

BELGIAN CONGO SPECIALISTS' STUDY CIRCLE

Bulletin No. 1.

February 1951

The inaugural meeting of the Belgian Congo Specialists' Study Circle was held at 12, Avenue Mansions, Finchley Road, London, N.W.3., on Saturday 10th February, 1951. There were present Mrs. D.M. Green and Messrs. P.G. Cresswell, W.J. Thrasher, G. Wood, J. Wright and R.H. Keach.

The first part of the meeting was in the form of an informal discussion to decide whether a Study Circle should be formed or not and this necessitated consideration of the objects and activities of the proposed Circle. It was reported that the following collectors of Belgian Congo were interested in the proposed Circle but were unable to attend the inaugural meeting; Messrs. C.H. Compton and L.G. Green, both of whom had hoped to be present but at the eleventh hour were prevented from doing so, Leslie Barker, J. Knight and D.B. Pritchard. With those present at the meeting this made a total of eleven prospective members and this was considered sufficient.

All those present took an active part in the discussion and it was finally agreed unanimously that there was the need for a Congo Study Circle and that it should be formed there and then. With that agreement the first meeting of the Circle began.

Election of Officers

The necessary officers were considered and it was agreed not to elect a president or permanent chairman but that the member who initiated the discussion at each meeting should take the chair for that meeting.

A permanent secretary was necessary and Mr. Keach who had arranged for the inaugural meeting was proposed and, there being no other candidate, was elected. It was agreed that the post of treasurer should be incorporated in that of secretary. If in due course the secretary finds his duties unduly onerous it will be possible for him to farm out specific jobs to other members.

The business of the inaugural meeting being of a formal character the newly elected honorary secretary was allowed to retain the chair for that meeting.

Title and Objects of the Study Circle

It was agreed that the Circle should be called the BELGIAN CONGO SPECIALISTS' STUDY CIRCLE and that its objects should be:

1. The collection and distribution of knowledge of the stamps and postal history of the Belgian Congo.
2. The recording of this knowledge.
3. The exchange and sale of surplus stamps and other material between members of the Circle.

Membership

It was agreed that membership should be confined to amateur bona fide collectors of Belgian Congo and that dealers should be excluded, even those

who themselves are collectors of the country. There was some discussion on the question of the standard for prospective members but it was thought that that question would sort itself out and that collectors who were not also students of the stamps would not wish to join and in any case applications for membership would be carefully considered before admission. A special questionnaire would be prepared and would be completed by all new members.

Bulletin

It was agreed that a News Letter or Bulletin should be issued at intervals, say four to six issues each year, depending on the subject matter available, and that this was an important activity of the Circle as it formed the country members' main link with the Study Circle. Suggested contents of the Bulletin were:-

1. Summary of the discussion at the previous meeting.
2. Chronicle of new issues.
3. Notes on new literature and reference to articles on Belgian Congo in the current periodicals.
4. Prices realized at recent auctions.
5. Want lists of members.
6. Notes of surplus material of which members wish to dispose.
7. Queries and answers.

The quality and frequency of issue of the Bulletin will depend to a large extent on the number of contributions received from members.

Meetings

It was agreed that for a start four meetings should be held each year at more or less equal intervals between September and May and that these should be on Saturday afternoons. At each meeting one issue, one value or one stamp would be considered, one member, who would be chairman for that meeting, would open the discussion with a display of his own stamps and he would be followed by other members enlarging on the subject and showing their stamps.

The meeting place was discussed and it was agreed that it must be in London. Mrs. Green offered the use of her flat for future meetings but although this offer was very much appreciated it was thought unreasonable for the Study Circle to impose upon Mrs. Green's goodwill. On Mrs. Green's suggestion it was agreed that the next meeting should be at her flat and in the meantime members should make their own enquiries and report their findings at the meeting. 3 p.m. was considered a more suitable time than 2.30 p.m., that chosen for the first meeting.

