

Secretary:

L. G. GREEN
ANVERS, 29 NEW ROAD
ESHER, SURREY KT10 9PG
ENGLAND,
U.K.

BELGIAN CONGO



STUDY CIRCLE

Bulletin Editor:

E. M. LAVITT
P.O. BOX 900
ROCKVILLE
CONN. 06086
U. S. A.

BULLETIN 85

SEPTEMBER 1992

President: Peter S. Foden
4 Muireston Green
Livingston, EH54 9EQ
Scotland, U.K.

Vice President and General
Sales Secretary

Exchange Packet Secretary
B. P. Hudson
92 Oakley St.
London SW3, England, U.K.

R. H. Keach
25 Kingswood Road
Tadworth,
Surrey KT20 5EE, England, U.K.

CONTENTS

PAGES

PLATING MOLS STAMPS (AND SUPPLEMENT PART 1 PAGES 1-14 AND PART 2 PAGES 1-18)	2
MOLS STAMP WITH MISSING LINE OF PERFORATION	3
EDITORS NOTES AND NEWS	3
THE CANCELLATIONS OF THE NORMAL POST OFFICE OF BELGIAN CONGO 1886-1960 & RUANDA URUNDI 1917-1962 (A New Edition)	4
A 'GOLD' EXHIBIT	5-6
THE "C.R." CACHET-A CONTINUING MYSTERY	7-10
1992 (3) AUCTION SALE	(11-15)

PLATING MOLS STAMPS

Enclosed with this Bulletin are the first two parts of a series of eleven articles which will attempt a comprehensive description of the Mols issues and plate combinations, listing the known varieties and giving guidance on the identification of plates and sheet positions. The first part is a general introduction, and the other ten parts will cover each of the values 5c to 10fr in turn. The objective is to bring together and update the research that has been done on these stamps over the years, much of which has been published in the Bulletin, but never in a consolidated form.

It is my aim that the parts should be circulated with the Bulletin as follows:

Introduction, 5c	September 1992
10c, 15c	December 1992
25c, 40c	March 1993
50c, 1fr	June 1993
3/3½fr, 5fr, 10fr	September 1993

I hope that these articles will stimulate interest in these fascinating stamps, and encourage further members to take up plating and sheet reconstruction. I would very much welcome any questions or comments on the articles which members would like to send me. In particular, I would be glad to have inaccuracies pointed out to me, or information on varieties which members can confirm but which I have not included in the listings. In the light of comments received, the Study Circle will consider reissuing the articles in consolidated form, amended to incorporate corrections submitted, towards the end of 1993.

I would like to thank Ray Keach, who is checking the articles with great care and thoroughness as I write them, and whose expertise will do much to improve their authoritativeness.

Finally, if members would like any help with identifying or positioning stamps in their possession, they should not hesitate to send them to me. Ray Keach has provided such a service for long time and I would be delighted to do the same.

BRIAN HUDSON
92 Oakley Street,
London SW3 5NR.

MOLS STAMP WITH MISSING LINE OF PERFORATION

In the June issue of the Bulletin I reported the acquisition of a 10F with Congo Belge overprint L1 with top line of perforation missing and illustrated a "plate number" copy. I have since learned that the number in the margin, unlike United States sheets, is not a plate number but a sheet number. A. G. Wood has sent a photo copy of a 1973 sale by Willy Balasse in which two lots of this stamp with top line of perforation missing were offered. A strip of 5 (positions 1-5) unused with sheet number 130 and Waterlow imprint (inverted) and a strip of 4 (positions 2-5), used (cancelled to order?), with sheet number 129 and Waterlow imprint. Thus it may be presumed there were at least 15 of these 10F stamps with missing top perforations since your editor's copy is sheet number 128. Mr Wood also observed that it was normal for the Waterlow imprint to be inverted in relation to the stamps in the top margin.

EDITOR'S NOTES AND NEWS

With this issue we begin the first of a series of 11 articles on PLATING MOLS STAMPS by Brian Hudson. His letter of introduction appears on the preceding page. Your editor confidently predicts they will be the definitive work on these issues and, when coupled with the Frenay works will, at last, make excellent order out of the chaos created by the printers of the "Mols" over the years.

I, for one, will await with much anticipation the issue of each installment and the ultimate issue of the articles in consolidated form. The Society is indeed fortunate that Mr. Hudson has undertaken this immense task and will share his knowledge with us all. The articles will be appended to each Bulletin and will carry their own page numbers.

Our member Regis Hoffman is to be congratulated for winning a VERMEIL for his exhibit of ALLIED FORCES IN EAST AFRICA, WORLD WAR I at the American Philatelic Society "Stampshow" held in August at Oakland California.

In the December Bulletin we will include a "note" from Andre Jeukens about the Airgraph Service in the Congo and an "Addendum to Censorship During World War 2" by Peter Foden as well as another installment of the Hudson work.

"THE CANCELLATIONS OF THE NORMAL POST OFFICE OF BELGIAN CONGO

1886-1960 & RUANDA URUNDI 1917-1962"--New Edition

As announced in the June bulletin, copies of the new edition of the cancellations book will be issued free to all paid-up members, they paying only the cost of postage and packing.

Unless there are unforeseen problems copies of the book will be ready for dispatch in October and, so that we may know how many copies to print, requests for copies should be made immediately.

The costs of postage and packing are as follows:

Members in Belgium		85 FB
Members elsewhere in Europe		202 FB or £3.60
Members outside Europe	1) by sea mail	202 FB or £3.60 or \$7.20
	2) by air mail	405 FB or £7.25 or \$14.50

Members paying in Belgian francs should send their orders to D. Van der Hauwaert, Ubbelstraat 141, 3550 Heusden-Zolder, Belgium

Members paying in £ to L. G. Green, 29 New Road, Esher, Surrey KT10 9PG, England

Members paying in \$ to E. M. Lavitt, P O Box 900, Rockville, CT 06066, USA.

Members who wish to pay the postage through their existing accounts with Keach should so indicate to R. H. Keach, 25 Kingswood Road, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5EE, England.

Updating of the information in the book will be made periodically in the Bulletin. Members finding errors in it or, particularly, discovering new cancellations or extended dates of use of recorded cancellations are requested to inform B. P. Hudson, 92 Oakley Street, London SW3 5NR, England.

A 'GOLD' EXHIBIT

Dr. Wilcke received a GOLD for his exhibit of the "Mols" issues at the Philadelphia National stamp show in November of 1991. Some of his observations, which follow, may very well help our exhibiting members. Ed.

"I highly recommend the AAPE Critique service (A service of the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors) to any of you who are inclined toward the exhibiting field. The director of the service, Harry Meier goes out of his way to help those who are really interested in improving a philatelic exhibit.

If you are trying to be a serious exhibitor, I advise you to join the AAPE and take advantage of this very helpful service. While you have to pay your membership dues to the AAPE, the Critique Service is free to members--and there are not any bargains out there today. (If interested one might write to: The Philatelic Exhibitor, Box 432, South Orange, NJ 07079 USA)

I should like to add that in exhibiting today, at least in the United States, the title page of the exhibit and a synopsis page that is given to the judges prior to the show are crucial elements. This is especially true for material that is little known in U.S. philatelic circles. These items give the judges the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with the material. While an occasional viewer might take the time to read the title pages, they are really and more importantly directed at the judges to help them get the 'flavor' of the exhibit in advance." H.W.W.

Dr. Wilcke reported that he used the help of our members Ron Strawser, Ed Hirdler, Herb Rabiner and Ray Keach in his studies and the preparation of the exhibit. The sharing of knowledge is one of the privileges and pleasures of our membership Ed.

His synopsis page on the following page which is illustrative of "what worked well" at the Philadelphia Show.

SYNOPSIS OF "THE BELGIAN CONGO 'MOLS' ISSUE"

THIS EXHIBIT COUNTS ITS BEGINNING FROM 1956-57, THE YEAR WE SPENT IN BELGIUM BEFORE TRAVELLING TO THE BELGIAN CONGO TO BEGIN A 16 YEAR PERIOD OF MISSIONARY SERVICE. THIS BELGIAN CONGO MATERIAL, NOT BEING READILY AVAILABLE FROM MOST AMERICAN DEALERS, WAS PAINSTAKINGLY ASSEMBLED FROM SOURCES IN ENGLAND, BELGIUM AS WELL AS FROM THE FEW CONGO COLLECTORS WITHIN THE U.S. PHILATELIC FRATERNITY.

WHEN BUILDING A COLLECTION OF EARLY CONGO MATERIAL IT IS IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT A VERY SMALL NUMBER OF THE USED STAMPS ARE FOUND ON COVER. THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO MANY FACTORS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE RATHER SMALL NUMBER OF LITERATE PEOPLE RESIDING IN CENTRAL AFRICA DURING THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES. THE RAVAGES OF THE HUMIDITY AND VERMIN CERTAINLY ADDED TO THE PROBLEM. THEN, MUCH OF THE SURVIVING COVER MATERIAL FELL VICTIM TO THE PASSION OF THE ERA: STAMP REMOVAL. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHILE MOST VALUES ARE SCARCE, THE 5 AND 10 CENTIMES VALUES OF THE "CONGO BELGE" TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS ARE VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN ON COVER. ANY USED EXAMPLES ARE EXTREMELY RARE AS THE ENTIRE PRINTING WAS PURCHASED BY STAMP DEALERS FOR USE IN PACKETS AND NEVER SENT TO THE CONGO FOR POSTAL USE.

THIS EXHIBIT WAS FORMED TO EXPLORE THIS EXTENDED ISSUE OF ENGRAVED BICOLOR PICTORIALS PRODUCED BY AND FOR THE CONGO FREE STATE AND EXTENDED INTO THE ERA OF ITS SUCCESSOR STATE, THE BELGIAN CONGO. IT WAS AT THE WISH OF KING LEOPOLD II THAT THIS FIRST PICTORIAL ISSUE FOR AFRICA WAS PRINTED.

WATERLOW AND SONS, LTD. OF LONDON WAS AWARDED THE CONTRACT TO PRODUCE THESE BEAUTIFUL LINE ENGRAVED STAMPS. THE PICTORIAL CENTERS, NORMALLY IN BLACK, REMAINED VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED THROUGHOUT THE MULTIPLE ISSUES. ALTERATIONS TO THE COLORED FRAMES DISTINGUISH THE VARIOUS ISSUES OF THE SERIES. THE SISTER FIRM OF WATERLOW BROTHERS AND LEYTON WAS GIVEN AN ORDER FOR TWO OF THE HIGH VALUES IN 1898 FOR THE FREE STATE AND AGAIN IN 1910 FOR THE BELGIAN CONGO. ARTIST'S MODELS, ESSAYS AND DIE PROOFS FOR THESE ISSUES ARE RARE (MANY UNIQUE).

THE ISSUES OF THE "MOLS" SERIES THAT ARE EXPLORED IN THIS EXHIBIT ARE:

THE 1894-1900 ISSUES FOR THE CONGO FREE STATE	THE 1918 RED CROSS SEMI-POSTALS
THE 1909 "CONGO BELGE" OVERPRINTS	FOR THE BELGIAN CONGO
THE BRUSSELS HAND OVERPRINTS	FOR RUANDA/URUNDI (GERMAN E. AFRICA)
THE LOCAL HAND OVERPRINTS	THE 1921 TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS (REUSE OF 1910) ISSUE
THE BRUSSELS TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS	THE 1922 TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS (MALINES)
THE "PRINCES" TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS	FOR BELGIAN CONGO
THE 1909 UNILINGUAL ISSUE (FRENCH)	FOR RUANDA/URUNDI
THE 1910 BILINGUAL ISSUE (FRENCH/FLEMISH)	THE 1922-23 HAND OVERPRINTS (BOMA)
THE 1915 MODIFIED BILINGUAL ISSUE	THE 1923 HAND OVERPRINTS (ELISABETHVILLE)
THE 1916 HAND OVERPRINTS (RUANDA/URUNDI)	THE HAND STAMPED "TAXES" FOR POSTAGE DUE USE
THE 1916 TYPOGRAPHIC OVERPRINTS (RUANDA/URUNDI)	THE 1925 COLONIAL CAMPAIGN SEMI-POSTAL

AN EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ILLUSTRATE THESE STAMP ISSUES IN THEIR MANY VARIATIONS AS WELL AS SOME ERRORS AND SOME USAGES. FINALLY, SINCE LITERATURE ABOUT THESE INTERESTING STAMP ISSUES IS MAINLY IN FRENCH, THIS IS AN ATTEMPT TO BRING THEM TO LIFE FOR ENGLISH SPEAKING COLLECTORS..

