

# HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Founded 1946

NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2020

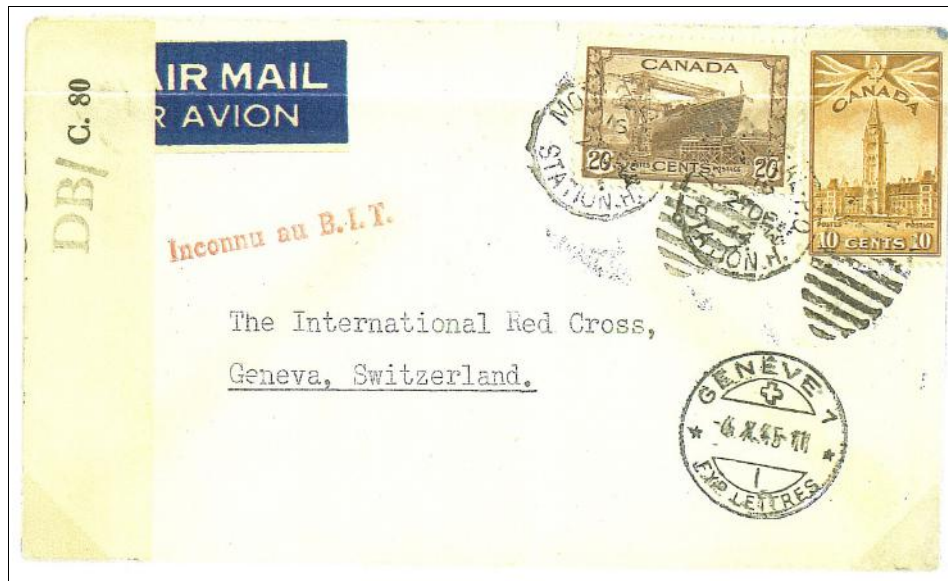
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LOST IN GENEVA?

CHARLES J. LaBLONDE CphH FRPSL



Cover cancelled at Montreal Station H on 27.12.1944. Sent to the International Red Cross, Geneva. Correctly paid for airmail – 30cts. Censored by Canadian censor DB/C.80. Arrived in Geneva on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1945. Red mark “Inconnu au B.I.T.”.

By being alert one can find many odd items in the mail of World War II. The cover shown above is an interesting example. The letter was posted on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1944 at Montreal Station H. Postage was correctly paid at 30 cents for air mail.

The censorship is as expected for that time - Type 751 in the Canadian Censorship Literature. But now things get a little fuzzy. The Swiss Postal Bulletin for January 1945 shows airmail to Canada as follows: “Departing Basel 2 Monday, Thursday and Saturday, via train/ship to England and onward from there via airmail.” One could assume with some surety that the mail from Canada to Switzerland would follow (at least approximately) this routing, but in the opposite direction. By midsummer 1945 the published Swiss routing had not changed.

I would be most indebted to our readers to learn more about the outbound mail from Canada to Switzerland during the period that the war was winding down. I believe there was much confusion..... and that mailbags were sent when possible, not always in accordance with published schedules and attached tags.

In any event our letter did not arrive in Geneva until 6<sup>th</sup> October 1945. In error, the Swiss Post Office must have delivered the letter to the Bureau International du Travail (B.I.T.). The B.I.T. in their confusion applied a red marking “Inconnu au B.I.T.” In other words, “What the heck is this?”

I have never seen this marking before and I would welcome other opinions and examples. So far my Swiss sources have not reported similar markings, seen on mail.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for all the good wishes I received over the Christmas period. It spurs me on to keep up the regular monthly production schedule. I'm sorry that the Lac Lemman barques did not show up very clearly in the illustrations of the Z1399 stamp or the poster stamp (HPS Newsletter January 2020 Page 3), but they are there – have a look through your magnifying glass – both are towards the left hand edge.

THE 50c AIRMAIL "WHITE ROOF" VARIETIESL.N. and M. WILLIAMS

This article was first published in 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly' in 1958 and later in the 'Swiss Philatelist' the journal of the stamp dealers 'The Amateur Collector' (Spring & Summer 1958). The Society is grateful to Stanley Gibbons for permitting us to publish it in our Newsletter. Thankyou also to Derrick Slate for drawing my attention to it. (Ed.)



