

BELGIAN CONGO



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WHY NOT JOIN THE 'PLATERS'?

One of our Belgian members has succeeded in obtaining a large number of the cheaper values of the Mols stamps, mostly 1910 and 1915 issues, undoubtedly in many ways much the most interesting stamps of the Congo.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for members who do not already reconstruct sheets of the Mols stamps to commence this fascinating activity, the only practical way for most of us to study the stamps and the way Waterlow treated the plates from which they were printed. So long as the activity is restricted to the commoner - and therefore the more interesting - stamps the cost is not great; it is probably the cheapest way to build a substantial collection of the Congo and, in so doing, to give continued interest. And, sometimes, to make a discovery of something new that no-one has previously noticed.

Any member who thinks he may be interested in such a study is invited to write to R. H. Keach to discuss the matter further, obviously without making any sort of commitment to embark on the exercise.

NEWS AND VIEWSCORRECTION

There was a typographical error in Bulletin No. 68 on page 15, paragraph 5 - 'his wife' should have been 'my wife'. Please correct your respective copies.

NEW MEMBERS

We wish to welcome two new members to our group, both from the United Kingdom.

D. Fryer, Lewes, whose particular interest is in the Congo River Mail-boats.

D. W. Crosthwaite, Edinburgh

AGM Meeting

Just as a matter of record, the subject of the meeting on 10 September is "5 FRANCS MOLS BALASSE VARIETIES" and will include some general commentary on the subject of plating. The presenter will be B. P. Hudson.

EDITOR ALMOST LOST

Not to go into details but your Editor has been ill to the point of spending 11 days in one of the local hospitals. He has now recovered to the point of getting out this issue, but it was serious enough for the cancellation of a trip to Europe and to take in the meeting at Torquay. With a couple of months of rest and recuperation all will be well. My good wife has accepted the trip cancellation but we are both hopeful we will be able to go next year.

BCSC ANNUAL COMPETITION

As a supplement to this issue is the official announcement of the BCSC Annual Competition along with the formal application. The main purpose of this exercise is to encourage our membership to participate in exhibiting - be it local, regional, national or international. The initial event brought out nine brave ones and we would certainly like to see this number doubled. The subject is POSTAL HISTORY and that ought to be a lot of fun for everyone. No one really knows how to describe Postal History and it is a chance to plow "new ground". (Postal History has never been the "bag" of your Editor, but I have put my required pages together and now all I have to do is make the title page and that is going to take some "tall doing".) So get off that letter to Norman Clowes, our Competition Secretary - he did a marvelous job on the first competition.

POSTAL AUCTION SALE

Also as a supplement to this Bulletin are seven pages of a Postal Auction Sale on Postal Stationery. Details of the rules of the Auction are on the first page and the listings should interest any of our members who have an interest in postal stationery.

The 1921 30c Surcharge

Recent correspondence with Mr. Ron Strawser has reminded me of a detail that I should have reported in the Bulletin long ago.

The variety on the 1921 30c surcharge on the 1910 10c of the missing dot under the right 'C' is very well known to all of us and it is on this subject that I write.

General Du Four, in his book 'CONGO - Cinquante Ans d'Histoire Postale', recorded four successive states of this surcharging plate:

1st State: with a full complement of dots. General Du Four presumed that this state existed although he had not seen a sheet of stamps from it. I too have not seen such a sheet; nor have I recognized a single copy of No. 36 in the sheet complete with right dot. But stamps may very well have been surcharged while the plate was in this pristine state.

2nd State: with a single missing dot under the right 'C' on No. 36.

3rd State: with missing dots under the right 'C' on Nos. 36 and 39.

4th State: with missing dots under the right 'C' on Nos. 19, 36, 37 and 39.

I have a full sheet with dots missing on Nos. 19, 36 and 39, No. 37 not suffering in this way and this introduces a further state intermediate between the General's 3rd and 4th. So we now have five states of the surcharging plate;

1st State: no missing dots and the existence of the state is doubtful.

2nd State: with dot missing on No. 36

3rd State: with dots missing on Nos. 36 and 39.

4th State: with dots missing on Nos. 19, 36 and 39.

5th State: with dots missing on Nos. 19, 36, 37 and 39.

The 5F Mols Centre Plate

For the first printing, maybe printings, of the 1915 5F stamp the centre plate was in its third state, the same state in which it was used for printing the 1910 stamps. In this state, in general, the short lines of shading of the sky to the left of the chieftain are neat and clear.

Before the next printing of the 1915 stamps the centre plate was completely re-entered by a further application of the roller die to each subject on the plate. This re-entry removed most of the gross imperfections but introduced some additional minor doubling to some subjects. Moreover, the shading of the sky is now indistinct with the short lines thicker and more blurred than on stamps printed from the plate in its third state; as opposed to this thickening some of the finely engraved lines at the bottom of the vignette are as fine as they originally were. The blurred condition of the shading lines could, I suppose, have resulted from corrosion of the plate but there is no other evidence of corrosion and I do not believe this to have been the cause. To my mind the thickening of the shading lines results from the re-entry with the roller die not in the precise position it should have been and what we see is the result of the further application of the roller die so that the two impressions on the plate have not quite coincided and the lines of shading are thickened or doubled.

I have a complete sheet of the stamp, a block and some single copies which show even thicker lines of shading in the sky and have reached the tentative conclusion that this is due to further re-entry of the centre plate, producing a fifth state. I have discussed this with one or two colleagues in the BCSC and they are not very encouraging. Unfortunately, I cannot find any specific doubling of the design that would prove conclusively that further re-entry did take place.

The ex-Waterlow engraver to whom I was introduced some years ago and who was so helpful is unfortunately now dead; had he been alive I am sure that he would have been able explain the variation in thickness of the shading lines.

In desperation I have approached several most eminent philatelists, men who have had wide experience of engraved stamps but with no specific knowledge of the Congo or of Waterlow's printing procedures. Most have said 'you may be right' and obviously were not greatly impressed with my arguments. One of these eminent gentlemen, probably philatelically the most eminent of them, had other ideas which are worthy of our consideration.

I showed him complete sheets of the stamps printed from the fourth state of the centre plate and from what I think may be a fifth state. His reaction was 'these two sheets were not printed from the same plate'. I said that they had to be and pointed to the 'comma' near the point of the lance on No. 1 on both sheets. His reply was 'that does not necessarily mean that they were printed from the same plate' and proceeded to explain.

It is now known with almost complete certainty that Waterlow and Sons produced one of the four plates used for the Rhodesia 1913 $\frac{1}{2}$ p Admiral as an electrotype of one of the other three plates. Electrotyping is the standard process for producing plates of typographed (letter-press-printed or surface-printed) stamps such as the early portrait issues of the Congo but the $\frac{1}{2}$ p Admiral and, of course, the Congo Mols are engraved stamps. It appears that electrotyping was occasionally used by printers for duplicating plates of engraved stamps and such a process is mentioned by L. N. and M. Williams in their admirable book 'Fundamentals of Philately'.

