

BELGAPOST

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Belgian Study Circle**

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September/October 1990

Edited by S.J. Andrews and J. Gibbs

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Regrettably it has been a very long time since you received a copy of the BELGAPOST publication. A number of changes were decided upon at the last Annual General Meeting and for the time being joint editorship has been assumed by Jack Andrews and Jack Gibbs.

Not only has the present issue been delayed but unfortunately the number of articles immediately available for publication is small. Nevertheless it has been decided to produce something without further delay. It will be appreciated that original articles take time to produce while precis and/or translations of others into English are equally time consuming.

It is for these reasons that we appeal to all members to help in this endeavour. The more contributions we receive the better will we be in a position to provide a magazine whose publication will be keenly anticipated.

For many years our past editors have received complaints from members that we have incorporated relatively few articles on stamps while including a disproportionate number on postal history. This biased emphasis has certainly been true in the past. To some extent it is true to-day and will remain so until such time that the balance is restored by the receipt of preferred articles from members.

We require any article on your own particular interest on any topic concerning Belgian philately. The length of the article you submit is not critical and any interesting snippet would be equally welcome. Please send these to Jack Andrews.

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The International Exhibition held at Alexandra Palace 3-13 May 1990

By S.J. Andrews

I gave a summary of my impressions of this important exhibition in a short talk at the last Belgian Study Circle Meeting at Regent College in London. I now wish to record these views for the benefit of all members of this Society by referring to those displays of particular relevance to Belgian philately.

The overall impression was one of excellence. The halls were interesting and looked well after the fire several years ago. The frames, which were made for the 1980 Exhibition were impressive and some of the many trade stands generally achieved attractive displays.

Probably the finest part of the whole exhibition was the Court of Honour in the Great Hall where the display was entitled "Before and after the Penny Black". This was specifically created to show the origins and development of the postal system in the United Kingdom, the postal reforms of the 1830's which led to the introduction of the uniform Penny Post on 10 January 1840 and the issue of the stamps and postal stationery on 6 May of that year. It also traced the subsequent progressive adoption of adhesive stamps by postal administrations world wide up to 1860. Further sections were devoted to or associated with the 50th, 100th and 150th anniversaries of the introduction of the Penny Post.

There were many outstanding individual items exhibited. Among these we found three specifically related to Belgium

Frames G1536-1542. Belgium Medallions from 1849 to 1866. This covered the genesis of the issue, the study of the plates and illustration of cancellations, postal markings and frankings. J. Vanhingeland (Awarded Gold).

Frames G1543-1549. Belgium 1869 issue which illustrated printings, varieties, frankings, T.P.O's, cancellations and specimens. R. Dewulf (Awarded Vermeil).

Frames G2048-2054. Belgium Postal History of Brussels. This covered a significant period (1500-1849) prior to the issue of the first Belgian stamps. E. Van den Panhuyzen (Awarded Gold).

There were many other items relevant to Belgium which were included

within other important exhibits. The following were of particular interest to the Belgian collector:-

France Maritime Postal History

Covering the period from the 15th to the 19th century.
J. Bergier (Awarded Large Gold).

France Pas-de-Calais (1628-1876)

A. Pennequin (Awarded Vermeil).

Germany. England-Prussia and Prussia-England.

W. Bruns (Awarded Gold).

Netherlands Postal History Overview.

R.P. Salinger (Awarded Large Gold).

France - Incoming European Mail to 1839.

H.S.H. Bidmead (Awarded Large Vermeil).

Some critical comments could be made. All too often exhibits showed mixed stamps and postal history which is a practice not in accord with present day rules. Too many postal history items did not mention or explain the significance of the marks which appeared on the covers. Some of the explanatory notes to these marks were either omitted or incorrectly given. Some reprinted proofs were referred to as "contemporary".

It was a pleasure to meet many old friends at the Exhibition, particularly Albert de Lisle our member from America.

1865 Issue - Leopold I Profile

1 Fr Violet (COB 21/SG 33)

By S.J. Andrews

The 1 Fr stamp of this issue was used as prepayment for all classes of mail intended for some foreign countries for which the rate was one franc for each 7.5 grammes.

This tax prepayment was not mandatory for letters intended for Brazil, the U.S.A., Western Australia, New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, British Guiana, New Caledonia and all other English and French possessions except South Australia, Tasmania and the Sandwich Islands.

Owing to this restricted prepayment rule one can readily understand why this single stamp on cover is extremely rare.

THE 1918 RED CROSS ISSUE OF BELGIUM

(Issued 15 Jan 1918 - Withdrawn 15 Aug 1919)

By A.G. Wood

An enquiry by a member of the Belgian Study Circle gave rise to the following notes on this issue. These are based on an article published in the Waterlow Study Circle Journal for which we thank the Editor. The information was obtained from the following source material:-

An article by General de Haene published in the Revue Postale in August 1927 to April 1928. This was subsequently also published in book form.

A note in La Revue Postale of April 1927 which quoted the number of stamps sold between January 1st and August 15th 1919.

An examination of the sheets of stamps kept by Waterlow in their files for reference purposes, the so-called File Copy Sheets, for the higher values from 35c upwards.

Sundry numbered sheets for the lower values from 1c to 25c. No File Copy Sheets are known for these typographed stamps.

It is a great pity that General de Haene only quotes the numbers of stamps destroyed for the four top values of this issue (1 Fr., 2 Frs., 5 Frs. and the 10 Frs.). Figures for the other values may be tucked away in the Archives of the Bruxelles Postal Museum.

The sheets for the values 1c to 25c were numbered and the blocks of numbers allotted before the stamps were printed, allowance being made for wastage. I show the approximate allocation of the numbers in the Table below.

