

# ENGLAND TO INDIA BY AIR

## The First Imperial Air Route Successfully Inaugurated

ENGLAND to India by air as a practical commercial proposition will have to be recorded as the first outstanding aeronautical milestone for the year 1927. Incidentally, also, flying between these two countries by the private owner of the light 'plane; for the first week in the New Year saw the two extremes in aerial transport between the Mother Country and India accomplished in a highly-successful manner.

We refer, of course, firstly, to the conclusion of Sir Samuel Hoare's and Lady Maud Hoare's flight from Croydon to Karachi, thence to Delhi, in the Imperial Airways D.H. "Hercules" (3 Bristol "Jupiter" engines) air liner, which flight inaugurated the first Imperial Air Route between Cairo and Karachi; and, secondly, to the "impromptu" flight from London to Karachi by Capt. T. N. Stack and Mr. B. S. Leete, of the Lancashire Aero Club, in two D.H. "Moth" light 'planes fitted with A.D.C. "Cirrus" engines.

It is not our intention to dwell here upon the merits or general aspect of these flights, as we have already referred to this side of the subject in our Editorial Comment this week, so that we can confine ourselves in the following article to a record of the actual happenings of both events.

Last week we recorded the progress of the D.H. "Hercules" air liner carrying Sir Samuel Hoare and party from Croydon to Jask on the Persian Gulf, with only the tenth stage to Karachi and final trip to Delhi to be completed. We need not, therefore, refer in detail now to this portion of the flight, but we may, we think, be permitted to repeat the daily point-to-point progress.

Before doing this, however, we would like to emphasise the fact that, except for the tenth stage from Jask to Karachi, the whole trip was carried out according to pre-arranged schedule, and where at one or two points along the route weather conditions did their best to upset arrangements, skilful piloting and navigating enabled matters to be carried out more or less "according to plan."

The following is an abbreviated log of the flight from start to finish (see also the accompanying sketch map of the route):—

- Dec. 27, 1926.—Croydon to Marseilles *via* Dijon (641 miles).
- Dec. 28, 1926.—Marseilles to Naples *via* Pisa and Capua (574 miles).
- Dec. 29, 1926.—Naples to Malta *via* Catania (410 miles).
- Dec. 30, 1926.—Malta to Benghazi *via* Khoms (580 miles).

Dec. 31, 1926.—Benghazi to Aboukir *via* Sollum (650 miles).

Jan. 1, 1927.—Aboukir to Ziga (Gaza) (360 miles).

Jan. 2, 1927.—Ziga to Baghdad *via* Rutbah Wells (543 miles).

Jan. 3, 1927.—Baghdad to Bushire *via* Basra (520 miles).

Jan. 4, 1927.—Bushire to Jask *via* Lingeh (556 miles).

Jan. 5, 1927.—Left Jask for Karachi, but had to return owing to sandstorm.

Jan. 6, 1927.—Jask to Karachi *via* Pasni (600 miles).

