











Did You Know?




January 1996

-  On 1.1.96 the inland and foreign postal rates went up, although at the time of writing the PTA announcement had been made; but there are none of the usual tables or booklets available giving all rates in detail. Basically the A & B mail go up 10c to 90 & 70 inland and 110 & 90 for Europe, and overseas is 180 (no change) & 110. Inland registered letter now CHF 5 (including 90c A mail), while for all foreign the additional charge is up from 3 to 4 CHF. Large covers B4 and above are called Maxi but more on this subject later.
-  A completely new rule has been introduced aimed directly at the philatelists, in that loose stamps for cancelling must have a value of at least 20c. This is because of the number of people who collect K and other special cancels on loose 5c ATMs. No mention is made of such low value stamps being stuck on cards or covers, as is done in the SVPS New Issue Service (to cut costs), so I expect that is still acceptable.
-  Another important change which affects stamp clubs and others is that the previous minimum number of 100 Newsletters, Bulletins etc., handed in at the same time is raised to 1000. This means that about 3000 such clubs, music, gymnastic, shooting and others will have to pay the normal B mail rate, i.e., about a 400% increase.
-  When I tried to order new booklets for the 70 and 90c stamps, with sheet number and printing date, the Philatelic Service in Bern wrote to me "not available", though they told our member in Boston, USA, that they were available, FD cancelled only.
-  Not only is the 'old' 80c A stamp not officially listed, but also the 80c booklet, the 60c postcard, and the 3 and 3.50 labels. The Philatelic Service told me they are to remain on sale until exhausted at all counters. A funny way to sell things.
-  I came across this gem while looking for something else. During her stay in Luzern in 1868 Queen Victoria went up Pilatus, on the pony she had brought from England! The lake steamer 'Winkelried' was put at the disposal of the royal party for their various trips. Where are the letters sent back to England now, with this ship cancellation?
-  I've been looking through more 50c Postman stamps and have found that, with a 10x magnifying glass and good light, there are vestiges of the 'stroke in T' on all sheet stamps too, but I think this is only a curiosity. On coil stamps it is clear and complete, on booklet stamps upper and lower bits only, on the second printing. The first booklet printing and sheet stamps, including the red surcharge of 1987, show vestiges.
-  The PTT Museum has updated its Junior Action Area with the installation of four computers. On two of them you can design your own stamps, from a vast store of views and objects which can be placed in the standard Helvetia format in any size and layout, in colour, but the print-out shows a large single and a cancelled block of four in black and white only.

On the other two computers are listed some of the remarkable covers and other items to be found in the Museum, with their data, and a quiz can be answered (with the help of the Zumstein catalogue on the table, if necessary). For those reaching maximum points, for beginners and advanced, a certificate is printed out.

Very well done and an additional attraction, with the aim to learn how to use the catalogue and exhibits. German, French, Italian or English can be selected by the user.

-  This is the most peculiar cancel I have ever seen. It should not have been classified as a 'K' as it will certainly be used for only a year. Basel 32 is located in the factory area of La Roche the chemical company and is not public.





Did You Know?



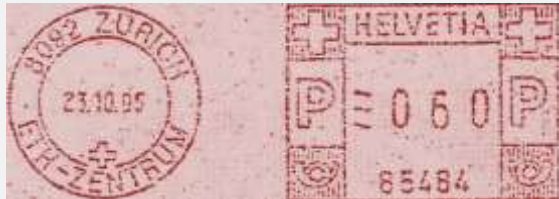
February 1996

☞ Aarau has had a modern letter coding and sorting installation since October 1995. This is of the ILV type with one electronic reader and 12 video desks for mainly handwritten addresses. The reader can determine from the street name and house number, the postman's round in that town or city suburb anywhere in Switzerland.

☞ On the 12th March a new postcard will be issued, in white, with a multi-coloured impressed stamp, for 70c. As these postcards are used practically exclusively today for various competition entries (win a new car!), they carry an 8-bar code at the top, just left of centre. This allows these cards to be sorted out automatically at an early stage. The same system is used for Giro postal payment envelopes.

☞ There are special postcodes for these competitions - 8099 Zürich, 3024 Bern and others. Of course there is no PO or cancellation for this inward-only traffic.