Sheet numbers for the recess printed stamps 35c to 10 Frs. would have been in packets 1 to 500.

THE RED CROSS ISSUE OF BELGIUM (Contd)

VALUE	NUMBER OF		SOLD		DESTROYED	SHEET NUMBERS	
	STAMPS	SHEETS	15.1.18- 31.12.18	1.1.19- 15.8.19		SUGGESTED ALLOCATION	KNOWN SHEET NUMBERS
1c	400,000	4,000		45,763		1-4,500	1020 2403/4 2442-59 3867
2c	400,000	4,000		165,578		13,501-18,000	14,843 16,966-7 16,969
5c	400,000	4,000		65,498		9,001-13,500	9,145
10c	400,000	4,000		55,908		4,501- 9,000	4,823
15c	200,000	2,000		30,368		18,001-20,250	19,042
20c	200,000	2,000		21,740		20,251-22,500	21,302
25c	200,000	2,000		23,903		22,501-24,750	23,273 23,278 23,823 24,166
						FILE COPY No.	DATE ON FILE COPY
35c	75,000	750		21,428		207378	19 Nov 1917
40c	75,000	750		19,839		"	"
50c	75,000	750		18,276		"	"
1 Fr	75,000	750	19,505	9,217	46,278	207379	"
2 Fr	25,000	250	13,000	5,923	6,077	"	"
5 Fr	25,000	250	9,903	4,330	10,767	"	"
10 Fr	15,000	150	8,588	3,582	2,830	"	"

Representing the notes of a display to members of the
Belgian Study Circle in November 1989

By R.T. Harrison

Following the pattern already established for the series of Province studies the present display of the postal history of the Province of Antwerp includes items which are shown in chronological sequence for the period up to the First World War. I have also included at the end a few sections dealing with Railway TPO's, Foreign Sorting Marks and National Exhibitions for this Province. Most noticeable is the dominance of the city of Antwerp which is reflected in the difficulty of finding postmarks for other towns.

The book by Herlant is used as the basis of postmark comments (Ref 1).

Historical background

Based on the original Marquisat of Antwerp, it is from the 12th century that the Duchy of Brabant, including Antwerp, achieves importance. With the Flanders towns, especially Bruges, in decline, the port facilities of Antwerp helped an enormous and prosperous four centuries of growth to make Antwerp a very powerful city. The Duchy of Brabant (see Fig A) in 1430 formed one of the seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands, the boundaries remaining almost unchanged for the following 300 or more years (see Fig B).

In 1795, one year after the French invasion, Belgium was divided into nine Provinces, Brabant being split to form Dyle and Deux Nethes (see Fig C). The name was appropriate as the French added to Deux Nethes a large area of modern-day Holland.

In 1813, on the defeat of Napoleon, William of Orange retained the Province and renamed it Antwerp, but excluded from it the Dutch territory added earlier in 1795. The unhappy, but not brutal, occupation by the Dutch ended in 1830 with Independence but it was a further two years before the Dutch troops left the garrison (Citadel) of Antwerp.

The Province became present day Antwerp, one of the nine Provinces with the same boundaries, which are largely unchanged to this day (see Fig D). Proudly Flemish, it is now a well-populated area although still, as in the past, dominated by the chief city of Antwerp.

Spanish Netherlands (1621-1713)

In his book, Herlant records only Antwerp, Lier and Mechelen as having postal markings during this period. These were in manuscript only and were spelt LIER and VAN MECHELEN or DE MALINES.

No manuscript marks are known for Antwerp where the following handstruck markings consisting of two letters were used instead:-

IB PM IC

As for other towns and villages, doubtless mail did pass to and fro but no marks are recorded by Herlant as having been used.

Austrian Netherlands (1714-1794)

During this period only two new towns were to achieve postal status. The following Table gives the spellings used in these postmarks⁺.

Name of Town	Spelling used in Postmark
Antwerp	ANVERS
Kontich	CONTICQ
Lier	LIER, LIERE or LIERRE
Mechelen	MALINES
Turnhout	TURNHOUT

These were initially manuscript but later on in this period we see the introduction of straight-line handstamp markings in black ink. Only three towns, Antwerp, Lier and Mechelen were to use these handstamps from around 1742.

During this time frequent use was made of a handstamp consisting of a letter set inside a circle. For Antwerp the letter A struck in red ink was used from around 1761 onwards.



The letter H was a Frontier Bureau mark on mail coming into Belgium from Holland via Antwerp which then, as now, was the principal frontier town. This mark also occurs without the circle.



+ Block letters are used to denote postmarks. Present-day local spelling is used for place-names except for those cases where an English equivalent exists eg Antwerp.

French Occupation (1794-1814)

The County of Brabant was divided to form two 'Departements', Dyle and Deux Nethes, each run as a 'Département conquis' and given a separate number. That for Deux Nethes was 93. This Department was considerably enlarged by the addition of adjoining Dutch territory (see Figs B and C) but I have restricted this study to towns situated in present-day Belgium.

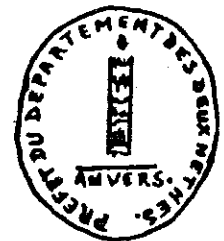
Only the same five towns retained their postal status during this occupation. The normal handstamp consisted of a straight-line with the number 93 above the name of the town. The postal practices and regulations for France were extended to all 'Départements Conquis', hence pre-paid letters used P93P over the name of the town while the débourse mark was similarly employed.