After some of the meetings it should be possible to hold small auction sales of members' surplus material. A list and description of the lots could be circulated before the meeting and this would give country members the opportunity of bidding.

Section Books

In the Belgian Specialists' Study Circle the country is divided into a number of sections, each section covering one issue, part of an issue or a series of issues and each section is led by a member who is making a special study of those stamps. That member writes in a so-called Section Book all that he knows about stamps of the group. That book together with a duplicate book is circulated to each member in turn and members enter into the second book their own observations, additions, criticisms etc. The books are in due course returned to the member whence they originated and he amends his original text where necessary to incorporate the information supplied by the other members. The book is periodically circulated to all members for their further notes and thus is kept up to date and serves as the best available work of reference on the particular issue.

It was agreed that a similar series of books would be of great value both to the present members and to future students of Belgian Congo and that it should be adopted in this Study Circle. It was furthermore agreed that the member who led the discussion at a meeting should start a Section Book on the subject covered by that meeting and thus a series of books would automatically be prepared. This arrangement would not, however, prevent any member from starting a section book without having superintended one of the meetings and members should be encouraged to do so. It was agreed that the sections books should be of the loose leaf pattern.

The section books will remain the property of the Study Circle although the originators will retain them while they are interested in that section.

Literature

There was a suggestion that the Study Circle should build up a library of its own but it was thought impracticable and the system used in the Belgian Specialists' Study Circle was approved.

Each member will be asked to provide a list of the books on Belgian Congo that he has together with a list of articles that have appeared in periodicals, are of practical interest and are not covered by the standard catalogues. A composite list of literature and owners will be prepared and circulated to all members who will be able to arrange with other members for the loan of books and periodicals when required.

Finance

The expenses of the Study Circle are problematical but it was thought that £1. 1. 0 from each member would probably cover the relatively heavy expenditure of starting the Study Circle and of seeing it through its first year. The subscription would have to be reviewed a year hence when the operating expenses could be assessed with some confidence.

There being no other business the meeting closed with a very sincere vote of thanks to Mrs. Green for her great kindness in allowing the meeting to be held at her flat and for her generous hospitality in providing tea and other refreshment.

After the meeting members discussed their stamps and inspected collections brought by other members, with intervals for tea and dinner, until about 10 p.m. when they went their several ways.

The above rather detailed summary of the inaugural meeting is given both for the benefit of those unable to attend and to serve as a rough constitution of the Study Circle.

A membership application form is enclosed and all prospective members are asked to complete and return it as soon as possible to the secretary and to include with it any suggestions, criticisms or other helpful advice and want lists, queries etc. for inclusion in the next bulletin.

Belgian Specialists' Dinner

The Belgian Specialists' Study Circle has invited all members of the Congo Study Circle to its Annual Exhibition and Dinner on Saturday, 31st March at Oddenino's Hotel, Regent Street, London, W.1. Tickets are 25/0 each and ladies are invited to the dinner. The Congo Circle has been invited to take part in the exhibition and it is hoped that as many members as possible will accept the offer of the Belgian Specialists. Will those members of the Congo Circle who are not members of the Belgian Circle and who wish to attend, or who require further information please inform the secretary without delay.

Queries

Members are invited to send their queries for inclusion in the bulletin and those members who know the answers are asked to inform the secretary so that he may include these in the following bulletin.

Want Lists

Members are invited to send their want lists for inclusion in later bulletins. It is suggested that Balasse Catalogue Nos. be used whenever possible.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Harry Green has given the secretary several copies of "The Genesis of the Stamps of the Third Issue of the Congo Free State, known as Mols and Van Engelen" by Col. Jean Du Four. This paper is of considerable interest and a copy is enclosed with this Bulletin.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday 14th April, at No. 12 Avenue Mansions, Finchley Road, N.W.3. The subject will be 1894-1900 issue and Mr W.J. Thrasher will open the discussions. Members are asked to record this date although a further notice will be despatched.
