

HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Hon. President: vacant

Hon. Secretary: vacant

Hon. Editor: Peter Hobbs, Six Tynning End, Widcombe Hill, Bath BA2 6AN Tel: 01 225-31 09 71

No. 1 January 2001

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION FOR INLAND NAVIGATION & WATER POWER UTILISATION 1926

sent in by
John Millener



This is the official pc for the exhibition showing, on the reverse, three planes over Basel harbour. It has the three cancels as listed on page 553 of the Zumstein Specialised Catalogue.

*Selig
Kautler
Mrs. H. G.*

OFFIZIELLE KARTE



This card is also 'official' but the reverse has only one plane over the harbour. The cancel is correct for the airmail Basel to Zürich, but - what is the cachet and vignette for the exhibition? Are they listed in some catalogue we do not have a copy of in the Library? Please let members know in case they are also puzzled!

The Swiss Merchant Marine Fleet

David Whitworth.

Last year I came across an official envelope from the Schweizerisches Seeschiffahrtsamt (Swiss Maritime Navigation Office), situated in Basel. Shortly afterwards I was able to purchase a few examples from a series of covers which had been mailed from Swiss registered vessels over a period of almost twenty years, from 1968 until 1986, each being forwarded by air from the port of call at the time. Countries visited ranged across the globe from Norway, Algeria, Aden, Japan, USSR, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America. Wanting to know more about Swiss shipping, I wrote to the office in Basel and also to the Swiss shipping line, Suisse Atlantique in Lausanne, which operated the vessels. Their replies have given an interesting insight into the development of the Swiss merchant fleet.

The 40c value stamp from the 1949 Definitive series depicts the harbour on the Rhine at Basel. In fact Basel is the legal port of registration for all Swiss seagoing vessels.

In the 19th century some Swiss trading companies owned and operated their own ships, which were registered in foreign ports, and several ships briefly sailed under the Swiss flag as early as 1860. However attempts to introduce shipping under the Swiss flag failed because there was no international maritime law governing the operation of a merchant fleet by a land locked country, with no navy; in addition the Swiss government had little interest in the matter.

It was during the First World War that Switzerland became aware of the lack of it's own merchant ships. Surrounded by nations at war, and completely dependent on imports, the effect of the Allied blockade and the German U-boat campaign became serious. Switzerland was able to charter a few, mostly American ships, but at a high price, and capacities became increasingly scarce due to U-boat destruction. When America entered the war, the situation became critical, and the shipping capacity available was only one tenth of what was theoretically desirable for adequately supplying the country.

The declaration of the Transport Conference of the League of Nations in Barcelona in 1921 was of fundamental importance to Switzerland. This declaration gave recognition to the flags of seagoing vessels registered to land-locked countries, as long as these ships were registered at a specific location considered to be a port of registration. However it wasn't until 1940, during the Second World War, that the Swiss Shipping Company in Basel, and André & Co. in Lausanne, (now Suisse Atlantique SA.) who both owned and operated vessels (three) under the Panama flag, asked the Swiss Government to have the vessels registered under the Swiss flag.

The request was refused, but the supply situation in Switzerland became critical towards the end of 1940 when Italy invaded Greece, whose ships had formerly been chartered to supply Switzerland through Italian ports. A maritime law was hurriedly drawn up which came into effect on 9th April 1941. The Swiss government purchased four vessels, and these, together with privately owned vessels previously mentioned, now sailed under the Swiss flag. In addition the International Committee of the Red Cross purchased three vessels, which were also registered in Switzerland. Despite occasional losses, and the difficulty of transporting goods to Switzerland from Portuguese or Spanish ports, it was realised after the war had finished, that it would be sensible to maintain a merchant fleet in peacetime.

The steam ship St-Cergue, built at West Hartlepool in 1937, acquired by Suisse Atlantique in 1941.