☞ For the Technical University in Zürich there is also a special inward postcode, 8092

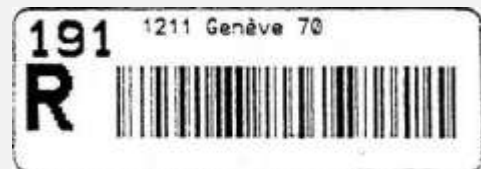


Zürich, but no PO. However I have just come across a red franking machine cancellation showing this non-existent PO (see example left).

ETH stands for 'Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule' i.e., Federal Technical University.

☞ Another example of a non-existent PO is shown right. This is a self-adhesive all-black label (Type 9) made, apparently by the bank, which has been given the number 'Genève 70' and is not listed anywhere.

Note the 'staggered' edges of the rounded parts of the 'R', a sure sign of a computer printer. Has anyone seen any other such 'funnies'?



☞ The classic dealer Gottfried Honegger in CH-8716 Schmerikon has again issued a superb catalogue, with hundreds of singles and covers all in full colour.

☞ The catalogue of Swiss stamps issued by the Dealers Association is available in a French-only version at CHF 23, as well as the usual German/French version, which also costs CHF 23.

☞ Someone had a good idea for the new K-cancel for 9196 Wil ZH; note the day of issue.





Did You Know?



March 1996

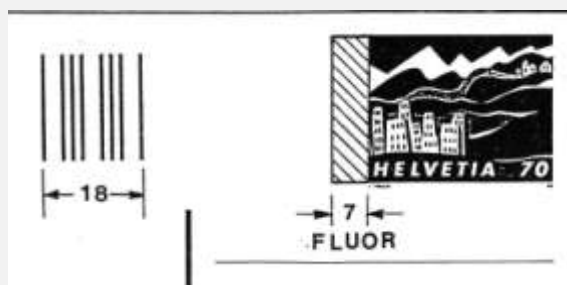
☞ In April 1996, in the new letter handling installation in Lausanne, the PTT will face letters (turn them to face the canceller) without the help of fluorescence on the stamps, but by establishing the grey image of the stamp. This method has been on trial in the Zurich HPO since 1993 to segregate A from B mail, using equipment supplied by the firm AKA Developments of 1024 Ecublens, near Lausanne.

The total grey image value of a stamp is determined optically/electronically (no matter how the stamp is placed) and memorized. About 40 commonly used stamps are thus registered now and can be used for sorting A from B, with two (later three) stamp values being added if necessary. This is done after cancellation. Now in Lausanne the same device is being installed to face the stamps ahead of cancellation.

☞ If successful, next year will see the end of fluorescent-coated paper in Switzerland. However, the PTT say that no stamps will be printed on both types of paper.

☞ The A from B selection is already in operation where Japanese NEC facer-cancellers are installed, namely Zürich, Basel, St. Gallen, Genève and Luzern, with Lausanne and Bern to follow.

☞ The new (12.3.96) 70c white postcard (see illustration) is also part of this test programme. The eight bars at the top are designed to indicate B rate, but if a 20c stamp is added then it is A mail. In Lausanne the system is also used to face the cards. However, there is also the usual fluorescent bar to the left of the stamp for use in facing in the older installations.



☞ The present 70c postcard, issued on 28.11.95 in the old beige colour, will not be used for long, so don't wait before stocking up.

☞ A prosaic explanation has been found for the rapid sell-out of the 60c AIDS stamp of 15.10.94 (Z.870). The Co-op used one in each packet of a new range they were promoting.

☞ I mentioned previously that loose stamps for CTO cancelling had to have a value of at least 20c, but if stuck on to cards this could remain at 5c. However, in the PTT Gazette the translation into Italian omitted 'loose', so that in the Ticino they insist on 20c for cards too, much to the annoyance of postmark collectors.

☞ The old 60c Lac de Tannay stamp is now available in rolls of 1000, 5000 and 10 000 for the mailing firms which apply stamps automatically to junk mail to make it look more interesting. The Philatelic Counters are not selling strips of eleven, so if you want a roll order direct from them at 3030 Bern.

☞ Following the example of the Basel Dove on the new standard FD cancel from Bern, Liechtenstein has decided to let their latest bird also have its tail breaking the circle, see the illustrations.



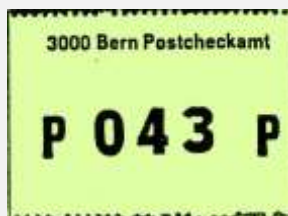
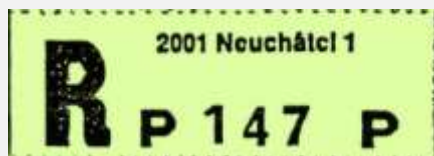


Did You Know?