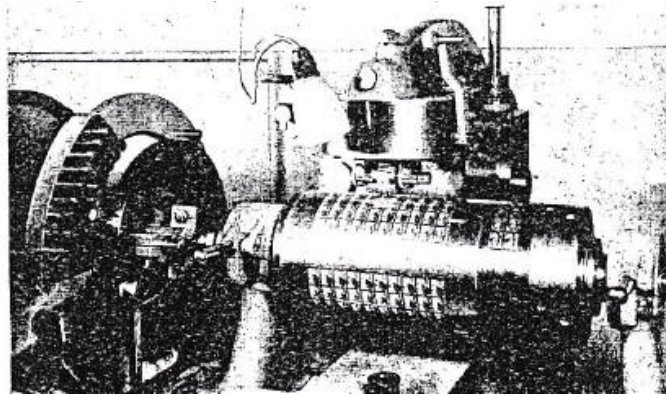
A 'normal' 50c Airmail stamp and various varieties of "white roof"

The Swiss airmail series current between 1<sup>st</sup> May 1941 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1955 was designed and engraved by A. Yersin, and printed by the Mint on a rotary line-engraving machine. The 50c. stamp in olive on salmon paper (S.G.417) shows Lac Lemman (the Lake of Geneva), with an aeroplane flying over some buildings. The building at the right of the stamp has a sloping roof, normally represented by fourteen unbroken horizontal lines of colour, more or less clearly printed.

A variety of this stamp, well known to specialist collectors of Swiss stamps, is termed the "White Roof". This variety is to be found in varying forms, all consisting of the absence of colour in the fourteen horizontal lines or some of them (see illustrations above right). In the most pronounced form of the variety which we have seen the colour is absent from nearly the whole of the roof. Similarly, in the least pronounced form, the absence of colour is confined to a comparatively small area affecting parts of the upper five lines. Between these extremes, the absence of colour occurs in varying degrees.

In the specialised Swiss Catalogues the variety has been listed as being caused by plate wear (see e.g. Zumstein's Special-Katalog Schweiz- Liechtenstein, 14th edition, 1957, page 268 No. 29 where the variety is listed under the heading "Plattenabnutzung"). This diagnosis has always been seen as unsatisfactory to us. An examination of a number of examples of individual copies of the stamp with the variety, revealed that they could not be graded in any one way to show that the variation in the extent of the absence of colour was caused by progressive wear. It was therefore clear that the variety occurred on more than one position on the sheet.

The sheets contained fifty stamps (5 across, 10 down) and the printing cylinder accommodated two such groups of fifty subjects. These subjects had been entered directly onto the cylinder from the transfer roll (roller die) in a special transfer press – see the illustration on the next page which shows a Swiss printing cylinder 696mm. (about 27½ inches) in circumference, brought into use in 1945; cylinders of this size are used for printing most of the current middle-sized, rotary line-engraved Swiss stamps; four groups of fifty subjects are entered on such cylinders, with the longer dimension of the stamps at right angles to the axis of the cylinder and the longer dimension of the sheet parallel with this axis. The cylinders used for the 10c. airmail stamp of 1941, and all other rotary line-engraved Swiss stamps issued between 1936 and 1945 measured 576 mm. (about 22½ inches) in circumference; and for middle-sized stamps such as the 1941 airmail issue, the subjects were entered in two groups of fifty, with the longer dimension of the stamps parallel to the axis of the cylinder and the longer dimension of the sheet at right angles to this axis; each group was separated from the following by a strip about 1 inch wide and this was cut away after printing. The small stamps such as the 'Landscapes' series of 1936 (which were the first Swiss stamps printed by rotary line-engraving) were arranged in four groups of fifty, as in the illustration. The large stamps, such as the 1, 5 and 10 fr. stamps of September 1938, were arranged in four groups of twenty-five. The middle-sized stamps (beginning, so far as rotary line-engraving is concerned, with the "Historical" series issued in January 1941) necessitated an uneconomic arrangement of subjects on the printing cylinder; and this was followed in 1945 by the adoption of a new machine and a printing cylinder of about 5 inches greater in circumference.



**A Swiss printing cylinder 696mm in circumference**

On such positional multiples as we have seen of the "white roof", the varieties occurred only on stamps in the extreme right-hand vertical column of the sheet. We have been reliably informed that they are limited to that column, occurring on all the stamps.

