

BELGIAN CONGO



STUDY CIRCLE

**Secretary:**

Stuart S. Smith  
 Lychgates, Pinfold Hill  
 Curbar-Calver, Hope Valley  
 England, UK S32 3YL  
 e-mail: ssscongo@aol.com

**Bulletin Editor:**

Ronald E. Strawser  
 4 Amhurst Court  
 Midland, TX 79705  
 USA  
 e-mail: strawser5@cox.net

**BULLETIN 124**

**June 2002**

**President:**

Hal Hoyte  
 1 Braybrooke Road  
 Hastings  
 E. Sussex TN34 1TA  
 UK

**Librarian:**

A. J. D. MacLaren  
 Moray, 43 Millar St.,  
 Carnoustie DD7 7AT  
 Scotland

**CONTENTS**

**Page(s)**

The Editor's Ramblings	Ron Strawser	2
Notes from the Honorary Secretary & Treasurer	Stuart S. Smith	2-5
Packet Secretary's Report	Hal Hoyte	4
Subscription Reminder		5
Advertisements		5-6
Jacques Du Four Collection Auction Results	Ron Strawser	6
Members Questions and Answers		6-7
My Favorite Cover		8
French Ship Lines Carrying Congo Mail	Alan Morvay	8-13
Emile Banning		13
Two Interesting Postage Due Usages	Ron Strawser	23-14
Imperial Airways Involvement with mail to and from the Belgian Congo Part 2	Norman Clowes	15-28
Prices Realized – Auction 2002 (2)		29
Members E-mail Addresses		30
Auction 2002 (3)		Supplemental pages

## The Editor's Ramblings

Well, here it is, time for another Bulletin. It may seem like quite awhile between issues to our members, but to me it seems like every time I turn around its time to put the Bulletin out again. This Bulletin is coming out later than I had hoped. This is due in part to things out of my control and some things I probably should be able to control. Thanks for your patience and hopefully it is worth the wait. This will be the fifth Bulletin that I have produced. How am I doing? I invite members to write or e-mail and let me know what they like and don't like in the Bulletin. Remember this is your Bulletin, I'm just the caretaker. I also must continue to ask for articles questions, answers to other members questions, and your "favorite covers". We have two very good articles in this issue by members Morvay and Clowes.

## Notes from the Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

### Minutes of the Belgian Congo Study Circle AGM, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2002

The Annual General Meeting was held at Churchills Hotel, Hastings on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2002. In attendance were Messrs W.H.Hoyte, S.S.Smith, D.Bilmans, J.J.H.Evans, Th.Frennet, B.Harris, C.Henuzet, E.R.Hoorens, Ph.Lindekens.

**Apologies** were received from most British members and several from the USA..

President Hal Hoyte chaired the meeting and the minutes of the AGM, as previously published in the Bulletin and held in Brussels 21<sup>st</sup> April 2001, were approved.

### **Matters arising**

It was noted that no action had been taken about assembling and distributing information on members specific interests. It was agreed that this would be a worthwhile exercise and the President volunteered to undertake the task.

### **Secretary's report**

No report had been filed from the U.S.A. secretariat but with this exception it was noted that throughout the rest of the world there are only three outstanding subscriptions for 2002. As reminders have been sent out, the members concerned will be removed from the mailing list following the distribution of this Bulletin (#124). Membership of the Circle is recorded as follows.

	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>
Belgium	44	50
U.K.	27	25
U.S.A.	32	?
Australia	2	1
Denmark	6	5
France	1	1
Germany	1	1
Kenya	0	1
Netherlands	1	1
Philippines	1	1
South Africa	1	1
Spain	2	2
Sweden	3	3
Switzerland	0	1
Zambia/Congo	0	1

### **Presidents Report**

The President welcomed the Belgian members contribution in the running of the Circle, without whose support it would be difficult to function. Ron Strawser was also thanked for his contribution as Bulletin Editor.

Ray Keach was remembered for his life and commitment to the Circle's success. His mark will be everlasting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The accounts for the year to 31 December 2001, as published in Bulletin #123 were presented and approved. It was noted that there was a fall in income from the Expert Committee but this was attributed to the passing of Ray Keach and the complications of dealing with items in the pipeline at the time. *(These appear to have been resolved and it was agreed in subsequent discussions to overlook the few outstanding small financial anomalies.)*

### Bank Account Signatories

The Treasurer sought approval for additional authorised signatories to the Circles Bank account with Halifax plc. The meeting approved that the following officers be authorised to operate the account – N. Clowes, W.H. Hoyte, B.J. Harris as well as the present Treasurer S.S. Smith.

**Will members please note that for the year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 the following subscriptions will apply :-**

Region	Subscription
<b>U.K.</b>	£8.00
<b>Belgium</b>	€10
<b>Other European</b>	€10
<b>U.S.A./Philippines</b>	\$15
<b>Rest of the World</b>	£12

### **Auction Secretary**

The Auction Secretary provided a detailed financial report of the successful quarterly auctions. We are fortunate that there is an abundance of material available for several years ahead. With regard to the Keach collection - this will be fed through continuously but provision will always be available for items from other members.

For the year ending 2001, 701 lots were sold (75% of all material offered) at a total price of £15347 (€24,708) producing an income of £495 (€798) for the Circle. At the present time this is held on account in Belgium.

As minuted at the last AGM the present policy of commission charges remains in place. By way of addition it was agreed that the Circle will charge the Keach estate, commission of 2.5% on all material sold. Other necessary administration expenses will also be charged.

The President and Secretary both expressed a sincere thank you to Messrs Lindekens, Stockmans and other volunteers involved in managing the sales so well. This is a massive undertaking which the membership fully appreciates.

### **Expert Committee**

Due to the death of Ray Keach and a decision by Abbé Gudenkauf to withdraw from direct involvement in managing the Expertization Committee – it is now necessary to reappraise the

facility the Circle will be able to provide. For a trial period Mr.L.Tavano has offered his services with a view to keeping the Committee running but it will be necessary to formulate a new set of conditions. The membership demands on this voluntary group of experts has become burdensome.

The remaining Expert Committee members will confer and make a statement about its future operation.

### **Librarian**

A full detailed report was received from Alan MacLaren and a request to seek approval to photocopy depleting stocks of several popular publications. The Secretary was instructed to communicate directly with both l'Abbé Gudenkauf and Mr. Van der Hauwaert with a view to satisfying this need.

It was also reported that the Librarian has now acquired a large number of Ray Keach's reference books (now the property of the Circle) and a list will be published shortly of what is available on loan to members.

### **Packet Secretary**

The Packet Secretary's report for 2001, having been published previously in the Bulletin, was taken as read. Hal Hoyte, in his dual role as both Packet Secretary and President reported on the 2002 packet which has just completed its circulation in the U.K. He commended to the Belgian members present, how successful and popular this is in the U.K. and they should consider something similar. After a short discussion it is apparent that things work differently on the other side of the Channel – and it is impracticable.

### PACKET SECRETARY'S REPORT

Once again, I am happy to report another successful Packet, which has just completed the circuit, consisting of 17 members, including myself. Four members contributed material, including a posthumous contribution from the duplicates of the late Brian Hudson, kindly assembled into four booklets by Bernie Harris. Material was priced to a total of £1026.82, and total sales were £613.97, remarkable 59.8%, an even better percentage than last year. Every department of Congo philately was represented, except for covers, of which there were only a few, and postmarks, none. We hope this will be remedied by future contributors.

Thanks to Bernie Harris (again), we now have a sturdy purpose-built box, ex-Vera Trinder, and less anxiety about a DIY packet coming apart in the post.

With the passing of Ray Keach, we now have a good supply of material of most periods and categories from his duplicates, and those of the late Messrs Hudson and Foden. It is hoped that this will encourage members to contribute Packet material, remembering a) that it will be in good company, and b) that interesting material, intelligently priced, should sell well, and c) that the comparatively short circuit means that a contributor will see a harvest from his labours within a reasonably short time. Most contributions were received during the Autumn 2001, the circuit started in the New Year 2002, and the cheques are now being sent out in early May.

It is hoped that this will also encourage more members to join the Packet circuit. I think I can state, without undue modesty, that this is a going concern. Would it be possible to start a Packet circuit among the Belgian members? This is in fact already being considered. (Footnote for the Bulletin : what about the US members? If any of you are interested, I would be most interested to hear from you.)