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THE "C.R." CACHET - A CONTINUING MYSTERY P.S. Foden

On Page 20 of Bulletin No. 82, Mr. Keach invited information about the mysterious "C.R." cachet, which appears on the reverse of covers from the Congo (and so far on one cover to the Congo) going through Elisabethville during a period of several months in 1941. This is not a completely new question, having been raised first by Mr. Jeukens some years ago, and first brought to the attention of members in the article on WW2 censorship in Bulletin No. 71 where it is illustrated on page 23.

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that, while more material has come to light with examples of the cachet, we seem to be little further forward in arriving at a convincing explanation for its use. For information, a list of the examples recorded to date is attached, but members may well find copies of the mark lying unnoticed in their own collections. When Mr. Jeukens first brought it to my attention, I found I already had two examples which, due to the gross and smudged appearance of the mark, I simply hadn't thought of it as being deliberate.

A number of possible meanings have occurred to Mr. Jeukens, such as:-

Courrier Rail	Censor Railways	
Censure Rail	Control Railways	Cape Route
Contrôle Rail	Censor Rhodesia	

If the mark is a Congo censorship mark, applied at Elisabethville, we would have to overcome the fact that none of the covers were opened and resealed there, and also that some of them had previously been opened and resealed in the Congo (the listed covers from Costermansville, for instance). Equally, it can scarcely be a South African mark, as one of the covers only travelled as far as Bulawayo.

We also, reluctantly, now have to eliminate any idea of a railway connection, as well as "Cape Route", because of the covers which travelled by air. Unfortunately, because these covers would not have deplaned at all in Rhodesia, "Censor Rhodesia" must also be ruled out. In fact, the existence of these covers, and the cover which only went as far as Rhodesia, seems to prove that the mark must indeed be a Congo one, and only applied at Elisabethville. Similarly, perhaps we have to rule out it being a routeing mark on the strength of the cover coming to the Congo from New York, although as this is still an isolated case, we cannot be absolutely certain that it did not receive the cachet purely by accident. Incidentally, censorship in Rhodesia and South Africa was well-established long before that in the Congo and it is totally improbable that such a primitive mark could relate to these operations. It has also to be remembered that the object of using cachets and labels to denote censorship was to avoid double, or multiple, work in vetting the same documents over again, so the marks are generally apparent on

"C.R." CACHETS continued

the fronts of the censored documents, whereas the "C.R." appears only on the reverse of those seen so far (all covers - unfortunately it has not yet turned up on a postcard).

So, if I am correct, it cannot be a railway mark, nor a censorship mark, and even a routing mark is unlikely on the reverse of the covers; is there some other explanation? On the assumption that it is an Elisabethville mark, we must expect it to be an abbreviation from French, or just possibly Flemish. Could it be a census mark? - i.e. a tally of mail volumes such as undertaken every October in the U.K. - but, if so, why only in 1941 and no other year? Could it be that the covers had to pass through a Central Receiving office? - again, why only for this short period and why such a primitive handstamp if it was supposed to have been an official post office production? Could it quite simply be some postal clerk's initials? - but, if so, why two separate stamps? One can only speculate. All the same, given that the decision to censor civilian mail in the Congo was taken early in 1941 and that none of the specific Elisabethville cachets (nothing at all other than a few examples of the standard "CENSURE CONGO BELGE" mark) have been found earlier than the end of July, 1941, I am still left with some lingering notion that, despite any logic to the contrary, the "C.R." was a local, perhaps unofficial, censor's mark at Elisabethville.

LIST OF COVERS WITH "C.R." CACHETS

	Place/Date of Departure	Transits	Destination/ Arrival	Description Colour/Size
1.	Léopoldville 14/3/41	Elisabethville 15/3/41	Durban, South Africa AIRMAIL	? ? x 17mm
2.	Kamina 25/3/41	Elisabethville 27/3/41	U. S. A.	? ?
3.	Léopoldville 11/4/41	Elisabethville 14/4/41	London	Violet 40 x 18mm
4.	New York 16/4/41	Elisabethville 10/6/41 Léopoldville 16/6/41	Matadi 17/6/41	Violet-black 40 x 18mm
5.1	Léopoldville 21/4/41	Elisabethville 26/4/41	U. S. A. AIRMAIL	? ?
6.	Kamina 29/4/41	Elisabethville ?	U. S. A.	? ?
7.	Usumbura 16/5/41	Albertville 23/5/41 Elisabethville 30/5/41	U. S. A.	Violet-black 35 x 17mm

"C.R." CACHETS continued

Place/Date of Departure	Transits	Destination/Arrival	Description Colour/Size
8. Masisi 11/6/41	Costermansville 17/6/41 Elisabethville 19/6/41	U. S. A.	? 42 x 18mm
9. Costermansville 25/6/41	Elisabethville 28/6/41	U. S. A.	? ?
10. Elisabethville 1/7/41		U. S. A.	? 42 x 18mm
11. Elisabethville 4/7/41		U. S. A.	Blue 38 x 18mm
12. Costermansville 9/7/41	Elisabethville 12/7/41	U. S. A.	? 45 x 18mm
13. Elisabethville 11/7/41		U. S. A.	Blue 42 x 17mm
14. Elisabethville 18/7/41		U. S. A.	Purple 45 x 18mm
15. Costermansville 22/7/41	Elisabethville 27/7/41	Cape Town South Africa	Blue 30 x 18
16. Elisabethville 25/7/41		U. S. A.	? ?
17. Lusambo 29/7/41	Elisabethville 4/8/41	U. S. A.	Blue ?
18. Elisabethville 31/?/41		Bulawayo S. Rhodesia	Greyish-purple 35 x 16mm

- Notes:
- 1) Without exception, all covers went through Elisabethville, either southbound from the Congo or, in one isolated case, north to the Congo from Cape Town, where the cover arrived by sea from New York.
 - 2) Two covers were AIRMAIL, one on a first flight to South Africa and the other to the U.S.A., presumably via the temporary route via Sidney and Auckland.
 - 3) All surface mail was to, or through, Rhodesia and South Africa, the shortest distance so far recorded being from Elisabethville to Bulawayo.
 - 4) So far, all the covers with "C.R." fall between March and August, 1941.

"C.R." CACHETS notes continued

- 5) Although various shades can be found, from bright blue to greyish-blue and from bright purple to violet black, most of these can be explained by indiscriminate use of the purple and blue stamp pads and there were probably only these two basic colours of ink in use. Where no colour is cited above, this is because only a photocopy of the cover was seen.
- 6) Several of the strikes could not be measured, either because photocopies were too faint, or because part of the strike was covered by a censor label (usually South African in origin). However, allowing for the fact that the handstamps were made of rubber, thus the angle of strike could make a difference of a few mm in some cases while rapid deterioration of the handstamps through use also affected their dimensions, it would appear that two separate stamps must have existed, a smaller, perhaps less common one of about 35 x 17mm and a larger one of about 42 x 18mm.
- 7) The cachet is relatively common, although it does not appear on every cover from or through Elisabethville and the Cape route during its period of use.

PSF

1992 (3) AUCTION SALE

In the June Bulletin I said that our next few sales were assured in quality by the Spurgeon collection of Congo Postal History. Sadly, we are not going to be able to offer the Spurgeon collection. My valuation of the collection is less than the amount which has been offered by a dealer and I cannot be sure that we would achieve such a high return. My apologies for that expectation. In consequence, the list of lots offered is more modest but I am sure most members will find many lots of interest.

R. H. KEACH

PLATING MOLS STAMPS

Enclosed with this Bulletin are the first two parts of a series of eleven articles which will attempt a comprehensive description of the Mols issues and plate combinations, listing the known varieties and giving guidance on the identification of plates and sheet positions. The first part is a general introduction, and the other ten parts will cover each of the values 5c to 10fr in turn. The objective is to bring together and update the research that has been done on these stamps over the years, much of which has been published in the Bulletin, but never in a consolidated form.

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BRIAN HUDSON
92 Oakley Street,
London SW3 5NR.

In the September Bulletin I published parts 1 and 2 of an 11-part series of articles on the Mols issues. I had hoped to publish part 3 and 4, on the 10c and 15c values, in the December issue. Unfortunately a long spell in hospital has made this impossible, though I certainly hope to be able to write these sections in time for the March Bulletin.

Meanwhile, for those who are interested, the following amendments pointed out by readers should be made to parts 1 and 2.

Part 1

Page 4, para 2, line 3: 'make' for 'makes'.

Page 6, para 3: change the subheading from 'Retouches' to 'Touching-up and retouches', and replace the second sentence by the following two sentences:

"If part of the design on the plate was found to be too weak, either at the start or in the course of printing, it would be re-etched by hand to strengthen it. If this was done before the plate went to press, it is known as 'touching-up'; if after, as 'retouching' (though for convenience 'retouching' will be used in these articles to cover both cases)."

Page 8, para 3, line 3: 'lézarde' for 'lézard'.

Page 8, para 6, line 6: 'write' for 'writes'.

Page 9, bottom: Unfortunately, between the draft and the final version, some lines slipped out of my word processor here or got switched round. The last four lines of the page should be replaced by the following six lines:

Long overprint: positions 4,10,11,12,31 (stamps of horizontal format);
20,39,40,45,47 (stamps of vertical format).
Broken C of CONGO: 8,34,36,37,38 (horizontal); 11,12,13,17,43
(vertical).
Nick in lower loop of B of BELGE: 8,9,13,21,27,34,37,38,39 (horizontal);
12,13,14,17,22,30,38,43,44 (vertical).

Page 11, para 1, line 1: 'cases' for 'case'.

Part 2

Page 7, under '1910 bilingual - III1+B3 bl-gr': insert 'p15(DD)' after 'p14(BB)'.

Page 9, first para of text, line 1: '183' for '182' and '18,180' for '18,080'.

Any further amendments from readers will be welcome.

BRIAN HUDSON

PLATING MOLS STAMPS

by B.P. HUDSON

Part 1: General Introduction

In Bulletin 84 our Vice-President expressed the hope that more members may be interested to start reconstructions of the Mols: "many of us find it the most fascinating aspect of Congo collecting".

How true this is. I have been plating and reconstructing Mols stamps for 17 years, and the activity has never palled. Each stamp to be positioned is a fresh challenge, and each identification gives a fresh surge of satisfaction. Each sheet reconstruction is a jigsaw puzzle which slowly progresses towards completion. Some can be completed relatively easily; others take many years of searching. In either case, the search provides absorbing pleasure and recreation.

The paradox of collecting is that the objective is to achieve completion, yet once the objective is reached all interest is lost. The collector who has no more spaces to fill can only put his stamps in a drawer and forget about them. With sheet reconstructing, there is no danger of this happening. Full reconstruction of all the main varieties would be an impossible task however many years were devoted to it. As a hobby, therefore, it can never be exhausted: the collector is always getting closer to his final objective, but will never reach it.

For this rarefied branch of philately the Mols of the Belgian Congo, issued between 1894 and 1925, provide an ideal subject. The stamps are pictorially attractive and are mostly inexpensive to buy. Complete sheets are compact and are not hard to obtain. Taking account of plate combinations, shades, perforations, surcharges and overprints, there are numerous different varieties of the ten basic values, and most of the varieties are easy to identify. Because of the recess printing process, with the plates made manually from steel dies, constant flaws and varieties can be detected on individual stamps, so that it becomes possible to deduce which position in the sheet the stamp came from. This process is possible not just for certain of the Mols issues, but for all sheet positions of every issue; and moreover with sufficient practice, almost every individual stamp can be positioned, even if badly obscured by a postmark or overprint.

The collecting possibilities which this opens up can be illustrated by a typical example. Take the 15c of 1915, a common stamp available for a few pence. By purchasing collections and dealers' stocks one can easily accumulate hundreds of them. To the 'one-of-a-kind' collector this would be a pointless activity, simply creating duplicates. To the plater, a substantial collection can be built up. Ignoring certain sub-states of the plates, there are six main plate combinations of the 1915 15c in sheets of 50 and three printings in booklet panes of 40. There are up to three perforation varieties of each plate combination, giving twelve main varieties of the stamps from sheets and four of the stamps from booklet panes. If reconstructions are attempted of each variety, with unused and used stamps reconstructed separately, a total of 1520 stamps would be needed for a complete collection just of this one stamp. Of course, few platers would aim to go to such extremes as this - most would be content with used reconstructions of the more common varieties plus representative examples of the others, a target which, given sufficient time, should be neither difficult nor expensive to achieve.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

This article is the first of what will be a series of eleven. Its purpose is to encourage members to take a more detailed interest in these attractive stamps, to persuade more of them to take up plating, and generally to communicate my accumulated knowledge of the subject. The first article is an introduction which sets the background and gives advice on general aspects of plating. Later articles will take each of the ten values in turn, 5 centimes to 10 francs, and (a) tabulate the issues of each value, (b) tabulate the varieties of each issue and describe how to identify them, and (c) give a guide to the determination of sheet positions for each plate combination. These guides will not be an exhaustive catalogue of varieties in every position, but will describe the main ones and give advice on how collectors can acquire for themselves the ability to plate and position individual stamps.