Because the "white roofs" could not be graded to show progressive wear of the plate, a further fairly safe assumption was that they were not caused by a progressive roller flaw – that is, progressively greater damage to the relief lines on the roller die breaking down increasingly under the stress of repeatedly entering the subjects on to the printing cylinder. (Many instances of such roller flaws are known, perhaps the most popular being Great Britain 1840 1d Plates 7, 8, 9 and 10, the so-called "O" and "ON" flaws, which are progressive stages of the same roller defect or weakness).

Further, close examination of a number of used and mint copies of the "white roof" varieties revealed that, in the coloured areas, although the colour was absent, the paper had been distorted by printing pressure and the lines were present in albino.

These combinations of facts dispose of any possibility of the varieties being caused by the diminution or absence of recesses on the printing cylinder on account of wear, or a roller flaw, or any other cause.

The varieties were, therefore, caused during printing.

Although this stamp was first issued in 1941 and many copies of the "white roof" varieties are known, we have seen no used copy bearing a postmark earlier than September 1946, and we have no record of any later than March 1949. The probabilities, therefore, are that sheets bearing the varieties were on sale during the latter part of 1946 and throughout 1947 and possibly, 1948. The stamp was demonetised on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1955 having gone off sale about eighteen months earlier. The 50c. value was in considerable demand – 5,298,000 copies being sold.

The comparative frequency with which the "white roofs" are encountered, the nature, distribution and appearance of the flaw are facts which render it difficult to account for the variety.

These Swiss rotary line-engraved stamps were wet printed "in the wet" - that is, on continuous reels of surface-dampened paper at the rate of 4,000 sheets per hour. The cylinder is placed in the machine and electrically heated internally to warm the outer surface. (In line-engraving, the heating of printing plates and cylinder plates is normal practice, to assist in working the comparatively stiff inks used in this process). This does not occur evenly, the right side takes longer to warm up than the left.

After the cylinder has been placed in position, the ink duct is introduced, the machine is started, and rollers spread ink into the recesses and over the non-printing surface of the cylinder. The next operation is to remove all traces of ink from the non-printing surface, leaving ink in the recesses.

This removal is reflected in two stages, as the cylinder revolves. First, all but a slight film of ink is removed by means of a mechanically adjusted length of clean, dry cloth or paper which moves rapidly to and fro over the 'non-printing surface'. Next, this surface comes into contact with a similarly moving length of fine cloth, damp with lye water, and the slight film of ink is removed. (Lye water, or lye, is the normal cleansing agent for printing plates and is also an ink solvent). The printing cylinder then meets the paper, which is pressed into heavy contact by the impression cylinder and sucks the ink out of the recesses.

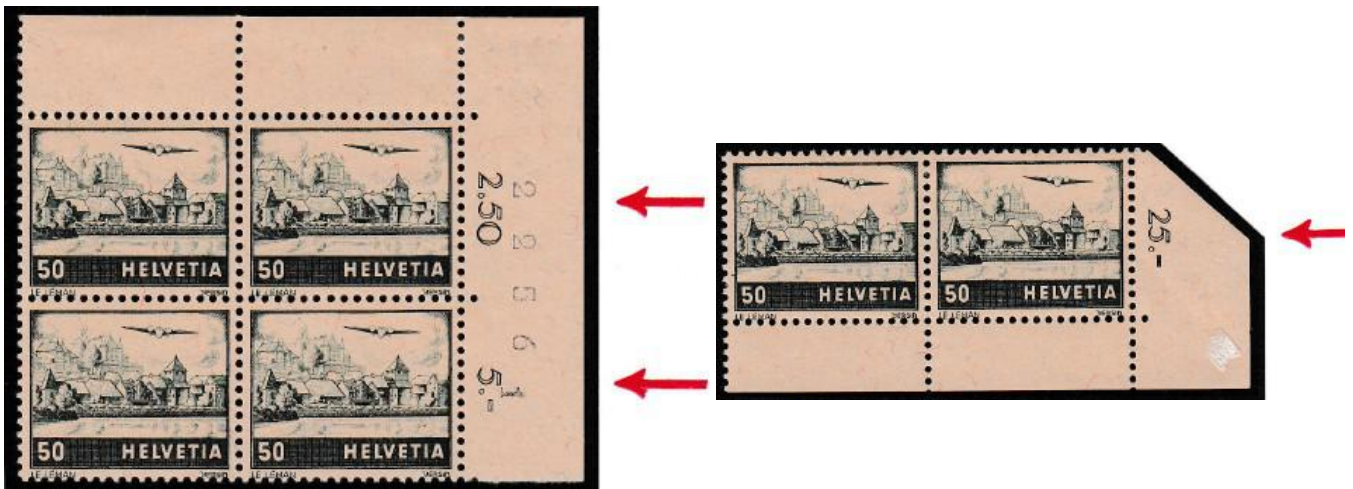
The edges of the fine cloth are always more damp than the centre.