### **Bulletin Editor**

There was no formal statement from the Bulletin Editor other than a request via the Secretary "for more articles to be submitted. If there is nothing to publish, there is no Bulletin!"

The meeting expressed it's thanks to Ron Strawser for the work he is obviously putting in and the noticeable improvement in presentation. All we want is more content – and that is up to the membership.

### **Officers of the Study Circle**

The following were elected :-

President	W.H.Hoyte
Secretary/Treasurer	S.S.Smith
Regional Sec - Belgium	E.R.Hoorens
Regional Sec – USA	D.A.Schaubroeck
Bulletin Editor	R.E.Strawser
Auction Secretary	Ph.Lindekens/ C.Stockmans
Librarian/Book sales	A.J.D.MacLaren
Packet Sec. – UK	W.H.Hoyte
Expert Committee	L.Tavano
(under review)	Ph.Lindekens C.Henuzet - other specialists

### **Future Meetings**

Benelux Specialist Societies – Bradford, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2002

A.G.M. and General meeting with displays – Brussels, April 2003

### **Subscription Reminder**

**\*\*\* Will all those who have not yet paid their subscriptions please do so – now! This will be the last issue you will receive if your dues are not paid up.**

### **Advertisements**

As was mentioned in the last Bulletin, beginning with this 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 are 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. Surprisingly there has been little response to this offer. The ads are free so why not take advantage of them. So without further ado, here are the ads:

For Sale or Trade: OMPHI sale lot #95, first and second portrait issues (CO #2, 6 (3 copies) and #8) tied by Boma 15/2/90 CDS on cover front. 650 Euros. Wanted: B.P.C.V.P.K. cancellations #2,3,7,8,13 on cover or postcard, #1,3,10,14,17 on stamps. Also Belgian Congo post cards or covers which travelled on Portuguese or German ship lines. Alan Morvay, PO Box 48195, Los Angeles, CA 90048

Wanted: Belgian Congo postal cards to unusual destinations. I will pay \$100 for the first copy offered of a non-philatelic domestic usage of Stibbe #66 in nice condition. I am also interested in Mols, Vloors and Stanley issues proofs, errors and unusual usages on cover. Ron Strawser, 4 Amhurst Court, Midland, TX 79705

I am looking for the following: Belgian Congo FDC 296, 297, 298-299 and 324; Dem. Rep. Congo FDC 624A and 645 ABCD; Ruanda-Urundi FDC 148-149, covers 107 and 202-204. Answers to be sent to Rolf Ohrneman, Sundbyvagen 19, S-18670, Brottby, Sweden.

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

The auction of the great Belgian Congo collection of the late BCSC member Mr. Jacques Du Four was held by OMPHI in Brussels on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2002. Marc de Winter described this auction as historical and I believe this is an accurate description. This auction was composed of 740 lots of Congo related material. Lot prices ranged from 5 Euros to 27,000 Euros with an average lot price of 604 Euros. There were 99 lots that sold for over a 1000 Euros each, while nine lots sold for over 5000 euros each and five lots sold at over 10,000 Euros each. The total realization was 446,594 Euros, a respectable total for a Congo collection. The auctioneer did an excellent job on the pre-sale estimates, as 49% of the lots sold for over the estimate and 50% sold for under the estimate. The average lot sold for 1.30 times the estimate. The results of the auction are listed on the OMPHI web site at: <http://www.omphi.be>. This collection included some of the great rarities of the Congo. A post card with the Etat issue 10 centimes inverted center on it sold for 15,500 Euros. A copy of the Etat issue 10 Fr. Stamp with inverted center (only five known) sold for 25,000 Euros. Lot 242 which contained the unique lot of Mols original water colors and essays sold for 27,000 Euros. In closing it is safe to say that this really was an historical auction and it is hoped that many of our members were successful in obtaining some of the lots.

### **Members' Questions**

The cover shown on the next page belongs to our member Alan Morvay. This cover appeared in the "Questions and Answers" column of the France & Colonies Philatelist January 2002 issue. This cover has generated numerous questions, correspondence and answers. It has been requested that we see if our members can add any additional information. I will try to summarize what has already been asked and said about this cover. If you can add any light to this mystery please contact the Bulletin editor.

The original question: I have a registered French Congo cover sent 1 March 1910 from Brazzaville to the Belgian Congo port of Matadi, received there on the 5<sup>th</sup>. There's a two line marking (about 48 x 12 mm) across the back reading "AFRIQUE & CONGO / FRET GRATUIT 150 K". Can Any reader advise whether the cover traveled by rail or riverboat, or both?

Mr. W. G. Mitchell has this to say: "I think the letter must have gone entirely by rail. Brazzaville was immediately opposite Leopoldville on the banks of the Congo and had a direct rail link with Matadi (the letter's destination) since 1898. The railway was built because rapids made communication between the two towns by river difficult if not impossible. The franking. 35c was the basic internal registered rate in France and her colonies at this time – for foreign mail the rate was 50c. however, in France there was a concessional "frontier rate" for mail to Belgium and Switzerland – if the straight line office-to-office distance did not exceed 30 km the internal French

tariff applied; this practice also applied in the colonies. The straight-line distance between Brazzaville and Matadi is considerably more than 30 km – it's about 250 km – but in remote areas abroad settlements were much farther apart than in densely-populated Europe so this difference in the concession is hardly surprising. The cachet. Translated literally the second line reads "Freight(age) free 150K". This is highly speculative, but could this possibly mean that no charge was made by the Belgians (the railway?) for the carriage of (French) Congo mail within (Belgian) Congo provided the total weight of a consignment did not exceed 150 kilos? Matadi was the terminus of the French shipping line to Bordeaux, but even so 150 kilos means an awful lot of letters, more than one would think likely, unless parcels were included. If this is correct the cachet is probably Belgian." He later stated ... "if my interpretation of it is correct I assume that it was applied to the first and/or last cover in a bundle, hence the assumed rarity". "As for 'AFRIQUE & CONGO', could this be another name for the railway, correctly 'Chemin de fer du Congo'? Mr. Mitchell then requests "I would appreciate, for example, the details of the rail services and conditions on the Congo River already requested, and also details of the Belgian Congo domestic and foreign postage rates (letters, postcards and also the registration fee would be relevant to this particular problem) at this time.

Hal Hoyte states "First is it possible that the 150 K on the cachet could refer to distance "KM" rather than weight? That, however, is still rather short of the distance from Brazzaville to Matadi. We do know that the early Congo ps internal postcards were inscribed 'Servicede l'interieur et des pays limitrophe jusques et y compris Libreville au Nord et Mossamedes au Sud'. On the 1900 internal card the inscription extends this 'au Nord la Colonie Britannique de la Cote d'Or et au Sud la Colonie Allemande du Sud-Oest Africain.' Was this concession reciprocal, and did it extend to other forms of mail, and how long did it last? Was the cachet perhaps applied in error, the clerk not knowing the actual distance?

In later correspondance Mr. Mitchell states "Whereas the France/Belgium and Switzerland frontier rate was confined to a very small area – 30 km office-to-office – the printed headings on the 1900 Belgian Congo postcard shows that there the concession applied to whole countries. This rules out kilometers as the meaning of '150 K' if the cachet is a postal one, which suggests that its' origin is probably a railway or shipping company. It may not be possible to ascertain the precise terms of the concession, in which case the headings on the Belgian Congo postcards will provide at least some evidence.



### My Favorite Cover

Alan Morvay had previously sent a photocopy of the cover shown below to the editor. While it may not be Alan's favourite cover I think it still qualifies for this section due to its' interest. This is a solo usage of the Unilingual issue 50 centime stamp paying the 25 centime single weight letter rate to Sudan and the 25 centime registration fee. This cover was previously in the late Brian Hudson's collection.



### French Ship Lines Carrying Congo Mail

Although mail to and from the Congo was carried on ships of the Compagnie Maritime Belge, most mail was carried on the ships of the French Compagnie des Chargeurs Reunis Line L from Bordeaux which was officially extended in 1908 to include the Congo port of Matadi. Prior to 1908, according to Salles' the journey beyond Libreville (Loango), where the postal agent left the boat, was at no extra charge. The ships would stop at Matadi and other ports as far as Loanda, Angola, and return to Libreville in time for its' regularly scheduled departure for Bordeaux.