Equipment needed for plating

Apart from reasonably acute eyesight, there are three prerequisites for the sheet reconstructor: a plentiful supply of stamps, complete sheets for reference, and a strong illuminated magnifying glass.

The supply of stamps is the least of his problems. Every Congo collector soon acquires duplicates of the more common Mols stamps, and it is these duplicates that can form the basis for his sheet reconstructions. As his reconstructions become more complete, he will find himself relying more and more on the excellent wants list service which Ray Keach has provided for Study Circle members for many years. The Study Circle holds its own small stock of Mols duplicates, and a large volume of material for sale is continuously being supplied to it by members in Belgium, the UK and the USA. All the Mols stamps that come in are positioned and are sent on approval to platers against their wants lists, usually at 33% of catalogue (50% for Princes), and sometimes as low as 20% for common material (eg the offer on page 20 of Bulletin 84).

If good reference literature is available it is possible to position stamps without a complete sheet of the relevant plate combination at hand, but generally this is not advisable. Many flaws can be confidently identified only by comparing stamp with stamp. Fortunately, complete sheets of many issues are quite common, especially of the lower values of the definitive issues of 1900, 1910 and 1915. These sheets can be used to position not only the stamps of those issues but subsequent issues with overprints or surcharges. The sheets are compact: a typical sheet of 50, five horizontal by ten vertical, measures 200 by 260 cms including margins. They can be mounted on album leaves or enclosed in transparent cover protectors.

Of course, good reference literature is an invaluable aid to positioning whether or not sheets are available. In this respect Congo collectors have been well served over the years. From relatively early times books like the Balasse catalogues and writers like Du Four illustrated the main plate varieties with great clarity. Others like Crustin in 1944 (the 1fr and 5fr of 1894) and Joncker in 1947 (the 10fr of 1898) published photographic guides showing varieties in each position of the sheet. Better guides have been published more recently through the auspices of the Study Circle. I would commend particularly the illustrated articles on the 1fr, 3½fr, 5fr and 10fr in Bulletins 38, 33, 35 and 39 respectively, and the excellent series of studies which is being produced by J M Frenay and which has so far covered all values between 15c and 10fr of the issues from 1894 to the Princes stamps of 1909.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

The plater's final requirement is a good magnifying glass. Most plate varieties are invisible to the naked eye or through an ordinary hand-held glass. A strongly illuminated glass like the 'Magniray', with at least 10x magnification, is required. A philatelic microscope, on the other hand, which typically gives 30x magnification, is probably unsuitable since these instruments illuminate only a small portion of the stamp and do not give the wider view which is needed when surveying for varieties. In addition they often confuse matters by inverting the image.

I should add a word about eye-strain. This is the bugbear of the positioner and I would offer newcomers the following hints on how to minimise it. First, learn to use the magnifier in a relaxed fashion without screwing up or closing either eye. Second, alternate between the eyes and take a short break whenever they start to tire. Third, always use fresh batteries (or a mains adaptor) and replace the batteries as soon as they start to fade; rechargeable batteries are a useful economy. Fourth, use torch bulbs designed for a lower voltage than the batteries provide: for example, I uses a 2.2 volt bulb with two 1½ volt batteries. The bulbs are more quickly burnt out but in return one gets a brighter light which facilitates positioning and reduces strain on the eyes.

Different types of variety

So our new plater has his single stamps, his sheet and his magnifier. He examines the former through the latter and sees the beautiful Mols and van Engelen design in vivid close-up. Among the design he can detect a few small dots, lines, signs of doubling and other marks, some significant and some not. How does he interpret these marks and embark on the detective work which will lead him to ascertain with confidence both the combination of plates used to print the stamp and its position in the sheet?

Before describing the main categories of plate variety, I should say a brief word about the way these stamps were printed, although this will already be familiar to most readers. The stamps were printed in London by Waterlow and Sons, except for the 3½/3fr and 10fr values which were printed by the separate firm of Waterlow Bros & Layton, possibly as a result of a printing order from Brussels being misdirected in the post.

They were recess-printed in two colours, which means that two printing plates were prepared for each stamp, one for the frames (printed in colour) and one for the centres (printed in black). First, the design was engraved by hand on a steel die which was then hardened. (This work was of the highest quality and of a fineness which allowed up to twelve lines to be engraved to the millimetre.) Second, the impression on the die was transferred onto a cylindrical transfer roller which in turn was hardened. Since the design was recessed on the die it was raised on the transfer roller. Finally, the transfer roller was rocked by hand onto the flat steel plate, creating a matrix of 50 closely packed impressions of the stamp, 10 high by 5 wide (or four panes of 2x5 in the case of the booklet stamps of 1915). As on the original die the design on the final plate was recessed and printing was achieved by passing an ink roller over it so that the ink was caught in the recesses and impressed on the paper as raised lines of the design.

As time passed the plates became worn and, in some cases, corroded by moisture. They were regularly cleaned with a cloth. If parts of the design were

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

faint they were often retouched by hand, position by position, using a tool called a burin. When the plates became too worn, rather than incur the expense of making a new plate they were usually re-entered using the original transfer roller, or a new transfer roller made from the original or a retouched die.

Since the plates were not very hard-wearing, but were used for many years, the quality of the printed stamps ranges from very good to very bad. The resulting flaws could offend a professional printer but are what makes these stamps interesting to the philatelist. The worse the flaws, the easier it is to position the stamps. On the other hand, as later articles will show, even with cleanly printed issues where there are few obvious flaws, it is still possible to differentiate all sheet positions if they are studied closely enough.

The imperfections visible under the magnifier divide first into the following broad categories:

(i) Die varieties. These are quite numerous and are small dots etc which do not seem to be an obvious part of the design. They served, for example, as centres of inscribed circles on the die. However they are of no use for positioning purposes since they are identical in each position of the sheet. On the other hand, they can sometimes be of use in determining the plate combination of the stamp, eg in the later issues of 1915 when new plates of the several lower values were made using retouched dies.

(ii) Transfer roller varieties. These occurred typically when a small foreign body attached itself to the transfer roller as it was being rocked onto to the plate. As a result, a distinctively shaped mark was indented onto the plate and was therefore printed on one or more successive positions of the stamp. If all 50 positions were thus affected, as (eg) with the spot on the hill in frame plate F of the 5c, the flaw is no aid to positioning. But in other cases transfer roller varieties are very helpful indeed since while not identifying the individual position, they narrow the possibilities to a defined group of positions from which the individual position can be determined readily from other flaws. There are many examples of transfer roller varieties, most of which will be described in the plating guides in subsequent articles.

(iii) Permanent constant plate varieties. These are flaws on the plate which are present and visible in all the printings made from it. They are the main basis for identifying the sheet positions of single stamps. The flaws are of many different types and characteristics which are listed below.

(iv) Temporary constant plate varieties. These are the same as (iii), except that they appeared or disappeared during the course of the plate's usage. They are therefore of use in identifying sheet positions, but not as useful as the permanent varieties since they appear on some but not all of the stamps printed from the position in question. For example, a scratch may appear on the plate in the middle of printing, or a faint mark visible in the early printings may later disappear through wear. The different types of these varieties are included in the list in the next section.

(v) Transient varieties. These are typically small dots of ink, smudge marks etc deposited on the paper as each sheet was printed. They are not constant from sheet to sheet and are therefore of no use in determining either plate combinations or positions. They can be a distraction since they can look much

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

like the varieties in (iii) and (iv), but with practice the experienced plater develops a feel for which of the flaws visible under the magnifier are transient and should therefore be ignored.

Constant plate varieties

There are many different types of these. The following paragraphs describe most of the types that the plater will encounter.

Lay marks. Known in French as 'traits de repère', these are lines and dots inscribed between certain positions after the application of the transfer roller. Their purpose was to create marks on the printed sheet to aid the registration of frames and centres. There is usually one dot on the mid-point between two adjoining pairs of stamps and one vertical line similarly positioned in another part of the sheet. (In the stamps of vertical format, the 15c and 5fr, the line is horizontal.) Lay marks are normally found on the frame plate, since the frames were usually printed first, but some 1910 issues are found with centre plate lay marks as well when Waterlows experimented with printing the centres first. Sometimes lay marks did not appear until after the first printings of a stamp, in which case their addition, being a deliberate act, created a new state of the plate (see the section below on the nomenclature of plate combinations). In other cases there is more than one dot or line.

The lay marks are conspicuous features, and if part of one is visible on a stamp it can be positioned immediately. However most sheet positions are not adjacent to one of these marks, and those that are do not necessarily show them if the perforation is close to the frame of the design on the side where the mark is printed. Lay marks are therefore mostly of limited use in positioning.

Guidelines. Guidelines are like lay marks in that they are vertical or horizontal lines deliberately engraved on the plate. The similarity ends there, however. Guidelines are much finer and fainter and are usually visible only over short sections of their length. They were put down in a grid pattern before the transfer roller was applied, their purpose being to guide the application of the roller and to get the 50 impressions lined up as accurately as possible. On frame plates, the guidelines coincide more or less closely with one of the outer edges of the frame. On centre plates, where they are found, they usually coincide with a feature of the design - eg the line is horizontal and matches the horizon of the picture - but on some stamps (notably the 10c) they are found in vertical positions midway between impressions.

Although they are usually faint, the guidelines are useful aids to positioning. They are found on most stamps, and on a few - for instance the 10fr Red Cross - are almost the only way of distinguishing one position from another. Their usefulness as distinguishing marks stems from two features. First, their location relative to the stamp design varies slightly from position to position, since they were laid down separately from the transfer roller. Second, after the lines were engraved sections of them (particularly those away from the stamp designs) were burnished out so as to make them less conspicuous on the finished sheet. The lengths and exact locations of the sections that remained vary noticeably according to the sheet position.

Finally, despite their faintness the guidelines were resistant to wear. In one or two cases (eg the 25c frame plate III) they eventually disappeared through

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

long usage, but on most of the stamps where they are found they are visible from the earliest to the latest printings.

Guide dots. These are less common than guidelines, but like them were deliberately applied to the plate separately from the transfer roller. They were caused by a pointer attached to the shaft of the transfer roller to guide its application. They were normally burnished out, but on some values the printers omitted to do so, notably on 5c frame plate V where they are present on all stamps in the second to fifth columns and in the right hand selvedge, and 3fr frame plate II where they are in the top selvedge and just under the bottom left corner of all stamps in the top to ninth rows. They are another useful guide to positioning because of the small variations in the location of each dot relative to the stamp design.

Retouches. This is a common constant plate variety and also a most useful one. If part of the design on the plate was found to be too weak, either at the start or in the course of printing, it would be retouched by hand to strengthen it. Since each impression had to be retouched separately, variations in the retouching give a guide to position. A good example is the dark triangle in the top left corner of the frames of the 1898 10fr, which was judged before printing began to be too weak and was therefore scored in by hand in most positions, in some cases with horizontal lines and in others with lines sloping to the left, to the right, or criss-cross. Almost all positions of this stamp can be quickly identified from this one feature alone, provided of course that a complete sheet is available for reference.

Sometimes the retouching was done carefully and is hard to notice. In other cases it was surprisingly crude. The best example of the latter is the 5c of 1910, frame plate III2, where the horizontal lines at the top throughout the plate were filled in by an engraver who did not use a ruler and had a remarkably unsteady hand, for reasons at which one can only guess.

Burin escapes. These are retouches gone wrong: places where a line of the design was being retouched, but the engraving tool slipped and created a short scratch branching out from the design. Burin escapes are found in a number of places where it is not otherwise obvious, because of the neatness of the work, that retouching took place.

Re-entries. Re-entries are doubling marks caused by a slight displacement of the transfer roller while it was being rocked back and forth to create the impression on the plate. This could happen when the plate was first laid down (in which case they are strictly 'fresh entries' rather than 're-entries') or when it was later re-entered to strengthen the design after it had become worn with use. In the former case the doubling is usually quite slight but in the latter it can be marked, eg in 5c centre plate B5 and 25c centre plate A4 where one or two positions, well known as so-called Balasse plate varieties, show displacement of a full millimetre or more. In other examples not only doubling but clear trebling can be seen.