For any reader who is not familiar with the electrotyping process let me explain briefly how it would be used to duplicate a copper or steel engraved printing plate.

The flat surface and engraved lines on the plate are covered with a very thin but uniformly thick layer of grease, heavily impregnated with graphite; the graphite is necessary in order to make the grease a conductor of electricity. The plate and a separate piece of copper are both placed in a bath of copper sulphate solution. With the printing plate as cathode and the piece of copper as anode the two elements are connected to a direct current electric supply. Copper is transferred via the solution from anode to cathode and a thin layer of copper is slowly laid on the surface of the printing plate. When the thickness has built up sufficiently the current is switched off and the plate removed from the bath. The thin shell of copper is stripped off the printing plate, this being possible because the grease has prevented adhesion of the deposited copper to the metal plate. The thin copper shell is flattened and molten type metal is poured on the back of it to such a thickness that, when solidified, the reinforced shell will be sufficiently strong to permit its use as another printing plate. All the finely engraved lines on the original plate will have been reproduced on the shell and the new plate is a facsimile of the original.

Was such a procedure used for the Mols plates? There is, as far as I know, no evidence of it and, moreover, if it was used to produce my supposed fifth state of the 5F centre plate, how is it that the shading lines are thickened? One would have thought that the engraved marks on the duplicate plate would have been thinner.

I am no further forward in my quest.

RHK

THE STICKNEY MACHINE ISSUES OF THE BELGIAN CONGO

THE 1934 AIR MAIL ISSUE

(Note: Some of the information which follows is not new, having been included in the writer's previous note which appeared in Bulletin No. 26, April, 1976. However, owing to the significantly greater quantity of material available for study at the present time, the opportunity has been taken to make this article as comprehensive as possible).

The 1934 air mail series was the last full issue of Belgian Congo stamps to be printed using the Stickney Machine. True, the booklet panes were printed subsequently, but these introduced no new designs, so the 1934 stamps were the final "start to finish" production - ie from design to issued stamps. It is further interesting to note that in format, plate layout, perforation and other details, this issue differs considerably from the pattern established in the three preceding series, the 1930 Natives Protection Fund issue and the two 1931 sets of definitive stamps for the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi.

Two values of the air mail series, the 1 fr. and 4.50 fr, were reprinted in panes for the 1939 booklets, together with five values of the 1931 definitives, and these will be covered in a subsequent article. As far as regards the stamps printed in full sheets, the following are the basic details as contained in the standard catalogues:-

<u>Value</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Dates of Issue</u>	<u>Nos. Printed</u>
50 centimes	black	22 January 1934	430,000
1,00 franc	carmin	" " "	385,000
1,50 francs	deep green	" " "	1,710,000
3,00 "	deep red-brown	" " "	1,605,000
4,50 "	ultramarine	" " "	1,700,000
5,00 "	chestnut	" " "	540,000
15,00 "	lilac	" " "	305,000
30,00 "	vermilion	" " "	108,000
50,00	violet	" " "	108,000
3,50/ 3,00 "	deep red-brown	25 March 1936	605,000
0,50/ 1,50 "	deep green	27 April 1942	420,000

Shades

The only catalogued shades, per Balasse, are of the 50c. They are:-

- black
- olive-grey
- and brownish-grey - this last resulting from very yellow gum.

Used stamps have also been found in deep green, but these are believed to be colour changelings from the original olive-grey shade.

Other values differ slightly in shade and may appear slightly lighter or darker according to inking and/or wear of the plates. It is clear however, that at least one value was reprinted and this is probably true of most other values, so there may well be minor distinctions for this reason.

In the case of the 50 fr. value, the original shade is a deep reddish violet, but this ink appears to have been particularly unstable and many copies, both used and unused, can be found in shades ranging from bluish violet to slate blue.

Dates of Issue

Godinas gives the original date as 21 January 1934; all other listings agree on 22nd. The original order date is given by Balasse as 10 January 1934.

Only Gibbons and Balasse give a date of issue for the 3,50/3 fr, agreeing on 25 March 1936. Balasse and Philatco agree on the order date of 10 February 1936.

Gibbons alone gives the 27 April 1942, issue date for the 50/1,50 fr. However Le Negro-Guide calls the issue the "local surcharge of 6 March 1942", while Balasse/Philatco note an ordinance of 6 March 1942 and Philatco refers to a further ordinance of 27 April 1942.

Numbers Printed

The should perhaps bear a Government Health Warning and certainly must be treated with caution. In all probability, they are taken from the original orders and ignore some subsequent printings.

The source for the numbers shown above is Godinas, which agrees with Le Negro Guide. On the other hand, Philatco, which refers specifically to the first printing, gives:-

50	centimes	250,000
1,00	francs	250,000
1,50	franc	2,000,000
3,00	"	1,000,000
4,50	"	500,000
5,00	"	250,000
15,00	"	100,000
30,00	"	100,000
50,00	"	100,000

while Philatco and Balasse give a printing of 240,000 for the 50c/1,50 fr, but give no figure for the 3,50/3,00 fr. In any event, there is a clear anomaly as regards the 1,50 fr, where the "first printing" given by Philatco is already higher than the total given in Godinas, although this could perhaps be explained away on the assumption that Godinas' figure is net of the surcharged stamps. However, further printings of the 30 fr and

50 fr of only 8,000 of each value still appear unlikely; certainly, the considerable catalogue price differential between these two values argues that the final number of 30 fr stamps must have been significantly greater than that of 50 fr stamps.

Design

A single design was used for the entire series, showing a Fokker F.VII b - 3m (tri-motor) aeroplane flying above native canoes on the River Congo. A number of these aircraft were made under Licence in Belgium and used in the Sabena fleet. They were used for proving flights to the Congo in 1934 and initiated the regular Sabena Belgium - Congo air service in February 1935, being replaced in 1936 by larger Savoia-Marchetti aircraft. The plane shown has the registration OO-AlX. Some years ago, in response to a query as to whether this registration was a valid one, both Mr Slabbinck and Mr Vindevoghel provided helpful information:-

- OO - the international designation for Belgian registered aircraft.
- Al - the Sabena fleet aircraft type - in this case, Al does represent the Fokker F.VII b - 3m.
- X - the 24th plane of the type in the Sabena fleet.
(the 1st would be A the 27th AA, etc).
These numbers were distinct and were never re-used on other aircraft.

The surrounding design is unremarkable, except for the winged post horn at the top which is, unfortunately, partly obscured by the inscription.

