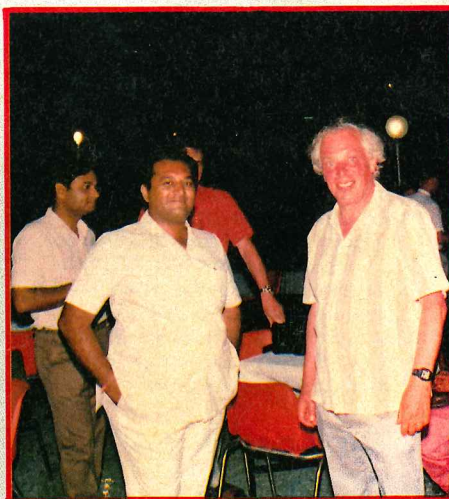
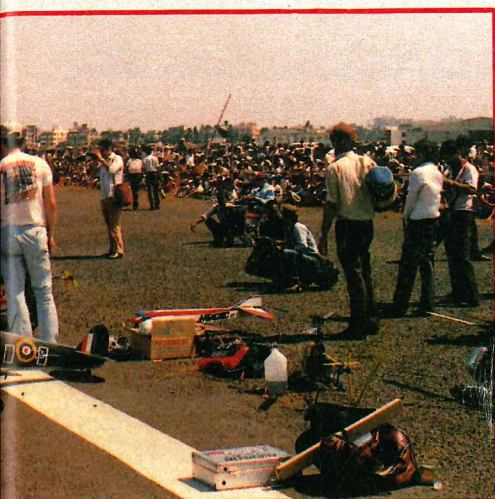




Start of the Paperchase

Having notified my two colleagues of the change of plans, Thursday was a frenzy of making crates, preparing the models, collecting an F-20 'Tigershark' D/F model from Paul Thorpe (generously loaned by him for the trip) and trying to organise the obtaining of visas from the Indian High Commission on the following day. As luck would have it, the Friday was one of India's main religious festivals — following Ramadan — and only a skeleton staff was on duty. The three of us waited for the doors to open, at 9.45a.m. only to be informed by the counter-staff that it was impossible to issue visas before Monday! A little sweet talking (and thanks to a broad view of 'emergency' by the manager) and we were promised the visas by four o'clock — an hour or so before we were due at Heathrow. Fortunately, Richard had completed his packing and he was left in London to collect the visas before tearing back to High Wycombe and on to Heathrow.

Derrick and I hot-footed back to Northamptonshire to complete the crating of the models (David Toyer had been hammering away

like mad) collect our belongings and set off again for Heathrow. When we had contacted Trevor (another modeller) to arrange for transport of the crate he frankly considered that it was a 'wind-up'. Who would ring up at 11 o'clock at night for a van to take a crate to the airport for a trip to India? It took three of us to persuade him it was genuine. Arriving at Heathrow, Gulf Air were expecting us, but were slightly overwhelmed by the size of the crates; the largest was 8ft. x 4ft. x 2ft. and that is LARGE. Excess luggage had only been cleared that morning and, thanks to Gulf Air generosity, the 80 kilo and 40 kilo crates were not charged.

Customs Out — Customs In

British Airways agreed to transport the crates to the Gulf Air 'Tristar' and on-load them, so all we had to do was to clear customs. "Where are your customs forms?" The Carnet forms for exporting and re-importing the goods." "Where do we get those from?" "From your local Customs office." With only a couple of hours to go before we are due to board there is no time to travel 160 miles to get the



Viranjan Ganjawalla and the Editor, above centre, are enjoying the celebration dinner on the roof terrace. Top right shows Darilus at the newly acquired club room in Bombay and, above, the impressive Gateway to India with the Taj Mahal hotel in the background.

