

BELGIAN CONGO



STUDY CIRCLE

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**BULLETIN 123**

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## The Editor's Ramblings

As you can see, this issue has been published in a slightly timelier manner than the previous three issues. This is due in part to the fact that begun work on this issue just a few weeks after issue 122 was published. This is a trend I hope to further improve upon in the future. We have two very good articles in this issue by members Lindekens and Clowes. Once again I ask for more articles from our members. It is only with the help of our many members that the Bulletin can maintain its' previous high standards. Remember, we have lost some of our most prolific authors in the last few years. So why not write a short article about a discovery you've made or about the items you collect. Also keep sending in your questions, answers to other members questions, and your "favorite covers".

## Notes from the Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

In the last bulletin's '*Letters to the Editor*', Pat Dowling and Roger Nailer each raised an item which, as the Circles 'general factotum', it is appropriate that I comment on. They are respectively the distribution of 'Email addresses' and 'postal voting at the AGM'.

### **'E-mail addresses'**

"I would like to see a list of email addresses published in the Bulletin." – Pat Dowling.

From my perspective there is no problem, but I have to have the information to enable me to publish it. The 'Membership Address List' was distributed with Bulletin #122 and rather than duplicate that, I will provide with the next Bulletin a list of e-mail addresses known to me by 'Country' and 'Members Name' only (i.e. excluding postal addresses).

In alphabetical order those presently known to me are:

Messrs. - Babicki, Bennet, Bruhn, Cornelis, Cruickshank, Daniels, Deijnckens, Dowling, Fowler, Frevelshausen, Goss, Harris, Hirdler, Hopperets, Lavitt, Lindekens, MacLaren, Morvay, Stockmans, Strawser, Temple, Vanderbossche, Van der Hauwaert, Verbeck, Weber, Yorio.

**\*\*\* Excepting those named above will all members wishing to be included please let me have their e-mail addresses for publication. Mine is given on the title page of this Bulletin.**

### **'Postal voting at AGM's'**

"On postal voting, I have a firm view that it should be allowed as a means of extending democracy to those members who, like me, find it difficult to attend AGM's" – Roger Nailer.

Whilst recognising where Roger is coming from – as things stand this is simply not practical. Historically I cannot recall any contentious matters requiring a survey of member's opinions before presentation to an AGM. To implement such a strategy would ideally require extra 'General Meetings', and the establishment of a formal multi-national committee to plan and direct our affairs. Are there any takers? The present Officers have, I feel, more than enough on just keeping our heads above water. The problem Mr. Nailer has in getting to AGM's is common to the vast majority of the membership because of our wide spread geographical base. (Editor's note: The idea of advertisements in the Bulletin was contentious in the past, but this situation has changed. See note on advertisements in this issue).

The principal reason for holding an AGM is to formalise our existence and protect financial integrity. I suggest that if any member feels strongly on a particular matter requiring a consensus opinion - by all means present it as a 'Letter to the Editor' but keep in mind that it does not necessarily need to be raised at an AGM.

At the present time the AGM agenda follows a standard format in which reports are received from each of the Officers. This includes one from the Treasurer who provides an analysis of the income and expenditure including those for the Belgian and American regions. Any other matters are raised under A.O.B.

This years A.G.M. will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> May in Hastings, the home town of our President. It is expected that the AGM will occupy the morning session and in the afternoon, members will have the opportunity to participate by presenting and discussing displays.

**\*\*\* Further information including the Agenda, is provided later in this report.**

**Joint Meeting of Benelux Specialist Societies – Bradford, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2002.**

A joint meeting of the 'Collectors of Luxembourg', 'Netherlands Philatelic Circle', 'Belgian Study Circle' and 'Belgian Congo Study Circle' is being held in Bradford, West Yorkshire. I have been asked to give a short talk and display on behalf of the BCSC. Other members are welcome and will have the same opportunity of presenting 24 sheets supported by a 5-minute talk. If there are no other volunteers then I suppose I will be able to have further bites of the cherry and I will go prepared. In total we are limited to six participants and it sounds like an interesting day. The programme starts at 10.00am; there are tea/coffee breaks and a buffet lunch – all for £6. The meeting closes at 4.30pm.

**\*\*\* *Would any British member wishing to attend please let me know as soon as possible.***

**"Notice to all Platers" – Ed Lavitt.**

In the last Bulletin Ed Lavitt offered to act as an intermediary between the Mols platers, by providing the service that Ray Keach used to give. We wish him well in taking on this venture and hope it is successful.

**Subscription Reminder**

**\*\*\* *Will all those who have not yet paid there subscriptions please do so – now!***

**Hastings, 4<sup>th</sup> May - A.G.M. followed by Circle member's displays**

Last year's AGM and meeting in Brussels was a huge success and the President is keen to repeat the format and include, as part of the day's activities, displays and an opportunity to discuss our various interests. Hastings is accessible for our Belgian members and several are expected to attend. The South East of England, historically and still, has the largest concentration of Circle members in Britain and it is hoped there will be good support.

If it is likely that a number of members would wish to stay over until Sunday, then arrangements will be made for a Saturday evening dinner and get together.

**\*\*\* With this in mind it would be helpful if those intending to be present would let me, the Hon. Secretary, know as soon as possible to allow us time to formulate an appropriate programme. Those members advising of their intention to be present will be kept informed of the venue, time and full details.  
(e-mail addresses, if available, would be a considerable help.)**

**A.G.M. agenda (Chaired by the President, Hal Hoyte)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To approve the minutes of A.G.M. 21<sup>st</sup> April 2001
3. Matters arising
4. To receive reports from and discuss matters arising
  - The Hon. Secretary
  - The President
  - The Treasurer
  - The Auction Secretary
  - The Expert Committee
  - The Librarian
  - The Packet Secretary (U.K.)
  - The Bulletin Editor
5. To review and determine
  - Subscription levels for 2003
  - Commission and expense charges on sales
6. To consider future activities and meetings of the Circle
7. To elect the following Officers: -
  - President
  - Secretary and Treasurer
  - Regional Secretaries     - Belgium
  - U.S.A.
  - Bulletin Editor
  - Auction Secretary
  - Expert Committee
  - Packet Secretary (U.K.)
8. Any Other Business
9. Date of future meetings

*Stuart S. Smith*

**Receipts and Payments Account – Year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001**

<u>Income</u>	<u>Year to Dec.2000</u>	<u>Year to 2001</u>
	<i>£ Sterling</i>	<i>£ Sterling</i>
Subscriptions received	£336.00	£300
Subscriptions in advance	£60.00	£88.00
Commission on stamp/auction sales	£75.36	£179.83
Expert Committee Certificates	£310.70	£161.10
Books and Document sales	£222.68	£232.88
Bank Interest (net of tax)	£58.22	£61.76
Miscellaneous	<u>£27.00</u>	<u>£1.39</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£1,089.96</b>	<b>£1,024.96</b>

## Expenditure

Bulletin cost (UK production & distribution)	£408.49	£364.01
Belgium – Bulletin costs in xs of income (1999-2000)	.....	£96.50
Expert Committee Expenses	£103.56	£67.13
Cost of sales – copying of Docs. for sale	£12.86	£196.30
Miscellaneous	£2.59	£36.19
Room Hire London (2000), Brussels (2001)	£50.00	.....
Postages – secretarial	£98.94	£78.02
Insurance	£128.94	£128.94
Subs. to A.B.P.S.	£16.80	£16.20
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£822.18</b>	<b>£983.29</b>
Surplus/(Deficit)	£267.78	£59.57
Balance on hand at start of period	£2,292.14	£2,559.92
<b>On hand at end of period</b>	<b>£2,559.92</b>	<b>£2619.49</b>
Represented by balance held at Halifax plc		

I certify that this receipts and Payments account is a complete account of all transactions for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001.