Doubling marks are of variable usefulness in positioning. In some stamps such as the 1fr of 1915, frame plates II3 to II6, so many positions are similarly doubled that the doubling is not a great help to identification. In others it can be a useful and prominent identifying mark.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

Parasitic entries. This is a curious form of plate variety which while not unique to stamps of the Congo, is only rarely found elsewhere. It is present on certain positions of the 10c, 25c, 50c and 5fr of 1894 to 1900, and consists of partially visible curved lines superimposed on the frame plate design. For many years no-one could work out what caused these marks. Then it came to someone in a flash of inspiration: the marks on the 10c were from the 50c design and vice versa, while the marks on the 25c were from the 5fr design and vice versa.

What happened was that no doubt to save money, two of the cylindrical transfer rollers made by Waterlows in 1894 were used to carry not one but two die impressions each. As the roller was rocked onto the plate, it was occasionally rocked too far so that the edge of the adjoining die was partly impressed on the adjoining stamp. For good pictorial illustrations of this process I refer the reader to pages 117, 158 and 173 of General Du Four's 'Congo - Cinquante Ans D'Histoire Postale'.

Parasitic entries are visible in up to nine positions for each of the stamps in question. They provide a good guide to positioning and are classified as Balasse plate varieties.

Scratches. This is a broad category of accidental flaw which is found extensively. Scratch marks range from deep scores which are highly visible to faint marks which quickly disappeared with wear. The former are obviously better for identification but the latter can also be useful if other flaws are not visible. Scratch marks are unique to the position where they are found, and vary greatly in size and shape. Some were caused by engraving tools, others (eg 'curlicue' scratches, and faint but long scratches in parallel lines) by cleaning; others no doubt by the general rough and tumble of the printing shop floor. Some of the worst scratches were noticed by the printers and burnished out, so that they no longer appear in later printings. Earliest printings are usually relatively free of scratches, but this is not always true.

Blotches. These are large irregularly shaped marks, often roughly oval in shape, found between adjacent stamps. There are good examples on the frame plates of the 1900 25c (I2) and 1915 50c (III3). Sometimes they have a deep colour, sometimes rather faint. They are caused by shallow indentations in the flat surface of the plate which caught ink from the roller and therefore caused a mark on the printed sheet. They do not appear in many positions, but are useful when they do.

Missing design. Occasionally a small part of the design, typically part of the frame line, is missing, no doubt because it was inadequately impressed by the transfer roller. This is a relatively uncommon variety because such defects were usually made good by retouching. Moreover it should not be confused with missing design caused by inadequate inking, a transient variety which is of no help to positioning.

Corrosion dots. Corrosion dots resulted normally from moisture on the plate causing pits in its surface which in turn caused small dots to appear on the printed stamp. They are found frequently on both frame and centre plates, but are more visible on the latter because of the darker colour of the ink. On some issues they are more or less absent in the earliest printings but appear in great numbers later on, no doubt because the plate was allowed to get wet or was not properly wiped down between printings. Although the dots are often very tiny,

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

and can only just be seen even under a strong magnifier, they are a good aid to positioning because they seldom disappeared with wear and their random locations are always unique to the sheet positions where they are found. Where a plate combination has corrosion dots, confirmation of a stamp's position is always unambiguous.

Where plates became thickly corroded, the printers often tried to minimise the damage by burnishing the dots out. However they could do so only in areas away from the stamp design, since otherwise the design itself would be affected. Thus on some plates there is a sharp dividing line between thick corrosion close to the design and clear space beyond. Good examples of this are found in 1fr centre plate A5 and later printings of the 25c booklet centres, panes β and δ .

Cracks. I end with this because there are only a few examples of it, but one of them is a famous one. During the late printings of the 1910 15c, frame plate III3, a long jagged crack known as the 'lézard' appeared in the plate between positions 41 and 42. It was still there in plate III4 which was used for the first printings of the 1915 issue. The crack was then noticed, and to prevent it spreading to the edge of the plate a large hole was drilled in it, creating frame plate III5. Both the crack and the hole make a prominent feature which is classified as one of the Balasse plate varieties. Similar cracks are also found in the 40c frame plate I, position 6, and frame plate III (the 'Campagnes Coloniales' issue), position 64.

Writing plating notes

As the new plater surveys single stamps against his complete sheet, and identifies their positions, he will usually notice not one but several identifying flaws in each position. It is essential that he makes his own written notes of them. It may be tempting to rely on reference material written by others, but this is a false economy. He will frequently find flaws which others have not noticed, and when he meets the same position again, as he surely will, he can confirm it much more quickly by referring to his own notes.

As a rule of thumb, I aim to record at least three or four different flaws for each position. There are two reasons for this. First, some flaws are rather similar from position to position so that relying on only one can lead to mistaken identification. Second, many stamps are partly obscured by cancels or overprints (or both) so that if only one plate variety on the position is known, the chances are that it will be covered up. If three or four are recorded, it is most unlikely that the position cannot be identified.

In case this is of interest to new platers, I will describe how I set out my own plating notes. With small handwriting which is illegible to anyone but myself, I can get all the notes for a plate combination on one side of a sheet of paper, using one line per position. At the bottom I list what I call 'generic' plate varieties, ie those found, identical or at least similar to one another, in more than one position. I label them A, B, C etc, and writes these letters in the left-hand column against the relevant lines of the plating notes. When confronted with a stamp I check first which of the generic varieties it shows, and I can then at a glance narrow down the possibilities for its position. For instance if it shows B and C but not A, I know that it must be from one of the positions labelled BC in the left column.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

In the plating guides in subsequent articles, I will describe these so-called generic varieties in relatively great detail, since they are usually the key to the rapid identification of positions in the sheet of 50. To have to go through all 50 positions every time a possible flaw is identified would otherwise be very time-consuming.

Occasionally one meets positions which are really hard to identify. The plate is clean and it takes a long time to find a flaw or other identifying mark. In my notes I mark these positions with a special symbol. When I meet that position again, the relative absence of flaws itself becomes a guide to its location, since I can concentrate my search on the positions I have marked with that symbol.

Sometimes positioning is easy while at others it seems hard and frustrating. As time passes, and the locations of more and more plate varieties are retained in the memory, positioning generally becomes much easier, but there are still always a few difficult ones. The more difficult the identification, the greater the sense of satisfaction when it is achieved. The plater requires great patience but his patience is usually well rewarded.

Overprints and surcharges

Intelligent use should be made of extraneous guides to position. The presence of selvedge or sheet margin is an obvious example. A more subtle example can be found with stamps with irregular perforations, where the 'pattern' of the irregularity is different on two opposite sides. Because of the way in which the line perforator was moved down the sheet of paper, but the sheet had to be reversed before the last line of holes was punched, this non-matching of facing lines of irregular perforation is an indication that the stamp comes from the edge of the sheet. (These perforations are described further below.)

However the most important extraneous guide to position is found in certain of the surcharges and overprints. Handstamped marks such as the Congo Belge and Tombeur overprints and the Elisabethville surcharges are obviously no help when positioning. The Red Cross, AO and Malines surcharges I have also found to be of little use. However the typo Congo Belge and Est Africain overprints and the 1921 and Boma surcharges are very useful indeed, and while they are strictly outside the scope of these articles - and have been well covered in earlier Bulletins - it is worth adding a brief résumé of them here.

Typo. The best article on the typographed Congo Belge overprints appeared in Bulletin 8 as long ago as 1952. It described how Brussels handstamp 5 was used to make five papier maché moulds from each of which probably twelve type-metal clichés of the overprint were cast. 50 of these clichés were assembled into the overprinting plate for the horizontal stamps. This plate was then dismantled and reassembled for the vertical stamps, ie the 15c and 5fr.

Because of shrinkage of the papier maché after the first five clichés were cast, and minor defects in several of the moulds, the following 'generic' constant varieties are found in the overprinting plates:

Long overprint: positions 4,10,11,12,31 (stamps of horizontal format);
11,13,17,24,43 (stamps of vertical format).
Broken C of CONGO: 8,34,36,37,38 (horizontal); 12,13,14,17,22,30,38,43,44
(vertical).

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

Nick in first E of BELGE: 6, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 28, 35, 40 (horizontal); 15, 16, 21, 23, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41 (vertical).

Short bottom bar of first E of BELGE: 2, 16, 22, 25, 29, 30, 31, 44, 45, 47, 48 (horizontal); 2, 3, 6, 7, 20, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 49 (vertical):

Uneven bottom bar of second E of BELGE: 8, 10, 27, 32, 37, 38, 39 (horizontal); 12, 13, 14, 19, 22, 43, 45 (vertical).

None of these features: 1, 3, 5, 7, 15, 23, 24, 33, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49, 50 (horizontal); 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 18, 27, 28, 36, 42, 46, 48, 50 (vertical).

These varieties together with others applying to single clichés are illustrated in the 1952 article. They facilitate the positioning of all stamps with typo overprint, since a quick look at the overprint narrows the possibilities to at most about a dozen positions.

When the time came to overprint the Princes stamps, the plate had again been dismantled and had to be reassembled, using a different selection of the original 60 clichés once more in random order, first for the horizontal and then for the vertical stamps. With Princes typo too, therefore, the overprint helps positioning. The positions of Princes typo varieties were described in Abbé Gudenkauf's comprehensive article in Bulletin 25.

1921 surcharges. See my article in Bulletin 41. The '1921' overprint on the high values shows few variations and is therefore of little help to positioning. The surcharges on the lower values are much more helpful. The overprinting plates were made up of bloc-reports of five elements reproduced ten times to make a plate of 50. Each surcharge shows five different 'types', distinguishable by the shape and alignment of the bars. On the horizontal sheets type A appears in rows 1 and 6, B in rows 2 and 7 and so on. On the vertical sheets type A is in columns 1 and 6, B in columns 2 and 7 and so on. For the 5/40c, 10/5c and 15/50c the same varieties in the overprinting bars appear. In this plate types C, D and E are easily distinguishable, though not A from B. On the vertical 25/15c all five are distinguishable. On the 30/10c and 50/25c different variations are found and only type E (30/10c) and type A (50/25c) can be distinguished from the others.

The well-known 'missing dots' on these surcharging plates also help to indicate positions. The relevant positions and the order in which the dots went missing are as follows:

15/50c: 41 left, 48 left, 47 left.

25/15c: 12 left.

30/10c: 36 right, 39 right, 19 right, 37 right.

50/25c: 27 and 28 left, 30 left, 35 left, 10 right, 40 right.

Boma surcharges. Four values were surcharged, the 5c, 40c, 1fr and 5fr. Four different plates were used for each of the 5c and 40c and one for each of the 1fr and 5fr (though the plate overprinting the 5fr was adjusted during the course of overprinting).

The standard work on the Boma surcharges is the booklet published by the Abbé Gudenkauf in 1974. The ten overprinting plates are full of constant varieties, illustrated by the Abbé, which help with the positioning of the stamps. Typically these consist of damage to the 1, 0 and c of the surcharge in the 10c/5c and 10c/1fr, and to the 2, 5 and c of the 25c/40c and 25c/5fr. In addition the vertical spacing between the bars in the 10c/1fr and 25c/5fr varies a little from

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

column to column, and in most case the column number of an individual stamp can be determined by measuring this space. With all values except the 5fr, the presence of a stamp on the edge of the sheet is indicated by the fact that the bars stop short of the edge of the stamp.

The four overprinting plates A, B, C and D of the 10c/5c can be distinguished by the horizontal distance between the bars, or (for plate A) by the carmine shade of the surcharge. In the 25c/40c the plates can be distinguished by the vertical distance between the 25 and the bars, except for A and B where this distance is the same. In the first two columns, the horizontal distance between the 5 and the c is 2½mm in plate A and 4mm in plate B. In the other three columns A and B can usually be differentiated only by positioning the underlying stamp -an example of a situation where the ability to position is a necessary aid to classifying the basic variety of a stamp.

East African overprints. This complex and fascinating overprint has been exhaustively studied in Bulletin articles, of which I would refer the reader particularly to those in Bulletins 41 and 46. I use here the nomenclature for the plates established in the latter article. I will not repeat all the details of these studies but will just summarise the ways in which the overprint can help the plater to position single copies of the stamps.

The EAA overprints fall into two categories. The first consists of the short overprints (type S) and the first group of long overprints (L1). These overprints were applied not sheet by sheet but row by row using a block of five adjoining clichés. Accordingly, any flaws in S or L1 overprints give no clues to the row number of the stamp, only its column number (or row number in the case of vertical stamps).