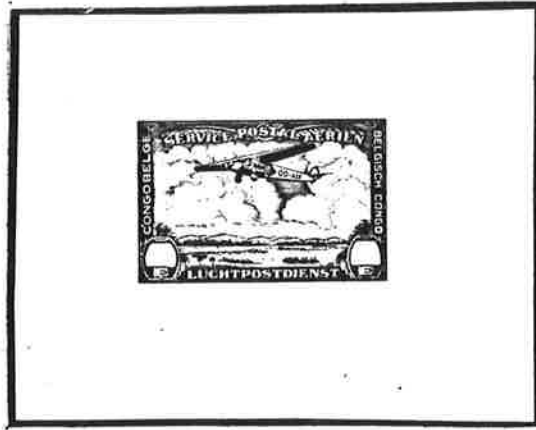
Dies

Whether any original source photograph or printing existed is not known, but the stamp design and original engraving of the master die were by Jean De Bast, a well-known Belgian engraver of the period. His initials, JD, are engraved at the bottom right corner of the central part of the design.

As is common where a series of stamps of the same design are produced, a single master die was prepared and, using a transfer roll, further dies were prepared for each value required. A proof of a master die, with the letter "E" (Essai) in each of the value tablets is known and is illustrated below. It is printed in deep green, albeit a somewhat lighter and bluer shade than the issued 1,50 fr. stamps.

Also illustrated are die proofs of the 5 fr, 30 fr and 50 fr values. It is believed that these are actually cut down examples of presentation proofs (as described in the preceding article on the Ruanda-Urundi definitive issue of 1931-38) produced by the Malines printing works on the authority of the Belgian Postal Administration.

Presumably such proofs exist of all values in the "issued" colours; here there is a curiosity, as the 5 fr. proof illustrated is actually in deep brownish violet, nothing at all like the chestnut shade of the issued stamp. If the normal practice of the period was followed, there are probably parallel series of proofs pulled in black, but I have seen none of these to date.



*Proof from Master Die. Note "E" (Essai?)
instead of "F" in value tablets.*



Finished Dies - Proofs in issued colours.



Proof in unissued colour.

Sheet Layout

All the airmail stamps were demonetised on 1 January 1951. This relatively late date adds force to the view that there were further printings, at least of some values, subsequent to 1934, and may also account for the apparently high survival rate of sheets, panes and blocks of unused stamps. The major items on which this article is based are:-

	<u>No. of stamps in piece</u>	<u>Pane No.(s)</u>	<u>Sheet No.</u>	<u>Depot Mark</u>
0,50 fr	(50)	3	-	-
	(4)	2	-	-
1,00 fr	(100)	1,2	000126	1937
1,50 fr	(100)	3,4	066	-
	(100)	1,2	067	-
	(100)	1,2	081	-
	(100)	3,4	082	-
	(100)	3,4	286	-
	(4)	-	209	-
	(4)	2	-	-
50/1,50 fr	(100)	3,4	154	-
	(50)	1	-	-
	(50)	3	-	-
	(50)	3	-	-
	(50)	4	304	-
3,00 fr	(50)	1	180	1940
	(50)	3	298	-
3,50/3,00 fr	(100)	2,1	066	-
	(100)	4,3	187	-

4,50 fr	(50)	3	000262	1937	Pane No. and imprint at top
	(50)	4	-	-	" " " " " "
	(4)	3	-	-	" " " " " "
	(9)	-	122	-	
	(4)	(1	000143	1937	" " " " " "
	(4)	(2	-	-	" " " " " "
	(4)	(3	000142	1937	" " " " " "
	(4)	(4	-	-	" " " " " "
	(4)	(1	-	-	Pane No. and imprint at bottom
	(4)	(2	-	-	" " " " " "
	(4)	(3	-	-	" " " " " "
	(4)	(4	-	-	" " " " " "
5,00 fr	(100)	4,3	021	1940	
	(50)	1	027	1940	
	(50)	2	-	-	
15,00 fr	(50)	2	145	1940) Sheet No. (and Depot mark)
	(50)	4	216	-) upside down at bottom
) of pane.
30,00 fr	(4)	3	-	-	
50,00 fr	(4)	1	-	-	

Certain assumptions can be made from the above list, as follows:-

- 1 Where sheets of 100 are noted, the pane numbers are given as viewed left to right. Sheet numbers would always have been printed at the top right of a complete sheet so, the view of the sheets for the various values where this can be implied, is:-

0,50 fr	3, 4 (and presumably 1, 2)
1,00 fr	1, 2 (" " 3, 4)
1,50 fr	1, 2 and 3, 4
3,00 fr	2, 1 and 4, 3
4,50 fr	2, 1 and 4, 3 (first printing)
5,00 fr	2, 1 and 4, 3
15,00 fr	1, 2 (and presumably 3, 4) but upside down with regard to the sheet numbering machine.

- 2 Perceived wisdom is that the pane numbers and printer's imprints appear at the base of each pane for the 0,50 fr, 1,00 fr, 1,50 fr, 3,00 fr and 5,00 fr values and at the top of each pane for the 4,50 fr, 15,00 fr, 30,00 fr and 50 fr values. This is true for all the sheets, panes and imprint blocks seen except for what appears to be a completely new set of plates for the 4,50 fr value, where all the pane numbers and imprints are at the bottom of the panes. It appears that complete new plates for this value were laid out, as the position and size of the side point dots which located the transfer roll on the plate are quite obviously different from those on the first set of plates, being almost immediately below the bottom frame line between the "S" and "T" of "DIENST". On the original plates, they are practically 1mm below the frame.

The second plates also have the dot rather larger and more deeply impressed.

A survey of 129 loose copies indicated 48 confirmed 1st plates and 23 confirmed 2nd plates. There were 58 which could not be definitely ascribed, either because they were from one of the 14 positions on each pane which have no sidepoint dot below the bottom frame, or because the dot has been perforated out - and because of the relative positioning of the dots, this is more likely to apply to stamps from the 1st plates. The earliest cancellation seen on a 2nd plate stamp is May 1937, while 1st plate stamps have been seen on commercial cover up to 1940 and on an aerophilatelic cover as late as 1946. Thus, if the reason for preparation of new plates was damage, or excessive wear, on the originals, at least some post offices had sufficient stocks of the first printings to last them several years, or else the new sheets, when received, were placed on top of the existing stock which resurfaced subsequently.

3 As usual, no sheet number is higher than 500. The existence of both 3 and 6 - digit numbers must, again, be at least suggestive of distinct printings at different times.

Further evidence which supports, extends, or, of course, demolishes any of these assumptions would be most welcome.

The general layout of a typical sheet (the actual example being 3,50/3,00 fr.) and of a full cylinder are shown below.

Unlike any of the previous Stickney Machine issues for the Congo, each plate, comprising 100 examples, is divided into 2 separately numbered panes of 50 each. The reason for this division is unknown and there is no evidence to suggest that a single pane of 50 examples for each value was prepared first and then used as an interim master to create the other panes; it may simply be that demand for air mail stamps was uncertain and the authorities provided an obvious means of dividing sheets into smaller units to meet requirements from less busy post offices. Let us not also speculate that, plate number blocks having proved popular with collectors, it was decided to maximise revenue by creating twice as many of them.