**Stuart S.Smith** (Hon.Treasurer)

## Notes to the accounts

1. **'Subscriptions'** - represent only those from non-Belgian and non-American members. Belgian and American subscriptions are banked locally and are used to offset their respective Secretarial/Bulletin production costs. Adjustments in respect of Belgian and American surpluses or deficits are incorporated into the 'Receipts and Payments account', as and when appropriate.
2. **'Expert Committee Certificates'** - The drop in income reflects a nil return for the second half of the year due to the death of R.H.K.
3. **'Stamp Sales'** - the Commission is represented by:
  - General stamp sales @ £25.96
  - U.K. Packet sales @ £25.37
  - Auction sales income for the year 2000, @ £128.50 (Note- It is not possible to finalise figures for 2001 during the 2001 accounting period.)
4. **'Bulletin Costs'** – the figure represents the production/distribution cost of the 'U.K./Rest of the World' Bulletin (i.e. does not include those for Belgium and the U.S.A.). Any surplus/deficit for Belgium (2001) will be incorporated into the 2002 accounts. America had a surplus of \$271.45 (held on account in the U.S.A.) for the year 2001, as a result of temporary generously gifted copying, arranged by the Editor.
5. **'Cost of Sales'**- the higher figure for the year reflects an increase in photocopying/duplication for sale to members at cost. Historically the small stock of 'books for sale' is not included in the accounts.
6. **'Room Hire'** – whilst there was a room hire expense for the Brussels AGM and 'Displays' meeting in April, the Treasurer erroneously overlooked this item. A charge of B.Fr.5800 (£95.53) will be included in the accounts for 2002. The £96.50 Belgian Secretarial/Bulletin expenses represent those in excess of membership subscription income, during the period 1999 and 2000.

## The Ray Keach Collection - update

Further to my notes about Ray's collection in Bulletin #122 - in consultation with the family, a meeting has now been held to finalise details of the way forward in making the contents available to our members. Whilst initially it was thought that some parts might be offered through selected 'Auction Houses', it has now been agreed that the collection will be offered exclusively through our own quarterly auctions – albeit over a period of several years. The first are expected in sale 2002-2, accompanying Bulletin #124.

In answer to my request I received notification from many members of their interest in being kept informed of any 'public auction house' which would have been involved. and thank them. However as things presently stand the Circle will be the sole provider and this no longer applies.

### **Member List Update**

Mr. P. Daniels address is: Avenue Saint Hubert 104, 7090 Braine le Comte, Belgium

### **New Members**

The BCSC would like to welcome its' newest members:

Mrs. Y. Van Rampelberg, Avenue Moliere 300/3. 1180 Brussels, Belgium

Jean Claude Courard, Avenue de Ninove 59, 5580 Jemelle, Belgium

Randy Jenkins, 51 Highland St., Lincoln Park, NJ 07035

### **Members Change of Address**

Dr. M. Oblin, Rue Britannique 5/23, 7090 Braine le Comte, Belgium

Andrew Ramsey, previously living in the UK has returned to continue missionary work in the Congo. His temporary address until about August is P.O. Box 240355, Ndola, Zambia. E-mail: Ramsey@Zamtel.zm

### **Resignation**

Mr. V. Vercauteren

### **Advertisements**

Beginning with the June issue of the Bulletin it will be possible for members to place small advertisements to buy, sell, or trade Belgian Congo area related philatelic material. These ads will be free and are available only to members of the BCSC. Ads are limited to four lines of print and are subject to editing for size and content. All editing will be cleared with the member submitting the ad. These ads will be included on a space available basis. Members will be limited to two ads per year. This may change one way or the other depending upon the response to this new opportunity. Ads should be sent to the editor as early as possible. These ads are not meant to replace the Study Circle auctions or sales circuits, but to compliment them. So, if you have something to buy sell, or trade (and don't we all) send in your ads.

### **Jacques Du Four Collection Auction**

An auction of the great Belgian Congo collection of the late BCSC member Mr. Jacques Du Four will be held by OMPHI in Brussels on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2002. All BCSC members will receive the auction catalog according to Emile Hoorens. The lots are also listed on the OMPHI web site at: <http://www.omphi.be>

## Members' Questions

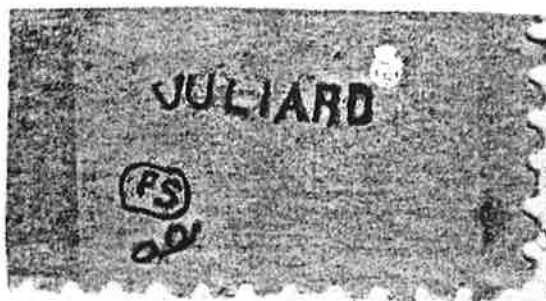
Joe Babicki has these questions:

**Q:** Were international reply coupons (IRC's) sold in Katanga during its "independence"? If so were they Belgian Congo IRC's, BC IRC's overprinted "CONGO", or BC IRC's overprinted "KATANGA"? I've communicated with a number of IRC collectors. Not one of them had an IRC from Congo's early independence let alone one from a post office in Katanga. I don't even know if Congo was selling BC IRC's or IRC's overprinted "CONGO". Just because Katanga wasn't internationally recognized and shouldn't have issued their own IRC's doesn't mean they didn't.

**Q:** Does anyone know why the "Air Katanga" issues are so hard to find on postally used covers? I've never seen one and I don't know anyone who has. 30,000 sets were issued, the same as the "Gendarmerie" issue and that one is found on commercial covers.

Ed Lavitt asks:

**Q:** I have a copy of the 25c Etat Independent with a forged CONGO BELGE overprint. It is purported to be handstamp #6, but clearly is not. On the back (see below) there are three markings: "Julliard"; an FS in a circle and a squiggle that looks like a pair of sunglasses. My question is: Was Julliard a dealer (like Nysten (editors note: Nysten was a known forger as well)) whose mark here purported to be a guaranty mark? Does anyone know who was, or the meaning of the FS in the circle, and what if anything was the meaning of the 'squiggle'? Answers please to E M Lavitt, PO Box 900, Rockville, CT 06066 USA (editor's note: Also to me for publication please)



Stuart Smith offers some answers to some of Roger Nailer's questions concerning place names:

Terry Garcia is the fortunate owner of a '1944 - Naval Intelligence Geographical Handbook for Belgian Congo'. which is a mine of information about the towns and villages. Reference has been made to it on several occasions in the past, and once again he has sent snippets on some of the town names that Roger Nailer asked about. Two of them answer Roger's query.

Ponthierville - (1890, Military expedition towards Emin Pasha's abandoned province) "The advance guard under Lt.Ponthier left Stanleyville in December, and reached the Nile some months later."  
"The township is named after a gallant Belgian officer who died in warfare against the Arabs."

Thysville – “In 1887 Captain Thys arrived at Matadi to start the survey for the railway and pitched his tents on the narrow strip between rocks and river.”