The original St-Cergue was sold in 1952, however a vessel with the same name, built in Rio de Janeiro in 1983, was operating in 1986 when the cover below was posted in Fukuyama, Japan, on 21st May 1986, back-stamped in Genoa, 28th May 1986. ➤

m/s St-Cergue



ON COMPETITIONS from Ken Reeves

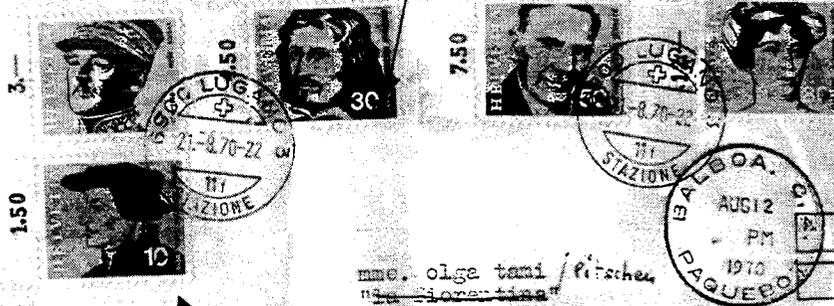
Very soon it will be competition time again. Unfortunately for some our respective clubs, Swansea and Helvetia, seem to clash on these dates. But the point I would like to make is that most Societies require entries of 16 pages. HPS only 12 pages. So that means reducing by four pages an entry which was written up for Swansea. This is not easily done. Could not Helvetia align with other Societies as the flow of a 16-page entry is broken somewhat by a reduction of four?

A cover addressed to Lugano, redirected to Sent, posted from Balboa in the Canal Zone on 12th August 1970. Redirected, the stamps were cancelled in Lugano on 21st August 1970. The stamps were not cancelled in Balboa, however they have all been marked with a small black ink mark in the bottom right hand side of the figure 0 belonging to the value figures, can anyone explain this?

POSTED ON THE
HIGH SEAS
LAT. Port of Balboa
Canal Zone
LONG.



PAR AVION
航空郵便



mme. Olga Tomi / Pitscher
via ~~praca 11~~
6532 ~~urugansona~~ Lugano
switzerland
7151 / SENT (GR)

A cover from m/s Sils, addressed to Italy, undated but with Pro Juventute stamps of 1986 cancelled PAQUEBOT, forwarded by air from Algiers.



After the war the Swiss government sold its merchant ships to private owners, and in the interest of maintaining a modern merchant fleet for supplying the country, it began to facilitate financing for ship owners by guaranteeing loans from Swiss banks for the purchase of ships. Today (as at 15.09.99) there are six companies operating a total of twenty vessels under the Swiss flag. These vessels, twelve bulk carriers, five multi purpose freighters, and three chemical tankers, are of modern construction, the majority having been built within the last ten years, which seems to indicate Switzerland's intention to maintain it's independent Merchant Marine fleet.

Adresse des Absenders. - Text.
Adresse de l'expéditeur. - Texte.
Indirizzo del mittente. - Testo.

ROUGE SERBE

du service
Lionniers de guerre
VES, 118

Geneva
[Handwritten signature]

Postkarte. Carte postale

Cartolina postale

12-1
SERBIE SUISSE SVIZZERA



INDANCE DES
RS DE GUERRE

CARTE POSTALE
VIENNE

SERBIAN RED CROSS in Geneva 1917 - two pcs, one to and one from Hungary, but what is the significance of the large 'S' on each? Both different and with an initial in blue crayon to the side. Was this to do with censorship?

COLLECTING SWISS

Allan Young

I have been collecting Swiss stamps for eighteen years. I started after my wife and I first visited the country in 1982. At the time my sister-in-law lived in Geneva, and with our domestic commitments easing, we were at last able to spend a holiday in Switzerland. What a memorable experience that was: to see the Alps, to witness the Swiss life style, both urban and rural. We spent a few days in Geneva and two weeks in a chalet in the village of St. Luc in the Val d'Anniviers, walking in the mountains. That experience started my love affair with Switzerland. We have returned to Switzerland many times since. So, back in 1982 I disposed of my rather ordinary collection of Commonwealth and concentrated on Swiss.

I would not claim to be a specialist collector, nor even a philatelist. I suppose you could class me as a 'one of each' collector. A good number of my stamps have come from the Society packets, some modern issues came direct from the PTT (now SP of course), some stamps and covers from my relations. Only a few have been bought from dealers and stamp fairs.

