

THE BIRTH OF AIRMAIL

The First Aerial Post At Allahabad - 18 February 1911

INTRODUCTION

A curious convergence of circumstances led to an historic event that was to have a far reaching impact on our lives, on how we communicated, and one that dictated the direction of engineering and technology for decades to follow, an event that decided which nations would emerge as new global leaders in the 20th century.

The year was 1911, and it was time again for the Kumbh Mela (Kumbh Fair), a Hindu celebration held once in twelve years at the confluence of the holy Ganga and Yamuna rivers at the city of Allahabad in the United Provinces of North India. The Mela was said to attract the largest human gathering in history, and so it was apt that the United Provinces Exhibition should be organised at the same time. Among the many new wonders on display in this Exhibition was the aeroplane, and a French pilot, M. Henri Pequet was on hand with a Humber-Sommer bi-plane to demonstrate the flying machine, never seen before in these parts. It so happened that the Oxford and Cambridge Hostel and the Holy Trinity Church were in need of money for repairs. To raise funds for this purpose, it was decided that a special flight would be arranged and would be ferried by air from Allahabad to Naini, about six miles away, across the Yamuna river, and a portion of the charges to collected would be used for this purpose.

Thus, as the first officially sanctioned airmail flight, history was made on 18 February 1911, and airmail was born. A total of about 6,500 postal articles were flown on this 13 minute journey, and all received a special large magenta cachet prepared specially for this occasion.

AIM OF THE EXHIBIT

This exhibit will bring out the many interesting aspects of this enigmatic flight. The rare items displayed here will introduce the personalities involved in making this happen, items specially prepared for this event, and also postal treatment of registered and ordinary mail, cachets, destinations - both foreign and domestic, and the United Provinces exhibition itself, all expressed in a postal history context.

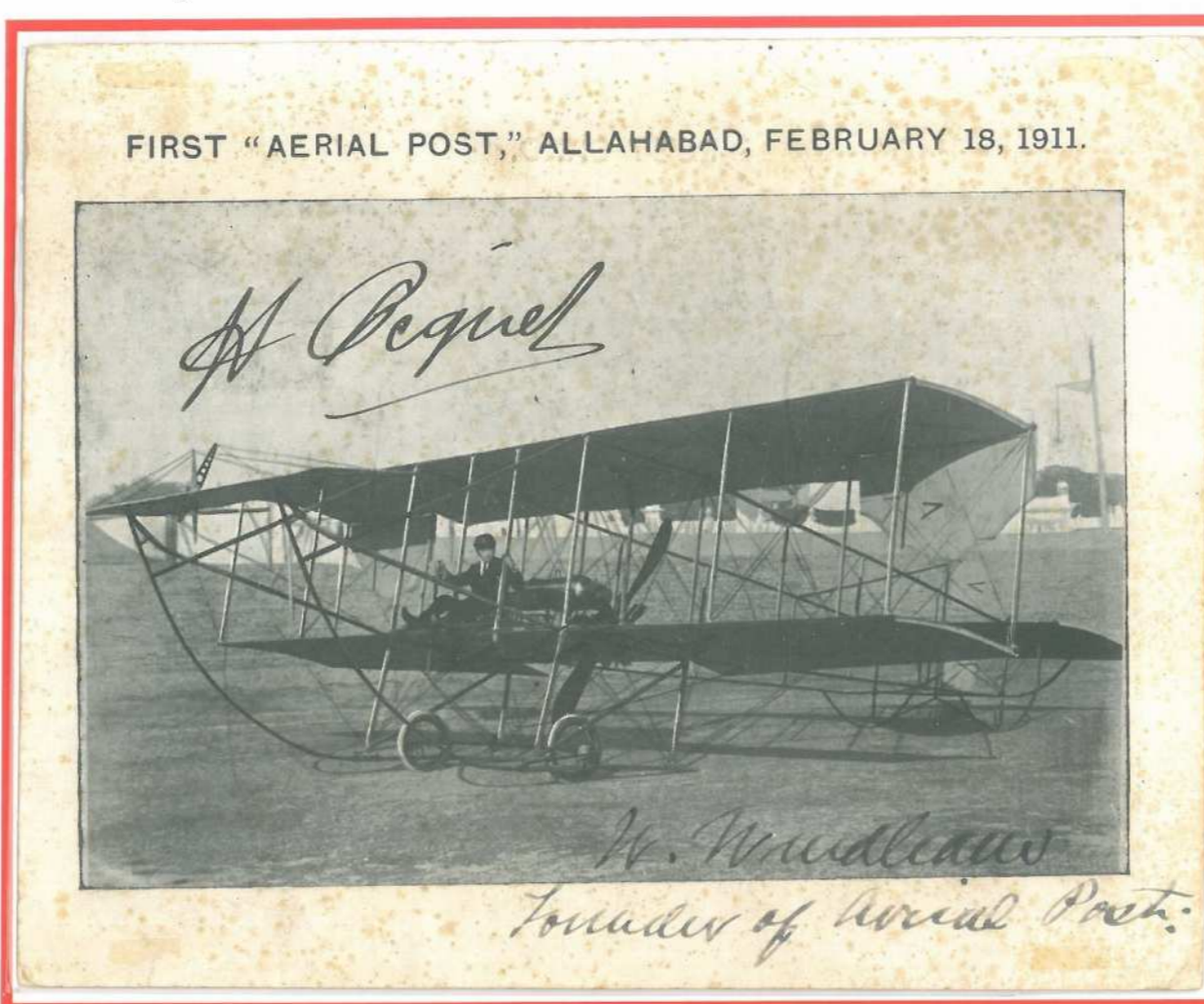
Items of exceptional rarity have been provided with a Red border.



First airmail cancellation in world FIRST AERIAL POST / U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD / 1911. Used on 18 February 1911



Postmark supplied by The Postal Authorities after the flight ALLAHABAD / 18 FEB 11



Only known card signed by Pequet and Windham

| Index | Page |
|--|------|
| Title Page | 1 |
| Prologue—Arrangements and Preparation | 2 |
| Capt. Walter Windham—The Organiser | 3 |
| The special "Pequet" signed cards | 4 |
| Postal registration marks and labels | 5 |
| Inland Mail | 6 |
| Overseas mail | 7 |
| The United Provinces Exhibition and beyond | 8 |

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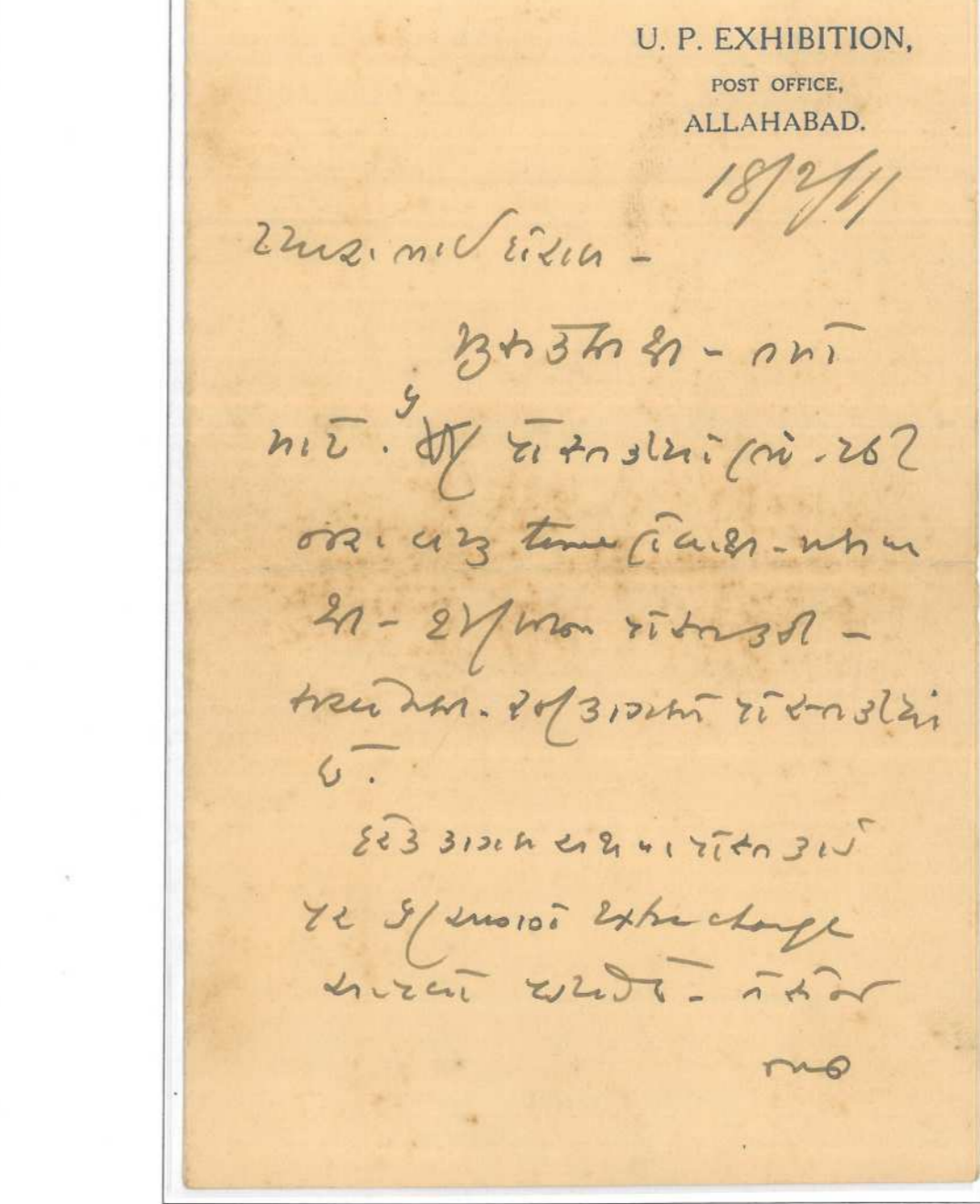
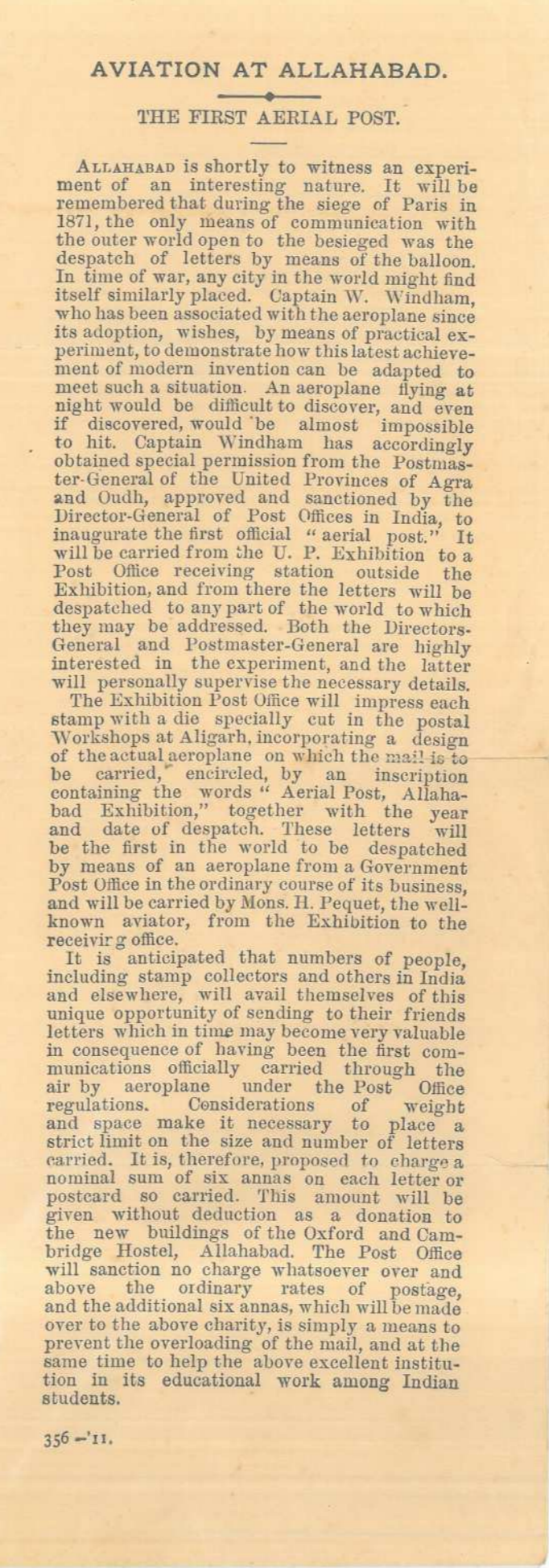
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- The World's First Official Post by Aeroplane: Allahabad, India by Ken Harman
- India, First Aerial Post 1911 by Uttam Reddy, LP May 2015.



Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet, and W. Windham, Founder of Aerial Post.

Prologue - Arrangements And Preparation

Elaborate arrangement and preparation was put in place for this historic event. This included wide publicity via newspapers, and a method to collect Gannas as additional charge per posted article, which was entirely donated to charity. A special large circular postal cancellation was prepared at the Postal workshop in Allahabad and used by the Exhibition Post Office at Allahabad for the event.



Written on official Stationery of Letter U.P. EXHIBITION, POST OFFICE, ALLAHABAD, and dated 18 FEB 11. The letter in vernacular (Gurmukhi) explains the difficulties in posting & covers the extra charges of Gas, Etc. "For every cover or card, Gas extra charge had to be paid. This Gas will go to Xavier Charity Fund for the Holy Trinity Church. Stamps affixed on the cover are rare."



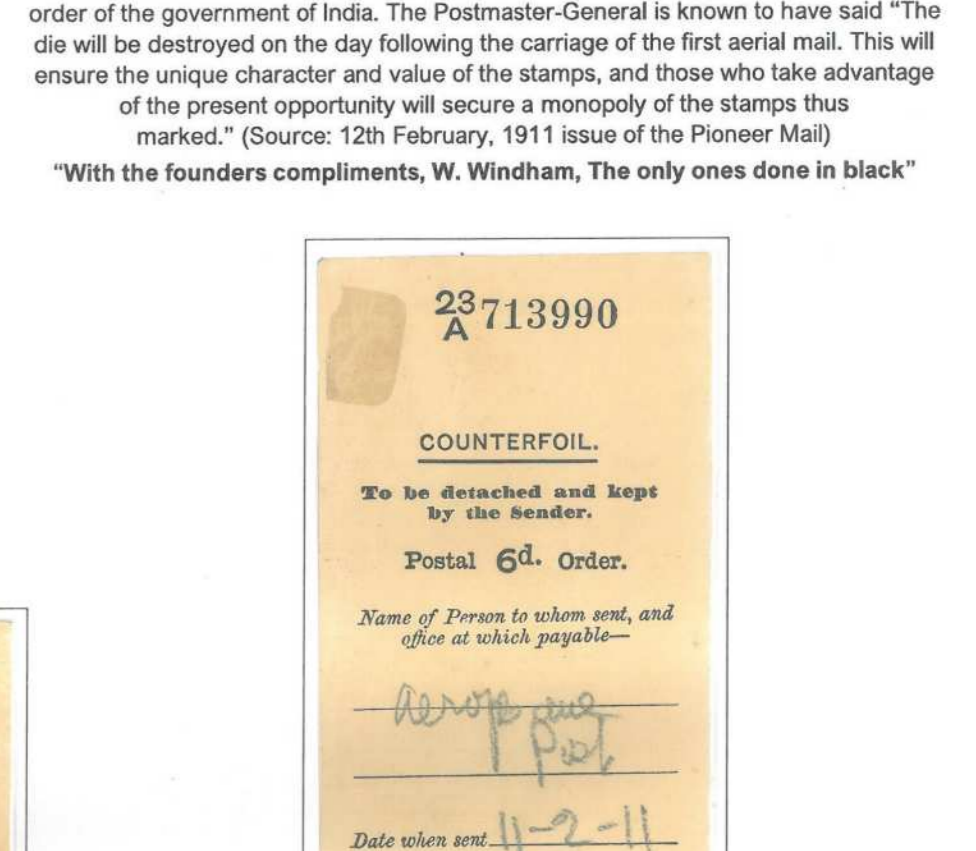
A calling card of W.G. Bason, Postmaster, Allahabad.



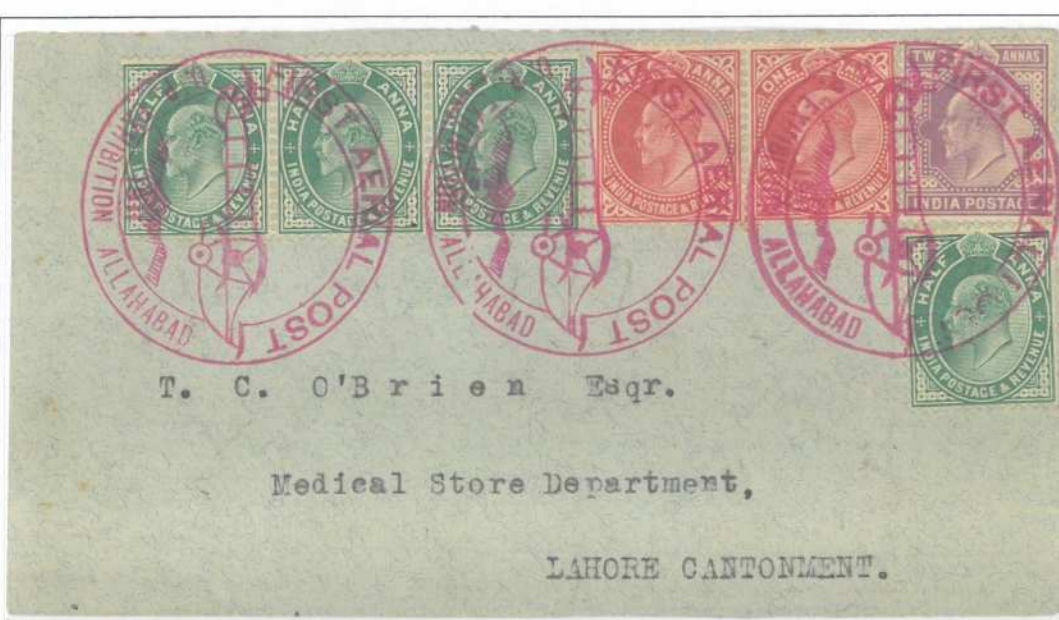
Proof of the Special "First Aerial Post" Postmark

The die for the authorized special postmark was cut at the workshops in Allahabad by order of the government of India. The Postmaster-General is known to have said "The die will be destroyed on the day following the carriage of the first aerial mail. This will ensure the unique character and value of the stamps, and those who take advantage of the present opportunity will secure a monopoly of the stamps thus marked." (Source: 12th February, 1911 issue of the Flower Mail)

"With the founders' compliments, W. Windham, The only ones done in black"



A counterfoil for a postal order to cover the postage for the souvenir flight cover.



First Flight cover having seven KE VII postage stamps tied with three superb strikes of the large magenta FIRST AERIAL POST / U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD / 1911 cancellation

| Index | Page |
|--|------|
| Title Page | 1 |
| Prologue—Arrangements and Preparation | 2 |
| Capt. Walter Windham—The Organiser | 3 |
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Capt. Walter Windham—The Organiser

In December 1910, Windham made the first passenger flight in Asia, and in 1911, he founded the world's first two airmail services: the first in Allahabad crossing the Ganges, and the second, established in September 1911, between Hendon and Windsor. He served in the Royal Indian Navy during the First World War, rising to the rank of Commander.



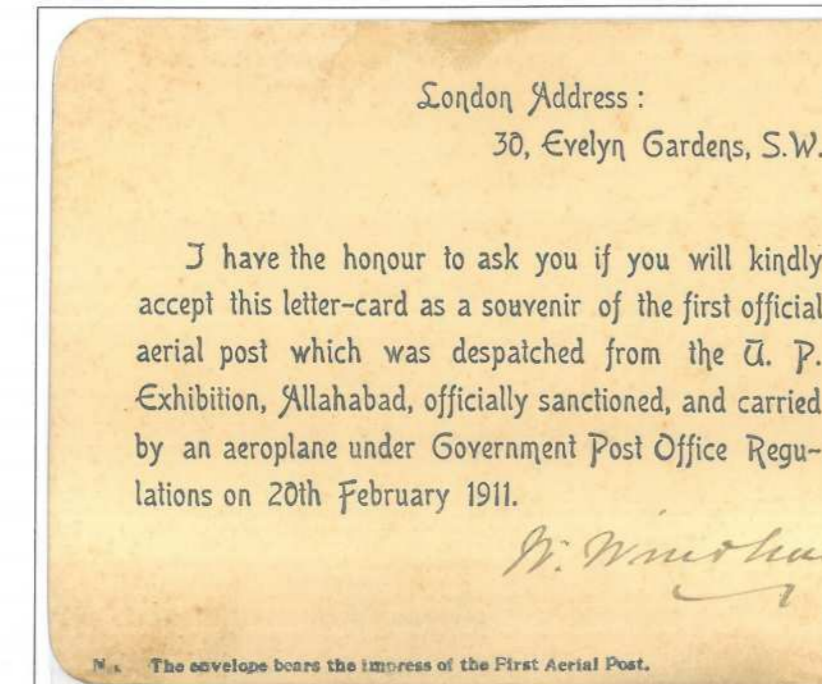
Capt. Walter Windham



Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet, and W. Windham, Founder of Aerial Post.



Original Photo postcard by J. Burlington Smith of Darjeeling showing the pilot, H. Pequet at the controls of the Humber-Sommer bi-plane at Allahabad. In front is Walter G. Windham. The person responsible for organizing the flight, and considered as the Founder of Aerial Post. Postcard addressed to Paraggarh, and KEVII St. Postage stamp cancelled with the special magenta cancellation. Also postmarked Allahabad 18 Feb 11, and Paraggarh, Dely, 20 Feb 11. A flown example of this card is extremely rare.