“1900 - Colonel Thys, (afterwards General Thys,) who was then aide-de-camp to the king, was one of the Marconi company’s first directors and at his instance, a wireless station, in touch with Ambrizete in Angola, was established at Banana in 1902.” Editor’s note: Roger Gallant has provided additional place name information which will appear in the next issue.

As to Roger’s second query about “no wheels on the Matadi-Leopoldville 50th Anniversary Railway locomotive stamp” – I think they were never intended. I do not have a proof copy but do have a block of the Waterlow Specimen copy, which is just the same. The artist clearly thought they were an unnecessary embellishment – ‘artist’s licence’ – akin to the 1894 50c locomotive passing over the M’pozo bridge before it was completed!

### My Favorite Cover



Registered postal stationery Stibbe #27 (15c unilingual issue) sent from Elisabethville March 31st 1910 to Smyrne / Turkey where it arrived on May 13<sup>th</sup> ; London/Registered transit on May 10<sup>th</sup>.

Very interesting item for those reasons :

- Earliest known date of use of Lukafu cancel at Elisabethville; this post office had its’ official opening date on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1910. The post office of Elisabethville opened without cancels and took one of Lukafu’s (large K and break of cancel circle between F and U) The first date known of Elisabethville cancel (H&K 1.1) on cover is March 8<sup>th</sup> 1911.
- Scarce destination to Turkey – to General Consul of Belgium at Smyrne.
- Misplaced to centre of the “CONGO BELGE” typographic overprint on both 25c. blue Mols type I – not re-engraved frame.
- Scarce postage rate of 65c. for registered (50c.) postal stationery entire - PSE (15c) to international country. It’s also the last day of this postage rate. The next day, April 1<sup>st</sup> 1910, the new postage rate for this destination was 35c. – PSE (10c.) + registration (25c.) “E” of “Recommandé” applied on the stamp –registration under Nr 292



## Congo Free State Neighbouring Country Mail

There are special rates, that few know and very few have seen. These rates were in effect for 22 years from 1889 to 1910. Most mail was sent during this period, to Belgium and of course to reach our collections, those covers must come back from Africa. Also the colonies nearest to Congo Free State were not Belgian and few men has friends in those countries. We find thus mostly administrative mail to telegraph, governors, etc

The postal cards to those neighbouring countries had the same rate as for internal mail. The covers had a postage rate between the internal rate and the international rate. The registration rate was the same as for international mail.

### January 1st 1886 – March 24th 1889 :

Same postage rate as internal

- postal card: 15c.
- cover : 25c.
- Registration : 25c.

### March 25th 1889 – March 31th 1897 :

“mail to neighbouring colonies including Libreville to the north and Mossamedes to the south, have the same postage rates as those for internal mail.”

- postal card: 10c.
- cover : 25c.
- Registration : 25c.

### April 1st 1897 – decembre 31th 1898 :

“mail to neighbouring colonies including Libreville to the north and Mossamedes to the south, have the postage rate shown below: (other than internal mail)

- Postal card: 10c.
- cover : 25c.
- printed matter : 5c. per 50 gr
- business printed matter: minimum 25c. – 5c./50gr
- samples of wares : minimum 10c. – 5c./50gr
- Registration : 50c.

### January 1st 1899 – March 31th 1910 :

“mail to neighbouring colonies including British Gold Coast to the north and the German colony of South West Africa to the south, have the postage rates shown below:

- Postal card : 10c.
- cover : 25c.
- printed matter : 5c. per 50 gr
- business printed matter: minimum 25c. – 5c./50gr
- samples of wares : minimum 10c. – 5c./50gr
- Registration : 50c.

The special postage rates for neighbouring countries ended April 1<sup>st</sup> 1910 – included in the international mail ; Treaty postage rates for UAP – United African Post went into effect September 1<sup>st</sup> 1940.

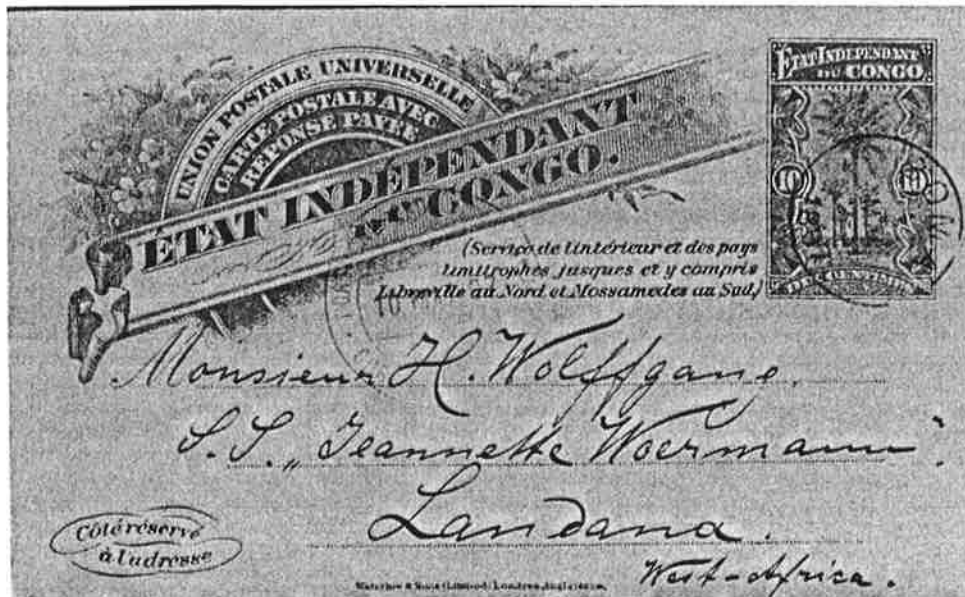


PSE Stibbe #4, posted at sea on French boat of line "Loango à Marseille" in 1890 to Libreville where it came on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1890. Cancelled by the postman on board with cancel "LOANGO A MARSEILLE/LM/N°2", in red.

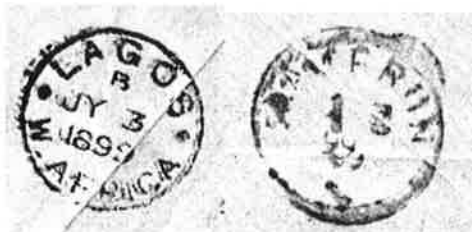


PSE double Stibbe #5, back folded to put the 10c. reply card on front, used from Banana May 30<sup>th</sup> 1890 to Loanda / Angola where it came on June 2<sup>th</sup> 1890. Demand card (at 5c. – reduce rate) on back not used.

I suppose the sender was not sure if he could use the reduced rate of 5 centimes to a neighbouring country and chose to use the current rate of 10 centimes as outbound card.



Stibbe #16 double card, sent from Boma May 7<sup>th</sup> 1897 to the German boat "SS Jeanette Woermann" at Landana harbour (Cabinda's enclosure – Portuguese colony) where it arrived on May 10<sup>th</sup>.



Cover sent from Banana June 27<sup>th</sup> 1899 to the Governor of Cameroun ; transits by Lagos July 3<sup>th</sup> and Kamerun aug. 1<sup>st</sup> 1899.



