

THE JOURNAL OF THE FRANCE & COLONIES PHILATELIC SOCIETY



David Parmley continues his fascinating story of French Show Business on pages 145 to 152.
Shown above is the 1986 miniature sheet celebrating the founding of French Cinema.

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**THE FRANCE & COLONIES
PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN**
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The Society

The Society was founded in 1949 and is affiliated to the ABPS. Its affairs are managed by a Committee comprising President, Officers and Committee members, elected annually.

All inquiries about and applications for membership should be addressed to the General Secretary by email or to the President: C J Hitchen, 36 Everton Road, Croydon CR0 6LA

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The Magazine Circuit

The Society subscribes to two French philatelic magazines, and has circuits organised for those who wish to read them.

For further details contact the circuit organiser:

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* * *

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Data Protection Act. Members are advised that their details are stored electronically, for use on Society business only, e.g address label printing.

The Journal of the France & Colonies Philatelic Society

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Annual Philatelic Meeting - 7, 8, 9 March

Come along and meet your fellow members for a weekend of French philately. See the accompanying flyer for details.

SOCIETY NOTES

Editorial

Working with a broken hand/wrist has had its challenges this edition – for the last 6 weeks I've had my hand in plaster so it is with grateful thanks to everyone who has eased the load and contributed to this edition. One of the challenges of this edition especially, has been to fill the little spaces at the end of the articles. The temptation is to go back to older Journals and use items from the past, but this society has always prided itself on original work. Reading through the meetings from the older Journals its amazing to see the diversity of subjects we collect. If you would like to share something with others I would love to hear from you. It could be why you collect a theme or an issue, or why you started; or maybe you collect an engraver or particular range of postal markings. One of my favourite things to read about is "Why I collect - what I collect". I'd love to hear about what you collect, and we are so in need of articles - long and short.

Jan Gane

New Members

The Society is pleased to welcome new member 1530 **Ran van den Boom** (Nootdorp, The Netherlands).

Members Resigned

The following members have advised us that, sadly, they will not be renewing their membership: 50 **W.G. (Bill) Mitchell**; 1207 **J.H. Thorpe**.

Regrettably, **William (Bill) Mitchell** has resigned because of failing eyesight. Bill was the longest standing member of the Society having joined in 1957. He recounts his memories of the early days of the Society in Journal 253. Peter Kelly commented that Bill "was one of the best indefatigable researchers in our Society with a great eye for detail and had great knowledge and understanding of the complex issues surrounding French West Africa".

His prolific contributions to the Newsletter and Journal covered 50 years and amounted to more than 70 articles, 30 of them being full length. An example of his fastidious research is an article co-written with US member Laurence Lambert on 'The Post Offices of French West Africa' which tabulated all the known opening and closing dates of operation and stretched over seven editions of the Journal!

Bill was a Committee member from 1991 to 1997 during which time he was Auction Secretary from 1992 to 1997, and although not the convenor, he was the right-hand man to the late Colin Spong in running the Southern Group in Worthing until it folded in 2012. Bill was a recipient of the FCPS Long Service Award in 2019.

If you would like to send Bill any correspondence please contact the Treasurer or the Editor who will gladly supply his details.

Members Deceased

It is with great sadness that we have to report the deaths of two members: 949 **Ashley Lawrence** (Bournemouth), whose obituary is featured on page 115, and 166 **Godfrey Bowden** (Bexleyheath), whose obituary appears on the back page. On behalf of our Society a donation has been made to the Alzheimer Society in Godfrey's name. If you wish to send your condolences to either family please contact Chris Hitchen for details.

Future Society Meetings 2024

The Northern Group will meet on 13 April 2024 at Ravenfield Parish Hall, Birch Wood Drive, Ravenfield, Rotherham S65 4PT. Times and displays to be confirmed. Provisional additional dates are 21 July and 26 October. There are no other scheduled meetings for 2024.

Correction

Journal 302, August 2023: On page 61, in the table, the Yokadouma - Moloundou distance is given as 15 kilometres, which one astute reader pointed out should in fact be 215 kilometres not 15. Your Editor apologises for her mistake.

Are you studying the Sage issue of 1876-1900?

Members may be aware that Peter Kelly has parted with his collection of *Type Sage* postal history. He has five ring-bound volumes of articles, correspondence plus sales details about the issue and many aspects of the postal history of the period. He also has a large document box of notes and correspondence. These would be of great interest to anyone making a study of this period and the long life of the Sage issue. Peter is offering this wealth of information to anyone who would like to have it. It is free but a donation to the Somerset Wildlife Trust would be appreciated. Ideally, Peter would like it to be collected but if posted then the cost needs to be reimbursed. This offer is open until the end of January after which date they will sadly be passed to the recycling service. Peter's email is peterkelly35@btinternet.com

Books Noted

Timbres Terres australes et antarctiques françaises: Territoire antarctique australien, antarctique britannique, Terre de Ross pub Yvert & Tellier; 392pp, price 35.90€.

Marques Postales Manuelles de L'arrondissement de Chinon, des origines à nos jours pub le Groupement Philatélique Maine-Anjou-Touraine; 173pp; downloaded free from www.philatelie-mat.fr

Maurice Tyler

OBITUARY

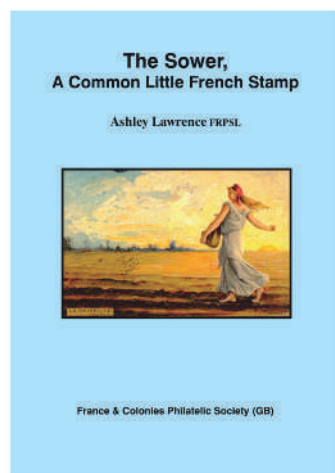
Ashley Lawrence

1943-2023

Ashley joined the F&CPS in 1992 and soon became an active and supportive member. He was elected to the Committee in 2002, became vice president in 2005 and served as president from 2005 to 2007. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society and a member of the Postal History Society and of the Society of Postal Historians.

His main collecting interest lay in the Sower issues of France and he became a leading authority on the subject and its designer, Oscar Roty. In February 2003, he gave a display to the Royal to celebrate the centenary of the Sower issue. During the presentation, he created a minor sensation by showing a photograph of Roty's model for the Sower, Charlotte Ragot, in the nude. "It was a moment to savour", Ashley recalled, "You could hear the pace-makers racing!" His other collecting interests were the Siege of Paris and the French Mandates of Syria and Lebanon

Ashley attended the London, Wessex and Southern regional meetings of the F&CPS and was an active participant in the RPSL regional meetings in his home-town of Bournemouth. He was a regular attendee at the F&CPS Annual Weekend where he delighted his fellow members with his displays of the Sower (naturally), the overprints of the French mandates, *porte-timbres* and a variety of material and memorabilia related to the Franco-Prussian War. His last display, in 2019, was an extraordinary series of original cartoons by James Gillray, William Hogarth, Amadée de Noé and Jules Renard relating to 19th century Anglo-French relations some of which had been reproduced on porcelain plates. Ashley enjoyed the company of his fellow members and was a humorous and entertaining speaker. He was generous both in the sharing of his expertise and at the bar. On one occasion, when he was unable to attend the weekend due to ill-health, he covered the cost of the wine served at dinner.



Ashley was a prolific researcher and author. His first appearance in the F&CPS Journal goes back to 1997 when he contributed to a discussion on 1871 Armistice Mail in the Question & Answer section. Thereafter, he was a regular contributor on his three favourite subjects, the Sowers, the French Mandates and the Franco-Prussian War. He featured regularly in 'Stanley Gibbons Monthly' and his last article was published in October of this year on the 'Life of Lily Pastré'. It was his Sower articles in SGM though that had the greatest influence on his readers and his enthusiasm for the stamp rubbed off on others. One F&CPS member said that Ashley's articles on the Sowers generated his interest in French stamps. Clare de la Feuillade, editor of SG's Foreign catalogues, commented that "it was through the work that Ashley and I did for the Stanley Gibbons France and Colonies catalogue that piqued my interest in the France 'Sowers' series. I will always be grateful to Ashley and the time he spent with me, sharing his enthusiasm for a very special stamp design".

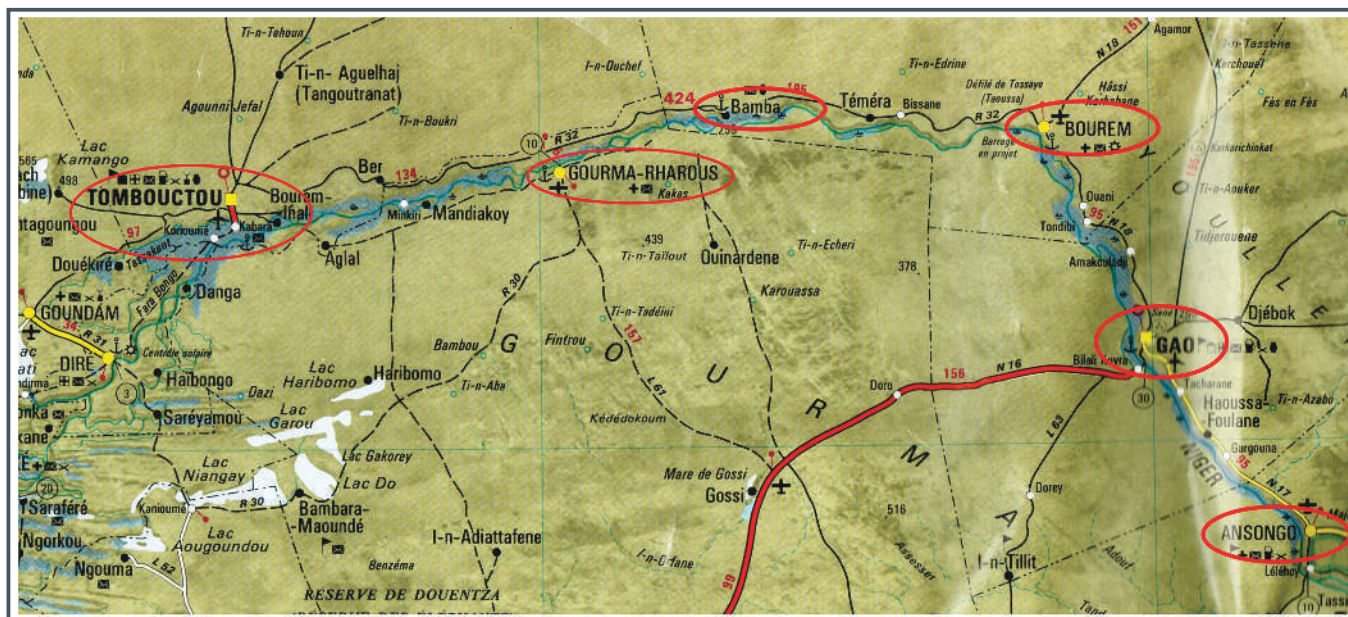
Fittingly, SG's brand-new France catalogue (2nd edition) includes Ashley's article 'The Printing of the Sower Stamps of France', reprinted from *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, February 2013.

Ashley was awarded the prestigious Rowland Hill Award in 2000 and 2002 for journalistic excellence and this was even before he had published the book he will always be remembered by – 'The Sower, a Common Little French Stamp' published by the F&CPS in 2012. This magnificent tour de force was an unmatched study of the Sower issue and nothing like it had been published before in France, let alone in the UK. The first printing sold out immediately and a second printing was commissioned. In the following year, at the New Zealand National Philatelic Literature Exhibition, Ashley's book was awarded both a Large Gold medal and the 'Grand Award', the ultimate accolades for a publication which will be a permanent memorial to such a warm-hearted, generous and enthusiastic philatelist.

Mick Bister

Tombouctou and the Niger Bend

Peter R.A.Kelly



Map of French Sudan showing the Niger Bend.

The occupation of Tombouctou December 1893-March 1894

The occupation and development of French Soudan was based on annual seasonal campaigns and, in particular, control over the river Niger and surrounding country along it. As far back as 1887 Lieutenant Edmond Caron had explored and developed relationships along the Niger with his small flotilla almost reaching Kabara, the port that served Tombouctou, only seven kilometres inland. The political and military strength of the Touareg, masters of Tombouctou, gave them dominance over the banks of the Niger and represented a considerable obstacle to effective colonisation of the Niger bend region.

In December 1893 Naval Lieutenant Gaston Boiteux, in charge of the flotilla of canoes and barges, set off with merchants bound for Kabara. He had been given specific orders by Colonel Louis Archinard, *Commandant Supérieur du Soudan Français*, that on no account should he enter Tombouctou. However, Boiteux sought the glory of raising the French flag over Tombouctou and was concerned that he might be beaten to it by Lieutenant Emile (Auguste Léon) Hourst who was organising a hydrological mission, surveying the river downstream of Tombouctou, around the Niger bend and down to Gao and beyond. This act of disobedience would cost many lives. When he reached Kabara he found that the unusually high water level allowed him to take his boats almost up to Tombouctou. He left the boats with a small detachment, entered Tombouctou without any difficulty and raised the flag there. Although the inhabitants were not opposed to French control themselves, they did fear the Touaregs who exercised control over the town.

While this was happening the Touareg attacked the boats. This was repulsed by the crew and the detachment left on board under Lieutenant Théophile Aube who now made the

fateful decision to pursue them. The small troop was soon surrounded by a superior number of Touareg and massacred to a man. This left Boiteux marooned in the town and the flotilla under the charge of a warrant officer.

We now need to look at what was happening elsewhere in the colony. Colonel Archinard, the Military Commander in the colony, returned to France and control passed to Lieutenant-Colonel Combes. He fell sick immediately and in turn authority was given for Lieutenant-Colonel Eugène Bonnier to fill this role. Bonnier also confirmed Archinard's instructions to Boiteux. In mid-December Bonnier was returning to Ségo after operations carried out against the warlord Samory. This coincided with the replacement of a military administration by a civilian one under a new Governor, Albert Grodet. Bonnier had not been aware of this change when he heard about Boiteux having entered Tombouctou. He was immediately concerned about the dangerous situation facing Boiteux and the need for reinforcements but of course did not know how bad the position really was after the massacre of Aube and his detachment. He immediately organised a relief mission with two columns; one that he would take down river with all the canoes and barges available and a second one to be led by Commandant Joseph Joffre to follow by the land route as there was no fluvial transport left.

Grodet had now taken over Bonnier's interim command as the new civilian Governor and instructed him to cancel the relief mission, as he wished to avoid military conflict with the Touareg and clearly distrusted the military. Bonnier believed that his decision had been the right one and continued on with the mission as planned. (This did lead to considerable repercussions at a later date and considerable support in favour of Bonnier for his action). Grodet was seen

to be both unpopular and incompetent in this and previous positions held. In July 1895 Grodet was replaced by Colonel Edgard de Trentinian as Lieutenant-Governor - Soudan was now back under military control.

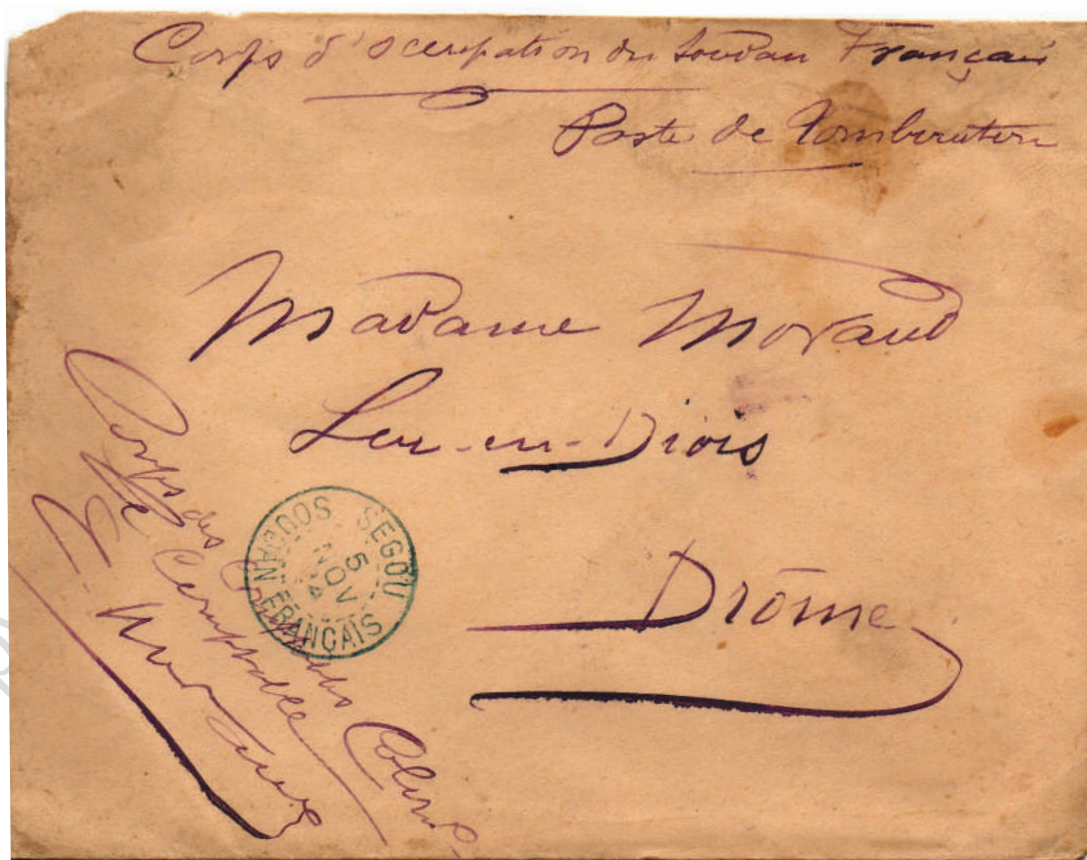
Bonnier's force left Ségou on 1 January 1894, reaching Kabara on 10 January. Here, he learned of the perilous position of Boiteux and the massacre of Aube and his men. Boiteux was rapidly relieved of his post and returned to his flotilla. Bonnier left a sufficient number of troops to maintain their presence and control within Tombouctou and, in accordance with Grodet's instructions began to make his way back to Kayes with a small troop. On 12 January he passed a Touareg encampment and took 3,000 sheep from them. He left one of his sections to guard these and pressed on, camping for the night of 14 January at Tacouba. Shortly before dawn the following morning the camp was surrounded and attacked by a large force of Touareg, catching them completely by surprise. It was another massacre and only one officer and nine men escaped, joining up with the section guarding the sheep. Bonnier was among the fallen. The rest of the force under Captain Philipps abandoned the sheep and made their way back to Tombouctou to reinforce their presence there.

The second column under Joffre made slow progress on the long journey from Ségou, delayed by deep water inlets and

marshy ground that had to be circumnavigated. Once they reached Goundam the flotilla under Boiteux was able to transport some of them. The main body reached Tombouctou on 12 February having covered more than 500km. They visited the site at Tacouba on their way and gathered together the remains of their fallen colleagues. Once arrived at Tombouctou, in front of the population the deceased were given full military honours. The French flag flew over Tombouctou, against initial orders and at what cost.

Though Tombouctou was no longer what it had been, once said to have been a great city of 200,000 habitants, it was still valuable as the starting point of numerous trade routes across the Sahara and the surrounding region. The possession of Tombouctou gave the French the positive recognised status of the dominant power on the Upper Niger.

There is some confusion with regard to the date of the opening of a military / civilian post office. The normally highly accurate details published in *Col Fra H.S.* 10-1 gives the opening date as being in 1894, the year of occupation, while the report given by M. Poisson, the *Commis Principal* of the post office at Kayes "*Rapport sur les Postes et Télégraphes en Soudan Français*" dated 25 January 1903 gives the opening date as being 15 February 1896. The telegraph service was operational from 15 March 1899. One of the problems here is that the original records no longer



This letter originated from Tombouctou, sent under the franchise of "*Corps des comptables coloniaux / Le comptable*" and received at Ségou on 5 November 1894. At this time Ségou was the furthest office downstream (opened in June 1893). The letter, addressed to Diois, Drome, France, was carried upstream to Koulikoro and then across country to Kayes (19 November). It finally reached Luc on 14 December.

One is tempted to consider that the presence of the colonial accountant might have been a stage on the opening procedure of a post office there. In any case, this can be considered as an early precursor of mail from this town, so hotly contested.



Kabara to Chatillon-sous-Bagneux (Seine)
11 April 1913.
Franked 5c for the illustrated card.
No other postal marks.

exist following a fire in the early days, an event that is unfortunately not unique but trying for postal historians.

It has already been mentioned that Boiteux, in the race for Tombouctou had been worried that Lieutenant Hourst, busy preparing his mission to Tombouctou and beyond, might arrive there before him. His mission was twofold. Firstly to map the river Niger from Tombouctou down into Nigeria and to assess navigability and secondly to establish relations, pacts and treaties with tribes along the river. The enterprise was an enormous achievement establishing that, at high water, the river was navigable from Koulikoro to Ansongo. At the same time, without any bloodshed, many new relationships were formed.

The three small vessels survived the long voyage of more than 12 months, finishing up at the mouth of the Niger. All the details of the voyage are well known as Hourst published a book "*La mission Hourst*" in 1898, effectively a diary of their journey, illustrated by the many photographs taken on the way. An interesting point was made in the book that after Tossaye no mail was received for ten months.

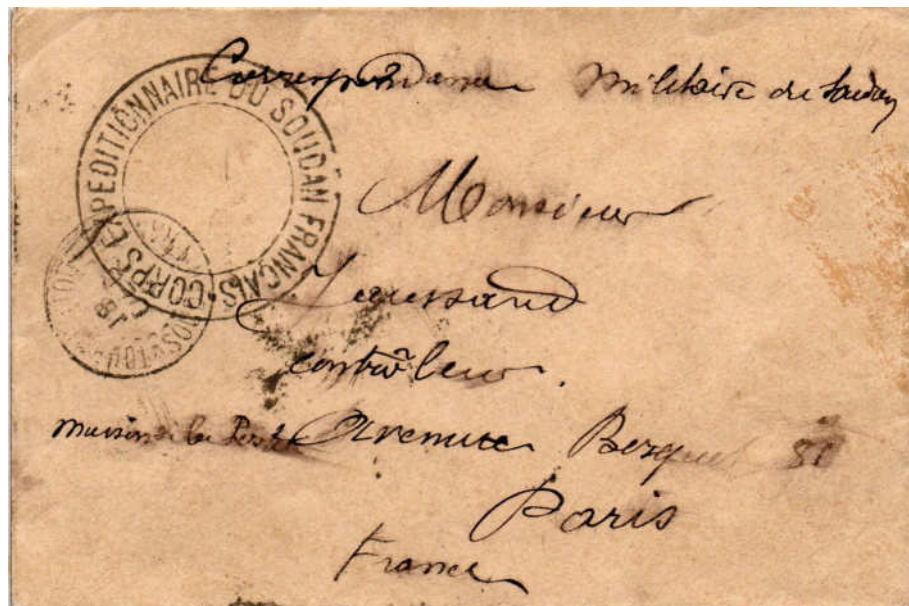
An office was opened at Kabara on the banks of the Niger and the port for Tombouctou some ten kilometres inland from the river, in 1908 (Source: Col Fra 10-1) and the same source indicates the presence of a "*cabine téléphonique*" as far back as 1906. It seems perfectly logical for there to be an office here, the terminus of the service from Koulikoro and

the departure point for services downstream to Ansongo. Very little mail is seen from Kabara as it all seems to have passed directly through Tombouctou. Examples seen indicate that the office was certainly functioning up to and beyond 1945.