The 1911 First Aerial Post Flight, a card signed in original by W. Windham which was inserted in a selected quantity of first flight covers and sent by him to eminent persons as a souvenir of the flight.



First Aerial Post 1911, U.P. Exhibition, Allahabad, cachet tying two 12a KEVII singles, to Allahabad, with appropriate backstamps including Feb 18 1911.

Cover address to Capt. W. Windham himself at Allahabad and flown on the 1911 flight with an additional magenta cachet on the reverse. Flown mail addressed to Capt. Windham is extremely rare.

The Special "Pequet" Signed Cards

It was thought that a total of 40 cards were flown in a combination of Type I and Type II. It now appears that the number may have been closer to 60-70 and a variety (Type III) has also been discovered. These cards are most sought after by Air Mail Collectors the world over as they mark the starting point of any air mail collection.



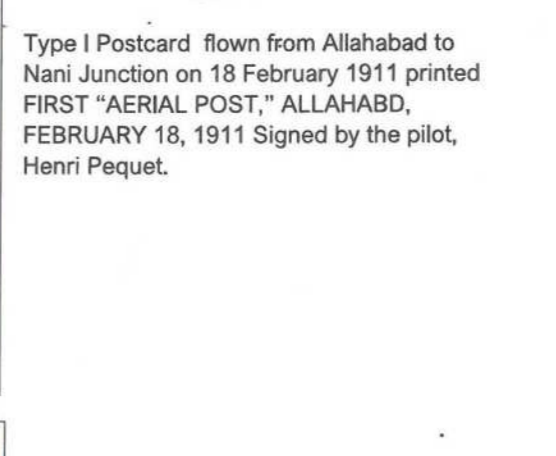
Type I Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



Type I Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



1911 (Feb 18) Allahabad First Aerial Post, Type III postcard, similar to the previous type but only 152x142mm and printed on black brown (non-gloss) paper, signed by the pilot, addressed to London. Franked by KEVII 1a tied by the special pictorial cancel in magenta, a second superb strike of the special cancel applied below in black with an Allahabad c.d.s. alongside. The Aerial Post cancel was only used in black on privilege mail from officials involved with the event and few examples are recorded. It is exceptional in combination with the magenta cancel and used on one of these Pequet postcards (of which Reddy only records three examples of this type III card). Extremely rare.

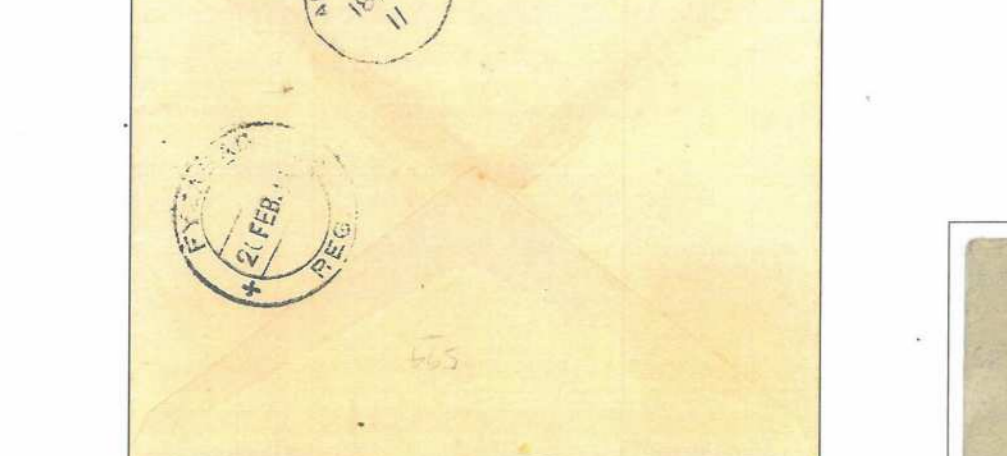
Postal Registration Marks And Labels

Registered mail for this flight was accepted at the Allahabad P.O. and at the U.P. Exhibition Camp P.O. Very few examples of registered mail exist.

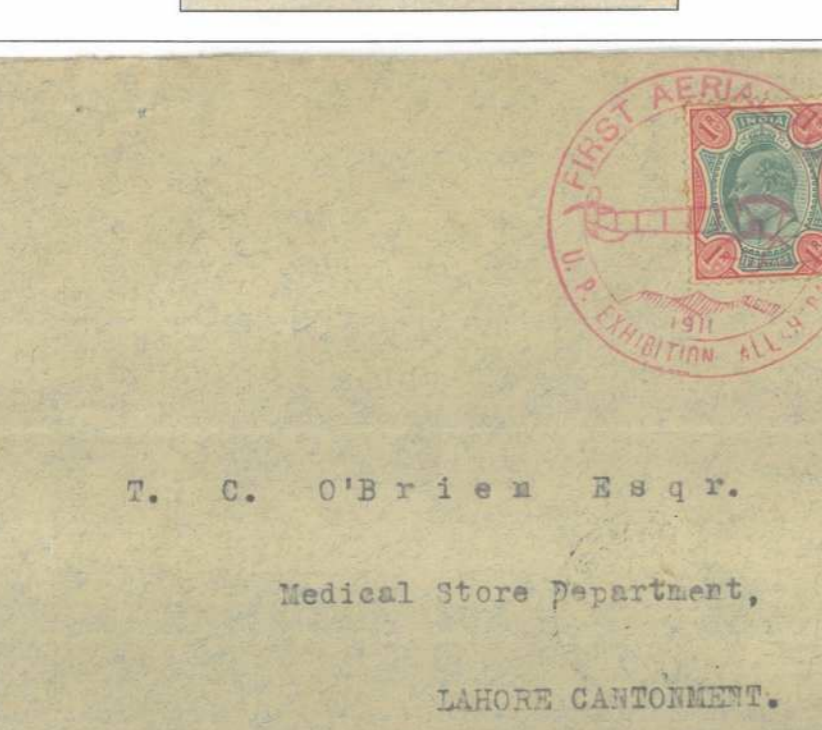


Three different kinds of registration labels are found on mail carried on this flight.

- Small label with the registration number and R ALLAHABAD, both in the same box.
- Large label with the registration number in one box and R ALLAHABAD in the other box.
- Boxed rectangular handstamp for mail accepted at the exhibition R / U.P. EXHIBITION CAMP / ALLAHABAD.



1. Small label: 1911 (Feb 18) Registered Allahabad First Aerial Post cover to Fyzabad with QV 1/2p tied by the special pictorial Aerial Post cancel in magenta, unusually with a second strike on the front and a registration label handstamped boxed "R/ALLAHABAD". Backstamped at Allahabad and Fyzabad.



2. Large label: Cover with a KEVII 12a postage stamp tied by superb strike of U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD First Aerial Post in Magenta Registered to Lahore with rectangular label on reverse.



3. Exhibition Camp handstamp: 1911 (Feb 18) Registered Allahabad First Aerial Post cover to Bareilly with KEVII 12a tied by the special pictorial Aerial Post cancel in magenta with black boxed "R/UP. EXHIBITION CAMP/ALLAHABAD", numbered 83. Backstamped at Allahabad and Bareilly.

Inland Mail

The flight aroused national interest. Letters were flown on it and the forwarded not only to the large cities but also small towns throughout India. Here we present a few examples of mail to interesting destinations.



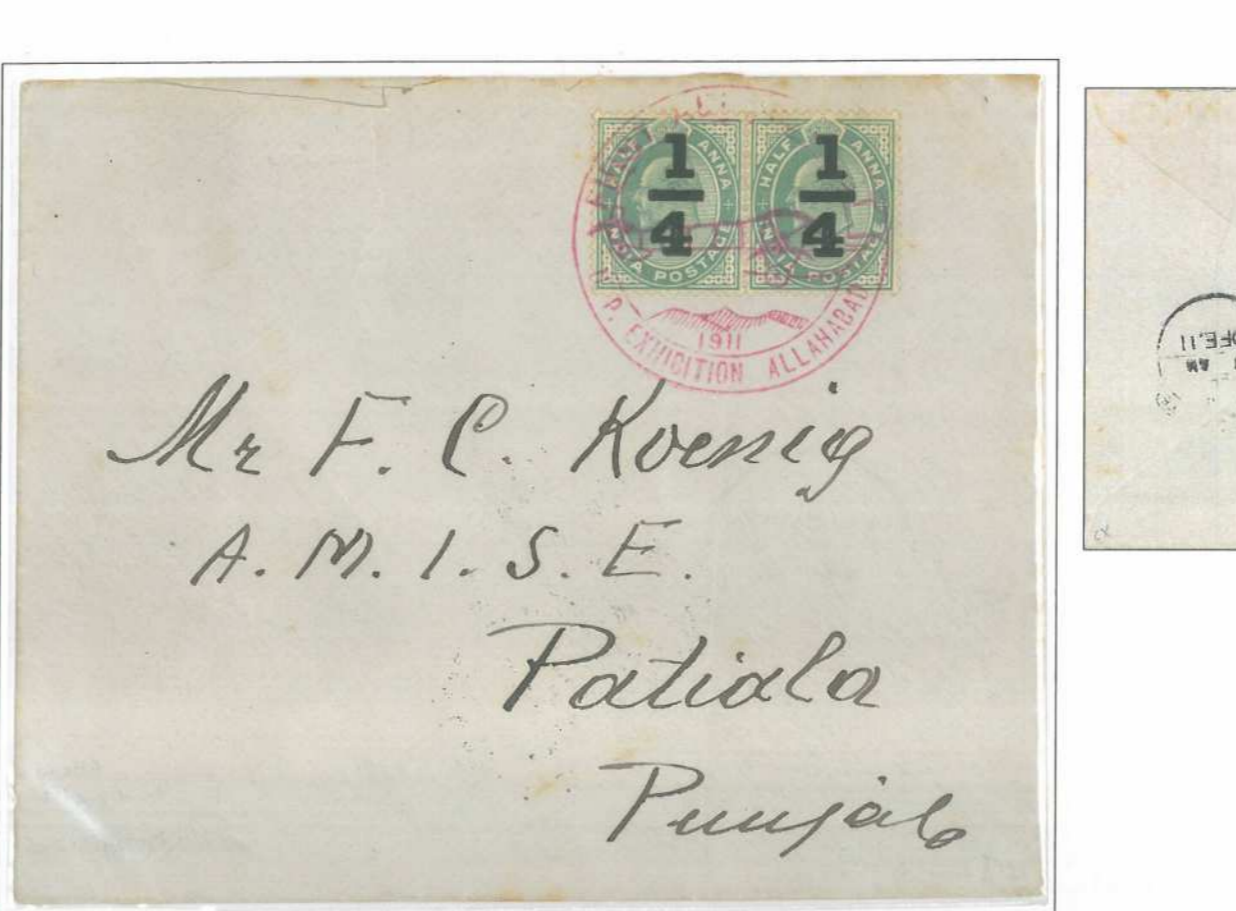
Cover with the large circular magenta cachet addressed to Dehra Dun. On verso, Sirmoor Rifles emblem stationary with the ALLAHABAD 18 FEB 11 postal date stamp, and delivery stamp DEHRA DUN CANTT, 20 FEB 11, 9 AM.