Registered cover ( N°1990) sent from Matadi April 18th 1903 to Mayumba – French Congo.  
 Postage rate : 1.75 frs for 5 rates(66gr) (5 x 25c.) + registration (50c)



Registered cover posted at sea on the boat « PARAGUAY » where the postman on board cancelled the stamps with his cancel « LOANGO A BORDEAUX/LL/N°4 » on May 18th 1903. Sent to Libreville where it arrived on May 23th.  
 Postage rate : 1.50 frs for 4 rates (4 x 25c.) + french registration R227 (50c)



Front only of a cover sent from Thysville December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908 to Brazzaville.



Business registered cover sent from Léopoldville April 17th 1909 to Brazzaville.  
Registration's demand & italic strike « Recommandé » but no number. The postman has probably put the strike before verifying the postage rate, which must be 75c. (25c./rate + 50c./rec)  
Postage : 10c. carmin overprinted CB L5 + 40c. blue-green overprinted CB L5



Registered cover sent from Léopoldville February 17th 1910 to Libreville . Transit by french boat « Matadi à Bordeaux LL N°1 » february 19th. Postage rate : 2.00 frs for 6 rates (79gr) (6 x 25c) + registration (50c). Franked with 2 vertical pairs of 50c. overprinted CB typo.

There is also a wonderful cover (ex-Celis) owned by a BCSC member with a 25c. blue re-engraved frame used as postage between Léopoldville and Brazzaville in 1908. It's the only cover known with this stamp.

Ph LINDEKENS

The following article is by Norman Clowes. He is almost certainly the only BCSC member who belongs to the Imperial Airways Study Group. The editor of the latter group's magazine is Stan Wheatcroft (of Measham, England) who has readily agreed that this article, which first appeared in their magazine, should also appear in the BCSC Bulletin. Part I which deals with mail to the Congo appears below. The second part which deals with mail from the Congo will appear in a future Bulletin.

By Norman Clowes

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

As early as 1920 - 1922 a passably regular air mail service was operated in the Congo by Société Nationale d'Etudes de Transports Aéronautiques, northwards from Léopoldville along the River Congo as far as Stanleyville. There was then a pause until SABENA began operations in April 1925, from Léopoldville in the direction of Elisabethville. As for international operations, until 1931 the nearest air mail connection was at Dakar, with the Latécoère service to France. Surprisingly, it was not until February 1935 that there was any regular air service between Belgium and the Congo.

As soon as Imperial Airways began flights to East Africa in 1931 it became clear that here was an excellent new, and faster, route for mail from north-eastern areas of the Congo, even though I.A. did not actually call at any landing ground in that country. This article will seek to show how there were various connecting points in countries served by I.A. - Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika and ( a little later) N. Rhodesia. The writer will deal in this Bulletin with mail destined for the Congo and aims to cover outward mail in the next issue. To some extent this split reflects the nature of examples available, arising from the merger of two collections some years ago.

The first mail sent to or from the Belgian Congo partly using the I.A. African service could theoretically have been posted, either way, in February 1931. Philatelic covers were certainly sent from the U.K. and from a few other countries en route but the earliest cover so far seen northwards is dated Stanleyville 9.4.1931.

When considering relevant postage rates it should be borne in mind that by 1931 U.K. air mail rates to Africa were inclusive of ordinary postage. However, rates from the Congo were often complex, with basic rates plus air surcharges, each calculated on different weight units, not to mention a concessionary basic rate to Belgium. However, later in the 1930s the system did have some merit for us in that, in the absence of any transit markings, a route could sometimes be deduced from the total postage paid, assuming that the sender had been able to work out the correct figure !

Air mail rates and routes from the U.K. to the Belgian Congo

<u>Probable date</u>	<u>First ½oz</u>	<u>Addnl ½oz</u>	<u>Postcards</u>	<u>Notes</u>
28 Feb 1931	8d	6d	8d	Via Sudan
8 Aug 1932	8d	6d	4d	Via Sudan
5 Oct 1932	8d	6d	4d	(assume unchanged)
"	1/3d	1/3d	7d	Via Broken Hill
8 Jan 1935	8d	8d	4d	Via Sudan or B.Hill
22 Feb 1935	8d	8d	4d	(assume unchanged)
"	1/3d	1/3d	7d	Extra route. via France-Leo/Brazza.
14 Nov 1935	1/3d	1/3d	7d	As last but extended to Elis.
2 Sep 1939	1/3d	1/3d	7d	All routes

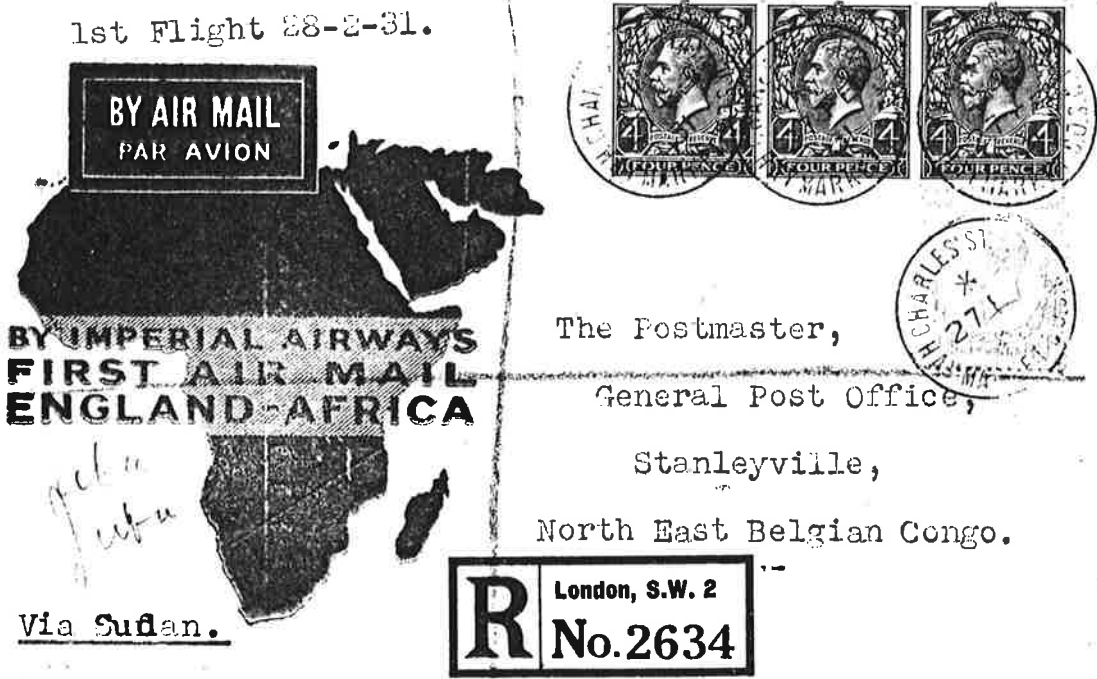
Major route changes during 1937 meant that from July there were no more I.A. flights to Broken Hill. Juba and Dodoma also dropped out of the pattern and Congo mail carried by I.A. - already drastically affected by the increasingly extensive SABENA/Air Afrique services - declined further. Some mail still went via Port Bell and British P.O. air mail leaflets as late as April 1939 continued to quote the 8d and 1/3d rates for '10 days to Elisabethville' [route unspecified] and '4 days to Léopoldville, via France' respectively. The war soon drew a line under I.A. involvement.