The main markings on the sheets are the pane/plate numbers, printer's imprints and perforation guide crosses at mid-height in the left and right selvages, all of these having been inscribed on the original plates. With the exception of the sideprint dots, there are no other plate layout marks to be found on any of the panes examined.

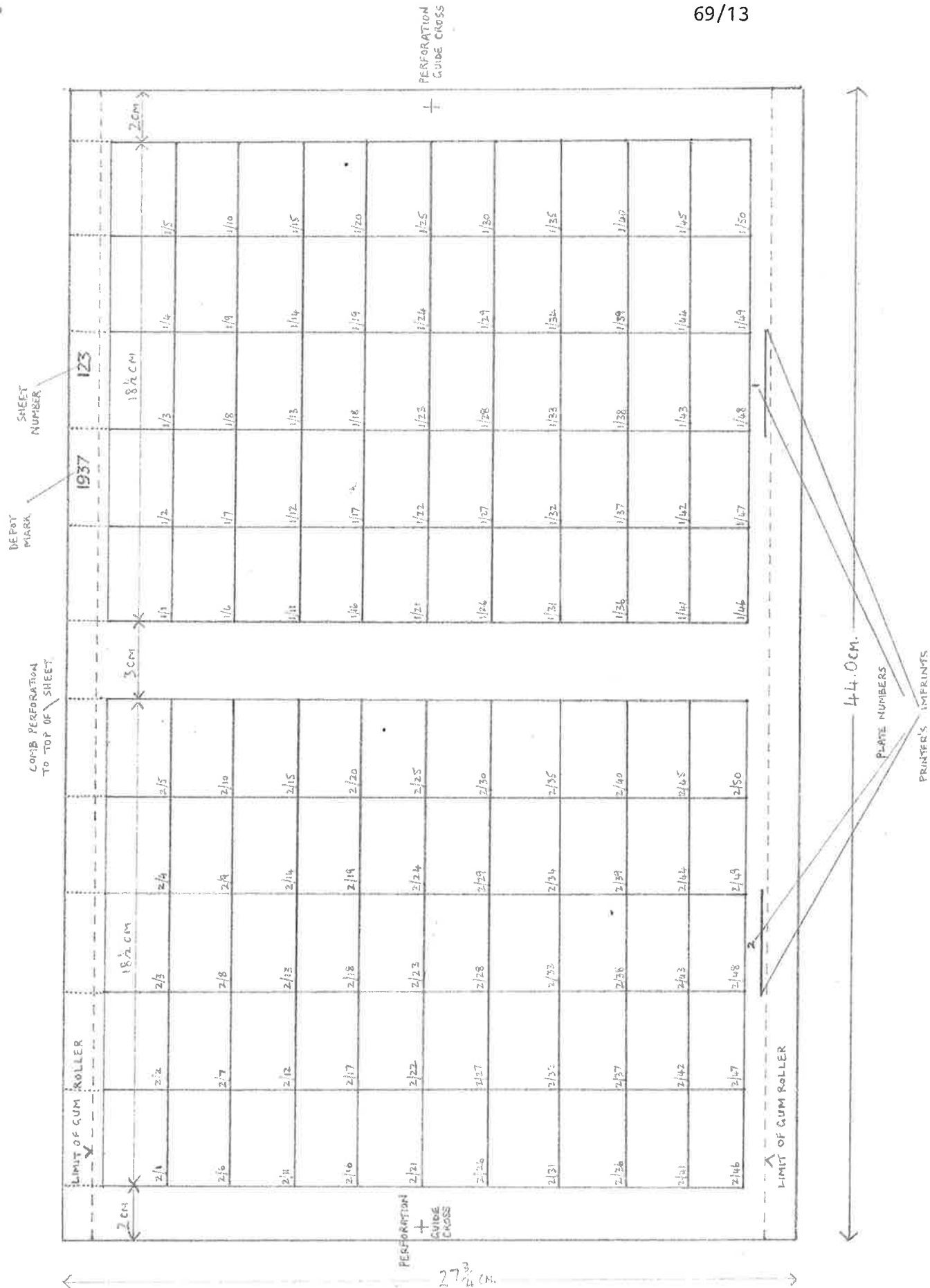
Sheet numbers

As mentioned above, both 3 and 6 digit numbers are found, the latter always commencing with "000". Normally, the 3 digit numbers appear above the 4th column of stamps on the right hand pane of each sheet. On a single sheet (3,50/3 fr No. 066) the number appears above the 3rd column. The 6 digit numbers seen are all above the 3rd column of stamps, instead of the 4th column, and all are associated with 1937 Depot Marks (see page 15 of BCSC Bulletin No. 63).

However, the 4 sheets with the 1940 Depot Marks quite clearly have the "1940" applied as a separate operation from the sheet number. It seems doubtful that this mark indicates a later printing and more probable that sheets were being taken back into central store, probably from sales points in Belgium, rather than in the Congo. It may well be that this was done as some by-product of the outbreak of war.

Format

As could be expected, the die proofs have the dimensions 32 1/2 x 21 1/2 mm, compared to the issued stamps 33 1/4 x 21 1/2 mm, thus indicating the effect of curving the plates, after laying them out, to fit on the cylinder for printing. No doubt those who are mathematically inclined could deduce from this, and the eventual length of the plates, the approximate thickness of a plate. A rough estimate suggests about 5mm.



BELGIAN CONGR
1936 AIR MAIL ISSUE
IN PAGES OF 50.