1911 (18 Feb.) 1/4a, brown card to Mhow cancelled with a fine strike of the illustrated cachet, dispatch c.d.s., alongside and arrival c.d.s. (20.2) c.d.s. at lower left corner, the message reading 'Conveyed by the first aeroplane on Postal Service'.



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1911 (18 Feb.) envelope to Patiala, bearing 1/4a on 1/2a pair. Pair sharing a large fine strike of the illustrated cachet, the reverse with dispatch and arrival (20.2) c.d.s. and signed by Stephen H. Smith, at most unusual usage of these Provisionals on mail from the flight.



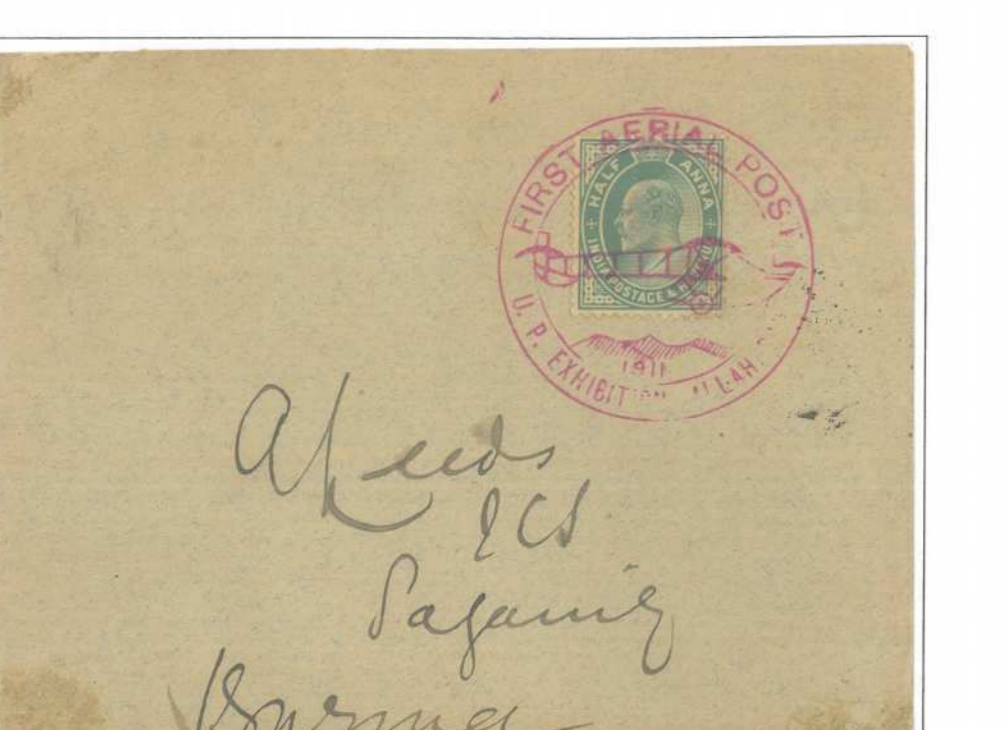
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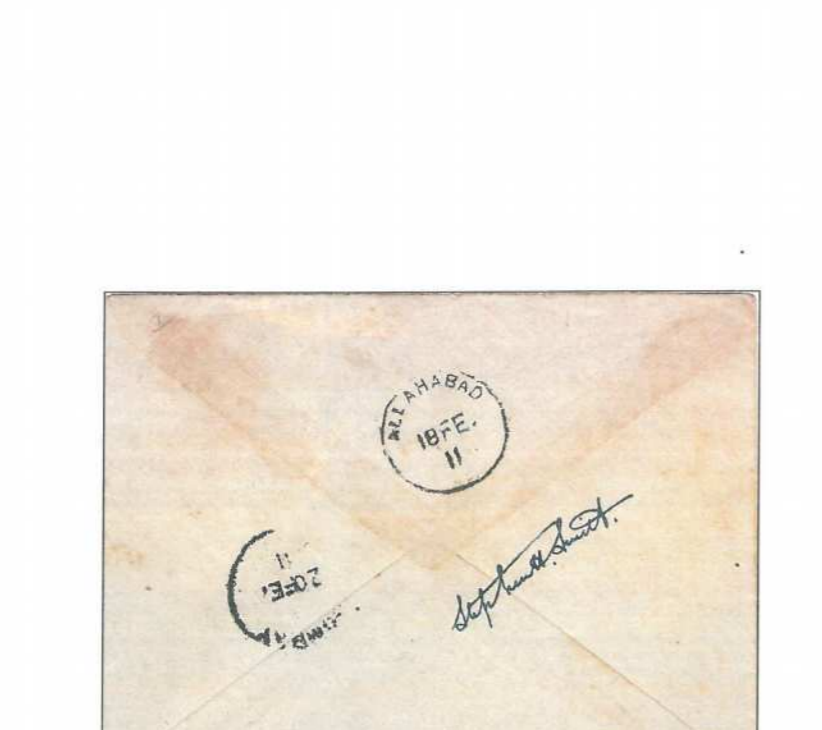
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Overseas Mail

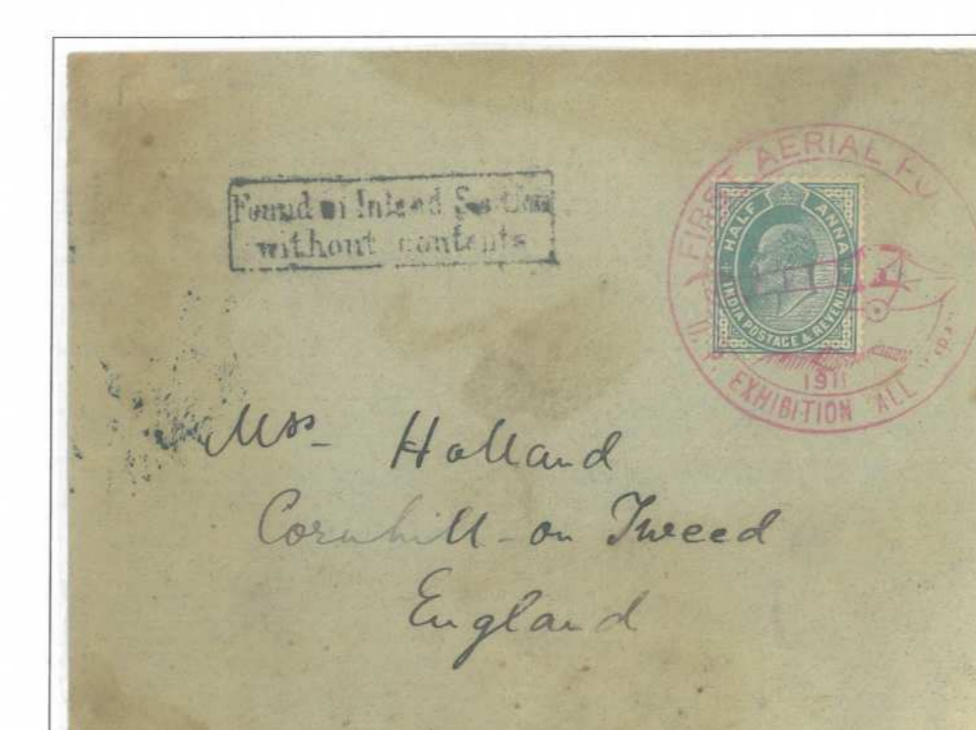
Mail carried on this flight was also then sent all across the world, from Burma in the neighborhood to England and Germany in Europe.



A cover with a KEVII 12a postage stamp cancelled with the large round magenta special cancellation mark. On the reverse is the small round ALLAHABAD/18FEB11 postmark and GAGANANG25 FEB 11 datestamp. The cover is addressed to Sagang, Burma, a rare destination.



A cover franked with a KEVII 12a postage stamp and cancelled with the magenta First Flight cachet, sent to England. Also bears a boxed rectangular cachet, found in inland Section without contents.



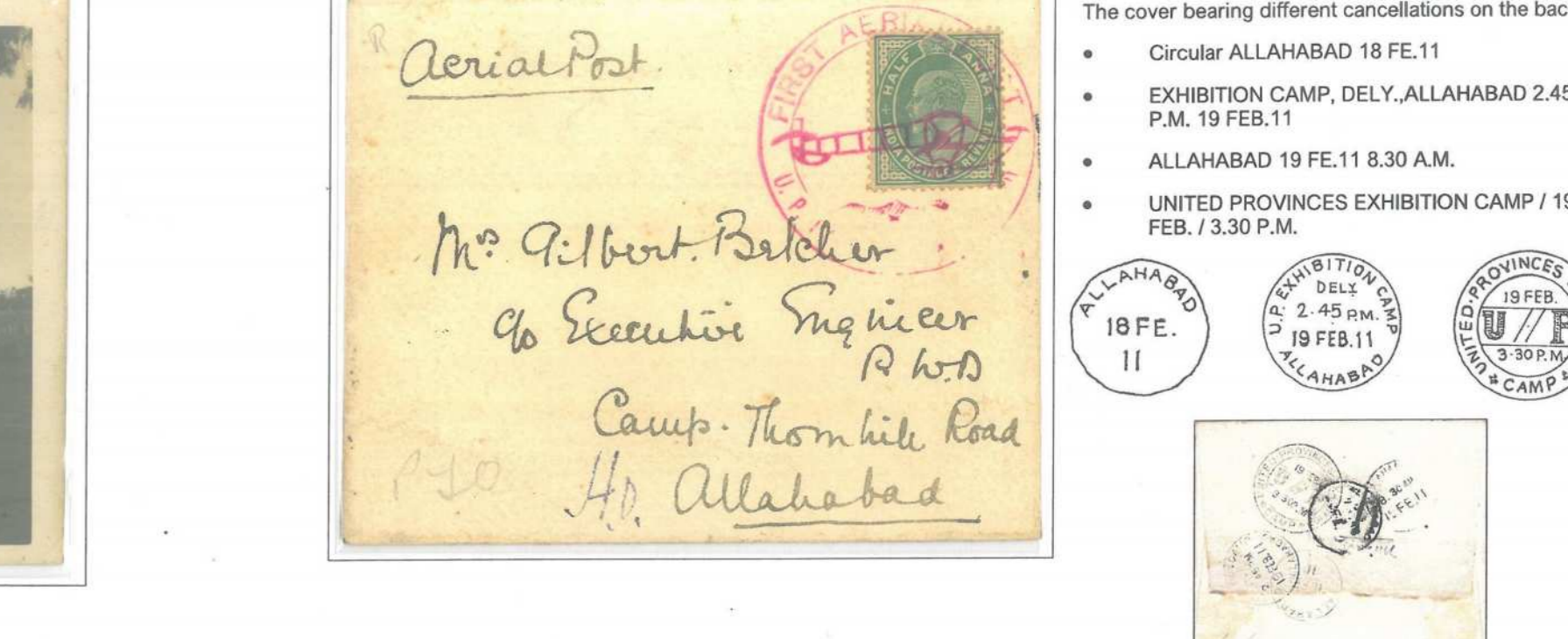
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The U.P. Exhibition And Beyond

The U.P. Exhibition and the First Aerial Post event was a huge success. The publicity generated drew considerable crowds for the remaining days of the Exhibition. Not only this, the organizer, W. Windham, was invited to England to supervise arrangements for the First Aerial Post there to mark the Coronation of King George V.