These notes will not attempt to give a similar summary of rates from the Congo. Even though two books on the subject have appeared in recent years, there are still gaps in prime sources. For example, it is known that, following publicity, mail was sent from Brussels to Irumu and Kabinda via the I.A. first E. African service to Kampala and Mwanza respectively: postage was basic 1.25fr (20gr) plus air fee of 4fr per 10gr. Yet no official announcement has been found for mail in the reverse direction, although it is clear, from copies of a range of 1931 commercial mail seen, that the same 4fr per 10gr fee applied. Again, to this day there is friendly argument over the Congo-Belgium preferential surface mail constituent in 1935: 1.25fr or 1.50fr ?

MAIL INTO THE CONGO

Inevitably the first mail sent via the new I.A. route was philatelic but some interesting routes are apparent. Three examples are illustrated:

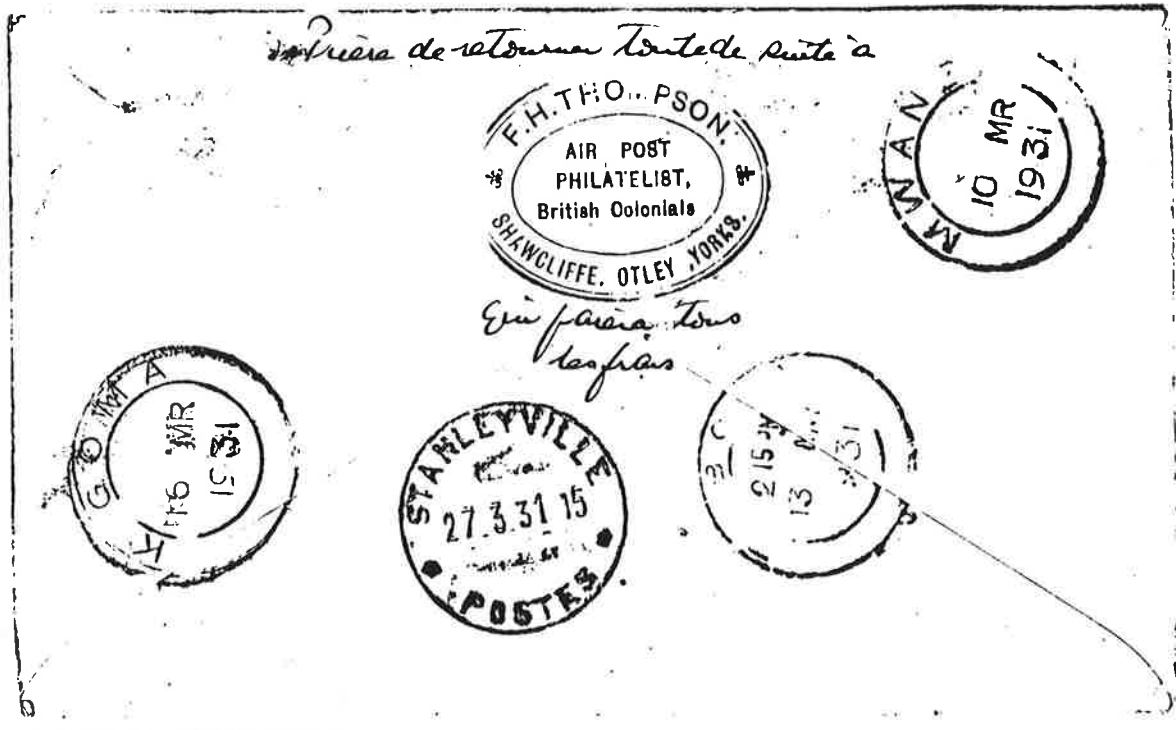
Cover N°1 London 27.7.1931 (registered and 2d overfranked) to Stanleyville: by air to Juba (8.3. but no transit mark) then by road by Soc. des Chemins de Fer Vicinaux du Congo mail van to Aba 14.3 and finally about 575 miles by road to Stanleyville 25.3. The cover is routed 'Via Sudan' as stipulated in P.O. circulars.



Cover N°1



Cover N°2 'Blue map' cover, Otley 26.2.1931, correct 8d postage, again to Stanleyville but no route indicated so bagged to the terminus (Mwanza 10.3): conveniently on the railway via Tabora 13.3 to Kigoma 16.3 and across Lake Tanganyika to Albertville. Finally a long combination of rail, river and possibly road to Stanleyville 27.3, two days later than the first cover.



Cover N°2

Cover N°3 London 27.2.1931, route incorrectly typed but correct 8d postage. Rather contrived route to Léopoldville and went probably as far as Stanleyville 25.3 as in Cover N°1. In the context there was no 'Belgian Line' to S'ville, while the first Stan.- Léo. SABENA service left Stanleyville on 10.4, the day after the cover arrived at its destination. The final stage appears to have been 1,000 miles by river steamer - downstream therefore quite feasible in a fortnight.



Cover N°3

Although the next cover (N°4) is a little grubby there is much of interest and it merits a place here. Posted in time for I.A. flight AS 44 from Khartoum on 5.1.1932 and (already ?) marked 'Via Mwanza-Kigoma', it was unloaded at Juba 6.1 and arrived (by road) at Aba the same day. Then back to Juba by 8.1 for carriage to Mwanza 14.1 on AS 45, the penultimate 'East African' flight.

The object of going via Mwanza was to make use of the good railway system, via Tabora 15.1, Tabora-Kigoma T.P.O. (date illegible) to Kigoma 18.1 on Lake Tanganyika. At Kigoma there was no alternative to lake steamer and clearly there was a good connection (either for Usumbura or for Albertville) as the cover arrived at Costermansville (= Bukavu) quite early on 22.1. In other words, the cover had managed to travel on both of the main routes into N.E. Congo at this time.



Cover N°4

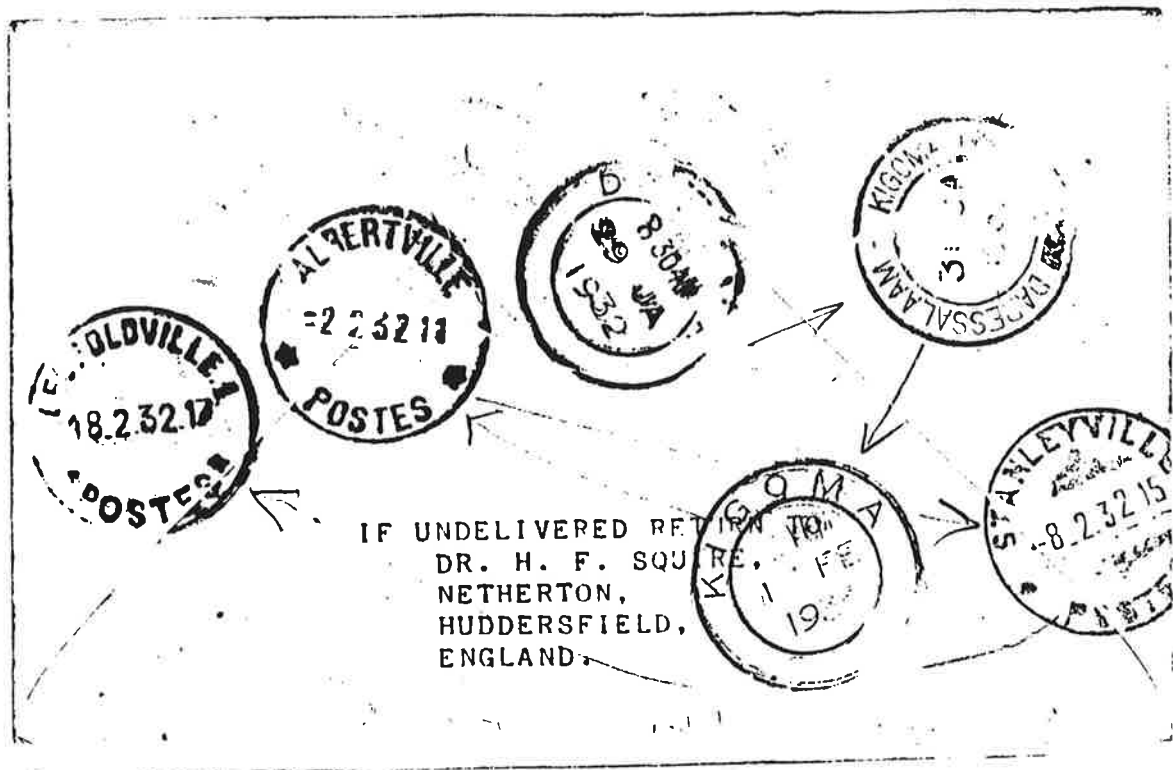
At this point let us remember that the Belgians were very slow in setting up a regular air route from Europe to their colony: it was not until February 1935 that the SABENA/Air Afrique joint arrangement came into operation. Until then the only major alternative route was by air France-Dakar and then by sea to Matadi in the Congo. It is not surprising that the 1931 annual report of the Congo Post Office commented on how the I.A. service to Mwanza had brought Stanleyville within about 14 days of Brussels. Furthermore, by April 1932 the Léopoldville-Coquilhatville SABENA service was to be extended to Stanleyville, giving mail to and from Léopoldville more flexibility when a steamer connection at Matadi was not imminent.