There were three French ship lines which called on Belgian Congo ports:

Line L to Loango 1889-1908, using postmarks for ships 1 and 2 until 1899 when ship 3 was added, and towards the end of 1901 when ship 4 was added.

Line L to Matadi 1908-1921, using postmarks for ships 1,2 and 3.



Line L to Pointe Noire (just south of Loango) 1921-1939, which did not identify any particular ship line or ship, but just used the mark "PAQUEBOT".

Eight different cancellations were used on the Loango/Bordeaux route:<sup>2</sup>



FIG. 1.211/1.



FIG. 1.211/2.



FIG. 1.212/1.



FIG. 1.212/2.



FIG. 1.213/3.



FIG. 1.213/4.



FIG. 1.214/3.

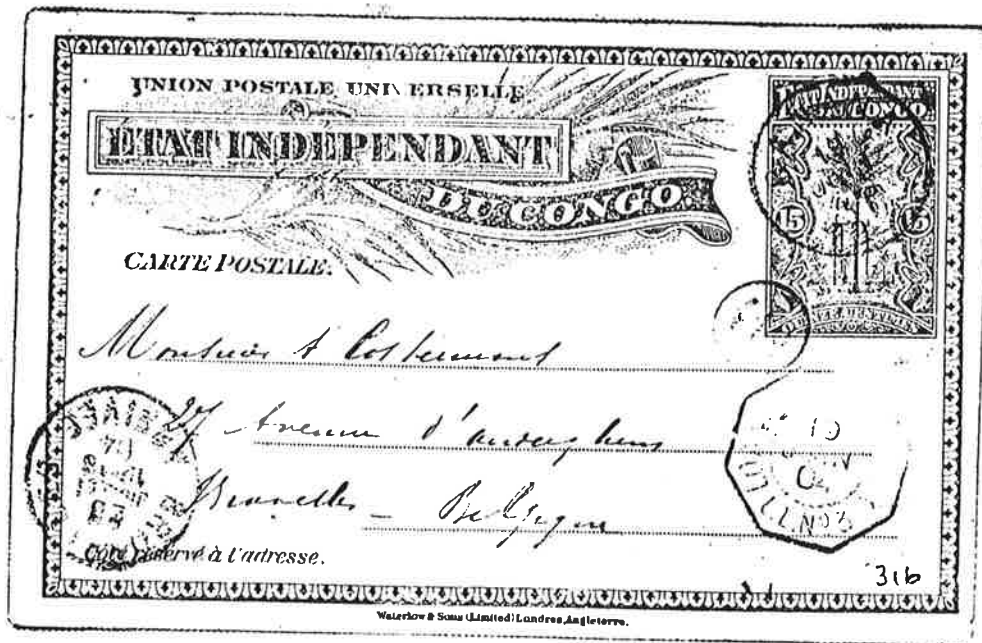


FIG. 1.214/4.

This cover was carried on the Ville de Maranhao (a ship of the Bordeaux-Loango French line calling at Teneriffe, Dakar, Conakry, Freetown, Grand Bassam, Cotonou, Libreville, Boma and Matadi). This round trip departed Bordeaux October 15, arrived at Matadi November 12. The stamp is cancelled with a Matadi Nov. 16, 1900 CDS. Alongside is a LOANGO A BORDEAUX L.L. No. 1 maritime postmark dated Nov. 18, 1900 which was applied when the cover was taken on board and on the reverse is a Conakry Dec. 8, 1900 CDS applied when the cover was taken off the ship. The ship then continued on, arriving in Bordeaux on Dec. 19, 1900.



The postal card shown below was cancelled Banane June 18, 1904, with a LOANGA A BORDEAUX maritime postmark was also carried on the Ville de Maranhao. Card arrived in Bruxelles on July 28, 1904.



There were eight different cancellations used on the Matadi/Bordeaux route.<sup>3</sup>

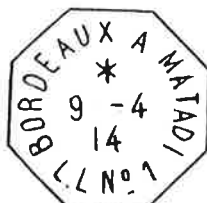


FIG. 1.227/1.

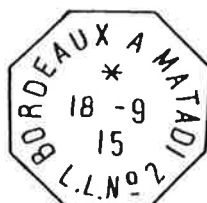


FIG. 1.227/2.

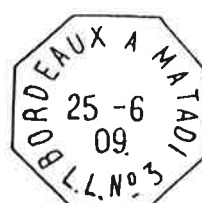


FIG. 1.227/3.



FIG. 1.228/1.



FIG. 1.228/2.

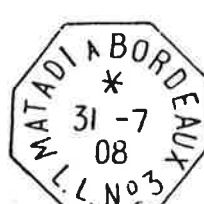


FIG. 1.228/3.

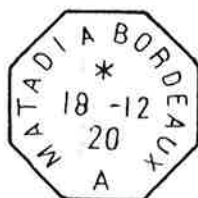


FIG. 1.231.

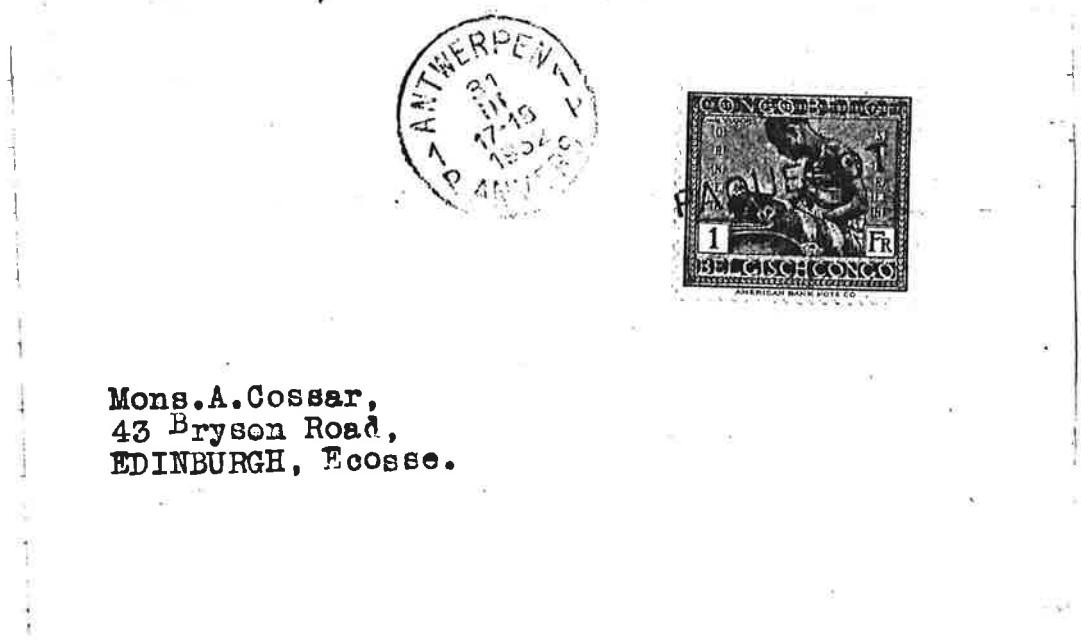
MATADI A BORDEAUX A

FIG. 1.232.

The postmark shown in figure 1.231 was a replacement for the postmark shown in figure 1.228/1 which was lost with the wreck of the ship Afrique during its' departure from France on Jan. 12, 1920. Salles indicates that this rare postmark was only used on the ship Tchad in 1920 and 1921. Figure 1.232 shows a handstamp occasionally seen on registered mail of 1920 and 1921.



This uprated postal card to Belgium bears a MATADI A BORDEAUX L.L. No 2 maritime postmark and has a Belgian receiving cancellation.



This cover shows the straight line "PAQUEBOT" mark which was used on the Pointe Noire/Bordeaux route.

The two cancellations shown below were used at the La Rochelle-Pallice mailboat stop, located along a large natural bay in southwestern France about 100 miles north of Bordeaux.<sup>4</sup> Mail carried on mailboats from many countries in western Africa was often offloaded at La Rochelle-Pallice where the excellent continental trains could carry it to major population centers more rapidly than if the mail were to continue first to the destination port of Bordeaux or Antwerp and then transfer to the rail system. By offloading the mail at La Rochelle-Pallice the transit time for the mails could be reduced by 1 to 3 days. The Abbe G. Gudenkauf of Brussels has confirmed this transfer of the mails, stating "the mail boats regularly gave their mail to the railway system at La Rochelle-

Pallice, so it could arrive at least one day before the ship landed at Antwerp.”<sup>5</sup> Very little of that early mail was handstamped in transit at La Rochelle, but the cover shown below (destination USA via Paris) was.