April 1996

- I made a silly mistake which has been kindly pointed out to me by the Liechtenstein Study Circle, in that Liechtenstein is a Principality and not a Duchy as given in my article last month (see the March 1996 Newsletter); I apologise.
- According to Markus Seitz, the four regions, if not quite the four language areas, are each paired with one of the four seasons in the set of four new ATM stamps coming out on 14th May 1996. They are as follows: Spring, 4116 Metzerlen (Jura); Summer, 7550 Scuol (Engadin); Autumn, 6596 Gordola (Lago Maggiore); Winter, 3863 Gaden (Susten). All manner of FDC can be ordered from him at Postfach, CH-6002 Luzern.
- These multicoloured stamps are printed by Courvoisier and introduce a new aspect of collecting Swiss stamps. Denmark and Liechtenstein preceded Switzerland with new Frama vending machines. For the first day 32 machines of this new type will be in service, the older 2500 will be modified as time goes on.
- On the 7th March I attended the launch in Bern of the new Sport stamp, 10 years after the first, and most successful, issue. Surcharged stamps, like Pro Patria and Pro Juventute, are becoming less and less popular. We will see what happens to this one. There is also a booklet with a strip of ten, taken from sheets, for CHF 10.
- The title of the new exhibit in the PTT Museum in Bern from the 19.3.96 to 23.6.96 is 'Portomanie', by an anonymous exhibitor. In 1878 the PTT introduced tax stamps to persuade the public that it was socially OK to put stamps on their letters, because too many thought it was an insult to the recipient, "could he/she afford it?" This series ran until 1910, in 35 editions, and they are all shown. I am looking forward to it.
- Later this year the PTT will issue self-adhesive stamps in booklet form, for A post I believe. This is something they have long tried to avoid, and it will be interesting to see how the public take it up. Again something new.
- According to the February issue of the BBZ, in 1995 Courvoisier delivered 363 stamps to a total of 29 countries, including no less than 23 to Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Last year the PTT started a new method of coding large envelopes, C4 and B4, i.e., the French system as part of the flatsorters from the Cegelec firm. This was in Luzern from September and in Aarau from December 1995. A long line of '4 state' bars are sprayed along the lower right-hand edge of the cover. This contains postcode, the delivery round and other information as for letters with their red-orange coding. I have not yet been able to work it all out, but this coding is in black, something quite new.
- I'm looking for information on the green registered labels, for letters, parcels and COD. Does anyone have any dated covers, especially from the 1920s and 1930s?



- Apparently as a result of the 1994 UPU meeting in Seoul, the new A & B post labels are to have English and French texts. The three 'Par Avion' labels are dropped; the new ones have the same numbers, except for the middle size. The new small label is slightly bigger, but also supplied in strips of twenty. The large ones are: in strips of five. Note that the 'Economy' label is green for parcels only; all the others are dark blue as before.



Did You Know?



📖 May 1996

- ☞ That the PTT Giro system is being reorganized. Started in 1906 it is now a major banking institute, with 25 clearing offices. These are now being concentrated into six units, completely computerised. Bern, Basel, Luzern and St. Gallen remain, but at Bulle, in Canton Fribourg, a new centre has been built to handle all French-speaking areas, and in Netstal in Canton Glarus a centre to handle mainly all Zürich City accounts.

In the early 1970s a new building in Fribourg City was to house all accounts, but the danger of terrorist activity stopped the plans to have everything in one computer, not forgetting possible electronic failures.



Two of the three slogans used in 1956 are shown here.



- ☞ In the 134 years since 1862 (Sitting Helvetia, perms.) the basic letter rate has risen only eight times, four times in the last 20 years.
- ☞ Ed Walton can be assured that red meter marks are very collectable. Practically from the start they were allowed, and used, for a number of reasons. In his catalogue of Swiss meter marks H Dürst devotes 15 pages to them, and in the SVPS Bulletin a three-page supplement has been printed recently. A brief introduction is being prepared and, when Heiner Dürst has checked it for me, it will be sent to our Editor.
- ☞ Every time the postal rates change a great variety of solutions appear how to make up the difference, for A and B mail. This time I have the feeling that many older stamps (mostly valid since 1963) are being used. Not so many years ago 70c was a rare one to find in the mail, now it is normal. So one gets 20 + 50, 30 + 40 and the usual 10 + 60, and even more now for the new 90c rate.

