

BELGIAN CONGO SPECIALISTS' STUDY CIRCLE

Bulletin No. 4

October, 1951

REPORT OF MEETING

The third meeting of the Belgian Congo Specialists' Study Circle was held at 12, Avenue Mansions, Finchley Road, London, N.W.3., on Saturday, 20th October, 1951. There were present Mr. R. H. Keach (in the chair), Mrs. D.M. Green and Messrs. C.H. Compton, P.G. Cresswell, O.C. Loader, W.J. Thrasher and J. Wright. Apologies for absence were received from Messrs. L.G. Green, J. Knight and A.G. Wood.

At the second meeting on the 14th April the question of meeting place had been discussed and had been left in the hands of Mrs. Green and the Secretary. The Secretary reported that they had made no satisfactory progress in this direction but that Mrs. Green had very kindly offered them the use of her flat for the present meeting. Gratitude at Mrs. Green's kindness and goodwill was expressed.

Mr. Wright stated that General Jean du Four of Brussels had expressed his interest in our Study Circle and had enquired if he might join. The thought was again expressed that overseas members could get little advantage from being members of the Study Circle. It was agreed, however, that overseas members should be welcomed and as far as is practicable they should enjoy the advantages of membership of the Study Circle. It was proposed therefore that General du Four should be invited to join.

There being no other business of a general nature, Mr. Keach gave his address on the 10 centimes value of the Mols series.

He showed first a run through the straightforward issues substantially complete including shades but without plate varieties, and errors. The display included the 1894 "Colour Trials" and most of the plate proofs. Stress was laid on the difficulty in recognising the Princes' printing of 1909 and the difficulty in recognising forgeries of the 1923 Elisabethville surcharge. In connection with the Princes' printing, Mr. Thrasher spoke briefly of the arrangement of the overprinting plates of the typographed "Congo Belge" for both the original printing and for the Princes' printing and its aid in recognising the latter. Mr. Wright dealt with the Elisabethville surcharge and suggested means for identifying the forgeries.

Members then showed material which they had to supplement that of the Chairman, including the 1895 issue with inverted centre, many inverted and double overprints, imperf. between and other perforation varieties. A block of four of the 1910 issue in the lake shade was included.

Mr. Keach then proceeded with the second half of his display which covered the plate varieties of the seven different centre plates and six different frame plates. In the centre plates of this value most of the varieties are accidental due to damage to the printing plates although there are re-entries especially on the first centre plate, used for the 1894 and 1895 issues, and on certain panes of the booklet sheet of 1915. On the frame plates many double strikes (shifted transfers?) were shown on the 1894 - 1900 issues and on the 1910 issue, also the eight examples of 1894 - 1900 issues showing the trace of the frame of the 50 centimes value.

At the completion of the meeting it was agreed that the Circle should proceed with its study of the Mols issues and at the next meeting the 15 centimes value should be considered. Mr. Loader agreed to open the discussion. Mrs. Green offered the use of her flat for the meeting and Saturday, January 12th, 1952, was agreed as a suitable date.

1915 ISSUE

In Bulletin No. 3, an extract was given from a recent article by Mr. Heim which includes information on the relative rarity of the two centre dies of each of the first six stamps of this issue. It may be of interest to readers to have General Jean du Four's figures on the relative scarcity, as given in his article in Balasse Magazine No. 13, dated March, 1939.

5 centimes	95% die II 5% die III
10 centimes	75% die I 25% die II
15 centimes	2-3% die I 98-97% die II
25 centimes	No estimate
40 centimes	10% die I 90% die II
50 centimes	10% die I 90% die II

Notes by the Secretary:-

I have found the 5 centimes Die III very scarce but do not consider the 15 centimes Die I, anything like as uncommon as suggested by General du Four. The 10 centimes Die I, is much commoner than Die II.

I have studied my copies of the 25 and 50 centimes values of this issue to assess the relative scarcity of the centre plates, using only those collected for frame plate varieties, irrespective of the centre plates. Of 72 copies of the 25 centimes, 37 are Die I and 35 Die II (51% and 49% respectively); these figures are very much out of agreement with Mr. Heim's. Of 11 copies of the 40 centimes 3 are Die I and 8 Die II. Of 23 copies of the 50 centimes, 5 are Die I and 18 Die II (20% and 80% respectively); these figures are intermediate between those given by General du Four and Mr. Heim.

NOTES ON THE "COLOUR TRIALS" OF THE 1894 SERIES

The six stamps of the 1894 series are found with frame colours different from those of the issued stamps. They are perforated 15 and are without gum. The Balasse Catalogue lists them as "colour trials", but it seems likely that this is not a correct description and that they were actually stamps specially printed by Waterlow for the benefit of prospective customers, ie a publicity issue.

There is some interest in comparing these essays with the issued stamps. Even with a very few copies to study one is able to indulge in some conjecture as to their history. The writer gives below, notes on the essays in his collection.

5 centimes - Wine Red. (All have black centres).
No copy available.

10 centimes - Pale Lilac. The writer's copy has a large black dot, 3 millimetres below the second canoe. He has not found this variety on the issued stamps.

25 centimes - Pale Blue. The colour of this essay is quite different from that of the 1900 issue. The two copies in the writer's collection both have well defined frame lines, quite different from that of the 1894 issued stamp and quite different from the retouched frame line on the 1900 issue. Careful inspection of the frame line leads one to suggest that it has been very carefully retouched.

50 centimes - Orange. The vertical pair in the writer's collection shows no centre or frame plate varieties.