Letter written from Tossaye to Paris, sent under military franchise "*Mission hydrographique du Niger* / Tossaye 24 Février 1896 / (signed) possibly Lt Bluzet. It was carried back upstream to Tombouctou where it entered the postal service on 15 March 1896. This is the earliest date of a postmark from Tombouctou found by the author so far. The letter would have been carried on the river as far as Koulikoro and by track to Kayes and again by the river Senegal to St Louis. Carried by Line J Portugal from Dakar (19 April), finally reaching Bordeaux on 29 April.



A letter sent under the franchise "Corps Expeditionnaire du Soudan Français". Entered the postal system at Tombouctou on 13 December 1898. In transit via Kayes 17 January 1899, reached Marseille on 9 February.



Military camp at Fort Bonnier, Tombouctou.



The flotilla of the Service d'Administration at Kabara.

The advance to Bamba

Although Tombouctou was first occupied in 1894 it took quite a long time before serious moves could be made to occupy both banks of the Niger downstream. A period of consolidation was deemed necessary with troops required to operate within a small perimeter of some ten kilometres. The Touareg remained hostile, and it was not until 1897 that Commandant Goldschoen sent troops north into the Sahel with the object of stabilising the French position based on Tombouctou. The Touareg quickly took advantage of the absence of these troops from Tombouctou and a mass gathering of different tribes amounting to some 3,000 came together near Rhergo where they fell on a small colonial detachment, the majority of whom were killed with only a few escaping to tell the tale.

Made bold by this success the Touareg advanced on Tombouctou but by this time reinforcements were in place and Commandant Jean-François Klobb split his troops into two groups, one to proceed downstream and the other to advance along the riverbank. The two groups met at Bamba. The Touareg attacked but were repulsed with considerable loss and the troops were able to return to Tombouctou laden with booty.

The Touareg problem did not end there. Further action was needed in May 1898 - the following month the Touareg leader N'Gouna was killed and this brought the conflict to an end. At this time a post was constructed at Bamba.



The exact date of the opening of a post office at Bamba is not known.

Up until recently the accepted date was in February 1909. The example shown here is

a card dated 25 December 1908 with a postmark of Bamba of 29 December. There are no transit marks.

Franked 5c for the 5-word, illustrated rate.

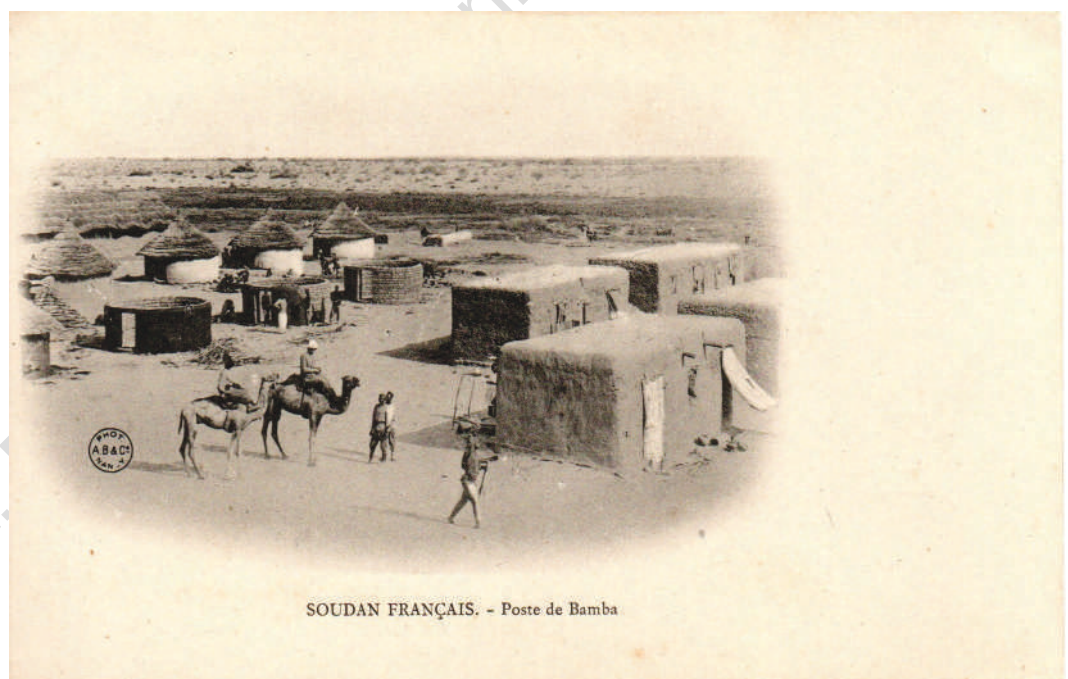
A card dated 31 January 1911 from Bamba to Toulon, no transit marks and franked 5c for the 5-word, illustrated card rate. The illustration shows the waiting / accommodation area at the landing-stage at Mopti of the regular riverboat service operating between Koulikoro and Tombouctou.





An unusual inland letter of 14 February 1925 from Bamba to Tombouctou, received there on 17 February, Franked 25c (inland rate of 1.4.1920). Inland mail from small offices is difficult to find.

An undated postcard (circa 1910-15) showing the French post at Bamba.



Conquest of the Banks of the Niger from Bamba to Ansongo

In November 1898 Lt. Col. Klobb received orders to escort the Voulet-Chanoine mission downstream as far as Ansongo en route to Tchad to meet up with the Foureau - Lamy and Gentil forces out of Algeria and Congo. This consisted of a land-based troop under Klobb backing up the Voulet-Chanoine mission, carried on boats from the Administration flotilla. They reached Ansongo on 25 December 1898 where they met up with troops under Commandant Crava who took over from Klobb and

escorted the mission as far as Zinder. A military post was set up at Ansongo and troops were left there to man it.

One of the instructions given to Klobb was that he had to set up military posts on his way back and he left a garrison at Gao on 2 February 1899 and returned to Tombouctou also leaving a garrison at Bourem. Military posts, actually small forts, were constructed at all these localities. An office was opened at Bourem in 1910 (source *Col. Fra 10-1*).



An early postcard from Bourem to Hanoi, Indochine, 7 November 1911 and redirected to Ba Xat. Franked 5c (tariff of May 1901, illustrated card + 5 words max and marked "imprimé". (This failed on both counts!)



The fort at Bourem. (Undated. c.1910-1915) this shows a surprisingly large structure to house quite a small garrison. Other illustrations show it to be close to the river Niger which is quite broad and open to flooding at this point.

An office was opened at Ansongo, two years after it was occupied, in 1910. (Source *Col.Fra 10-1* illustrates a date stamp of 27 January 1910). It is a remote location, 1400km downstream from Koulikoro. It was the terminus for the Niger river steamer service to Koulikoro for, below it, are rapids only passable at high water periods. Very little correspondence is recorded from here. The only example in the author's collection is dated 1928.

An office was opened at Gao in 1908, two years after French occupation. Historically it was an important town and it occupied a strategic point on the bend of the Niger. It was a large village, an important centre of communication. In later years the Intercolonial road from Dakar (Senegal) to Zinder (Niger) crossed the river here and the route to Colomb-Béchar (Algeria) also passed through Gao. It became an important link in the Transsaharan service of *Compagnie*

Générale Transsaharienne and a hub for early air services although these were soon taken over by Niamey. Prior to all these events there was little European activity and very little

early mail is recorded. *Col.Fra* 10-1 illustrates a postmark of 13 March 1909.



A registered airmail letter of 18 June 1928 from Ansongo to Berne, Switzerland. This would have been carried by “*pirogue postale*”, a postal canoe (constructed of steel and poled by 8 men) to Tombouctou and by steamer to Koulikoro. This was sent during the low-water season, from Koulikoro to Kayes and on to Dakar by rail. Flown from Dakar to Toulouse and by rail reaching Berne on 31 July, a total journey time of six weeks. Franked 5F (underpaid- it should have been 6F). Foreign rate 1F50, foreign registration 1F50, air fee 3F00. The error was in applying the inland registration fee.



A registered letter from Gao to Casablanca of 4 August 1928. No transit marks. Received at Casablanca on 16 September. Transit via Tombouctou, Bamako and Dakar. Franked 1F50 (50c on the back). Postage 50c (tariff 9.8.1926) + 1F00 Registration (tariff of 1.5.1926).

Klobb's mission needs to be seen in perspective. The details of the mission and what it achieved are contained in his own words *Carnet de route*, published posthumously with additional information on the facts leading up to his death – on the specific instructions of Voulet he was shot by troops from the Voulet-Chanoine mission. Just before Klobb was about to return to France on leave, news filtered back to Kayes of the excesses of the Voulet-Chanoine mission and Klobb was ordered to follow them up and take command. The *carnet de route* tells of the trail of destruction left behind by the Voulet-Chanoine mission, burned villages, dead bodies, wells polluted with corpses, women and children hanged and villages stripped of all food stuff. On 14 July 1899 Klobb caught up with them, Voulet refused to give up

his command and instructed his troops to aim well and fire at Klobb and his small troop. Klobb himself was killed and his lieutenant injured. Later, the troops turned on Voulet and Chanoine and shot them. (Source: Klobb, *Dernier carnet de route*. Flammarion, Paris 1904)

The earlier part of the *Carnet de route* gives details of Klobb's mission to Gao, shepherding the Voulet-Chanoine mission. On arrival at Gao he made the point that he was only the second European to enter the village, following in the footsteps of Lt Hourst. It is therefore not surprising that for many years after the installation of French posts along the Niger bend that there was little likelihood of much correspondence emerging.



Postcard of the sternwheeler *Sikasso* at Gao (high-water period). Posted at Bourem 31 May 1931.



Postcard with a 1931 Gao postmark showing the arrival of the postal canoe (*pirogue postale*). This would have been used mainly during the low-water period.

The last office to be opened in this period is that of Gourma-Rharous situated 134km east (downstream) of Tombouctou between there and Bamba. The opening date of this office is

not known and the earliest record (*Col Fra* 10-1) seen so far is 1928. The author has not seen any outgoing mail and only one incoming dated 18 April 1929.



Communications on the River Niger

Effectively, all mail sent to and from offices on the Niger bend were carried on the river. The early reports (Poisson – see bibliography) mentioned the service by canoe that operated between Koulikoro and Kabara, the port for Tombouctou. These canoes were seven metres long and one metre wide, made of steel with lockable boxes fore and aft. They were manned by either Bozos or Somonas tribesmen, capable of working long hours, night and day. Poisson indicated a journey from Koulikoro to Tombouctou and back of 21 days.

There was no specific timetable but an effort was made to try to coordinate services with the departure of mails from Kayes to the coast. In 1900 there was no service downstream beyond Tombouctou. Later when the military installations were in place, any service was on an as-and-when basis not under the control of the Post Office.

In 1905, higher up the river at Koulikoro, sternwheeler steam launches were introduced in 1905. These were capable of carrying goods, passengers and mails as far as Kabara in the wet season when the water levels were high, but in the dry season they could only reach Mopti or Ségou from where the mails would be carried either by canoe or

poled on barges. Another improvement in 1906 was the opening of the railway between Kayes and Koulikoro and the possibility of better coordination with the river service.

By 1907 during the high-water period the average time upstream from Kabara to Koulikoro was nine days and downstream as little as five days. The dry-season, low-water period lasted from May to September but all these details are approximate as everything depended on the level of rainfall falling in the Fouta Djallon highlands of French Guinea, the source of both the Niger and Senegal rivers.

Downstream from Tombouctou steamers could reach Ansongo when the river was in full flood. The Taoussa defile and Tossaye rocky rapids upstream of Bourem were a major difficulty in the dry season and below Ansongo navigation was difficult at all times, so canoes were really the only answer. By the 1920s there was a weekly service put in place between Niamey and Ansongo by canoe and twice monthly from Niamey into French Soudan (Gao?) (Source: Bouerat. *Niger Col.Fra Hors Série 18-3 2009*). A service did exist between Ansongo, Gao and Tombouctou but it is not clear how regular it was and more research is needed.

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Poisson Sous-Inspecteur, *Chef du service des Postes et Télégraphes de la Sénégambie-Niger à Kayes Rapports détaillés des services dans les territoires, Transport des courriers entre Kayes et St Louis, Développement du service des P et T de la Colonie pendant la période 1900-1903*. All manuscript.

**Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the
France & Colonies Philatelic Society
will take place at the Charlecote Pheasant Hotel, Charlecote, CV35 9EW
(during the Annual Philatelic Weekend) at 9.20 am on Friday 8 March 2024.**

Any member wishing to raise matters or put proposals to the AGM should submit them in writing to General Secretary, Dr Andrew Telfer Brunton, The Ponds, Trevethan Close, Bolingey, Perranporth, TR6 0DH or by email to secretary@fcps.org.uk at least one month prior to the AGM. Members who may wish to put themselves forward to serve on the Committee or otherwise assist the Society are encouraged to contact the General Secretary.

Minutes of the 2023 annual General Meeting were distributed within the August 2023 Journal - number 302. The AGM itself generally takes just over half an hour. The rest of the weekend is all about meeting your fellow members, acquisition of material, gaining knowledge, and especially enjoyment.

Contact David Parmly on 07464 926250 or dparmly@jhgl.co.uk for further information

The adoption of stamp vending machines in France

Jean-Luc Raffel

Part 2: Identification of coil stamps and postal usage

Before embarking on the study of covers it may be worthwhile to remind ourselves of the coil printing process and the operation of the KERMODE and ABEL vending machines (F&CPS Journal N° 302, pages 89-93).

The coils were the product of flat-plate printings. The plate was composed of three plates of 50 clichés butted together to form a single plate printing 150 stamps in ten columns of fifteen stamps. Two additional blank rows were left at the bottom of the sheet (Figure 1). The letter M in the gutter margin indicated the position of the *millésime* which recorded the year of printing. Once the sheets were printed, they were separated into two panes of 75 and all the margins but the bottom one were removed by hand. The bottom margin was trimmed down to a selvage of just a few millimetres in depth. A roll was created by overlapping

and gluing the top of one pane over the selvage at the bottom of the next pane. This overlap is known as a coil join. This process would continue until 40 or 80 panes were joined together in a single roll. Finally, the roll, the width of a half sheet, ie five columns, was then sliced by circular blades to produce individual coils of 600 or 1200 stamps. In order to prove the provenance of a coil printing, a collector would need to acquire a strip of at least six stamps as the maximum from a normal sheet printing was five. Further evidence of a coil printing would be the acquisition of a coil join, stamps displaying constant varieties associated with the original plate, or marks or defects left by the operating mechanism. Figure 2 illustrates the operating mechanism of the KERMODE & FAWNS vending machine as described in Part 1.

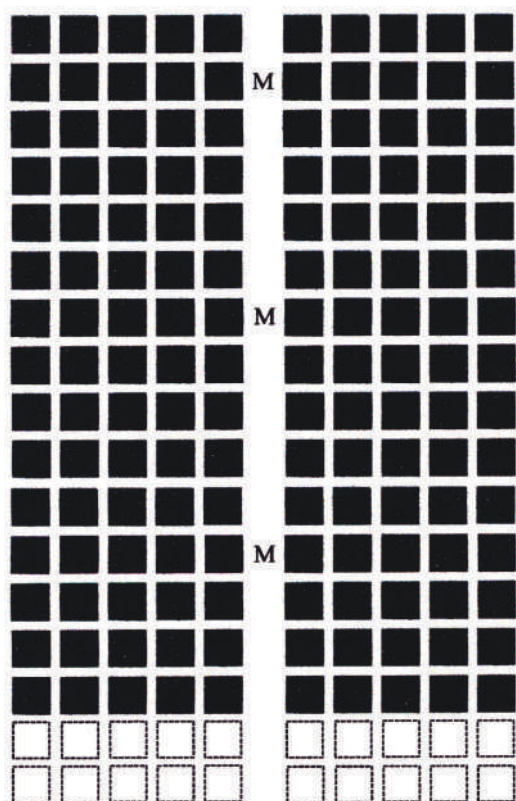


Figure 1
Printing plate of 150 stamps plus
blanks for the production of coils.

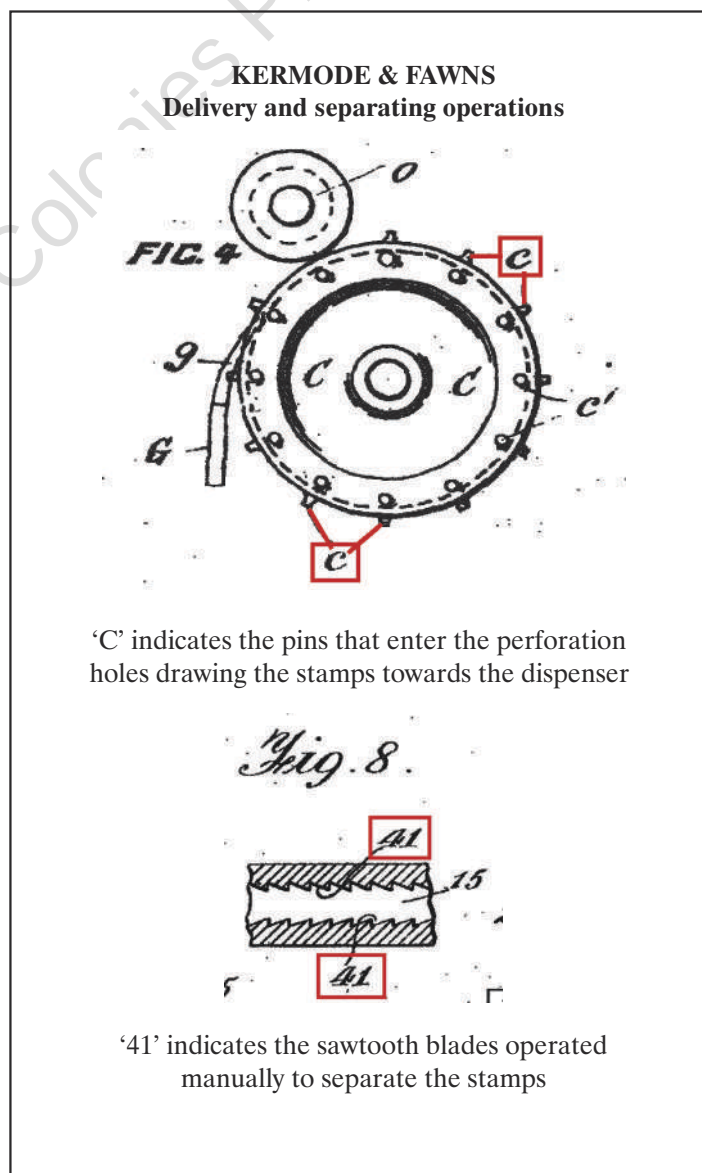


Figure 2
Delivery and separating operations of the
KERMODE vending machine.

Although the KERMODE vending machines had a much longer lifespan than those manufactured by ABEL and ultimately benefitted from a greater number of locations, it is very difficult for me to provide evidence left on the stamps by

the pins which drew the continuous roll through the dispenser. Only a few rare copies have been found that have been identified by defects suffered during the dispensing operation (Figures 3–5)

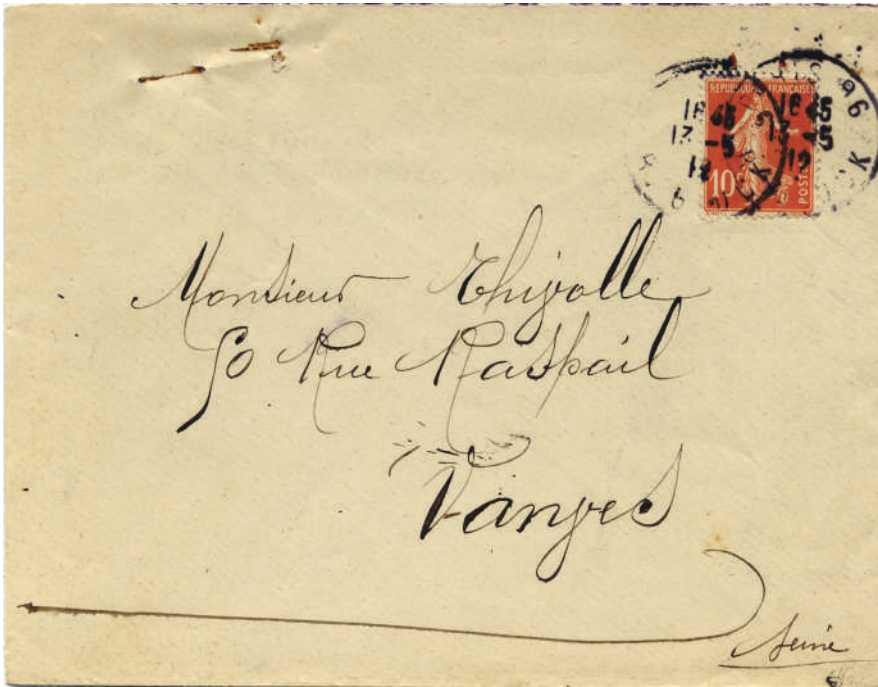


Figure 3

Letter cancelled on 13 May 1912 at Paris 96 with the 10c Sower from a KERMODE machine paying internal letter rate of less than 20g, 1 May 1910.

Figure 4
Close examination of the perforation will reveal the double thickness caused by the underlying coil join.

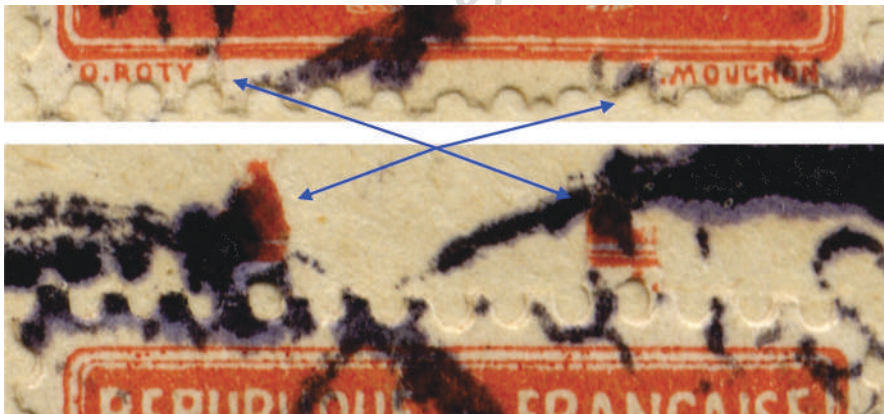
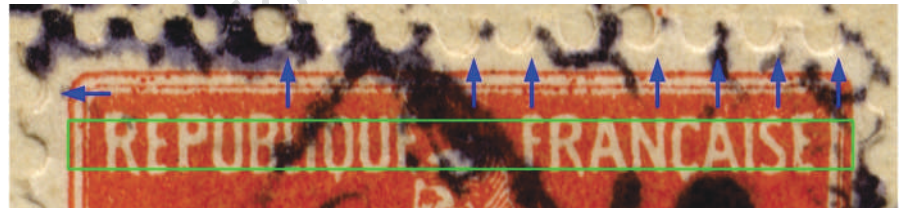


Figure 5

The malfunction of the sawtooth blades during the separation process results in the loss of a clean horizontal cut (top image) and remnants of the adjoining stamp (bottom image).

It's much easier to identify the ABEL vending machine which left indelible marks due to the milled edges of the four drive wheels. Certainly, it is a very lucky person or an informed collector who has the opportunity to own covers with coil stamps bearing evidence of each of the KERMODE and ABEL machines. Figure 6 describes the

mechanism of the ABEL machine previously illustrated in Part 1 and Figures 7-10 illustrate the characteristics of a coil stamp dispensed by it namely 1) the impressions made by the milled-edge wheels drawing the stamps towards the dispenser and 2) the clean horizontal cut left by the straight blade.

