



The Story of Aviation in Jamshedpur

1934 – The Landing Ground

The Indian Aviation department issued its first Aviator Pilot's License to JRD Tata in 1929. This focused interest in flying in India. Very soon, 2,000 kms away, Jamshedpur township was waking up to the importance of air travel.

In Jamshedpur, about 5 km North-west of the railway station, the officers and others used to gather on weekends to bet at the horse racing ground, a flat piece of land, overlooking the Dalma hills. This, the management decided, would be the ideal landing ground for the nascent aviation movement.

A landing strip was then appropriately constructed. This was very convenient for dignitaries like Governors and Rajas to visit the township. It was also used as a technical halt for the historic Calcutta to Bombay experimental flight in 1934. The "T" shaped landing ground was expanded from 550 yards to 1000 yards which would enable "even a KLM or Imperial Airmail liner to land".



How the first Aeroplane in Jamshedpur was acquired

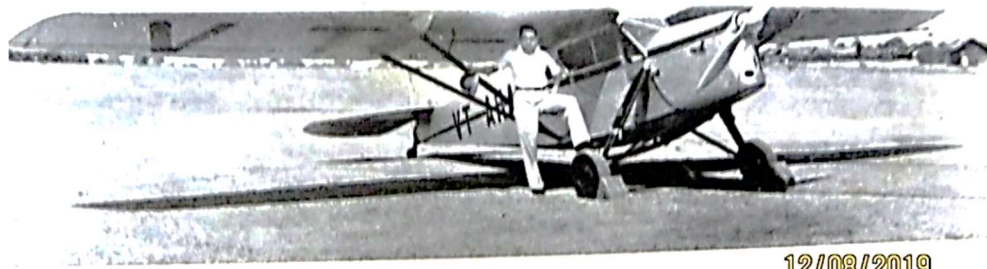


Local legend suggests that a Scottish engineer wrote to the Board of Directors requesting that TISCO acquires a small plane. Since he had to travel regularly on dusty roads to the collieries, he offered to fund half its costs.

Jehangir Ghandy, Assistant General Manager, thought it was a reasonable request since a landing field already existed. The company decided to fund the entire cost. And with this began the exciting and colourful history of aviation in Jamshedpur. An aircraft with a larger capacity than the usual Puss Moth was considered.

TISCO began its historic aviation journey with the Leopard Moth registered as VT-AHA in 1936

A British made De Havilland "Leopard Moth" monoplane made in the U.K. was delivered on the 22nd of April, 1936. With a 130 H.P. engine, it cruised comfortably at 100 MPH and could carry two passengers besides the pilot. Two days later on the 24th of April Mr. Ghandy took the 7½ hour journey to Bombay and returned on the 27th of April, satisfied that this new acquisition could be profitably used in better time management for the officers. After that it was used regularly to visit the nearby collieries.



Mr. J. J. Ghandy under the wings of the 'plane. (See Notes & Comments) 12/08/2019
मि० जे० जे० गंधी उड़ने की तैयारी कर रहे हैं।

J.J. Ghandy welcomes TISCO's first aircraft

The first flight to Bombay



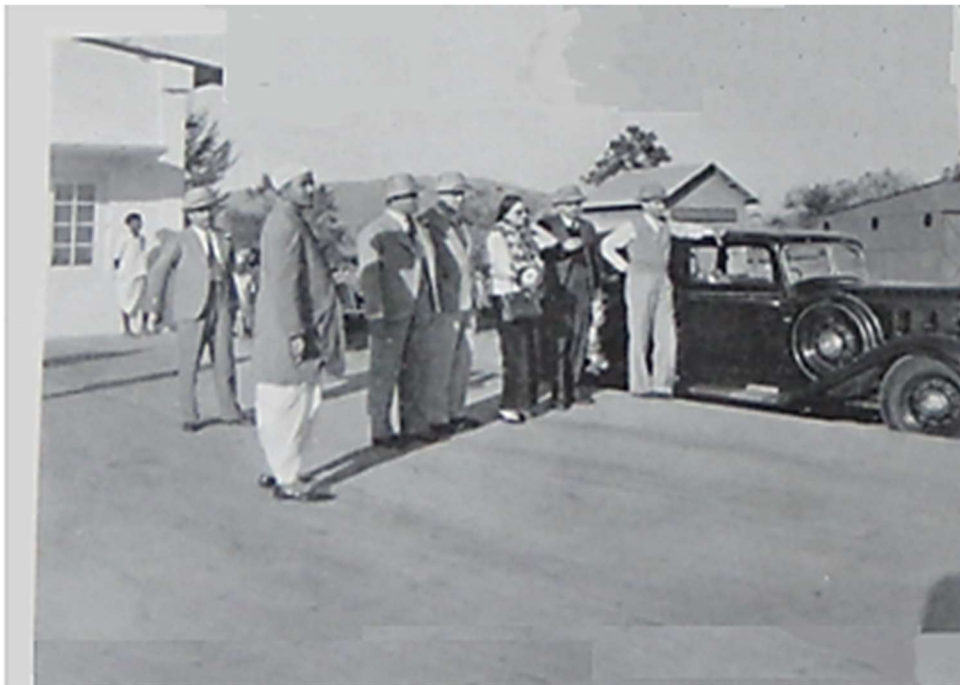
The Steel Company's "Leopard Moth" in which Mr. J. J. Ghandy, the General Manager (in the centre) flew to Bombay. See "Notes & Comments". 12/08/2019