(FIG. 270.)



(FIG. 270 bis.)



*H. H. Coleman, Esq.,  
723 Eleventh St., N.W.,  
Washington,  
D.C.  
Estate Unie d'Amerique*



ON THE REVERSE

Cover franked with correct 25 centimes postage with Boma July 13, 1911 CDS. The S/S Elisabethville I departed Matadi on July 14 and stopped en route to Antwerp at La Rochelle-Pallice where this was cancelled July 31 and put on a train to Paris where it arrived August 1 (the ship docked at Antwerp on August 2). From Paris the cover travelled to Washington, D.C. where it arrived August 10.

For their help in making this article possible, I would like to acknowledge and thank Phillip Cockrill, Abbe G. Gudenkauf, Ed Hirdler, the late Ray Keach, Robert Kinsley, Laurence Lambert, Stanley Luft, and Norman Lurch.

#### References:

1 Raymond Salles, *La Post Maritime Francaise*, Tome III, *Les Paquebots de l'Atlantique Sud*, Paris 1963 (reprinted by James Bendon, Cyprus 1992)

2 *ibid.* p. 169

3 *ibid.* p. 178-9

4 *ibid.* p. 209

5 Abbe G. Gudenkauf, written communication to E. Hirdler, March 30, 1997  
124:8

#### **Emile Banning**

In Bulletin 122 Roger Nailer asked about the people that some Belgian Congo towns were named after. One of these was Emile Banning after whom Banningville was named. Thanks to our member Charles Stockman and his excellent web site (<http://users.skynet.be/chst/>), we can provide this information. The English translation will be presented in the Bulletin. Anyone wishing to see the original French version should go to Mr. Stockman's site. Please note any translation errors are the fault of the Bulletin editor. Here is the information:

Emile Banning (Liege 1836-1898) Senior official, journalist, writer, theorist of colonization, doctor of philosophy and letters. He began as a journalist with the *l'Echo du Parlement* and civil servant to the royal Library. Rogier transferred him to Foreign Affairs, as librarian-archivist and translator. His work as historical advisor distinguished him, feeding his studies of the diplomatic problems arising in his time. He was noticed by Léopold II to whom he provided invaluable help with questions concerning the Congo. An independent spirit, he did not hesitate to distance himself from royal policy after 1890. He was the Belgian delegate to the Conferences of Berlin 1884 and Brussels 1890, and was member of the royal Academy of Belgium. (Denoël Thierry, the new dictionary of the Belgians, *Le Cri* 1992)

Future Bulletins will discuss others after whom Belgian Congo towns are named.

#### **Two Interesting Postage Due Usages**

Shown on the next page are two interesting usages of Belgian Congo 1923 postage due issues. The first is a South African official cover franked with a one penny stamp that was originally mailed to Johannesburg, South Africa, but was then forwarded to the Congo. Upon arrival it was taxed 2.35 francs. Can anyone explain this amount of postage due?



The second item, shown below is a post card mailed from Russia to the Belgian Congo. It is franked on the reverse with a Russian 5 kopeck stamp. Upon arrival it was taxed 80 centimes. Once again, can anyone explain the postage due amount?



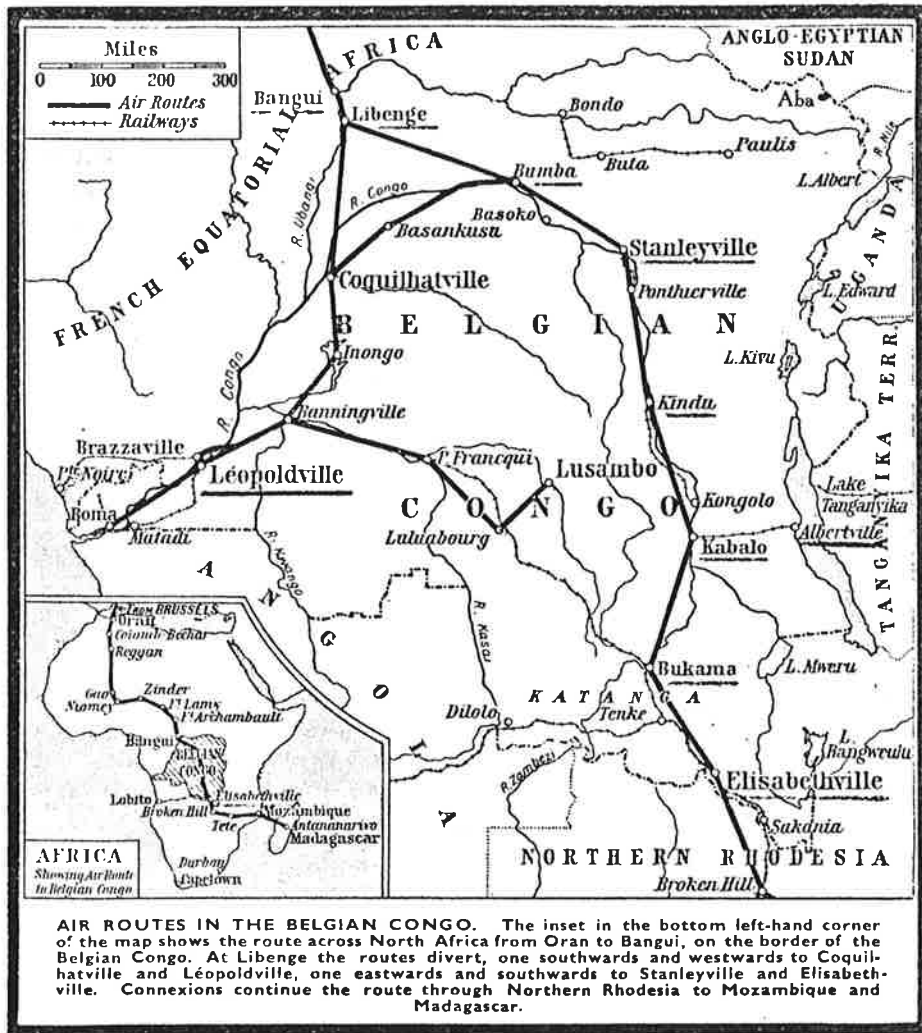


PART 2

By Norman Clowes

In a recent issue of the Bulletin the reader was offered some introductory notes and reasonably detailed comments on 1930s mail carried by Imperial Airways to within striking distance of the Congo, for onwards carriage by road, rail or air. The reader will recall that - to the writer's regret - only two out of eleven examples used as illustrations were commercial mail. In the sense that philatelic mail can sometimes give a clearer (than commercial covers) indication of routes taken, the weighting might be acceptable.

To be honest, however, the writer's collection contains comparatively little commercial mail into the Congo, and most of that was not touched by Imperial Airways. On the other hand, mail from the Congo can be chosen from a wider variety and so this second part will have a more diverse menu of examples. Incidentally, just as (in pre-political correctness parlance) man embraces woman, so does Congo embrace Ruanda-Urundi in this article.



The above map is undated but can be assumed to be relevant to late 1936 or early 1937. It is incorporated within this article not particularly for the internal routes shown but mainly to give a general idea of the geography of the area.

## MAIL FROM THE CONGO

### The situation before 1931

The varying air services within the Congo in the 1920s did not connect directly with any other air mail system and the only indirect connection was at Leopoldville for rail and sea carriage to Casablanca (later Dakar) whence the final stage to France was by Latécoère. Mail from the Lower Congo and from Katanga to Europe used this route. There were other surface routes, especially from the N.E. Congo, which linked with well-established rail and sea services to Europe and elsewhere. Indeed, semi-official or official routes, partly by runners, had operated for over 40 years.

### The effect of Imperial Airways

Starting in March 1931, Imperial Airways enabled the white (mainly Belgian) population in the N.E. Congo to have faster links with Europe and the value of the new connections was soon recognized by the Congolese authorities. The different connecting points are now set out: some obviously ceased to be of use when Imperial Airways changed their routes while others remained operative through much of the 1930s. Numbering of illustrations will be from N°12 onwards.