The Swiss Direction Generale des PTT, Section for Postage Stamps, have provided the writers with the official explanation of how the "white roof" varieties occurred and the following is a quotation from the explanation: "It may happen that the (printing) cylinder is not warm enough when inked the first time and the second cloth just a little too wet. The lye water will dissolve the colour and the mixture pressed against the stamp paper will leave blots on the sheet. At the same time water penetrates into the inmost recesses of the engraving and prevents the penetration of colour. As the cylinder gets warmer, the water evaporates, all spots of the engraving get filled with ink and the design is complete. But in the meantime a great many sheets have left the machine which prints 4,000 sheets per hour. Of course such cases are very rare, if noticed at once the machine can be stopped and the cylinder cleaned. Later the spoiled sheets and the ones with bad printing are sorted out as waste."

This explanation is satisfying but not entirely comprehensive. The inquiring mind is left wondering about the exact combination of circumstances resulting in seemingly only a part of the design of each stamp in the right-hand column being affected, and why that part should be similarly positioned on each of the stamps.

A clue to the answers to these questions is, probably, to be found in the last sentence of the quotation above. During the first part of the run or runs of the machine other portions of the stamps were affected and the resultant sheets were discarded. However, in all probability, it was considered unnecessary to discard the sheets containing stamps with only the "white roof". It is, perhaps, significant that no copy of this stamp has been discovered bearing an absence of colour extending beneath the lowest of the fourteen lines comprising the roof.

POSTSCRIPT: Derrick Slate showed a number of examples of the "white roof" variety in his Aerophilately display at Salisbury in October last year. Below are examples of three 'white roof' varieties in sheets with the normal version of the stamp adjacent.



#### NEWS FROM THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY LONDON

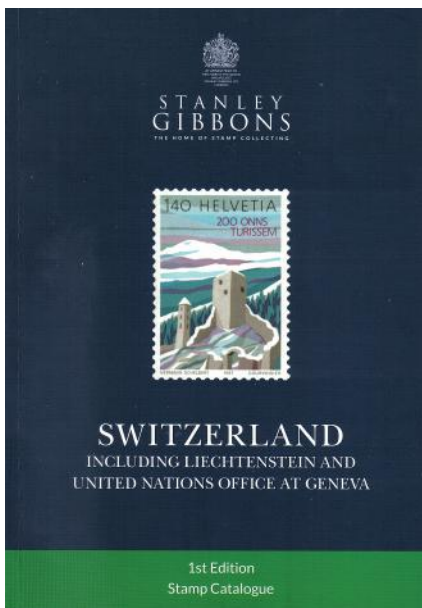
The RPSL have recently published a major new biographic work recording the lives of 42 pioneering philatelists who died before the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists was created, "who otherwise would have become signatories of the world's most prestigious philatelic honour". The book is entitled 'The Fathers of Philately' by Brian J. Birch FRPSL. 300+ pages, full-colour throughout, hardback with dust jacket - £65 + postage – available from the RPSL via Email: [adminsecretary@rpsl.org.uk](mailto:adminsecretary@rpsl.org.uk)



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A NEW STANLEY GIBBONS CATALOGUEEDITOR

The Society has been sent a complementary copy of Stanley Gibbons' new catalogue: 'Switzerland including Liechtenstein and United Nations Office at Geneva', for which we are very grateful. It will be placed in our Library for reference. Probably because it departs from Gibbons' traditional format of a joint Switzerland/Italy volume, it is labelled a "1<sup>st</sup> Edition Stamp Catalogue". Included in the introductory texts, it states:

"Prices have been thoroughly revised and brought up to date by leading experts in the field.