Just for the record, the writer has not yet seen any mail for the Congo which would have travelled on one or more stages of the 1931 Christmas flight. There was very little advance notice of this special extension southwards

and dealers concentrated on the main points of call. However, some commercial and personal mail must surely have been carried, presumably all unloaded at Juba. Kisumu (instead of Mwanza) would not have made much sense and red tape would undoubtedly have foiled any bright idea (in 1931) to use the Broken Hill - Elisabethville railway connection.

The opening of the London - Cape Town regular I.A. service in early 1932 was marked by a rather different range of dealer covers addressed to the Congo; different in that the writer does not recall having seen any cover originating in a country north of Tanganyika, not even in the U.K.

Cover N°5 Springbok type, franked 65c, Moshi 28.1.1932 to Léopoldville, travelled by I.A. only one stage to Dodoma 29.1, a very convenient new point for the Dar - Kigoma T.P.O. 31.1 to Kigoma 1.2. Most of the remaining route was already established i.e. across Lake Tanganyika to Albertville 2.2 and then to Stanleyville 8.2 and, on balance, probably by air to destination, arriving 18.2.

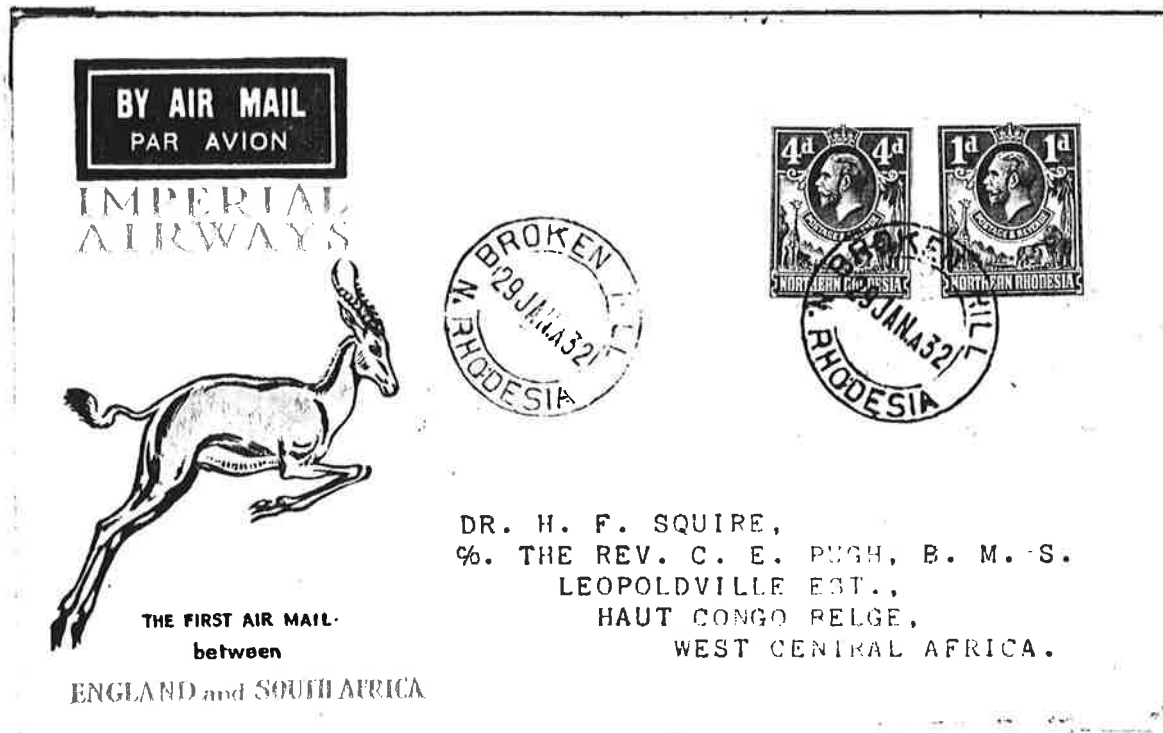


Cover N°5

Coming up from the south, Cover N°6 (Springbok type, Johannesburg 25.1 to Léopoldville, franked 1/-) took the first return flight - with the well-known double crash - as far as Broken Hill 4.2 and was quickly on the train via Sakania 5.2 to Elisabethville 5.2: finally by SABENA to destination 13.2.

Cover N°7 This item, Broken Hill 29.1 to Léopoldville, deserves a full page to itself as, if logic were any criterion, the cover should have avoided I.A. completely. As can be seen, it arrived at Léo. 1.3, via Nairobi of all places, over a fortnight later than Cover N°6 which had passed through Broken Hill six days later.

First flight Cape Town - Croydon 27.1.32



DR. H. F. SQUIRE,  
 % THE REV. C. E. PUGH, B. M. S.  
 LEOPOLDVILLE EST.,  
 HAUT CONGO BELGE,  
 WEST CENTRAL AFRICA.

