

World Air Mail Day Standing Display

February 2026 | Royal Philatelic Society, London

Jointly Organised by



World Air Mail Day is celebrated on 18 February to commemorate the world's first postally sanctioned air mail flight, flown in India in 1911 from Allahabad (now Prayagraj) to Naini, carrying about 6,500 postal articles. This historic event marked a turning point in global communication and honours the pioneers of aviation and postal services.

Organised as a tribute to this legacy, the Standing Display features 20 exhibits in Aerophilately and Astrophilately, showcasing rare material, significant milestones, and engaging stories for both seasoned philatelists and first-time visitors.

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01) Mr. Piyush Khaitan FRPSL, FPCI



An award-winning philatelist specialising in Indian Airmails. Honours include the Champion of Champions at AMRITPEX 2023, the Nelson Eustis Memorial Prize for Best Aero Exhibit at Canberra Stampshow 2020, and a Gold Medal at Uruguay 2025 (FIP). His works, such as 'Round the World by Airmail Zeppelin Attempt' and 'The First Underpaid Letter to Travel by Air,' have been published in philatelic journals. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Air Mail Society India Foundation and the PCI Philatelic Trust. He is also the Convenor of AMSIPEX (International Virtual Aero- & Astrophilatelic Exhibition).

The Birth of Airmail

The First Aerial Post at Allahabad - 18 February 1911

Capturing the events of the day Airmail was born is of immense historical significance, as 18 February 1911 marked the world's first officially sanctioned airmail flight. The exhibit highlights many fascinating aspects of this historic and enigmatic flight. This exhibit features rarities like the world's first underpaid airmail cover, the black cachet card signed by Pequet and Wyndham, the cancellation die proof card signed by Wyndham, the only Pequet card flown to Germany etc. The exhibit also highlights prevailing postal rates and treatment of mail to domestic and international destinations, and the aftermath, all presented through a philatelic lens.

02) Mr. Pradip Jain RDP, FRPSL



A seasoned exhibitor and researcher with a strong focus on Indian airmails and historically significant themes, including Mahatma Gandhi. His award-winning exhibits reflect meticulous study and a deep respect for India's postal and socio-political history. Through his collections, he brings to life pivotal moments in Indian aviation and national development, combining philately with historical narrative.

England-India-Australia Ross Smith & Beyond

This exhibit commemorates the 2019–20 centenary of the landmark long-distance flights, including the England–Australia Air Race (1919–20) and the Rome–Tokyo flight (1920), which connected the West to the East and revolutionized global communication. It traces the pioneering trial and survey flights that laid the foundation for a permanent aerial route between England and Australia. Through significant aerophilatelic material—covers, postcards, and mail carried on key experimental flights—the exhibit documents the evolution of early international airmail services and highlights the technological, navigational, and postal milestones that shaped modern long-distance air communication.



03) Mr. Terry Hare- Walker

Aerophilatelist with a strong focus on Indian and South African airmail history. His award-winning exhibits, recognized with Gold and Large Gold medals at national and international exhibitions, reflect deep research and long-term dedication. An active author and contributor to India Post-published works, he has played a meaningful role in documenting India's aviation heritage. Through organizing study circles and delivering lectures across philatelic societies, he continues to share knowledge and inspire collectors worldwide.

The Imperial Airways Route to India, 1927–29

This exhibit traces the early development of Britain's aerial route to India, beginning with the Anglo-Indian Air Survey of 1924–1925. Commissioned by the British Government, the survey assessed the feasibility of long-distance air communication between the United Kingdom and India, laying the groundwork for regular air services. Building on these findings, Imperial Airways later assumed responsibility for the route, expanding the former R.A.F. Desert Service between Cairo and Baghdad. The service was progressively extended eastward, first to Basra and ultimately to Karachi by March 1929. Together, the material illustrates the transition from exploratory surveys to a structured imperial air route.

04) Mr. Pragma Kothari Jain FRPSL, FPCI



A philatelist and researcher with a long-standing interest in Indian airmails and classic British India issues, his exhibits have received international recognition, including Gold medals at Aerophilately USA 2014 and Singapore 2015, and a Large Vermeil at Stampex 2019. He authored *Gems of Indian Philately – Edition 1* (2019) and has been honoured with the Fellowship of the Royal Philatelic Society London (2020) and the Philatelic Congress of India Fellowship Award (2024) for his scholarly contributions.