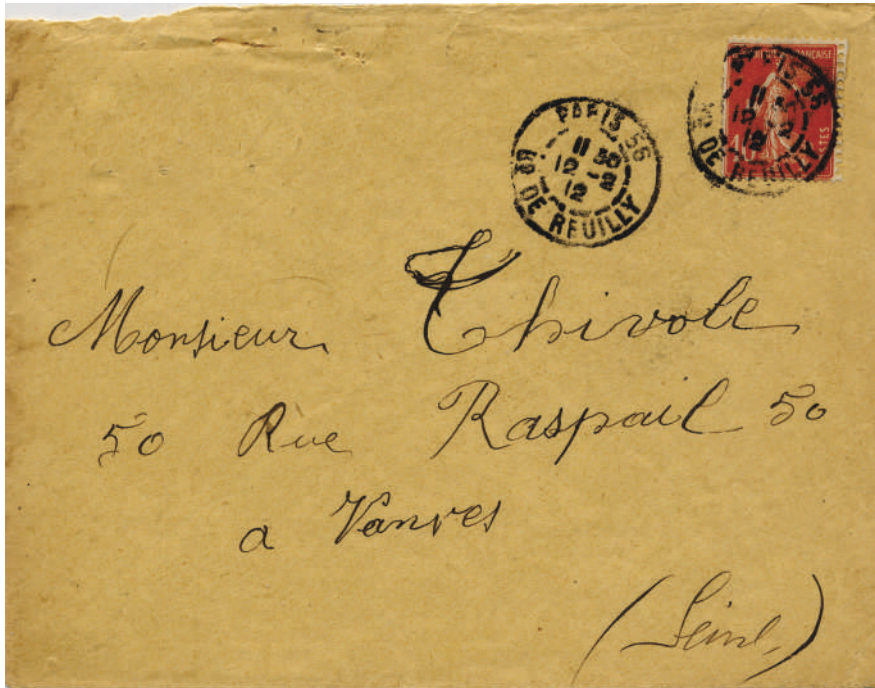


Figure 7

Letter cancelled on 12 February 1912 at Paris 56 with the 10c Sower from ABEL machine paying internal letter rate of less than 20g, 1 May 1910.

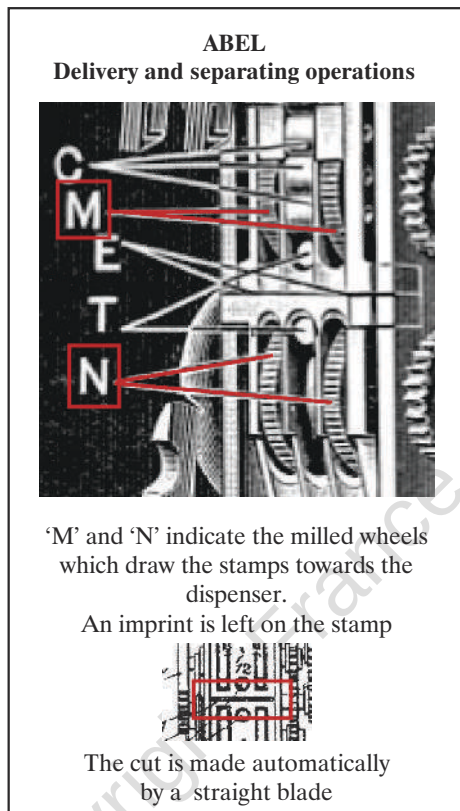


Figure 6

Delivery and separating operations of the ABEL vending machine.



Figures 8 and 9

The arrows indicate the imprints made by the milled-edge wheels drawing the stamps to the dispenser.

Despite the protestations in the *Sénat* and the criticisms made of the suppliers, the installation of stamp vending machines was not limited just to Paris. Certainly, they did exist elsewhere but not, strictly speaking, in provincial towns as demanded, since they were on another continent, in Algeria, where the main offices in Algiers, Oran and Constantine were able to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, I do not have a picture of the main office in Algiers, just a postcard illustrating the two vending machines there. Events relating to the installation of the machines in Algiers are reported in [Figures 11- 12](#) and in Oran in [Figures 13-15](#).

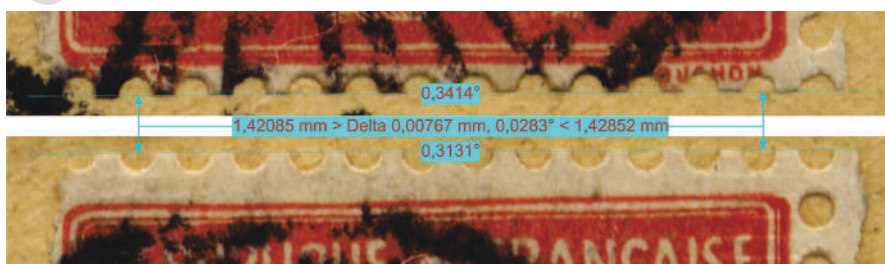


Figure 10

Clean horizontal cut between stamps.

M. TÉDESCHI. — Je désire demander à M. l'inspecteur général s'il ne serait pas possible d'établir des distributeurs automatiques de timbres poste, comme il y en a à Paris. J'ai vu sur les boulevards des appareils dans lesquels, en mettant 10 centimes, on voit apparaître un timbre de 10 centimes.

M. Nivoix, commissaire du gouvernement. — J'ai le plaisir de faire connaître à M. Tédeschi que j'ai été au-devant de son désir et que dans le hall du nouvel hôtel des postes il y aura deux distributeurs.

M. TÉDESCHI. — Et pour les pièces fausses? On m'a dit, à Paris, que lorsqu'on met une pièce fausse le timbre ne sort pas.

M. Nivoix, commissaire du gouvernement. — Nous aurons, à Alger, les distributeurs les plus perfectionnés.

Figure 11

Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the *Délégations financières algériennes*, 25 May 1910 at which a delegate raises the question of the availability of vending machines in Algiers. He is informed that they have already been ordered and that they are of the highest specification and will not accept counterfeit coins.



Figure 12 (left)

The ABEL machine (left) dispensed 10c stamps and the KERMODE machine (right) dispensed 5c stamps at the Algiers office in the rue d'Isly which had been opened in July 1910 according to a report in the 'Alger-journal', 31 July 1910. The KERMODE machine was later replaced by an ABEL.

POSTES, TÉLÉGRAPHES ET TÉLÉPHONES. — L'assemblée décide, sur la proposition de son président, de solliciter de la Direction des P. T. T. l'installation de cabines téléphoniques publiques, comme il en existe à Alger, dans les principaux carrefours, ainsi que des distributeurs automatiques de timbres-postes au bureau central.

Figure 13

Report in 'L'Écho d'Oran' 29 March 1911 that the authorities in Oran will ask the PTT to install stamp vending machines like those in Algiers.

A L'HOTEL DES POSTES.

La salle du public de l'Hôtel des Postes va être dotée, très prochainement d'un distributeur automatique de timbres-poste. Voilà une amélioration qui sera fort bien accueillie des nombreuses personnes qui, jusqu'ici, étaient obligées de stationner devant les guichets pour avoir un timbre.

Figure 14

Announcement in 'L'Écho d'Oran' 26 March 1912 that there will indeed be a stamp vending machine installed in the *Hôtel des Postes* in Oran.

Figure 15

Report from 'Le Petit Oranais', 27 March 1912 announcing the installation at Oran of two ABEL machines dispensing 5c stamps and 10c stamps. Customers are assured that the machine will return incorrect coins and reject counterfeit coins.

Heureuse innovation. — On vient d'installer à la Poste un système automatique de distributeur de timbres : à gauche sont les timbres à cinq centimes ; à droite ceux à dix centimes.

Par suite d'une heureuse disposition du mécanisme, les fausses pièces sont rejetées et rendues au public.

De même, lorsqu'un client met par inadvertance une pièce d'un ou de deux francs dans l'appareil, celui-ci la restitue immédiatement.

C'est le cas de répéter le mot célèbre : On diable la vertu va-t-elle se nicher ?

Figures 16 to 18 illustrate mail franked with 10c coil stamps from the ABEL vending machine at Oran.

Figure 16

Postcard from Oran to Liège in Belgium cancelled 22 September 1913 (foreign postcard rate from 1 May 1910). Enlargement of stamp shown in Figure 17.





Figure 17

Stamp showing miscalibrated horizontal cut and very clear imprints from the milled-edge wheels drawing the stamps to the dispenser



Figure 18

Letter from Oran to Cao Bang in Tonkin cancelled 27 August 1912 (10c internal letter rate of less than 20g, 1 May 1910). The impressions left by the milled-edge wheels are clearly visible on the right-hand side of the stamp.



The condition of the postcard (Figure 19) is not good but I have not seen anything better. Figures 20 shows the example of a pair of 5c coil stamps from the ABEL vending machine at Oran.

Figure 19

Postcard from Oran to Toulouse with pair of 5c Sower cancelled 11 April 1911 (10c inland postcard rate with more than 5 words, 18 November 1903).



Figure 20

The coil pair has been overlaid with photos of the wheel traces taken under raking light otherwise they would not be visible.

And here are two more postcards (Figure 21), which I will describe as inseparable. Before texting there was the 5-word postcard rate, and these cards are from the same sender, to the same recipient sent at the same time.

This makes it possible to reconstitute a coil pair.

Figures 22-23 show the franking of the two cards and Figures 24-25 the characteristics of the matched coil stamps.

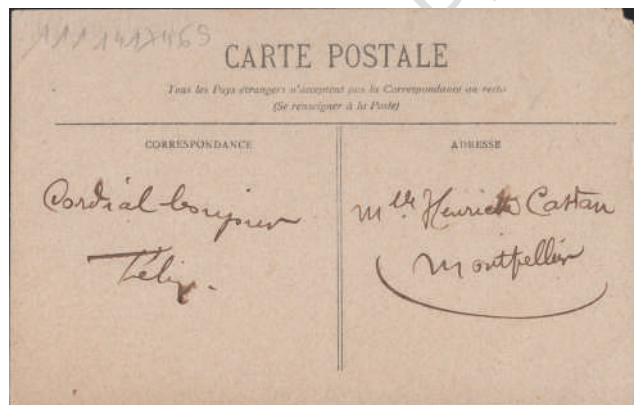
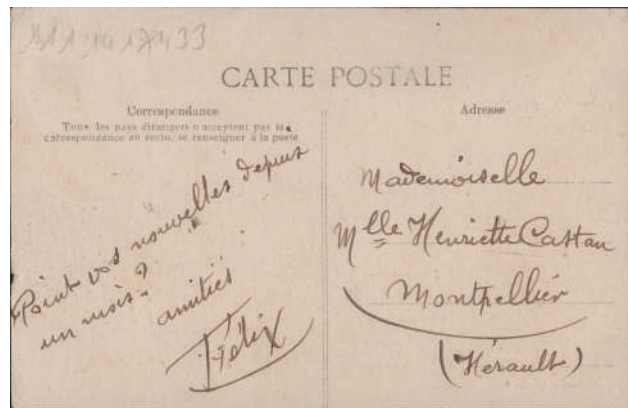


Figure 21

Two postcards dated May 1914 from Oran to Montpellier with 5c Sower (internal postcard rate up to 5 words, 18 November 1903). The first card has been accepted despite being slightly over the 5-word limit.

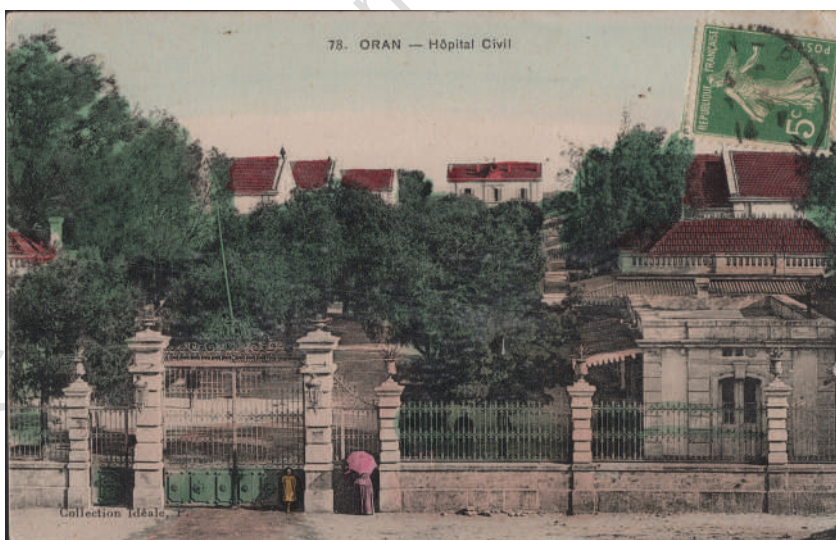


Figure 22

First postcard with top stamp from coil pair showing sloping blade cut at top and torn perf at bottom.





Figure 23

Second postcard with bottom stamp from coil pair showing torn perf at top and sloping blade cut at bottom.

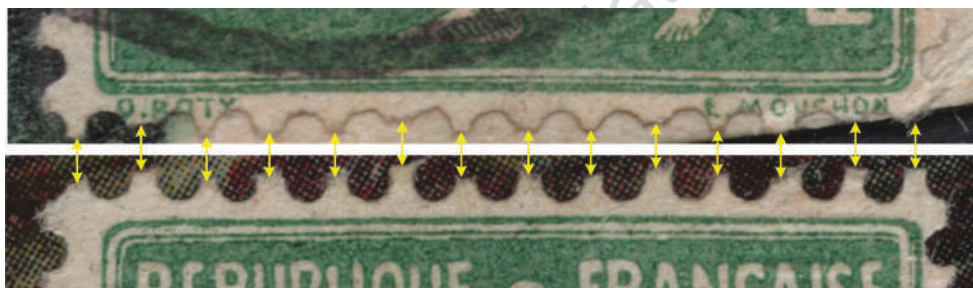
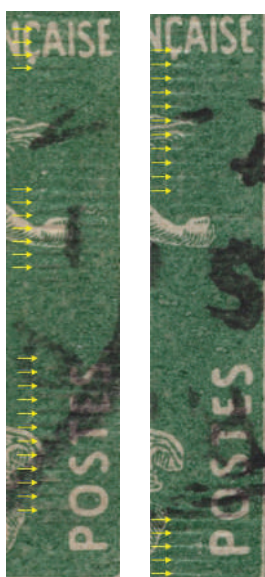


Figure 25

Put end to end the torn edges match. The yellow arrows show a constant distance between the separation of each perforation tooth.

Figure 24 (left)

Yellow arrows indicate the distinct marks left by the milled-edge wheels on the two stamps.

With regards to Constantine, I do not have any press references, only philatelic documents. As in Algiers, the residents of Constantine also had right of access to two vending machines and both were ABEL.

The first example below of Constantine mail shows a 10c Sower with a spectacular dispensing fault (Figures 26-28). There was a lack of synchronisation between the feeding of the roulette and the action of the cutting blade

which cut through the stamp instead of the perforation. How did the customer retrieve the missing piece at the top? Did he manage to extract it himself from the dispenser or did he complain to a PTT employee fearing that his card would be refused and taxed? The latter may have given him the upper part of the next stamp from the machine to complete his part stamp, but this is only a conjecture.



Figure 26

Postcard from Constantine with 10c Sower cancelled 6 June 1914 (10c inland postcard rate with more than 5 words, 18 November 1903).



Figure 27
Stamp cut à cheval with compensatory portion at the top.

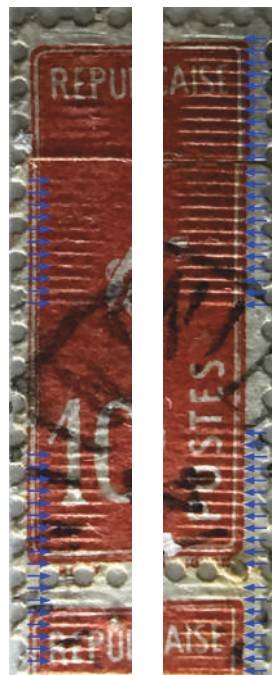


Figure 28
Once again raked lighting highlights the marks left by the wheels drawing the coil to the dispenser.

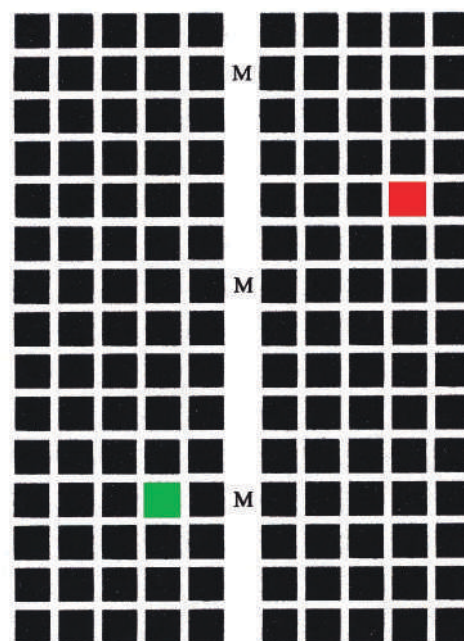


Figure 29
Coil printing plate showing the positions of the 5c green and 10c red Sower flaws.

The printing plate, known as the '*galvano de service*', is formed of 150 clichés. It is inevitable that during the handling of the plate one or two clichés may get slightly damaged. This damage, if not retouched, creates a constant printing flaw which, in turn, produces a positional variety on

the printed sheet. In the case of the 5c Sower printing, a flaw appears in position 114 and, in the case of the 10c Sower printing, in position 49 (Figure 29). In addition to the marks left by the milled-edge wheels and to the straight cuts of the dispenser blade, the flaws are further evidence of the stamp originating from a coil printing.

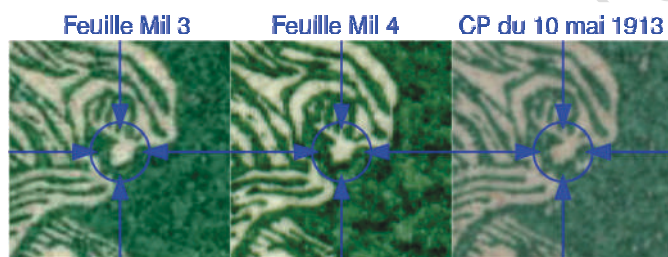


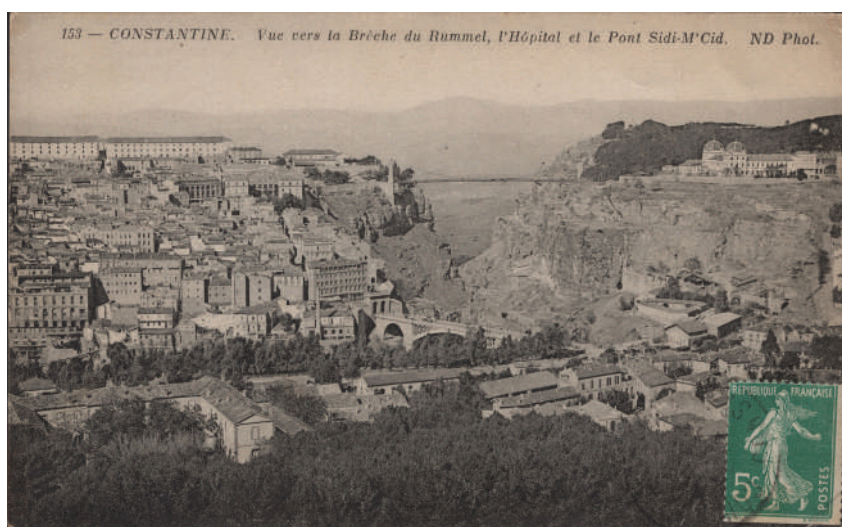
Figure 30
Enlargement of the flaw in plate position 114.

The flaw in position 114 of the 5c printing is shown in Figure 30. It appears as a white patch on the green background between the two drapes above the Sower's rear foot. The diagram shows its appearance in both the 1913 and 1914 coil printings and on the stamp franking the 1913 postcard shown in Figure 31.

The strangest thing is to find marks made by the ABEL machine in Constantine as late as 1923. Being of German origin, most of these machines were decommissioned and sold off in September 1915 but was there a logistical problem in this city?



Figure 31
Postcard from Constantine cancelled 10 May 1913 with 5c Sower from plate position 114 showing flaw and clean machine dispenser cut.



The postcard illustrated in **Figure 32** is dated 28 April 1923. The 10c Sower affixed to it clearly shows the traces of the milled-edge wheels (**Figure 33**) but more importantly another constant flaw associated with the coil printing which, on this occasion, is located in position 49. A white diagonal scratch can be clearly seen running through the lower frame above the 'M' of 'MOUCHON'. **Figure 34** illustrates this flaw on a mint copy of the stamps as well as on the stamp franking the postcard.



Figure 33

Traces of milled-edge wheel indentations.

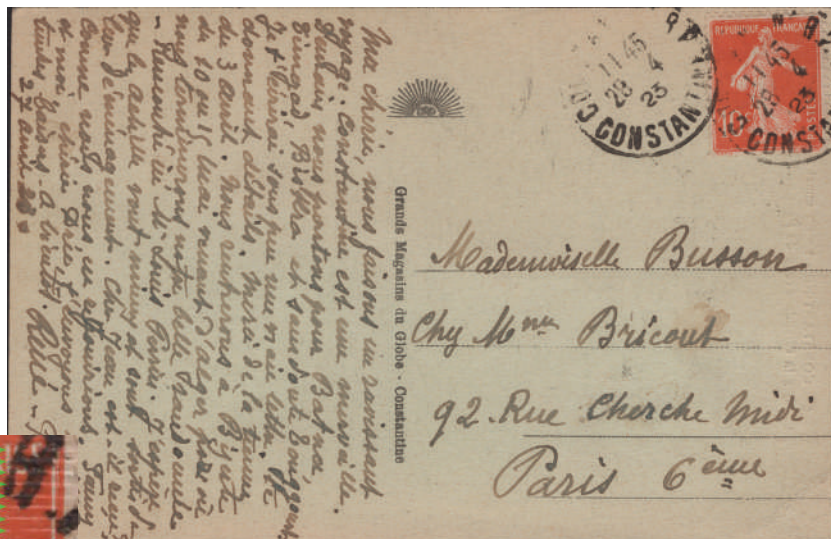


Figure 32

Late use of ABEL coil stamp on postcard from Constantine, 28 April 1923.



Figure 34

White scratch flaw above 'MOUCHON' in plate position 49.

In the mid-1920s, the ABEL machine marks also reappeared in the 'Grand Est' (**Figure 35**), for which there are perhaps more logical explanations and writings to be found in the local press, but this is beyond the scope of this article. I just mention it to make your mouth water and initiate further discussion.

Figure 35

Postcard from the 'Grand Est' cancelled Strasbourg, 26 April 1925, and franked with a 5c Sower dispensed by an ABEL machine.



Forthcoming Exhibitions

LONDON SPRING EXHIBITION 2024 (28-30 March) A National Exhibition of 146 frames is planned for March 2024 to be held at The Royal Philatelic Society London. This is particularly aimed at those seeking to qualify for forthcoming international competitions. Entry deadline is **12 February 2024**. Enquiries to: exhibiting@abps.org.uk. **EUROPHILEX 2025**, Birmingham (7-11 May) is the next

UK International with FEPA patronage and with FIP recognition of all classes. 2,000 frames will be on show. With the excellent air and rail links and vast car parking it's sure to be an attractive destination. **Entry deadline: 8 May 2024**. Further details, the IREX and entry forms on the Exhibition website EuroPhilex25 – www.europhilex2025.co.uk Other forthcoming exhibitions are listed at www.abps.org.uk

Precursors of the French postal card

Frans Jorissen

Part 2

After a hesitant start with printed cards that could be sent without a wrapper (see Part 1 of this series of articles, F&CPS Journal N° 302, pages 94-97), the Franco-German or Franco-Prussian war (19 July 1870 to 10 May 1871) was the direct cause of the widespread use of postal cards on French territory. Initially, however, the German postal administrations were mainly responsible for this.