I made an early decision to collect postally used wherever possible, to avoid the mint never hinged nonsense, as it seemed to me that it was more ethical, more honest, to collect stamps that have served their intended purpose as pre paid mail. I must say I am not concerned with the monetary value of my collection. Other members might be mystified this attitude I'm sure! Realistically, I have not acquired any expensive stamps, so I cannot expect my collection to ever be valuable.

My collection is housed in nine albums - volumes one to seven are the W H Smith's four ring Collector type, covering the general definitive and commemorative issues, air and postal dues etc from 1850 to 1999. Pro Patria and Pro Juventute are in separate Martin Mills albums. All the stamps are written up, and arranged in Zumstein numerical order, ie chronologically. Often one issue occupies one or more pages, with blocks, covers, postal stationary, etc. I include any matter relevant to the particular stamps, maps to show cantons, towns and railways. I try to make the collection interesting to a non-specialist 'reader', as one might do for a club display. Presentation does matter.

The first album starts with a written chronology of the classic issues, and a few pre-stamp postal history items. My first stamps are the 1850 imperforate Federal issue. The collection then proceeds through the years, as outlined above, and ending with the 1999 SP Christmas Card with the millennium block. Why end there? To continue with new issues seems a mugs game! All I was doing was sending money to Swiss Post, falling for their ploy of stamps as a money-making commodity rather than to serve a postal need. I am sure all members of the Society will understand what I am saying.

To draw a line under the collection was a hard decision, but one I do not regret taking. There are so many more paths to explore, without filling further albums with silly new issues. I ought to look out for more varieties, and to try to fill the more expensive gaps, more soldier stamps, interesting cancellations, railway stamps, postal stationary, covers, let alone finding better copies of some of the earlier stamps. So I am not giving up collecting by any means. Perhaps with the general collection now intact, this is the beginning of becoming a philatelist!

Northern Group Meeting. Water levels had now subsided sufficiently to allow the December meeting to take place and a most enjoyable one it proved to be. It was reported that in recent weeks and in addition to the visit to Leeds PS as mentioned last month, displays had been given by four of our members to the societies at Rotherham, Scunthorpe, Morley, Huddersfield, Bury and Blackburn with, I suspect, more to come.

However, the topic for this occasion was "Three Colour Mixed Frankings" at the suggestion of Ian Gilchrist when the programme was being prepared. He it was, therefore, who was the 'opening batsman' for the afternoon and for which purpose he had kindly prepared a short paper on the subject. With Ian's approval I am using this paper, virtually in its entirety as my report.

"Last year when I suggested the subject of 'Three Colour Frankings' we did not have time to discuss what this really means. In fact I thought that this was the subject we had decided upon. It was only after I had prepared a few sheets for the day that I looked at the syllabus to discover that the frankings were to be 'mixed'! I had already decided that I would ask the question, 'What do we mean by a three colour franking?' Now I also need to address the question of what is a three colour mixed franking? Firstly, therefore, I would like to outline my ideas on a three colour franking as questions rather than statements, followed with my thoughts. (*In brackets*).

1. Should there be only three stamps of a different colour on the envelope or card, or are pairs, blocks, tête-bêche, etc. allowed? (*Only three stamps but multiples allowed*).
2. Do the three stamps each have to be of one colour? (*Yes*).
3. Should the stamps all be of the same set? By this I mean stamps issued on or around the same date; e.g. Strubel, Sitting & Standing Helvetia, Numerals, 1900 UPU, Tell and Tell Boy. With the Tell issues it is very difficult to decide what is a set. (*Yes, with all Tell Boys counting as one issue, William Tell and Helvetia counting as separate issues*).

4. Do all the stamps have to be from the same country? (*Why not but this will conflict with No.3; i.e. they cannot be from the same set*).

5. Are stamps used with Postal Stationery allowed? (*Not sure on this!*).

Now to the question of the meaning of 'Three Colour Mixed Franking'.

1. Should there be only three stamps of a different colour on the envelope or card, or are pairs, blocks, tête-bêche, allowed. (*Only three stamps, but multiples allowed*).
2. Do the three stamps each have to be of one colour? (*Yes*).
3. Should the stamps be from different sets, i.e. a combination from sets like Sitting and Standing Helvetia, Tell Boy and William Tell, definitive with Pro-Juventute or other issues. The list is endless. (*No comment!*).
4. Can the stamps be from different countries? (*I assume so, for this is mixed*).
5. Are stamps with Postal Stationery allowed? (*Yes, this is a mixed combination*).

