

THE ENGLAND-INDIAN AIR MAIL

NOW that the Direct Indian Air Service has been in operation for six months, it may be of interest to give some particulars of the results, which have been issued by the General Post Office.

The service by Imperial Airways to India was inaugurated on March 30, 1929, from Croydon, and the first return flight commenced from Karachi on April 7. The route taken is by air from Croydon via Paris to Bâle, thence by train to Genoa; subsequently the air route followed is Genoa-Athens-Tobruk (Libya)-Alexandria-Gaza-Baghdad-Basra-Jask (Persia)-Gwadar-Karachi. The eastbound aeroplanes leave Croydon every Saturday morning, and the westbound service starts from Karachi every Sunday morning; the actual time of transit over the whole route is 7½ days.

The service was thrown open at the start for the carriage of the air mails of every country on the actual route; and, after a few weeks' experimental period, it was made available (in June) to the mails of every country in the Postal Union. Austria, Belgium, Canada, Ceylon, Czecho-Slovakia, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Iraq, Irish Free State, Latvia, Palestine, Persia, Sweden, and the United States of America are either using, or have expressed their intention of using, the service. The list is not exhaustive.

The traffic to and from India has been increasing steadily week by week. From an average of about 300 lbs., in either direction (India only), the average weekly weight is now over 550 lbs., representing nearly 5 per cent. of the total letter mail outward, and over 5 per cent. inward. (It should be mentioned that the weight of the ordinary mail outward is greater than the inward.) The average weekly weight of the whole mail despatched from London is nearly 750 lbs., and of the mail received about the same, or 1,500 lbs., a week in all. This does not include mail loaded at intermediate places, of which complete figures are not yet available.

During the first six months' working of the service 14,656 lbs. of mail have been carried from London to various destinations, and 17,529 lbs. of mail have reached London; or a total weight in both directions of 32,185 lbs. The corresponding figures for India alone are 11,893 lbs. outward and 11,436 inward. According to existing information there is no regular long-distance service operated from Europe whose traffic figures can compare with these.

The service has been operated from the start with remarkable regularity. Outward, apart from the tragic Jask disaster, there have only been two late arrivals in India (owing to floods and to sand storms respectively) in 26 flights; and homeward there have been three late arrivals (two owing

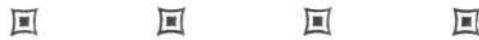
to missing the train connection at Genoa and one owing to sand storms).

The normal closing time for the air mail to India during the summer flying period was 7 a.m. on Saturdays at the General Post Office, London; but arrangements were introduced in September for a late posting (without special charge) at Charles Street Branch Office, near Charing Cross, up to 9.25 a.m.

As from October 12, the hour of departure from Croydon was put back to about 8.30 a.m., owing to the change to winter time and the need for leaving a wider margin for the journey to Bâle, where the train connection to Genoa must be made. The latest time of posting will now, therefore, be 6 a.m. on Saturdays at the General Post Office, and the late posting at Charles Street will be suspended until the spring. The latest time of posting in the provinces varies, but information on the subject can be obtained at local Post Offices.

The fees charged to the public, 6d. to India and Persia, 4½d. to Iraq, and 2½d. to Egypt and Palestine per ½ oz. in each case, are very appreciably lower than the fees charged for comparable services conducted by other countries.

The only serious difficulty which has been experienced is with letters which are despatched by the public with insufficient postage to cover the air fee. The Post Office is not permitted by the International Air Mail Agreement (to which Great Britain is a party) to send by air letters which do not bear the minimum air fee and, even if this were possible, a large number of the letters would inevitably be refused owing to the amount of the surcharge, which averages at least 1s. per letter. Where the name of the sender is known, effort is made whenever practicable, to inform him of the under-payment of his letter and to give him an opportunity of affixing stamps for the deficiency before the mail leaves. But in many cases the sender is not known or the error is considerable, and there is no course open but to send the letter by ordinary mail with consequent heavy delay. Most of the errors appear to be due to an impression that a 6d. air fee will cover any weight, instead of being the fee for each ½ oz. The public are therefore asked once more to note, in using the Indian Air Mail, that letters to India must bear stamps to cover the ordinary postage plus the air fee at 6d. per ½ oz. or fraction thereof. The air fee to Egypt and Palestine is 2½d. per ½ oz., plus postage, and to Iraq and Persia, 4½d. per ½ oz. plus postage. Ordinary postage to Egypt, Palestine and India is 1½d. for the first ounce, and 1d. for each succeeding ounce. To Iraq the rate is 2½d. for 1 oz. and 1½d. for each further ounce.



R. 101. A SUCCESSFUL LONG FLIGHT

ON Thursday last, October 17, R.101 was given a further mooring up trial. She was removed in a wind of 25-30 m.p.h., and the whole operation went with perfect smoothness throughout. Later on the same day, in the evening, a line squall, which had been predicted, struck the ship. The wind, which had been at about 15 m.p.h., rose in 10 minutes to 25 m.p.h. and changed its direction 45° and at the same time the temperature dropped 2°; however this combination of rapidly changing factors made no great difference to the ship, or occasioned any trouble whatever.

The following morning the ship left Cardington at 8 a.m. She had on board 50 people, amongst whom were Lord Thomson and his private secretary, Maj. Bullock, Mr. S. Reynolds, Sqdr.-Ldr. B. Colmore, Lieut.-Col. C. Richmond, Wing-Commdr. Cave-Brown-Cave, Sqdr.-Ldr. Rope, and Lieut.-Commdr. Pressy, of the R.C.A.F., who is over here with four other ranks to learn the routine of mooring up at the mast so that he will be able to take charge at the St. Hubert airport when R.100 makes her trip to Canada. Maj. Scott was in command for the flight, but the ship was generally under the direction of Flight-Lieut. Irwin, with Sqdn.-Ldr. Johnston as navigator, Lieut.-Commdr. Atherstone first officer, and Flying Officer Staff second officer.

Communications were received frequently throughout the trip. At 9.15 she reported over Northampton, at 10.5 over Rugby, at 10.15 over Coventry, 10.40 Birmingham, and at noon over Nottingham.

When approaching Newark, Lord Thomson sent out a message that they were making a ground speed of 60 m.p.h. with only 50 per cent. of the available power being used. He said that the conditions were ideal and that the trip was comfortable, smooth, and restful. She was reported later over Derby and Leicester, and at 2.15 p.m. was again at Cardington.

There was some little delay while waiting for cooler and quieter conditions and she was finally moored up at 6 p.m. This having to wait before mooring up has caused some adverse comments to be published, but, as Lord Thomson pointed out, the crew have yet to shake down and learn how to handle the ship under all conditions, and until such time it is obviously best not to take any undue risks; he said he remembered the *Majestic* arriving off the Ambrose Light at 6 a.m. and not docking till 5.34 p.m.

The subsequent technical report on the flight was in every way satisfactory. Even at higher speeds under bumpy conditions it was not necessary to relieve the men at the control by utilising the Servo-motor gear.

As a meteorological report indicated the possibility of strong gusty winds on Wednesday, and there was a certain amount of work to be carried out on the starting engines in preparation for the full-speed trials, it was decided on Tuesday evening to move the ship back into the hanger. This was done by searchlight, and she left the mast at 7.5 p.m. and was safely housed by 7.50.