The North German Postal Federation (NDP = *Norddeutscher Postbezirk*) had officially introduced a postal card on 1 July 1870. This first card was a formular card, without imprinted indicium, which had to be franked with a stamp according to the long-distance letter rate. On the day of the French declaration of war, 19 July 1870, the German postal administration announced free postage for all active soldiers. Special military postage-free postal cards (named *Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte*) were announced as early as 20

July 1870. Before these cards became available (the earliest known date of use is 3 August 1870), soldiers on active service could use normal postcards without franking them (**Figure 1**). The postal cards discussed in this article are thus of German manufacture, but were mostly sent from France. They are therefore, in my opinion, an integral part of French postal history, although they are often neglected in France.

It is interesting to note that these military postage-free cards were issued in two types:

1. Cards to be sent from Germany to soldiers at the front in France (**Figure 2**). These cards were sold for the small amount of ¼ groschen for 5 cards.
2. Cards to be sent back from the front to Germany (**Figure 3**). These cards were issued to soldiers free of charge, and were almost always sent from France to Germany.

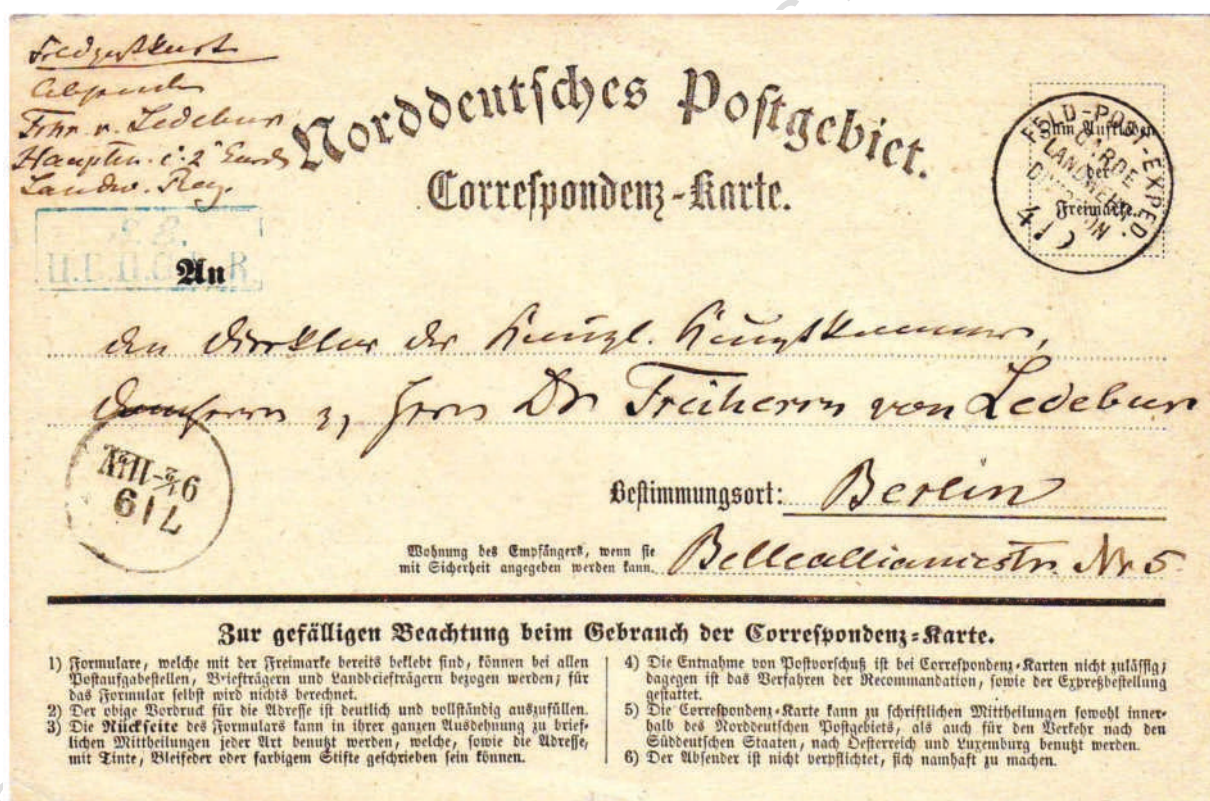


Figure 1

Normal postal card of the North German Postal Federation, sent on 4 September 1870 by a captain of the 2nd "Garde Landwehr Division" from France to his father in Berlin. Arrival stamp of Berlin, 7 September 1870. By writing "*Feldpostkarte*" (at the top left of the card), and indicating his rank and army corps, the sender indicated that he benefited from military free postage. A rectangular cancel with a "V" on the back of the card (see insert) indicates that the text has been checked by the censorship office.

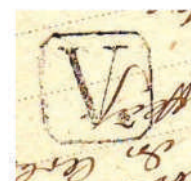




Figure 2

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("outbound" model) of the North German Postal Federation, sent on 16 August 1870 from Neuwied to a soldier in France, assigned to the 7th Army Corps, 13th Division, 2nd Westphalian Infantry Regiment n° 15, 2nd Company. As the addressee (a brother of the sender) had fallen in battle (centre of the card, in pencil "*Ist am 18/8 im Gefecht bei Jussy gefallen*"), signed by his sergeant "*Giesecke Feldwebel*"), the card was returned on 25 August 1870. There is a handwritten mention "*retour*" in red, and on the back a departure cancel of the 13th Infantry Division, alongside a transit stamp from Cologne dated 16 August 1870 (from the earlier journey to the front in France). In this somewhat brutal way, the family of the deceased Wilhelm Meijer was notified of his death. According to a statement written by the sender's grandson in 1978, this unusual death notice was kept as a relic in the family papers.

Figure 3

(Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("return model") of the North German Postal Federation, sent on 15 October 1870 from Beauvais to Dresden, forwarded to Tschachwitz in the Czech Republic (in 1870 part of Austria). Departure cancel of the 12th Army Corps Avant-Garde field post office. Blue service cancel of the "Commando D.K.S. 2. Uhlanen Regiments". Arrived and forwarded at Dresden on 21 October 1870.



These cards were massively used in the French territory. To give an idea: between 15 July 1870 and 31 March 1871, almost 90 million items of mail, mostly postal cards, were delivered by the German field mail to soldiers in the field. Of course, these military postal cards, all of which spent some time at the front, are very rarely in pristine condition. The North German example was quickly followed by the

three South German states allied with Prussia. The kingdom of Bavaria had issued its first normal postal cards on 1 July 1870; as in the North German Postal Federation, these were formular cards. After the outbreak of the Franco-German war, Bavaria issued a military postal freedom card, in a single model (Figure 4), which could be used in both directions (earliest date of use 8 August 1870).



Figure 4
(Reduced to 90%)
Feldpost-
Correspondenzkarte
of Bavaria (marked
"Feldpost" above
right, where on
normal cards the
stamp had to be
attached), sent on 2
September 1870
from Rémilly (10 km
southeast of Metz)
to Augsburg in
Bavaria. Departure
cancel of the
"Königliche
Bayerische
Feldpost" N° 1.
Transit cancel
"München" and
arrival cancel
"Bahnhof
Augsburg", both of
9 September 1870.

In Bavaria, the sender was obliged to indicate at the bottom of the front of the card to which army unit he belonged.

The kingdom of Württemberg issued its first normal postal card on 8 July 1870. Unlike all other German states, this was a postal stationery card, with a printed indicium. Like the North German Postal Federation, Württemberg issued two different military postage freedom cards, to be used to and

from the front (Figure 5). The Württemberg cards are known from 26 July 1871, a week before the North German cards came into use. Interestingly, the card shown was handled by the Prussian field post (as shown by the departure cancel), and not by the Württemberg field post, which had its own cancels.

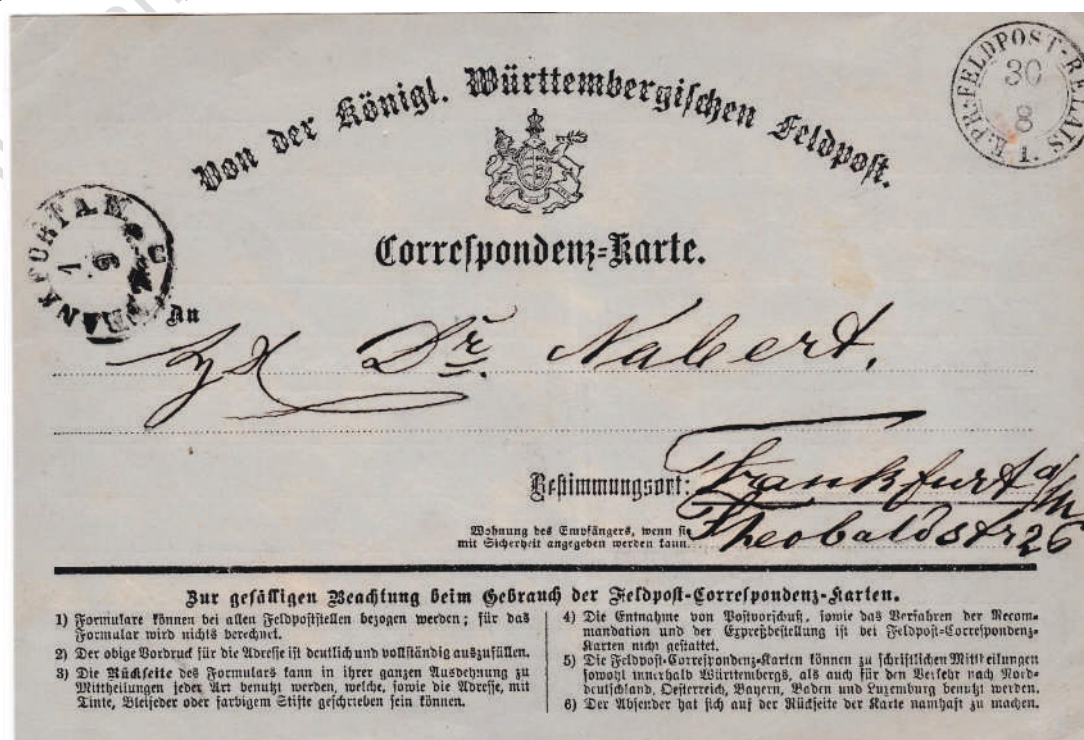


Figure 5
(Reduced to 90%)
Feldpost-
Correspondenzkarte
("return model") of
Württemberg, sent on
30 August 1870 from a
bivouac near
Vaucouleurs (20 km
west of Nancy) to
Frankfurt am Main.
Departure cancel of
the Royal Prussian
Field Post Relay No 1.
Arrival at Frankfurt on
1 September 1870.

The Grand Duchy of Baden, which issued its first normal postal card on 1 August 1870 (a formular card), never issued special military postage-free cards. Throughout the war period, normal postal cards were used for this purpose (Figure 6).

Military postal freedom cards of Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden are significantly rarer than those of the North German Postal Federation.

In the North German Postal Federation, two very notable military postal freedom cards are worth mentioning. Firstly, there was a special postcard for Queen Augusta's 4th Garde Grenadier Regiment (Figure 7). According to Kalckhoff, this was a present from the wife of King (after the war Emperor) William I to "her" regiment. Since a regiment numbered about 1750 soldiers, Frech (2015) speculates that some 20,000 of such cards were printed (10 per soldier).¹

Secondly, a series of 15 different cards were illustrated on the back. These cards, all intended to be sent from the Front back to Germany, were probably printed in Berlin. The patriotic illustrations usually show a caricature with a matching rhyme (Figure 8). These are the oldest illustrated German postal cards known today and are only known unused.



Figure 6 (Reduced to 90%)

Normal *Correspondenzkarte* of Baden, sent as a military postal freedom card (written indication "Feldpostbrief") on 21 December 1870 from Dijon to Mannheim. Departure cancel of the Baden Field Post Expedition, blue service cancel of "Gr. Bad. 2 Regiment 5. (Fues.) Bat." (Grand Duchy of Baden, 2nd Regiment Fusiliers Battalion).



Figure 7
(Reduced to 90%)
Special *Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte* ("return card") for Queen Augusta's Garde Grenadier Regiment, sent on 14 January 1871 from Villepinte (20 km northeast of Paris) to Kaufbeuren in Bavaria. Arrival cancel of Kaufbeuren dated 17 January 1871.



Figure 8
(Reduced to 90%)
Unused *Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte*
("return card"),
illustrated with a
satirical image and
New Year's wishes set
in verse.

Use of military postage-free cards.

In the vast majority of cases, these military postage-free cards were used as anticipated. The "outbound card" was sent by family and friends to soldiers at the front, and the "return card" was sent by German soldiers in France back to Germany. The cards could only be used by active military persons. When used by private individuals, postage had to be paid using stamps. Such cases, dealt with in the next issue, are rare.

In some cases, however, the military postage-free cards were used in a more original, originally unanticipated way such as by French prisoners of war in Germany (Figure 9). According to a German decree of 7 August 1870, French prisoners of war also benefitted from postal freedom. Evidently, in some cases military postage-free cards were made available to French prisoners of war.

Figure 9
(Reduced to 90%)
Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte
("outward card")
sent on 1 March
1871 by a French
prisoner of war in
Cüstrin (Prussia) to
his parents in Eymet
in Dordogne
(unoccupied
France). Reverse:
transit cancel of
Bergerac (8 March
1871) and arrival
stamp of Eymet (9
March 1871).



The sender has indicated on the topmost address line "*par le décret du 7 Août 1870*" (the decree that established free postage for prisoners of war). Next, the administrator of the POW camp has struck its cancel on the bottom left, whereas the stamp "PD" on the top right confirms that postage was paid up to the destination. The written V at the bottom right suggests that the card has been censored.

The “return cards” were used by German prisoners of war in France (Figure 10). Because the war was catastrophic for France, so that in a few months most of northern France was occupied by German troops, this case is much less common. The soldier hospitalised in Calais may still have had a return

card on him which he sent without a stamp.

Their use is found within the occupied part of France. This instance, (Figure 11), which was not provided for in the regulations, occurs sporadically. It mostly concerns correspondence between soldiers and their hierarchy.



Figure 10 (Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte (“return card”), sent postage free on 24 December 1870 by a German prisoner of war from Calais (unoccupied France) to Dencklingen in Prussia. Blue service cancel “Place de Calais - Le commandant de la Place”. The handwritten “Vu” at top right with the initials underneath (of a censor) indicates that the text was censored.



Figure 11 (Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte (“return card”) sent on 4 November 1870 from the 36th Royal Prussian Field Post Relay (based in Corbeil, 20 km south of Paris) to Versailles. During the Siege of Paris (17 September 1870 - 28 January 1871), the German headquarters were at Versailles. On this card, H. Langenheim requests a “Post-Assistant” to send letters and parcels addressed to him to the Etappe-Post-Directorate of the 3rd Army, in Corbeil. In other words, a kind of change of address!

The use of cards to destinations abroad, to countries other than Germany, which was absolutely not foreseen in the service orders, was extremely rare. Surprisingly, such cards

were mostly sent unfranked, and could therefore be taxed on arrival (Figures 12-15).



Figure 12
(Reduced to 90%)
Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("return card") sent unfranked on 17 January 1871 from Metz to Geneva (Switzerland). Since the card was sent by a by a German field deacon (chaplain), to a preacher in Geneva, military free postage was respected, as is shown by the PD cancel.



Figure 13
(Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("return card") sent unfranked on 8 September 1870 from Faulquemont (20 km east of Metz) to St. Joost ter Noode (Belgium). Arrival 11 September 1870. Blue service cancel of the "Commandatür of the royal Land-Etappen-Commandos". The card was initially treated as an unstamped letter, and taxed with 4 décimes (40 centimes). Later, this postage was reduced to 1 décime, the (single) postage for an unfranked domestic letter. So in spite of the red PD cancel, the Belgian postal service considered that the card was only franked up to the Franco-Belgian border. In Belgium, the first postal card was not issued until 1 January 1871, so this postal card must have been an unknown phenomenon!

The postcard was sent by a Belgian medical doctor in charge of a field hospital in a German-occupied area (the hospital being supplied by the Germans). The sender thanks the addressee for his help to obtain this position.



Figure 14 (Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("return card") sent unfranked on 14 August 1870, from Fort-Saint-Blaize (10 km south-west of Metz) to Brussels (Belgium). The card was sent by the K. Pr. Veldpostrelais n°5, at the time positioned in Corny-sur-Moselle. As with the previous card, the postage payable in Belgium has been reduced from 4 *décimes* to 1. On this card this is indicated by the rare cancel "*Taxe rectifiée*", annotated with "*à 10 centimes*", and the initials of the postal officer.

This card has been sent several weeks before the German postal administration issued special stamps for the occupied territory (between 6 and 10 September 1870). Since no postage stamps were available (the German army postal service did not permit French stamps), it is possible that the postage of this card (and also the previous card) has been paid "*en numéraire*" (cash). The use of the stamps on postal cards for the occupied territory (the Alsace and Lorraine German occupation issues) will be treated in the next issue.



Figure 15 (Reduced to 90%)

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte ("return card") sent unfranked on 26 September 1870 from Cuvry to St. Petersburg (Russia). Departure cancel of the K. Pr. Feld-Post-Expedition, 9^e Infantry Division. Arrival cancel of St. Petersburg of 19 September 1870 (Julian calendar, or 1 October according to our Gregorian calendar). It is amazing that in the middle of the war, this card arrived in St Petersburg after only five days. It is also surprising that the card has not been taxed on arrival.

Their use extended to address labels on parcels sent to the front in France (Figure 16). As was often the case, nothing was left to chance in the German Army. Parcel dispatch was also carefully regulated. Four so-called ‘Field Post Parcel Actions’ (term used by H. Frech in his “Postkartenhandbuch”), were restricted periods or time windows during which parcels could be sent to the front. These were from 15 October to 8 December 1870, from 5 to 21 January 1871, from 3 to 20 February 1871, and from 24 April 1871 onwards. For the 1st, 3rd and 4th time windows, there was a maximum weight limit of

4 pounds (5 pounds for the 4th time window), for which a fixed postage of 5 groschen had to be paid (18 kreuzer in southern Germany). More than a million parcels were sent to the front during the first time window.

The 2nd time window, for which only officers were eligible, was mainly for sending winter clothing and equipment. In this case, the maximum weight was 12 pounds (with a postage of 5 groschen per 4 pounds).



Figure 16

Feldpost-Correspondenzkarte (“outward card”), used as an address label for a 3-pound parcel (indication top left), sent on 3 February 1871 from Berlin to a sergeant of the 9th Army Corps, 18th Division, 8th Company of the 36th Infantry Division. According to the instructions, the parcel was franked with a stamp of the *Norddeutsche Postbezirk* of 5 groschen. This is a parcel sent on the first day of the 3rd Parcel time-window.

¹ For anyone wishing to learn more about these fascinating early postal cards (or about other early postal cards issued in the German states), I heartily recommend Hanspeter Frech’s truly amazing “Postkarten-Handbuch”. Without that very extensively documented and illustrated book, this article could not have existed! The works by Dr F Kalckhoff are a similarly rich source of information.

*The President and Committee wish all members
and their families a*



*Merry Christmas and a
Prosperous New Year
Joyeux Noël & Bonne Année 2024*

There's No Business Like...

Show Business – Connections on French Stamps

David Parmley

Part 5

For reasons which will shortly become apparent I recall the Bacharach-David song title *(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me* which could easily be a subtitle for this project. So, without further ado, let's open the show.

DARIUS MILHAUD 1892-1974

The 3F value of the 1985 Europa (European Music Year) set featured Milhaud who was a key modernist composer with an oeuvre of over 440 pieces described by one critic as ranging between the banal and the inspired or fascinating; the uneven quality of his output resulting in a reluctance to perform his works to the extent deserved.

He wrote music to accompany silent films such as *The Beloved Vagabond* and *L'Inhumaine* and soundtrack music for talkies including *Madame Bovary* (a 1934 Jean Renoir interpretation), *The Beloved Vagabond* (a 1936 British musical drama with Margaret Lockwood and Maurice Chevalier) and a contribution to a 1947 avant-garde experimental film, *Dreams that Money Can Buy*, directed by Hans Richter – a compendium of seven surrealist dream sequences – which won the award for Best Original Contribution to the Progress of Cinematography at the 1947 Venice Film Festival; not a bad return for a US\$15,000 budget.



YT 2367 / SG 2680

As a Jew, Milhaud was forced to flee France in 1940 and emigrate to the United States where, as a teacher, his long-standing interest in jazz led to his taking Dave Brubeck as a pupil. Brubeck brought jazz to the charts with his recording of *Take Five*. Another pupil, who would make a major contribution to popular music, was Burt Bacharach (and just as I typed that what should come on but *Raindrops Keep Fallin' on my Head* – spooky...).

A trained concert pianist, Bacharach, with a variety of lyricists – principally Hal David, wrote, and sometimes recorded or performed, over 500 popular songs performed by over 1200 artists including a legendary long-term collaboration with Dionne Warwick and, closer to home, a significant contribution to the career of Cilla Black. His work won three Oscars, six Grammy awards and one Emmy.

CHARLES DULLIN 1885-1949

A single 3F20 value was issued in 1985 to commemorate the birth centenary of this actor, theatre manager and director who started his career as an actor in melodrama. In 1922 his Théâtre de l'Atelier troupe took over the Théâtre Montmartre, moving to the larger and more modern

Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in 1941 until 1947 when they closed down owing to financial problems.

Dullin was a major stage and screen actor appearing in films including *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1921), *Maldone (Misdeal)* (1928), *Cagliostro* (1929), *Les Misérables* (1933), *Volpone* (1940) and *Quai des Orfèvres* (1947); his earnings underwriting his stage work which included directing productions of *Volpone*, *L'Avare* and *Richard III*.



YT 2390 / SG 2694

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH FILM INSTITUTE (shown on the front page)

In 1986 a miniature sheet comprising ten 2F20 values was issued to celebrate the founding of the Cinémathèque Française; each value depicted a film still in front of a silhouetted audience. Before considering the individual subjects it is appropriate to devote a little time to the French cinema in general.

As we saw earlier the cinematic process was invented in France and consequently they had a head start in commercial exploitation. Having the benefit of a long and interesting history as well as a rich heritage of literature and culture, the French saw themselves as ideally placed to produce a wide variety of interesting films uninhibited, in the silent era, by any language barrier, so that by 1910 60-70 percent of all films distributed throughout the world were made in Parisian studios. Ten years later the combined effects of the Great War and the rise of Hollywood had eroded their position to such a degree that French-made films had only a ten percent share of the home market. Hollywood's rise was fuelled by the American consumer demand for American stories with American (or at least American-based) stars. Given that the American market, in box-office terms, was forty times greater than the French (for whom cinema-going was not a mainstream leisure activity) it was no contest.

Although the French film industry has always been more or less fragmented, two companies – Pathé (in some form or other) and Gaumont – had been dominant. The collapse of the industry during the Great War and the subsequent introduction of sound, with access to US systems (impossible given the parlous post-war economic situation in France) killed off both companies which had been struggling anyway, by the mid-thirties.

There is a fundamental difference between the Hollywood and the French approach to film making. In France the

director is regarded as the auteur of the film and it was not unusual for production monies to be secured from family and friends, a scratch crew assembled and for the players to be somewhat unknowns or even members of the public. Compare this to Hollywood where the nominal producers were studio executives, the crews were permanent employees and the director was, more often than not, little more than a paid manager whose responsibility was to actualise the project using a studio-provided script (prepared in accordance with studio values and from the mid-thirties production codes) with the main emphasis on the promotion of the star(s) to best effect.