I think from this brief introduction to the topic you will appreciate that this is not a straightforward subject. I would like to suggest that at some future meeting we put time aside to discuss this further and perhaps put our conclusions to the Society. I am aware that this type of collecting has become very popular over the past few years and wonder if any of the philatelic bodies have published their opinions. Today, I have brought along 24 sheets which illustrate most of the thoughts I have put forward.

Three Colour Frankings

1. 1900 UPU, all three stamps from same but different colours.
2. Numeral Issue, all three stamps from same set but different colours.
3. Tell Boy, First Issue. 4. Tell Boy, Type I. 5 & 6. Tell Boy Type I and II.
7. Tell Boy, Type I and III. 8. Tell Boy, Type II and II. 9. Tell Boy, Type III.
10. William Tell. (As with Nos. 1 & 2, the eight that followed all had three stamps from the same set, but different colours).
- 11 & 12. Tell Boy First Issue and Type I. (*Or does this count as 'mixed'?*).
- 13 & 14. Tell Boy First Issue and Helvetia in blocks of four/six and singles. (*Is this allowed?*).
15. Tell Boy, Type II and Wm. Tell. 16. Tell Boy overprint, W. Tell and Helvetia. (*Or are both of these to be classed as 'mixed'?*).

Three Colour Mixed Frankings.

17. Wm. Tell Type I, Salvage Campaign, Pro-Juventute. (*This poses an interesting question. Clearly a mixed franking but does it count as a three colour as all the stamps are brown, albeit of different shades and printed 28 years apart?*).
18. Definitive Landscapes with Helvetia.
19. Tell Boy, Type II, Helvetia and Frank Stamp.

20. 3Fr. Definitive and two Helvetia with sword. (*Does this count, as the Helvetia with sword stamps are from the same set?*).
21. Airmail cover; Air stamps and Tell Boy, Type III. (*The Air stamps are not one colour so I think this does not count in either section. However, the cover is interesting as the orange 5c. Tell Boy has turned brown!*).
22. Wm. Tell with postage dues from other countries.
23. Postal Stationery; one card with stamps of the same issue; and one with different issues.
24. Finally a fun item; miniature stamps of Wm. Tell and Helvetia. Has anyone seen these before?

I hope you have found this of interest. I find it a fascinating subject, so dare I suggest that we have a meeting next year on FOUR colours! Whether they are mixed or not I leave the meeting to decide."

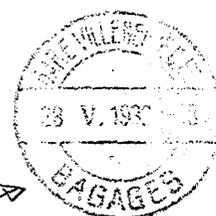
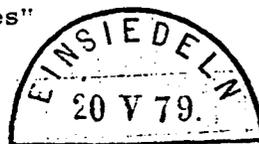
Four of the rest of the team then followed with their versions of the topic. Enough said, since one person entered the realms of multi-franking! D.C.

ANSWERS TO QUERIES or a few of them in last month's Newsletter M Rutherford

The octagonal cancel on page 94 is the station cancel of Gstaad on the MOB line, it is well known but I cannot find it in the Güller book. With its octagonal form it is more like a telegraph or customs cancel.

The vignette is for the *Mustermesse* (Samples Fair) in Basel, Italian version. The winged helmet represents Mercury, the god of Trade, Communications and Science.

In the Güller book I did find a couple of "funnies" in the way of cancels - this one is for Einsiedeln. While on the subject of cancels here is one from Mr Miccotti which he found on piece. The date is 28.V.1933 and the stamps were a Tell Boy a PJ and a Disarmament issue. What was the Gare in Villeneuve doing with this?



In the DYK column opposite are the two new covers for A & B post. Here are the barcodes from some other covers which have a similar barcode to show where the cancel is to be applied, as there is no stamp to indicate this.