Specimen stamps have been included for the first time

Design indexes for Switzerland and Liechtenstein have been updated, and are designed to aid the collector in identifying and cataloguing their stamps. (Particularly useful for Thematic collectors – HPSN Ed.)

New issue listings have been updated – Switzerland to March 2019; Liechtenstein to November 2018 and the United Nations Office at Geneva to March 2017.

There have been significant price rises in early Switzerland.

An article on the 'Strubel stamps of Switzerland' by Alan Wishart FRPSL from Gibbons Stamp Monthly has been included."

Unlike the Zumstein catalogue, the Pro Patria stamps, Airmails, Postage Dues, Officials and Frank stamps are included in the general schedule of stamps in chronological order. This largely accounts for the significant differences between the Zumstein and Stanley Gibbons catalogue numbering.

Like the Zumstein catalogue, it does not include the stamp designs of the imprinted stamps on postal stationery, many of which only appeared in that format.

Two features that I always find very helpful are that, as in previous versions, the names of the stamp designers and descriptions of the stamps in English are included. There is also a reference to our Society with full contact details, which hopefully will attract some new members!

The very experienced philatelic dealer, Werner Gattiker, who specialises in all things Swiss and is a member of our Society's Committee, has also had an opportunity to examine this new volume. He writes:

"At last, users of Stanley Gibbons catalogues have been treated to a new version of the S.G. Switzerland listings. The good news is that you don't have to buy a large book including all the Italian areas as you did with the old "Part 8", and that listings have been brought right up to 2019 in the case of Switzerland. The actual listings and the information provided have been gradually improved over the years and are now quite reliable and quite exhaustive. The list of unreliable listings or downright errors is really quite small.

The not so good news is that Gibbons persist in over-inflating many of their catalogue prices. In particular the prices for used stamp prices right up to the 1950s are very much top-heavy, often triple or quadruple normal market prices. Mint stamps of that period are generally nearer the mark and for stamps up to 1945 are to be understood for mounted mint material. The 1950s period is generally overpriced for both mint (now unmounted mint) and used. Also catalogue prices from 2012 onwards seem absurdly high, where SG use a blanket 'CHF 1.00 face-value equates to £5.00 catalogue value' formula. But not in the case of Pro Juventute stamps, where a rate of 'CHF 1.00 = £3.75' has been used. Why?

Sadly, S.G. continues to ignore tête-bêche pairs of mixed values (i.e. a 5c 'Tell-boy' with a 10c 'Tell head') and only lists same-value pairs. They also continue to list booklet panes which – to my knowledge – nobody collects systematically, at least I have never come across a collection with a "booklet pane section" in it in all the many years in this business.

All in all a good effort by Stanley Gibbons, and a catalogue worth having, as long as you disregard many of the inflated prices quoted."

ISSUED IN 1941 AND STILL IN USE TODAY!

DERRICK SLATE/EDITOR



Derrick Slate recently received this cover (above) from a fellow philatelist. The cancellation date is 2.10.2019. Postage has been paid in old Swiss definitive stamps. No postage due charged. He thought you might like to see it! His colleague writes: "All swiss stamps younger than 1963 are still valid for postage plus some more like: "Technik und Landschaft" 1949 and "Historische Bilder" 1941 (n.b. the address has been erased by your Editor prior to publication for privacy reasons).

Coincidentally, whilst formatting this article for publication in the Newsletter, I found a copy of the July 1940 edition of the 'Meccano Magazine' – still my favourite journal! In the 'New Collectors' Corner' of the 'Stamp Collecting' section there was a short item on "Demonetized Stamps" – I quote: "No stamp is obsolete until it has been "demonetized", although it may have been out of issue for many years. This expression is the official declaration that a stamp issue has become obsolete and no longer valid for the pre-payment of postage.

There is no standard practice among the countries of the Universal Postal Union\* in declaring their issues demonetized. Some countries leave their issues available for many years after they have ceased to be on sale. For example, in Australia all issues are still valid, including those used by the individual states – New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, in the days before the Commonwealth issues first appeared in 1913.