The flaws are of two kinds. The first are irregularities in the metal letters of the overprint which therefore show in all stamps printed from that block in the column in question. There are only a few of these as follows:

- Long T in OCCUPATION: block L1(t), column 2 (or row 4 in vertical stamps).
- Elongated stop after BELGE: block L1(t), column 4 (or row 2).
- Dash in 2nd L of ALLEMAND: block L1(g), column 3 (or row 3).
- Nick in top of G of BEZETTING: block L1(g), column 4 (or row 2).
- Dot between A and L of ALLEMAND: block L1(g), column 5 (or row 1).
- Nick in top of I of BEZETTING: block L1(i), column 3 (or row 3).

The blocks which do not show these flaws are grouped together as L1(o).

The second kind of flaw was caused by a foreign body getting trapped in the block as it was being used and therefore causing a spot to be printed on or between particular letters of the overprint. These flaws, which are quite numerous particularly on the 1fr value, therefore always appear in the same column, but not necessarily throughout the usage of the block. They include the well-known 'OCCUPATION' varieties on the 5c with short overprint and 1fr with long overprint. In the latter case the flaw appears twice, on one occasion in column 1 and on another in column 2. The dot flaws, whose blocks are denominated as L1(.), are illustrated in the article in Bulletin 46.

The second category of EAA overprint is known as L2. These were made quite differently, in fact in much the same way as the typographed CONGO BELGE

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

overprints. A plate of 50 overprints was assembled from individual clichés cast from perhaps five or six moulds. The assembled plate therefore shows both generic and individual varieties which aid positioning. Bulletin 46 illustrates these in full, but here is a list of the generic varieties and their positions:

Nick in right end of L of BELGE: 1,11,12,14,15,34.
Dot between U and I of DUITSCH: 3,4,6,8,16,19,24,36,39.
Uneven tops of T's of BEZETTING: 5,18,32,33,35,41,42,48.
Thickened bar of L of BELGE: 7,10,29.

These positions apply to the horizontal stamps. For the vertical stamps plate L2 was not reassembled but was simply turned on its side. However the plate was dismantled and put together again for late applications of the overprint to the 5c value only (including the 5c with Malines surcharge). This reassembled plate is known as L2'. It shows the same generic varieties as L2, though fewer of them and in different positions. The generic and individual varieties of L2' are also illustrated in Bulletin 46.

Fortunately, the L1 and L2 groups are easily differentiated on single stamps. L1 overprints are (like S overprints) somewhat blotchy in appearance while L2 are clean with clear outlines. The difference is always particularly noticeable in the S of EST in the top left corner.

The overprints and surcharges which show constant varieties add greatly to the interest of plating, and the articles referred to above on the typo, 1921, Boma and EAA overprints are indispensable reference material for the Mols plater.

Other background information

In parts 2 to 11 which will follow in this and later issues of the Bulletin, covering the values 5c to 10fr, the varieties of each issue will be described and tabulated. For the benefit of those who are relatively new to the Mols I should therefore summarise here certain basic information on the plate combinations, perforations and other features which make up these varieties.

Plate combinations. As described above, the frames and centres were printed from separate plates, and for new printings sometimes new plates were made but more often the old plates were repaired or re-entered. The nomenclature of the plates used for each value is as follows. The successive frame plates are labelled I, II, III etc and the centre plates A, B, C etc. When any deliberate change was made to a plate - re-entry, retouching, lay marks etc - this is regarded as creating a new state of the plate, and successive states of the same plate are labelled I1, I2, I3 etc. Sometimes the plate changed noticeably for accidental reasons - eg, typically, the appearance of numerous corrosion dots - and where the distinction is considered worth making, these are called substates of the plate and are labelled I1a, I1b etc. The full designation of the plate combination is shown by adding frame and centre label thus: I+A1a, I+A1b and so on. The position numbers on the sheet are counted from left to right and from top to bottom, so that the top left position is no.1 and the bottom right position is no. 50.

All Mols stamps were printed in sheets of 50 except for the 25c+25c Campagnes Coloniales issues of 1925, which used the 40c centre die and were printed in sheets of 100, and the 5c, 10c, 15c and 25c booklet panes of 1915. The booklet

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

stamps were printed in sheets of four panes of ten stamps per pane. Each value went through three printings designated 1st, 2nd and 3rd booklets, and the panes are designated by the Greek letters α , β , γ , and δ . Where there was re-entry or retouching during a printing this is designated by a number in brackets, so that the full description of a pane might be, for instance, 25c 2nd(2) booklet pane α . Within the pane positions are numbered again from left to right and from top to bottom.

Perforations. This is another fascinating and complicated aspect of Mols philately, described in Bulletins 39, 47 and 78 in much more detail than I can give here.

I leave on one side the Campagnes Coloniales issues of 1925 (p12½) and the 3½/3fr and 10fr stamps printed by Waterlow Bros and Layton (p14 except for some 10fr which are p12). For the remaining Mols issues many different perforating heads were used, some with regular and some with irregular spacing between the pins, some easily identifiable on single stamps and others indistinguishable from one another. Three irregular perforators were described in Bulletin 47 but one of them, the so-called p14-14½, has subsequently been dropped from the list since it cannot really be separated from the regular p14 heads. Our latest knowledge on the eight regular perforators (or groups of perforators) was tabulated by Ray Keach, with dates of usage, on page 15 of Bulletin 78.

For practical purposes in the remaining parts of this article I classify the perforations on single stamps in the following groups, recognising that (3) and (4) at least, and possibly (2), represent more than one perforating head:

- (1) Regular p12½ (actual gauge 12.5). Very scarce and found only on the 15c and 40c of 1896 and 25c of 1900.
- (2) Regular p13½ (actual gauge 13.7). Not uncommon and found in the later printings of the 1900 issues and most subsequent issues.
- (3) Regular p14 (actual gauges 13.9, 14.0 or 14.2). Covering several different perforating heads and plentiful throughout all issues.
- (4) Regular p15 (actual gauge 15.0 to 15.1). At least two heads: common from 1894 to 1900; also found, but less common than p14, from 1910 onwards.
- (5) Regular p16 (actual gauge 15.8). A distinctive head which is fairly common in some of the issues of 1895 to 1900, but is not found otherwise.
- (6) Irregular p12-14 (actual gauge: long stretches of 13.9 alternating with short stretches of 12.0, 12.8 and 13.5). A most distinctive perforator found not uncommonly on issues from 1894 to 1900, but never later. Of course, single stamps displaying only stretches of 13.9 on each side would be classified under (3).
- (7) Irregular p14½-15 (actual gauge: alternating stretches of 14.4 and 14.9). A single perforator found quite plentifully on issues from 1894 to 1900, and occasionally on early printings of the 1910 issues, but not subsequently. Where only stretches of 14.9 appear on each side of a stamp it is difficult but certainly not impossible to distinguish this perforator from (4).

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 1

Rarely, stamps are found with compound perforations, ie with a different perforating head being used for adjacent sides. The best known examples are the 10c and 25c 3rd booklet stamps p14x15.

Shades. In the earlier issues there is found a great variety of shades, often associated with separate batches of printing. Some values of the later issues also show shade varieties, but to a lesser extent. In the case of the 1fr of 1894 the shade changes are so marked - from violet to lilac to carmine - that even in the simplest of catalogues they are listed as separate stamps. Shade variations are also found in some of the Malines surcharges.

In the listings that follow, the choices of shade changes which are shown as significant varieties are largely a matter of personal taste. Often particular shades are associated with particular plate combinations or perforations; at other times the same combination can show several different shades. Other collectors may disagree with the way I have grouped or described these shades, since we all see colours differently. All agree however that the shade variations are important and make an interesting subject for study.

Errors and curiosities

I do not deal in these articles with the errors and curiosities found in the Mols stamps, eg so-called proofs, overprints and surcharges on the wrong stamps, inverted and doubled overprints and so on. Some of them are most interesting, others of more dubious provenance. All have been amply described in the literature.

The popularity of these expensive items stems from the desire of collectors to fill their pages with greater interest and to have further material to collect once the fairly simple task of completing a one-of-a-kind collection has been completed. As I commented in the introduction, the urge to extend one's collection in this way becomes less compelling if one has embarked on sheet reconstruction, when the risk of running out of material to collect will never arise. Having said that, there is at least one collector - André Vindevoghel, who displayed some of this at the 1991 anniversary meeting - who not only collects the rarest curiosities but reconstructs sheets of them, perhaps the ultimate in philatelic ambition!

Conclusion

The contents of these articles will already be familiar to the old hands of Congo collecting, but they may find it useful to see them updated and gathered together in one place; they may also find some plate varieties described which they had not previously noticed. For newcomers to the Mols, I hope the articles will provide a comprehensive introduction to one of the most interesting of all areas of specialist philately. For those who have collected the Mols for some time, but have not embarked on plating studies, I hope that what I have written will encourage them to do so, by showing that sheet positioning is not so hard as is sometimes imagined, and is always rewarding.

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PLATING MOLS STAMPS

by B.P. HUDSON

Part 2: 5 Centimes

Introduction

The 5 centimes is the lowest of the ten Mols values. It is found commonly on cards and covers in conjunction with other values, and on cards on its own. 5 centimes was the internal rate for postcards from 1910 to 1920, and was also the printed matter rate for both internal and foreign mail, 'printed matter' including postcards with not more than five words written on them.

The design of the stamp shows the port of Matadi in the west of the country, 30 miles east of the mouth of the Congo. The design was based on one of the paintings in the diorama exhibited by the artists Robert Mols and Piet Van Engelen at the Anvers Exhibition of 1894. The painting was in turn based on a photograph of Matadi taken by Lieutenant Wyns in 1893. It shows mountains in the background and the port in the foreground, including official buildings, a chapel, barracks and on the river, two steamers of the Anvers-Matadi line.

Main issues

In the following table the number on the left is the Catalogue Officiel number. The right-hand column shows the number printed, excluding those that were subsequently overprinted or surcharged. This is based on the figures given by General Du Four in 'Cinquante Ans D'Histoire Postale', drawn from official and other sources, but Du Four warns that these numbers have to be treated with caution and in some cases probably understate the true figure. This is borne out by the evidence of the Waterlow file copy sheets - see Bulletin 35. The figure for the 1915 issue, for example, seems undoubtedly to be too small.

Belgian Congo

14	Nov. 1894	5c blue	État Independant	30,000
15	Jan. 1895	5c brown	État Independant	280,000
16	May 1900	5c green	État Independant	748,000
30B	Jan. 1909	5c green	Congo Belge Brussels	4,500
30L	Jan. 1909	5c green	Congo Belge local	124,600
40	Jan. 1909	5c green	Congo Belge typo	22,900
40P	Mar. 1909	5c green	Princes unoverprinted	100
40PB	Mar. 1909	5c green	Princes Brussels	250
40PT	Mar. 1909	5c green	Princes typo	4,650



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

50	June 1909	5c green	Unilingual	200,000
54	Jan. 1910	5c green	Bilingual	390,000
64	Nov. 1915	5c green	Bilingual with 'cinq'	225,000
72	May 1918	5c+10c green	Red Cross	250,000
86	July 1921	10c/5c green	Recuperation surcharge (on 54)	292,000
96	Jan. 1922	10c/5c green	Malines surcharge (on 64)	246,000
100	Jan. 1922	10c/5c green	Boma surcharge (on 64)	147,500

Ruanda Urundi

9	July 1916	5c green	Ruanda Tombeur (on 64)	2,750
16	July 1916	5c green	Urundi Tombeur (on 64)	2,750
28	Nov. 1916	5c green	Est Africain (on 64)	390,000
36	May 1918	5c+10c green	A.O. on Red Cross	250,000
46	Jan. 1922	10c/5c green	Malines on Est Africain (on 64)	86,000

Plate combinations

1894	I1+A	Original frame and centre plates
1900	I1+B1	New frame and centre plates
	I2+B2	Frames and centres re-entered
1909	II+B2	New frame plate
1910	III1+B3	New frame plate; centres re-entered and lay marks added
	III1+B4a	Extra centre lay marks added
	III1+B4b	Centres corroded with fine dots
	III1+B5	Centres re-entered
	III1+B6	Centres partly re-entered
	III2+B6	Frames retouched
	III2+B7	Centres again re-entered
	III2+C	New centre plate
	IV+D1	New frame and centre plates
	IV+D2	Centres re-entered
1915	V1+E1	New frame and centre plates
	V2+E2	Frame lay marks added; centres re-entered
	V3+E3	Frames retouched; centres re-entered
	V3+F	New centre plate
	VI+F	New frame plate
	Booklets (1)	Frame and centre plates for booklet panes
	Booklets (2)	Centres re-entered

There have been the following changes from the nomenclature first introduced by Du Four:

(1) For the 1895 issue Du Four distinguished three states of centre plate A,



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

A1, A2 and A3, A2 being caused by scratch marks on four positions and A3 with the scratch mark on one position burnished out. Accidental damage of this kind is no longer regarded as creating a new state of the plate.