THE FIRST AIR MAIL  
 between  
 ENGLAND and SOUTH AFRICA

Cover N°7

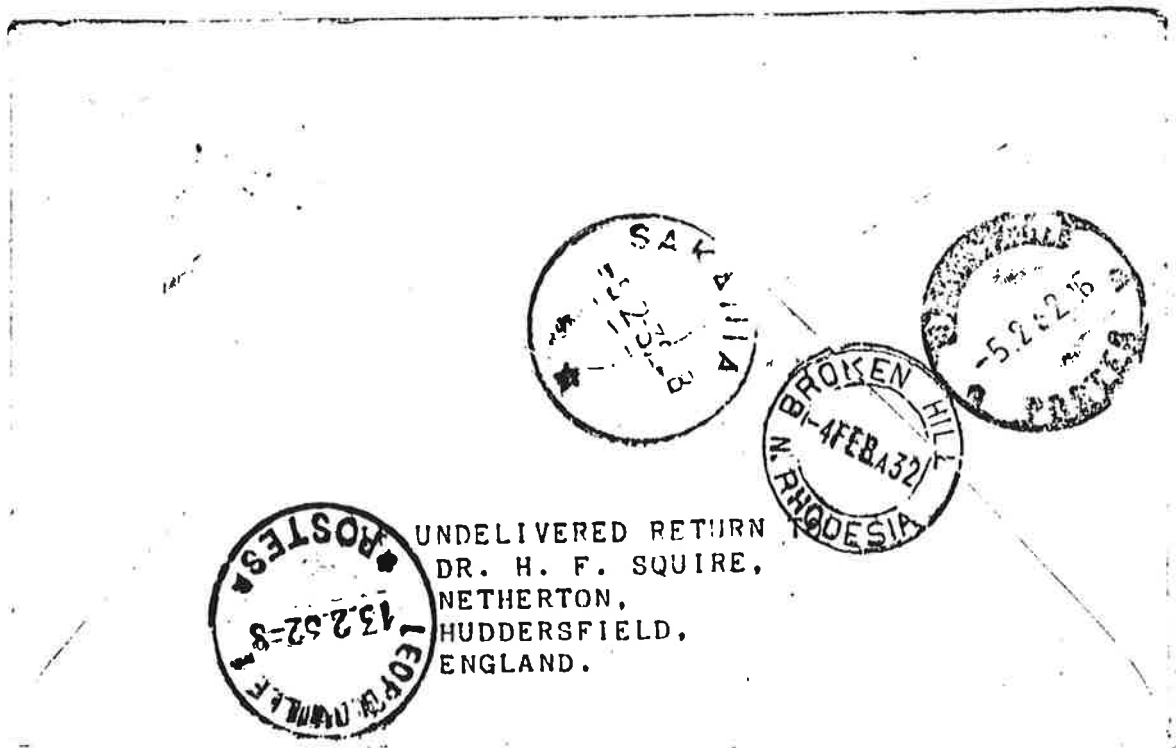
Broken Hill 29.1 to Leopoldville 1.3

The route taken by this cover is intriguing:

- (probably) Nairobi on the 'emergency' flight and then back to
  - Dodoma 4.2
  - Dar-Kigoma TPO 7.2
  - Kigoma 8.2, then across Lake Tanganyika to
  - Albertville 16.2
  - Stanleyville 22.2
  - Leopoldville 1.3.

Had the cover been routed straight into the Congo by rail to Sakania it would have reached Leo'ville on 13.2; but then it would not have travelled on the first I.A. flight ! (See the Jo'burg-L'ville item).

On the evidence of various pieces of mail posted at B.Hill it would seem that the Dodoma items were wrongly bagged for Nairobi and then immediately returned on the next (4.2) southwards flight by the 'City of Baghdad'. The weak link in this theory is that there is no Nairobi transit stamp but as mail from Mpika to Dodoma (qv) was properly back-stamped 3.2 (with the 2pm hour digit in a different place) there seems no other explanation.



Cover N°6

The main framework now having been set up, I.A. had three years without any real competition by air, for mail ultimately destined for large areas of the Congo. Indeed, the company's position was soon strengthened, later in 1932, when an air feeder service superseded the Elisabethville-Broken Hill rail link.

The feeder service in question was operated by the Aéro-Club du Katanga and has been given general coverage in all the usual aerophilatelic books. However, accurate and precise details have been lacking and some comments over the years have been quite contradictory. Fortunately, in the 1990s Frank Broeckaert in Belgium did much work on the subject and Paul Magid was able to arrange for translation of a major article originally in Flemish. As mentioned in the introductory notes to this present article, mail from the Congo will be dealt with later. More detailed comment on the Aéro-Club will be given then.

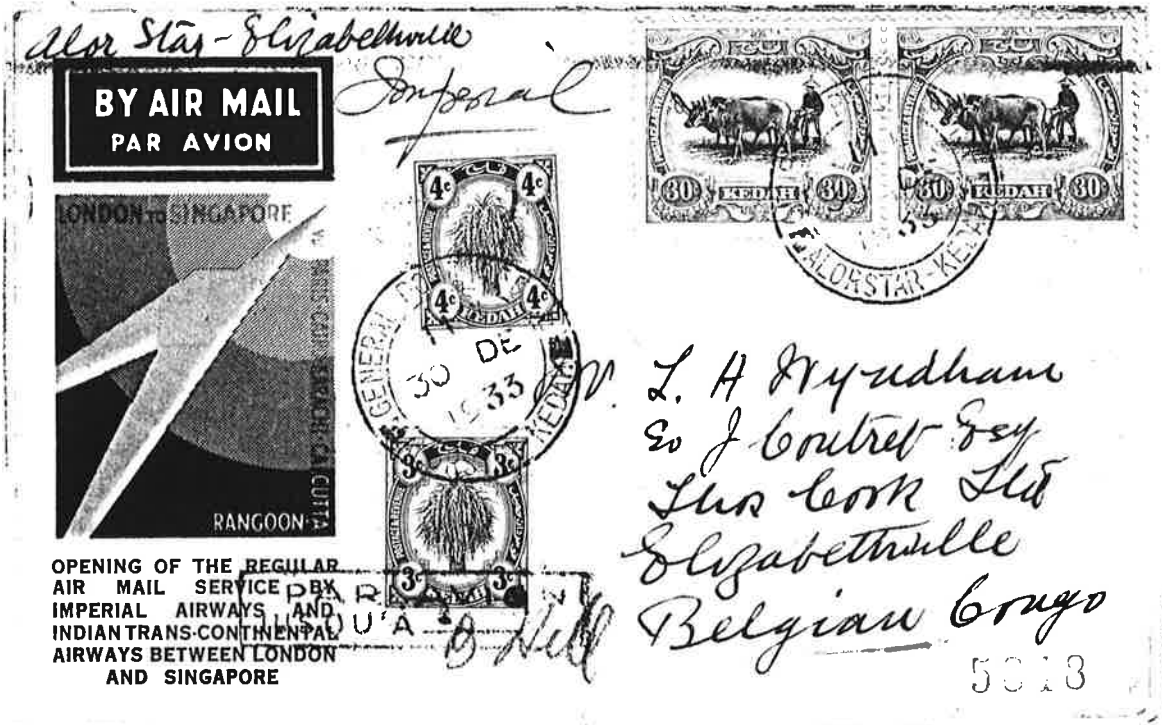
Page 10 of this article shows (ex 4 October 32 item) an attractive label encouraging the use of I.A. for mail to the Congo. The cover also has the loosely-worded endorsement 'FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT'. The opportunity is now taken to discuss (Card N°8) a registered postcard which left Antwerp 3.10.1932 to join the same flight (AS 84) and the same feeder service to Elisabethville 14.10. Broeckaert comments that this was not the first air connection Belgium - Broken Hill - Elisabethville but the first for which the air fee 3.50fr/5gr applied. The card just enters the second weight stage and total postage 9fr is correct for registered printed matter. There had been some earlier flights from 26.8.32 (variously described as 'proving' or 'experimental') onwards but the writer has so far only seen mail carried in the Elisabethville - Broken Hill direction. Interestingly, the British Post Office only gave (on 5.10) a few hours' notice of the service and British mail left a week later.