On the other hand, some countries put a very early stop to the validity of their issues. Italy's commemoratives are usually demonetized almost immediately on ceasing to be on sale. Great Britain is among the "delayed action" countries. The stamps of Queen Victoria's reign were invalidated only some ten years ago (1930)."

Can anyone tell us which other countries come into the "delayed action" category, other than Switzerland, Australia and GB? Can any compete with Switzerland for the longevity of validity?

\*"The UPU – an international organisation which regulates the postal services of the world. It was founded in 1874, when 21 countries met at Berne by invitation of the Swiss Government. Almost its first business was to arrange that all mail fully pre-paid in the stamps of a member country would be accepted and delivered without extra charge of postage for this service, and to fix a colour scheme so that these uniform rates could be easily recognised by the postal servants of all countries. ...."

#### Footnote



The advertisement (illustrated left) also appeared in this wartime edition of the magazine. Presumably Mr. Harlow had some trouble with his Geography and/or possibly his understanding of the stated allegiances (or neutrality) of the various combatants in the War when he included Switzerland among the countries "in the vicinity of The Mediterranean Menace"! Interesting to see that in those days you could get more Swiss

stamps for your shilling than those of several other countries.

For those members as interested in model vehicles as Philately – by July 1940 the Meccano/Hornby company could boast a 2-page spread of Dinky Toys related to the armed services including Royal Artillery and Royal Tank Corp vehicles and other equipment and at least five RAF aircraft types then in service.

'DOUBLE ATLANTIC', 'TWO OCEAN' AND OTHER UNUSUAL AIRMAIL COVERS

BOB MEDLAND

International airmail covers can present one of the more attractive and interesting aspects of Swiss postal history. Recently - and with the encouragement of Charles LaBlonde - I have been developing an interest in the subject and displayed some of my more unusual items at the society's meeting in Salisbury last October. Here are a few of them.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Figure 1. Sent on 19th August 1932 7pm from Zürich to Santiago, Chile, franked with 2f 30: letter rate 30c, airmail fee 2f 00 per 5g, the latter franked with the scarce zF13. The mode of transport from Geneva to Marseille is uncertain but it was then taken for the rest of its long journey care of Aeropostale, the pioneering and legendary French airline (which was dissolved in 1932 and became part of Air France). On 21st August it was flown to Algiers and Morocco, then on to Dakar, Senegal the next day. It was transported across the Atlantic by charter ship arriving at Natal on the 26th, thence onward by air to Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires (on the 27th) and finally over the Andes arriving at Santiago on the 28th, nine days after posting.

Figure 2. 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933 from Cairo to Winterthur, franked with 36 mils: letter rate 20m, airmail fee 16m. Annotated "Dutch Air Mail" and flown on the KLM Batavia-Amsterdam service that stopped at Cairo on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Two days later it was taken off the aircraft at Budapest where it was back-stamped and transferred to a train for the rest of the journey. On arrival in Winterthur it was treated as 'Express' mail (i.e. special delivery) by prior arrangement with the post office, for which a 60c fee was paid using 2 x 30c 'Tell' stamps, cancelled 15<sup>th</sup> June 3pm. Three days journey time.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Figure 3. 12<sup>th</sup> June 1935 from Zürich to Fort Wayne, USA, franked with 50c: letter rate 30c, airmail fee 2 x 25c, total 80c required franking. Shortfall 30c collected by sending 'honesty card' to sender, cover struck with cachet 'L'affranchissement manquant est réclamé' advising the USA post office that the full payment had been collected in Switzerland. The bottom line of the address was confusingly written "India". An alert clerk in Zürich post office realised that Fort Wayne was in the state of Indiana in the United States, not India, so annotated the cover 'USA'.

Figure 4. 7<sup>th</sup> January 1938 from Weinfelden to Montevideo, Uruguay, weighed 8 grams. Franked with 4f 30: letter rate 30c, airmail fee 2 x 2f 00 per 5g. Similar route to 1932 cover but flown by Air France. Journey time five days.



Fig. 5

Figure 5. 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941 from Berneck to New York City franked with 1f 10. Letter rate 30c, airmail fee 70c so over-franked by 10c for no obvious reason unless the sender was wanting to show off the 'Bundesfeier' charity stamp. The letter was posted sent two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and two days before the USA declared war on Germany. It was censored by the British in Bermuda.