(2) Du Four did not distinguish B4 from B3 nor B6 from B5. Thus he called B4 what is now called B5 and B6, and B5 what is now called B7. The partial re-entry which created B6 was not discovered until 1990 - see Bulletin 78.

(3) Du Four did not distinguish between V1 to 3 and E1 to 3, and therefore described V1+E1 to V3+E3 as V+E.

Identifying the plate combinations

1894. Plate A produced fine, grey impressions of the centres whereas those from B are black and coarse. It is sometimes necessary to make this distinction because of the number of 5c blue stamps that are faked copies of the 5c green, chemically altered to change the colour. As well as having darker centres the fakes have paler frames than the genuine stamps.

1900. I2+B2 is differentiated from I1+B1 by the small green circle immediately under the bottom frameline in the SE corner, and by the similar circle above the top frameline in the NE corner. The upper circle is not always clear, but the lower one appears on all positions in I2+B2 except no. 30, which can be distinguished instead by the short green vertical scratch in the right margin, ½mm outside the frameline and level with the top of the 5.

Princes printings can be recognised by the brighter green shade of the frames and by the centres which are brownish-black rather than grey-black as in the 1900 issue. The shades of Princes stamps are in fact close to those of the unilingual issue printed three months later. They are always p14. Where a Princes stamp has a typo overprint, as most of them do, the fact that it is Princes can be verified from the overprint since constant varieties in the overprinting plate are in different positions from those on ordinary typo stamps (see page 10 of part 1).

1910. Stamps from III1+B3 show fine, clear centres and the horizontal shading lines at the tops of the frames are thin but also clear. The frames are bluish green; in all later combinations they are green to yellow-green. III1+B4a are like III1+B3 apart from the shade; also the lines of shading at the top centre are fainter. In B4b most of the centres are peppered with fine corrosion dots. In III1+B5 the centres are heavily re-entered with signs of doubling in all positions, very markedly in some, and the shading lines in the top centre of the frame plate have almost disappeared. B6 has coarser centres than B5, especially



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

in the horizontal river lines, and shows slight changes in doubling in rows 6 to 9; III1+B6 can really only be differentiated from III1+B5 in these rows, and then only by positioning the stamp.

In III2+B6 the top framelines were crudely retouched by hand; this state of the frame plate is easily recognised. In B7 the appearance of the centre plate, which had become very worn indeed, somewhat improved, but the major doubling marks remained. III2+C has the same retouching at the top of the frames but the centre plate is quite different being clear and free from flaws.

IV+D1 gives a different impression again. The top horizontal shading of the frames is strong and even, and the centres are clear without doubling, though darker than B3 or C. IV+D2 is similar but with coarser centres; where there are dots between the river lines on D1, they are enlarged on D2.

1915. In V1+E1 the frames are yellow-green and the centres are fine, clear and greyish. E2 was created by re-entering the centre plate, which shows as changed doubling in a few positions. The frame shade is unchanged, but the centres are black and coarser than E1, and this is the feature which makes it possible (but not always easy) to distinguish V2+E2 from V1+E1. In V3+E3 the re-entered centres are further coarsened, with corrosion especially in the first column, and the horizontal shading at the top and bottom of the frames is lightly retouched. This is most evident in the right panel immediately to the left of the small circle above the last E of BELGE. The lines here are wavy where in all other 1915 stamps they are even, parallel and slightly doubled. Most V3+E3 stamps are also noticeable from the dull blue-green shade of the frames, though the earliest printing was yellow-green like V2+E2.

Stamps from VI+F are easily recognised by the light centres, the black spot near the mountain top ('type III' in the Balasse catalogues) and the green shade of the frames - neither yellow-green nor blue-green.

The three printings of the booklet stamps can be told apart by their shades. The first printing is yellow-green with clear grey-black centres. The second printing is deep blue-green with deep black centres showing a little corrosion. The third printing is dull green with dull grey centres, and is on coarse grey rather than white paper. Towards the end of the first printing the centre plate was re-entered, showing additional doubling of the river lines in many positions, but stamps from the first printing with re-entered centres are scarce.

Booklet stamps from the first printing are hard to tell from V1+E1 and V2+E2, since the shades are the same. If there is a small green guide dot in the white vertical line between CENTIMES and the scrollwork on the left, or if there are



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

traces of green guideline down the right margin, the stamp is from V+E. If there are traces of horizontal green guideline in the top margin, it is probably a booklet stamp. If there is no guide dot it is either a booklet stamp or from the first column or no. 42 of V+E: only positioning the stamp will determine which.

Varieties

The following sections list the varieties of plate combination, shade, overprint and perforation known for each issue of the 5 centimes. The list covers 'normal' stamps only; errors and curiosities such as inverted overprints and imperf-between pairs are excluded. Mention is however made of the better known examples of overprints on the wrong stamps.

The list is based mainly on my own collection plus some additional varieties reported in authoritative literature. If members have varieties which are not on the list I would be glad to hear of them so that the list can be updated and made as comprehensive as possible.

Shades are given only where shade varieties are considered to be significant, and are listed in what is thought to be the chronological order of printing. Shades are abbreviated thus:

bl=blue br=brown dp=deep gr=green r=red y=yellow

The middle column indicates the overprint or surcharge type. For handstamped Congo Belge overprints, B = Brussels, L = Local. For Tombeur RUANDA and URUNDI overprints, K = Kigali, G = Grysolle and H = Havre. For the nomenclature of EAA overprints, see page 11 of part 1 and Bulletin 46.

For details of the perforation varieties, see page 13 of part 1. Each perforation variety is followed by a two-letter code in brackets. This code gives my judgement of the relative scarcity of the variety in question. The first letter indicates the scarcity of unused copies of the stamp, the second the scarcity of postally used copies. I have split the codes in this way because there are some stamps which are more common used than unused, and others which are more common unused than used - indeed some that are almost unknown genuinely used. This because some batches of sheets from the printers were all or mostly sent to the Congo for distribution to post offices, while others were all or mostly retained in Brussels for sale to dealers. Stamps cancelled by favour or with forged cancels are not taken into account in arriving at the scarcity factor for used stamps.

The scarcity codes shown are highly subjective and should not be taken too



PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

seriously, but readers may nevertheless find it interesting to compare them with their own experience. The codes are as follows:

- A: Very common
- B: Common
- C: Fairly uncommon
- D: Scarce
- E: Rare
- X: Probably unknown

1894 5c blue

I1+A p14(CE), p15(BD), p12-14(DE), p14½-15(BD)

Although p14 is shown as a separate variety from p12-14, it is thought likely that all p14 copies come from sheets perforated with the p12-14 perforator - see part 1, page 13, subparagraph (6).

Colour fakes are found frequently, as are forged cancels. I have found fakes of the 5c green I1+B1 p14, p15 and p14½-15, and of I2+B2 p13½, p14 and p14½-15.

1895 5c brown

I1+A br p14(BB), p15(CC), p12-14(DD), p14½-15(DD)
 I1+A r-br p14(AA), p15(AA), p16(DD), p12-14(BB), p14½-15(BB)
 I1+A dp br-r p14(DD), p15(BB), p12-14(DD), p14½-15(DD)

1900 5c green

I1+B1 p13½(DD), p14(BA), p15(AA), p16(CB), p12-14(EE),
 p14½-15(AA)
 I2+B2 p13½(CB), p14(AA), p14½-15(BB)
 I2+B2 Princes p14(EX)

1909 Congo Belge handstamp

I1+B1	B2	p14(DE), p15(CE), p14½-15(CE)
I1+B1	L1	p15(EE)
I1+B1	L2	p15(EE)
I1+B1	L4	p15(EE)
I2+B2	B2	p14(CE)
I2+B2	B3	p14(DE)
I2+B2	B4	p14(DE)
I2+B2	B5	p14(DE)
I2+B2	B6	p14(DE)
I2+B2	B8	p14(EX)
I2+B2	L1	p14(AA), p14½-15(BB)
I2+B2	L2	p13½(DD), p14(AA), p14½-15(BB)
I2+B2	L3	p13½(DD), p14(BB), p14½-15(CC)
I2+B2	L4	p13½(DD), p14(AA), p14½-15(BB)
I2+B2	L5	p13½(CD), p14(AA), p14½-15(CC)
I2+B2	L6	p13½(DD), p14(BB), p14½-15(CC)
I2+B2	L7	p13½(DD), p14(BB), p14½-15(DD)
I2+B2	L8	p14(EE)

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

I2+B2 Princes B2 p14(EX)
 I2+B2 Princes B5 p14(EX)

The following combinations were reported by Du Four but have not been confirmed by myself or Ray Keach:

I1+B1 B5, B6, L6, L7 I2+B2 B7

Forged overprints are common. I have forgeries on I1+B1 p14, p15 and p14½-15, and on I2+B2 p14.

1909 Congo Belge typo

I2+B2 p14(AD)
 I2+B2 Princes p14(DC)

Some forgeries are found, one of which is dangerously accurate. I have forgeries on I1+B1 p14 and p14½-15 and I2+B2 p14.

1909 unilingual

II+B2 p13½(CB), p14(AA)

1910 bilingual

III1+B3 bl-gr p13½(DD), p14(BB), p14½-15(DD)
 III1+B4a y-gr p13½(DC), p14(AA), p15(DC), p14½-15(DC)
 III1+B4b p13½(DC), p14(CA), p14½-15(DD)
 III1+B5 p13½(DD), p14(BB), p15(DD)
 III1+B6 p14(AA), p15(BC)
 III2+B6 p13½(CC), p14(BB), p15(DD)
 III2+B7 p14(DC), p15(DD)
 III2+C p14(CB)
 IV+D1 p14(EE)
 IV+D2 p14(CB), p15(DE)

1915 bilingual

V1+E1 p13½(DC), p14(BA), p15(DC)
 V2+E2 p14(AA), p15(DC)
 V3+E3 y-gr p14(CB), p15(ED)
 V3+E3 bl-gr p14(AA), p15(CB)
 VI+F p13½(DD), p14(BB), p15(DD)
 1st(1) booklet p14(AA)
 1st(2) booklet p14(DD)
 2nd booklet p14(AA)
 3rd booklet p13½(CD), p14(AB), p15(CC)

1918 Red Cross

V3+E3 p14(AC), p15(BD)

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

1921 Recuperation

III1+B3 bl-gr	p14(DD)
III1+B4b	p13½(DD), p14(DD)
III1+B6	p14(BC), p15(BC)
III2+B6	p13½(DD), p14(DD)
III2+B7	p14(CD), p15(EE)
III2+C	p14(CC)
IV+D1	p13½(BC), p14(AA), p15(BB)
IV+D2	p13½(CC), p14(BD), p15(EE)

The surcharge is found, erroneously, on the 1915 5c V3+E3 p14.

1922 Malines

V2+E2	p14(DD), p15(EE)
V3+E3 y-gr	p14(CC)
V3+E3 bl-gr	p14(AA), p15(CB)
VI+F	p13½(CC), p14(AA), p15(CB)

I have a forged surcharge on VI+F p14. It is not clear what was gained by applying this forgery.

1922 Boma

V1+E1	B	p13½(DD), p14(EE)
V1+E1	C	p14(DD)
V2+E2	B	p14(CD)
V2+E2	C	p14(CC)
V2+E2	D	p14(DD), p15(EE)
V3+E3 y-gr	C	p15(EE)
V3+E3 y-gr	D	p14(DD)
V3+E3 bl-gr	B	p14(BC), p15(DD)
V3+E3 bl-gr	C	p14(CC), p15(EE)
V3+E3 bl-gr	D	p14(DD), p15(DD)
VI+F	A	p13½(DD), p14(AB), p15(DD)
VI+F	B	p14(DD), p15(EE)
VI+F	C	p13½(DD), p14(BC), p15(EE)
VI+F	D	p14(DE)

I am sure that there are more combinations to be found with surcharges B, C and D. Although not many of these stamps pass through my hands, I am regularly finding new varieties.