1929 AIRMAIL STAMPS (The First Airmail Stamps of India)

The exhibit presents the story of India's first airmail stamp issue, tracing its journey from concept to usage. India, among the earliest countries to adopt airmail, issued five values on 4 November 1929, followed by the 2 Annas value on 20 December 1929. The exhibit showcases key elements of this landmark issue, including artist's designs, proofs, approved stamp designs, and significant varieties. It further highlights noteworthy postal usages and airmail postal stationery, narrating the development, implementation, and practical use of these iconic stamps within early Indian airmail history.



05) Dr. György Lovei

An aerophilatelist specialising in Central European and Hungarian airmail history, he has presented award-winning exhibits at major international exhibitions including Bangkok, Prague, and Hafnia. He publishes regularly in *Bélyegvilág* and *Philatelica*, with an upcoming English-language study on the 1922–1928 airmail period. An accredited FEPA juror (since 2021) and FIP Aerophilately juror (since 2022), he served on the jury at EFIRO Bucharest 2024 and is President of the Hungarian Philatelic Scientific Society.

Hungarian Air mail bi-plane international directory cancellations from 30-04-1924 to 28-04-1928

This one-frame exhibit forms part of a five-frame study illustrating the international Hungarian air mail service up to 31 December 1933. It focuses specifically on biplane directory air mail cancellations used between 30 April 1924 and 28 April 1928, regarded as the finest examples of *jusq'à* type cancellations worldwide. Following the introduction of the Icarus airmail stamps in April 1924, these cancellations were applied on early international airmail routes from Budapest to major European destinations. The exhibit showcases black and red cancellations, rare registered usages, and corrected markings, highlighting the development, operational practices, and aesthetic excellence of Hungary's pioneering international air mail service.



06) Mr. Serge Kahn

An FRPSL and member of the Académie de Philatélie (France), Mr. Kahn is a leading authority in Polar Philately, noted for his rigorous research and interpretative approach to polar postal history. His exhibits have earned major international awards, including the Grand Award at the Saint Louis Stamp Expo 2023 and a Large Gold at the Great American Stamp Show 2024. In 2025, he received the Frederick A. Brofos Award and continues to play a key role in International Boston 2026.

Thor Solberg's Odyssey

This one-frame aerophilatelic exhibit documents the three determined attempts (1932–1935) by Norwegian pilot Thor Solberg to complete the first trans-Atlantic flight from the United States to Norway, following the historic polar route. Through a chronological presentation of flown and associated postal material, the exhibit traces both failure and final success, reflecting the technical limits, harsh polar conditions, and navigational challenges of the era. Beyond recording a milestone in aviation history, the exhibit tells a human story of perseverance, courage, and vision. By uniting rare postal evidence with historical context, it becomes the first philatelic exhibit of its kind to honour both this monumental achievement and the pilot who made it possible.

07) Mr. Chris Hargreaves AHF



A leading expert on Canadian and North Atlantic airmail, combining scholarly research with active philatelic leadership. His exhibits have received high international recognition, including Gold and Special Awards. As President of the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society and a frequent contributor to major philatelic journals, he has played a key role in documenting and preserving Canada's aviation postal history. His work reflects clarity of research, editorial excellence, and a deep commitment to education within philately.

Wing Over Winnipeg, Canada

The exhibit traces the progressive development of airmail services to and from Winnipeg, highlighting the city's pivotal role in early aviation history. The exhibit begins with a postcard sold for the first attempt at a mail-carrying flight in Winnipeg, which also marks the first attempt at an airmail flight in Canada. It then follows key pioneering routes and milestone flights that contributed to the expansion of regional and international airmail services. The exhibit concludes with a cover carried through Winnipeg on the first trans-continental airmail flight linking the Arctic with Argentina, illustrating Winnipeg's enduring significance in global airmail development.

08) Mr. John G. McEntyre FRPSC, FRPSL, FIP Jury Fellow



A distinguished philatelist with extensive experience in exhibiting and judging, particularly in fiscal and revenue philately. Having exhibited over 20 single-frame collections across multiple classes, his versatility and depth of knowledge are widely recognized. His leadership roles and long-standing commitment to the hobby underline a lifelong dedication to advancing philatelic study and mentoring within the community.

The Development of Official Canadian International Airmail Routes 1928-42

This exhibit documents the development of Canada's scheduled international airmail services following the success of earlier exhibition, experimental, and pioneer flights. After establishing regular domestic airmail operations, the Government Post Office inaugurated official international airmail routes beginning in 1928. Using commercial flown covers, including First International Flight covers, the exhibit displays at least one commercial cover for every international airmail route developed by Canada. The material traces all twenty inaugural official flights operated prior to interruptions caused by World War II, illustrating the growth, organization, and postal significance of Canada's early international airmail network.