Perhaps the ultimate indignity had been inflicted by Paramount in 1930 when they acquired an old Pathé studio and fitted it out with sound stages and modern equipment. The objective was to take an existing US film, provide a French script, re-shoot the dialogue scenes with French players and insert these scenes into the body of the film. This was also to be a centre for similar treatments in other languages.

In spite of all vicissitudes the independents had managed to keep going and actually created a niche market in the USA where French films were shown to limited but discerning audiences in small cinemas. The financial returns were tiny but at least there was some prestige. This lasted until the Second World War but post-war the French were mortified to see their niche market taken over by Italy.

Ironically it was during the German occupation that the French film industry had the greatest degree of organisation. In 1940 the Nazis set up 'Continental Films' under the control of Dr Alfred Greven, a Francophile film producer who had been a Great War pilot and was a friend of Goering. Whilst the vision of a "United Europe" was still seen as an outcome of the war the Nazis planned that France would be the spearhead of European cinema. It was during this period, in the absence of Hollywood products, that some of the finest works of French cinema would emerge.

However, there were two occasions where French films exerted a notable influence on Hollywood. The first was a 1937 French release titled *Pépé-le-Moko* directed by Julien Duvivier (widely regarded as the most successful French film director responsible for 67 films between 1919 and 1967 of which 20 are considered masterpieces) and starring Jean Gabin as Pépé, a gangster hiding from the police in the Casbah of Algiers. Not only did it propel Gabin to international stardom, it was the inspiration for the film noir genre. Its US release was delayed until 1941 whilst it was re-made as *Algiers* starring Charles Boyer and Hedy Lamarr (which made it a sensation). The use of *Algiers* as a title inspired the adoption of *Casablanca* in place of *Everybody Comes to Rick's* (a play developed from a nightclub on the Monte Carlo road outside Nice where Rick, a black pianist from Chicago, played jazz) for a 1942 production of some renown. It has also been claimed that *Pépé* influenced the plots of both *Casablanca* and *The Third Man*; in short it was so influential that Hollywood was forced to copy it. A further

1948 re-make as a musical comedy *Casbah* which – despite starring Tony Martin and Yvonne de Carlo with Peter Lorre as the policeman charged to capture Pépé watching on calmly as his colleagues failed - lost money.

In 1956, making his directorial debut, Roger Vadim (an established screenwriter) directed his wife, Brigitte Bardot, in *Et Dieu... Créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman*). This turned out to be what had always been sought – an international blockbuster with world receipts of US\$33 million (including US\$12million in the US and 3.9 million tickets in France – the more remarkable as comedy was the favoured genre) on a budget of US\$300,000. But more than that its popularity in the US encouraged Hollywood to shake off the restrictive production code which had hampered cinematic expression since 1934 (and buried many earlier films). One thing was for certain, Hollywood would never allow a repeat performance!

LOUIS FEUILLADE 1873-1925

Originally a journalist and poet he became a pioneer film-maker responsible for about 800 films between 1906-24 (remembering that many of these early productions ran only ten minutes or less). Credited with developing thriller techniques which would later be used by Fritz Lang and Hitchcock he is chiefly

remembered for his crime serials, made for Gaumont, notably *Fantômas* (1913-4, five parts), *Judex* (1916, twelve parts) and, what is considered his magnum opus, *Les Vampires* (1915-6).

The latter (featured in a still on the stamp) is a ten-parter running about seven hours and not, as the title suggests, about bloodsuckers but a criminal Apache gang. Starring Edouard Mathé as a reporter investigating the gang, Marcel Lévesque as his colleague, ostensibly assisting but in fact working for the gang, and Musidora (Jeanne Roques) as Irma Vep – a nightclub singer and mistress to succeeding gang leaders who carries out many of the gang's plots. Her name, as a vignette of letters changing on a billboard explains, is an anagram of "vampire".

Opening with the discovery of a headless corpse, the film proceeds at breakneck speed through all manner of skullduggery and criminal acts with car chases, coded messages, various poisonings, bombings and a ghost just to keep things moving along. For those who are interested the entire series is available, with intertitles in English, in a *Wikipedia* article.

In 1996 Maggie Cheung starred in *Irma Vep*, in which the back plot concerns an unstable director attempting to re-make the original *Les Vampires*. The film is more of a meditation on the state of the French film industry at the time. Although critically successful this was not reflected at the box office. A further re-interpretation as an eight-part comedy drama TV miniseries starring Alicia Vikander as Mira (playing Irma) was screened in 2022.



YT 2433 /
Within SG MS2740

MAX LINDER 1883-1925

Under the pseudonym “Max”, Gabriel Leuvielle became the first recognisable serial character in the movies



YT 2434 /
Within SG MS2740

appearing in several hundred Max tiles. Originally a stage actor with the Bordeaux Théâtre des Arts he began appearing in Pathé short comedies in 1905 and in 1907 first appeared as Max, a wealthy, debonair man-about-town in *The Skater's Debut* set on a frozen Parisian lake. By 1910 he was considered

the most popular film star in the world with a huge following and by 1912 commanded a salary of one million francs a year. Charlie Chaplin, who first appeared in films in 1914, was not averse to “borrowing” Max’s gags and even plot-lines and would demonstrate his gratitude by presenting Max with a signed photograph inscribed “To Max, the Professor, from his disciple”.

His best work appeared between 1912-4 until he entered war service as a dispatch driver. Physical fitness precluded a combatant role, but he was invalided out of the army following a series of accidents, spending the remainder of the Great War entertaining troops and making films. Max was lured to the USA in 1916 to replace Chaplin who had left Essanay. Essanay in return had offered Max US\$5,000 per week to make twelve shorts. This adventure proved unsuccessful and was abandoned after three films.

His subsequent career was dogged by ill health but the 1919 production *The Little Café* grossed a million francs in Europe and briefly revived his fortunes. Returning to the US in 1921 his production company released *Seven Years' Bad Luck*, which some consider his best film, featuring an early example of the “human mirror” gag – a scenario best known from *Duck Soup* (1933) between Groucho and Harpo Marx. Max was then abandoned for a satire on the sort of swashbuckling films made by Douglas Fairbanks; *The Three Must-Get-Theres*, loosely based on *The Three Musketeers*, although praised by Fairbanks and Chaplin, was a flop and precipitated a return to France.

His health, not improved by an opium addiction, was further impacted by a motor crash in 1923 and shortly afterwards he was arrested for kidnapping a minor, the 17-year-old Hélène “Ninette” Peters, who he married later that year. His last films were *Au Secours! (Help!)* (1924) made in England where it was critically acclaimed and *The King of the Circus* made in Vienna in 1925.

The couple had a stormy relationship exacerbated by Max’s irrational jealousy, and after an unsuccessful effort in 1924 both died in a dubious suicide pact in 1925. This had followed their attendance at a screening of *Quo Vadis* in which two characters had committed a similar act in a similar manner.

SACHA GUITRY 1885-1957

Alexandre-Pierre Georges Guitry, his adopted forename bestowed by his Russian nurse, was born in St Petersburg, the son of leading actor Lucien Guitry, and became a stage

and film actor, director and playwright/screenwriter – author of 115 plays. He married five times, always to protégé actresses, most notably Yvonne Printemps (1919-32).

His theatre work was popular in France, London and North America and he was awarded the *Légion d'honneur* in 1930. Whilst he did make *Ceux de chez nous* – a patriotic short celebrating great men and women of France – in 1915, he disliked the silent medium as it offered no opportunity for dialogue. However the introduction of sound attracted him back to the cinema in 1930 and he appeared in many films which he also directed and provided the screenplay.



YT 2435 /
Within SG MS2740

Le Roman d'un Tricheur (The Cheat or other similar titles), which is featured on the stamp, was made in 1936 and based on his only novel *Mémoires d'un Tricheur*. Guitry plays the eponymous Cheat who, as an old man, is writing his memoirs and narrates over flashback scenes of his life. As a twelve-year-old he is caught stealing from the family shop and as a result is excluded from a family meal at which the treat of mushrooms turns out to be poisonous and the whole family is killed. Although he inherits the family money, a distant relative takes charge and robs him of his inheritance. These events demonstrate to him that crime does pay so he embarks on a career of chicanery but there is a happy ending as he spurns the entreaties of a former lover to assist her to burgle a nearby residence stating that he has found the ideal occupation, as a security guard, to utilise his talents in a legitimate pursuit.

In 1938 Guitry presented a one act play *Dieu Sauve le Roi* before King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to mark their state visit and for the reciprocal visit of President Brun the following year presented a comedy in English, *You're Telling Me*, in which he starred with Sir Seymour Hicks in a command performance and for a limited run.

Of greater importance, he assisted British intelligence representatives to deliver a replica Enigma coding machine for the Bletchley Park codebreakers whose activities were instrumental in winning the war. During the war, however, his position became somewhat ambiguous as he continued to work during the occupation and also wrote a book and made a film both entitled *De 1492 à 1942 ou De Jeanne d'Arc à Philippe Pétain*. Whilst intended to extol the past glories of France many took it to be honouring the traitor and war criminal Pétain: and he was listed as a collaborator and subsequently interned after the liberation until released for want of evidence and allowed to resume work in 1948. This experience had left him disillusioned but he was able to restore his reputation to the extent that on his death in 1957 twelve thousand people filed past his coffin.

JEAN RENOIR 1894-1979

Jean Renoir, son of leading impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, was born in Montmartre and as an actor and director made over 40 films between the silent era and

the end of the 1960s. Of these *La Règle du Jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*) an immediate pre-war satirical comedy drama released in 1939 (originally met with derision and banned in France, but more appreciated after a 1950s re-appraisal) and *La Grande Illusion* (featured on the stamp) are frequently cited as among the greatest films ever made.



YT 2436 /
Within SG MS2740

The latter, set in the Great War and released in 1937 starring Jean Gabin, is based on a 1909 book *The Great Illusion* by British journalist Norman Angell, and argues that war is futile because of the common economic interests of the European nations. Gabin plays Maréchal, a working-class aviator, who together with a French noble air ace Böeldieu (played by Pierre Fresnay), are shot down by von Rauffenstein (Erich von Stroheim - who was also a somewhat eccentric film director) a German noble and air ace. Their common nobility and discovery of mutual friends creates some sort of bond between the Frenchman and the German; the two Frenchmen are moved from camp to camp as prisoners of war eventually re-encountering the German, whose injuries have resulted in his appointment as a camp commandant. The two Frenchmen in concert with another - a wealthy Jew - escape from the camp and when Böeldieu is apprehended the German urges him to surrender but receiving a refusal is forced to shoot; aiming to wound, the shot proves fatal and the German comforts Böeldieu who is saddened that the function of the nobility and its usefulness to the cultures of their countries is being destroyed by the war and that the German will have to repurpose himself in the postwar World. The other two successfully escape into Switzerland.

The film was enormously successful but was banned in Germany and whilst it won the Best Artistic Ensemble Award at the Venice Film Festival it was subsequently banned in Italy. It was the first foreign language film to be nominated for a Best Picture Oscar. Other notable successes were *La Bête Humaine* (a 1938 film noir and tragedy based on the life of Emile Zola starring Simone Simon and Jean Gabin) and, after he fled to the USA in 1940, the 1945 release *The Southerner* (starring Zachary Scott) which earned him a Best Director Oscar nomination. Although later his US work met with little success he was to travel to India where he made *The River*, his first colour film, which won the International Prize at the 1951 Venice Film Festival.

Returning to Europe, Renoir made a trilogy of comedies including *French Cancan* which sold over four million tickets and *Elena et les Hommes* (in English versions *Paris does Strange Things*) which starred Ingrid Bergman, Mel Ferrer and Jean Marais selling over two million tickets in France.

In 1975 he received a lifetime achievement Academy Award and was elevated to the rank of Commander in the *Légion d'honneur*.

MARCEL PAGNOL 1895-1974

A French novelist, playwright and filmmaker and generally regarded as one of France's greatest writers of the twentieth century although his work is less fashionable nowadays. Whilst visiting London in 1929 he saw an early talkie and this persuaded him to concentrate his efforts into the medium. He proposed a screen adaptation of his play *Marius* to Paramount; Alexander Korda directed the 1931 release (starring Raimu and Pierre Fresnay) which was one of the first successful French language sound films.

In 1932 Pagnol founded his own film company and over the next ten years he employed both the most famous players and local unknowns to provide authenticity. The featured film *La Femme du Boulanger* (*The Baker's Wife*) released in 1938 starred Raimu and Ginette Leclerc and was a simple

tale set in an idyllic Provençal village where the pretty young baker's wife runs off with a handsome shepherd. The baker is left heartbroken, takes to drink and is unable to bake; the villagers anxious for their daily bread are organised by the local landowner and schoolteacher to mount a search. On locating the runaway the shepherd decamps and the priest counsels the



YT 2437 /
Within SG MS2740

wife to return where she says sorry to the baker, he forgives her and they immediately begin to bake bread together. No mean feat stretching this to 133 minutes' running time! The story was adapted as a musical and had a short West End run in 1989.

Pagnol is also known for his translations of Shakespeare and Virgil into French; his *Hamlet* is still being performed. In 1946 he was elected to the *Académie Française*, the first filmmaker to be so honoured. The 125th anniversary of his birth was marked by a Google Doodle (i.e. the title page of the search engine, modified to reflect a special event or occasion).

JEAN EPSTEIN 1897-1953

Born in Warsaw. His family relocated to Switzerland after the death of his father in 1908 and he subsequently attended medical school at the University of Lyon. Whilst there he also



YT 2438 /
Within SG MS2740

worked as secretary and translator for Auguste Lumière and began directing films in 1922 making *Pasteur*; the first of his thirty-plus films.

The featured film is *La Glace à Trois Faces* (*The Three-Sided Mirror*) a 1927 short talkie about the recollections of three women (played by Jeanne Helbling, Suzy Pierson and Olga Day) of their love affairs with the same man (played by René Ferté). This seems an odd choice because, although the film was well received for its technical achievements, Epstein is best remembered for his *La Chute de la Maison Usher* – a 1928 silent adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

RENÉ CLAIR 1898-1981

René-Lucien Chomette served as an ambulance driver in the Great War. Invalided out with a spinal injury, he became a journalist and also wrote songs for a music-hall singer Damia who, in 1920, persuaded him to visit Gaumont studios where she had a part in a film *Le Lys de la Vie* (no title in English and written, incidentally, by Queen Marie of Romania) which was being cast and René landed a leading role. Other parts followed under his adopted stage name including *Parisetette* for Louis Feuillade.

Graduating to directing his films combined fantasy and comedy and by the end of the silent era he was recognised among the great names of cinema. Whilst initially sceptical of sound he realised its creative possibilities and his films included *A nous la Liberté!* (*Freedom Forever* or *Freedom for us*) which precipitated a legal action for plagiarism against United Artists, the producers of Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Clair, who recognised the benefits he had derived from Chaplin's other work, refused to be involved.

In 1935 Clair contracted with Alexander Korda to make three films in Britain. In the end only one was made – *The Ghost Goes West* starring Robert Donat – but he did direct *Break the News* for Trio Films which starred Maurice Chevalier, Jack Buchanan and June Knight with songs by Cole Porter in 1938.

In 1940 Clair went to the USA with Duvivier. The original plan was to develop a French production centre but that fell through with the occupation so he worked for several Hollywood studios most notably directing *And then there*



YT 2439 /
Within SG MS2740

were None (UK title *Ten Little Indians*) in 1945 for distribution by 20th Century-Fox and starring Barry Fitzgerald, Walter Huston and Louis Hayward. Based on a book by Agatha Christie, the film adopted the second and third titles of the book – the original title having been abandoned as offensive as long ago as 1940.

Returning to France in 1947 he resumed his career including the film featured on the stamp – *Les Belles de Nuit* (*Beauties of the Night*) – a 1952 fantasy comedy starring Martine Carol, Gina Lollobrigida and Gérard Philipe as Claude, a poor music teacher who hates his job and in his dreams is a great composer who seduces beautiful rich women. A typical dream turns into a nightmare when he is being chased by indignant husbands and brothers of women he has seduced.

For fear of a repetition he tries to stay awake and meets his neighbour played by the fourth star Magali Vendeuil. Described as a brilliant French-Italian comedy Claude's fantasy dream life presents a series of hilarious escapades and the film sold 3.5 million tickets at French cinemas. It was nominated for the Golden Lion – the premier award at the Venice Film Festival.

Widely regarded as one of France's leading film-makers Clair was elected to the *Académie Française* in 1960.

JEAN GREMILLON (1901 [not 1898 as quoted in one source]-59)

A classical violinist who also directed over fifty films encompassing documentaries, avant-garde works and melodramas with famous stars. Whilst many of his early documentaries from the silent era are lost, his first dramatic success was with *Maldone* (*Misdeal*) in 1928 produced by and



YT 2440 /
Within SG MS2740

starring Claude Dullin. Directing twenty films from then to 1953 his best work was during the occupation, notably *Remorques* (*Stormy Waters*) 1941, *Lumière d'Été* (*Summer Light*) 1943 and *Le Ciel est à vous* (*The Woman who Dared*) 1944; these proved his talent beyond doubt.

The film selected to represent Grémillon's work – the 1937 *Gueule d'Amour* (*Ladykiller*), an early film noir, starring Jean Gabin – seems an odd choice as it was filmed in the Berlin studios of UFA with location scenes in Paris, Orange and Cannes. Gabin played Lucien, a handsome and dashing NCO in the Spahis (light cavalry regiments comprised principally of North African Arabs), who is stationed in Orange and the idol of every woman he meets. Taking a short leave in Cannes to collect a modest inheritance he meets and falls in love with Madeleine (Mireille Ballin), a society beauty who gambles away the inheritance. Disillusioned, Lucien returns to his regiment but unable to overcome his obsession with Madeleine leaves and takes a menial job in a printers in Orange to be near to her. Discovering her to be a kept woman and unwilling to leave her benefactor Lucien eventually puts the affair behind him.

His good friend from his army days, René – now a respected doctor – confides that he has met a woman called Madeleine who he loves and intends to marry. Anxious to spare his friend the inevitable tragedy, Lucien arranges a meeting and murders Madeleine. When this is discovered by René, who quickly grasps the situation, he puts Lucien on a train to Marseille so he can escape to safety in Africa.

JACQUES BECKER (1906-60)

While both his parents were in business, it was not the sort of career Becker wished to follow so he took some time to find himself. He was friendly with Jean Renoir who he had met in 1921 and both had shared interests in sports cars, jazz and films. He had declined an offer to work for King Vidor in the USA but in 1929 he played a bit part in one of Renoir's films

and became his assistant on nine of Renoir's 1930s films.

Following the German invasion of France Becker was captured and became a prisoner of war until released in 1942 when he directed *Dernier Atout* (*The Trump Card*) in the



YT 2441 /
Within SG MS2740

South of France; other films followed, and he established links with the Paris resistance whilst planning for the post-war cinema.

His post-war work includes several films in comic vein depicting everyday lives of young people in contemporary Paris but sandwiched between

these was the 1952 *Casque d'Or* (*Golden Helmet*) starring Simone Signoret (Marie) and Serge Reggiani (Georges Manda) – a Belle Epoque tragedy based on actual events of a love triangle between a prostitute and two rival Apache gang leaders which caused a sensation when reported in 1902. Marie, a golden-haired beauty of the demimonde (whose nickname provides the title), is unhappily involved with Roland – a member of the Leca crime syndicate. Manda is introduced to Marie at a dance by his friend Raymond and when they dance this angers Roland who accosts Marie so Manda knocks him out. Roland's jealousy simmers leading to an arranged fight with Manda, in front of various gang members, during which Manda stabs Roland to death.

Following a tip-off, the police arrive and all flee the scene. Manda subsequently meets Marie at her village where they live together until Leca intervenes and seeks to frame Raymond for Roland's murder so as to force Manda to confess and have Marie for himself. Out of loyalty to his friend, Manda confesses to the police who nonetheless charge Raymond as an accessory. Both men escape from custody but in the chase Raymond is mortally wounded. In order to avenge his death, Manda seeks out Leca and chases him into a police station where Manda grabs a police gun and shoots Leca dead. Quickly captured, Manda is tried and sentenced to death; Marie looks on in horror from a garret overlooking the courtyard where her lover is guillotined.

The film is especially admired by Truffaut and its closing scene has become famous and a great inspiration for others; when struggling over an ending, "*Why not try a Casque d'Or solution?*" has become a byword amongst directors. Jean Paul Gaultier said Becker's 1945 film *Falbalas* (*Paris Frills*) inspired him to become as fashion designer.

FRANCOIS ROLAND TRUFFAUT (1932-84)

Truffaut lived with his grandmother until aged eight; she instilled in him a love of music and books but he was a frequent school-refuser sneaking into cinemas to watch films. After expulsion from several schools, by the age of fourteen he determined to be self-taught and set goals which included watching three films a day and reading three books a week. He started his own film club in 1948 and joined the army in 1950; after spending the next two years trying to escape he was eventually imprisoned for desertion. His

friend André Bazin, a noted film critic, used his political influence to effect his release and gave him a job on his new magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* where, as a critic and later editor, he achieved notoriety for his brutal reviews and was the only critic not invited to the 1958 Cannes Film Festival. He is particularly notable for an article in 1954, translated as "A Certain Trend of French Cinema": it was a scathing attack on the mainstream industry in France and publicly castigated eight named directors (including Renoir and Becker) who he deemed incapable. There was inevitably a storm of protest but the controversy led to his appointment to the far more important publication *Arts-Lettres-Spectacles* for which he provided more than 500 articles during the next four years.

He began making films in 1955 and his first major feature was *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (*The 400 Blows*) in 1959 which is considered a defining film of the French New Wave (an art film movement which rejected traditional film-making conventions in favour of experimentation). This was a coming-of-age drama with four sequels between 1962-79 tracing the life of Antoine Doinel, played by Jean-Pierre L  aud. His first colour film, and the only film he made in English, was *Fahrenheit 451* in 1965, starring Julie Christie and Oskar Werner (the seventh actor considered for the role and a nightmare to work with). Not a commercial success but critical opinion, whilst always mixed, has improved over time.



YT 2442 /
Within SG MS2740

Although it was nominated for the Golden Lion at Venice it is more regarded as a cult film with a devoted following.

The featured film is *L'Enfant Sauvage* (*The Wild Boy/The Wild Child*) made in 1970 in black and white and based on the true story of Victor of Aveyron. In 1798 a naked boy aged 11 or 12 years is found in a forest by a woman who is frightened and runs away; finding some hunters she explains and the hunters chase the boy with a pack of dogs and apprehend him. The boy is taken to Paris and placed in a school for deaf mutes where the doctor believes the boy to be neither deaf nor dumb and that he can be educated. The doctor names the boy Victor and takes him in care at his house where he becomes socialised and learns the rudiments of language. Whilst Victor gains the ability to adapt to social situations he loses his ability to live as a savage. Victor was played by Jean-Pierre Cargol who was discovered by scouring the schools of Nimes and Marseille seeking a child who was sufficiently talented but unruly and unkempt and chanced upon this gypsy boy who turned out to be the nephew of Manitas de Plata, the famous flamenco guitarist. Truffaut directed and after considering several actors for the part of the doctor he decided he could establish a closer rapport with the boy if he played the part himself.

With little dialogue, voice-over narration by Truffaut and music by Vivaldi, the film was well received by critics and its reputation has grown. It sold 1.7 million tickets in France and made US\$800,000 in foreign rentals.

It was in 1973 that Truffaut won wide acclaim with *La Nuit Américaine* (*Day for Night*) which starred Jacqueline Bisset (who was fluent in French) with a part for Truffaut himself as the director of the film-within-a-film. The English title is taken from a film-making process in which daytime scenes appear to take place at night. The film won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film: it was voted best film at the BAFTA ceremony and is included in *Time* magazine's 100 best films of the century.

