

BELGIAN CONGO SPECIALISTS' STUDY CIRCLE

Bulletin No. 8

October, 1952

REPORT OF MEETING

A meeting was held at 12, Avenue Mansions, Finchley Road, London, N.W.3., on Saturday, the 20th September, and there were present Mr. C.H. Compton (in the Chair), Mrs. D.M. Green and Messrs. Creswell, Loader, Wood, Wright and Keach. Mr. R.E. Turner was present as a guest and prospective member. Apologies for absence were received from Messrs. Thrasher and L.G. Green.

During the formal business the Secretary reported that the Circulating Packet, which had by that time completed one complete circuit of home members, had not met with the same success as had the auction sale, owing to the shortage of material. Only three members had entered their duplicates but for these entries sales have been quite as high as could be expected. It was agreed that the packet should complete a second circuit and that, if any member does not wish to receive the packet, he should advise the Secretary accordingly. Members are asked to sort out their duplicates for addition to the packet when it reaches them. It is regretted that the packet cannot be sent overseas but overseas members may send to the Secretary material for inclusion in the packet, either mounted and priced or loose, at a fixed fraction of catalogue price (Gibbons, Prinnet or Balasse suggested).

Major Corbisier de Meaultsart had sent a further batch of modern covers and these were available for those who wanted them. This further evidence of Major Corbisier's interest in the Study Circle was very much appreciated and the Secretary was instructed to write to him offering him the sincere thanks and best wishes of the members present.

There being no other formal business, Mr. Compton opened the subject of the 40c. value of the Mols and Van Engelen issues, together with the 1925 Colonial Campaigns issue. He dealt with the stamps themselves and with the multitude of frame plate retouches and re-entries.

A considerable quantity of unusual material was on view including complete sheets of all the normal issues. There were die proofs of the 1896 issue; plate proofs of the 1915, Red Cross and A.O. Issues; a horizontal pair of the A.O. issue with the A.O. missing from the left-hand stamp; 1921 5/40c. with typographed overprint; 1922 Malines surcharge, Centre Type I, mint in block of four (from booklet) and used single; and the 1922 local surcharge double, inverted, printed on both sides etc.

At the close of the meeting sincere thanks were expressed to Mrs. Green for her continued kindness in allowing the Study Circle the use of her flat for its meetings.

1948 IDOLS SERIES

Following the note in Bulletin No. 7, the Secretary took a normal copy of the Congo 20c. Idols, covered the lower half with brown paper and exposed the upper half to the sun for about two months. The exposed half was found to have been bleached to a pale grey only a little darker than those found earlier by two members of the Study Circle. There is no doubt that the pale shades of the lower values of this series are caused by fading due to exposure to the sun.

NEW MEMBER

Mr. R.E. Turner of Eastbourne has joined the Study Circle and his address is on the attached slip.

1898 - 10 FRANCS

Mr. Heim has sent a photograph of a copy of the above stamp showing a very clear frame plate re-entry with the short horizontal lines of shading near the left-hand frame line doubled vertically; other parts of the design, for example the bottom right-hand corner, also appear doubled.

Mr. Heim will be interested to know if any other member of the Circle has a similar copy and if possible he would like to know the position of the stamp in the sheet.

1909 TYPOGRAPHED OVERPRINTS

Mr. W.J. Thrasher has studied the typographed "Congo Belge" overprints on both stamps of horizontal and vertical format and has summarised his findings in the attached thesis. He will welcome the observations of other members.

THE PORT OF MATADI

General du Four has sent a further extract from "Diorama du Congo" giving the description of the subject of the 5 centimes value of the Mols. series. Below is the Secretary's rough translation.

The town is built in rugged hilly country 150 kilometres up the River Congo. It is the terminus of the railway joining the coast to Leopoldville. The church, the Dutch trading depot, the general shops, the large hotel, the pharmacy, etc. can be distinguished.

On the majestically moving River Congo two steamships, making the journey from Antwerp to Matadi, are surrounded by numerous canoes. In the foreground is the railway which weaves its way to the foot of the rocks forming one side of the picture. The figures of native men and women give life to the picture. In the background of the tableau, on the heights of the Bangou mountains on the side of the river, stands the old station of Vivi, actually occupied by an English Protestant Mission. The prominent peak in the mounts is Mount Leopold.