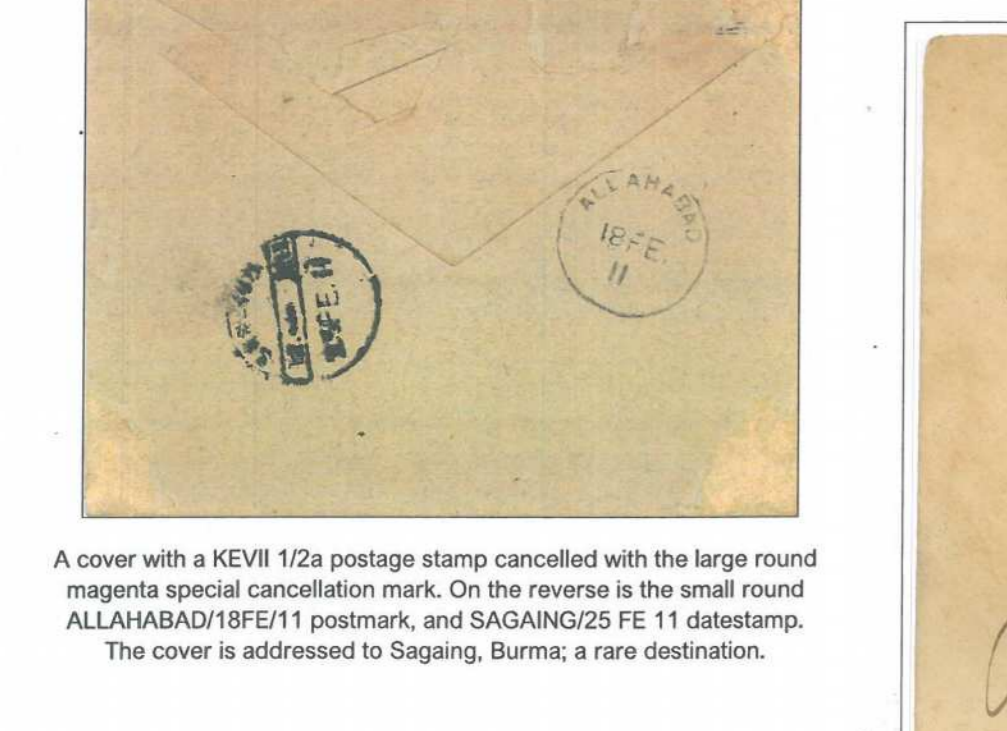
Original Photo post card by J. Burlington Smith of Darjeeling showing the Humber-Sommer biplane in flight over the Welcome Club at the Exhibition Grounds at Allahabad with the pilot M. Henri Pequet at the controls.



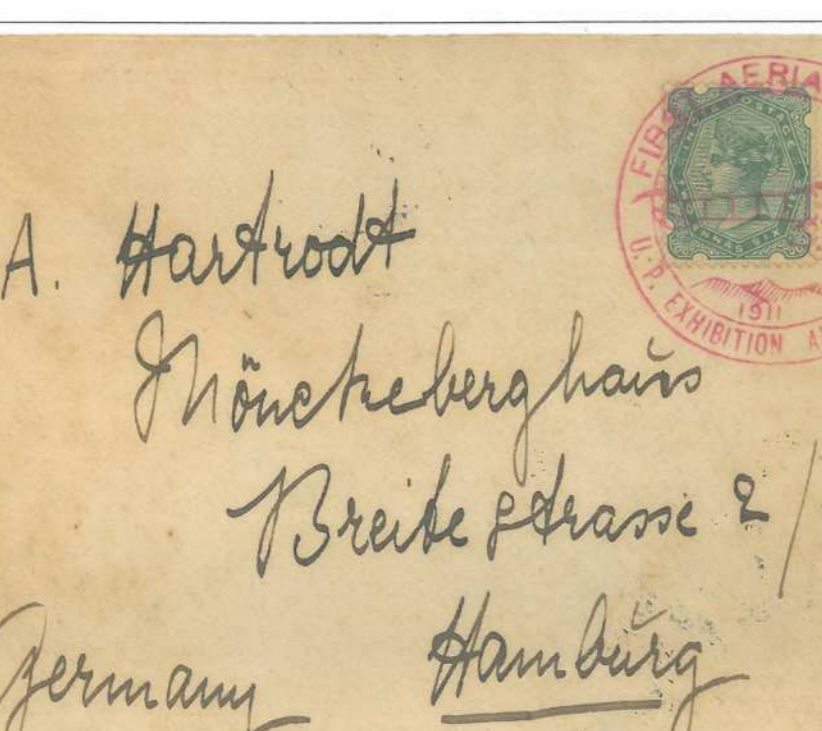
The cover bearing different cancellations on the back: Circular ALLAHABAD 18 FEB 11; EXHIBITION CAMP, DELY, ALLAHABAD 2.45 P.M. 19 FEB 11; ALLAHABAD 19 FEB 11 8.30 A.M.; UNITED PROVINCES EXHIBITION CAMP / 19 FEB. / 3.30 P.M.

Conclusion

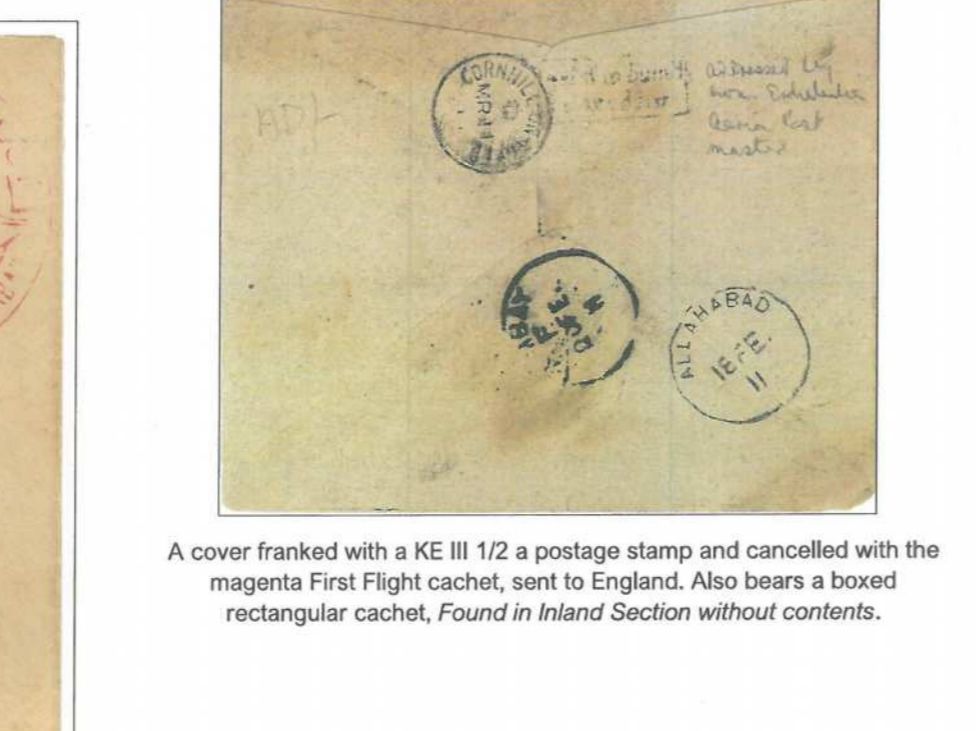
The next Aerial Post Flight was in England in September 1911, again organized by Capt. Windham. The interest generated by these flights led to the emergence of the most important means of rapid postal communication for the rest of the 20th Century.



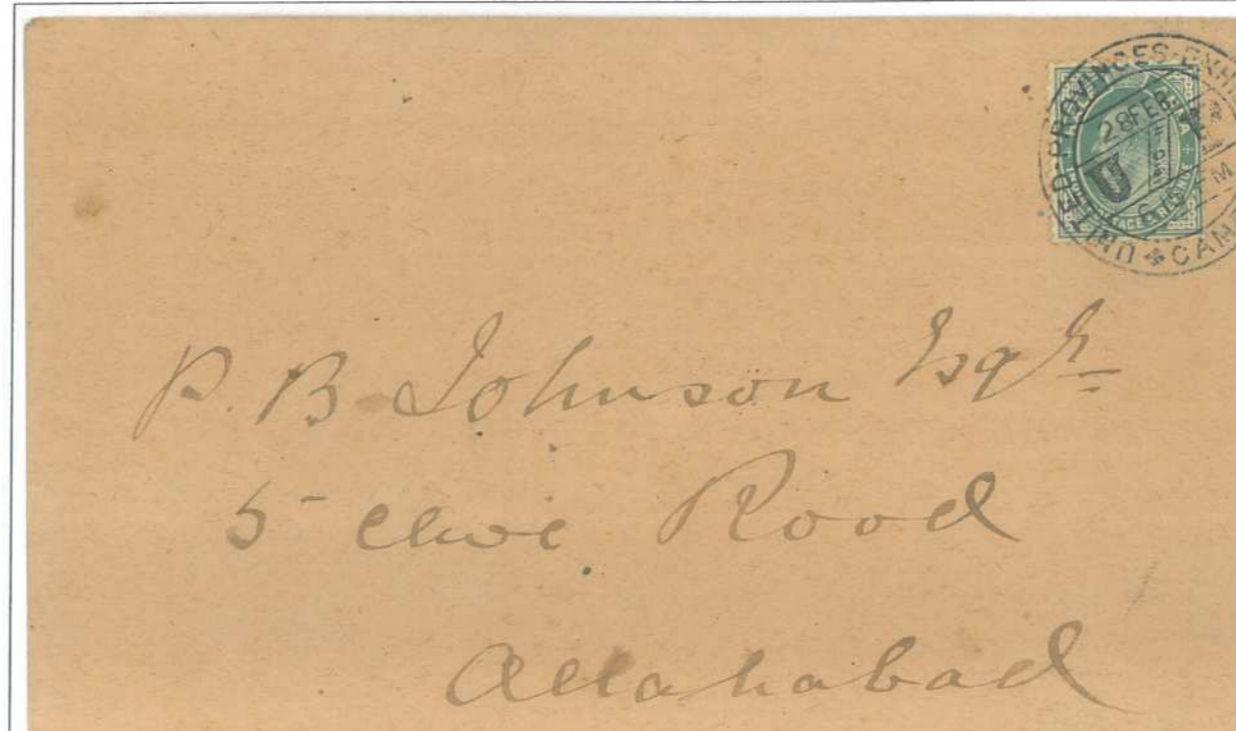
A cover with a KEVII 12a postage stamp cancelled with the large round magenta special cancellation mark. On the reverse is the small round ALLAHABAD/18FEB11 postmark and GAGANANG25 FEB 11 datestamp. The cover is addressed to Sagang, Burma, a rare destination.