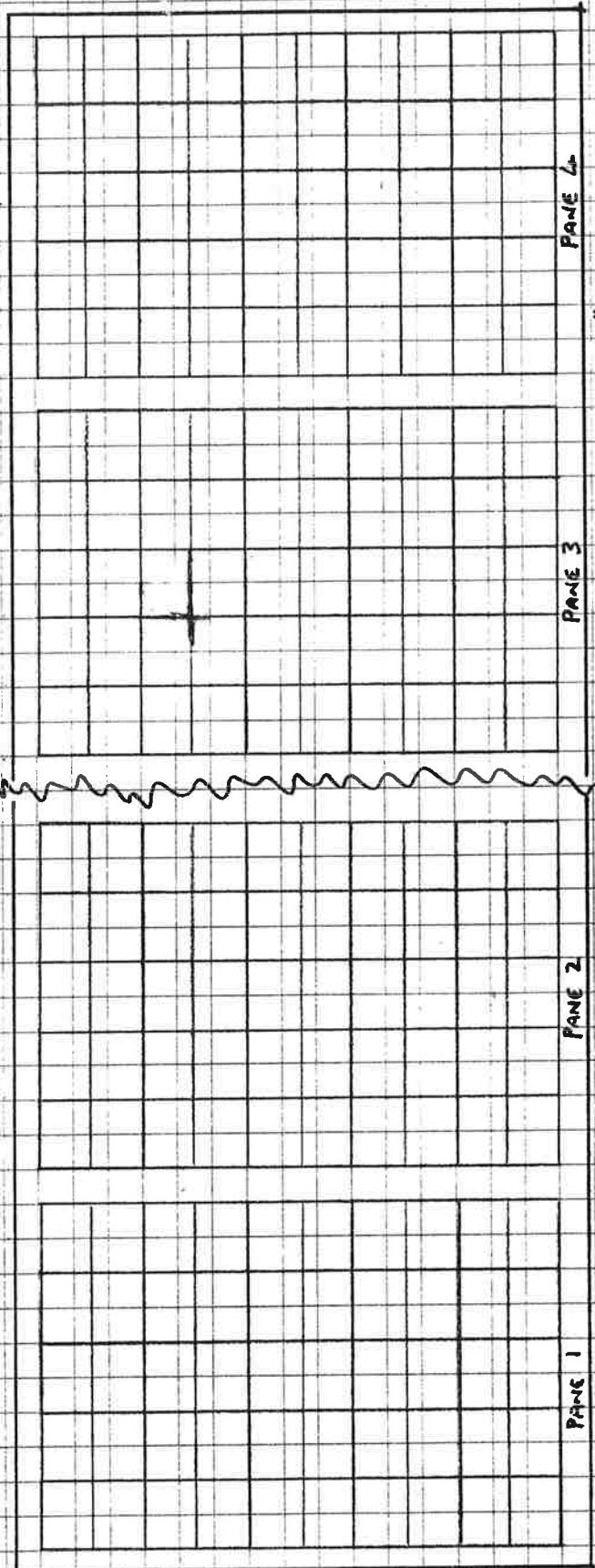


PLATE "B"

PLATE "A"

CYLINDER

Plate Varieties

The design of the stamps includes several heavily cut areas, and these, in turn, appear quite often to have been subject to ink-stripping during the printing process; frequently this extra ink appears elsewhere on the sheet. There are thus many minor, but non-constant, varieties which are of no interest. Many of the stamps can, however, be positioned, although often this is from the small stress lines appearing between stamps and due to the process of curving the plates and other small surface scratches presumably occasioned by cleaning the cylinder, or, in the case of the 50/1,50 fr stamps, with some assistance from the surcharge. Indeed, most of the positioning work done to date has been as a result of the desire to authenticate stamps with the inverted surcharge. Only a few genuine plate varieties have been found worthy of note:-

- | | | | |
|---------|--------|---|--|
| 1,00 fr | Pane 1 | - | vertical doubling of printer's imprint. |
| | Pane 2 | - | " " " " " |
| 1,50 fr | 1/16 | - | bottom frame line broken and trails downward below "DIENST" |
| | Pane 2 | - | pane no. lightly doubled vertically. |
| | 4/12 | - | bottom frame line broken and trails downward at right. |
| | 4/27 | - | bottom frame line extends 1/2 mm right frame. |
| 5,00 fr | Pane 2 | - | vertical doubling of printer's imprint. |
| | 3/5 | - | slight oblique doubling of palm fronds and sky at lower right. |

In addition, there are numerous examples of partial doubling of the top and bottom frame lines caused by compression of the metal at the edges of the design during the rocking-in process.

The doublings of the printer's imprint noted above are merely the most marked; there are many minor doublings and additional burin lines used to strengthen the engraving. The imprint itself is the same as was used for the 1931 definitive issues, as shown hereunder:-

— «ATELIER DU TIMBRE - - ZEGELFABRIEK» —

(actual size roughly 40 x 1 1/2 mm).

Sidepoint Dots

These have already been mentioned above, with particular reference to the second set of plates prepared for the 4,50 fr value. However, it should be remembered that, although for convenience they are described as falling under the "ST" of "DIENST" of the adjacent stamp (since that is the easiest position in which to observe them) they are, in fact, the hollows

in which the transfer roller sidepoint was engaged whilst rolling in the design in the column one to the right and in the row below. Thus, viewed properly, the dot appears about 11 mm to the left and 1 1/2 mm above the top left corner of the position to which it relates; no dot therefore appears adjacent to any stamp in the final column of a pane, nor under the bottom row, but they do appear above the top row of columns 1-4 and in the left selvedge of each pane.

Perforation

The perforation of all values is 13 1/2 x 14 comb, the base of the comb having 126 pins, with legs of 16 pins rising from numbers 1, 26, 51, 76, 101 and 126. This perforated one pane of 50 stamps; however, the cut sheets consisted of 2 such panes and both were perforated simultaneously, so the full comb had a base of 252 pins, in two similar sections separated by a gap of about 30 mm. Being comb, the perforations extend through either the top or bottom selvedge on each sheet (though not both), but do not run into the side margins.

Several values also exist imperforate, although the catalogues do not all agree as to which. The full list is:-

1,00 fr	*	(G, N, P, S, O, B)	24
3,00 fr		(G, N, P, S, O)	500
4,50 fr	*	(G, N, P, S, O, B)	24
5,00 fr		(G, S, O)	-
15,00 fr		(G, N, P, S, O, B)	500
30,00 fr		(G, P)	-
50,00 fr		(G, P)	-

(G - Godinas; N - Negro Guide; P - Philatco; S - Stanley Gibbons; O - Officiel; B - Balasse).

Only the Negro Guide gives any numbers issued, shown in the last column above.

* The 1,00 fr, and 4, 50 fr. values are almost certainly from booklet panes and the rather odd number of 24 is believed to relate to the number of imperforate panes, which would represent 3 sheets of each value.

Of the imperforate sheet stamps, only the 15,00 fr. has actually been seen by the writer. Confirmation of any of the other values in this state would be most welcome.

1. 3,50/3,00 fr - typographed surcharge in blue at Malines..

This surcharge was carefully prepared and applied and no major variations or errors are known. From very minor varieties on the two sheets of 100 examined, it would appear that the printing base was of 100 examples and the same overprinting plate was used for both sheets. This does not preclude the possibility of a further overprinting plate (or plates), but should be regarded as supporting the conclusion that, unless evidence to the contrary can be found, only one such plate was used.

2. 50c/1,50 fr - typographed surcharge in black at Leopoldville.

Here the situation is different; both inverted and misplaced surcharges are to be found (according to Godinas, 500 of the former, but the relative scarcity of even the 15,00 fr. imperforate would suggest that more copies of the 50/1,50 fr. inverted surcharge exist). Further, forgeries of the inverted surcharge are not uncommon and similar forgeries of the normal surcharge are also known. Some of these are dangerous and it is frequently necessary to position stamps on the plate before being sufficiently confident of authenticating the genuine inverted surcharges.

This is made more difficult by the fact that more than a single plate was apparently used for surcharging.