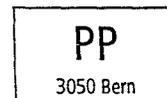
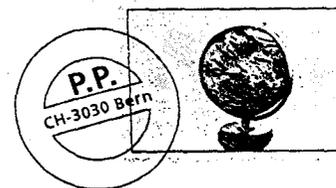


Postsendung
Envoi postal
Invio postale
6501 Bellinzona

Postfinance **DIE POST** 
LA POSTE
LA POSTA



Die Schweizerische Post
Swiss Post International
Viktoriastrasse 21
CH-3030 Bern



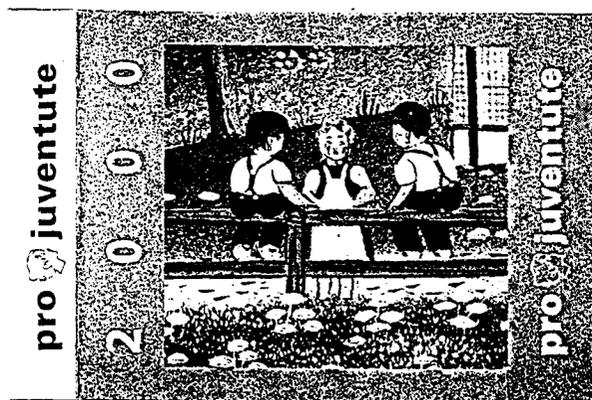
THE EDITOR DOES NEED A CONTINUAL SUPPLY OF ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER.

Please do not think that another member will send in an article or query. YOU have also something in your collection that needs an answer. You have some notes you have made on your special interest. Publish it in the Newsletter for others to share before it is lost in an executor's sale of your effects!

Did you know?

M Rutherford

- that I wish you all an interesting 2001, not too sticky and be careful of your perforations! I really hope to clear up a number of outstanding queries this year (good resolution No. 1) and I don't mind you sending me a rocket to get me back on track.
- that the Philatelic Counter in Zürich moved in December, from the first floor of the Fraumünster Post to the ground floor (old Swisscom office) giving them an improved location at street level, almost equal to that in Luzern.
- that Fribourg has been upgraded from a sub-centre to a Regional Centre in October, and equipped with two of the newest Siemens (AEG-Electrocom) coding/sorting machines type IRV/DBCS (Integrated Reading and Video system/Delivery BarCode Sorter) which can handle up to half a million letters per day. The coding remains the same.
- that in Zürich Sihlpost the same type of machines are being installed as the daily pressure of 2.5 million letters has risen to 3.5 million.
- that the auction house of Kronenberg in Basel had an auction (13th December) in which two items stand out. A part sheet of the Geneva Doubles, ie, the top with all the instructions and two rows of ten stamps (five pairs) mint. The green colour is considered truer than the part sheet in the Museum of Communication as it has lain undisturbed for 70 years in a bank safe. The other item is a corner block of four Basel Doves with wide margins. This was bought in 1930 for the vast sum - then - of CHF 75 000. Starting price today - a ¼ million.
- that in the SBZ for December there is an article by Dr Andreas Burkhardt (and R Schmidt) who was until recently Curator of the Museum for Communication, on the rumoured poisonous ink used for printing the Basel Dove stamps. He can guarantee that this is not the case. The six-page, fully-illustrated article in colour handles many other aspects of this stamp. It also illustrates how scientific methods of incredible complexity can today be easily applied to stamp forgeries, in ways unthinkable a decade ago.
- that readers of *Focus on stamps* are privileged. The general public in Switzerland do not know that pre-stamped covers can be bought at all POs, A & B post in sizes C6 & C5, at the nominal prices of 90 or 70c, that is the envelopes are free. They are for internal use but can be up-rated by adding the appropriate stamps for foreign countries. As an additional attraction the A & B service remains even after the next rate change. That is perhaps why selling them is not being pushed, a funny way for an organisation devoted to selling in today's market. So get hold of them before they are withdrawn because of lack of demand (see the figures below).
- that last month I wondered about the number of possible PJ booklets. However, it is not four, but only one. The 70c value is that of the booklet cover (see figure) and the 90c the boy with the umbrella, as used in the FD cancel and shown in last month's Newsletter. Nicely done.



A TOUR OF THE COURVOISIER PRINTING WORKS IN 2000 Bob Medland

In September this year, along with some friends I was privileged to be able to have a tour of Messrs Courvoisier printing works La Chaux de Fonds. That privilege was even the greater for having M. Hutin, the company Chief Executive, to show us around.