#### (i) Juba

The writer's collection contains examples from 1931 to 1938 and Cover N°12, Kilo-Mines to Brussels, - an exception to the normal pattern - illustrates how correspondents adapted to the new possibilities. Earlier mail from the gold mines had evidently gone across Lake Albert and then by road and rail to Mombasa for the long sea voyage via Suez.

Congolese franking 9.75fr (of which 8fr should have been in air stamps) is 50c too much for 10-20gr and, as all the stamps were still valid for postage, there must have been a very good reason to pay 35 mills to have the cover actually posted in Juba. The latter had replaced Rejaf, ten miles up the Nile, as the trade and traffic centre for the area.



Cover N°12  
(see next page for the obverse)



*Par avion  
via DJUBA*



*Monsieur Van Seymouten*



*40 Rue Wex*

**AIR MAIL**

*Bruxelles  
(Belgique)*

Cover N°12 (obverse)

'Affranchi par l'expéditeur' usually means (philatelic) overfranking in practice - as is the case with Cover N°13, Boma 4.12.33 to Switzerland. Nevertheless this is a good example of deliberate and correctly detailed routing to Europe via Juba, from almost the furthest possible point in the Congo, which point itself was served by the fortnightly sailings connecting with the French air service Dakar - Toulouse. The massive overfranking of 16fr basic postage - as only 2fr basic and 2fr registration were needed - was presumably to get a used example of the 20fr top value. However, the air stamps represent the correct 1.50fr normal air fee plus 2 x 3fr per 5gr special air surcharge via Imperial Airways to Europe, the rate having changed to reflect distance carried by air. The sender had missed the 1.12.33 sailing and the next would have left Boma on 15.12, giving delivery in Switzerland perhaps around 27 or 28 December. So there was a gain of only about 3 or 4 days, this being less than normal and mainly due to the time between Stanleyville and departure from Juba by Flight AN 145. Transit marks make a fine showing on the back of the cover: Leopoldville 6.12.33, Stanleyville 9.12, Alexandria 20.12, Brindisi 22.12, Pescara-Milan TPO 23.12 and arrival at Bulle 24.12.



Cover N°13 124:17

(ii) The writer has not personally seen mail from the Congo which went aboard Imperial Airways aircraft at Mwanza, an option available only between March 1931 and January 1932. However, Foden (Belgian Congo S.C. Bulletin 37/17) reported a cover from Kigali 4.9.31 via Usumbura 7.9 and Mwanza 17.9 to London. Furthermore, Van der Haegen has displayed, inter alia, covers Albertville 6.5.31 to Bruges and Usumbura 4.7.31 to Dinant, both arriving at Kigoma by lake steamer from different directions and then going by rail via Tabora to Mwanza for northwards flights. Certainly this route was logical for Congolese towns on or near to Lake Tanganyika.

(iii) Kisumu

During the opening months of the Imperial Airways service to East Africa it was not unknown for mail to be unloaded at the wrong place: very sharp complaints by local postmasters are on file. So far there is no record of mail to or from the Congo having been routed via Kisumu either by accident or deliberately. In fact, geography and communications probably made such a route pointless.

(iv) Kampala/Port Bell

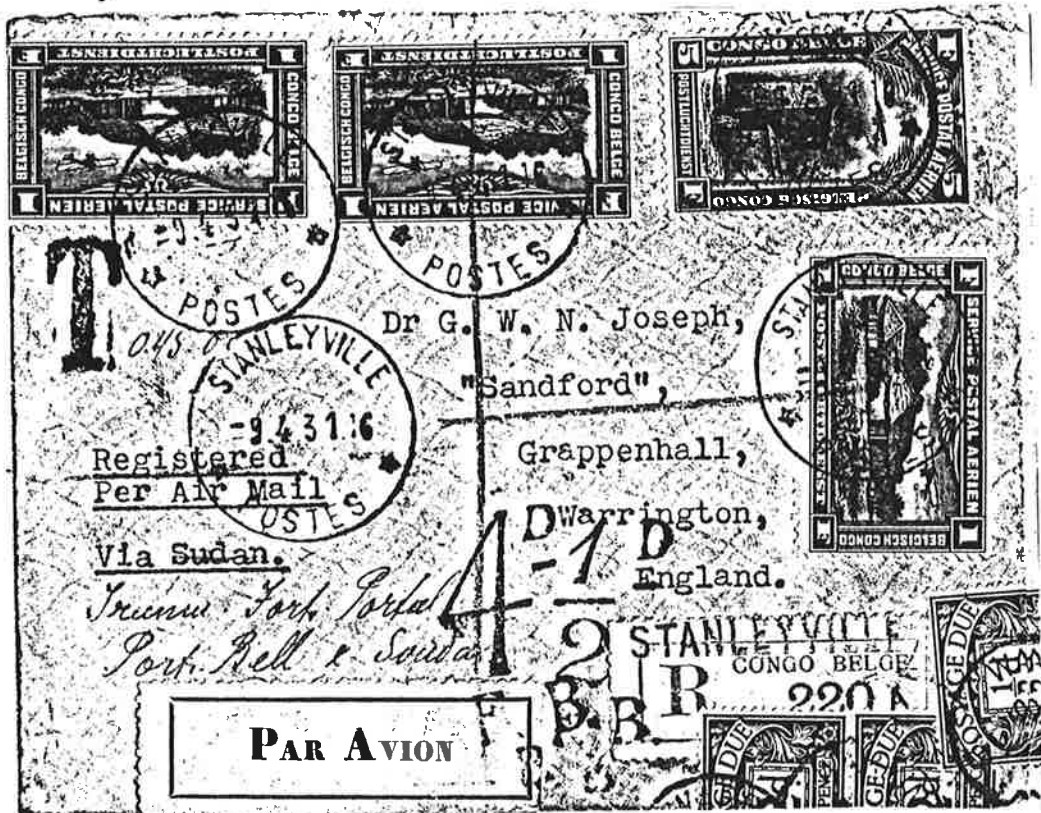
From March 1931 until the beginning of 1933 Imperial Airways seaplanes called at Port Bell, at the northern end of Lake Victoria and which, in the context, may be treated as synonymous with Kampala, about five miles inland by a branch railway line. Following a change to landplanes, Entebbe then took over for the 4½ years until the Empire flying boats brought the route back through Port Bell. Thereafter it was Port Bell right up to the airline's August 1939 timetable, probably the last before war broke out.

For decades mail from different parts of the N.E.Congo had passed through Kampala and the pattern continued throughout the 1930s. Transit postmarks were applied there even during Imperial Airways' 'Entebbe period' (see above) when the mail was presumably bagged and taken direct to Entebbe aerodrome.

The earliest cover northwards via Imperial Airways known to the writer is Cover N°14, Stanleyville 9.4.31 to Warrington. The routeing via Kampala is singular and the cover deserves more than a page to itself.



Cover N°14 (reverse)



Cover N°14

Stanleyville 9.4 to Warrington 9.5 via Fort Portal 25.4 and Kampala 26.4

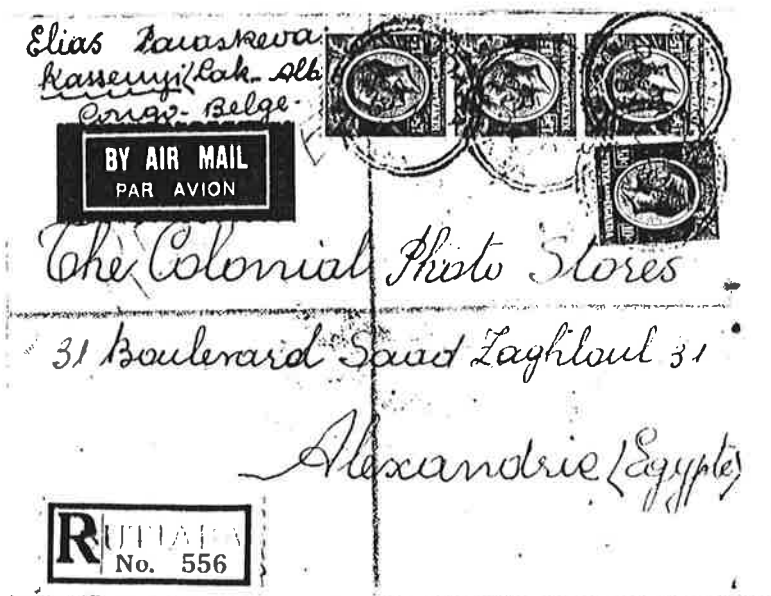
There is more to this cover than meets the eye. It is the earliest Congolese cover seen (by the writer) which had been carried most of the way by Imperial Airways. [From memory] the addressee is known to have been a rather selective creator of philatelic covers but the turn of events could well have surprised him.