It seems likely that collectors are using up their stocks which they once put away, and now find it is more profitable to use them up on their daily correspondence, unless they fax their e-mail into the Internet.

- ☞ The only correction I can make to the table on page 21 in the March Newsletter "Philatelic Bureau Stickers" is that Max Wehrli has shown me two covers used for sending Pro Juventute mint stamps to POs, dated October 1931. That puts the use of 'Forerunner I' back from 1947 to 1931. That's quite a jump, who will be next?
- ☞ On 1st April parcel post rates were "re-dimensioned"; more expensive if under 4 kg and less expensive for above 5 kg. That means the family, i.e., philatelists, will pay more, and the firms less. There the competition is greater with the private delivery firms, who will not deliver to mountain villages at all. However, all are now insured up to CHF 300 so that 'registration' is being dropped.

If a signature is desired this now costs CHF 1 (registration was CHF 2.). The old parcel label shown on page 94 of the December 1994 Newsletter, for Menziken, is now being replaced by the self-adhesive, all black, square-cornered label shown here.





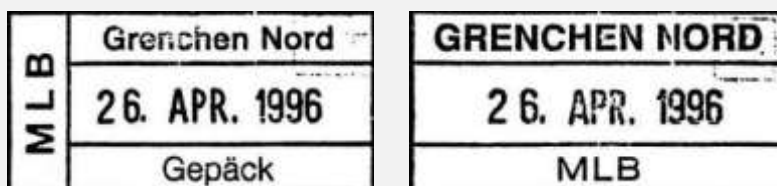
Did You Know?



June 1996

- The Zumstein BBZ has been running a series of articles by Otto Wicki on the history of Swiss postcards. This started in the December 1995 issue and is a most useful and interesting documentation. (Issues of the BBZ are held in the Society's Library).
- Since a certain dealer offered FDCs of the new Express labels (stampless) there has been a lot of discussion here about it. The FD, 1.11.95, was not announced in any way, so one had to have access to confidential PO information, and to have studied it carefully. It is unclear when the label alone makes stamps unnecessary, but not in the Cantons, or PKDs, of Zürich and Genève. On the first-day many POs were closed as it was a Catholic holiday.
- The only private train line to stop using its TPO cancel this year is Lugano-Porte Tresa. I could not find out if mail is still being carried, but it is likely. The last day of use is the Saturday 1st June 1996, when the timetables change over.
- The Moutier-Lengnau Bahn is a little-known private railway owned today by the BLS. The MLB is mostly tunnel and has only one station, namely Grenchen Nord. In fact 9 of its total length of 12 km's is tunnel.

The only station cancellations with MLB are shown here.



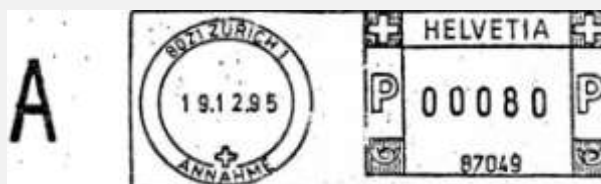
As Grenchen PO is open on Sunday afternoon, for cancelling and sorting only, there is no need for mail to be cancelled by station staff. On the platform I found a still-functioning, hand-operated dispenser of the 10 and 50c 'figure' coil stamps. How could I resist! This must be one of the last ones left as 1995 was supposed to be the last day.

- On 14.5.96 eleven new stamps in four series were issued, each series having its own FD cancel, so four on one day is a record I think.(see below). All the stamps are above average in popular appeal. It will be interesting to see how the two Pro Patria 70c stamps fare.
- On the 30th March the PTT withdrew from general sale the two address labels, self adhesive, with CHF 3 and 3.50 impressed stamps on them. These had been issued on 1.7.94 with a minimum of publicity (see the Newsletter for August 1994) and were never mentioned in the Philatelic Bureau sales lists; they are classed as postal stationery, not stamps. The paper is high gloss so an un-smear cancel is practically unknown, but they are convenient for general use.



- Markus Seitz has calculated that the total running costs of the 2500 or so PTT ATM vending machines is about CHF 200 000 a year. This sounds a lot, but is negligible to keep them warm and ready for instant use.