93
ANVERS

P93P
ANVERS

D93B
ANVERS

Naturally, French became the regulation language hence the change from ANTWERPEN to ANVERS. The corresponding normal marks for the other four towns became 93/CONTIGH, 93/LIER, 93/MALINES and 93/TURNHOUT. A number of special cancellations incorporating the words 'Deux Nethes' also appeared for Antwerp. Two of these with circular frames are illustrated.



Needless to say these changes were far from welcome in this part of Belgium which had always been fiercely and patriotically Flemish in both history and language.



United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815-1830)

Following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the Dutch took control and retained the area of Deux Nethes as a Province but excluded the parts of Holland added by France (see Fig D). It became the Province of Antwerp.

Although this period was relatively short, a number of changes and improvements were made to central and local administration, including the postal administration. Naturally, however, Dutch (ie Flemish) language and names were restored to the benefit of this Province.

Initially the French handstamps were used with the number 93 erased until new Dutch handstamps became available. These consisted of the name of the town with the letters PP or DB as separate handstamp.

DB
ANVERS.

In 1829 the first circular date stamps were introduced consisting of a large single circle showing the day and month but not the year. There were still only five towns evident with postal status during this period.



Independent Belgium 1830

The name of 'Anvers' and the boundaries of the Province were adopted by the Belgians and have remained similar to this day. A number of additional towns gained postal status, rising to a total of twenty before adhesive stamps were introduced in 1849.

One of the first changes made was the introduction in 1830 of large double circular date stamps to distinguish Belgian mail from Dutch letters. However, due to the break in relations between the two countries, little mail passed, at least directly, between Belgium and Holland in the early years. These new handstamps included two small pearls which were later removed. The 'Anvers' handstamps had letters of two distinct sizes. Smaller circular date stamps were later introduced.

Rayon Marks

The chief town, Antwerp, lies within Rayon 2 and, initially, the mark LPB2R was used. This was later to become B4R which exists in several styles and in different colours.

Other Marks

A number of other items with a variety of marks also formed part of the display.

PAYS D'OUTRE MER

This mark was introduced in 1837 and replaced the Dutch 'ZEEBRIEF' mark.

DEBOURSE
ANVERS

First noted by Herlant for 1836.

FRANCO FRONTIERE

Indicates mandatory pre-payment up to the frontier.

FCO OSTENDE

Another example of an instructional mark denoting limitations

Adhesive Stamp Period

Stamps were cancelled by a circle of bars with a circular date stamp alongside. The latter were initially in red ink then in black. Various styles of these are to be found. One unusual circular date stamp shows STATION DE MALINES in red ink. A number of additional cancellers were used in Antwerp, eg ANVERS(STATION) and ANVERS(BASSIN), in black ink (Ref 2).

From around 1890 the number of Antwerp offices increased and a selection of these including ANVERS(ZURENBORG) formed part of the display. Bilingualism was used for those towns which had alternative names.

Railway parcel stamps produced special cancels some of which were also included in the display.

Travelling Post Offices (TPO)

Within the Province was to appear the first experimental TPO on the Brussels-Antwerp line and the small boxed mark ANVERS, in green ink, was to continue when regular TPO markings were established. The route was named NORD and circular date stamps NORD 1 ANVERS and NORD 1 with a small boxed ANVERS were used.

Foreign Sorting Marks (FSM)

The principal route into Holland was via Antwerp, where most mail was routed. From early times, the manuscript mark DE HOLLANDE appeared in various forms. The earliest one noted by Herlant is for 1678. These were later replaced by a handstruck mark a typical example of which is also shown. The letter H as depicted on page 6 under the section for the Austrian Period, also occurs.

De Hollande

D HOLLANDE

A few years after Independence the marks HOLLANDE PAR ANVERS and PAYS-BAS PAR ANVERS were introduced with large double circular date stamps in red ink. The latter were subsequently replaced by small CDS's of various types.



When black ink was introduced, the marks PAYS-BAS PAR ANVERS and PAYS-BAS PAR ANVERS STAT appeared.

On mail carried on the Railway, the route direction **NORD** was used as for inland mail. Numbers 1 and 2 were used and the marks **HOLLANDE NORD NO 1** **HOLLANDE NORD NO 2** and **PAYS-BAS/NORD 2** are to be found with some variations. A number of distinct types have also been observed.

Some mail connecting Antwerp direct with Holland bore markings **AMSTERDAM-ANTW** or similar and omitted the country name.

The only other town to have its name on a foreign sorting mark is Turnhout. The mark **PAYS-BAS PAR TURNHOUT** has been observed.

Exhibitions

The first major exhibition for which special adhesive stamps were issued was that for 1894 in Antwerp. A selection of covers bearing the stamps and special cancellations used during this Exhibition were included in the display.

The 1930 Philatelic Exhibition which also took place in Antwerp was commemorated with the issue of the special stamp (COB 301) showing the coat of arms of the town. The display closed with items issued for the 1977 Exhibition of 'Rubensjaar' which commemorated Antwerp's favourite son.

Several other members also contributed material to the display.

References

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2. Stibbe, J., 'Dictionnaire des Bureaux de Poste de Belgique, 1830-1914'. Académie de Philatélie de Belgique (1969).