The film was dedicated to two major stars of the silent era – Lilian Gish, whose film career spanned 75 years between 1912-87 and her sister, Dorothy who appeared in 100 films between 1912-63. Truffaut is also remembered for a leading role in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – that film took over US\$300 million at the box office!

Inevitably, with an assembly such as this, the cognoscenti will have opinions as to who has been omitted or who should not be included. Georges Méliès is an obvious omission but, as previously mentioned, he has had his day in the Sun (or trip to the Moon) with his own stamp. But to this amateur the glaring omission is Julien Duvivier, director of the pivotal *Pépé le Moko*, who was prominent between 1930-60, revered by such as Ingmar Bergman and Jean Renoir and perhaps the most neglected of those regarded as “the Big Five” of French cinema. The other four are Jean Renoir, René Clair (both included), Jacques Feyder and Marcel Carné (who was still living at the time of issue). Whilst Duvivier is recognised by a Paris street named for him perhaps he will be honoured with a stamp sometime.

JEAN ROSTAND (1892-1977)



YT 2458/ SG 2758

In the first part of this series I promised to reveal the longest-running musical and checked that there was a suitable stamp by reference to the design index. This stamp in the 1987 Celebrities series, part of a set of six issued in both sheet format

and se-tenant booklet, depicts Jean Edmond Cyrus Rostand, a noted biologist. He is the wrong Rostand for our purposes and it is his father who is relevant.

EDMOND EUGENE ALEXIS ROSTAND (1868-1918)

Astonishingly Rostand does not feature on any French stamp although there have been many opportunities in various Celebrities series and even singly in his own right. However I fortunately came across a postal history item (Figure 1) addressed to the street in Marseille which is named for him and this will serve as an illustration.

Born into a wealthy family (his father was an economist) Rostand was a poet and dramatist (all his plays being written in verse) associated with neo-romanticism; his plays contrasted with the naturalistic theatre popular in the late nineteenth century. In 1894 *Les Romanesques* (*The Romancers*) was performed providing his first success and leading to commissions to write for Sarah Bernhardt.

Rostand is perhaps best remembered for the comedy *Cyrano de Bergerac* which was first performed in 1897 and ran for 300 performances. It was quickly translated into other European languages and was adapted to produce eight films (plus numerous loose adaptations), four operas and five musicals but was never funnier than when presented by Ernie Wise as “a play wot I wrote” with Eric Morecambe (replete with false nose) in the leading role ably supported by Penelope Keith (the Queen of France) and Francis Matthews with Keith's fellow players from self-sufficiency comedy series *The Good Life* (Richard Briers and Paul Eddington) in cameo appearances. Surely one of the best “one-words” was delivered when Cyrano enquires of the Queen “What would it take for me to kiss you?” and the Queen replies “Chloroform”.

In 1901 Rostand became the youngest writer ever to be elected to the *Académie Française*.

Returning to *Les Romanesques*, this was adapted by Tom Jones (book and lyrics – and incidentally not the Welsh chap who only adopted that name in 1963) and Harvey Schmidt (music) into a musical *The Fantasticks* which title derives from George Fleming's 1900 adaptation of the original play. A group of friends put up the production money and the musical opened at the off-Broadway Sullivan Street Playhouse in Greenwich Village. It ran for 42 years and 17,162 performances, making it not only the longest running musical but the longest run of any theatre piece performed continuously in one location.

If you have never heard of it then surely you have heard its opening song, introduced by Jerry Orbach and four of the cast, the hauntingly beautiful *Try to Remember* which has been much recorded by great performers including Harry Belafonte, Liza Minnelli, Nana Mouskouri and a version by Gladys Knight and the Pips combining some of the lyrics with those of *The Way We Were*. Other notable songs were *Soon It's Gonna Rain* (recorded by Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Blossom Dearie, Julie London and more) and *Much More* (recorded by Barbra Streisand and others).

Some will be thinking that *The Mousetrap* has been running over 70 years having opened in 1952; this is true and is the longest continuous run. However this Agatha Christie play changed theatres. On Saturday March 23 1974 the play was performed for the last time at The Ambassadors Theatre (acknowledging the Apostrophe Protection Society there is no apostrophe in the theatre's name) and for the first time at St. Martin's Theatre on Monday March 25 – hence preserving the continuous run which continues to be maintained during tours by performances with an understudy cast. One actor has appeared in every performance – namely Deryck Guyler, whose recorded voice is heard as a wireless announcer. However both of *The Fantasticks* records might come under threat in the years to come as the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Richard Stilgoe musical *Starlight Express* has been running in the purpose-built Starlighthalle in Bochum, Germany since 1988 where it has been seen by over 15 million people.



Figure 1

A 1921 picture postcard depicting the *Messageries Maritimes* paquebot "Lotus" and addressed to Rue Edmond Rostand in Marseille. Displaying a mixed franking of a 5c green Sower, which was applied first and cancelled 29/3/21, and a TANGER overprint on a 5c Blanc, cancelled 7/4/21 – presumably for re-direction as the original address has been covered by a pasted-on label.

The *Fantasticks* can boast over 11,000 separate productions in over 60 countries including various revivals and a host of top names making appearances. By 2010 the original investors had recovered their money more than 240 times over. A film version released in 2000, despite starring Joel Grey and having a budget of US\$10 million, was a

monumental flop – box office receipts recorded as just US\$50,000!

So whether we have travelled by train (strikes permitting) or boat or 'plane we have reached the end of another stage of our fantastic journey.

Do you have a display or an item of interest you would like share with others? If so contact Chris Hitchen (treasurer@fcps.org.uk) for Journal items, or Mick Bister (m.bister@btinternet.com) for Zoom items.

Bank Balance Request Service

(Notification d'avoir à une date déterminée)

Edwin Voerman

Since the creation of the French postal cheque and Giro service in 1918, account holders have felt the need to be able to inquire about their current account balance. Nowadays, a simple action with a smartphone suffices, but things were a little different a hundred years ago. At that time, anyone wishing to be informed about the balance in his or her current account had to submit a request to that effect, specifying the desired date of the balance. The postal cheque and Giro service charged a modest fee for this service. Until 1930, this was 25 centimes per requested balance. For information on the balance over a longer period, 1 franc was charged per 100 transactions or part thereof.

In 1930 (Decree of 27 April of that year), the fee per balance request was increased to 1 franc and, if the period involved multiple transactions, 2 francs were payable up to 50 transactions, 3 francs from 51 to 100 transactions and 4 francs from 101 to 150 transactions. Thereafter, a franc was added for every 50 transactions. This rate change took effect on 16 May 1930. See the scans from the 1930 postal instruction book (Figure 1).

However, a major restructuring took place in 1939. The Decree of 16 November 1939 (published in the PTT *Bulletin Officiel* N° 34 of 1 December 1939, page 777), relating to certain postal charges, stated that holders of a postal Giro account could choose between a regular balance request service (*Notification périodique d'avoir*) and an occasional service on a given date when the customer needed it (*Notification d'avoir à une date déterminée*).

The regular balance information could be provided weekly, twice weekly or even daily. The corresponding monthly subscriptions were 1 franc for balance information on a weekly basis, 2 francs for balance information on a twice-weekly basis and 5 francs for balance information on a daily basis. This article though is limited to a study of the service responding to balance information requests from the account holder on an occasional basis - *Notification d'avoir à une date déterminée*.

Bank balance requests were made over the counter. The client was given a form which was variably headed *Demande d'Avoir*, *Notification d'Avoir* or even *Demande de Notification d'Avoir* depending, it would appear, on the issuing office. The client inserted his name and account number and handed it (the 'demande') to the teller with some form of ID. The teller would check the client's account, write in the balance and return the

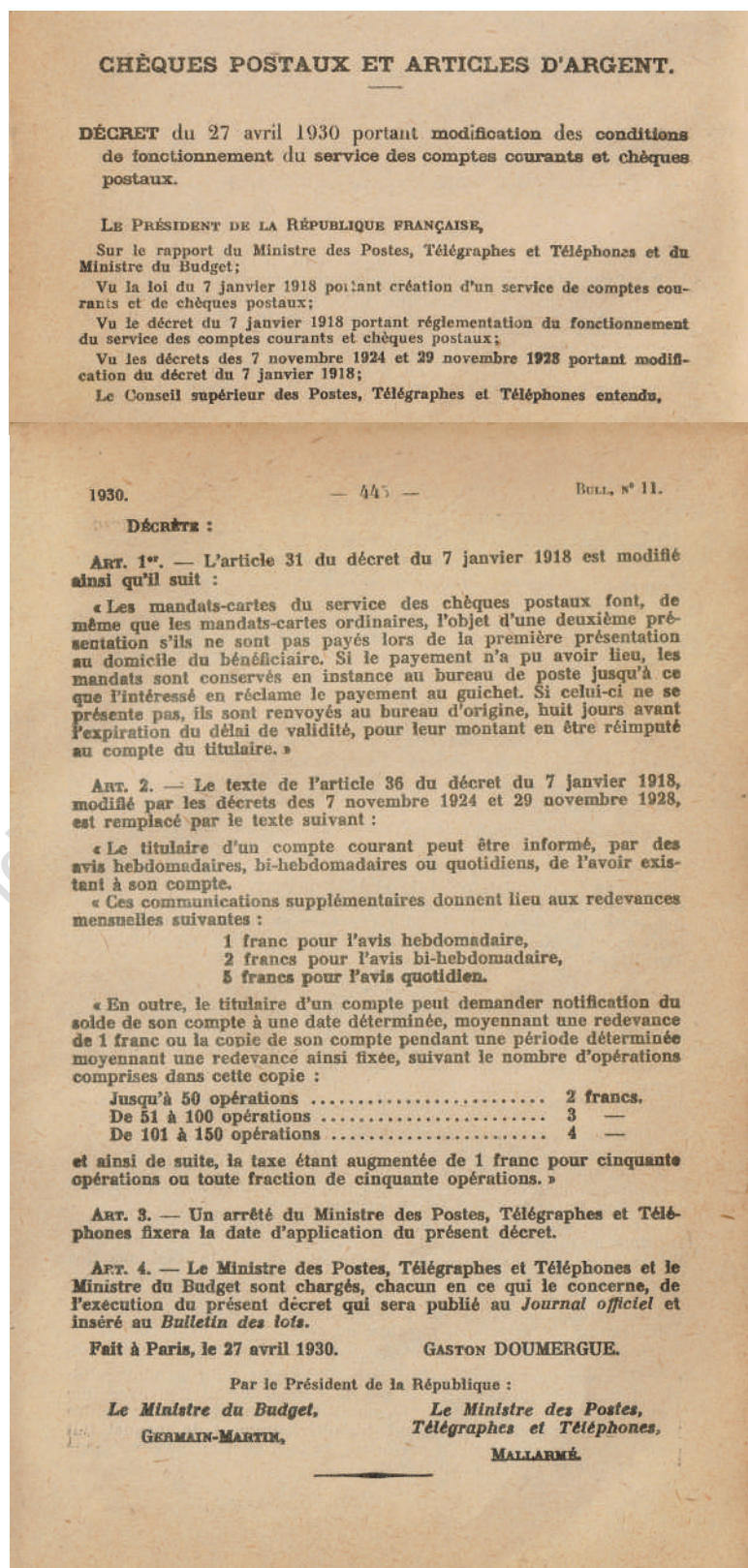


Figure 1

Pages 444 and 445 from the 1930 *Bulletin Officiel* N°11 of the French Post Office setting out the fees for making bank balance requests during the period 16 May 1930 to 30 November 1939.

form (the '*notification*') to the client. If a stamp was affixed to pay for the request fee it was cancelled with a special *CHEQUES POSTAUX* circular date stamp (of which there were various designs) or a straight-line *CHEQUES* strike with the name of the office.

The dates of fee changes for bank balance requests were neatly in line with those of domestic letter rates. On 8 December 1951, this situation changed dramatically. From that date, the fee for bank balance requests was substantially higher than the domestic letter rate. Possibly the cost of staff deployment could be the reason for this. From 1973 (according to the *Bulletin Officiel* 145, 6 July), fees were levied only in the event of '*notorious abuse*', so maybe there was also a punitive element for clients who

requested access to their accounts too frequently. Nothing else is known about the justification for fees being higher compared to the letter rates. See the tariff overview at the end of this article on page 159.

Up to 8 December 1951, the fee payable for a bank balance request had changed 10 times. These fee changes ran entirely parallel to the change dates of the rates for inland letters. Only with the introduction of the 20 franc fee on 8 December 1951 was it decided to represent the fee paid by attaching a postage stamp with a nominal value of 20 francs to the balance request form (Figures 2 to 6). This is an example of fiscal usage of a postage stamp which we sometimes see on invoices.

Front of the form:

CH. 12. RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
J. A. 105775 (4)
CENTRE DE CHEQUES POSTAUX
d. le 19....
N°
Prière de bien vouloir rappeler votre numéro de compte dans toutes vos communications avec le centre de chèques postaux.

Back of the form:

CENTRE DE CHEQUES POSTAUX CLERMONT-FD
NOTIFICATION
Nom du titulaire...: *Rouchouse*
No du C/C.....: *760-79*
Date.....: *31/12/53*
Avoir.....: *655.*
Pièces d'identités produites.....: *Permis conduire*
Signature: *Rouchouse*
20f
REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
POSTES
CHATEAU DE LA LOIRE - CHAMBOURD

Figure 2

Front and back of an early balance request form from the postal cheque and Giro service centre in Clermont-Ferrand with 20F *Château de Chambord* (YT 924), issued on 31 May 1952, and used in a fiscal role. This is the first 20-franc issue after the introduction on 8 December 1951 of postage stamps as a revenue stamp on balance request forms. The rate was from 8 December 1951 to 30 June 1957. The reverse side of the form had space for any correspondence from the postal cheque and Giro service centre with the client.

12

CENTRE
DE
CHEQUES POSTAUX
CLERMONT-FD

NOTIFICATION

REPUBLICQUE FRANÇAISE
POSTES
20F
NATATION

Nom du titulaire...: Hartmann Elisabeth

No du C/C.....: 97-84

Date.....: 3 jan

Avoir.....: 85

Pièces d'identités
produites.....:

Signature: Hartmann

Figure 3
The 1953 20F *Natation* stamp (YT 960) is also among the early issues used as revenue stamps by French postal cheque and Giro service centres.

CENTRE
DE
CHEQUES POSTAUX
CLERMONT-FD

.....
: B.O.6bis :
.....

NOTIFICATION D'AVOIR

REPUBLICQUE FRANÇAISE
20F
MARTINIQUE
LE MONT PELÉ

Nom du titulaire...: DANIEL

No du C/C.....: 756.58

Date.....: 29.5.57

Avoir... 28/8: 69 604

Pièces d'identités
produites.....:

Signature: Dan

23

Figure 4
The 20F *Martinique - Le Mont Pelé* issue (YT 1041) from the 1955 *Série Touristique d'Usage-Courant* also belongs to the category of stamps used as revenue stamps during the first tariff period.

CENTRE DE CHEQUES POSTAUX
STRASBOURG

NOTIFICATION D'AVOIR

L'Avoir du compte courant n° 586.33

élève à 11078 francs.

A Strasbourg, le

à heures



Figure 5
The 20F Ajaccio (YT 981) from the 1954 *Série Touristique d'Usage-Courant* belongs to the tariff period from 8 December 1951 to 30 June 1957. The form was used by the Strasbourg postal cheque and Giro service centre and has a very plain appearance.

CENTRE 13
DE CHÈQUES POSTAUX
DE BORDEAUX

DEMANDE
de Notification d'Avoir

C/C n° 1222 09

Titulaire : M. Capitaine Allemand
Les Romains Rhodéens Périgueux

Bordeaux, le 24 Janvier 58

Signature : Allemand

Avoir et date	Timbre-Poste Taxe	Timbre-Visa de l'agent
27.763 frs. le <u>18.1.58</u>		

B.O. 10.000 14-6-57

Figure 6
The 50F Saint-Rémy -Les Antiques stamp (YT 1130) from the 1957 *Série Touristique d'Usage-Courant* was used by the postal cheque and Giro service centre in Bordeaux.

Despite the long period when the French public were requesting their bank balance, we do not often encounter the forms themselves provided for this purpose. Many forms were lost which is no surprise; after being informed of the requested balance, the recipient had no further interest in it. They have only been preserved in cases where they were an essential part of a private or business financial archive - unless such an archive itself has been destroyed over time.

From the fee change of 2 August 1976, attaching stamps to balance request forms seems to have become optional, as they appear less and less on these forms. The last fiscal use of stamps on balance request forms known to me dates from the year 1972.

No doubt a limited number of contemporary philatelists showed an interest in the stamped balance request forms but most of the stamps used on them were rather ordinary

Figure 7

A pair of the 30c *Semeuse* by Jules Piel (YT 1234 A) to cover the fee payable for balance information from 6 January 1959 to 31 December 1961. The stamp was issued 23 February 1961.

CHÈQUES POSTAUX
CH 46
J. S. 005715

DEMANDE D'AVOIR

CADRE A REMPLIR PAR LE DEMANDEUR

N° du C/C : 10.12.72

Nom : TIXIER Maurice

A : 13 rue Blatin

Signature : Dupuy

RÉPONSE

AVOIR

183,57

Timbre visa

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
30c
Semeuse

CHÈQUES POSTAUX
CH 46
J. S. 205527 (2)

DEMANDE D'AVOIR

CADRE A REMPLIR PAR LE DEMANDEUR

N° du compte : 13921-60

Nom : Grangi François

A : Paris le 22.12.62

Signature : Grangi

RÉPONSE

AVOIR

3,51

Timbre visa

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
20c
Semeuse

296

Figure 8

In this example, for the rate period from 1 January 1962 to 21 January 1968, no fewer than four 20c *Semeuse* stamps (YT 1233) were used to cover the 80 centimes fee. The stamp was issued on 2 January 1960. Stamps with a face value of 80 centimes would not appear until 1974 when the domestic letter rate was raised to 80 centimes. The handstamp was applied in green by the postal cheque and Giro service office in Paris.

(Figures 7 and 8). Some were often commemoratives but collectors for a long time were interested only in the stamps themselves rather than their use. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate commemorative stamps without surcharge which were integrated into regular postal traffic. We see them used

almost as often as the *usage-courant* issues. Postal history was still in its infancy when stamps were used on these forms. Because we do not come across these forms very often, it is worthwhile to show quite a few without being exhaustive.

B. O. 82

CENTRE
DE
CHÈQUES POSTAUX
CLERMONT-FD

Nom du titulaire...: *E. J. B. K. E. M. 7 u F. C.*

N° du C/C.....: *93.50*

Date.....: *15/6/62*

Avoir.....: *2708,59*

Pièces d'identité
produites.....:

Signature
du
titulaire

Two copies of the 30c commemorative issue *Rattachement de la Savoie à la France 1860 - 1960* (YT 1246) here serving to meet the balance request fee of 60 centimes valid from 6 January 1959 to 31 December 1962.

Figure 10
Two copies of the 30c *Héros de la Résistance* (YT 1251) serve in this case to meet the balance request fee of 60 centimes | valid from 6 January 1959 to 31 December 1962.

B. O. 82

CENTRE
DE
CHÈQUES POSTAUX
CLERMONT-FD

NOTIFICATION

Nom du titulaire...: *BARNIER Roger*

N° du C/C.....: *14 70*

Date.....: *18/8-60*

Avoir.....: *47,62*

Pièces d'identité
produites.....:

Signature
du
titulaire

Two copies of the 30c *Héros de la Résistance* (YT 1251) serve in this case to meet the balance request fee of 60 centimes | valid from 6 January 1959 to 31 December 1962.

The use of stamps as proof of payment for submitting a bank balance request came to an end with the *Bulletin Officiel* N° 145, 6 July 1973 stating that a balance request fee was only needed in the event of 'notorious abuse'.

During each tariff period, there circulated several commemorative stamps with the same face value as the balance request fee. Plenty of choice, therefore, for frankings. What is noteworthy, is the different format of the forms and their layout used by the *Centres de Chèques Postaux*, and the economy paper used. The form from the

Strasbourg postal cheques centre (see **Figure 5** above) takes the crown where amateurism is concerned. The forms shown are from the Bordeaux, Clermond-Ferrand, Paris, Dijon and Strasbourg postal cheque and Giro offices. I am also familiar with the Lyon and Toulouse offices, but I am sure there are more. Forms from Clermond-Ferrand are the most common in my collection. All handstamp cancellations (barring exceptions) are applied in black, except for those of Paris which are all found in green.

Bank balance request fees

Date of tariff	Tariff in francs	Date of tariff	Tariff in francs	Date of tariff	Tariff in francs
1918	25c	16 May 1930	1	1 Dec 1939	1
5 Jan 1942	1,50	1 Mar 1945	2	1 Jan 1946	3
1 Jan 1947	5	3 Jan 1947	4,50	1 Mar 1947	4,50
20 Apr 1947	5	8 July 1947	6	21 Sept 1948	10
6 Jan 1949	15	8 Dec 1951*	20	1 July 1957	50
6 Jan 1959	60	1 Jan 1962	0,80	22 Jan 1968	1,20
12 Jan 1970	2	4 Jan 1971	2,50	16 Sept 1974	3
2 Aug 1976	4	15 May 1978	5	15 Oct 1979	5,50
1 Aug 1980	6,30	1 Sept 1981	6,30	1 June 1982	7
1 June 1983	7	1 Aug 1985	7,65	1 Aug 1986	8,30
1 Nov 1987	8,70	1 Aug 1988	8,90	1 Feb 1990	9,20
19 Aug 1991	9,70	10 Aug 1992	10		
*The date November 1951 is quoted by Gérard Fabrègue in his article "Les notifications d'avoir", <i>L'Echo de la Timbrologie</i> , December 1993					

In conclusion, it needs to be emphasised that little has been previously written on this subject. Readers should therefore view the article strictly empirically, as an exploratory work but with some hard facts such as the pages from the 1930 *Bulletin Officiel* and the forms themselves. The article raises

many questions for an interested reader that are logical in themselves, but which simply cannot be answered at this moment. Finally, thanks to Laurent Bonnefoy and to Mick Bister for their support and input.

Zoom Meetings - an observation

To me, one of the joys of the Zoom programme has been being able to meet my fellow members and truly be a part of the France and Colonies Philatelic Society. Before Zoom I went through old Journals and sought out photos of those who had attended meetings so I could 'see' who the other members of the committee were!

Reading the Journal reports of physical meetings always fascinated me and made me feel quite envious because of the diversity of subjects that I was missing out on. Not any more!

As Covid took over our lives and we became less inclined to go out and mingle, Zoom really became a wonderful means of communication. I live in Western Australia so the meeting time of 14.30GMT has been ideal for me - although in the northern winter it's a bit late at the 22.00 start - but I don't have to travel anywhere and I can hop straight into bed afterwards so it's well worth staying up for. Some of our US members have an early start with the meetings beginning at 06.30 and sadly our Eastern Australian States members miss-out on live meetings as it is a past-midnight start.

Fear not - all our meetings are recorded and uploaded to our YouTube channel. The meetings can be downloaded from there and stored on your own computer if you wish.

Some of the wonderful talks have been: *Canal du Midi* - **Peter Maybury**; *Boîtes mobiles* - **Steve Ellis**; Nice - **Roger Niven**; French airmail stamps - **Chris Hitchen**; French Colonial Group Type - **Loric Dufresne de Virel**; Fun with a Centime - **Ed Grabowski**; plus many more interesting subjects. Our website under the heading - 'Meetings' gives the full list of talks and instructions on how to join or display within Zoom.

The numbers to the meetings are declining so if you have a computer and a good internet service you can watch live (you can also hide yourself when the meeting is taking place if you're shy) and enjoy the meeting with others as I do.