AUCTION SALE NO. 2

The catalogue of our second auction sale is attached. All the lots available are being circulated to home members and it is requested that any home member who does not wish to see the lots will inform the Secretary immediately.

In the cases of lots Nos. 54 and 84 which are not available for inspection, it must be understood that if the condition of the stamps is not in accordance with the descriptions given, the purchasers are under no obligation to accept them.

EXTRACTS FROM PERIODICALS

*LE PHILATELISTE BELGE NO. 61, SEPT. - OCT. 1952

Un Variete "Congolaise" by E.C.M.

The writer discusses the cracked frame plate or "lezarde" between Nos. 41 and 42 on the sheet of the 15 centimes 1910-21 issues. Whereas earlier

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suggestions have been that the hole in the plate (showing as a dot on the stamps) caused the crack, the writer contends that the hole was drilled intentionally to prevent the crack from spreading to the edge of the plate.

RECENT AUCTION REALISATIONS

Harmer - July 1st, 1952

It is regretted that in Bulletin No. 7 it was stated that the 1941 Memorial Set, mint imperf. pairs, fetched £12; this should have read £10.

Vessey - June 28th, 1952

1918 - 10 franc Red Cross mint £2.10. Od.

1918 - 10 franc A.O. mint £2. 8. Od.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Study Circle will be on Saturday, 29th November, and Mrs. Green has again invited us to use her flat. The Secretary will open the discussion on the 50 centimes Mols and all members are asked to bring with them their stamps of this value.

THE TYPOGRAPHED OVERPRINTS OF 1909

Careful studies of the handstamps used in the overprinting of the Mols issues after the declaration of the Congo's Colonial Status have been well recorded, particularly in the booklets published by Messrs. Gelli & Tani, many years ago and subsequently incorporated in Balasse lists.

Early ventures in this field can be discouraging as the new participant does not find even the distinction between handstamped and typographed overprints an easy matter and quite frequently they are incorrectly classified in established dealers' approval books. It follows that scope for fakes and forgeries is considerable.

Messrs. Gelli & Tani introduced a gauge for these overprints relying upon the spacing of vertical strokes of the capital letters which in itself is an admirable guide and in conjunction with known characteristics of each type a sure "yard stick". They specify slight differences in certain letters in the handstamp types but spacing and formation of those in the typographed overprints are more constant, two sizes of overprint only being referred to.

The origin of these differing sizes is intriguing and there is no doubt that the method described by Messrs. Gelli & Tani, by which the firm of printers of "Le Cote Libro" produced the type and applied the overprints is correct.

One of the original handstamps (known as Brussels, Type V) was used to make a series of moulds (probably five) in a papier mache matrix, in which a series of separate cliches (probably twelve) in lead were cast in each mould.

The pouring in of the hot metal for the first series of castings caused shrinkage in the papier mache moulds even though these were kiln dried after impression. Thus, the larger size typographed overprints were from those first cast, smaller than the original handstamp owing to the initial drying shrinkage of the mould. Slight further diminutions in size resulted in subsequent castings but these differences are so small as to be hardly measurable.

The repetition of castings is corroborated by the repetition of minor flaws in the letters of the overprints; for example, the V shaped indentation in the vertical stroke of the first E in "BELGE", which is often seen, including overprints of the larger size. Other flaws possibly resulted in the moulds as a result of the removal of the first castings from them when they must have shrunk tight to the lead; those would be repeated in the subsequent castings and each casting upon removal might cause further slight damage to the mould. Thus some flaws would only occur in the later or last casting. There is, of course, also the possibility that damage could occur to the letters after casting and such damage would then only occur on individual cliches, ie when printed, upon one stamp in each sheet.

The study of these overprints on the complete sheets at once confirms what can only be suspected from separate stamps, strips and blocks, and it is soon evident that a relationship exists between the positions of the lettering flaws on stamps of the horizontal and vertical format. As the same cliches were used for both and the arrangement of them had necessarily to be different to suit the sizes and setting of the original sheet of stamps they had to be separate for each stamp and individually changed in position upon some form of base board.

Comparisons of the overprints on sheets of horizontal and vertical format reveal that the positions of the four larger size overprints are in direct relation, namely, from the top left hand corner of the former to the bottom right hand corner of the latter. Further, this relationship can be traced to the minor

letter flaws which sustain the same continuity throughout the sheets.