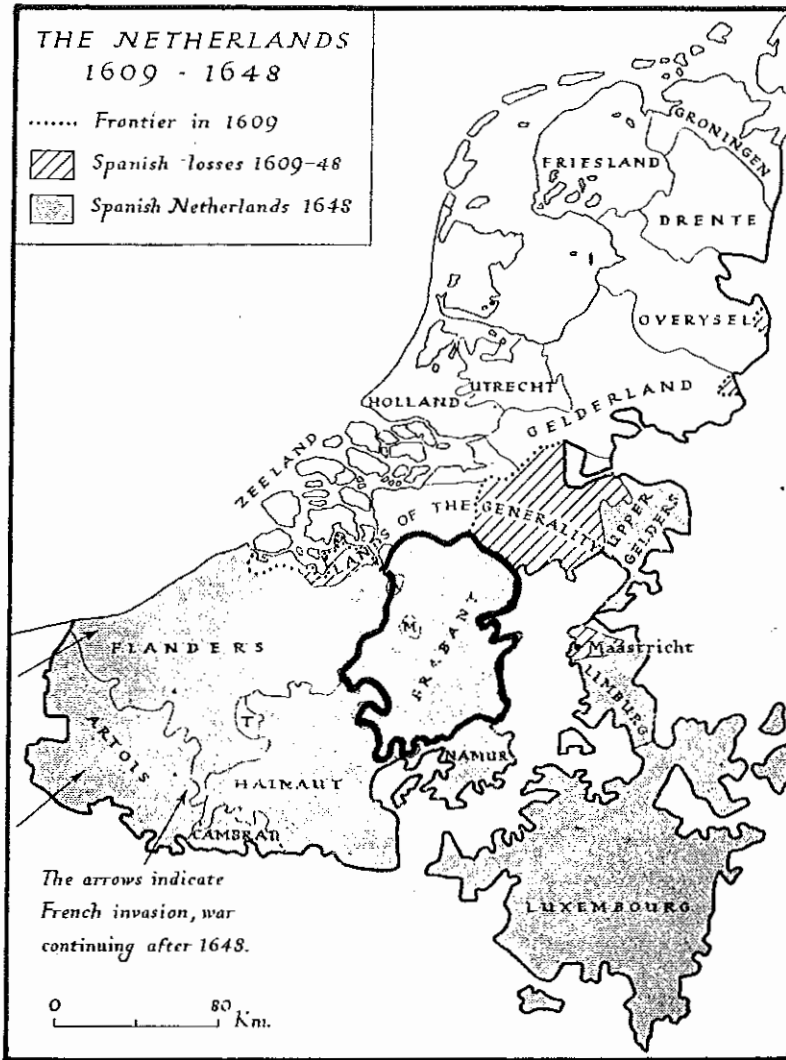


Fig. A The Netherlands in 1609-48

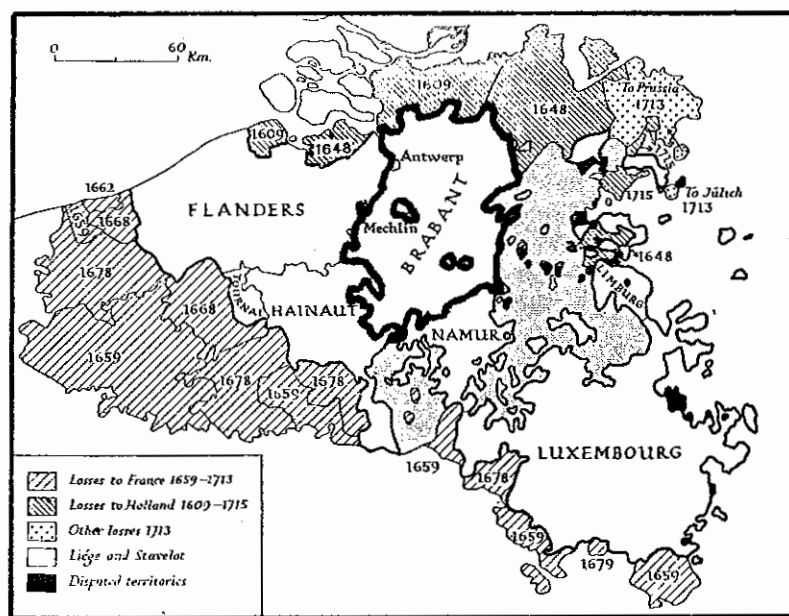


Fig. B The Spanish Netherlands, 1659-1715

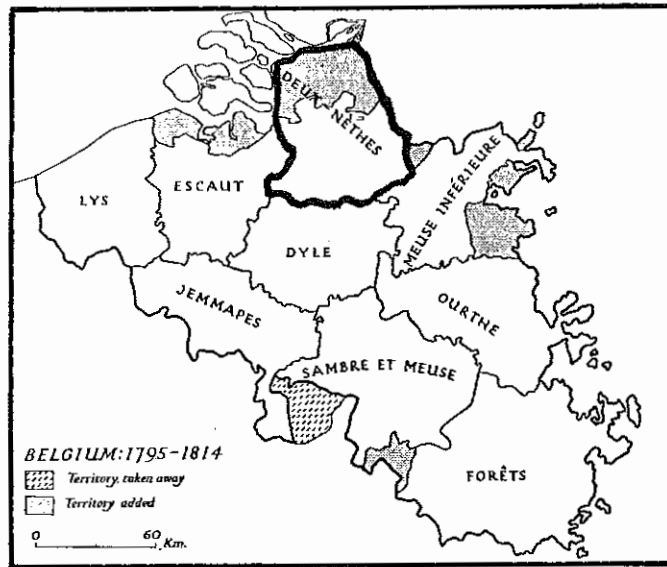


Fig. C Belgium under French domination

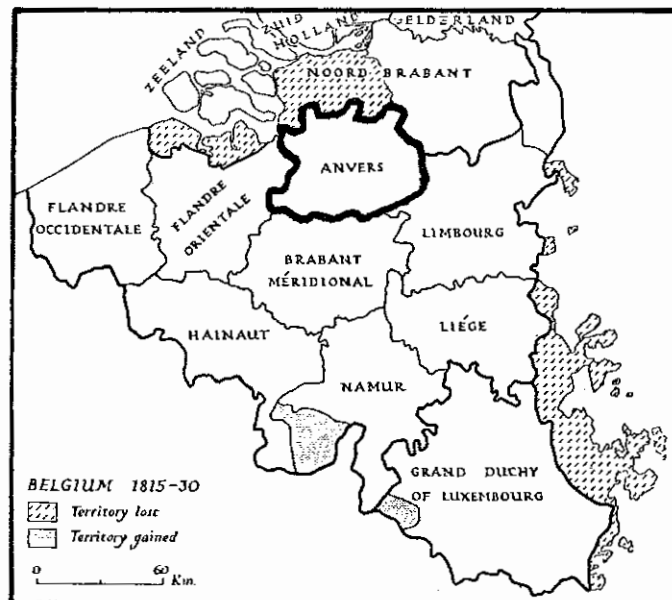
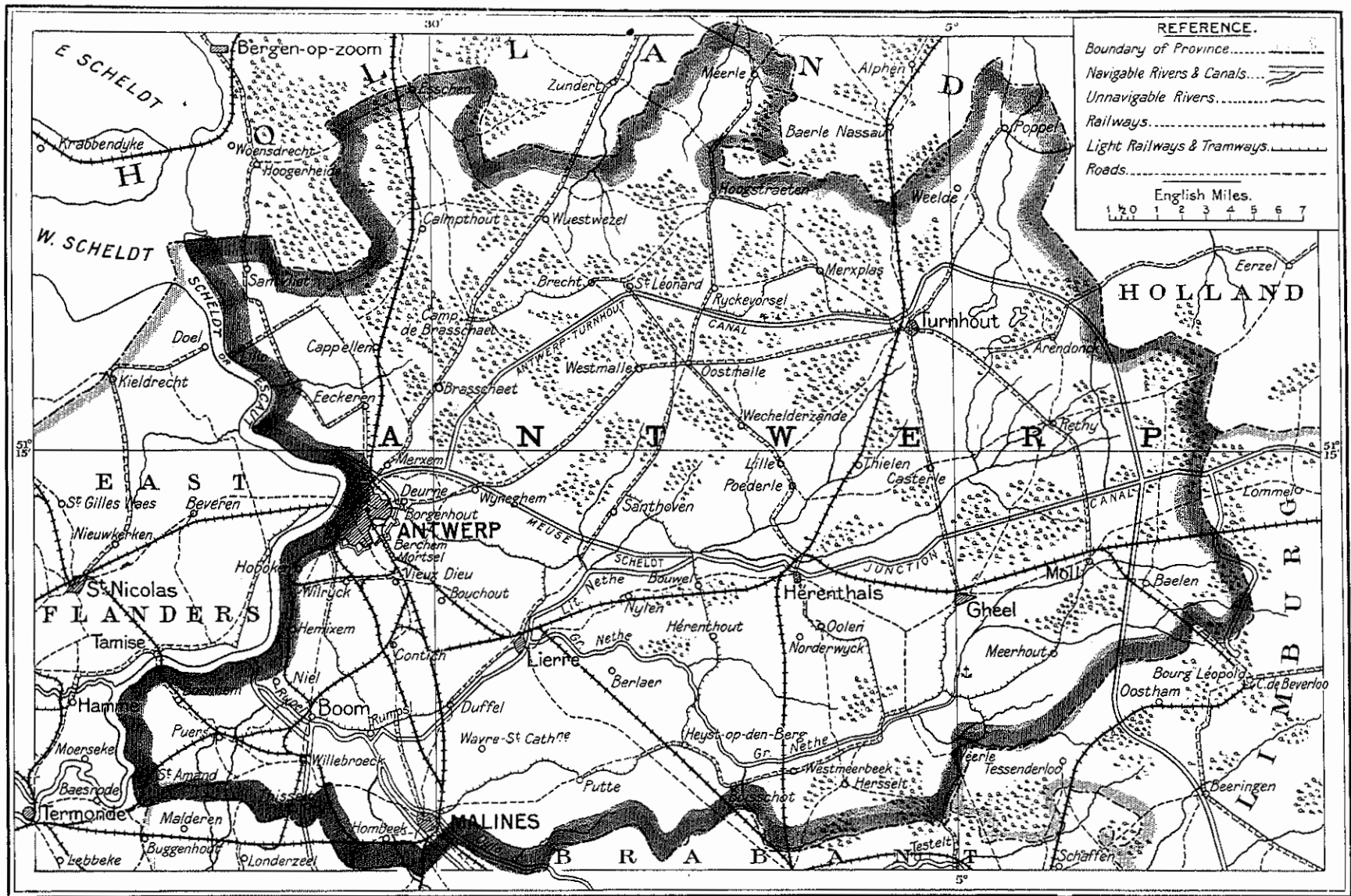


Fig. D Belgium in 1815-30



MAP OF ANTWERP.

Copyright]

[Hutchinson & Co.

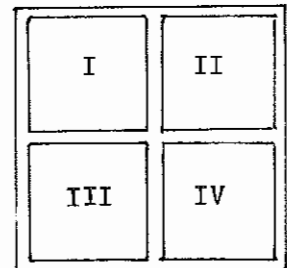
An Update of Published Works

By P.D.D. Russell

The study of the varieties of the 1915 Issue has been the subject of a number of articles. The first systematic study was published in La Revue Postale by General de Haene during the period 1928 to 1934 (Ref 1). A second study was published in manuscript form by Kicken towards the end of the second World War (Ref 2). This was followed by a slightly enlarged compendium published by Leveque in 1975 (Ref 3). In addition to these primary sources there is also a number of less well-known articles which have appeared in various philatelic publications.