- A most peculiar meter mark has been shown to me by Heiner Dürst, the specialist on meters. Other than that it is badly designed, i.e. the lettering is too small, what is the part frame for? The matter is being investigated.





Did You Know?



July 1996

☞ I cannot keep track of all the changes happening here in the parcel service, as well as all the changes in other areas. Below 5kg is the responsibility of the PTT, above 5kg can be handled by private firms. Therefore, the rates change as the PTT tries to defend itself against pressure from the big, often international, firms who are, of course, not the slightest bit interested in delivering a parcel to the Val Calanca (GR). Switzerland handles the largest number of parcels per head of population in the world.

'Next day' delivery is promised, which has led to new parcel labels and to new electronic gadgets at the counter. So we have a number of test systems in use, which are not announced in advance, except to some dealers. But are parcels interesting to collectors?

☞ At the beginning of June 1996 Bellinzona started up with an ILV coding and sorting AEG installation, using the number 30 (of the new MLOs Biel was 8 and Aarau 12).

In Bellinzona new software is being tried out which can read proportional typeface, and more handwriting, at the rate of 15/sec so that these letters too can be coded and sorted right to the postman's walk, without the help of a girl video operator.

☞ These 20-odd MLOs, existing and planned, are now being put directly under the control of the GD in Bern, and will no longer come under the individual PKD (the old 11 regional directorates). This makes co-ordination easier, to follow the electronic control from Bern.

If a street name, say, is changed anywhere, this information is sent from Bern to all the coding machines in Switzerland at the touch of a button.

☞ Zumstein has now published an excellent booklet on the "*History of Swiss Postcards*" by Otto Wicki, based on the series of articles in the BBZ which I mentioned in the June Newsletter. It is in German, A5, 32 pages for CHF 10, direct from Zumstein.

☞ The new-style ATM Frama's were a great success on their first-day, 14.5.96; it took the PTT more than 2 weeks to apply the FD cancel to all the covers sent in. Generally all are pleased with the result, no miscuts seen so far!

☞ The new Pro Patria stamps were officially presented at a ceremony in the old Pfäfers Baths, which have been beautifully renovated with the help of the Pro Patria Fund, see the 90+40 stamp. Also being celebrated was 50 years of this fund.

The PTT had a show of all Pro Patria stamps, as well as the accepted and un-accepted artwork for the present issue.

☞ Mettmenstetten has introduced a peculiar K-cancel with a text in English only. For how long will such a cancel be used? Until this sport fashion disappears!



☞ The splitting off of the Telecom part of the PTT from the Post part of the PTT is nicely shown on the two new publicity slogans shown below.



☞ Many HPS members have fond memories of Spiez on the Lake of Thun, so I am sure they will be interested in the new slogan No. 4.2.390 to be used from the 1st July 1996 in 3700 Spiez.





Did You Know?



August 1996

- ☞ Once again the PTT has produced a special stamp within hours of the event. A new, unannounced, 90c stamp was on sale on Thursday 27th June in all POs in Switzerland. It was issued to prove the acceptance by the Guinness Book of Records of the representation by about 11 000 gymnasts at the 1996 National Gymnastics Festival in Bern on Saturday 22nd June of the current 90c stamp.

Each gymnast wore an appropriately coloured T-shirt and cap. My sheet carried the printing date 23rd June, a Sunday. Not bad. (See August Newsletter for Press Release)

- ☞ This new stamp is slightly larger, 28 x 33mm, than the original (to suit the printing cylinder diameter) and is in four-colour offset, red, yellow, blue and black. The original is 24 x 29mm, and is without the black, also offset printed.

The PTT description mentions that the area covered by the gymnasts was nearly 2600m , and they add in the English version 28 000sq ft.

- ☞ This new 90c stamp is the second to carry the indication 'Druck DIE POST' lower left. Stamps printed by Courvoisier have always carried their name, now the PTT are catching up.

In the stamp issues of 14th May the Pro Patria were printed by Courvoisier as usual, but the two Europa stamps were by the PTT. (PostEurop seems to be the successor to CEPT.) However, only the '100 Years Olympic Games' 1.80 stamp carried the text 'Druck DIE POST'. I expect this will now be the rule. My copy was printed a week later than the two ladies stamps.