Fig. 6

Figure 6. 19<sup>th</sup> May 1941 from Winterthur to Alexandria, weighed 15g franked with 6f 60: letter rate 30c, airmail fee 3 x 2f 10. The greatly increased airmail fee was for the 'Two Oceans' route: it was flown via Lisbon, PanAm Clipper to New York, domestic flight to San Francisco, PanAm clipper via Hawaii to Singapore, connecting with westwards BOAC flight on the Horseshoe Route via India. After all that it was delayed by six days in Cairo for the vital censorship process, then sent on to Alexandria arriving 12<sup>th</sup> July. Distance over 20,000 miles, journey time 54 days.



Fig. 7

Figure 7. 21<sup>st</sup> March 1941 from Basel to Kenya. This cover appeared in the January 2015 Newsletter but I make no apologies for showing it again in view of new information received. Sent via Lisbon to connect with the PanAm FAM18 flight to New York, probably on 24<sup>th</sup> March and carried by Yankee Clipper, it then went by ship to Cape Town – hence known as a 'Double Atlantic' cover – then by land or sea to Durban from where it was flown on the BOAC 'Horseshoe Route' north to Mombasa.

#### OTHER ITEMS DISPLAYED AT THE SOCIETY'S SOUTHERN REGION MEETING LAST OCTOBER (PART TWO)

EDITOR

#### **Richard Donithorn**

A presentation of mainly modern material related to airmail and the aircraft industry including:

All the Swiss stamps featuring aircraft, balloons, air services, airports and pioneer airmen including Airmails and Pro Aero.

A selection of Swiss Army stamps produced for the use of their "Air Force" and "Aircraft Observation" units in the Second World War.

Official Aerogrammes – 65c, 65c+45c and China-Swiss joint issue with words "Taxe Perçue" and two imprinted "stamps" without denominations.

Courvoisier "Trial prints" produced in 1958 to advertise Switzerland at the first World Fair after the Second World War in Brussels, including several featuring Swissair's services.

Covers on flights related to the Swiss National Exhibition 1939 including the Pro Aero Meldeflug from the exhibition site (6.5.39), an International Balloon flight (14.5.39) and the Swissair Europa flights promoting the exhibition cancelled North and South in April and May 1939.





Imprinted stamp from PTT Official card and Courvoisier trial prints for Swissair.

Souvenir covers produced for FISA, the Swissair Aerophilatelic Society and the Swissair Philatelic Club to celebrate various Aerophilately Days and the LUPO 1969 (Luftpost exhibition) held at the Swiss Transport Museum.

Commemorative covers, cards, vignettes and a stamp for other events at the Verkershuis in Lucerne including the Opening of the Planetarium.

Other commemorative covers including Pro Aero Special Flights in 1949, 1963, 1969, 1972, 1981 and 1988.

Cover from the First Swissair North Atlantic flight from Geneva to New York and subsequent souvenir covers commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event.

Special Zürich – Geneva – Zürich Flight on 20. 9. 1944 to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Swiss Airmail services (Lausanne-Zürich section).

### Rosalind Ragg



Although Rosalind admitted that she had no 'airmails' in her collection, she entertained her audience with several interesting items including:

A cover with an Army Catering Corp. "Army Stamp" with flaw, seemingly addressed to the designer of the stamp.

A block of 4 "Army Stamps" of the Bat-Fr. Fus.217 Frontier Fusiliers (the Border Force) and the special envelope in which it was sold - issued on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1939.

10 c 'Cantonal Messenger' definitive sheet stamp and coil stamp flaw on the same souvenir cover.

Her aunt's mid-C20th Swiss Women's Alpine Club membership card.

Finally, being a great horse-lover and a recognised judge of certain breeds, she was keen to point out her disappointment with, what she considered to be, the "very ugly impression of such a beautiful animal" on the Swiss commemorative stamp in the 'Animal Friends' series issued in March 2019 (see illustration).

The Society is grateful to Swiss Post for enabling it to reproduce illustrations of their products.