09) Mr. Fredrik Ydell



A distinguished aerophilatelist and postal historian, he is an FIP Large Gold medalist for multiple landmark exhibits covering airmail within, from, and to the Nordic countries, including specialized studies on Sweden and Denmark, as well as classic Swedish postal history (1550–1872). His research has been widely published in leading Swedish philatelic journals, reflecting both depth and clarity of scholarship. Beyond exhibiting, he actively contributes to the international philatelic community as a Board Member of the FIP Aero Commission, a Swedish Commissioner at major exhibitions, and an FIP Jury member in the Aero class.

SCADTA - Danish consulate stamps and mails 1925-1928

This one-frame exhibit presents a comprehensive study of Danish SCADTA stamps and mails used for airmail transport in Colombia between 1925 and 1928. It focuses on the distinctive Danish “D” overprints, hand-printed and machine-printed—applied to Danish stamps for SCADTA services. Through rare stamps, covers, and postal usages, the exhibit traces the development, varieties, and withdrawal of the “D” stamps, explaining their postal and operational context. A notably difficult and specialized field, the exhibit brings together a substantial portion of all known surviving material, including several very rare and unique items, making it both authoritative and highly significant in aerophilately.

10) Mr. Piyush Khaitan FRPSL, FPCI



An award-winning philatelist specialising in Indian Airmails. Honours include the Champion of Champions at AMRITPEX 2023, the Nelson Eustis Memorial Prize for Best Aero Exhibit at Canberra Stampshow 2020, and a Gold Medal at Uruguay 2025 (FIP). His works, such as ‘Round the World by Airmail Zeppelin Attempt’ and ‘The First Underpaid Letter to Travel by Air,’ have been published in philatelic journals. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Air Mail Society India Foundation and the PCI Philatelic Trust. He is also the Convenor of AMSIPEX (International Virtual Aero- & Astrophilatelic Exhibition).

Indian Mail via Airship & Catapult Flights (1912-1938)

This exhibit explores the remarkable history of Indian mail conveyed by airship and catapult flights between 1912 and 1938, a period when India was neither a participating, nor a treaty nation for such services. Despite this, rare mails originating from, to, or transiting through India were carried on pioneering Zeppelin, catapult, and experimental air routes. These exceptional survivals illustrate early global airship development, technological innovation, and the complex postal networks linking India with Europe and the Americas.

11) Dr. Cheryl R. Ganz RDP, FRPSL



A globally respected authority in aerophilately, particularly known for her pioneering work on Zeppelin mail. A multi-award-winning philatelist, she has consistently set international benchmarks through her research-driven exhibits and scholarly writing. Her contributions extend beyond exhibiting—she has authored and edited important philatelic literature and has served in leadership roles across major philatelic societies. Dr. Ganz brings to philately a rare combination of academic rigor, historical insight, and an enduring passion for aviation postal history.

Basel Zeppelin Posts

This exhibit examines the vital role of Basel, Switzerland, in Zeppelin navigation and airmail communications during the interwar period. Strategically situated on the Rhine River at the junction of Germany, France, and Switzerland, Basel served as a crucial geographic landmark for both overseas and domestic Swiss Zeppelin flights. Its location required airships to adjust course, making it a key point of orientation and decision-making. Basel also functioned as an important postal exchange office for mail carried by Zeppelin, handling international correspondence destined for long-distance flights. Together, navigation and mail operations highlight Basel's significance in Zeppelin aviation history.

12) Mr. Markand Dave FRPSL



A distinguished philatelist and FRPSL, he has earned multiple top honours at major international exhibitions, including Gold and Large Gold medals at EUROPHILEX 2025 and AMSIPEX-2025 for his landmark exhibit The Rocket Mails of India, with jury felicitations and Best in Class recognition. His scholarship extends to literature, including the Gold-medal-winning book The Rocket Mails of India, Part-1, and an acclaimed article in The London Philatelist. He also serves as RPSL Representative in India and former President Emeritus of the Gujarat Philatelists Association.

The Rocket Mails of India, During WW II

This conceptual single-frame exhibit explores the remarkable wartime experiments of Stephen H. Smith, who pioneered rocket mail in India during the Second World War. Against the backdrop of wartime restrictions and material shortages, Smith experimented with gunpowder, compressed air, gas, and other propellants to launch rockets carrying mail across short distances. Each cover tells a story of innovation born from necessity, courage, and persistence during uncertain times. The exhibit highlights not only the technical evolution of rocket mail but also the human spirit behind these trials—where experimentation, risk, and imagination came together to keep communication alive during the war years.