Collectors interested in this issue usually rely on the latest publication of Ref 3, probably because they may not have ready access to the other literature. The present series of articles for BELGAPOST was therefore conceived to provide a bridge between the work of the above authors, to give cross references to the previously defined variety numbers and most importantly to provide information enabling varieties reported up to 1975 to be related to stamp position in the panes.

Stamps of this issue, with the effigy of King Albert, were printed in sheets of four panes consisting of 100 stamps each. The pane positions in the sheet are defined by Roman numerals as shown.



Four distinct panes were used for the Die I (15c and 20c), the Die Ia (5c-emerald) and the Die III (2c,5c,10c,15c). Eight different panes were used for the remaining values and dies. In general the position of a particular pane in the printing base does vary and a number of combinations were employed from 1915.

The first article in the present series deals with the four distinct panes of the 2c Die III.

The 2c Die III

This stamp was first issued in October 1920 and, as far as is known, the positions of the four distinct panes used in the printing base have not varied. These panes have therefore been labelled (1,2,3,4) in arabic numerals thereby corresponding to their positions (I,II,III,IV) in the sheet.

This study is based on the author's collection of ten panes together with several large blocks of 50 or more stamps. Five of these panes have the DEPOT 1920 mark. A further pane was also made available by Mr Deruyck of Belgium.

The varieties of Refs 1,2 and 3 are listed on p.16 and illustrated on p.17. The pane numbers in which H18 and H19 occur were corrected using the author's collection. It is clear from this Table that the original work published by General de Haene, for this value, has not been significantly extended in Refs 2 and 3. The following points are worth noting:-

- L101a This variety is not mentioned in Refs 1,2 and 3. It is always associated with L100.
- L104 First reported by Kicken but not observed at all in the author's collection.
- L107 Only very faint examples found on stamp 30 of panes 1 and 3.
- L108] First reported by Leve`que in Ref 3.
L202]
- L200 Reported by Leve`que and Kicken but originally ignored by de Haene. Classifying it as a variety presents difficulty as the line in question occurs with different intensity and with a length varying from less than 0.5 mm to almost 1 mm. It occurs in several positions in panes 1,3 and 4. In the author's view it is most conspicuous in position 3 of pane 1, in positions 3,6,8,9 and 10 of pane 3 and in positions 1,2,3,6,7,8,10,12,18 and 91 of pane 4.
- L401 Not reported by de Haene.

The author of the present article has extended this work by documenting a large number of additional constant varieties for the 2c Die III. Some of these involve large design flaws which are considered to add significantly to the usefulness of existing information summarised in the Table below. This extension is outside the scope of the present article but information may be obtained on request. This extension is in close agreement with an independent study carried out by our member Willy de Bakere of Veldegem, Belgium.

References

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De Haene, A., 'Belgique - Emission de 1915'. Serialised article in La Revue Postale. 1c Die I pp 636-640(1932). 2c Dies I & II pp 657-664(1933). 1c Die II & 2c Die I pp 677-680(1933). 2c Dies II & III and 3c Die II pp 708-714(1933). 3c Die II pp 733-736(1933). 5c Dies I & II pp 747-753 (1933). 5c Die II pp 773-776(1933). 5c Dies III & IV pp 790-793(1933).
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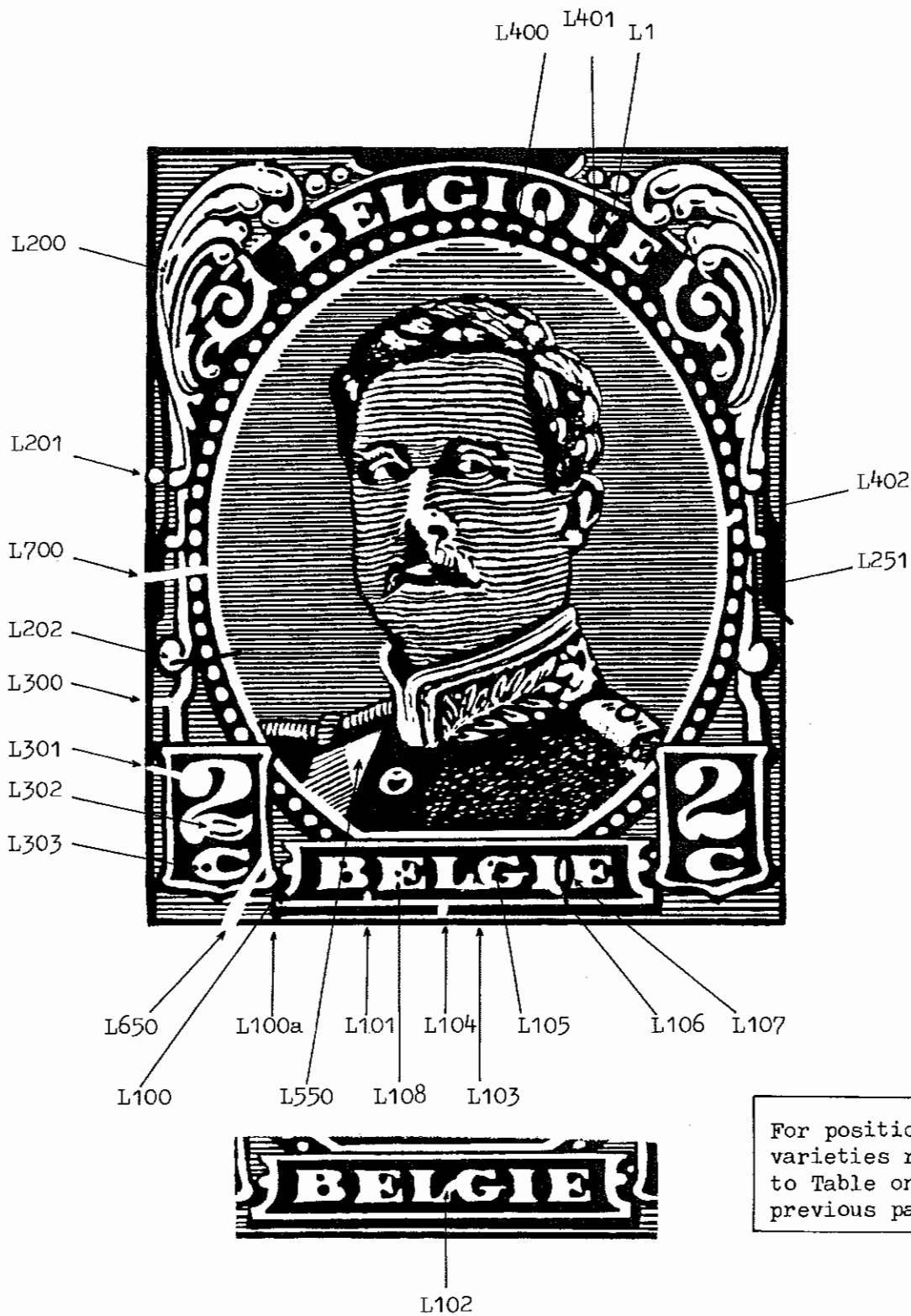
Table of Published Varieties