- ☞ On the 28th August the PTT Board of Directors will decide on an important step; should the 11 Regional Directorates be down-graded to purely sales organisations (like UK Post Office Counters) and then have product divisions, e.g. Letters, Parcels and International to run the service more directly. This would involve a reduction by 2000 in a total staff of 39 000 today. Strangely the Swiss voters are not being consulted, nor on the splitting-off of the money-making Telecom from the loss-making Posts.

- ☞ A 30-year old tradition is being broken by the PTT. This year, the first time since 1966, there will be only one special cancellation for the 1st of August, namely 'Rütli', but without the other two towns and their arms or something similar. Pity.

- ☞ One of the finest philatelic periodicals, to me, is the 'American Philatelist' published by the American Philatelic Society. During the first few months of 1996 they have discussed the type of safe suitable for philatelists. Most important is that 'fireproof' types should not be used as they contain materials which produce water when heated which ruins the contents. Several such tragedies are described.

- ☞ At the beginning of July the Lausanne coding installation was updated with newer models of AEG equipment, ILV, and also the latest technology for recognising stamps, to determine if A or B mail was being paid for, and to indicate how each cover should be faced for correct cancellation.

- ☞ After my comment in the March DYK about tail feathers breaking their bounds it appears to becoming a popular theme. The cancel from Vaduz for 2 Sept 1996 is another one but when looking at the one for the Olympics it seems to be just breaking out of the FL border!





Did You Know?



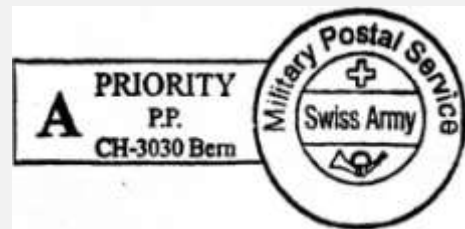
September 1996

- ☞ One of the two dropped Pro Patria 1st August cancels could have been in Mesocco where they have been celebrating 500 years of incorporation of the Italian-speaking valleys of the Calanca and the Mesolcina into the then independent Graubünden in 1496. This saved them from annexation and exploitation by the twelve old Cantons of the Federation imposed on the other Italian-speaking parts of what is known as the Ticino, or Tessin, for 300 years until they were liberated by Napoleon in 1798.

They say that the colours of the Ticino arms, red and blue (see the 15c Pro Juventute of 1920, and the 70c Pro Patria of 1981), were those of Paris, chosen as gratitude in 1798.

- ☞ The ever-popular annual Zumstein catalogue for 96/97 covering CH/FL & UN Genève for CHF 23 is also now available as a CD-ROM for the price of CHF 85.
- ☞ An old friend wrote to me, but used the old Bassersdorf address. However, the letter was forwarded to me in Zürich by the PTT, although we left Bassersdorf in 1983. Redirection costs CHF5 for 1 year, but someone somewhere must consider me to be a good customer.
- ☞ The PTT not only sells a variety of well-made cardboard boxes, but will now also do the packing, for CHF 3 per parcel.
- ☞ The fourth Sport stamp of 1996, 70+30c, has achieved sales of only 1.6m so far (the first sold 13m), used covers will be scarce.
- ☞ For CHF 4.50 the PTT are issuing, on the 10th September, something new and unannounced - 'Tour de Suisse der Post 1996'. This consists of the four new ATMs, cancelled, and a cover showing one of the designs from the recent children's competition. Motto: To bring us nearer to the Post!

- ☞ On the 12th July the NZZ published a short article on the postal service for the Swiss 'Yellow Berets' in Bosnia for the OSCE. On the right is shown the undated cancellation applied to the free letters coming back to Switzerland. Philatelic wishes cannot be met. This is a really rare cancel.



- ☞ The tiny village of Mutten (1394m asl) near Thusis GR has above it Obermutten (1863m asl), a few houses occupied only in the summer to keep the cows company, but it had a PO, open only from 1st July to the middle of September (there are still about ten such seasonal POs).



In the spring of 1996 the house in which the PO was situated burnt down. So the PTT Direction in Chur had rather a good idea; they announced that 29.6.96 would be the 'last day', see left.

- ☞ The BBZ for September 1996 has the perfect addition to my article on the new booklets in the July Newsletter with a cover picture of a miscut pair of the rabbit stamps for the new CHF 7 booklet, imperf between!