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Postal use envelope with the rare special cancellation United Provinces Exhibition, Camp, 28 Feb. U.P. 1910-1911, and arrival stamp on verso Allahabad, Del. 1 Mar.



1911, First U.K. AERIAL POST special cancellation on illustrated cover from London to Amstela (arrival backstamp), with complete letter inside (beginning: 'As a Philatelist you will no doubt be pleased to receive this').

THE BIRTH OF AIRMAIL

The First Aerial Post At Allahabad -18 February 1911

INTRODUCTION

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The year was 1911, and it was time again for the Kumbh Mela (Kumbh Fair), a Hindu celebration held once in twelve years at the confluence of the holy Ganga and Jamuna rivers at the city of Allahabad in the United Provinces of North India. The Mela was said to attract the largest human gathering in history, and so it was apt that the United Provinces Exhibition should be organised at the same time. Among the many new wonders on display in this Exhibition was the aeroplane, and a French pilot, M. Henri Pequet was on hand with a Humber-Sommer bi-plane to demonstrate the flying machine, never seen before in these parts. It so happened that the Oxford and Cambridge Hostel and the Holy Trinity Church were in need of money for repairs. To raise funds for this purpose, it was decided that a special flight would be arranged and would be ferried by air from Allahabad to Naini, about six miles away, across the Jamuna river, and a portion of the charges so collected would be used for this purpose.

Thus, as the first officially sanctioned airmail flight, history was made on 18 February 1911, and Airmail was born. A total of about 6,500 postal articles were flown on this 13 minute journey, and all received a special large magenta cachet prepared specially for this occasion.

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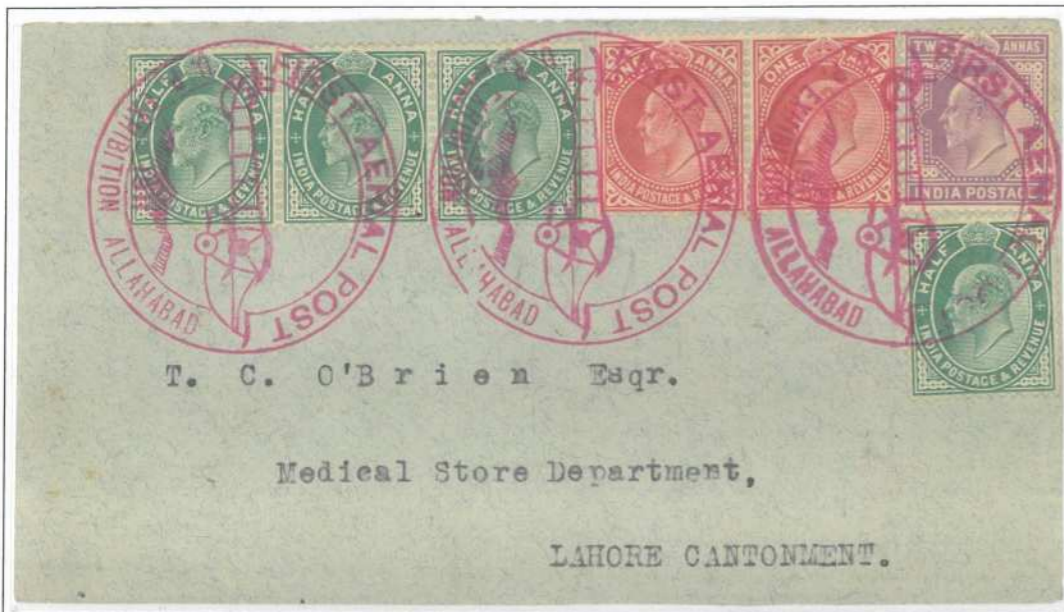
First air mail cancellation in world **FIRST AERIAL POST / U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD / 1911.** Used on 18 February 1911



Postmark applied by The Postal Authorities after the flight ALLAHABAD / 18 FE / 11



Only known card signed by Pequet and Windham



First Flight cover having Seven KE VII postage stamps tied with three superb strikes of the large magenta FIRST AERIAL POST / U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD / 1911 cancellation

EXHIBIT

| Index | Page |
|--|------|
| Title Page | 1 |
| Prologue—Arrangements and Preparation | 2 |
| Capt. Walter Windham—The Organiser | 3 |
| The special 'Pequet' signed cards. | 4 |
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Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Naini Junction on 18 February 1911 titled FIRST "AERIAL POST," ALLAHABAD, FEBRUARY 18, 1911 signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet, and W. Windham, Founder of Aerial Post.

Prologue - Arrangements And Preparation

Elaborate arrangement and preparation was put in place for this historic event. This included wide publicity via newspapers, and a method to collect 6annas as additional charge per posted article, which was entirely donated to charity. A special large circular postal cancellation was prepared at the Postal workshop in Aligarh and used by the Exhibition Post Office at Allahabad for the event.

AVIATION AT ALLAHABAD.

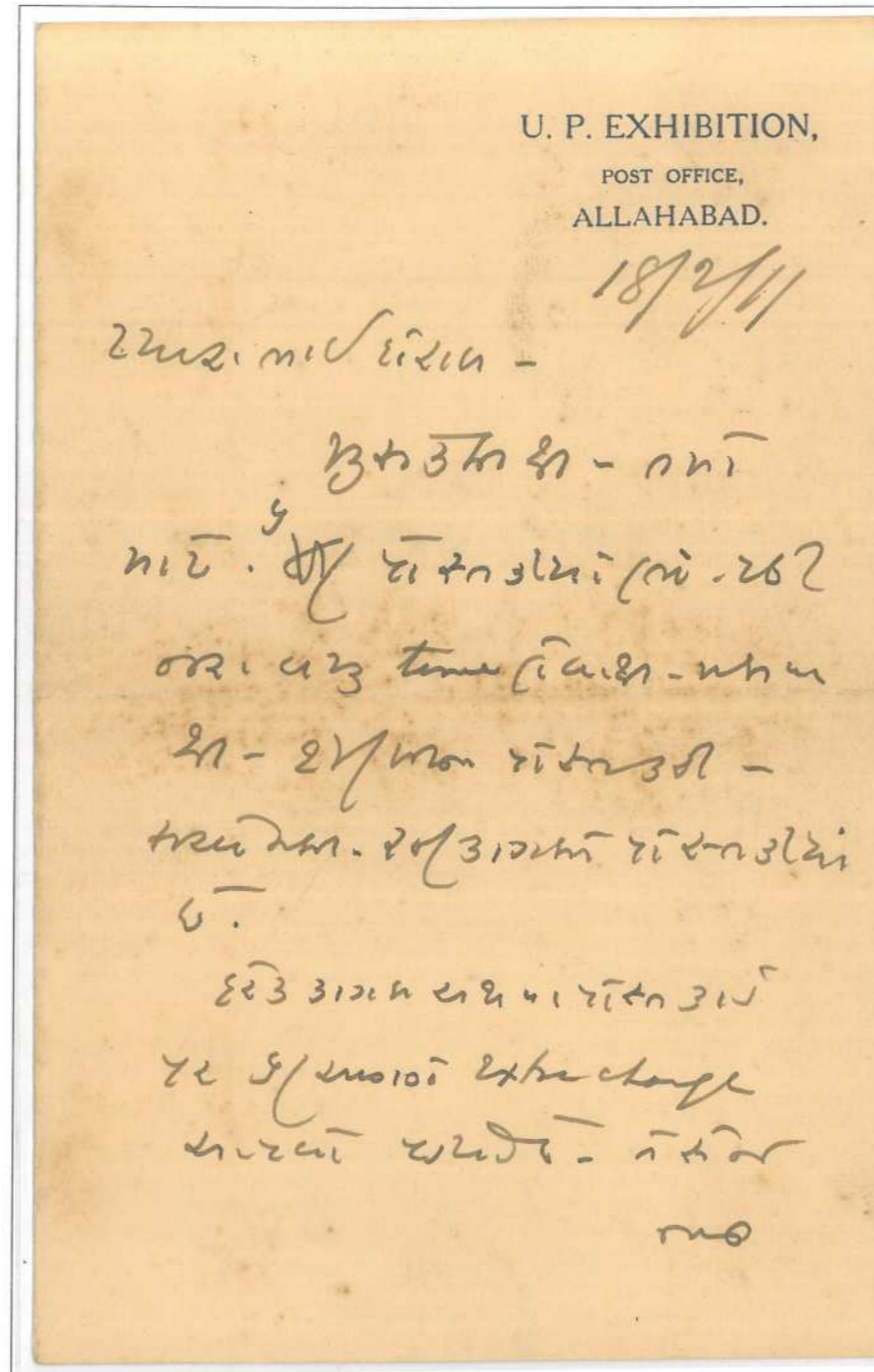
THE FIRST AERIAL POST.

ALLAHABAD is shortly to witness an experiment of an interesting nature. It will be remembered that during the siege of Paris in 1871, the only means of communication with the outer world open to the besieged was the despatch of letters by means of the balloon. In time of war, any city in the world might find itself similarly placed. Captain W. Windham, who has been associated with the aeroplane since its adoption, wishes, by means of practical experiment, to demonstrate how this latest achievement of modern invention can be adapted to meet such a situation. An aeroplane flying at night would be difficult to discover, and even if discovered, would be almost impossible to hit. Captain Windham has accordingly obtained special permission from the Postmaster-General of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, approved and sanctioned by the Director-General of Post Offices in India, to inaugurate the first official "aerial post." It will be carried from the U. P. Exhibition to a Post Office receiving station outside the Exhibition, and from there the letters will be despatched to any part of the world to which they may be addressed. Both the Directors-General and Postmaster-General are highly interested in the experiment, and the latter will personally supervise the necessary details. The Exhibition Post Office will impress each stamp with a die specially cut in the postal Workshops at Aligarh, incorporating a design of the actual aeroplane on which the mail is to be carried, encircled, by an inscription containing the words "Aerial Post, Allahabad Exhibition," together with the year and date of despatch. These letters will be the first in the world to be despatched by means of an aeroplane from a Government Post Office in the ordinary course of its business, and will be carried by Mons. H. Pequet, the well-known aviator, from the Exhibition to the receiving office.