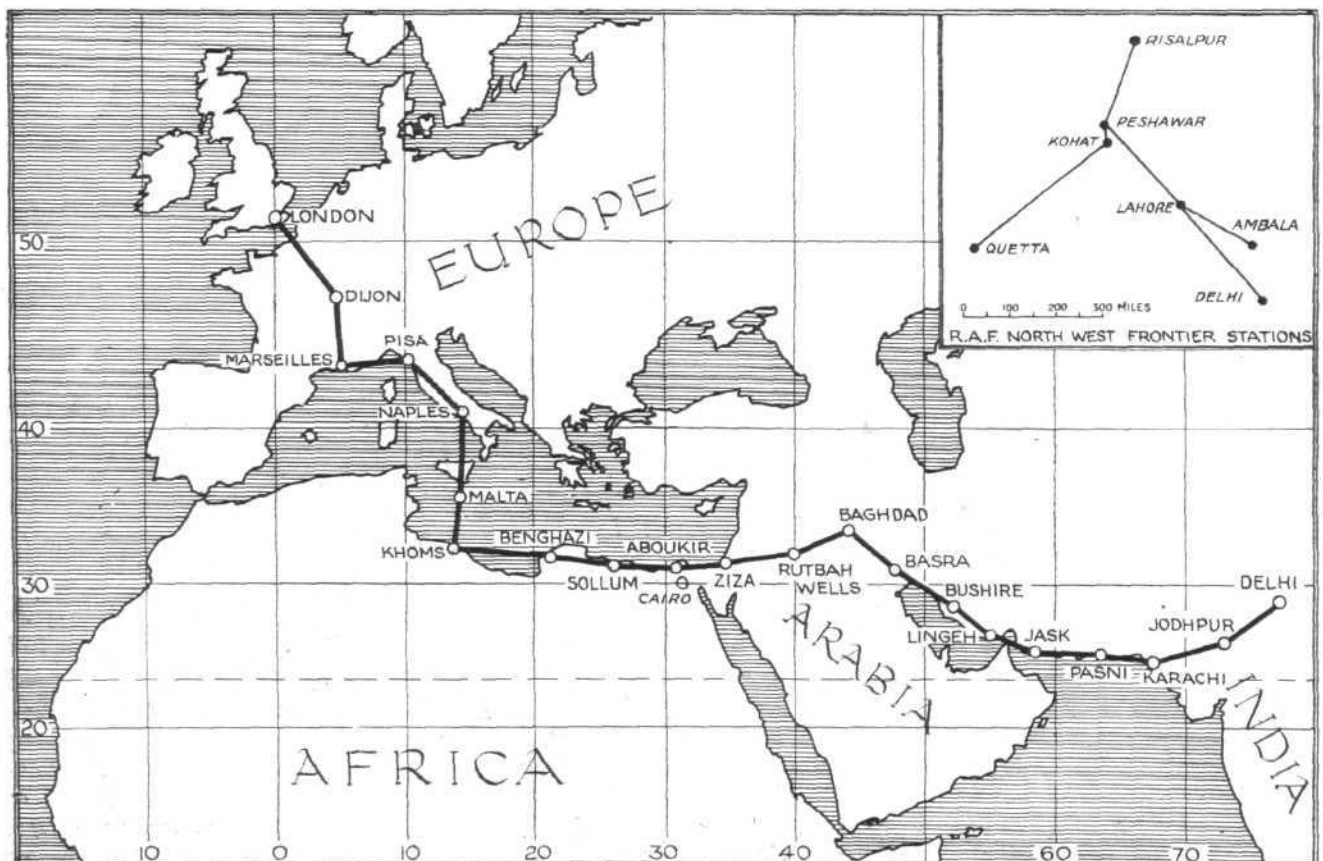
Jan. 7, 1927.—Karachi to Jodhpur (390 miles).

Jan. 8, 1927.—Jodhpur to Delhi (300 miles).

Capt. F. L. Barnard piloted the machine from Croydon to Aboukir, after which Capt. Wolley Dod took charge. The navigator throughout the trip was Sq.-Ldr. Johnstone, navigator of the airship R.33. As previously stated, the "Hercules" air liner kept remarkably close to the scheduled times for the journey of over 6,000 miles. At Malta it was 40 mins. late, but was 10 mins. ahead of time at Aboukir. It was an hour early at Baghdad, half an hour late at Bushire, but was again 10 mins. ahead of time at Lingeh. The day lost at Jask was made up by a shortened stay at Karachi, and a very speedy flight to Delhi, which was reached exactly to the time fixed for its arrival—12.30 p.m.. In fact, it may be mentioned that having time to spare over certain parts of the route opportunity was taken to make detours over points of interest, and to carry out experiments, such as flying on one engine, etc.

Shortly after leaving Jask for Karachi on January 5, the machine encountered what was at first thought to be a local mist, but climbing to 5,000 ft. in the hope of getting above it, only made matters worse, for it proved to be a severe and wide-spread sandstorm. The pilot considered it was unwise to proceed under these conditions, and therefore decided to return to Jask. To do so they had to turn seawards, in order to avoid running into uneven ground as they had to fly very low—little more than 25 ft. above sea level—to take bearings. A thrilling flight was thus made, following the coast line until a safe landing was once again made at Jask.

This stage was, however, successfully accomplished the following day, and, escorted by two R.A.F. machines from Pasni—where a stop for lunch was made—the "Hercules" air liner arrived at Karachi just before sunset, being observed



THE FIRST IMPERIAL AIR ROUTE: Sketch map showing the route taken by Sir Samuel Hoare during the inaugural flight from Croydon to India. Inset, the R.A.F. (India) Stations Sir Samuel will visit.