13) Mr. David S. Ball



Serves as the President of the American Air Mail Society, U.S. Delegate for Astrophilately to FIP, and is a Philatelic Judge with the American Philatelic Society. He is the author of *American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years*, a landmark work that was nominated for a national book award and awarded a Gold Medal in philatelic literature. An accomplished exhibitor, his award-winning collections have received Gold and Large Vermeil medals at major national and FIP exhibitions, with subjects ranging from Lindbergh's pioneering mail flights to Soviet and American ice stations and early U.S. space programs.

Pushing the Envelope: Pioneer Rocket Mail 1928-1963

Pushing the Envelope introduces the evolution of rocket mail from its earliest experimental flights to organized national efforts. Beginning with Friedrich Schmiedl's pioneering launches in Austria, the exhibit traces rocket-borne mail through a diverse group of experimenters, ranging from serious innovators to purely philatelic entrepreneurs. Covers are presented chronologically, illustrating the technical challenges, ambitions, and varied motivations behind rocket mail experiments across Europe, the United States, and Canada. While some efforts sought genuine postal solutions and advances in propulsion, others produced imaginative philatelic novelties. Together, the material documents both the ingenuity and eccentricity that defined rocket mail between 1928 and 1963.

14) Mr. Walter Hopferwieser



A pioneer in astrophilately, recognised for his lifelong dedication to space mail research. His award-winning exhibits, honoured with multiple Large Gold medals at international exhibitions, reflect decades of original study and passion. A prolific author and self-publisher, he has contributed extensively to specialist literature, including in-depth works on rocket mail and space exploration. As a jury member and society chairman, he continues to shape and inspire the global astrophilatelic community.

Space Mail for the Apollo Moon Landings

This one-frame exhibit presents a selection of flown philatelic covers carried by astronauts across key milestones of human spaceflight. It begins with early X-15 rocket-plane missions, including a cover flown by astronaut Mike Adams, and progresses through the Apollo program, where astronauts carried commemorative covers on all missions. A highlight is one of only three trial cancellations of the historic Moon Landing postmark applied on the Moon. The exhibit concludes with material flown aboard the Soviet space stations Salyut-3 and Salyut-4, illustrating the parallel development of spaceflight and the unique postal history created beyond Earth.



15) Mr. Marc Van Quickenborne

A committed astrophilatelist whose exhibits have achieved consistent recognition at national and international levels. His collections demonstrate careful research and a steady progression in quality, earning multiple Large Vermeil awards. With a focused interest in space-related postal history, he represents the dedicated collector whose passion and perseverance continue to enrich the astrophilatelic field.

Living beyond the space frontier - Sergei Krikalev

This exhibit chronicles the extraordinary space career of Sergei Konstantinovich Krikalev, a Russian mechanical engineer, cosmonaut, and veteran of six space flights, who ranks third for the most time spent in space—803 days, 9 hours, and 39 minutes. It documents all his missions, including Mir EO-4, STS-60, and Expeditions 1 and 11 to the ISS, with flown covers marking key events from launches, landings, and mission control stations. Activities aboard space stations and shuttles are illustrated through signed covers and photographs, providing a visual and historical record of Krikalev's remarkable contributions to human spaceflight.

16) Mr. Alex Bartos FRF, FRPSL, ASITAF, SU, ASSS



An internationally acclaimed astrophilatelist and accredited FIP judge in the discipline. Known for his innovative and visually engaging exhibits, he has earned top honours, including world-level awards. His research spans rocket mail, space-flight postal history, and thematic space exploration. Through leadership roles in Romanian and international philatelic bodies, he actively promotes astrophilately and encourages fresh perspectives in exhibiting and judging.

Space Stamp Design

This exhibit presents a comprehensive showcase of space-themed philatelic material, with a primary focus on all official space stamp issues released by Romanian Post. It further includes a curated selection of space-related stamps, souvenir sheets, cancellations, and associated philatelic items for other postal authorities and associations worldwide. Through original artwork, thematic continuity, and innovative design concepts, the exhibit highlights the evolution of space exploration as interpreted through philately, reflecting both artistic vision and historical significance within the global space narrative.

17) Mr. Stefan Bruylants FEPA-Judge Astrophilately



An internationally accomplished Astrophilatelist and an accredited FEPA judge in the discipline. With multiple gold-level awards to his credit, his exhibits demonstrate both depth of research and visual storytelling. Actively involved in editorial and organizational roles within major philatelic bodies, he has played a significant role in promoting Astrophilately worldwide. His work bridges science, history, and postal documentation, inspiring collectors across generations.