طيران الخليج
GULF AIR



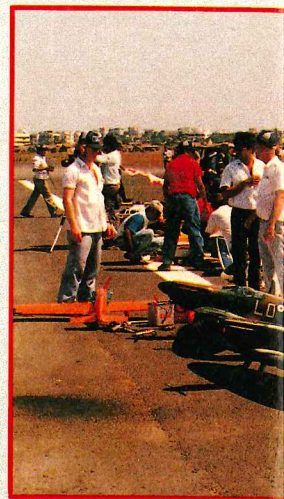
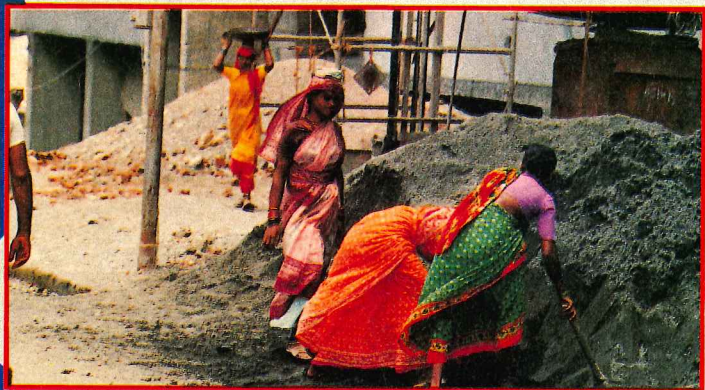
PASSAGE TO INDIA

Three men, two crates, five thousand miles — all to attend India's first International R/C meeting.

Report by David Boddington. Photographs by Vicki Lugani and the editor

Continued on page 742

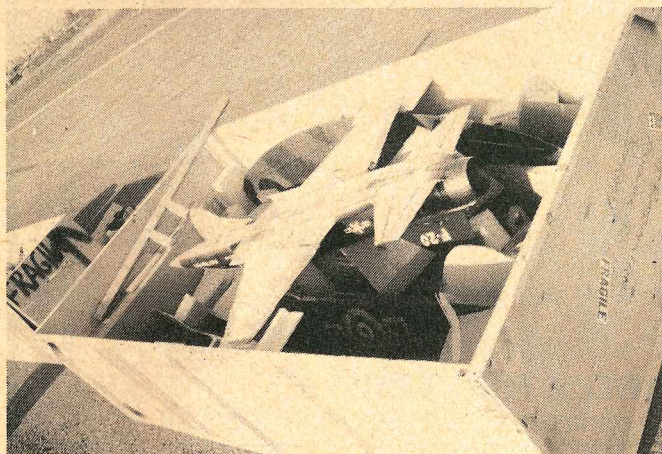
To give a true impression of India it would be necessary to have the heat and smells as well. We only have two dimensions to portray the atmosphere and events—below are Len Mount and John Wallington displaying the Kalt helicopters, followed by a shot of some sari-clad ladies doing the hard work on a building site and, bottom, Derrick starting up the 'Gringo' with Richard and myself looking on. Another general view of the pits area, and Indian spectators, is shown above right.



IN THE COLD, DIM AND DAMP DAYS of March one can be forgiven for having the occasional day-dreams of visiting hotter and more exotic countries. When a letter arrives on the editorial desk, totally unexpectedly, requesting the company of R/C aeromodellers to visit India the dreams turn into reality — well almost — and the world seems a little brighter. Darius Engineer, Secretary General of the Indian Academy of Model Aeronautics, had written explaining that they were organising the first Indian International R/C Aero Display and were looking for participation from Britain and other countries. Originally they wanted helicopter teams — solved by the attendance of a two-man Kalt Sprengbrook team, Len Mount and John Wallington and ducted fan models. We were hoping to get Chris Golds and David James over but, due to the short notice and communication delays this proved to be impossible.

Having organised a few displays myself, I could imagine the problems Darius was having in organising the event, sponsorship to obtain, the ground organisation to attend to, permission to apply for, negotiations for the site and the hundred and one things to do — plus having to take some exams! However the date was getting ever closer, Derrick Cox and Richard Crapp were standing by to create their models, and still no confirmation of the air tickets. We were due to fly out on the evening of Thursday, 28th May and when, by the Wednesday, there was no confirmation, I had no option but to ring Derrick and Richard to tell them it was definitely off. By this time Len and John had already left, by Air India, so we were feeling rather dejected.