Leveque Number	Kicken Number	de Haene Number	Description	Stamp Position	Pane Number
L1	K1	H5	Break in right arm of U of BELGIQUE	92	P(1234)
L100	K2	H17	Left of central shield has colour spot in frame	34	P(1234)
L100a	-	-	Colour spot joining left of central shield to bottom main frame	34	P(1234)
L101	K3	H7a,H12	White spur below and between BE of BELGIE	1	P(1234)
L102	K4	H4	L and G of BELGIE joined by white scratch	81	P(1234)
L103	K5	H10	Bottom of LG of BELGIE joined by white line	100	1
L104	K6	-	Lower frame of central shield cut by white line under L of BELGIE	-	-
L105	K7	H19	Colour spot in top of G of BELGIE	48	P(1234)
L106	K8	H11	White spur to bottom right of I of BELGIE	50	P(1234)
L107	K9	H16	White spot between IE of BELGIE	30 10	P(13) 2
L108	-	-	Colour spot in first E of BELGIE	35	P(1234)
L200	K10	-	Thick colour line in 3rd left leaf	(see	page 15)
L201	K11	H15	White circular spot by left main frame level with 12th/13th left pearls	32	2
L202	-	-	Colour scratch from ball of last left ornament	8	1
L251	K12	H14	Colour scratch to right main frame and final right ornament	7	P(12)
L300	K13	H13	Break in left crooked ornament	4	P(1234)
L301	K14	H8	White scratch top left of left shield	61	4
L302	K15	H1	Multiple elongated colour scratches in left 2	5	P(1234)
L303	K16	H2	Colour spot to left C	25	P(1234)
L400	K17	H18	Large spur to pearl under IQ of BELGIQUE	99	P(1234)
L401	K18	-	Colour spot in pearl under 2nd E of BELGIQUE	46	P(1234)
L402	K19	H6	11th right pearl joined to oval	79	P(1234)
L550	K20	H9	White patch on sash	15	2
L650	K21	H3	Large white scar from bottom margin through left shield	94	1
L700	K22	H7	Long white scratch across left ornament and level with 9th left pearl	1	2

- Notes
1. Primary varieties occur in more than one pane. Thus P(12) refers to a primary variety to be found in panes 1 and 2.
 2. Distinctive varieties appear in one pane only and include:-
 - (i) Secondary varieties which occur from the outset of issue
 - (ii) Printing varieties which arise from damage to a pane during printing
 - (iii) Ephemeral varieties which occur and then disappear possibly as a result of 'make-ready' alterations.

Thus L103 is distinctive of pane 1.

Illustration of Published Varieties



NOTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Regents College on 19 May 1990

By A.G. Wood

The following Officers were appointed at this A.G.M.

Chairman	G.O.I. Hollings
Vice-Chairman	A.D. Geake
Secretary	A.G. Wood
Treasurer	R.T. Harrison
Packet Superintendent	J.G. Gibbs
Postal Auctions	G.O.I. Hollings
Joint Editors of BELGAPOST	S.J. Andrews and J.G. Gibbs

During the interim period J.B. Horne will complete Volume III of BELGAPOST which is to be published in one volume. The new Editors will be responsible for the Sept/Oct Issue of Volume IV No 1. At present it is not known which will appear first.

Since the A.G.M. John Connolly has done a grand job disposing of Arnold Cuigniez's collection. If any member is still interested in any particular item or section, will he please contact John Connolly at 112, London Road, Datchet, Slough, Bucks SL3 9LH - Phone number 0753-42540.

I am in the process of revising the address list, but am still awaiting details of changes from J.B. Horne.

Those of us who attended the joint meeting with the Belgian Congo Study Circle (BCSC) at the Portland Hotel, Buxton on the 15th/16th September 1990 had a most enjoyable time. The subject of this joint session was Air Mails between Belgium and the Congo. This display was led by Norman Clowes (BCSC) who had a very varied collection. He was supported by Peter Foden (BCSC) and Jack Gibbs. The Belgian Circle sessions dealt with the Postal History of the period of the French Domination. This was led by Jack Andrews ably supported by Jack Coles (BCSC), Jack Gibbs and Tony Geake. Later Jack Andrews showed picture post cards of Belgian Post Offices and their relevant post marks. The stamps dealt with were the Small King's Head Red Cross of 1914 which included both genuine examples and some forgeries. I displayed material from George Hollings' collection of the 1893 issue which included blocks and strips which had to a large extent been placed, although it has not always been possible to assign them to a particular plate.