The first such plate was clearly of 100 subjects, divided into 2 panes of 50 and with regular spacing between "50" and "C" in each vertical column, as shown.

Column	1	-	2 3/4 mm
"	2	-	2 3/4 mm
"	3	-	2 3/4 mm
"	4	-	2 mm
"	5	-	2 3/4 mm
"	6	-	2 3/4 mm
"	7	-	2 3/4 mm
"	8	-	2 3/4 mm
"	9	-	2 3/4 mm
"	10	-	2 3/4 mm

The regular spacing within each column indicates the probable use of a report block of 10 subjects in a single line which was then duplicated to make a complete plate of 100. The difference between the 4th and 9th columns suggest that 10, rather than 5, subjects formed the base. This plate shows no significant varieties in the letters themselves, except for a notch in the inner part of the right side of the "0" in position 2/23 (yet to be confirmed).

The second plate was presumably also of 100 subjects but, so far, has been seen represented only by panes of 50. Pane 1 and 2 x Pane 3 all exhibit similar characteristics, while Pane 4 is different. It is, of course, possible that a plate of 50 subjects was used to surcharge individual panes, but there would seem to be no reason to prepare 2 separate plates for this purpose. However, until a complete sheet of 100 can be found uniting the two, the size of the surcharging base remains an assumption. On the basis that it was of 100 subjects, the spacings between "50" and "C" are:-

Column	1	-	2	mm
"	2	-	2	mm
"	3	-	2	mm
"	4	-	2	mm
"	5	-	2 1/2	mm
"	6	-	2 1/4	mm
"	7	-	2 1/4	mm
"	8	-	2	mm
"	9	-	2	mm
"	10	-	2	mm

The one well-known positional variety come from this plate, from position 1/5. The top of the "5" has been damaged and thinned, completely removing the serif. Further, on position 1/33, there is an extra black line between the top and the loop of the "5". There are also a number of possible varieties on the right-hand pane but with no means of confirming them as yet .

The question remains - why two surcharging plates? Were the numbers to be surcharged too enormous - either 2,400 or 4,200 sheets; or was there a second surcharging operation after the original plate had been broken up- this could, of course, explain the discrepancy of 180,000 in the numbers printed according to the different catalogues. The stamps appear only infrequently on cover and it has not so far been possible to carry out sufficient study to confirm or deny the latter postulate.

Postal Use

It should be recalled that, in 1934, all air mail franking constituted a surtax, calculated in addition to the relevant surface postage rate. The air mail stamps were intended to pay only this surtax and their use should be seen in that context. Nevertheless, some of the values selected pose questions.

As far as is known, the air mail rates in operation around 1933/34 were:-

To Europe via Dakar	- up to 24/1/34	1,50 fr per 20 gm.
	from 25/1/34	1,00 fr per 5 gm.

Via Imperial Airways - from 25/2/33

To Europe	3,00 fr per 5 gm.
To Egypt and South Africa	3,50 fr per 10 gm.
To Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern and Southern Rhodesia	3,00 fr per 10 gm.
To India (British)	4,00 fr per 5 gm.

Special Flights (Raids) appear to have been generally subject to a 5,00 fr rate, whether per 5 gms, is unknown.

(Fabry & Van der Linden, Hansez, Rubin).

After establishment of the Sabena/Air Afrique service in 1935, airmail to Belgium by this route was 3,00 fr per 5 gm., airmail to other countries in Europe became 3,50 fr per 5 gm., as did airmail to Belgium by any other route (mainly Imperial Airways).

Special reduced rates became applicable within the African Postal Union during 1936, 3,00 fr per 5 gm.

Internal mail bore an air surtax of 1,00 fr per 5 gm. for letters and postcards and 0,50 fr per 50 gm. for printed matter.

Hence:-

0,50 fr - intended to pay the air surtax on internal printed matter and often seen on "printed matter" first flight covers for internal stages. It is by no means certain that the 0,50/1,50 fr provisional was ever intended to pay air surtax. This was a war time measure and could equally represent the straightforward utilisation of spare stocks to meet an urgent requirement - 0,50 fr was, of course, also the basic overseas surface printed matter rate throughout the war period.

1,00 fr - basic air surtax for internal letters and postcards, and, for a short period, the basic surtax for air mail to Europe via Dakar.

1,50 fr - presumably intended to pay the original surtax for the Dakar service, but this was quickly superseded. These stamps are seldom found on cover and, no doubt, the fact that they no longer served to pay a single rate explains the residual stock which could be used for surcharging in 1942.

- 3,00 fr - first the rate to Europe via Imperial Airways, then the rate to Belgium via Sabena and also the rate to other African Postal Union member countries.
- 3,50/ - surely associated with the increased rate to Europe by
3,00 fr Imperial Airways. The continuing use of the 3,00 fr value suggests additional printings of this value.
- 4,50 fr - the real mystery! The stamps are frequently found paying surface plus air surtax rates (1,50 fr + 3,00 fr) to Belgium, but can hardly have been produced with this in mind. Conceivably, both this and the 3,00 fr value were also originally seen as paying multiple rates by the Dakar route, but were redundant for this purpose almost as soon as they were issued. However, the large printing, and the fact that it was felt worth while to make new plates for this value, indicate extensive use.
- 5,00 fr - certainly used for special flights. More commonly seen making up other rates - eg 6,00 fr etc for letters over the 5 gr. limit. Quite possibly simply ordered as a direct replacement for the previous 1921 5,00 fr air mail stamp.
- 15,00 fr) - used to make up multiple rates for heavy air mail
30,00 fr) letters and packages. During the war period, many
50,00 fr) rates were substantially increased and these values came into their own. The first two are, of course, direct replacements of the 1930 high values.

Early use of the 1934 air mails was by no means certain, as it is clear that many post offices retained considerable stocks of the 1921 and 1930 issues and these continued in use alongside the 1934 issue right up until 1 January 1951, on which date all the special air mail stamps were demonetised. By this time, most mail was carried by air and identifiable stamps were considered unnecessary. Indeed, almost from the inception of air mail stamps, they had been used equally with other postage stamps to make up a total surface/air franking without the two elements being necessarily paid by the relevant stamps.

P S Foden

References:-
 Catalogue Officiel 1987
 Stanley Gibbons Overseas 4 (2nd Edition)
 Godinas Catalogue de Poste Aerienne 1951
 Catalogue Willy Balasse 1949
 Philatco Catalogue 1946-47
 Le Negro Guide 1945
 World Aircraft 1918-1935

A LIST OF THE COMBINATIONS OF PLATES OF THE 1894-1923 MOLS ISSUES

As promised in Bulletin No. 67 I have, with the help of others, compiled a basic up-to-date list of the various successive combinations of plates found on the Mols stamps, very much in accordance with the comprehensive articles by Mr. Hudson in Bulletins Nos. 42 and 47 but including later discoveries and excluding sub-states and perforations which may be of limited interest to some members. Those interested in these important matters should refer to the original papers.