On Thursday morning it happened. A telephone call from Gulf Air in India assured us that the tickets were cleared and waiting for us at their London Office, there had been some communications mix-up and these had now been resolved. But, it was now only a few hours before our flight was due and there was no possibility of getting ready in time. A flight on the Friday evening seemed equally impossible but, spurred on by my secretary, Pat, and Geoff Clarke, we set out to achieve the impossible — a large brandy settled the nerves.



required forms but, to prove the Customs officials are human, they agreed to accept duplicate lists of the contents and valuations.

We've made it. Aboard the 'Tristar' we relax and the flight passes in a haze of drinking, eating and dozing. Stepping off the plane at Bombay we are greeted by Gulf Air representatives who usher us through passport control and on to Customs with our hand luggage. "Have you any other luggage?" "Yes, two large plywood crates — look, there they are coming through the doors." That's where the problems started. The value of the models and equipment had been declared in England at £6,000, but import duty in India is 3250%, so the import value was £21,000. A bank bond for this amount would be required, from the Indian organisers, to ensure that we did not sell the goods during our stay. Saturday afternoon is not the best of times to obtain such a bond as all the banks are closed!

Paperwork is an essential part of the bureaucracy of the world's largest democracy and the inter-departmental form-filling for the Customs at the airport started in earnest. By this time Darius Engineer, our host and organiser, had caught up with us and helped us with the reams of paperwork. Some six and a half hours later (during that time we walked about four miles of corridors, made 'phone calls to the British Embassy, the Sports Minister and met a dozen different officials) we were cleared. It was thanks to the intervention of Viranjan Ganjawalla, sympathetic to our cause, that we made it at all.

By now there was only time left of the evening to get our crates near to the display site, book into the WIAA Club where we were staying, have a meal — the first of many excellent curries — have a shower and hit the sack. Half-way through my shower a loud banging on the door heralded the return, from a night on the town, of Len, John and friends; I must come and have a drink! Hell, who needs jet-lag anyway?

It aint 'alf hot mum!

As the flying display was due to commence at 10a.m. and we hadn't even unpacked our models, we were up at 6.30a.m. collected at 7.30a.m. and at the airfield, complete with crates, by 8.30a.m. The temperature at this stage was well into the 90's and rising fast. Jurah airfield was Bombay's original airport, now used for training, transport and private flying, and had been hired for the show. Tarmac runways were a mixed blessing, ideal for the models, they also acted as great heat reservoirs and the temperature soon soared to a 122°F maximum — hot, even for the locals.

Unpacking the models, they had travelled without damage, they were assembled in between answering a multitude of questions and searching for drinks. The latter were consumed at a fantastic rate and were sweated out at an equally impressive speed. Engine tests



Transport problems were solved, in India, by the simple action of hiring a barrow and porter. Packing the crate was an overnight work of art — the models survived unscathed, left. Darius Engineer, organiser of the event, with Vice Admiral S. Jain, chief guest, above. Even our transport had appropriate registration letters! left. Len ascends with John's hat, above right, colourful Gulf Air banner in the background and Paul Thorpe's 'Tigershark' takes off for the first D/F demo in India, right. Typical of the Bombay street scenes is the 'barber' shaving one of the locals, top right.

showed that performance, in the heat, was decidedly down; the ST2000 series engines needed to have the needle valves opened an extra four turns. There was no question of the motors coming up to operating temperature, they were above that just sitting on the tarmac. Fortunately, the Fleet, Sanwa and Simprop radio equipment continued to operate in these conditions, quite an achievement considering there was no shade or respite from the sun.