It seems to me that the cutter was set for, say, five booklets per sheet (Type 1), but the actual sheet was a Type 2, i.e. only four booklets per sheet, or vice versa. Must be rare. Look at figure 2 on page 51 of the July Newsletter and imagine the centre row of perforations is missing.



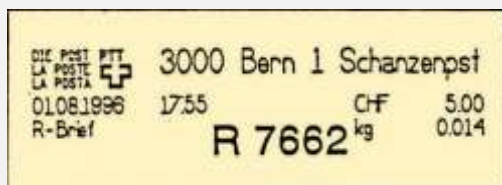
Did You Know?



October 1996

- ☞ The 'Basler Taube' National exhibition of June 1995 has proved not to have been as successful as expected, only 10 000 paid entries, plus 15 000 gratis, and that the well-designed block was bought even less often than the Geneva 90 block. Was it too big?
- ☞ The 'Fund for Furthering Philately' (supported 50% by the PTT and 50% by the VSPPhV) celebrates 30 years of activities in its latest annual report, with its capital of CHF 5.9m still higher than the start of 5.25m. In Bern in 1965 2.3m blocks were sold each with a surcharge of CHF 2.70 (with 30c postage). That was the starting impulse.
- ☞ The Swiss catalogue publishers (only Zumstein and the Dealers' Association) have decided that the new self-adhesive stamps will not have a new section, but will be noted as ordinary definitives, singles only, as they are in effect cut apart.
- ☞ The new 1997 catalogue of the Swiss Dealers' Association comes again in two versions, German with some titles in French, and French only (each CHF 23). As an attraction they give away a facsimile of the Zürich 4 & 6. Many people think this is a dangerous precedent.

- ☞ A new R label (designated Type 10) has appeared, in Bern only (?), which requires no stamps. See the figure below and note that it was issued on 1st August, a public holiday, so must have come from the special 'Urgent counter'. It is self-adhesive and printed, in black only, at the counter. The computer also prints out the receipt for the item.

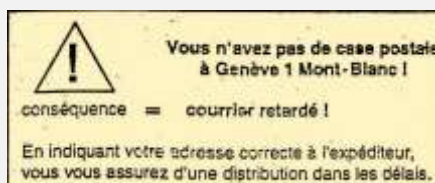


- ☞ The strange 'discord' regarding stamps or not on Express letters is still active (see DYK June) in that stamps are required only in PK Genève and Zürich, not in the rest of Switzerland.
- ☞ Yet another test is being carried out with a 'pink spot' of 30mm diameter, self-adhesive, applied to some Express letters. Not quite sure why, really fast handling, or letter is being 'followed' to check actual times, or something. Watch this space.
- ☞ The reason why we find so many 'Declared Value' letters from the 19th century is that there were then no banks for ordinary people and small firms, therefore cash had to be sent by post, and it was a significant part of postal activities.
- ☞ Max H Wehrli, who has written much on the Swiss Hotel Posts, is amazed at Heinz Katcher's find. Neither is it mentioned in the 1995 book on the subject by M Kottelat.
- ☞ The Swiss Coil Stamp Society has published a very useful 8-page A5 booklet in German on the Swiss ATM Types 1-10.

- ☞ The 'touristic' steam line running in the Val de Travers has produced a nice K cancellation for the 7.9.96, see below, and a number of special covers and items for collectors, as all these enthusiasts trains do, Blonay, Oberalp, Rigi and others, mostly attractive and hard to resist.



- ☞ Genève 1 Mont Blanc is having trouble with postbox addressees!











Did You Know?




November 1996





-  The PTT Library and Documentation is being 'ripped apart'. All philatelic books and periodicals are now in the PTT Museum, and a comparable infrastructure is being built up (open 8 hours per week). On top of this the Telecom is taking over all books and documentation applying to telephony. Improvement?
-  A new edition of the Kümmerly+Frey 'Postcode' map has been issued, 1:300 000, for CHF 16.50. The usefulness has been enhanced with the addition of the cantonal borders.
-  A new service 'Florissimail' is being offered. A standard range of flowers is prepared by the Migros chain of supermarkets, and the post delivers them, in Switzerland only. I have not seen a label for them, but there must be one. I usually get rockets.
-  Once again the OLMA card is being offered by the PTT of St. Gallen, at CHF 4 per card, for the third time.
-  Not to be outdone by the efforts of St.Gallen, Chur and Neuchâtel Philatelic Counters, Bern is offering eight postcards for Fr.10. They are all of the PHQ type well known in the UK, depicting, in most cases, a modern stamp enlarged.