On the back are 2.50fr in ordinary stamps, a note of the weight (11gr) and 'Sender: G.P.O. Stanleyville.' It seems likely that Joseph sent the cover, quite possibly pre-franked, with the request that it be put in the post. Using the first E. Africa flight southwards it could have arrived under separate cover at Stanleyville on 25.3 or 27.3 [inferred from other covers held]. Alternatively, use of the second southwards flight should also have given enough time for the return journey on 9.4.

The cover bears correct air stamps 2 x 4fr/10gr for the new route but, needing 2fr basic postage and 2fr registration fee, it is 1.50fr ordinary postage short. Using 1fr Congolese = 15 gold centimes, twice the deficiency = '0.45 or' as indicated in red ink. This, in turn, translates exactly into 4½d postage due in England.

As British announcements had stipulated marking 'via Sudan', Joseph did just that but had his route altered by the Stanleyville P.O. [same red ink as the '0.45c or'] to the pattern at bottom left. This suggests that Stanleyville had not yet had full operating instructions for air mail as Irumu & F. Portal were on a long-established but time-consuming route. Examples abound of later Stan. mail going out via Juba. In this case the cover would have reached England a week earlier via Juba, even allowing for I.A. connections chaos April/May.

A variation on the Kampala theme is seen in Cover N°15, in that it was taken from Kasenyi across Lake Albert, posted (total postage, front and back, 80c.) at Butiaba, Uganda 25.11.34, passed through Jinja 28.11, Kampala 29.11 and arrived at Alexandria 4.12: sensible enough as Kasenyi is on the lake and the post office there had been closed on 7.10.33. Notes written by the late Stuart Rossiter - a former owner of the cover - put forward the theory that the stamps would have been purchased on board the lake steamer. The registration fee was 30c at the time and the fact that the postage 80c is made up of six low value stamps does suggest that 50c was the correct air fee to Egypt.



Cover N°15

(v) Entebbe

Comment has already been made on the 1933 - 1937 period when the connection at Entebbe was not apparent, due to the absence of transit marks.

Although connections with Imperial Airways were so important for 1930s mail from the N.E.Congo - albeit increasingly less important from 1936 as the main SABENA/Air Afrique main route improved - no attempt seems to have been made to set up any air feeder service until late 1939.

Cover N°16 appears to have been carried on a first trial flight by SABENA from Usumbura 25.11.39 to Entebbe (and thence to Brussels 13.12) for the Imperial Airways flying boat service from Port Bell. De Ganck was a usually reliable dealer, with 'Par 1 vol Usumbura - Entebbe...' in his own hand and there is a further pencilled '1<sup>e</sup> Essai avant l'ouverture régulière' added by someone else. There was a lot of SABENA activity in this corner of the Congo at the time but this apparent trial flight does not appear in those reference works so far consulted; nor any subsequent regular flight.

For the record, the lowly 10c stamp with wide overprint is very scarce on cover.



Cover N°16

(vi) Dodoma

In 1914 the railway from Dar-es-Salaam (then part of German East Africa) was completed as far as Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika. The full importance of this postal route could not be realized until after the First World War but it was then possible to increase the volume of mail sent via Albertville, Usumbura and Uvira - all three postal exchange offices and ports on the Congo shores of the lake. It follows, therefore, that when Imperial Airways went down as far as Cape Town, the call at Dodoma - on the railway since late 1910 - became even more important for mail from the Congo. This lasted until the route changed in June 1937.

Cover N°17, Kindu 4.11.32 to Brussels [arrival there shown by N°5 postman's mark] and meriting its own page q.v. clearly shows the route intended and has the correct 1932 air fee for 20-30gr i.e. 3 x 4fr/10gr. Basic postage (up to 40gr) and registration fee correctly total 4fr.

Cover N°18, Albertville 29.1.36 to Paris, shows the same sequence of transit marks but indicates how the franking rule - that air stamps only should be used only for the air surcharge - was ignored at times, even though the Governor-General had repeated the rule in May 1934. The basic rate to France plus registration fee = 5fr, with air fee 3.50fr: the franking is the very reverse.

The convenience of the Lake Tanganyika/Dodoma route is further indicated by Cover N°19 which originated at Uvira (a minor port at the top of the lake), was posted on board a lake steamer and given 'Paquebot' treatment at Kigoma before moving by rail to Dodoma for flight AN 206. In this case the basic postage 1.50fr was the first stage of the concessionary rate between the Congo and Belgium. The lightweight envelope must have had very flimsy contents as the air fee 3fr was sufficient for the first 5gr stage only. The boxed 'By Air to Brindisi' was applied at Dodoma.

1932 Miscellaneous mail to Belgium



Cover N°17

Kindu 4.11 to Brussels (Postman's mark No 5)

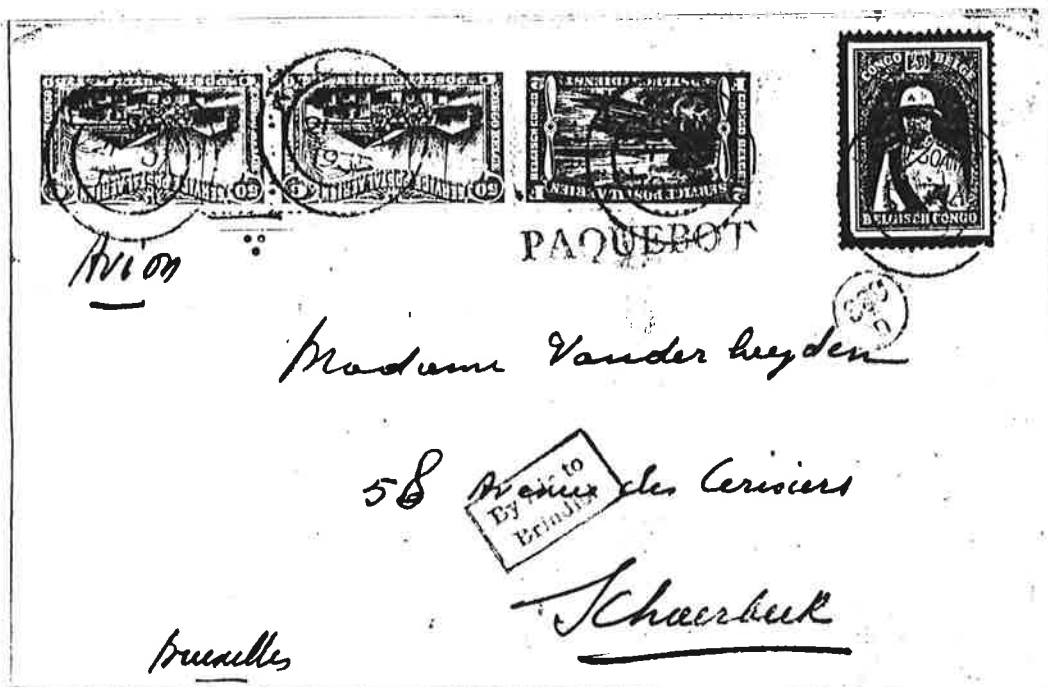
The route is ideally indicated by the transit marks. By rail to Albertville 6.11 and then across Lake Tanganyika to Kigoma 9.11.

The next stage was by rail to Dodoma 12.11 where the cover was placed on the Imperial Airways service northwards to Brindisi 18.11 By rail thereafter, commencing with TPO Pescara-Milan 18.11.