The cliches must therefore have been mounted individually on a base board to suit one format (one may hazard a guess that this would be the horizontal since eight values occur thus and only two in the vertical form) and after being used to overprint all the sheets of this format were taken off one by one commencing at the top right hand corner and mounted on the new board commencing at the bottom left hand corner.

The accompanying chart indicates the arrangement on each format recording the characteristics and position of each and can be used in many cases to "plate" blocks, pairs and strips by combination of the known flaw positions.

It will be seen that the indented E occurs on eleven stamps in each sheet, whilst the short bottom bar to the same E occurs on eleven other stamps in each sheet - the former only including one of the larger size overprints. From this I conclude that the number of castings from the moulds was probably twelve, some being discarded.

A damaged B occurs on nine stamps and a damaged C on five, whilst a curled foot to the second E occurs on seven stamps in each sheet.

It will be realised, therefore, that known flaws in the overprints upon stamps also known to have some original plate characteristic, e.g. number 35 on the horizontal 1 fr. value, can undoubtedly prove genuineness or otherwise or indicate a "de Princes" issue, whilst inverted overprints can be similarly checked subject to allowance for the inverted relationship of sheet and overprint setting.

When subsequently the "de Princes" issues were produced the recorded position of the larger size overprint showed that although the separate cliches remained in the possession of the printers they were again mounted and remounted on base boards for the "de Princes" order. It would indeed be interesting to be able to check and compare the relative spacing between the overprints on these and the original issues as well as the positions of the lettering flaws indicated on the chart but unfortunately complete sheets, or even part sheets, of the overprints are too scarce for the writer's reference.

In this connection one observes that whilst Prinnet adheres to the recorded four large size overprints in each sheet of the overprints he introduces a fifth in the original overprints. This is completely incompatible and one can but question the reason for his departure.

W.J.T.

The Typographed CONGO BELGE overprints of 1909.

A chart of the recurrent characteristics in letters.

Horizontal format.

Sheets of 50 stamps.

Vertical format.

5c. 10c. 25c. 40c. 50c. 1fr. 3frs & 10frs

15c and 5frs

Nos					
1-5		d.		✦	
6-10	c.		a.b.f.	b.	✦ f.
11-15	✦ c.	✦	b.	c.	
16-20	d.	c.	c.	c.	c.
21-25	b.	d.			d.
26-30	c.	b.f.	c.	a.d.	d.
31-35	✦ d.	f.i.		a.b.	c.e.
36-40	a.	b.f.	ab.f.	b.f.	c.
41-45				d.	d.
46-50		d.	d.		

Nos									
1-10		d.	d.			d.	d.		
11-20	a.	b.	a.	b.	c.	c.	a.		f.i. ✦
		f.	b.	f.		e.	b.		d.
21-30	c.	b.	c	a.	d.	d.			d. b.
		f.	d.						
31-40	d.	c.	c.	c.	c.		c.	b.	✦ ✦
									c.
41-50	c.		a.	b	✦		✦		d.
			b.						
			f.						

✦ Nos. 4. 10 11 & 12. ✦? 31 (Pinet). Larger size o'print. Nos. 39 40 45 & 47 ✦? 20 (Pinet)
16 3/4 mm.

a. Nos. 8. 29. 34. 36. & 38.

a. → CONGO

Nos. 11. 13. 17. 24 & 43.

b. Nos. 8. 9. 13. 21. 27. 34. 37. 38. & 39.

b. → BELGE

Nos. 12. 13. 14. 17. 22. 30. 38. 43 & 44.

c. Nos. 6. 11. 14. 17. 18. 19. 20. 26. 28. 35. & 40.

c. → BELGE

Nos. 15. 16. 21. 23. 32. 33. 34. 35. 37. 40. & 41.

d. Nos. 2. 16. 22. 25. 29. 30. 31. 44. 45. 47 & 48.

d. → BELGE

Nos. 2. 3. 6. 7. 20. 24. 25. 26. 29. 31 & 49.

e. No. 35.

e. → BELGE

No. 16.

f. Nos. 8. 10. 27. 37. 38. & 39.

f. → BELGE

Nos. 12. 13. 14. 22. 43. & 45

f.i. No. 32.

f.i. → BELGE

No. 19.

f.i. → BELGE