Waco5 seater biplane

Very soon the management felt the need for a larger aircraft to carry more than two passengers. By 1938, TISCO added a five seater Bi-plane – the American Waco fitted with a Jacob's Radial 285 BHP engine, with a cruising speed of 140 MPH. This continued to be in service till the early fifties. Important dignitaries thus found it more convenient to visit Jamshedpur.



Tata's New Five-seater—The Waco Bi-plane.

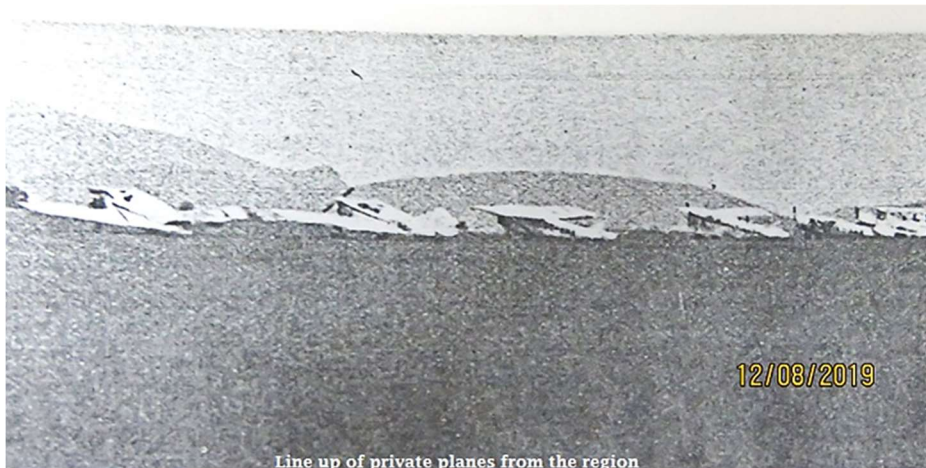


From Right :
Mr. J.R.D. Tata, Chairman TISCO, Mr. J.J. Ghandy, Mrs. Tata & others at the Jamshedpur Aerodrome



Mr. & Mrs. JRD Tata, Mr. J.J. Ghandy and others at the Aerodrome

World War II effort



Aircraft of the local kingdoms

In 1941, Mr. Jehangir Ghandy stirred up the imagination of the citizens of Jamshedpur by conducting a collection drive leading to donating the proceeds of Rs 2,30,000/- to purchase two Spitfire fighters named Sakchi and Golmori. He managed to gather the aircrafts of the local kingdoms and ignited the imagination of the local people with aerobatics, low flying and even steep dives !

Growth from the late fifties

Since then the company continued to acquire a wide variety of interesting and modern aircraft from the Beechcraft, Cessna and the Pilatus range.

Tata Steel continued to upgrade its fleet. The Beechcraft, considered to be the Mercedes of executive planes, continued to be its favourite. There is a twin prop aircraft for long distances. For short hauls and to ferry company executives there are the two single prop STOL Pilatus and also the three Bell 429 helicopters.



The current range of aircraft

Flying for the citizens

With the interest in aviation increasing, TISCO encouraged locals to experience the thrill of flying by allowing the creation of **Jamshedpur Cooperative Flying Club**.

Commercial Flights



Mr. JRD Tata at the Jamshedpur Cooperative Flying Club inspecting the Pushpak

In the fifties, private airlines like JamAir and ACC began commercial flights to Dum Dum, Calcutta, using the war horse of World War II – DC3 Dakotas.

This is what ignited the interest of young Niroop Mahanty, in flying.



Niroop Mahanty - Early experiences in flying

Next, Vayudoot introduced the F-27 Fokker Friendship and sustained the service successfully for a few years. After that, a few private airlines like Kingfisher, Air Deccan and MDLR attempted service to Jamshedpur but gave up after a few months. Others also have, for a short time, attempted to own and operate aircrafts.

The Scotsman of the 1930s would surely be thrilled to see the results of what he had suggested !



- **Ronald D'Costa**

Courtesy :

Capt. Ravi Radhakrishnan

Capt. Neeraj Madaan

Niroop Mahanty

Dicky Mody

Swarup Sengupta

Merlyn F. Anklesaria