Grand Opening

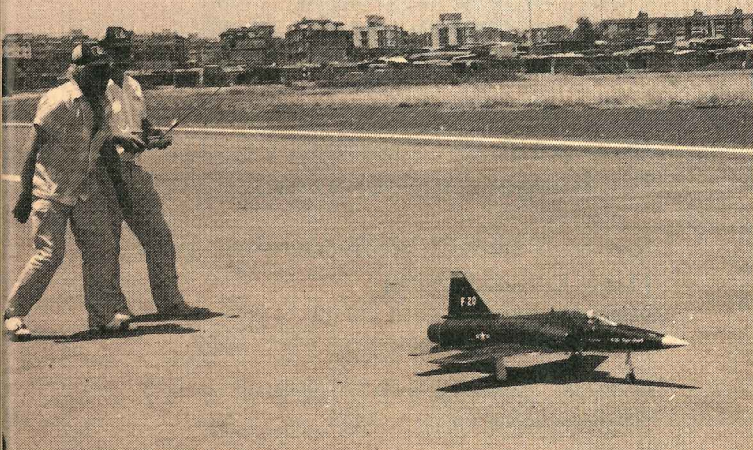
Before the start of the display we had a photo call for the benefit of the press and television and were then introduced to the chief guest, Vice-Admiral S. Jain who arrived, impressively, by helicopter. By this time an enthusiastic crowd of about 3,000 people had arrived to witness the event, a high proportion had probably never seen radio-control model aircraft before.

Local club members commenced the show with displays of aerobatics, banner towing, glider releasing and simulated combat — all, to the 'Oh's' and 'Ah's' and applause of an appreciative audience. Their standards were very much akin to a typical British club. Len and John had had the luxury of the two days prior to the event to set up their Kalt Baron helicopters and, despite the YS engines being 1,000rpm down on performance, they put on immaculate demonstrations. Having described the 'Gringo' as a sports pylon type model it was slightly disturbing to have the model staggering around the sky as if the Enya four-stroke had lost all interest in working in the prevailing conditions. At the end of a sixteen turn spin the engine finally quit and, on landing, the reason for the reluctance to run became apparent. Due to the heat the cowl and the nylon spinner had expanded to the extent that the rear of the spinner was melting on the cowl!

Richard had fewer engine problems than most of us as the Quadra 50 motor is used to operating at higher temperatures. His 'Starduster Too' demo, complete with smoke, was much appreciated by the public, although a failure of one elevator servo (they are duplicated) limited the last part of the flight.

Further displays by the dynamic duo, Len and John, included the 'little girl flying a helicopter' act (where Len hides and the girl pretends to fly the model). So convincing was this 'spoo' that it is doubtful whether Len will be invited back, the organisers will book the girl instead.

It was intended to change the transmitter for the F-20 'Tigershark' from Model 2 to Model 1, so that I could fly it, but there was no time to do this. Len Mount kindly stepped into the breach and the engine was wound up to an impressive scream — much to the joy of the spectators. Although the performance was naturally down compared



with this country, Len was able to put on a convincing display and made a superb landing back on the tarmac — without wheels, having to touch down on three small hardwood skids. For India, this was a modelling first, they were particularly keen to see a ducted fan model fly.

The finale of the modelling participation of the display was due to be the large 'Spitfires' flown by Derrick and myself. However, by this time two things had happened, we were running out of time and the over-enthusiastic public had reached the edge of the runway. Regrettably we had to call off the 'Spit' demo, perhaps this was not a bad thing as the engines would have been struggling in the heat and one of the models had suffered a split along the wing (right down through the foam). Not only that, it was also impossible to handle the starter and the transmitters.

Cooling breezes

Completing the public show were displays by the Navy and private helicopters and a twin-engined Beech. One of the helicopters did its best to keep all of us cool by hovering a few feet away from us — all very nice, except that we had to try to hold the models down at the same time, with dust and debris blown into our faces.