In the following tabulation various contractions are used in order to condense the information into as small a space as practicable:
 CBB = Brussels CONGO BELGE handstamp; CBL = Local CONGO BELGE handstamp; CBT = typographed CONGO BELGE overprint; 1909 = Unilingual issue; RU = RUANDA and URUNDI overprints and RU is followed by (T) to indicate 'Tombeur' or local overprint, (H) to indicate Havre overprint or (G) to indicate Grysolle overprint; EAAOB = 1916 EST AFRICAINE overprint (see later); AO = 1918 Red Cross with A.O. overprint; 1921(error) is the term used for the 5c, 10c and 25c of the 1915 issue with 1921 surcharges although the term 'error' is doubtless quite incorrect; 1922/M = 1922 issue with 'Malines' surcharge; EAAOB/M = EST AFRICAINE ... issue with 1922 'Malines' surcharge; 1922/L = 1922 issue with Local surcharge (see later); E'ville/1 = 1923 Elisabethville issue with so-called 'First Surcharge'; E'ville/2 = 1923 Elisabethville issue with so-called 'Second Surcharge'; CO = Catalogue Officiel No.

Where 'Princes' is stated it is understood that this includes stamps without overprint and those with CONGO BELGE overprint, both handstamped and typographed.

For the EST AFRICAINE overprints EAAOB is followed in brackets by the types of the overprint: S = 'short' overprint; LIG = 'long' overprint with deformed G in BEZETTING on all stamps of the fourth vertical column; SlT = 'long' overprint with extended T in OCCUPATION on all stamps of the second vertical column; L1 = all other 'long' overprints applied by strips of five cliches (including transient varieties such as OCCUPATION); L2a (alternatively known as L2) = 'long' overprint from the first setting with fifty individual cliches; L2b (alternatively known as L2') = 'long' overprint from the second setting with fifty individual cliches. For detailed information on the EAAOB overprints see Bulletin No. 46.

For the 1922 local surcharges the 1922/L is followed in a bracket by the settings of the surcharge that exist. During his studies of the 1922 Local 25c surcharges on the 1915 40c, the Abbe G. Gudenkauf came to the firm conclusion that the four different settings were applied in the sequence (Du Four nomenclature) B, A, C, D. In his book 'Les Timbres du Congo Surcharges a Boma en 1922-23' he therefore transposed General Du Four's A and B. This article is intended to incorporate the latest knowledge and practice and for these stamps the Gudenkauf nomenclature is used and the Du Four surcharges A and B transposed.

Where (?) is added after an issue the existence of the stamp with that combination of plates has been reported but has not been finally confirmed.

In the column REFERENCES are listed documents from which information can be gleaned on the characteristics of the plates and the reasons for the changes of state. 'Du Four' = General Jean Du Four's book 'CONGO - Cinquante Ans d'Histoire Postale' which is indispensable for a study of the plates. 'Bull' = BCSC Bulletin with the appropriate number. RP = La Revue Postale.

COMBINATIONS OF PLATESISSUES FOR WHICH THE PLATES WERE USEDREFERENCESMODERNAS DU FOUR5 CENTIMES

I1 + A	(I1 + A1) (I1 + A2) (I1 + A3)	1894, 1895, CBB & CBL on 1895 stamp	(Du Four (Du Four (Du Four
I1 + B1	I1 + B1	1900, CBB, CBL	Du Four
I2 + B2	I2 + B2	1900, CBB, CBL, CBT, Princes	Du Four
II + B2	II + B2	1909	Du Four
III1 + B3	III1 + B3	1910, 1921	Du Four
III1 + B4		1910, 1921	Bull No. 42
III1 + B5	III1 + B4	1910, 1921, 1922/L(C)(CO 100C)	Du Four
III2 + B5	III2 + B4	1910, 1921	Du Four
III2 + B6	III2 + B5	1910, 1921	Du Four
III2 + C	III2 + C	1910, 1921, 1922/L(C)(CO 100C)	Du Four
IV + D1	IV + D1	1910, 1921	Du Four
IV + D2	IV + D2	1910, 1921	Du Four
V1 + E1	} V + E {	(1915, RU(all), 1922/M(?), 1922/L(B,C)	Bull No. 49
V2 + E2		(1915, EAAOB(S, L1, L1G), 1922/M, 1922/L(B,C,D)	Bull No. 49
V3 + E3		(1915, EAAOB(L2a), 1918, AO, 1921(error), 1922/M, EAAOB/M(L2a), 1922/L(B,C,D), 1922/L(CO 102B)	Bull No. 49
V3 + F	V + F	EAAOB(L2b), EAAOB/M(L2b)	Du Four
VI + F	VI + F	1915, 1922/M, 1922/L(A,B,C,D), 1922/L(CO 102B)	Du Four

10 CENTIMES

I1 + A1	I1 + A1	1894	Du Four
I1 + A2	I1 + A2	1894, 1895	Du Four
I2 + A2		1895	Bull No. 46
I2 + A3	I2 + A2	1895	Du Four
I2 + B1	I2 + B1	1900, CBB, CBL	Du Four
I3 + B2	I3 + B2	1900, CBB, CBL	Du Four
I4 + B2	(I4 + B2) (I4 + B3)	1900, CBB, CBL, CBT, Princes	Du Four Du Four
II + B2	II + B3	1909	Du Four
III1 + C1	III1 + C1	1910, 1921,	Du Four
III2 + C1		1910, 1921, E'ville/2	Bull No. 42
III2 + C2	III1 + C2	1910, 1921, E'ville/2	Du Four
III3 + C2	III2 + C2	1910, 1921, E'ville/1 & /2	Du Four
IV + D1	IV + D1	1910, 1921, E'ville/1 & /2	Du Four
V1 + D2		1915, RU(T,H), RU(G)(?)	Bull No. 42
V2 + D2	V + D2	1915, EAAOB(S,L1, L2a), 1922/M, EAAOB/M(L2a)	Du Four
V2 + D3	V + D3	1915, 1921(error), 1922/M	Du Four
V2 + E	V + E	1915, 1922/M, E'ville/1 & /2	Du Four