For those not familiar with the area, La Chaux de Fonds is an old-established town in the depths of the Jura Mountains, a fine setting. We were expecting to be taken to the modern environment of an out-of-town business park with the latest technology buildings, but not a bit of it. A few town blocks from the railway station and we were at the front door of modern philatelic Mecca, a multi-storey building that has been home to Courvoisier SA since 1928.

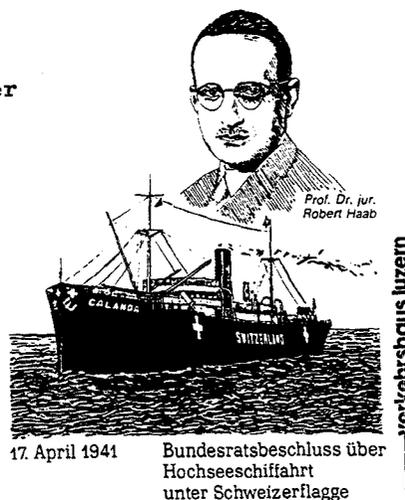
On first impressions the interior seemed like a rabbit warren but it soon made sense as we were taken along the route of the production process. To my mind and eye, the quality of Courvoisier stamps stands out head and shoulders above the mediocrity of many others in modern stamp production. This is principally because they use the more lengthy and expensive process of photogravure rather than the cheaper and inferior offset printing. As with most things in life, 'you pays your money and takes your choice'.

The care and dedication with which the printing process is handled is immediately apparent. Forget a bustling hive of activity (until the machines actually run): it is eerily quiet. But it is soon apparent that an atmosphere of Swiss assuredness and calm confidence pervades all parts of the building. This is hardly surprising, given the levels of investment and high standards of production, and perhaps epitomised by their ISO 9001 accreditation. It was all the more remarkable then to learn that, in recent years, Swiss Post – of all organisations – should have decided, solely for economical reasons, to entrust Courvoisier with fewer issues to print and now entertains competition from potentially cheaper competitors abroad. Looking at recent issues resulting from this, the difference in quality speaks for itself. These are hard times in commerce and not least for Courvoisier. But with commercially-astute management, the production of such a quality product, available worldwide, surely assures them a future.

This is not the place – nor do I have the resources or technical knowledge – for a history of the company or the intricate details of the photogravure process. Suffice to say we left La Chaux de Fonds deeply impressed, equally by the care with which non-commercial visitors were treated and the care with which Courvoisier carry out their craft.

Incidentally, one further point of my curiosity was answered during our visit. Why is there such a high proportion of La Chaux de Fonds cancellations on early stamps? The answer lies in the proliferation of clock and watch manufacturers in the area, including the like of Longines, which doubtless generated a vast quantity of international business correspondence.

As an interesting sideline on the article on the Swiss Merchant Marine Fleet on page 2, Michael Rutherford has sent a copy of a cover produced by the PTT in 1991 to commemorate the maritime law brought in 50 years before to establish the Swiss fleet.



HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Hon. Editor: Peter Hobbs, Six Tying End, Widcombe Hill, Bath BA2 6AN Tel: 01 225-31 09 71

No. 2 February 2001

THE FASCINATION OF THE ENGADINE

Tony Shaw has collected cancellations and postal history relating to Canton Graubunden for many years. He set out to collect cancellations of the 400+ POs, of which 250 remain, and the different cancellers used in each PO. He now feels that he has a hopeless task. It does give him and his wife an excuse to return each summer and walk to POs such as Vnà (previously Manas) at 1630m asl, population 65!

The two items below were sent in 1919 & 1920 from Fetan (now Ftan), a village some 10 minutes by bus above Scuol in the Lower Engadine.

These pre-paid cards are on buff-coloured paper with imprinted 10 purple-brown Czech stamps. The first has two imperforate 5 green Czech adhesives added and cancelled Fetan on Xmas day 25.XII.19. The second card has a similar 10 red added and cancelled 13.III.20.

Tony asks if a Swiss PO in a small village would accept and cancel these cards if the postage was not correct and the stamps valid? Can any member, or other reader, explain what has happened here?