PAR AVION PAR AVION ★ IMPRIMÉ ★ PAR AVION PAR AVION



Card N°8

As I.A. extended its eastern route, so did postal contacts between the Congo and Asia and Australia become more effective. Frankly, the amount of commercial mail arising was minute but, at least, the next two covers - inevitably philatelic - show what could be achieved. Cover N°9 from Alor Star 30.12.1933 has not only the boxed Cairo 'Jusqu'à' transit completed for Broken Hill but also a Broken Hill transit, Elisabethville arrival and even Wagons-Lits/Cook arrival marks, all dated 11.1.1934



Cover N°9

Cover N°10 from Australia 7.12.1934 received a normal Cairo 22.12 transit and same day 26.12 Broken Hill and Elisabethville postmarks.



Cover N°10

Meanwhile, the Sudan route [British Nov1934 P.O. Guide states '5 days to Aba.....'] was well used, even though there were delays at times.

Cover N°11 Bournemouth 31.12.1934 arrived two days late at Juba 8.1.35, clearly missed a connection and arrived at Aba 14.1, whence to Stanleyville 19.1 and SABENA to Léopoldville 22.1



Cover N°11

The February 1935 opening of the weekly air service from Europe to Léopoldville/Brazzaville shared by SABENA/Air Afrique was certainly likely to reduce the volume of mail sent via Aba destined for the Lower Congo (e.g. Cover N°11). Whereas the new route was faster for acceptances from the U.K., it was much dearer (1/3d per unit as against 8d via Aba). However, the bulk of mail to the Congo naturally emanated from Belgium and just five days from Brussels to Léopoldville was a winner. True, there was initially little difference for mail from Belgium to Elisabethville (using local SABENA Léo - Elis) but, here again, I.A. would soon have to struggle to retain the volume of mail for Katanga passing through Broken Hill.

In November 1935 the SABENA/Air Afrique service was extended to Elisabethville and I.A. realized the implications. Cover N°12 London 7.11 to Broken Hill 'via Oran [should be Algiers] and Brazzaville' was sent to test the new route but, as can be seen on the next page, 'the best laid plans.....'

During the next few years both I.A. and SABENA/Air Afrique speeded up their flights to central/southern Africa, both by changing routes and by having more powerful aircraft. In the introductory remarks to this article reference was made to the reduction in established connecting points with the Congo. The reader will, therefore, not be surprised by the following comment, taken from the 1937 annual report of the Congo Postal Service:

'On remarquera la forte régression du trafic par la ligne étrangère "Imperial Airways" au profit de la ligne nationale "Congo-Belgique".'

This comment was made in the context of weight of mail carried from the Congo directly or indirectly by air and accompanying figures showed that I.A. share fell from 100% in 1934 to a mere 7% in 1937. To be fair, it must be said that Congo Postal Service annual reports in the 1930s lack consistency and the volume figures quoted appear to ignore all the mail carried (up to February 1935) initially by sea Matadi-Dakar. Again, it is likely that most parcels and packets went by SABENA/Air Afrique, thus distorting the amounts of letters carried. Figures for inwards mail are not given but they would probably have been fairly similar and the basic pattern is evident from the content of several major collections seen by the writer. Some new northern links were being set up in 1939 but the war soon curtailed normal traffic.

The next section of this article, dealing with mail from the Congo, will necessarily include the same routes as have already been described. However, the mail shown will tend to be quite different and some will also reflect the ingenuity of senders.

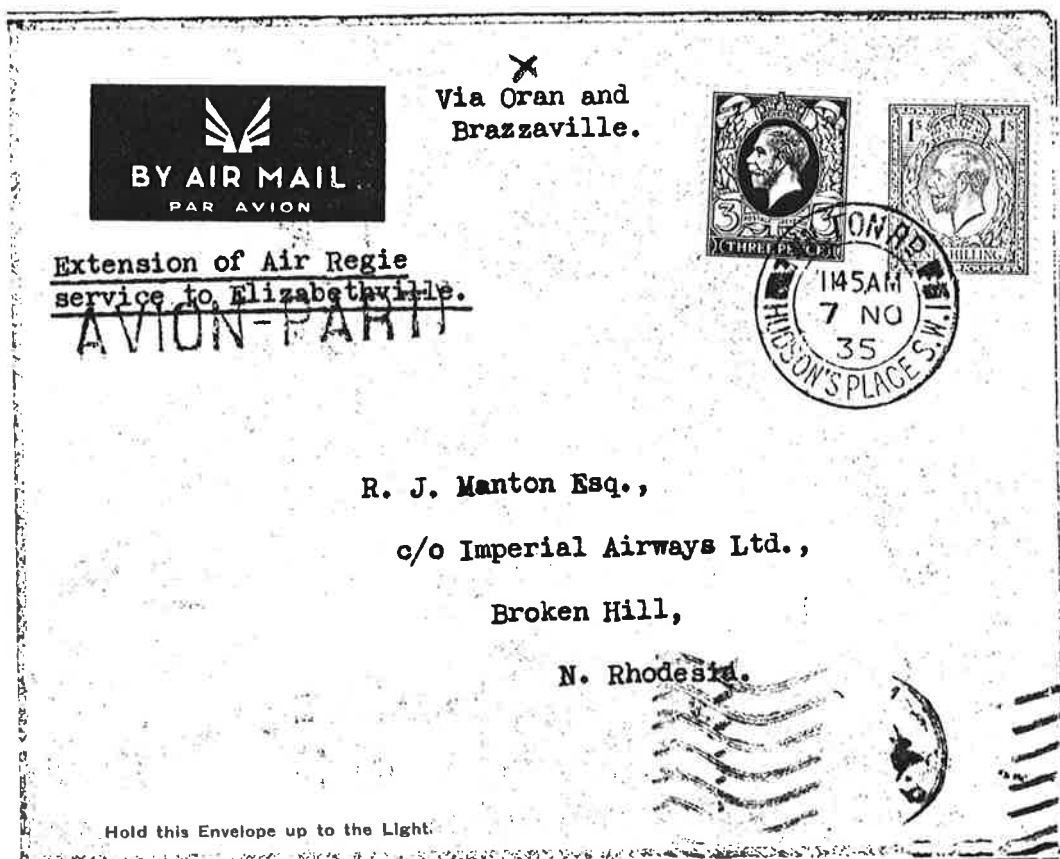


This publicity label is referred to on page 7 of this article.



1935 Extension of Regie Air Afrique service to Elisabethville

Details of the flights which it was intended that this cover should catch are given below. In practice the first, Air France, stage had already left Paris ('avion parti') and the cover went by the regular Imperial Airways service to Broken Hill.



Cover N°12

London 7.11 to Broken Hill 17.11 via Paris 8.11

With the co-operation of Air France and the Regie Air Afrique with which they formed a pool SABENA extended the Congo route to E'ville.

The service was provided, following precedent, in alternate weeks by the French and Belgian companies, the first departure being by Air France from Paris on 8.11. Air France covered the Paris-Algiers section and Air Afrique took over from Algiers to Elisabethville. At the same time another French company, Regie Malgache, inaugurated a connecting service between Elisabethville and Tananarive, via Broken Hill, Tete and Mozambique.

Had the cover made the connection in Paris it would probably have arrived at Broken Hill on 14.11, assuming a connection on that date from Elisabethville. (Later - mail is now held with a B.Hill mark of 16.11, from the service which reached Madagascar 17.11).