1 franc - Ochre. The writer's vertical pair has a major re-entry in the upper stamp with the native's spear, body and arms and the elephant's tusks and trunk all doubled. The doubling is quite different from and much more pronounced than that shown on No. 1 in the sheet of the issued stamps. The frame plates of both stamps of the pair show re-entries in the top right corner, rather similar to those found on several of the issued stamps, but after careful comparison with the illustrations in Crustin's treatise on the 1894, 1 franc stamp, the writer has come to the conclusion that the pair of essays has quite different frame plate re-entries from any vertical pair in the issued stamps.

5 francs - Green. All the issued stamps in carmine have a white mark near the left hand margin, some 4 millimetres above the centre "pearls". This white mark is missing from each of the two stamps in the horizontal pair in the writer's collection.

It appears certain, therefore, that the frame plate of the 25 centimes, frame plate and centre plate of the 1 franc and frame plate of the 5 francs were all printed from plates different from those of the issued stamps. One is tempted to generalise and state that both centre plate and frame plate of each value were from plates different from those of the issued stamps. This conjecture is supported by the writer's inability to find on the essays any plate variety observed on the issued stamps; moreover, the appearance of the centres of the essays is different from that of the stamps.

The origin of these essays is shrouded in mystery and the numbers issued are unknown. Assuming that they were not printed from the plates of the issued stamps it is possible that they were printed in sheets of less than 50. Perhaps one day information may be obtained from the printers on the origin of these interesting items.

R.H.K.

NEW ISSUES

(Date unknown). New values in the 1947 series commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Abolition of Slavery. (Same format and general design as 3 fr. 50 and 10 franc values).

1 fr. 50, Violet - Portrait of Lavigerie.
3 fr., Sepia - Portrait of Dhanis.

Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie, a French divine, was born in 1825 and became Archbishop of Algiers in 1868. In 1874 Lavigerie founded the Sahara and Sudan Mission and sent Missionaries to Tunis, Tripoli, East Africa, and the Congo. The Order of African Missionaries thus founded for which Lavigerie himself drew up the rules has since become famous as the Peres Blancs. In 1882 the dignity of Cardinal was conferred on Lavigerie and in 1885 he was transferred to the new Metropolitan See of Carthage. He spent the rest of his life in ardent anti-slavery propaganda, and died in 1892.

Francis Dhanis (1861 - 1909) was a Belgian administrator born in London and educated at the Belgian Ecole Militaire. He went to the Congo in 1887 and from 1892 to 1894 commanded an expedition against the slave traders. He captured in succession the three Arab strongholds of the Nyngwe, Kasongo and Kabambari. He was raised to the rank of baron and in 1895 was made vice-governor of the Congo State. In 1896 he took command of an expedition in the Upper Nile. His troops, largely composed of the Batetela Tribes who had only recently enlisted and who had been irritated by the execution of some of their chiefs for cannibalism, mutinied and murdered many of their white officers. During 1897 to '98 he was engaged in a life and death struggle with them; eventually he succeeded in breaking up the bands of mutinous soldiers. In 1899 Baron Dhanis returned to Belgium. He died on November 14th, 1909.

A new issue, presumably up to the 100 francs, is forecast for the Congo, with flowers as the subject. Presumably a similar series will appear for Ruanda.

EXTRACTS FROM PERIODICALS

The West End Philatelist No. 429 - Sept. - Oct. 1951

The Lado Enclave, by Lt. Col. J.R. Danson.

Notes are given on the Lado cancellations amplifying the article given in the previous month's issue by Mr. Hurst and summarised in Bulletin No. 3. Col. Danson describes three of the "Lado" covers in his possession.

The first cover is cancelled in manuscript, "Lado" with the date and initials in red ink and bears the White Nile T.P. cancellation. There is no "retta" cancellation.

Two covers have stamps cancelled "Lado" in black ink, instead of the usual red ink, but the stamps bear the normal "retta" cancellation.

Col. Danson has a stamp off-cover with the Lado inscription and cancelled with four black ellipses, one in each corner of the stamp.

Le Philatliste Belge, No. 55 - Sept. - Oct. 1951.

The Stamps of Belgian Congo, by Dr. H. Avidon.

The second of this series of articles lists the Post Offices, past and present, of the Province of Equateur and the Eastern Province (including Stanleyville).

Western Stamp Collector - 29th May, 1951.

"Taxes" Stamps of Belgian Congo, by A.T. Heim.

Mr. Heim gives information on the different types of overprints and advances the following theories to explain the presence of unused stamps with "Taxes" overprint.

Bulletin No. 4

October, 1951

1. That the postmaster in some of the busier towns pre-cancelled whole sheets in advance.
2. That the postmaster overprinted sheets to order as a favour, (that is known to have occurred).
3. That the overprint was used to demonetize stamps when they were ordered to be withdrawn from circulation.
4. That they are all out and out fakes.

Western Stamp Collector - 17th April, 1951

First Issues of the Congo Free State, by B.W.H. Poole.

The writer gives a brief summary of the history of the Congo, prior to 1886, describes the 1886 issue with special reference to the earlier Belgian issue and gives the numbers printed, presumably taken from the Balasse Catalogue.

AUCTION REALISATIONS

Plumridge, 24th October - U.P.U. miniature sheets for Congo and Ruanda - £12.10.0.
Vessey, 21st September - Balasse 5E1. Imperf., design touched at one point, £6. 5. 0; 11, used but off centre, £4. 0. 0; C.P.4. used but off centre, £5.17. 6.;
72 - 80 M £3. 0. 0.; R36-44 M £2.12. 6.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As stated earlier in this Bulletin, the next meeting will be on Saturday, January 12th, and members are asked to reserve this date. Mr. O.C. Loader will open the subject of the Mols 15 Centimes value.