So ended the display, but there were still scores of questions to answer, the press to talk to and the models to pack away. I must admit that, after over six hours standing in the searing heat I was fair shattered, fortunately Derrick and Richard had enough steam left, with the help of a few of our local modelling friends, to secure the models in the crates.

Was our journey really necessary

Our first thoughts were, having travelled all this way for a handful of flights between the five of us, was it all worthwhile. The answer was an unqualified yes. To explain the reason for this success it is necessary to understand the position of aeromodelling in India. Although accepted as a sport it gets very little in the way of encouragement and sponsorship, as a result, the members of aeromodellers are very small. With the enormous import duty buying foreign goods is prohibitive and indigenous products are limited and not to the standards we have come to expect.

Help, if it is to come, must originate from the Government in the forms of greater recognition, the relaxation of import restrictions and encouragement in the development of home-based modelling industries. To obtain assistance from the Government the hobby must have a higher profile with good media coverage. This was one

of the principal aims of the display in Bombay and in this respect it was extremely successful. National and local television covered the event and the newspapers were generous with their coverage, more so than any reporting I have seen in this country. Later in the week a press conference was held at the Gulf Air headquarters and if we contributed in some small way to the progress of aeromodelling, in addition to having a most interesting and enjoyable stay, then our visit was doubly worthwhile.

The remainder of our stay in Bombay was spent in sightseeing, taking a look at the workshops of the Academy and the Airforce Cadets and eating and drinking, drinking and drinking — I've never consumed so many cold soft drinks in all my life. Our hosts were marvellous, they took us into their homes and showed us round Bombay. We even managed to make it rain on one evening — the first for nine months — and the 180° skid performed by Rushabh, on the inevitably greasy and polished tarmac road surfaces, all added to the excitement. Driving in Bombay, especially in the Taxis, is an unforgettable experience, they drive to the absolute limits, sound their horns continuously and yet, miraculously, have few accidents.

Return of the Golden Falcon

Our traumas were not yet over, the Gulf Air Golden Falcon flight was due to take-off at 7.45a.m. which meant rising at four o'clock, making a 25km hair-raising taxi ride to collect the model crates then on to the airport. As usual, there was a hoard of unofficial porters to carry our boxes, all of them wanting to give instructions. However, the passport and customs officials were in less of a hurry. We had to 'undo' our customs paperwork and this caused a certain amount of confusion as they were insisting that there were two forms to clear, we were equally adamant that the two crates had been entered on one form. Finally, it transpired that the second form related to Richard's video camera (he'd forgotten it was in his passport for safe-keeping). We boarded the plane with minutes to spare, thinking our problems were now over, and settled down to the three-stop flight home. In-flight service was again excellent, I had to refuse three brandies — something of a record — and even Richard's not inconsiderable appetite was sated.

Arriving back at Heathrow our bags and boxes of mangoes came safely through on the conveyor belts, but no crates. With assurances that the aircraft had been completely emptied we had to accept the inevitable, the crates might be at Bombay, Muscat, Bahrain or Frankfurt, but they were definitely not at Heathrow. Thankfully, there was a telephone call the next day to say that they had safely arrived at the airport and they were delivered to us on the following day.

Mysterious East

Our sincere thanks go to Darius, Rushabh, Mukesh, Jitendra and to our sponsors Gulf Air for making such a fascinating trip possible. The potential of aeromodelling in India is undoubtedly tremendous; Bombay alone has a population of ten million and even if you could get 0.1% actively interested it would amount to a great number (India is expected to have a total population of 1,000 million by the turn of the century).

We can, in a small way, give assistance to fellow modellers in the sub-continent by sending them some of the vital goods and literature they so urgently need. How this can be done we will explain in a future issue of the magazine, when we have devised a suitable scheme with Darius and the Academy.

If this report has been less R/C model orientated than normal, I hope you will forgive the indulgence, but I genuinely believe that we should be thinking more in terms of our hobby in world terms, rather than on a parochial level. Finally, would we go again? — you bet!

... and so to bed.