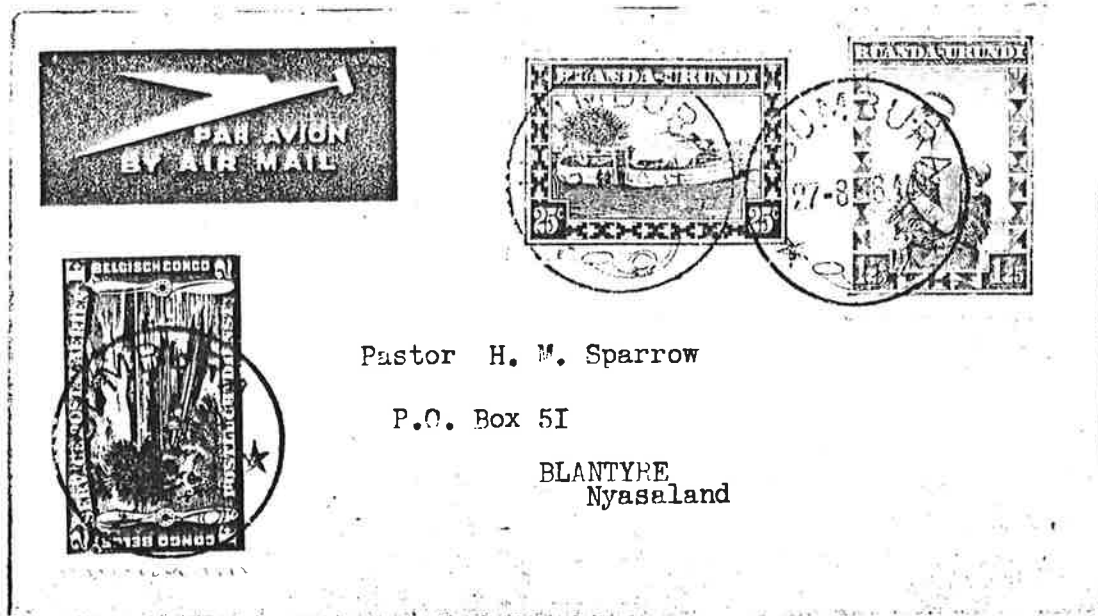
Cover N°18



Cover N°19

(return address Uvira) via Kigoma 21.1.35 & Dodoma 23.1 to Brussels

Before moving from the Dodoma connection it is worth remembering that it was also convenient for mail southwards. Cover N°20, Usumbura 27.8.36, Dodoma 2.9 to Blantyre 5.9 made very good time, with the first stage to Kigoma being almost certainly by lake steamer. A previous owner of the cover opined that the first stage was by road but that seems very unlikely, from perusal of a detailed map. Imperial Airways flight AS 374 left Dodoma 4.9 and the final stage was from Salisbury to Blantyre by RANA. By now postage rates were becoming even more complex and the strange basic 1.50fr is in fact the concessionary rate for members of the African Postal Union, formed only five months earlier. The 2fr air fee was specific to Nyasaland, S.Africa and S.W. Africa, via Dodoma.



Cover N°20

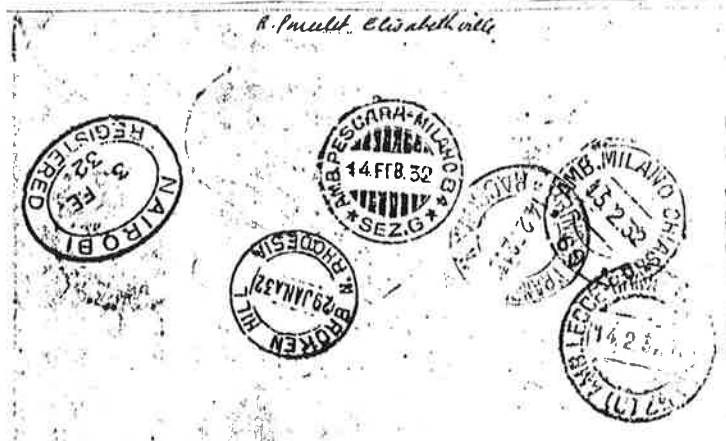
(vii) Broken Hill

As early as 1910 the railway from Northern Rhodesia had been extended into the Congo as far as Elisabethville, the second most important town in the Congo and capital of the vital mining province of Katanga. A large white population and major commercial interests engendered much mail. As soon as Imperial Airways started serving Broken Hill in early 1932, regular railway connections were organized and, such was the demand, a regular air feeder service (Elisabethville to Broken Hill) was started by the Aéro Club du Katanga seven or eight months later.

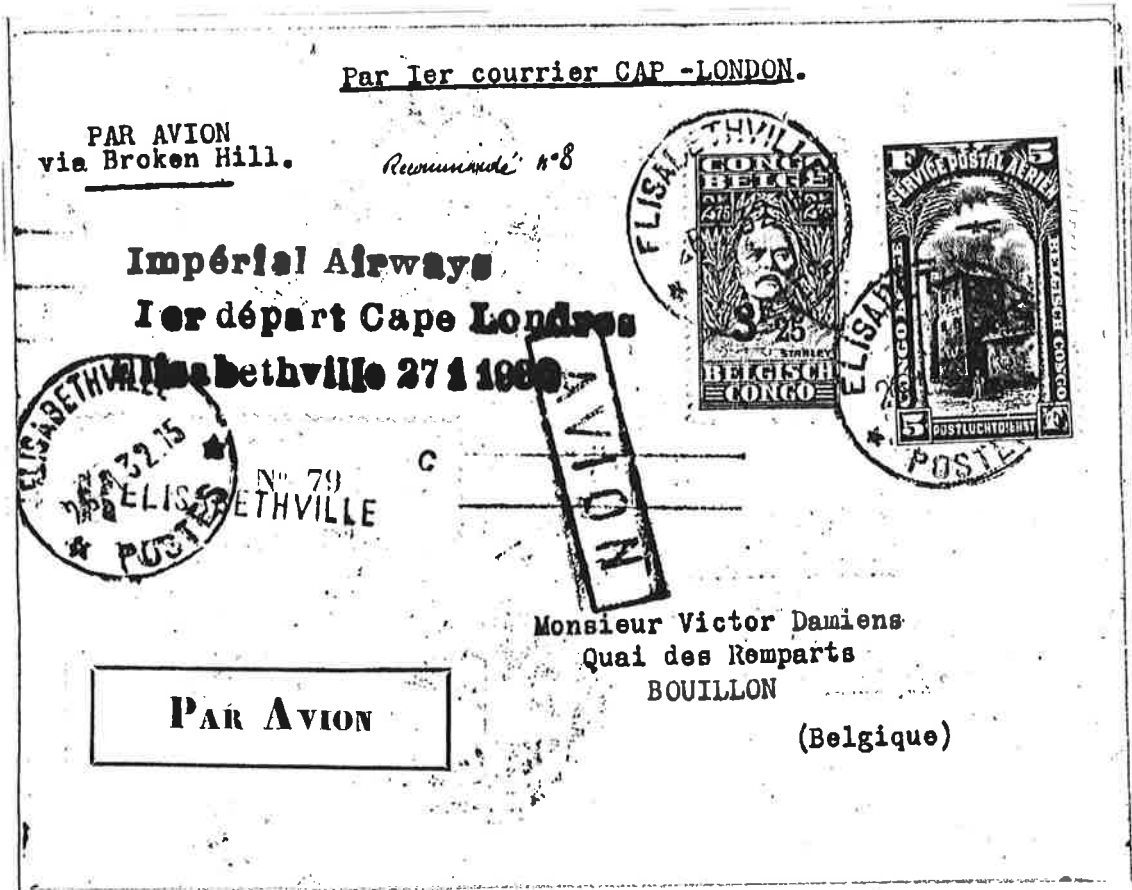
Surprisingly, the writer does not hold any examples of pre-feeder commercial mail but the separate sheet bearing (philatelic) Cover N°21 shows the pattern. The postage is correct, with 3.25fr basic postage at concessionary rate to Belgium plus registration fee; in addition there is the air surcharge which was 5fr/10gr at this stage, before the establishment of the air feeder service.



1932 First regular Cape Town - London flight by Imperial Airways



Three-line cachet applied at Elisabethville



Cover N°21

Elisabethville 26.1 to Bouillon via B.Hill 29.1, Nairobi 3.2 and sundry Italian offices.

This cover went by rail to Broken Hill and arrived in good time to be picked up by the first flight from the south. However there had been two accidents and the first regular service did not arrive at B. Hill until 4.2. Meanwhile the second southbound aircraft, the 'City of Baghdad' had been turned around and took the mail from B.Hill and other points to Nairobi on the so-called 'Emergency Flight', mail from which can be detected by the transit marks, usually Nairobi 3.2.