The next Zoom meeting is on 13 February 2024 -with **Mick Bister**'s the '50c *Jeanne d'Arc* issue of 1929'. It would be a terrible shame if these programmes ceased through apathy.

Jan Gane

SHORTER ITEMS - INCLUDING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

‘POSTELEC’ 1985

Paul Watkins

This is an item that I have recently acquired, not because I collect philatelic covers of the 1980s, but because I am intrigued by short-lived experiments of the PTT.

A postal supplement of 5 francs above the 2f 20 inland letter rate has been applied for this ‘Postelec’ service which seems to have involved the receiving office telephoning the addressee to inform him of the letter’s arrival at the sorting office. He could then collect it, rather than it being delivered by the postman. Presumably this could have been useful in

the case of very urgent correspondence, when the delivery round of the *facteur* was unpredictable or lengthy – although not everyone would appreciate a telephone call at 7.40 a.m. and a subsequent drive to the sorting office!

I have not seen this service mentioned anywhere before and this is the first example of its use I have encountered. Maybe I have led a sheltered life and members know all about it and could enlighten me? (But please, not by telephone, especially not before breakfast!)



It could have been a local initiative as the Rennes sorting office was a major player in technological innovations in the late 70s and later. I did a quick Google search and discovered that the name ‘Postelec’ couldn’t have been

patented by La Poste as there is now a company which manufactures and installs electric car chargers with the same name.

Mick Bister

Small articles are as important to the Journal as in-depth ones.
Contact Mick Bister if you have an interesting item to share.

Epic of Vimy – a Canadian Pilgrimage

Twelve years ago, the France and Colonies Philatelic Society, published (in Journals No 259, 260 and 261) an article by Mick Bister which reflected on the dedication and unveiling of the Vimy Monument on 26 July 1936 and studied the associated stamps and covers. As a contributor to the article, I have over several years developed an exhibit: 'Epic of Vimy – A Canadian Pilgrimage.'

Exhibitors are always aware of Treatment, Importance, Knowledge and Research. When new research becomes available, we must revamp our exhibit and write to reflect this information. My 'Epic of Vimy' exhibit currently attributes two First Day Covers (26 July 1936) to having been cancelled by a Second Generation Krag continuous cancelling machine (manufactured by Krag Maskin Fabrik

in Oslo, Norway), with the slogan 'MONUMENT DE VIMY.'

The Second Generation Krag cancellation is identifiable by a circular date stamp with a diameter of 27mm containing a single-line dater. The circumference of the canceller cylinder is 128mm and the repeat (the distance between the centres of the datestamps) is 64 mm. One FDC records the collection of mail at 19h00 and the other at 22h00 (Figure 1).

The cancellation illustrated on the FDC in Figure 2, has been applied by an RBV (Roux, Braconnier, Vorms) machine manufactured in France (Ste. L'Outillage R.B.V. Constructeur, Paris). The circular date stamp is 24mm in diameter and has a four-line dater with a repeat of 87mm. This was cancelled at 19h00. This RBV cancellation was only discovered twenty years ago.



Figure 1
First day of issue
with the Krag
cancellation times
of 19h00 (top)
and 22h00
(bottom).



The author Gérard Dreyfuss believes that the RBV machine was used to back up the Krag machine and that it only treated mail to Canada and the USA. Another theory is that the RBV machine broke down. I have two RBV covers but both are cancelled at 19h00. To my knowledge no known cancellations exist using an RBV machine with the later

22h00 cancellation. There are reportedly FDCs cancelled by the RBV at 22h00 but to date I haven't seen one. If they do exist, I would be very interested as they must be rare.

There was a temporary PTT post office at Vimy Ridge selling stamps, covers and postcards. It is also believed that this facility was a repository for all mail for cancelling



Figure 2

First day of issue with an RBV cancellation time of 19h00

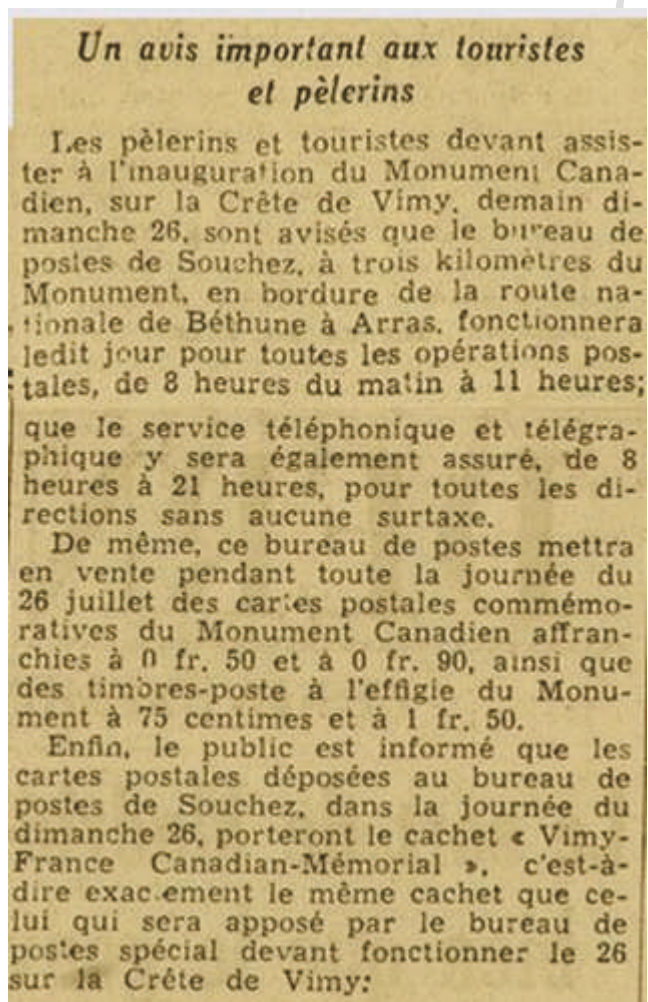


Figure 3

Extract from *Le Grand Écho*, the local newspaper of Souchez, with details of postal facilities during the inauguration of the Canadian Monument on Vimy Ridge

elsewhere. It would have been bagged, possibly in two shipments, based on the collection hours on the circular date stamp (19h00 and 22h00), and dispatched to a central sorting office.

But where was this central office located? The question is if the Krag and RBV machines were located elsewhere and the RBV machine broke down would the Krag machine have processed the balance of mail, with a time stamp of 19h00? Or was this changed to read 22h00? With respect to a possible location in the area where this mail might have been processed, the sorting office at Arras (later Arras RP), which is only 3-4km from the site, did have a Krag machine at the time; similarly, Arras-Gare had a Krag machine but not an RBV until 1941. But I believe, pending proof to the contrary, that both machines *were* located either in Arras or Arras-Gare. The office in Lens only had a Daguin machine at the time. Research has located a newspaper, *Le Grand Écho*, published in Souchez (4km from Vimy), with an article dated 25 July 1936 advising tourists and pilgrims that postal facilities would be open on the next day (Figure 3).

The newspaper announcement reads as follows:

“Pilgrims and tourists attending the inauguration of the Canadian Monument, on Vimy Ridge tomorrow Sunday 26, are advised that the Souchez post office, three kilometres from the Monument, on the *Route nationale* from Béthune to Arras, will operate all postal services on the said day from 8h00 to 11h00 and that the telephone and telegraph service will also be assured there from 8h00 to 21h00 for all distances without any surcharge.

“Likewise, this post office will put on sale throughout the day of 26 July commemorative postcards of the Canadian Monument franked at 0fr50 and at 0fr90, as well as postage stamps bearing the effigy of the Monument at 75 centimes and 1fr50.

“Finally, the public is informed that postcards dropped off at the Souchez post office on Sunday 26 will bear the handstamp ‘Vimy-France Canadian-Mémorial’, i.e. the same as the one which will be applied by the special post office operating on the 26th at Vimy Ridge.”

From reading this newspaper cutting we know that an identical handstamp was used to cancel souvenir mail at the post offices in Souchez and at the PTT stand at Vimy Ridge. But there are still many questions. Where were the Krag and RBV cancelling machines located if not at Arras? Did the RBV break down resulting in a rare or non-existent 22h00 cancellation? Is there a French PTT report on operations and functions prior to and during the unveiling which will provide the answers?

Any corrections, confirmation and assistance with regard to this article would be most appreciated. Please contact me by e-mail at don.hedger@gmail.com Thank you.

Sources

‘*Le guide de l’oblitération mécanique*’, Yvon Nouazé, 1990

‘*Catalogue des Oblitérations Mécaniques de France*’, Gérard Dreyfuss, 1994

‘*Le Grand Echo*’, Souchez, 25 July 1936

Personal correspondence with Gérard Dreyfuss, March 2023

Don Hedger

The Post Box and the Postman

When on holiday in France, I cannot resist taking photographs of subjects related to the postal services. This summer was no exception when, towards the end of our holiday, my wife and I spent a few days in Brittany.



The first photo I took was of a post box affixed to the wall of the Boule d’Or hotel in Sainte-Anne d’Auray in the département of Morbihan. It is a magnificent beast which Chris Hitchen will no doubt recognise and which may still exist in Paris but it is the first one I have seen in the provinces. Some of the

yellow paint had peeled away to reveal the previous coat of pale blue and, underneath that, patches of dark blue paint.

Although the post box had been decommissioned, its mouth was still wide open in anticipation of receiving some mail. Bright blue Dymo tape though had been applied informing customers to go to the local post office where mail would be collected at 9.30 am from Monday to Saturday.

At the very bottom of the post box, and despite being coated in the numerous layers of paint, the manufacturer’s name was still discernible - Savava-Delachanal of Charenton. According to the website, the company was manufacturing post boxes in 1922 but it does not stipulate which models.

The second photo is of the local postie delivering mail to our hotel in Quiberon located to the south of Sainte-Anne d’Auray. I was impressed with his sleek summer uniform and the well kitted power-assisted bike. The black of his shirt, the grey of his shorts and the yellow trim on his trainers tastefully complemented the La Poste colours of his bike.

Earlier, I did see his female counterpart who was even more photogenic but my wife vetoed any intention of mine to take the lady’s photo.



Mick Bister

The Gouverneur-Général Ballay Issue of French West Africa 1906/7

An Illustrated Study of the 5F Forgery



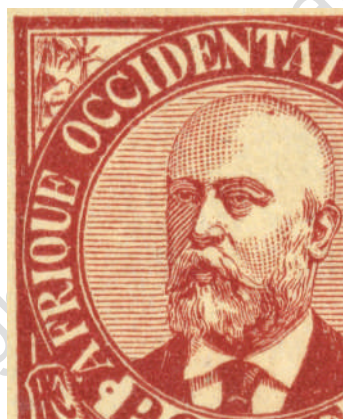
Members of the Society may be aware from previous articles that, in honour of my great-grandfather who was a trading pioneer of the West African 'Fever Coast' from the mid-1870s until 1907, I specialise exclusively in early British and French colonial issues from Sénégal down to the Congo Français.

In consequence, I am fascinated by the multitude of unnecessarily varied local overprints and, of course, forgeries of those - and even of the stamps themselves. Whereas the British colonies out there were fairly dull in the latter respect, in the case of the French colonies what started out as a cottage industry producing very obvious fakes had become, by the early part of the 20th century, much more of an organised business offering much more convincing items.

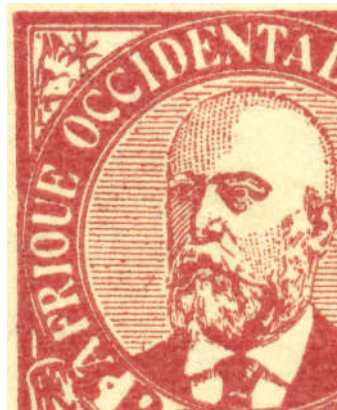
It would seem to me that this was only made easier by two main factors. Firstly, neither the dealers themselves nor the hobby enthusiasts in their suburban villas collecting stamps from fascinating, faraway places had access to 1200 dpi

scanners and, perforce, had to rely on poor black-and-white reproductions printed in the philatelic press and catalogues of the era to identify their stamps, so forgers did not have to be hugely skilled to pick their purses. Secondly, there was the need for the postal administrations of the great colonial empires to rationalise production costs by issuing omnibus designs that could use one main engraving for a multitude of different colours, values and individual colonies. Naturally the forgers were quick to take note, because this also helped to streamline their costs.

The Ballay issues are a case in point. Because I do not have a full list of Fournier's more than 3,671 'facsimiles', I have no absolute confirmation that these forgeries could have been produced by Fournier, or later by Hirschburger, his successor in the business, but the use of what appears to be photo-lithography might suggest it. Unfortunately, I cannot find any details of the actual product list, but I do know from research that Fournier's last catalogue in 1914 is said to have contained many items produced by other forgers. Michael Round suggests that the Ballay forgeries were the work of a fellow forger called Forbin, about whom I have no further information either and whose name does not appear in Varro E. Tyler's 1991 comprehensive work *'Philatelic Forgers - Their Lives and Works'*¹. The fact that only the higher Ballay values of the series can be found as forgeries (and even then, very few of the 1F and 2F versions) also confirms to me the desire of a very prolific forger like Fournier to make a great deal of money at the lowest cost.



Genuine



Forgery

Top Left of the Forgery

- The palm trees in the top left corner are not fronded; distinct and the thatched hut and the left hand tree trunk are ill-defined.
- The circular frame-lines show breaks and the lettering is blurred throughout. The fancy detail on the top of both letter 'A's is almost invisible.

- The hair at the top of the head is blurred and the hatching is poor. The eyes, eyebrows, ear, lips, nose and the moustache are all blurred and the hatching on the cheek is also poor.
- Michael Round has pointed out that, in the genuine, the horizontal shading lines behind the portrait touch Ballay's cheek; in the forgery they stop short.

¹ Alfred Forbin may have been unknown to Varro Tyler but he is famous - and admired - among fiscals collectors as the creator of a worldwide catalogue of them. It dates from as long ago as 1915 but in many areas has never been replaced since. Perhaps the Ballays were his only foray into forgery - if indeed it was him. (Michael Round)

Using the one main engraving for *all* the values of the Empire-wide ‘Navigation and Commerce’ series was a commercial godsend and having to make replicas of the lower Faidherbe and Palmier values in this, geographically much smaller, series was, I guess, not worth the effort. Furthermore, as with the ‘Navigation and Commerce’ series, one can only suspect that the camera lenses of whoever was the forger were less than superb (as opposed to Sperati who definitely used photo-lithography) because the same type of blurry faults that show in the Fournier representations of the ‘Navigation and Commerce’ series are also to be seen in the production of the 5F Ballay, as illustrated in the scans below.

As soon as one looks at these much-magnified images the differences quickly become apparent but for those who buy their stamps online and have to rely on the partial magnification available on these sites, I list below the most obvious differences. Many of these faults are described in great detail, often with hand-drawn illustrations, in Fernand Serrane’s masterful work of 1929 ‘*Vade-Mecum du Spécialiste-Expert en Timbres-Poste Hors d’Europe*’. However, modern scan technology allows a picture to show one so much more that I am pleased to say that it has enabled me to point up two easily-spotted faults that he does not mention.



Genuine



Forgery

Top Right of the Forgery

- The same letter ‘A’ faults in the lettering are also apparent.
- The thatch and the lower parts of the huts are poor and the background trees are not fronded. The main tree of the foreground is blotchy.
- The tablet engraving line to the left of the C of Français is too wide and the C lacks a cedilla (not mentioned by Serrane).

- The eyes, necklace, torso, fingers of the right hand, the skirt, and the engraving of reed bowl are all poorly defined.
- The tablet value is not crisp and the most obvious mistake (that can normally be spotted even with low magnification) is that the middle bar of the f is stunted and lacks the elongated points (not mentioned by Serrane).



Genuine



Forgery

Lower Right of the Forgery

The lettering of the colony’s name has rounded ends and is never clean and sharp; the blue is the wrong shade. Unfortunately, I only have a ‘cancelled’ forgery of the Dahomey issue that doesn’t allow for appreciation of the difference in the lettering but the same blurring of the edges

can be seen in the Guinée forgery and every other colony’s version.

Simon Binsted
(with grateful acknowledgement of assistance from
Michael Round and Mick Bister)

– Your 2024 subscription is due 1st January –
Please see your enclosed renewal form for the new rates

Postcards from Metz; fakes, forgeries or fantasies?



Figure 1
1905 card with 'DEUTSCHES REICH' superimposed on 5c *Type Sage*.

The owner of this material is **Colin Marshall** who, although not being a member of the F&CPS is, like me, a collector with a deep interest in the 1F75 State Visit to France stamp issued in 1938. Colin recently bid successfully on a mixed lot in a public auction in order to acquire material related to the aforementioned issue but the lot also contained the three unusual postcards illustrated above and over the page, all with a connection to Metz during its annexation by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War.

To place the three cards, dated between 1905 and 1918, into their historical context it is worth knowing a little of the history of Metz during this period.

Under the Treaty of Frankfurt of 1871, Metz was annexed into the newly created German Empire, being part of the Imperial Territory of Alsace-Lorraine administered directly by the imperial government from Berlin. The bulk of the German-annexed *département* of Moselle and two *arrondissements* of the former *département* of Meurthe also seized by Germany were merged into the German province of Lothringen with Metz as its capital. The city kept its strategic military role and became an important German garrison town. The Germans decided to build second and third fortified lines around Metz with the prospect of a future war between Germany and France in mind. To consolidate the strategic significance of Metz, its railway station was directly linked to Berlin via the Kanonenbahn railway. Following the armistice with Germany ending the First World War, the French army entered Metz in November 1918 and the city officially returned to France under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919¹.

The postcards shown are a testimony to the times in which they were posted and to the bipartisan loyalties of the sender.

The first card (**Figure 1**) was sent on 24 August 1905 from Sedan in the *département* of Ardennes to Metz and on the reverse, it shows the 1870 War Memorial in Sedan. The brief message is in German but barely legible. The card was franked with a combination of the 1c and 4c *Type Blanc* and the 5c *Type Sage* to pay the 10c foreign postcard rate. Before affixing the stamps though, the sender had removed the inscription DEUTSCHES REICH from the bottom of a 5 pfennig *Germania* issue and deftly pasted it over the words RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE on the 5c *Type Sage*. This tampering went unnoticed both at the French office in Sedan and at the German office in Metz where the card received a Metz arrival date stamp. If it had been discovered by the French authorities one cannot imagine what the consequences would have been for the sender – a charge of treason at the least.

The second card (**Figure 2**) was sent a few months later, on 4 October 1905, to the same addressee in Metz but this time from Saarbrücken, a German town on the border of the *département* of Moselle. The picture side shows a group of young ladies from an orchestra dressed in identical outfits. There is no message. The card was franked with a 2pf and 3pf *Germania* paying the 5pf internal postcard rate but on this occasion the doctoring of the stamps was more audacious. In both cases the words RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE from two *Type Sage* issues, possibly the 3c grey and the 30c light brown, were cut and pasted to obliterate

¹ Extracts from www.HistoryofMetz-Wikipedia.

the inscription DEUTSCHES REICH. Again, what would have been the consequences had the German authorities noticed the defamation of the personification of the German nation?

The third card (Figure 3) is much more significant historically. On this occasion it is a postcard treated locally within Metz. It was franked with a 2½ pf and a 5pf *Germania* but I am not aware of a 7½ pf postcard rate at that time. Again, the stamps were doctored but in a limited manner with only the word REICH being obliterated by RÉPUBLIQUE from *Type Sage* issues, possibly the 3c grey

and the 5c green. The most important element is the date. The stamps were cancelled on 11 November 1918, the day on which the Armistice was signed and which marked the end of World War 1. Furthermore, on the reverse of the card (Figure 4) there is a message scribbled in German and likewise dated 11/11/18. Unfortunately, the sender's signature is illegible.

So what conclusions can we draw? Firstly, are all these cards from the same sender? The cards have been posted in three different towns - Sedan in France, Saarbrücken in Germany and Metz in annexed Lorraine but they are within striking



Figure 2

1905 card with 'RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE' superimposed on 2pf and 3pf *Germania*.



Figure 3

1918 card with 'RÉPUBLIQUE' superimposed on 2½ pf and 5pf *Germania*.

distance of one another and the cards could have been posted by a travelling salesman. The handwriting differs slightly on each card but that might be expected over a period of time. The common factor is that the addressee is a

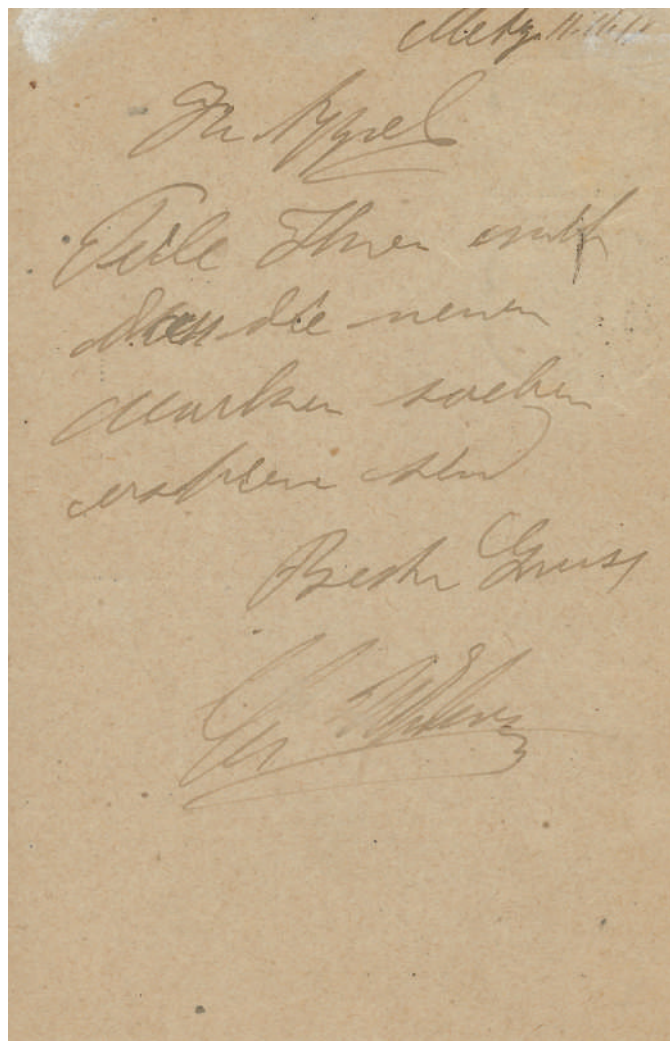


Figure 4

Reverse of 1918 card dated 11 November 1918.

Herr/Monsieur Appel in Metz. The messages are written in German but that does not mean the sender has German nationality. German was compulsory in the schools of annexed Lorraine and hence the language in which to communicate with an inhabitant in Metz.

How do we categorise these stamps? An extract from an earlier auction catalogue which accompanied the lots describes each postcard as 'unique' and defines the stamps as '*faux pour tromper la poste*' i.e. postal forgeries. But I do not think that the sender's intention was either to deprive the post office of revenue or to deceive stamp collectors. Are they fakes, then? The sender has certainly altered a genuine stamp to make it appear as something else but a fake is, for example, an attempt to add a cancellation or overprint in order to make the stamp more valuable. Are we then looking at propaganda or political parodies? We have seen these used in conflicts before. For example, in World War 2 there is the 1F50 Pétain issue where Pétain's portrait has been replaced by that of de Gaulle or the famous 10 pf Hitler Head issue where the Führer's face is represented by a skull. But such 'stamps' are usually printed in large quantities otherwise the propaganda would not reach enough people to have any influence.