Surcharge C is found erroneously on the 1910 5c III1+B5 p14, and the 1915 5c V2+E2 p15 and VI+F p14 are found with the 25c surcharge (plate A) normally applied to the 40c stamp. Forgeries of Boma surcharges are quite common, being often found inverted. I have examples on V3+E3 blue-green and on all three printings of booklet stamps (all p14).

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

1916 Tombeur

V1+E1	K	p14(EE)
V1+E1	G	p14(EX)
V1+E1	H	p14(CX)

Needless to say, there are forgeries.

1916 Est Africain

V2+E2	S	p14(BB),p15(EE)
V2+E2	L1(o)	p14(BD),p15(BD)
V2+E2	L1(g)	p14(BD),p15(DE)
V2+E2	L1(.)	p15(CE)
V3+E3 y-gr	L1(i)	p14(CE)
V3+E3 y-gr	L2	p14(BA),p15(BB)
V3+F	L2'	p14(BD),p15(DE)

1918 Red Cross AO

V3+E3		p14(AC),p15(BD)
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1922 EAA Malines

V3+E3 y-gr	L2	p14(AD),p15(BD)
V3+F	L2'	p14(BB),p15(CC)

In all, 182 varieties of the 5c are listed above - 18,080 different stamps in the unlikely event that mint and used reconstructions of each variety were to be completed.

GUIDES TO POSITIONING

In this section I assume that the reader has a complete sheet of the plate combination he wishes to reconstruct, and will make his own plating notes as he studies individual positions. As stated in part 1, I will not attempt to provide a complete listing of the constant plate varieties, since this would make for a bulky document and would duplicate work that has been or will be done by others. Instead I will provide more general guidance on how to approach positioning of the 5c plate combinations, concentrating on the so-called 'generic' varieties which appear in more than one position; on certain of the more conspicuous individual varieties; and finally, on the harder positions where the plater is most likely to experience difficulties.

11+A

The 5c blue and brown of 1894 and 1895 are relatively easy to position. The frames show guidelines, guide dots or doubling in over half the positions of the sheet. The centres are clearly printed, but in most positions there are small black dots visible, especially in the white spaces between the horizontal lines of the river. These dots are present through all printings of 11+A, and since their pattern in each centre is unique they make it easy to confirm the stamp's position.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

I start by looking at the frames. If there are guide dots on each side of a corner, resting on the outer frame about 2mm from the corner point, then the stamp comes from the corresponding corner of the sheet, ie positions 1, 5, 46 or 50. (This is also a feature of plate combinations of other values, and should always be looked out for.) If the top left corner is doubled horizontally or vertically the position is 2 or 47 respectively. If there is doubling by a guideline of the right end of the top frameline the position is 16, 26, 28, 31-40, 42, 47, 49 or 50. If there is a vertical guideline visible between the vertical frames in the bottom right corner it is 37, 42-44, 47 or 48. If a vertical guideline is visible just in the left margin it is 2, 3 or 5. A strong vertical line on the lower half of the left torch indicates position 16 (Balasse V13). A curved mark in the left margin just above centre indicates position 1. In 18 there is a small coloured spot by the bottom of the left torch.

Having narrowed down the possibilities by looking at the frames, the exact position can usually be confirmed from the centre plate dots. A number of centre positions - 6, 7, 14, 24 and 30 - also show near-vertical scratches through or under the boats. The following positions show vertical guidelines to the left of the mountain ridge: 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33-35, 37, 39, 46, 47. The most prominent of these, on 10, is Balasse V3. 19 and 20 show a black spot above the right horizon, a transfer roller variety. 44 and 45 have the whole centre design doubled (Balasse V1). 8 and 15 have black spots in different positions above the lower left trees. Except in early printings, 6 shows a conspicuous black mark in the left margin. In 48 there is a long curved scratch over the mountain ridge - Balasse V2.

On what used to be called centre plate A2, prominent scratch marks caused by cleaning are found on 47 (Balasse V4), 3, 8, 14 and 46. However these appeared only on the last printings of the 1895 stamp with deep brown-red frames.

The following positions are difficult, having few centre plate dots and no recognisable frame features: 11, 12, 17, 21, 23 and 25. In 11 there are two small dots close together in the lower space between the river lines. In 12 there is a single dot in that space and a short vertical black dash by the right dagger. In 17 there is a single dot in the upper space, and traces of a dotted horizontal black line crossing the middle of the right frameline. 21 has a cluster of dots at the left end of the lower water space. 23 has one or two dots in the middle water space, to the left of the left boat, and a black dot by the left dagger. 25 has two dots in the lower water space and a trace of a vertical black scratch, very faint, in the top right corner.

I1+B1

This is another easy sheet. All the frame plate varieties present in I1+A are still clear in I1+B1 and help to identify over half the positions. The centre plate however is different. It is blacker and coarser, and instead of the fine dots there are now heavier black dots in most positions especially just above the mountain ridge, down the left side of the centre vignette and among the river lines. The dots are especially numerous in most of the positions in the second column.

Positioning is largely by these dots. Where there are few dots, there are usually one or two on or just above the mountain ridge, or to the left of it. Traces of black vertical guidelines are found crossing the upper frame above ET and the lower frame below CI, on 7, 19, 23, 24, 30, 33, 37, 47 and 50 (upper only);

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

3,5,8,29 and 42 (lower only); and 2,9,10,14,18 and 40 (upper and lower). The large building shows slight horizontal doubling in many positions, most notably in the 2nd column (Balasse V6). 34 shows the black 'balloon' in the sky immediately above the central ridge which persisted through all states of this plate (Balasse V5). Traces of a long, near-vertical diagonal scratch are visible crossing either the top or the bottom frames, near the centre, in 17,22 and 37.

Difficult positions with almost no dots are 4,10,13,14,20,21,24 and 28. 4 is recognised by the trace of vertical green guideline by the spur of the left torch. 10 has a single dot in the lower water space and another 1½mm to the left of the left end of the abrupt. 13 has a tiny dot in the water space and a horizontal black guideline crossing the right frame. In 14 this line is visible on the left, and there is a dot in the upper water space. 20 has two dots in the upper water space. 21 is rather difficult: the only mark is a tiny faint dot at the right end of the lower water space. 24 shows a faint near-vertical guideline a little above the left end of the abrupt. 28 shows a faint dot in the lower water space and a near-horizontal black scratch at the right end of the bottom margin.

I2+B2

This is a more difficult plate combination, because the re-entry of the frames caused most of the helpful varieties in I1 to disappear, though the green dot in 18 survives as does a trace of the vertical line in 16. Most positions show doubling of the vertical frameline in the lower right corner, but this feature appears too often for it to be useful for identification. There is doubling of the lower left vertical frameline on 6,11 and 16 (Balasse V14). The top right horizontal frameline is doubled on 2-4,10,15-18,32,34,35-40,43-45 and 48. A tiny green guide dot is visible above the top left frameline in many positions, and its distance from the frameline varies from position to position. The top horizontal framelines are doubled in 2-4, and the bottom lines in 8 (otherwise a difficult position).

As with the earlier plate combinations, the real help comes from the centre plate. Many of the corrosion dots in B1 are still visible, and there are others in new positions. The diagonal scratch crossing 17,22 and 37 is not only visible in B2 but for some reason is clearer. The lines at the top of the ridge show doubling upwards in 2-5, and the left ends of the river lines show vertical doubling in 2-5, 10 and 15, and to a lesser extent in some other positions. In 4,19 and 23 there is a black dot closely behind the stern of the left boat. There is a horizontal scratch across the tops of the mountains in 7 and 8, but not in all printings.

The most difficult positions in this plate combination are 13,20,33,38 and 43. 13 has a small dot just on the left end of the abrupt. 20 shows a faint black dot just above the ridge near the right abrupt, and another in the top right fleuron. 33 has two dots in a diagonal pattern above the left ridge, a little left of centre. 38 has a black spot on the ridge near the left end. 43 has two black dots at the right end of the top margin.

II+B2

The frames of the unilingual stamps, frame plate II, show few points of interest. Neither doubling nor guidelines are visible. The most notable varieties are a short horizontal line adjoining the frame in the upper part of the left margin (no. 31) and a near-horizontal green scratch over the top right corner (no. 48).

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

Of greater interest is the fact that on this plate, for the first time, lay marks appear: a green dot between positions 8, 9, 13 and 14, and a vertical line between 38, 39, 43 and 44.

The lack of interest in the frame plate means that positioning depends largely on the centre plate varieties, which are the same as in the previous combination I2+B2. One striking new variety appears, which is a diagonal black line joining the two boats in position 41 (Balasse V7). In fact, this variety appeared first with the Princes printings of I1+B2. The difficult positions with few centre plate dots are the same as in I2+B2.

III1+B3 to III1+B6

With so many different states of the plate, the 5c of 1910 with frame plate III1 is potentially a complicated stamp to position, especially if a good selection of reference sheets is not available. The best technique is to establish from the frames which position in the sheet the stamp comes from, and then from the centres work out which state of the centre plate applies - B3, B4a, B4b, B5 or B6.

Fortunately both stages of this process are relatively easy to perform in all positions of the sheet. The frame plate is full of constant varieties which are present in all printings. The centre plate became progressively more corroded and doubled so that although the later states are a disgrace to the printing profession, they make confirmation of the position an easy task for the plater.

The feature of the frame plate which is particularly helpful is the presence of guidelines along the tops of the stamps and in the left margins. The easiest approach to finding the sheet position is to ignore other varieties, look at the guidelines that are visible, and find the position on the reference sheet that matches the pattern of these guidelines. This pattern varies from position to position, particularly in the bottom left margin, to the left of the top left corner and to the right of the top right corner.

For example, the top right horizontal guideline may be above or below the framelines. It is level with the upper half of the space between the guidelines in 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 36-38, 46 and 49. It is level with the lower half in 5, 7, 19, 28, 35 and 44. It is exactly half way between in 8, 13, 16, 23, 29 and 45. It is level with the top in 4, 14, 27, 40 and 47. It is above the top in 1, 26 and 32. There is no guideline visible in this part of the stamp in 2, 10, 15, 20, 30, 31, 33, 34, 39-43, 48 and 50. The vertical guideline against the lower left frame is equally helpful, because of how it varies in length and in distance from the frame.

There are many other varieties of the frame plate of which it is worth mentioning a small green dot just left of the top left corner in 16 and 45, and a transfer roller variety in the form of a green spot on the hill line under the B of BELGE in 1-3. The frame lay marks are a dot between 8, 9, 13 and 14, a circle between 37 and 38 and a vertical line between 38, 39, 43 and 44.

Having established the sheet position from the frame plate, the plate combination can be ascertained from the centres. The balloon in no. 34 is still visible, but otherwise the centre plate varieties from B2 including Balasse V7 have mostly disappeared. Since the sheet position is known from the frames,

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

there is no point going through the centre plate varieties in detail, but the characteristics of the different centres are as follows:

III1+B3. The centres are clean and clear with little corrosion and few signs of doubling. The centre plate has the following lay marks: a dot between 7,8, 12 and 13, a cross and dot between 8,9,13 and 14, and vertical lines between 42 and 43 and between 43 and 44.

III1+B4a. The only difference in this plate is the addition of lay mark circles underneath the lines between 42, 43 and 44. Otherwise the centres are the same as B3. However all stamps from B3 can be distinguished from B4a because in the former, the frames are green with a slight bluish tinge whereas in the latter they are yellow-green.

III1+B4b. The centre plate is not re-entered but is affected in most positions by a thick sprinkling of fine corrosion dots, especially on the river. In positions 11,16,21,26,31 and 45 there are relatively few of these dots, but still enough to distinguish them from B3.

III1+B5. The centre plate was re-entered creating noticeable doubling in every position, especially on the mountains and the lines of the river. Some of the doubling is extremely pronounced, eg the doubled boats and trees in 8 (Balasse V9), the doubled lower left trees in 9 (Balasse V10), and the doubling of the boats and mountains in 37 (Balasse V11). Another Balasse variety, the scratch over the mountains in position 2 (V8), in fact first appeared in later printings of B4. The balloon on no. 34 is still present. Many of the corrosion dots from B4b are also still visible, though coarser and thicker, and care must be taken to look for doubling differences in order to distinguish some B5 positions from B4b.

III1+B6. The centre plate was re-entered again, but only it seems in rows 6 to 9. In all positions the horizontal river lines are coarser in B6, but it is only in positions 26 to 45 that differences in doubling can be detected. The places to look are in the roof of the church, the masts of the ships and the river lines. The differences are moreover rather slight, and difficult to find because the doublings in B5 are also present in B6 without any apparent change.