I see little use for such cards, mainly because they cannot be used for maximum cards (as they represent an issued stamp completely). Liechtenstein changed their policy, but the UK has still to follow, to help Maxicard collectors.

-  Liechtenstein is again in the news. On the 2nd of September 1996 they issued a very nice Fr.10 stamp, which was not well received by collectors, now in 1997 they are going to produce one for FR.20. How many 1000s of sheets of the 1961 Swiss FR.20 are still lying around, unsold? Meters and SFS labels have taken their place.

-  In May 1996 the Swiss Airport of Basel, situated in Mulhouse, France, celebrated its 50th anniversary, and by an unusual method; a pair of machine slogans were used. See the illustration below with the French one above, and the Swiss (No. 4.2.388) below. It is also the nearest airport to Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany.



-  At the Swiss Open in Winterthur, Markus Seitz of Luzern put on sale his new "*Handbuch and Spezial-Katalog 1997*" covering all aspects of Frama ATMs of Switzerland and Liechtenstein, 175 pages A5, including 71 pages of historical and technical notes which you won't find anywhere else. CHF 40, in German.
-  In the PTT annual report for 1995 they mention that sales of stamps rose from 699m to 715m, of which 573m were printed by the PTT and only 142m by Courvoisier. Standing order customers dropped from 189 000 to 174 000, with about one third foreign.
-  A 125-page illustrated "*History of the Fischer Post 1798-1832*" by Annelies Hüssy, has appeared. This will be of great help to postal historians and collectors.
-  The latest issue of the PTT-published *Focus on Stamps* mentions that the new version of the 'Year Collection' is vastly improved and is now 68 pages, full of information, in four languages. (The old red-covered booklet issued since 1982 is finished) The 'Year Set', on one black card only, remains on the sales list. The former contains a non-postal block.



Did You Know?



December 1996

- ☞ A new service has been introduced by the SBB/CCF. For quite a number of 100 franc notes you can travel with the driver over certain main routes and have an off-duty driver explain all the signals etc. As the waiting list is getting longer perhaps the PTT will allow philatelists, for a fee, to accompany a postman on his round, and carry his bag!
- ☞ Bern main post office, Schanzenpost has now been updated with three new ILV coding and sorting machines, and that completes the planned renovations. Only three new installations to come, Sion in 1996 and Chur and Winterthur in 1997. Then with the eleven 'read only' sorters, all letters will be coded at: the nearest collection point, then read at the distribution point (which might be the same place in say, a city) to be sorted automatically into the specific postman's bundle, i.e., no hand sorting needed anywhere.
- ☞ The Swiss TV gave full coverage to the Feldman auction in Zürich where the Swedish 3 Sk yellow stamp changed hands for 2,9m CHF. This unfortunately gives the impression that philately is only for the very rich. They should see me going through the wastepaper baskets in the POs I come across (and I could mention a few others too).
- ☞ Just in time for your Christmas stocking Zumstein is putting on sale their 1997 catalogue in CD-ROM form, all details, price list and all stamps in colour, in German and French, for CHF 85. You can order this, and all other stock items; Internet: <http://www.briefmarken.ch>
- ☞ A new specialist book has been issued by Paul Bach, Basel, on the peculiar 'retouch' marks found on many stamps from 1932 to 1952 printed by Courvoisier, which were discovered to be caused by damage to the glass screen used during this period. The author is Kubli Heinrich. It is in German and French and costs CHF 49.
- ☞ It's not often that an author publishes five editions of his catalogue/handbook over a period of 50 years, but this remarkable feat has now been accomplished by Heiner Dürst with his work on the 'Meter Marks of Switzerland' in German. His 5th edition is now in two volumes, but the 2nd volume with Type 3 in detail and with all the other special sections, will appear next year. Volume 1 has 171 pages and costs CHF 20.

- ☞ Liechtenstein has done it again, feathers protruding through the frame of the cancellation, see illustration.
- ☞ Users of stamps are increasingly confronted with the problem of which way is up. From many recent examples the three shown below are those most often seen.



How does the upside down beaver feel?

According to the artist the one in the middle is correct.

- ☞ The new self-adhesive stamps are proving popular, and I believe a second printing is being considered. The stamps do wash off perfectly. The shiny surface does make for a smudgy cancel at times.