Spaceflight in Japan

This exhibit presents the evolution of Japan's spaceflight program through philatelic material, tracing its development at the Uchinoura Space Center from the International Geophysical Year (IGY) to the launch of Japan's first satellite in 1970. It highlights early rocket experiments, scientific satellites, and the gradual expansion of Japan's space capabilities. The exhibit also documents Japan's human spaceflight contributions, including Japanese astronauts aboard the MIR space station and the International Space Station. In addition, it showcases JAXA's role in supporting the ISS through HTV cargo missions, illustrating Japan's growing participation in international space exploration.

18) Mr. Nandakishore H.S. (Youth Member)



A budding philatelist with a keen interest in Astrophilately. His approach reflects curiosity and quiet perseverance, focusing on the scientific and exploratory dimensions of space-related postal history. Through his collecting interests, he highlights humanity's fascination with space and technology, contributing meaningfully to a specialized yet evolving area of philately.

American Space Missions Displayed Through Philately

This exhibit explores the history and achievements of American space missions through philatelic material issued by the United States and international postal authorities. Using stamps, covers, and related items, it traces major milestones in space exploration from the early human spaceflight era to modern deep-space missions. The exhibit is organized chronologically, highlighting key programs such as Project Mercury, Apollo, Surveyor, Viking, Skylab, the Space Shuttle, and interplanetary missions including Pioneer, Mariner, New Horizons, and OSIRIS-REx. Together, these philatelic artifacts document technological progress, scientific discovery, and international recognition of the United States' contributions to space exploration.

19) Mr. Charles Bromser



An internationally recognised authority in Astrophilately, he maintains six active exhibits, including an International Large Gold at Belgica 2001. A foundation president of the Thematic Society of Australia and founder of the China Philatelic Society of Australia, he has served as Australia's FIP Astrophilately Delegate, FIP Bureau member, Commission Chair, and as a National and FIP judge. A long-standing philatelic writer and editor, his collecting interests include rocket mail, cosmology, space-related postal history, and specialised postal stationery.

Australia in Space -The Story of the Woomera Rocket Range

This exhibit traces the history of Australia's Woomera Rocket Range, established in 1946 under an Anglo-Australian partnership to advance guided weapons and rocket technology following World War II. Developed in response to wartime progress in German rocketry, Woomera evolved into one of the world's largest and most significant missile and space testing ranges. Through philatelic and postal history material, the exhibit documents early secret trials, major missile programs, and space research activities conducted at Woomera. It highlights the site's strategic importance during the Cold War and follows its operational development through to its gradual decline in the late 1970s.

20) Mrs. Marianne Van den Lemmer



An accomplished astrophilatelist whose work is distinguished by its thematic and research-driven presentation. A member of COSMOS Club and SEPGOM, her award-winning exhibits creatively document space animals and experimental missions. Her work has been featured in books and journals, reflecting both originality and research depth. Through her collections, she makes space history approachable, educational, and deeply human.

Space Dogs - The First Soviet Superstars

The exhibit explores the pivotal role of canine cosmonauts in the early Soviet space program. Through postcards and related material, it traces the journey from Sputnik-2 and Laika to later successful missions that proved a living being could survive spaceflight and return safely to Earth. While the scientific achievement belonged to engineers and researchers, public recognition was bestowed almost entirely on the dogs. Their images filled the media and consumer culture, transforming them into symbols of national pride. In a society with little popular celebrity culture, the space dogs became the Soviet Union's first true pop stars.



About RPSL

The Royal Philatelic Society London (RPSL), founded in 1869, is the world's oldest philatelic organization and a global hub for postal history. Its principal objects are to advance the science and practice of philately through research, lectures, and the publication of *The London Philatelist*. Under the patronage of King Charles III, the Society maintains an extensive library and museum at its London headquarters. Furthermore, it actively promotes international exhibitions and rewards excellence in philatelic literature, ensuring the hobby's academic preservation while fostering a global community of over 2,000 members dedicated to historical study.



AIR MAIL SOCIETY
INDIA FOUNDATION

About AMSI

The Air Mail Society India Foundation (AMSI) is driven by a passion for the historical and philatelic significance of Indian Air Mails. We are dedicated to preserving the rich heritage of Indian airmails through meticulous documentation and safeguarding artifacts for future generations. AMSI offers comprehensive educational resources and programs to enhance understanding and appreciation of Aerophilately among both members and the public. Our vibrant community of collectors, researchers, and enthusiasts fosters the exchange of knowledge and insights, ensuring that the rich legacy of Indian Air Mails flourishes.

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