III2+B6, III2+B7 and III2+C

The retouching of the top framelines which made III2 is so marked that all positions in the sheet are denominated as Balasse V15. For these plate combinations, identification of the sheet position is straightforward if a reference sheet is available. Every position has burin escapes and other irregularities in the top panels which are unique to it. There is similar retouching in the panels of horizontal lines at the bottom. For example, the white vertical line above the G of the upper CONGO is wholly crossed by a burin mark in 1,20,26,30,34,36,41, 46 and 47, and is partly crossed by such a mark in 4,7,9,16,17 and 21. There are burin escapes on the top frame on 3,8,13,16,18,20,21,30,33 and 50, and on the bottom frame on 5,6,9,24,29,32,34-36 and 40-42.

The centres of III2+B6 are the same as III1+B6. When the plate was re-entered yet again to make B7, the major doubling was unchanged in many positions but in others new doubling appeared or old doubling disappeared. All

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

B7 centres give a worn appearance, but one that is generally cleaner than B6.

With III2+C we have a completely new centre plate. The centres are clear with no doubling and virtually no flaws. The only variety worth mentioning - though it is hardly needed because of the ease of identifying positions from the frames - is a transfer roller flaw in the form of a black spot in the river 2mm NW of the lower left tree. It is clearly visible in 16-20 and 22-25, and barely visible in 21.

IV+D1 and IV+D2

It is a mystery why centre plate C, nearly flawless and in use for only a short period, was discarded. IV+D1 and IV+D2 were introduced late in the life of the 1910 5c, and most of the sheets printed from them were overprinted with the Recuperation surcharge. Indeed, IV+D1 without the surcharge is a great rarity, the discovery of which is enhanced by the fact that in a dealer's stockbook it is no more expensive than common 1910 5c's from other plates.

There are no lay marks on these combinations, but there are many constant varieties on both frames and centres which make positioning easy. Again, it is best to identify the position first from the frames, and then check from the centre whether the stamp is D1 or D2. The impression of these plates is of clear, even shading at the top of the frames, unlike the previous plates, and of generally undoubled centres which are darker than those of B3, B4 and C.

The frames show guidelines in many positions, particularly along the top and down the left. The left hatching in the top half extends into the left margin in 6, 34 and 42. There is a green spot in the curved white line under the EL of BELGE, and another in the white vertical line to the right of the lower part of the left torch, in 2-5 and 46-49. These are transfer roller varieties, the former of which ascends in strength being faintest in no. 2 and strongest in no. 49. A small guide dot is visible between the top left horizontal framelines in 1, 3, 6, 17, 20, 27, 29, 34, 39, 48 and 50.

Centre plate D also shows other useful varieties. There are quite marked horizontal guidelines, at the mid-point of the stamps and crossing the frames on left and right, in many positions, and also some vertical lines down the left sides. A number of positions show a distinctive cluster of dots towards the right end of the lower water space: 1, 3, 9, 11, 21, 24, 27, 41, 43, 46 and 49.

These varieties are the same in D2 as in D1, except that in D2 the dots are larger, and other corrosion dots are visible together with evidence of thickening and minor doubling. D2 centres are coarser and it is not hard to tell D1 from D2 if reference sheets of both are available. Position 8 of D2 shows a thick diagonal scratch above the lower trees, Balasse V12, which is not on D1.

As with III2, no positions on IV+D1 and IV+D2 are classified as 'difficult'.

V1+E1

New frame and centre plates were made for the 1915 issue, with the frames modified to include the word 'CINQ' in the centre of the top tablet.

Frame plate V1 has no lay marks. Guidelines are visible down the right hand side in most positions, and faintly over the top frames in just a few: 6 (right),

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

24 (left), 28 (right), 33 (right) and 41 (left and right). Other useful frame plate varieties are tiny dashes just above the right top frame and below the right bottom frame, in 5 and 50 respectively; a spot outside the top right corner in 7 and inside it in 14; doubling above the ELG of BELGE in 13; a dot just in the bottom margin under CO in 8, and under H-C in 21; a dot in the right margin towards the bottom in 11 and above centre in 36; horizontal shading extended into the top left margin in 15; horizontal doubling of the top right frameline in 19 and 20, and of the bottom left frameline in 25; doubling under the 'shoulder' of the right fleuron in 6, 11, 21 and 41; and a large spot in the same place in 46.

However the most useful variety in frame plate V is the green guide dot which appears in the white vertical line right of the torch, more or less at its mid-point. These dots are in all positions except the first column and no. 42 where it is hidden under the vertical line (in 14 the dot is present, but is hard to detect). In 4, 5, 7-10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 33, 35, 37, 40, 45, 47 and 50 the dot is, to a greater or lesser degree, in the left half of this space. In 3, 20, 34, 38, 39 and 49 it is in the right half. In other positions it is in the middle. In terms of vertical displacement, in 5, 8, 10, 14 and 45 it is more than one horizontal shading line above the level of the top of the tablet in the middle of the torch; in 3, 12 and 43 it is below this level. In 22, 23, 25 and 47 the dot is doubled, in 18 there is another dot 0.3mm below it, and in 37 there is a dot in the tablet in the middle of the torch.

Many positions can therefore be identified from the frames. The centres of E1, being clean and almost free of corrosion, are less informative. There are no centre plate lay marks. Most positions other than in row 1 have a small black cross at mid-height on the left of the stamp, but since it is the same in each place it does not help with positioning. Position 12 has a prominent vertical scratch in the upper left part of the stamp, under the left fleuron. The river lines are clear but are slightly doubled on the left in 12, 13, 25, 26, 27 and 41, and more widely doubled in 36, 39, 43 and 45.

A number of positions in V1+E1 are quite difficult. In the first column with no dot, 16 and 26 are hard because of the absence of guidelines in the right margin. For this reason, they are easily mistaken for 1st booklet stamps. The distinguishing mark in 16 is a faint vertical green scratch in the top margin above the C of CONGO; in 26 it is a sloping line of faint green dots in the same position.

Of the positions with guide dots, the difficult ones where the dots are all in much the same central position are 2, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 38 and 39. In no. 2 there is a short black horizontal guideline just visible crossing the upper half of the right torch. 24 has a short horizontal line just visible beyond the top left corner, and a green dot in the top margin over the left of the last E. 28 has the guideline at the top right and a short green dash in the middle of the right margin. 29 has the hatching slightly extended into the right margin under the torch. 30 has two faint dots in the lower water space, either side of the gap, and thickening of the bottom right vertical frame. 32, 35 and 38 have traces of guideline in the right margin, and one or more dots in the water spaces. 39 has a similar dot in the water, and a green dot in the right margin level with the top of the torch.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

V2+E2

Frame plate V2 is the same as V1 except for the addition of lay marks in the form of vertical lines between 13, 14, 18 and 19 and between 33, 34, 38 and 39, and dots between 18 and 19 and between 33 and 34.

Although re-entered probably throughout, centre plate E2 is similar to E1. The characteristic difference is that E1 centres are light grey while E2 are black and blotchier. The small black cross disappears from E2 except in the 1st column. The slight doubling visible in several E1 positions is no longer seen in E2, but new doubling can be seen in positions 1, 2 and 50. There is more black corrosion around the river and mountains in E2, and for this reason it is easier to position than E1.

V3+E3

V3+E3 is easier still to position; this plate combination seldom presents any problems. The frames are usually a distinctive blue-green shade, although the earliest printings of V3+E3 were yellow-green.

The frame varieties of V1 and V2, including the guide dots, persist, but new varieties are added because of the extensive retouching of the upper framelines on the right, just to the left of the small circle above the last E of BELGE. The lines here are uneven whereas in all other 1915 5c stamps they are straight and parallel. The shape of the retouching varies slightly from position to position. A further aid comes from wear in the top horizontal lines which shows as white patches in them. 26 and 31 have a white patch over the LG of BELGE; 26 also has 3 white patches over the N of CONGO; in 32 and 36 a line above BELGE is worn; in 42 and 43 the middle line to the right of CINQ is worn. The left ends of the lines above the C of CONGO are worn to white patches at various heights in 6, 7, 11, 17-21, 27, 30-33, 40, 41 and 50. There is similar wear at the left end of the bottom lines, over the B of BELGISCH, in 6, 7, 9-11, 15, 17, 21, 23, 26-28, 32, 43-45 and 48.

Centre plate E3 was at least partly re-entered and shows some additional doubling, eg in no. 1. More important, the plate was badly corroded especially in column 1 where heavy black spots appear in the river area. This helps to position stamps which do not have the guide dot. There is corrosion above the mountains and elsewhere in the other columns of the sheet, though not as heavy as column 1, which helps identification of the positions listed above as difficult in V1+E1. The only real difficulty remains with positions 30 and 35, where careful attention must be paid to the upper right retouching and to a few dots in the river.

V3+F

This combination of plates was used only for stamps with the EAA overprint, with or without the Malines surcharge. Centre plate F is easily recognised by the black spot on the mountain, but is otherwise clean and free of flaws. Positioning of stamps from V3+F is therefore based normally on varieties of the frame plate and overprinting plate.

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

VI+F

A new frame plate was created, and the frames of this combination are a plain green with the centres showing the spot on the mountain. Many constant varieties in the frame plate make this a fairly easy stamp to position.

Like V2 and V3, the frame plate has lay marks in the form of vertical lines between 13, 14, 18 and 19 and between 33, 34, 38 and 39. Conspicuous curved burin marks can be seen in different places on or close to the bottom frame in 1, 13 and 26. There are smaller marks in one of the lower 5's in 2, 4, 6-8, 15, 17, 19, 28 and 34. A horizontal guideline is visible just in the bottom margin, normally under the right half of the stamp, in 1, 4, 7-14, 25, 27 and 28. The top frameline above CINQ is neatly retouched in all positions except 15 and 35. There are green dots variously placed in the M of the left CENTIMES in 1, 14, 17-19, 27, 28, 30, 31, 47 and 50. There is a small green dot just under the bottom left corner in 36 and 41.

There is less to go for in the centre plate which has few imperfections. Some positions have horizontal scratches in the top or bottom margins. It is also worth mentioning the black vertical scratch on the left hill in no. 3, the black horizontal line over the N of the lower CONGO in 20, and the similar line just above the mountain ridge in 47.

For stamps from VI+F I classify only 32, 39 and 44 as difficult. 32 has small green mark on the bottom frame under the G of CONGO. 39 has a small mark on the top frame over the C of CONGO, and a green dot in the white line over the BE of BELGISCH. 44 has two green dots just left of the N of the left CENTIMES.

Booklet stamps

The three printings are easily distinguished by their shades, as explained on page 3. Positioning however is not always easy, especially for 1st printing stamps which can look like V1+E1 or V2+E2 stamps from positions without the guide dot.

The best start with 1st booklet stamps is to look for guidelines. If there is any trace of vertical green lines in the right margin, the stamp does not come from the booklet panes. If there are traces of horizontal guideline just above the left half of the top frameline, it is either no. 41 from frame plate V or β5-8, γ1, 2, 4-6 or δ1-6 from the booklets. Other frame plate varieties of the booklets are not too numerous, but it is worth mentioning the slight doubling of the top framelines (γ9, 10, δ7) and of the bottom frameline (δ10), a short green line between the bottom frames under the lower 5 (α1, 5, γ1), doubling of the right frame near the top (α3, 7) and a dot or burin escape by the bottom right corner (β6, 8, 10, δ2, 6).

The 1st printing centres have few flaws. The best guide is the short stretch of horizontal guideline which appears in most positions at the left of the river lines, by the upper water space. (A similar line appears in V+E stamps without the guide dot, but only in positions 26, 31 and 42.) The relationship between this line and the river lines varies from position to position, and is a good way of narrowing down the possibilities when positioning a stamp.

There is little doubling of the river in the first state of the booklet centres. After the plate was re-entered doubling is visible on many positions. Since re-

PLATING MOLS STAMPS PART 2

entry took place before the end of the first printing, it is worth checking 1st booklet stamps for re-entry, though examples with re-entered centres are scarce.

The 2nd booklet stamps with their bright blue-green frames and dark black centres are easy to spot. The frame plate varieties are the same as before, but in addition most positions have corrosion dots just above the mountain ridge which, together with doubling of the river lines, help positioning. 3rd booklet stamps with their dull green frames and dull grey centres can also be positioned from these features as well as from those described above for 1st booklet stamps.

Difficult booklet positions without the black line in the river are $\beta 1$ and $\beta 9$. In $\beta 1$ there is a green dot in the top right margin opposite the shoulder of the fleuron. In $\beta 9$ the left hatching is extended slightly into the margin (also visible on several other positions) and there is a short horizontal extension of the frameline in the bottom right corner.

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