COMBINATIONS OF PLATESISSUES FOR WHICH THE PLATES WERE USEDREFERENCESMODERNAS DU FOUR15 CENTIMES

I + A1	I + A1	1896, CBB, CBL	Du Four
I + A2	I + A2	1896, CBL, CBT	Du Four
I + A3		1896, CBL, CBT, Princes	Bull No. 67
II + A3	II + A2	1909	Du Four
III1 + A4	III1 + A3	1910, 1921	Du Four
III1 + A5	} III1 + A4 { } III1 + A5 {	(1910, 1921	} Bull Nos. } 32, 37, } 42 & 68
III1 + A6		(1910, 1921	
III1 + A7		(1910, 1921	
III1 + A8		(1910, 1921	
III1 + A9		(1910, 1921	
III2 + B1	III2 + B1	1910, 1921	Du Four
III2 + B2		1910, 1921	Bull No. 42
III3 + B2	III3 + B2	1910, 1921	Du Four
III3 + B3		1910, 1921	Bull No. 37
III4 + B3	III4 + B3	1915, RU(all)	Du Four
III5 + C1	III5 + C	1915, EAAOB(S, L1, L1G, L1T)	Du Four
IV1 + C1		EAAOB (L2a)	Bull No. 67
IV2 + C1	IV1 + C	1915, EAAOB(L1, L2a)	Du Four
IV3 + C1	IV2 + C	1915	Du Four
V + C1	V + C	1915, 1918, AO	Du Four
V + C2	V + D	1915	Bull No. 29

25 CENTIMES

I1 + A1	I1 + A1	1894	Du Four
I2 + A2	I2 + A2	1900, CBB, CBL, CBT	Du Four
I3 + A2	I3 + A2	1900, CBL, CBT, Princes	Du Four
II1 + A3	II1 + A3	1910, 1921	Du Four
II1 + A4	II1 + A4	1910, 1921,	Du Four
II2 + A4	II2 + A4	1910, 1921	Du Four
II3 + B	II3 + B	1910, 1921	Du Four
II4 + B		1910, 1921	Bull No. 48
III1 + B	III1 + B	1915, RU(all), EAAOB(S, L1, L1G, L1T), 1922/M, EAAOB/M(L1, L1G, L1T)	Du Four
III1 + C		1915, EAAOB(L2a), EAAOB/M(L2a)	Bull No. 23
III2 + C	III2 + C	1915, 1921(error), 1922/M	Du Four
III2 + D	III2 + D	1915, 1918, AO, 1922/M	Du Four
III3 + D	III3 + D	1922/M	Du Four

COMBINATIONS OF PLATESISSUES FOR WHICH THE PLATES WERE USEDREFERENCESMODERNAS DU FOUR40 CENTIMES

I1 + A1	I1 + A1	1896	Du Four
I2 + A1	I2 + A1	1896, CBB, CBL, CBT, Princes, 1921(CO 85A)	Du Four
II + A2	II + A2	1910, 1915, RU(all), 1921, 1922/M(vermilion and carmine), 1922/L(B,C,D)	Du Four
II + A3	II + A3	1915, EAAOB(L1, L2a), 1918, AO, 1922/M (vermilion and carmine), EAAOB/M(L1, L2a) (vermilion and carmine), 1922/L(A,B,C,D)	Du Four
III + B	III + B	Colonial Campaigns (CB and RU)	Du Four

50 CENTIMES

I1 + A1	I1 + A	1894	Du Four
I1 + A2	I1 + B1	1900, CBB, CBL(?), CBT(?)	Bull No. 28
I2 + A2	I2 + B1	1900, CBL, CBT, Princes, 1921(CO 87A)	Du Four
II + A2	II + B1	1909, 1921(CO 87B)	Du Four
III1 + A3	III1 + B1	1910, 1921	Bull No. 42
III2 + A4	III2 + B2	1910, 1921	Du Four
III3 + A5	III2 + B3	1915, RU(T,H), 1922/M	RP No. 72-73
III3 + B	III2 + C	1915, RU(G), EAAOB(S, L1, L1T, L2a), 1922/M, EAAOB/M(L2a)	Du Four
III4 + B	III2 + C	1918, AO	Bull No. 42

1 FRANC

I1 + A1	(I1 + A1) (I2 + A1)	1894, CBB, CBL (violet and lilacs)	(Du Four Du Four)
I2 + A2	I3 + A2	1900(carmine), CBB, CBL, CBT, Princes, 1921(CO 91A and 91B)	Du Four
III1 + A3	III1 + A3	1910, 1921	Du Four
III1 + A4	III1 + A4	1910, 1915, RU(T,H), 1921	Du Four
III2 + A5	III2 + A5	1915, RU(G), EAAOB(S, L1)	Du Four
III3 + A5	III3 + A5	EAAOB(L2a)	Du Four
III4 + A5		1915, 1922/L	Bull No. 32
III5 + A5	III4 + A5	1915, 1922/L	Du Four
III6 + A5		1915, 1922/L	Bull No. 21
III6 + A6	III5 + A6	1915, 1922/L	Du Four
III + A7	III + B	1915, 1918, AO	Du Four corrigenda

3.50 AND 3 FRANCS

I + A	(I + A1) (I + A2)	1898, CBB, CBL, CBT, Princes	(Du Four Du Four)
III1 + A	III1 + A2	1910, 1921	Du Four
III2 + A	III2 + A2	1910, 1921	Du Four

<u>COMBINATIONS OF PLATES</u>		<u>ISSUES FOR WHICH THE PLATES WERE USED</u>	<u>REFERENCES</u>
<u>MODERN</u>	<u>AS DU FOUR</u>		
<u>5 FRANCS</u>			
I + A1	I + A1	1894, CBB, CBL, CBT, 1921(CO 93A and 93B)	Du Four
I + A2	I + A2	Princes	Du Four
III + A3	III + A2	1910, 1915, RU(T,G), EAAOB(S, L1, L1T, L2a), 1921	Bull No. 42
III + A4	III + A3	1915	Du Four
II2 + A4	II2 + A3	1915, EAAOB(L2a), 1918, AO, 1922/L	Du Four
<u>10 FRANCS</u>			
I1 + A1)	I + A1	(1898, CBB, CBL, CBT (perforated 14)	Du Four
I2 + A1)		(1898, CBL, CBT (perforated 12), Princes, 1921(CO 94 and 94)	Bull No. 42
II + A1	II + A1	1910, 1921 (yellowish paper), 1910, 1921 (bluish paper)(?)	Du Four
II + A2	II + A2	1910, 1921 (bluish paper)	Du Four
III + B	III + B	1918, AO	Du Four

Future discoveries will doubtless change details of the above tabulation. Apart from possible additional states of the plates and the possibility that what are now considered to be new plates may prove to be repaired earlier plates it is very possible, even probable, that some overprinted stamps, on particular combinations of plates and not included in the above list, may well exist and, in the future, be recognized. Plate combination IV1 + C1 of the 15c may well exist in the 1915 issue without the EAAOB overprint.

It is important to resolve the queries indicated in the tabulation and any information that may help in their solution will be greatly welcomed.

If readers require detailed information on the plates and on the repairs made to them they need to refer to General Du Four's book and to the other references listed in the tabulation. For the 1910 and 1915 issues the respective articles in BCSC Bulletins Nos. 14 and 22 may be found helpful.

My sincere thanks are due to Abbe G. Gudenkauf and Mr. B. P. Hudson for their very considerable help in producing and checking the information in this article.

R. H. K.