

## The Rocket Mails of India.

The most comprehensive collection ever formed. | 1934-44

**Introduction :** The first documented postal rocket firing was in 1902 at Niuafo'ou Island, Tonga. Rocket mail offered expedited transportation across mountains, rivers and during emergencies where regular services were disrupted.

Renowned aero philatelist **Stephen Smith** took the initiative in India and carried out **270 rocket experiments** from 1934-44, of which **82 experiments carried mails** and the philatelic material known to exist. The experiments by Smith were personal; later he was granted permission from the Maharajah of Sikkim for official experiments. **The Indian postal authorities invited him to carry out official experiments in June 1938, which were the first postal rocket mails in the whole British Empire.**

**The Aim of the exhibit :** Traces development of Rocket Mail in India from the earliest to the latest Smith's experiments.

**Treatment :** 10 Chapters in chronology of the developments. Introductory information is provided in most of the chapters. The exhibit starts with archive material and the early experimental covers and goes on with the mails from every rocket known to have carried the mails along with the para-philatelic material **The rocket nos. mentioned in the exhibit are only for those rockets which carried mail**, Smith having also conducted experiments without the mail. Smith was a pervasive signer of the memorabilia so write-up does not mention this, other than where particularly pertinent.

**Selection of Material :** The exhibitor has struggled for almost 2 decades and was fortunate to build the most comprehensive collection of Indian Rocket mails over a period of time and more over to possess the original record book of Stephen Smith in which Mr. Smith use to make notes of his rocket mail experiments, this record book has revealed many unknown facts and this can be seen in the exhibit.

The exhibit includes many rare and unique pieces - proofs, color trials, overprint essays, outer wrappers, metal piece of the rocket, feathers from a Cock and Hen being the first livestock transported by rocket, covers, cards and missives, particularly the war period rocket mails are extremely rare and very hard to obtain. The rarest items are highlighted with thick border.

The exhibit is easy to follow and the story is told with coloured text.

### The Plan.

Chapter	Chapter Name	Frame	Page
1	Early Rocket Mail experiments.	1	1 to 7
2	Royal Silver Jubilee Firing and 1 <sup>st</sup> series of Sikkim Durbar experiments.	1 - 2	7 to 13
3	Parcel Experiments. Earthquake relief, Livestock firings and other experiments.	2	14 to 16
4	2 <sup>nd</sup> series of Sikkim Durbar experiments.	3	17 to 20
5	Telescopic Rocket Experiments.	3	21
6	Demonstration at Boy Scout camp - Delhi and Girl Guides Rally - Calcutta.	3 - 4	22 to 26
7	Coronation Celebration firings.	4	27
8	Special Rocket firings - First Postal rocket experiments of the British Empire.	4	28 to 32
9	Experiments during World War II.	5	33 to 38
10	Gas and Air Propelled rocket experiments.	5	38 to 40

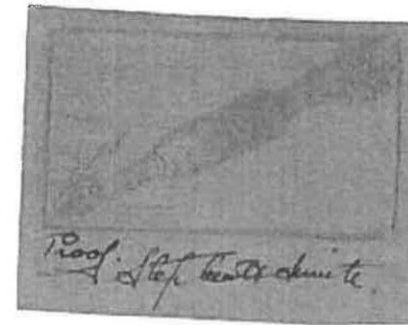
### Bibliography / References :

- Mr. Stephen Smith's original record book.
- Rocket mails of the world by Max Kronstein.
- Pioneer Rocket Mail & Space Mail by Michael Walter Hopferweiser.
- World Rocket Mail by Ellington and Zwisler.
- India 1935 Silver Jubilee Stamps by Nick Levinge and Rohit Prasad.
- Stephen Smith's Diary 1934-35 edited by D. N. Jatia
- Rocket Mail Catalogue and Historical Survey of First Experiments in Rocketry by Stephen Smith.

## Chapter # 1 Early Rocket Mail Experiments.

Proofs of the labels for the India's 1<sup>st</sup> Rocket Mail Experiments.

Smith was very sane and experienced aero philatelist, that can be seen from the versatile look he gave to his rocket mails using the colourful labels and cachets, he prepared the proofs for the labels of his first 3 experiments he carried at Sougar Island near Calcutta, Smith tried with various coloured papers and different single colours printing, initially the Rocket direction was downwards which Smith later changed to upwards and issued the 3 bicolour labels.



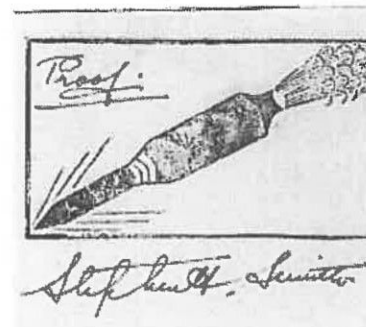
Red on glossy orange paper.



Dark blue on wove magenta paper.



Red on wove magenta paper.



Black on smooth yellow paper



Black on smooth pink paper