It is anticipated that numbers of people, including stamp collectors and others in India and elsewhere, will avail themselves of this unique opportunity of sending to their friends letters which in time may become very valuable in consequence of having been the first communications officially carried through the air by aeroplane under the Post Office regulations. Considerations of weight and space make it necessary to place a strict limit on the size and number of letters carried. It is, therefore, proposed to charge a nominal sum of six annas on each letter or postcard so carried. This amount will be given without deduction as a donation to the new buildings of the Oxford and Cambridge Hostel, Allahabad. The Post Office will sanction no charge whatsoever over and above the ordinary rates of postage, and the additional six annas, which will be made over to the above charity, is simply a means to prevent the overloading of the mail, and at the same time to help the above excellent institution in its educational work among Indian students.

356 - '11.

The postal notice in original published before the flight describing the event, and explaining it's importance. This also details the procedure to be followed for anyone wishing to send a souvenir cover on this flight. A rare survivor.



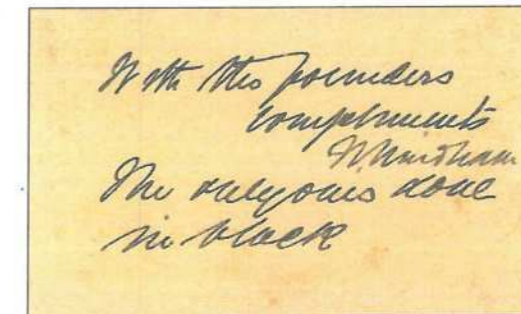
Written on official Stationery of Letter U.P. EXHIBITION, POST OFFICE, ALLAHABAD, and dated 18/2/11. The letter in vernacular (Gujarati) explains the difficulties in posting 6 covers, the extra charges of 6as. Etc. "For every cover or card, 6as extra charge had to be paid. This 6as will go to Xavier Charity Fund for the Holy Trinity Church. Stamps affixed on the cover are rare."



A calling card of W.G. Bason, Postmaster, Allahabad.

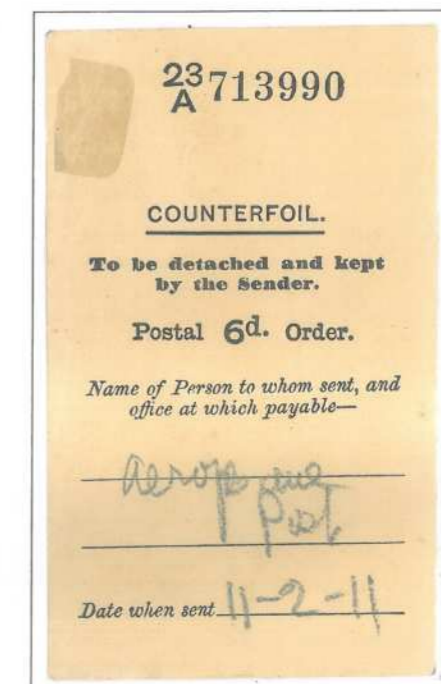


Proof of the Special "First Aerial Post" Postmark



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"With the founders compliments, W. Windham, The only ones done in black"



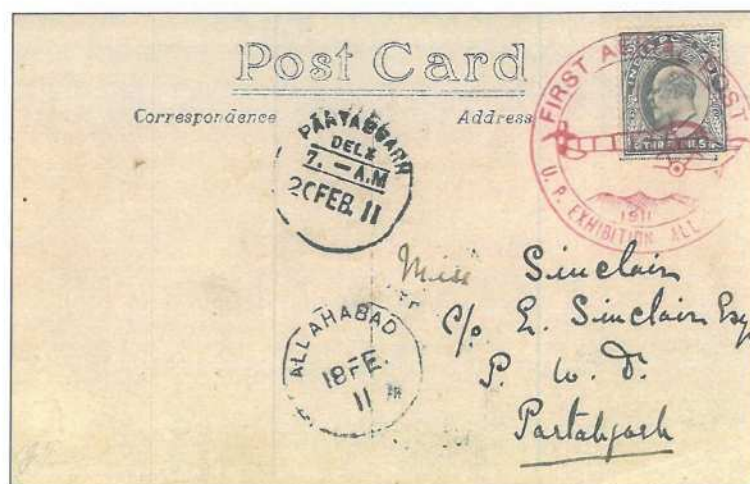
A counterfoil for a postal order to cover the postage for the souvenir flight cover.

Capt. Walter Windham—The Organiser

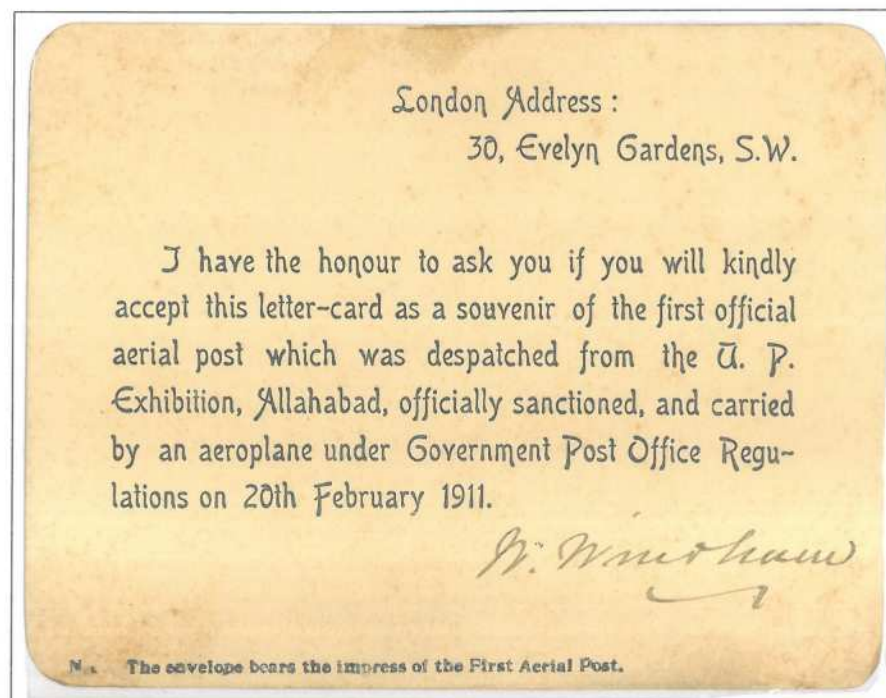
In December 1910, Windham made the first passenger flight in Asia, and in 1911, he founded the world's first two airmail services: the first, established in February 1911, from Allahabad crossing the Ganges, and the second, established in September 1911, between Hendon and Windsor. He served in the Royal Indian Navy during the First World War, rising to the rank of Commander.



Capt. Walter Windham



Original Photo post card by J. Burlington Smith of Darjeeling Showing the pilot, H. Pequet at the controls of his Humber-Sommer bi-plane at Allahabad. In front is Walter G. Windham, The person responsible for organizing the flight, and considered as the Founder of Aerial Post. Postcard addressed to Partapgarh, and KEVII 3p. Postage stamp cancelled with the special magenta cancellation. Also postmarked Allahabad 18 Feb 11, and Pratapgarh, Dely, 20 Feb 11. A flown example of this card is extremely rare.



The 1911 First Aerial Post Flight, a card signed in original by W. Windham which was inserted in a selected quantity of first flight covers and sent by him to eminent persons as a souvenir of the flight.



First Aerial Post 1911, U.P. Exhibition, Allahabad, cachet tying two 1/2a. KEVII singles, to Allahabad, with appropriate backstamps including Feb 18 1911.

Cover address to Capt. W. Windham himself at Allahabad and flown on the 1911 flight with an additional magenta cachet on the reverse. Flown mail addressed to Capt. Windham is extremely rare.

The Special "Pequet" Signed Cards

It was thought that a total of 40 cards were flown in a combination of Type I and Type II. It now appears that the number may have been closer to 60-70 and a variety (Type III) has also been discovered. These cards are most sought after by Air Mail Collectors the world over as they mark the starting point of any air mail collection.



Type I

Type I Postcard flown from Allahabad to Nani Junction on 18 February 1911 printed FIRST "AERIAL POST," ALLAHABD, FEBRUARY 18, 1911 Signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



Type III

1911 (Feb 18) Allahabad First Aerial Post, Type III postcard, similar to the previous type but only 152x114cm and printed on thick brown (non-glossy) paper, signed by the pilot, addressed to London. Franked by KEVII 1a tied by the special pictorial cancel in magenta, a second superb strike of the special cancel applied below in black with an Allahabad c.d.s. alongside. The Aerial Post cancel was only used in black on privilege mail from officials involved with the event and few examples are recorded; it is exceptional in combination with the magenta cancel and used on one of these Pequet postcards (of which Reddy only records three examples of this types III card). Extremely rare.



Type II

Type II Postcard flown from Allahabad to Nani Junction on 18 February 1911 printed FIRST "AERIAL POST," ALLAHABD, FEBRUARY 18, 1911 Signed by the pilot, Henri Pequet.



Postal Registration Marks And Labels

Registered mail for this flight was accepted at the Allahabad P.O. and at the U.P. Exhibition Camp P.O.
Very few examples of registered mail exist.

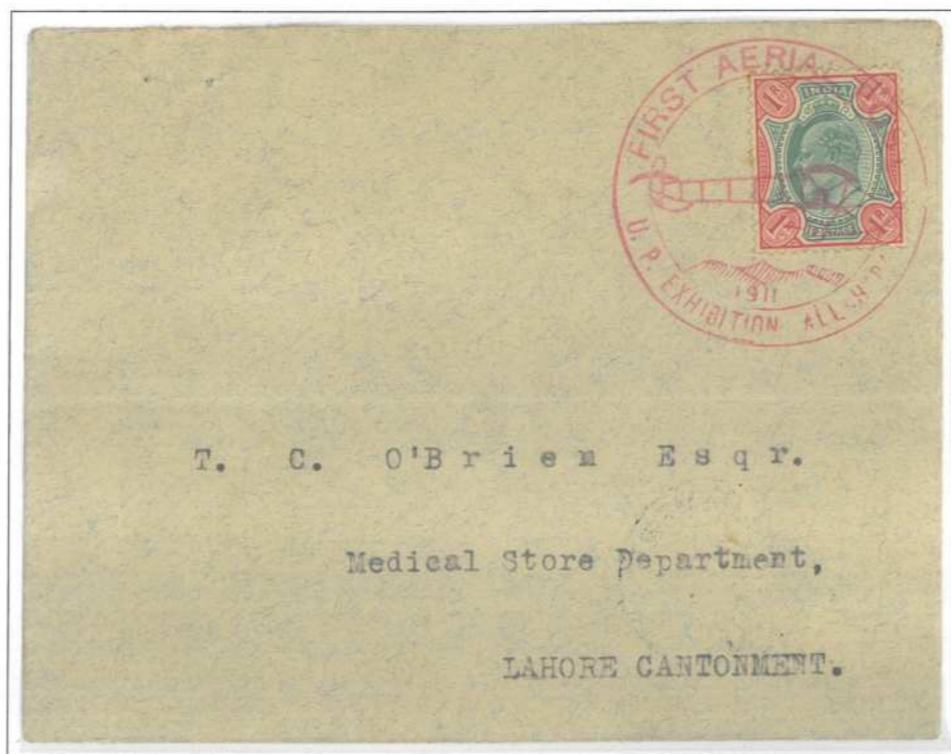


Three different kinds of registration labels are found on mail carried on this flight.

