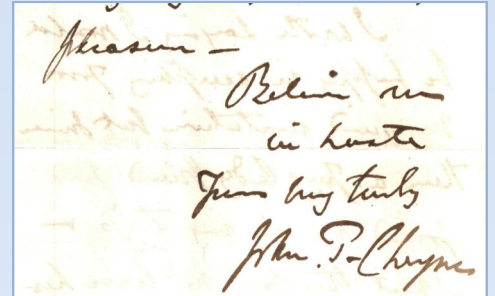


PRE-WWII

# Polar Lighter-Than-Air Flights

Insert letter so letterhead and first handwritten line shows. That will cover this text. Use 2 corner mounts on reverse to hold letter in place. Recommend 2 inch corners for that purpose.

Line below will be slit.



Letter signed by Cheyne.

Only known British Commander John Powles Cheyne, RN (Ret.) posted note pertaining to his (aborted) 1880 (first ever) North Pole balloon expedition. Dated 13 October 1879 from Birmingham, England, on "London Central Arctic Committee Rooms" stationery during his unsuccessful fundraising tour.

**PURPOSE:** To be the first exhibit to postally document the evolving history of balloons and motorized airships ("lighter-than-air [LTA]" flight vehicles) in the polar regions during the earliest two periods (1850-1936) of human Arctic and Antarctic activity.

**BACKGROUND:** Polar history's middle period (*Mechanical Age*, 1924-54) generally is characterized by its increased acceptance of aviation support. However, flight vehicles (balloons) first were used in the polar regions almost 75 years earlier. Some fragile devices, but mainly magnificently mature LTA aircraft, sparingly appeared in polar skies during the interwar period, while most of the polar realm's aerial attention at that time was focused on the development of struggling fixed wing aircraft.

LTAs accomplished some of the most significant polar flight

achievements: The very first polar flight, first crossing of Siberia, first aero attempt at North Pole, first trans-Arctic flight, first aero geographical exploration, first employment in upper air scientific data collection, first aerial ascent in Antarctica, etc. Fixed and rotary winged aircraft replaced LTAs for polar flight, but LTAs served well their period of useful, significant service, while providing some of our more intriguing aerophilately.

**SCOPE:** Shown chronologically is material from all the important pre-WWII polar LTA events. Associated contemporaneous items are used where appropriate and especially where flown pieces do not exist. Fuller postal documentation is presented of the most influential and significant LTA events, particularly where this more complete postal portrayal traditionally would be expected (e.g., 1926 *Norge*, 1928

*Nobile*, 1929 RTW Zepp flight and the 1931 *Polarfahrt*). More unusual examples are shown in many cases where a certain necessary flight documentation is inherently not uncommon.

**HIGHLIGHTED MATERIAL:** Much of the material is challenging or highly unusual. The most extraordinary are identified in explanatory red type. Complete rate/routing coverage is shown in both the 1929 Zepp RTW flight and 1931 *Polarfahrt* sections.

## Exhibit Plan

Organized by periods and their device type:

1. 19th C. Balloon
2. Early 20th C. Balloon
3. Early 20th C. Airship
4. Later 20th C. Airship
5. Later 20th C. Balloon