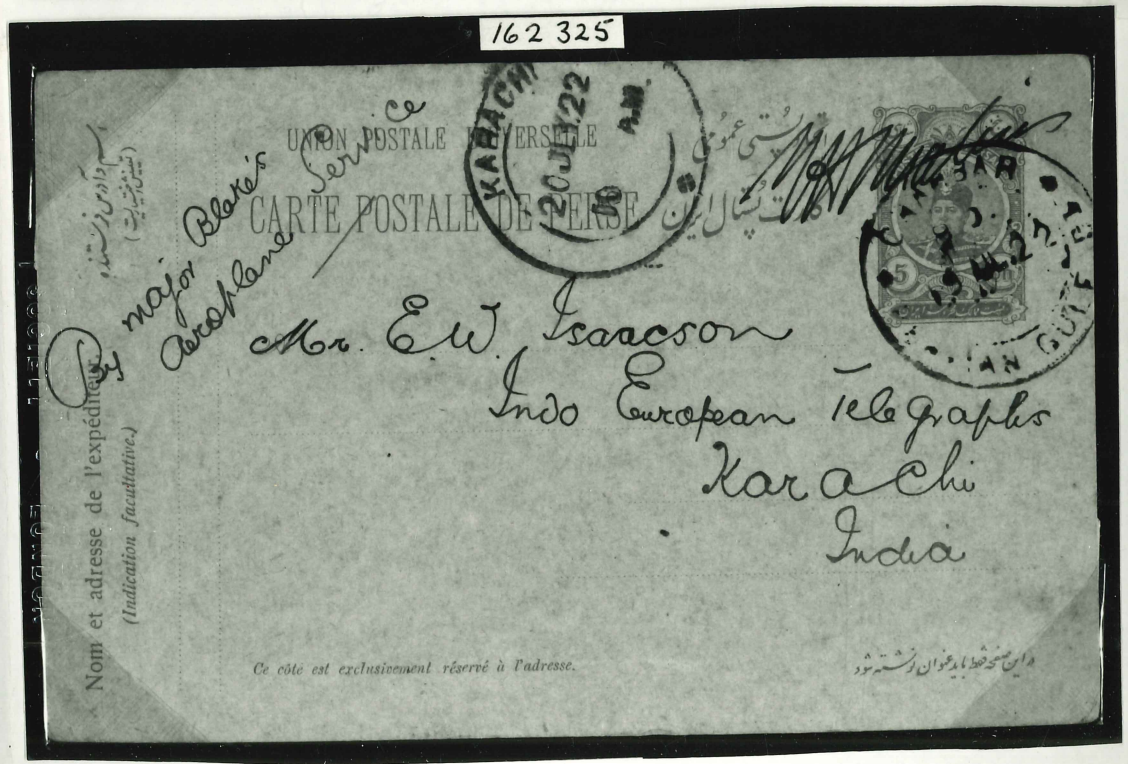
1918 November 29th, Egypt - India, first ever flight included stages Bandar Abbas to Charbar, Charbar to Karachi stage took over 6 hours, average speed 69mph.

1920 January 8th, England - Moulmein, Burma in stages; also in a DH9 fitted Siddeley Puma engine; included Bandar Abbas to Charbar, Charbar to Karachi. At Charbar the Postal Authorities requested they carry the mail to Karachi. Note: 'Indian Airways, Vol 111, 1930' refers.

Comment

The detailed extract has stages omitted from its itinerary; for example the distance between Ramlet and the next listed Bushire is around 1000 miles; on page 12 it states that Bandar Abbas to Karachi was flown in one stage in 3 1/2 hours, this being impossible as the distance by air is about 730 miles, beyond either the speed or range of the aircraft. Logically, the aircraft would have stopped on route at Charbar, where landing facilities and fuel existed, the last before Karachi.

Opinion



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**CROYDON—LUKHIDI CHAR (SUNDERBANDS)
1922.**

Pilots MAJOR BLAKE.
CAPT MACMILLAN.
Photographer. CAPT MALIN.

Æroplanes. From Croydon to Calcutta, D.H.9.
Seaplane. From Calcutta to Lukhidi Char, Fairey III.
On May 24th, Empire Day, the above airmen left Croydon ærodrome, on a proposed world flight. Their first halt was at Paris where they arrived the same day. Next day they left for Lyons, where they were detained owing to squally weather till the 28th.

On the 28th they left for Marsielles, where they arrived the same afternoon, but in landing the undercarriage of the æroplane was smashed beyond repair.

The aviators were detained in consequence till June 24th, owing, at first to waiting for a new æroplane, and again after a new D.H.9., had arrived, due to some evilly—disposed person having put fine sand into the engines. Eventually on June 24th, the airmen made a start and reached Pisa the same day, leaving for Naples after taking petrol.

A brief list of the places they stopped at with dates is given below. Delays were due to bad weather and the engines giving trouble.

Naples.	...	...	24th June.
Corfu.	...	...	2nd July.
Athens.	...	...	4th "
Alexandria.	...	...	7th "
Ramlet.	...	...	11th "
Bushire.	...	...	17th "
Bunder Abbas.	...	...	18th "