The final session was devoted to varied items of interest that members had brought along. The material was of good diversity and should provide a basis for future articles in BELGAPOST.

We must all thank Stuart Smith (BCSC) for arranging the week-end, and the hotel staff who were very helpful and of a happy disposition. Those members who did not get to Buxton missed a treat.

Next year the Belgian Congo Study Circle will be celebrating its Fortieth Anniversary. It has been proposed having a week-end at the beginning of May at a hotel within 20 miles of Heathrow. They will not, therefore, be able to support a joint week-end later in the year. It has also been suggested that our next joint meeting should be at Bournemouth in June 1991. Comments to the Secretary would be welcome.

Assuming that British Rail will again be offering holders of Senior Citizen Railcards some additional travel concessions in November, it is hoped that holders of such cards will endeavour to get to our meeting at Regents College on the 17th November.

SMALL BEARDS - 1893 ISSUE

Number of Plates used

By A.G. Wood

As is well known, the marginal 'ATELIER DU TIMBRE' marks in the 1893 Small Beard Issue are printed in the same colour as the stamps and as such, formed part of the printing base. Having been loaned by George Hollings an album page of fourteen of these stamps of various values, I noted that the position of this mark varied.

This fact set me to examine these marks in my collection and in the available illustrations. This study was extended to the perforation crosses which occur above the 3rd stamp of pane II and below the 23rd stamp of pane V. These researches showed that several plates of 300 stamps were used for the undermentioned values. The same sub-type varieties and primary varieties are found on all plates of the same value.

My findings are that at least three plates were used for the 1c and 5c and at least two plates for the 2c, 10c and 25c stamps.

These discoveries will make plate reconstruction more involved but one should arrive at the correct answer at the end.

Notes of Talk given at Buxton on 15 Sept 1990

By J. Gibbs

The subject of air mails was logical for the joint meeting of the societies as post from Belgium plays just as important a part of the study as does post from the Congo.

Norman Clowes (BCSC) warned his audience at the outset that his approach would at times be irreverent as he believed that the subject was varied enough to allow enjoyment without being too serious. In order to prove the point he had made up a new category for specialists. He denoted this 'TOOT' mail and showed a 1953 cover bearing 'T' and 'O' markings coincidentally making up that word.

The first major development in the Congo had long been known to collectors as the 'First LARA' (Ligne Aerienne du Roi Albert), being the 1920-1922 trial, and then theoretically fortnightly, flights connecting with sea mail from Antwerp. By 1922 the service had extended as far as Stanleyville. Mail from that early phase is not easy to find and is almost entirely philatelic. A halt was called in June 1922 and it was not until 1925 that SABENA began flights towards Katanga. This service becoming known as the 'Second LARA'.

While progress was being made within the Congo there were initially no regular flights from Europe. However, the French air line to Casablanca, extended to Dakar in June 1925, meant that letters to and from Europe were speeded up considerably. It was not until February 1935 that a regular service was set up, Belgian and French aircraft flying in alternate weeks. A feature of this joint service was the way in which SABENA gave little publicity to the French alternate week flights, and vice versa. Whereas Belgium was more concerned with flights to the Congo, France saw the service as a major part of the important link with Madagascar.

Examples of various early individual flights from Europe to or through the Congo were displayed. Again, Belgian and French writings sometimes gave biased, partial or even incorrect accounts.

Although regular services from Belgium and France were aimed at Leopoldville (and later Elisabethville), examples were shown of mail out of the Congo linking with the Imperial Airways service through central Africa to and from Cape Town.

There was a lot still to be learnt, even today, about the main 1920/30s formative period. For example, mail from Dundo (on the Congo/Angola border) was routed via Tshikapa in order mainly to take advantage of the internal Congo air service from the latter village. Such mail is not too elusive and the speaker commented on the mixed franking thereon, and on the way in which no proof had yet been found that the mixed franking (and especially the apparent sale of Congo air stamps at Dundo) had any official backing.

Emphasis was laid on the interest to be found in mail to the Congo from obscure places: here the major factor was patience in rummaging through dealers' stocks.

The speaker concluded with his favourite philatelic motto: 'Do not despise the oversized', showing as an example a massive 1942 commercial cover from Usumbura to the U.S.A. bearing 64 examples of the then highest value on sale, 20 frs.

BELGICA 90

By R.T. Harrison

The BELGICA 90 philatelic event took place in Brussels during the first week in June 1990. Held at Heysel in a large purpose built exhibition hall, it was a delight to be able to see all the exhibits etc., in natural light and at a comfortable temperature.

The small group of our members who attended this exhibition included Tony Geake, Reg Harrison, Maurice Wilkinson and Geoffrey Wood. They were delighted to meet up with a number of overseas members including Willy de Bakere, Jean Bruwier, Joseph Deruyck and Albert De Lisle.

The exhibition included a display from the collection of the Belgian King. This comprised a few older items and a great deal of modern material. On the Wednesday (the day we returned home), a visit by the King was planned - one wag commenting that he went to see what his collection looked like !

On display was an old mail coach which continued the theme 'Mail in Olden Times' together with several exhibits which included postal history covers and artefacts.

This was an enjoyable trip and the exhibition had something of interest for everyone. A bonus was the opportunity to meet Marcel and Eliaine Deneumostier from whom so much valuable literature has flowed in recent years.