I think we have to concede that these are simply philatelic fantasies and very much of a private nature. If the sender is trying to broadcast a message regarding his views on the annexation, then it is a confusing and ambivalent one. His reasons for defacing of the stamps, albeit creative and deft, are inconclusive. Nevertheless, the sender's legacy is an attractive group of postcards which any collector of WW1 material and especially that of Alsace-Lorraine would enjoy having in their collection. One wonders if the sender and the addressee are one and the same person and how many more he created and where they are. One wonders too, in the atmosphere of oppression and authoritarianism in which he lived, whether his activities were those of a fool or of a very brave man!

Mick Bister

New-issue listings from Stanley Gibbons: August-November 2023

Some meaty entries this time, and space is short. Thanks, as always, to SG catalogue editors Hugh Jefferies and Clare de la Feuillade for permission to quote these details.

AUGUST 2023. **France** (last entry 4/2023). 2022 Blue Planet - 2023 Red Cross (SG 7159/448 plus booklets CSB227/45).

SEPTEMBER 2023. **Andorra, French** (1/23), 2022 Joana Call - 2023 Europa (F905/17). **Andorra, Spanish** (1/23). 2022 Visit - 2023 Quima Calvo (MS529/538). **Monaco** (7/22) 2017 SEPAC - 2019 Women's Rights (3256/364).

OCTOBER 2023. **Cambodia** (1/23). 2021 Fish - Flowers (2632/67). **Monaco** (9/23) 2020 Arms - 2023 Dogs (3365/507).

NOVEMBER 2023. **French Polynesia** (10/22). 2017 Pierre Loti - 2018 Taputapuatea (1433/66). **New Caledonia** (4/22). 2016 Tige Is - Spirals (1650/67). **St Pierre et Miquelon** (6/23).

2017 Map - Cathedral (1253/68). **Wallis & Futuna** (6/23). 2018 Art - World Cup (1113/9).

and finally - not a new listing but a new edition

Stanley Gibbons France, 2nd edition 2023. xxxi + 543pp. SG Item no. R1413-23; ISBN13 978-1-73986-968-7. Weight 1.12kg. Price £42.95.

Here, at last, is the second edition of SG France (plus Andorra and Monaco but not the colonies). We await with pleasure Richard Broadhurst's expert views on this new edition's scope, prices, layout - and value for money compared with the rival Yvert volume. Meanwhile, confirmed anglophones may order with confidence.

Michael Round

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE AND FRANCE AND COLONIES PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Joint Meeting 4 March 2023 at the RPSL

*A fuller version of this report was published in the newsletter accompanying CAMEO, the West Africa Study Circle journal, for May 2023. We are most grateful to WASC secretary and author **Paul Redhead** for permission to quote extracts from it here.*

Most of West Africa was at one stage colonised by either Britain or France, and while focussing on the former, WASC shares a lot of common ground with the countries colonised by France. We heard and saw presentations from 12 members.

All the displays were filmed, and are available on YouTube. The **Morning Displays** are available to view at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_keBTB9jSo

Major display: **French Cameroons – Rob May**. Starts at c.5'35"*. Rob's display covered the period from the French takeover of German-ruled territory during WW1, up to 1950. Rob outlined the war and the post-war take-over of German postal services at Duala and Yaounde (including, for a time, German stationery and cancellers), as the French administration gradually opened more offices, issuing its own cancellers and postal stationery. Items shown, from this era up to 1939, included the issued stamps, scarce 1920s surcharges, the PP cachet used when stamp supplies ran out, covers, Postage Due (which used French stamps), special services such as CoD, and airmail routes. The first two sets of stamps were overprinted in 1916 on issues from Gabon and Congo, and Rob showed used examples, with warnings against forgeries. The WW2 period was complex, with Cameroon declaring early on for the Free French under de Gaulle. Material shown included military mail, censorship, and the 'family cards' used to communicate with Vichy France. Rob described the Harrison-printed airmail stamps issued to Francophone countries in 1942 (but not used until 1943 in Cameroon), and the stamps issued in 1946, including perforation varieties now included by Gibbons. Rob's final cover was a scarce international postcard with the correct 3F 60c postage stamp.

Short display: **Aéromaritime flights connected with the Gold Coast – John Powell**. Starts at c.48'15". We saw material sent via Dakar to and from the Gold Coast between 1936 and 1939, and three covers carried by Air France as far as Dakar before completing the rest of the journey by sea, just before Aéromaritime was established in March 1937 to provide onwards air services from Dakar.

Short display: **Joseph de la Nézière issues of French West Africa – Mick Bister**. Starts at c.54'30". The stamps designed by Joseph de la Nézière featured vignettes and frames appropriate to each individual colony, namely Senegal, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Upper Senegal and Niger, and

French Guinea. Designs were illustrated with photos showing the inspiration for each, including trials of several of the vignette designs. De la Nézière was a well-travelled and hard-working artist: although he did all the artwork, it took a team of three engravers to produce the plates. Mick's second frame concentrated on Ivory Coast, and included examples of all the values, colours and overprints during the currency of the designs from 1913 up to the late 1930s. Frame 3 showed a variety of covers showing different colonies, rates and usages, including a correctly paid 5F airmail to Germany from Dahomey.

Afternoon Displays Part 1 are available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKL1GvyVFYc>

Major display: **Ivory Coast: the Carbon-Copy Colony? – Michael Round**. Starts at c.8'50". Michael's display covered the years 1862 (approx)-2005. His intention was to show how far Ivory Coast followed general French colonial stamp-issuing policies, and how far it deviated from them, unilaterally. The first country-specific issues were, as for 28 other French colonies at the time, in the 'omnibus' design variously known as 'Tablet' or 'Commerce and Navigation'. Prior to this, Ivory Coast had used French Colonies general issues: usage there can be proved only by postmarks. Frame 1 included Fournier forgeries, and the illustration of a stamp of which only one copy was ever printed (the Parcel Post 'Un franc' Type IX on 10c: SG P27d, YT Colis 8C, Scott Q20). Frame 2 covered stamp issues from pre-WW1 to the mid-1930s; 1936 (Frame 3) saw new engraved definitives typical of many other colonies, including overprints when Ivory Coast gained land from the partition of Upper Volta. Vichy stamps (largely unissued) appeared during WW2, followed soon after by surcharges on stamps of Mauritania and Senegal. These comprised the first issue of (and were valid throughout) the unified French West Africa. Frame 5 covered ten years from the late 1940s: the engraved pictorials of 1947 contain many shades and changes of perf yet to be properly catalogued.

Ivory Coast became independent in 1959, and Michael displayed stamps, covers, and proofs. They included some 'semi-definitives,' short sets oft reprinted in the manner of France's 'Tourist Publicity'. Subsequent issues were aimed more at the philatelic market. However - as shown by Michael's five final frames of stamps, postal stationery, machine cancels and covers (including scarce postage-due usage) - there is still plenty of philatelic interest.

Michael was most grateful to WASC and F&CPS colleague Barbara Priddy for providing many enticing covers, including an item returned from Saudi Arabia and some whimsical phonetic spellings of 'BBC World Service, WC2'.

* The "Starts at c..." against each speaker's name indicates where on the video the talk begins. *Ed.*

Short display: **French West African Air Mail 1939-1945 – Peter Richards**. Starts at c.51'05". Peter's display dealt with the effects of wartime political changes in France and the allegiances of the various countries on airmail to and from FWA. The two main routes for FWA (and some British colonial) mail went via Dakar and the Aéro maritime service, and via a trans-Sahara service through Niamey. From 1939, at differing times, airmail was suspended, or went via the USA or Britain, or was restricted to highly-regulated postcards. In mid-1942 the Vichy and the Free French started exchanging mail via third parties, which eased the situation for a while, but the November 1942 allied invasion of North Africa led once more to the suspension of an airmail service between mainland France and FWA. **Afternoon Displays Part 2** are available to view at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_OKsPW6Pfg

Short display: **Modern French Colonies Eye Candy – Philip Quirk**. Starts at c.1'30". Philip showed a range of modern covers selected for the (mostly) attractive stamps attached, but with some cancellation queries too. Countries included Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, Senegal and Benin.

Short display: **Nigerian Frontier Force operations in North-West Niger Companies Territories – Tony Plumbe**. Starts at c.4'00". Tony's display covered the period 1897 to just before 1900, when France and Britain vied for control of NW Nigeria. Correspondence was mostly stamp-less, sent down the Niger and in some cases cancelled at Burutu on the coast. Destinations included India, reflecting the presence of Indian nationals in the 2,000 to 3,000- strong NFF under Lugard's command which enforced treaty agreements. Email paul@redsite.org for a copy of Tony's one-page handout on this topic.

Short display: **Northern Nigeria with a French Connection – Ray Harris**. Starts at c.7'05". Ray showed a frame of correspondence relating to the relationships between French and British officials negotiating boundaries. In addition to the covers, the enclosed letters provided a

fascinating account of travels and negotiations. New to many was the existence of a 48 hectare French customs post enclave close to Fort Goldie, about 20 miles from Jebba.

Short display: **Jet Age airmails from French colonies - Barbara Priddy**. Starts at c.15'15". Barbara's talk started with the introduction of the Comet into the UAT (*Union Aéro maritime des Transports*) fleet in 1953, which carried mail onwards from the Air France service to Dakar. Later aircraft flying on the long haul into Dakar included the Boeing 707, then the 707, Concorde and Airbus. In the 1960s Air Afrique, created by 11 newly-independent Francophone countries, took over regional flights, but went bankrupt in 2002, with its schedule taken over by Air France. Barbara showed a range of covers, postcards, crash mail etc, reflecting these developments, including mail flown by Air Mali and Cameroon Airlines. The popularity of covers to commemorate first flights, last flights, special flights and the acquisition of new aircraft made for plenty of material for us to look at. Email paul@redsite.org for a copy of Barbara's one-page handout on this topic.

Short display: **Mail from French West Africa to the Gold Coast – John Powell**. Starts at c.20'25". John showed 29 covers, all from FWA countries to the Gold Coast. Mail came from Algeria, Cameroons, Dahomey, French Equatorial Africa, Gabon (via Accra), Ivory Coast (via Axim), Morocco, Ubangi Shari, Senegal, Upper Senegal and Niger, and Togo.

Short display: **Gambia / France connections via postcards – John Russell**. Starts at c.43'10". John showed a frame of picture postcards to and (mostly) from the Gambia, all with a French or FWA connection.

Short display: **Postcards with French West African railway connections – John Hossack**. Starts at c.44'35". John started with a 1890 cover from Conakry bound for Germany but mis-sent to Sierra Leone. His display continued with a range of picture postcards showing railway-related scenes from Senegal, French Guinea, Ivory Coast and Dahomey.

Paul Redhead

Northern Group meeting: 14 October 2023

A fine mixed range of displays was offered at our autumn meeting:

Ubangi-Shari (*Oubangui-Chari*) stamps and covers, including registered, airmails and unusual cancellations from the period 1899 to the 1930s;

French Antarctic Territories, a rarely seen area;

Insufficient postage markings applied on underpaid mail post-1849;

Rural mail from 1830 and the use of the 28mm cancellations and their variations;

Tchad stamps and covers up to 1936 when all French Equatorial colonies used common issues inscribed *Afrique Equatoriale Française*;

The NYK shipping line: aspects of France';

'The Fall of France in 1940', with letters, documents, photographs, postcards, stamps and covers;

Exposition de Lyon 1894;

A range of mixed covers including first flights and cross-Channel mail;

Illustrations of old post boxes in rural villages.

Our next meeting, held between Rotherham and Sheffield, will be on 13 April 2024 at 1300 hours with the option of a local pub lunch from 1200.

Do come and join us; it isn't necessary to offer a display – simply come and discuss French philately in good company, with refreshments and a wide range of material to view. Depending upon attendance at this meeting, provisional dates for the rest of 2024 are 21 July and 26 October.

Steve Ellis

LIST OF RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Compiled by Maurice Tyler

Please contact me (maurice@fcps.org.uk) if you would like to see a particular article mentioned that you do not have direct access to. I can usually produce one that has appeared during the last 12 months, or point you in the right direction.

Timbres Magazine

N° 257 Jul/Aug 2023: Un aspect connu des prisonniers de guerre 1940/45: l'envoi de photographies (Hardy); 17 août 1918: Paris - Saint-Nazaire 1^{ère} liaison aéro postale française régulière (Sinai); Les prémices de la société des loisirs [cartes postales illustrées] (Lacroix); Afrique équatoriale française (Hervé); La variété X 198 a enfin trouvé sa place: 132 B7 [25c Cérès aux types I, II et III] (de La Mettrie).

N° 258 Sep 2023: Ma rencontre avec Albert Decaris (de peu La Patellière); L'étonnant tarif du 5 janvier 1942 et ses demi-timbres (Sinai); 80 ans du Chant des Partisans (Berrebi); Transports en tous genres du début du XX^{ème} siècle [cartes postales illustrées] (Zeyons); Des mots et des maux [définitions de certains mots philatéliques] (de La Mettrie).

N° 259 Oct 2023: L'étonnant tarif du 5 janvier 1942 et ses demi-timbres (2^{ème} partie) (Sinai); Le millésime 2022 des TAAF (1^{ère} partie) (Dreyfus); AOF: des surchargés de 1944 oblitérés dès 1943? (1^{ère} partie) (Chauvin); Petite reine pour grand écran [le vélo vu par le cinéma] (Mennessiez); Quelque chose de Sperati dans votre collection (Melot); Distributeurs d'Entiers Postaux (Gomez); Profession: infirmière [cartes postales illustrées] (Zeyons); Les prisonniers écrivent, parfois nous émeuvent (de La Mettrie).

N° 260 Nov 2023: Terre Adélie – De la conquête des glaces polaires à la science de l'extrême (Kahn); AOF: des surchargés de 1944 oblitérés dès 1943? (2^{ème} partie) (Chauvin); Le millésime 2022 des TAAF (2^{ème} partie) (Dreyfus); La «Divine» [Sarah Bernhardt] (Berrebi); Le facteur au cinéma: à pied, en vélo, en voiture (Mennessiez); 1912: la poste aérienne fictive d'Albert Moreau (Sinai).

L'Écho de la Timbrologie

N° 1985 Jul/Aug 2023: Le Sénat conservateur... du temps où Napoléon était Consul à vie, puis empereur (Sollin/Bastide-Bernardin); l'OP 2-2022 du *Marion Dufresne* (suite et fin) (Venturini).

N° 1986 Sep 2023: Courriers de et pour Périgueux à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et sous la Première République (Valdenaire/Bastide-Bernardin); Polaires – Recyclage philatélique des manchots papous: de la carte postale à la LISA de France en passant par un timbre des TAAF (Cogez).

N° 1987 Oct 2023: Cécogrammes internationaux: des objets insolites, rares et à petits prix (Daniel & Pan); Les courriers de l'OP 3-2022 du *Marion Dufresne* (Venturini).

Bulletin COL.FRA

N° 184 2^{ème} trim 2023: Madagascar – Les timbres surchargés de juin & août 1902 sur courrier (Lindekens); Madagascar: Un affranchissement insolite en 1899 (Monteret); Genèse de la surcharge oblique de Castellorizo (Jouvent); Kouang Tchéou-Wan, un K né sous X – première

série de timbres-poste 1906 avec variété du «X» (Ferrien & Bordeaux).

N° 185 3^{ème} trim 2023: La Division Navale d'Extrême Orient (DNEO) – une présence militaire française permanente sur les mers et fleuves de Chine (1844-1940) (Bordeau, Delaux & Ferrien); Le courrier du Corps Expéditionnaire Français en Tunisie {1881-1884} (Baudens); Lettres de Guyane et d'Inini pendant la seconde guerre mondiale (Coré); Les bons de commande du BEPTOM (exemple avec Saint-Pierre et Miquelon) (Hurpet).

France & Colonies Philatelist

Vol 79 N° 3 (Whole N° 353) Jul 2023: NSB lozenge of Nossi-Bé on the 5C Napoleon III Colonies General Issue stamp of 1871 (Marra); Cameroun in World War I – Provisional Measures to Postmark the Mail (Bratzel); Why Was the Vichy 1941 Défense de L'Empire Issue Not Released In the Colonies of French West Africa? (Marra); The "Timbres Fictifs" (Tricard).

Vol 79 N° 4 (Whole N° 354) Oct 2023: Martinique Printed Matter Rates from 1862 to 1877 – Was there a 2c internal rate in Martinique as there was in Réunion and Guadeloupe? (Marra); Tunisian Liberation Semi-Postal Issue of 1943 (Rasmussen); Marianne, symbol of the French Republic: are you looking to the right or to the left? (Silverston); La Surcharge SPM Gothique de 1885 (Tillard); Studying the French Congo 1900 Pictorial – V (Nilsestuen).

Documents Philatéliques

N° 257 (3^e trim 2023) Jul 2023: Une règle peu connue de l'Union postale universelle: l'affranchissement obligatoire des imprimés (et autres objets) à partir de 1925 (Castanet); Un petit facteur bien serviable (et ambitieux) (Walter); La presse taille-douce six couleurs n° 1 – Une presse reflet des évolutions technologiques (1^{ère} partie) (Gervais); Les levées exceptionnelles avec l'oblitération rouleau de points au bureau central (1863-1876) (Raynaud); Côte des Somalis: Les séries de 1902 et de 1903 – Mise au point (Gibot).

N° 258 (4^e trim 2023) Oct 2023: La correspondance avec la France des Français en Chine 1939-1946, 1^{ère} partie: de 1939 jusqu'à Pearl Harbor (Goanvic); Énigmes de la poste ferroviaire malgache (Varin); La presse taille-douce six couleurs n° 1 – Une presse reflet des évolutions technologiques (2^e partie) (Gervais); La première ligne F de la poste maritime française (Vernot & Abensur).

Les Feuilles Marcophiles

N° 393 (Jun 2023): Histoire postale, la photo raconte – Automobiliste militaire dans la Première Guerre mondiale (Albaret); Affranchissements avec timbres découpés par des distributeurs privés: précurseurs méconnus des «roulettes» (Goutay & Catherine); Timbre à date du Paris

insolite: Le bureau de poste de l'OTAN (alias PARIS XVI TER) (Lavenas); Une poste maritime à Lorient? (Reynaud); Présentation détaillée de la machine dite «Daguin» (Cas); Évolution du contenu du timbre à date des bureaux de recette «modèle 1884» (Guillard).

N° 394 (Sep 2023): Histoire postale, la photo raconte – Joseph Roig: des Lignes Aériennes Latécoère... Au rugby! (Albaret); Prise de la chapelle de Saint-Luc (30 avril – 1^{er} mai 1794) vue par François Courchet, chirurgien lors de la 2^e bataille du Boulou (Fort); Quand Le Havre était bureau d'échange frontalier avec... La Prusse! Une liaison postale maritime peu utilisée depuis Hambourg entre 1835 et 1843 (Goutay & Catherine); Timbre à date du Paris insolite: Le bureau de l'OCDE (alias PARIS 16 TER) (Lavenas); Évolution du contenu du timbre à date des bureaux de recette «modèle 1884» (Partie 2) (Guillard).

Le Maghrebophila

N° 43 Sep 2023: Affranchissements avec timbres de la poste locale de Brudo (Mazagan-Marrakesh) (Lindekens); Rectificatif article publié dans le numéro de juin 2023 - Voie transsibérienne: un courrier du Maroc accidenté (Benziane); Censure impériale du courrier en transit: 1943 lettre Tanger vers l'Algérie via Gibraltar (Parren).

The Indo-China Philatelist

Vol LIII N° 3 (Whole N° 258) May 2023: More on the Inverted 5c + 5c Native Woman Semi-Postal (Bentley); Design Study for 10-franc Native Woman Stamp (Bentley);

International Mail through the Viet Minh Postal System (Düring & Goanvic).

Vol LIII N° 4 (Whole N° 259) Sep 2023: Indochina in Rarities of the World Auction (Bentley); Internment Camp Correspondence [in post-war Indochina 1945] (Bentley).

Vol LIII N° 5 (Whole N° 260) Nov 2023: The Special Case of Lungchow Combination Covers (Dufresne de Virel).

Forces Postal History Society Journal

Whole N° 336 Summer 2023: A taxed cover from France – 1919 (Grimshaw); Napoleonic Wars – 1803-1815 (Cowlin); Second Lieutenant Charles Pannetier (1892-1915) (Le Grel).

Forces Postal History Society Journal

Whole N° 336 Summer 2023: A taxed cover from France – 1919 (Grimshaw); Napoleonic Wars – 1803-1815 (Cowlin); Second Lieutenant Charles Pannetier (1892-1915) (Le Grel).

Collectors Club Philatelist

Vol 102 N° 5 (Sep/Oct 2023): Noted in Passing on the Auction Block: Incomparable Indochina Inverts (Healey).

Cameo

Vol 24 N° 3 (Whole N° 120) Oct 2023: Post Office Buildings at Duala, Kamerun – 1887 to 1914 (Heap & Bratzel); September 1945: End of Postal Control in Cameroun (Lebourcq).

BOOKSHELF

Courriers de la Marine Française durant la seconde guerre mondiale racontés par les entiers postaux.

Reviewed by Chris Hitchen

Mail of the French Navy during the Second World War as told by through postal stationery.

By Philippe Pignon and Éric Panozzo.

Available from Philippe Pignon at entier.postal@gmail.com

Priced at 45€ plus post and packing.

More than eight hundred postal stationery items are described in this voluminous work of 440 pages. It is richly illustrated with maps and photographs of the ships and places associated with these postal items. As explained by co-author, Philippe Pignon, President of the *Association des Collectionneurs d'entiers postaux* -

This study of the mail of the French Navy during the Second World War, as told through postal stationery, serves a dual purpose: To bring together in a single book as much philatelic writing as possible on the Navy during this turbulent period and to supplement this with new chapters.

To trace the political, administrative, historical and postal contexts thanks to the correspondents and the routes followed by postal stationery as traced by postal history.

The book takes stock of the French Navy - both wartime and merchant - during the Second World War. The organisation of naval mail is particularly well described, and a panorama of official, military and administrative mail from the Navy is offered.

Readers also benefit from a full description of the routing of mail in these pages. A fine book, well-structured and illustrated.

A summary of the contents:

La Marine françaises pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale

La Poste Navale

Les courriers officiels de la Marine

Courrier militaires et administratif de la Marine

L'acheminement des courriers

La Marine françaises de guerre (organisée par classes de navires)

La Marine marchande.

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Compiled by Jan Gane

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OBITUARY

Godfrey Harold Bowden 12 March 1928 – 19 October 2023

Godfrey joined the Society around 1970 and has been a long-standing and active member for many years. His uncle Marcel worked for the French bank *Crédit Lyonnais* and, before the war, introduced Godfrey to stamps and particularly those of France. He regularly attended the meetings held in London and often provided displays. His main interest was the French issue we know as *Sage*. He made many philatelic studies of different aspects of this issue and shared his findings in many articles and notes in our Journals. In November 2001 he gave a full display in London largely devoted to this stamp.

Godfrey was also a regular attender at our weekend meetings. For many years he came with his wife Jean until she sadly could no longer come as her health declined. In recent years he was able to come to Charlecote with the support of his family, particularly his daughter Hilary and his son Neil, who generously were able to bring him.

His professional background as a chemist was always evident in his rigorous approach to whatever philatelic investigations he made. He made a detailed study of the inland postage rates in France alongside the work that Derek Richardson was doing and put this together in an article in Journal 242 in December 2006. Latterly he was drawn to the philately of Tunisia and Algeria and entertained us with studies of those areas.

In his younger days he was a keen tennis player, whilst throughout his life he had a very serious interest in photography which he took to very high levels.

Godfrey was always more than willing to share his knowledge and enthusiasm with his fellow members. His friendship and contributions to our meetings will be much missed.

Chris Hitchen



Godfrey at the Charlecote weekend in 2019 showing his display of folded business cards