## SOME REMINDERS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

### THE ANNUAL NATIONAL MEETING 2020

The Society's ever-popular annual event will be held at the George Hotel in Huntingdon on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Full details together with a booking form were sent out with the January Newsletter. It will make life MUCH easier for the Committee if you can book as early as possible so that we have a rough idea of numbers. PLEASE REMEMBER: the organisers put in many hours of time and some personal cost for your benefit. We have negotiated special discounts and for a two day event it represents very good value for money. Your early responses – even if to let them know that you can't go – will be greatly appreciated.

### THE SOUTHERN GROUP

The next meeting will be on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020 commencing at 10.00 for 10.30am and finishing at approximately 4.00pm at Harnham Scout Hall, Lower Street, Salisbury SP2 8HB (on the south west side of the city off Harnham Road). Refreshments will be available, including lunch at a local hostelry. The main theme of the meeting will be "Swiss Lakes". Members attending should bring along items from their collection for display. Displays on other themes will be welcome and shown if time permits. Future meetings in 2020 are scheduled for Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June and Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October. Further information from Werner Gattiker: Tel. 01273 842 135 or [werner@swisstamps.co.uk](mailto:werner@swisstamps.co.uk)

### MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2020

This is a gentle reminder that if you have not paid already, your subscription is now overdue. PLEASE make our Hon. Treasurer's life a little easier by sending him your renewal by the end of February at the latest.

Bob Medland Chairman

INTERESTING TECHNIQUES WITH PHILATELIC APPLICATION

MIKE SHARP

The recent article by Edward Duliba in the HPS Newsletter (January 2020 pp 9/10) about the use of ED-XRF for ink analysis of the stamp printing process aroused my curiosity. By coincidence, in the September 2019 edition of the 'London Philatelist' there is an article about the same or similar technique use for evaluation of an early New Zealand postage stamp.

Mr. Duliba describes an interesting use of this non-invasive scientific technique. In the past, examination paint used in artworks was based on analysis of paint scrapings by T.L.C. Clearly not suitable for written or printed document analysis.

On the subject of the Munich and Bern printings of the Strubel issues, the use of the starch detection test is intended to distinguish only the paper type used. The Zürich paper, not the München mill paper, included in its composition starch as a filler. Therefore, in principle, testing the reverse of the stamp using the potassium iodide test (remember O level Biology and potatoes) for the presence of starch should identify Zürich paper. A blue/black stain appears in the presence of a starch. An application of Sodium Thiosulphate can be used to remove the stain mark. The procedure requires care and there is a little uncertainty about whether there is a possibility of long-term damage to the stamp, although I am unaware of any reported problems to date. In addition to the information given by John Barrett, referred to previously, note, that this chemical test is also mentioned by the late Herbert Brach in his excellent book 'The Imperforate Sitting Helvetia' (2000) which is written in English. I have not yet studied the writings of Urs Herman in his 'Strubel-Handbuch' (2005) which is the current biblical reference for all Strubel matters.

Whilst researching a subject unrelated to philately, I have come across a rather more elementary and experimental internet-based tool which might assist reading of difficult postmarks on selected postage stamps or covers. A link is - <http://retroreveal.org/about>

Meanwhile, I am yet to practice distinction of Munich and Bern Strubel issues by application of the starch test ref. the details previously published in the HPSN by our American H.P.S. colleague, Dr. John Barrett. My progress has been impeded as no modern chemist keeps any re-agents that once were readily available in the back room in the past and I have no need for industrial quantities purchasable elsewhere. More research is necessary, but production of an interesting review paper about various investigative techniques might be a future project.

NEWS FROM THE ABPS

Only two Swiss-related displays were mentioned in the winter edition of their journal - Our former Society Chairman, David Hope presented his 'Swiss Postbuses' display at the British Thematic Association's meeting in York in July 2019. Another of our long-serving members, Richard Akers (also of the Pinner P.S.) had less success. In October 2019 his presentation to Watford P.S. on 'France and Switzerland' had to be postponed to a future date due to a burst water pipe flooding the hall in which the meeting was due to take place! Please let us know the details of your revised date Richard so that we can let our members know in advance, should they wish to attend.

## Werner Gattiker



### For most aspects of Swiss Philately and Postal History

- Free Standard Price List 1850 – 2012 with both Zumstein/SBK and Stanley Gibbons numbers.
- "Werner's Treasure Trove" sent most months to my customers, full of offers of stamps, covers, cards, blocks, collections & lots, literature, etc.
- Liechtenstein also available.

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