This is not the place to argue exactly when the (incorporated) Aéro Club du Katanga began regular - as opposed to trial - flights from Elisabethville to Broken Hill and vice versa. Every commentator seems to differ on finer points and the writer accepts Broeckaert's belief that the first weekly flight was on 26.8.1932. The air fee was increased to 7fr/10gr, with the extra 2fr going theoretically to the company. For about perhaps sixteen months regular flights were made by the Aéro Club to connect with Imperial Airways: whenever the latter altered their timetable the Aéro Club did likewise.

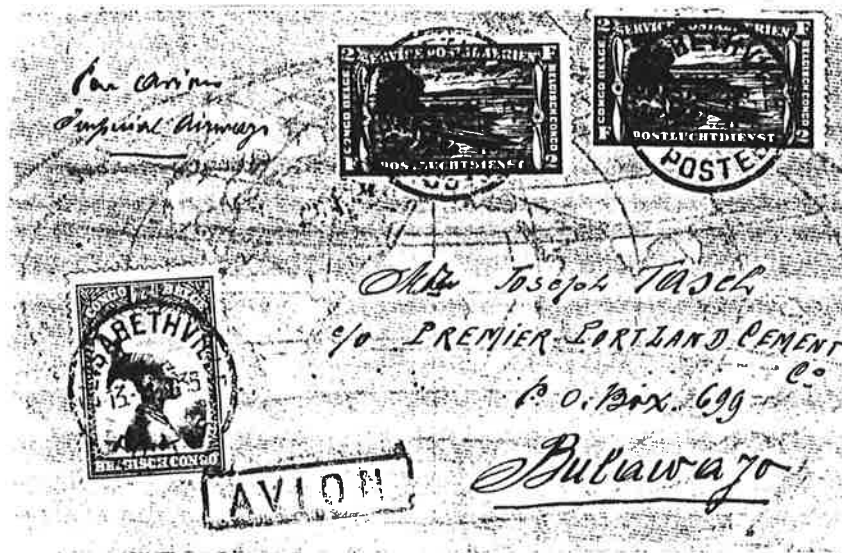
By the end of 1933 the Aéro Club was conveying about 11kgs of mail a week for onward carriage by Imperial Airways. However, the strain was too much for what was fundamentally a non-profit making enterprise which appears to have received insufficient help from officialdom. Probably in January 1934 carriage of mail and passengers was transferred to a new entity, Société des Transports Aériens du Katanga, of which little now appears to be known. Air fees changed several times and Cover N°22, Jadotville 11.8.34 via Rome 22.8 to Paris 23.8, bears the 3fr/5gr air rate applicable between about 28.3.33 and 1.6.35.



Cover N°22

The feeder service came to an end with the extension of the SABENA/Air Afrique joint Europe-Congo service as far as Elisabethville in November 1935. At the same time Régie Malgache began operations between Elisabethville and the island of Madagascar via Broken Hill. Obviously there was still a useful flow of Congo mail by Imperial Airways southwards from Broken Hill but much of the northwards volume was to switch to the SABENA route.

Cover N°23, Elisabethville 13.11.35 was carried on the last feeder service to Broken Hill 13.11 and thence on Imperial Airways flight AS 290, due to pass through on the same date but running two days late. Postage was correct at 2.50fr basic plus 2.25fr air fee, the latter being a figure impossible to affix in air stamps - so much for the rules !



Cover N°23

### Concluding remarks

It is always more difficult to prove a negative. This article has provided examples of various routes used up to the relevant aerodrome but there is no telling how much mail was routed deliberately to avoid the Imperial Airways service. For example, the final item shown, Cover N°24 from Stanleyville 23.7.32 to England, was routed away from the N.E.Congo by internal SABENA flight to Leopoldville 26.7. The odds are that the sender knew that his letter would be in time for the 28.7 departure of the 'Albertville', giving likely eventual arrival in England on about the same date as Imperial Airways would have provided via Juba. The big difference was in the air fee - 1.50fr (up to 20gr) as sent but 4fr, or even 8fr (10-20gr) via Juba.

Outside the scope of this article - but worth future thought - is the way in which some post offices aimed mail at Imperial Airways by different routes. Costermansville comes to mind, with known covers sent to Brussels via Dodoma in mid February 1932 and via Kampala in July 1932.

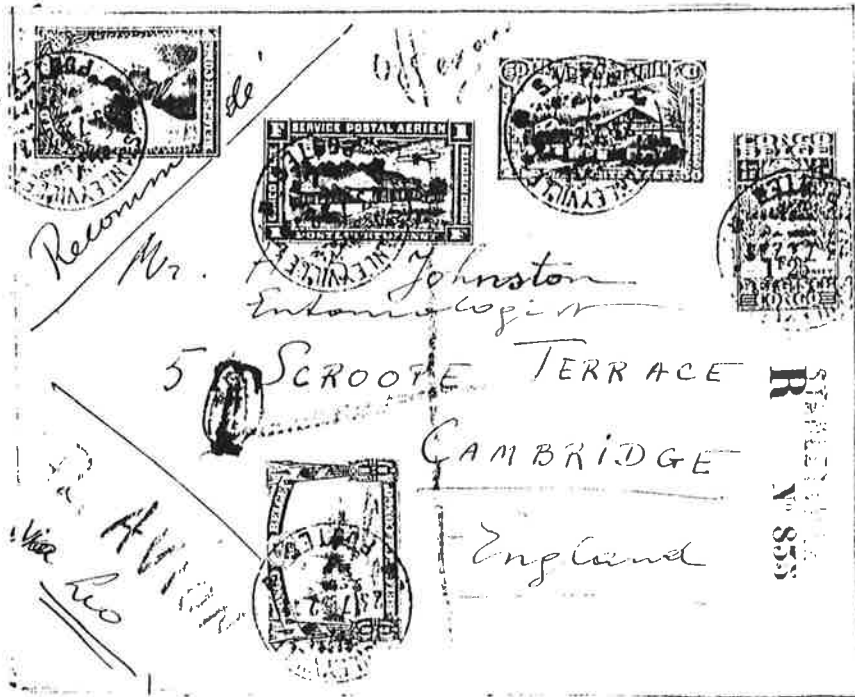
On the next page there appears a small extract from the 1.6.1935 table of air fees from the Congo to international destinations A - B, to which a (destination only) basic rate had to be added.

Given the various possible permutations of route and rate, the writer would welcome black and white photocopies (cover front plus notes on anything of interest on the back) of any air mail from the Congo prior to World War II. They would reinforce his existing reference file and, in return, opinions would be offered to the owners concerning points brought to mind by the material. Any non sequiturs will undoubtedly be classic !

Norman Clowes, 20 Ogwen Drive, Lakeside, Cardiff CF23 6LL, United Kingdom

### Note for members of the BCSC

The above invitation was originally made to members of the Imperial Airways Study Group, few of whom possess reference books on Congo routes and rates. It goes without saying that the writer's reference file still needs more examples of unusual and/or 'proving' air mail. BCSC members' suggestions/disagreement arising from both parts of this article will be summarized later for use by the editor.



Cover N°24

2 REGIME INTERNATIONAL

Pays de destination	Echelon de poids (1)	Surtaxe via			
		Bangui	Juba	Entebbe Dodoma	Broken-Hill
Afghanistan	5 grs	5.75	2.75	2.75	4.50
Afrique du Sud (Union)	"	-	2.50	2.00	3.00
Afrique du Sud-Ouest	"	-	2.50	2.00	3.00
Afrique Equatoriale Française	"	1. -			
Afrique Occidentale Française	"	1.50	5.50	5.50	7.50
Afrique Orientale Portugaise	"	-	3.75	3.25	3.50
Alaska (2)	"	4.75	3.75	3.75	5.75
Albanie	"	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Algérie	"	2.25	3.50	3.50	5.50
Allemagne	"	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Amérique du Sud	"	21.00	20.00	20.00	22.00
Angola (3)	"				
Arabie	"	4.00	1.50	1.50	3.50
Arménie	"	5.75	3.50	3.50	3.50
Australie (Commonwealth)	"	9.00	6.50	6.50	8.50
Autriche	"	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Bechuanaland	"		1.75	1.25	2.25
Belgique	"	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Bornéo du Nord Britannique	"	7.50	5.00	5.00	7.00
Bulgarie	"	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50

This small extract shows air mail surcharges applicable from 1.6.1935 and is taken from 'Arrêtés et Ordonnances concernant les Tarifs Postaux au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi' by Charles Stockmans and Roger Gallant. The Bangui column refers to the joint Belgian and French service which had begun a few months earlier.