1. Small label with the registration number and R ALLAHABAD, both in the same box.
2. Large label with the registration number in one box and R ALLAHABAD in the other box.
3. Boxed rectangular handstamp for mail accepted at the exhibition R / U.P. EXHIBITION CAMP / ALLAHABAD.



1. **Small label:** 1911 (Feb 18) Registered Allahabad First Aerial Post cover to Fyzabad with QV 3Rupee tied by the special pictorial Aerial Post cancel in magenta, unusually with a second strike on the front and a registration label handstamped boxed "R/ALLAHABAD". Backstamped at Allahabad and Fyzabad.



2. **Large label:** Cover with a KEVII 1 Rupee tied by superb strike of U.P. EXHIBITION ALLAHABAD First Aerial Post in Magenta Registered to Lahore with rectangular label on reverse,



3. **Exhibition Camp handstamp:** 1911 (Feb 18) Registered Allahabad First Aerial Post cover to Bareilly with KEVII 12a tied by the special pictorial Aerial Post cancel in magenta with black boxed "R/U.P. EXHIBITION CAMP/ALLAHABAD", numbered 83. Backstamped at Allahabad and Bareilly.

Inland Mail

The flight aroused national interest. Letters were flown on it and the forwarded not only to the large cities but also small towns throughout India. Here we present a few examples of mail to interesting destinations.



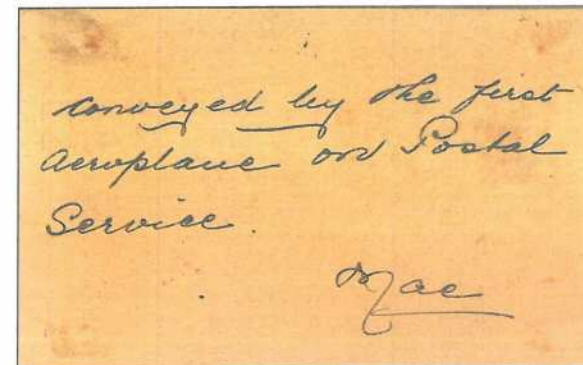
Cover with the large circular magenta cachet addressed to Dehra Dun. On verso, Sirmoor Rifles emblem stationery with the ALLAHABAD 18 FE 11 postal date stamp, and delivery stamp DEHRA DUN CANTT, 20 FE 11, 9 AM.



1911 (18 Feb.) envelope "Per Aerial Post" to Jubbulpore, bearing four 3p, sharing two fine strikes of the illustrated cachet, dispatch and arrival (20.2) c.d.s. on reverse.



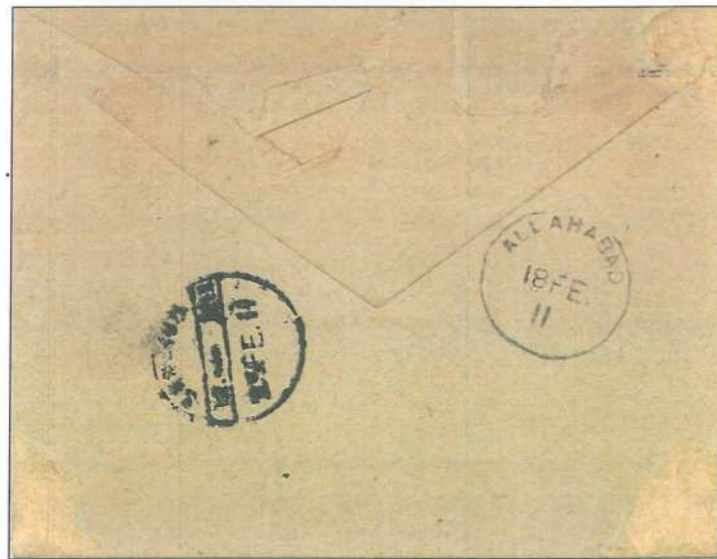
1911 (18 Feb.) envelope to Patiala, bearing 1/4a on 1/2a pair. Pair sharing a largely fine strike of the illustrated cachet, the reverse with dispatch and arrival (20.2) c.d.s. and signed by Stephen H. Smith; a most unusual usage of these Provisionals on mail from the flight.



1911 (18 Feb.) 1/4a, brown card to Mhow cancelled with a fine strike of the illustrated cachet, dispatch c.d.s. alongside and arrival c.d.s. (20.2) c.d.s. at lower left corner; the message reading "Conveyed by the first aeroplane on Postal Service".

Overseas Mail

Mail carried on this flight was also then sent all across the world, from Burma in the neighborhood to England and Germany in Europe.



A cover with a KEVII 1/2a postage stamp cancelled with the large round magenta special cancellation mark. On the reverse is the small round ALLAHABAD/18FE/11 postmark, and SAGAING/25 FE 11 datestamp. The cover is addressed to Sagaing, Burma; a rare destination.



Letter to Hamburg Germany franked with 2as 6pies QV stamp, Backstamped ALLAHABAD 18 FEB.11, BOMBAY 20 FEB.11. Authenticated on verso by Stephen H. Smith.



A cover franked with a KE III 1/2 a postage stamp and cancelled with the magenta First Flight cachet, sent to England. Also bears a boxed rectangular cachet, Found in Inland Section without contents.

The U.P. Exhibition And Beyond

The U.P. Exhibition and the First Aerial Post event was a huge success. The publicity this generated drew considerable crowds for the remaining days of the Exhibition. Not only this, the organizer, W. Windham, was invited to England to supervise arrangements for the First Aerial Post there to mark the Coronation of King George V.

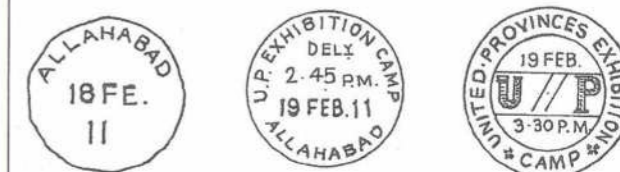


Original Photo post card by J. Burlington Smith of Darjeeling showing the Humber-Somner bi-plane in flight over the Welcome Club at the Exhibition Grounds at Allahabad with the pilot M. Henri Pequet at the controls.



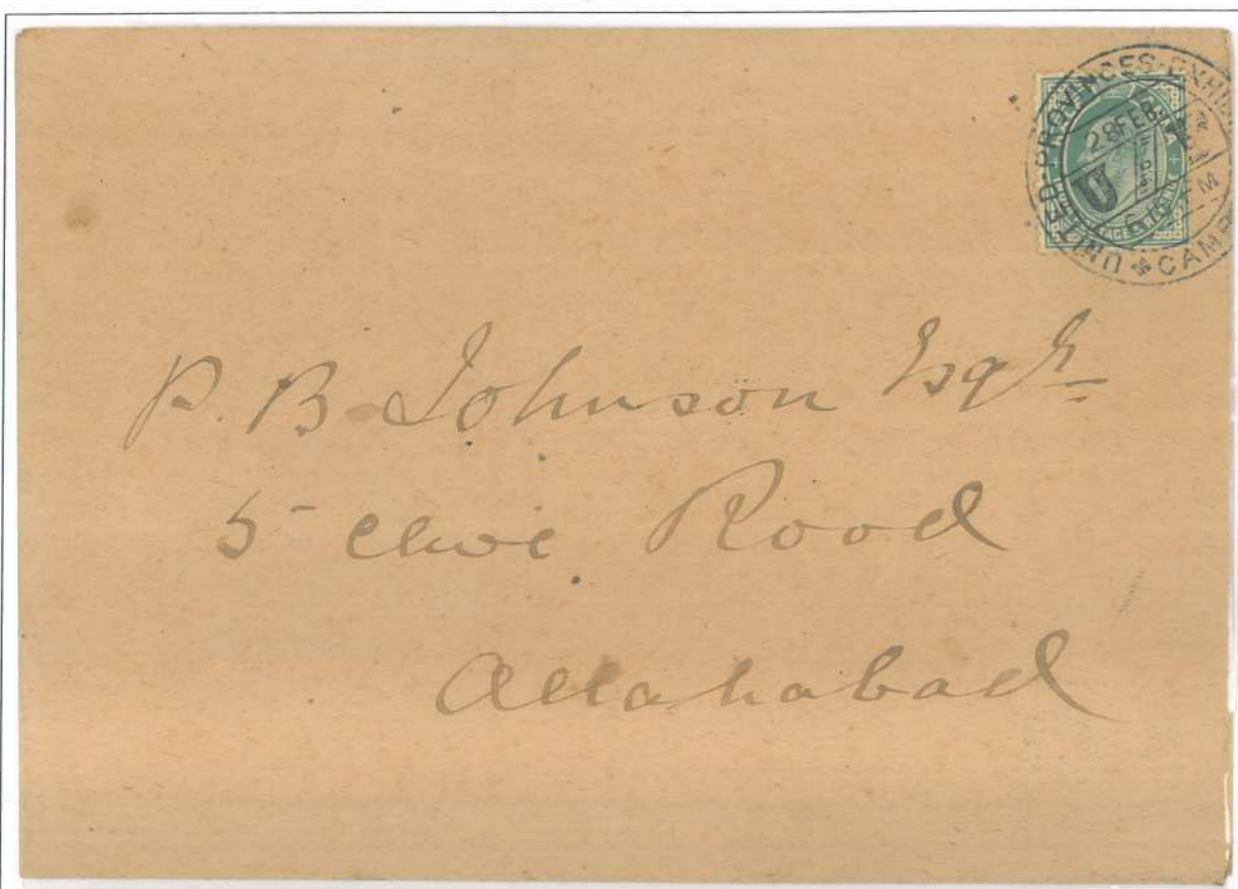
The cover bearing different cancellations on the back

- Circular ALLAHABAD 18 FE.11
- EXHIBITION CAMP, DELY.,ALLAHABAD 2.45 P.M. 19 FEB.11
- ALLAHABAD 19 FE.11 8.30 A.M.
- UNITED PROVINCES EXHIBITION CAMP / 19 FEB. / 3.30 P.M.



Conclusion

The next Aerial Post Flight was in England in September 1911, again organized by Capt. Windham. The interest generated by these flights led to the emergence of the most important means of rapid postal communication for the rest of the 20th Century.



Postal use envelope with the rare special cancellation United Provinces Exhibition, Camp, 28 Feb, U.P. 1910-1911., and arrival stamp on verso Allahabad, Del, 1 Mar.



1911, FIRST U.K. AERIAL POST special cancellation on illustrated cover from London to Ambala (arrival backstamp), with complete letter inside (beginning; 'As a Philatelist you will no doubt be pleased to received this.