



# Did You Know?



## January 1998

The PTA, the official weekly bulletin of the PTT, dies at the end of 1997; to be replaced by what? New stamp issues in the quarterly *Focus on Stamps*, new postal services (unknown), closed foreign routes, and re-opening (unknown), and many other public announcements are left hanging in the air.

Cancellation information, special cancellations, new slogans, closed POs and similar items will be given in a new publication 'Stempel News' (Cancel News) to be issued free by the Philatelic Services. If it is to be weekly or monthly is not stated. We will see.

Another change is that from January 1998 there will be no slogans used which advertise Swisscom services (machine cancellations of Group 1) unless, perhaps, they are paid for separately?

Once again, without PTA mention, there will be cheaper inland parcels from 10th to 22nd December, called 'Colis Noel', and with a white label.

Practically only for PTA subscribers, six new 90c special stamps are announced for issue on 5th January. These are to celebrate 200 years since the French invasion, and 150 years of the new Swiss Constitution, as well as the separation of the postal from the telephone services in January 1998. There are also two 70c postcards with an historical illustration.

The Swiss PO, which handles all UN mail in Bosnia namely from Liestal to Sarajevo, has brought out 30 000 letters and 1600 parcels, with 20 000 letters and 5000 parcels going in. Only 20% of the original POs in Bosnia are functioning.

With the new software more and more handwritten addresses are being read in the coding machines so that letters can be sorted automatically to the postman's walk; long possible with typed letters.

The Pro Juventute First Day cancel of 20.11.97 just appealed to me, the effect of the waterline has been used so well, see illustration.

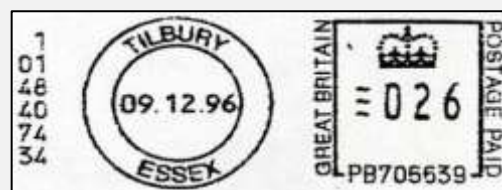
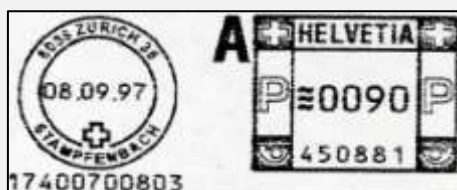


One of the firms which organise items of great rarity has discovered that there are 163 Swiss Alpine Club huts, each with its own 'Hut Stamp', in rubber, of no postal value at all. But now you can subscribe to the series of 163 sheets, illustrated, for CHF 12.25 each. Dare I say it - don't miss this chance to fill your waste bin.

The system of sending on underpaid letters without delay, but asking the sender, via a postcard, to send in the missing amount, without surcharge, has been modified in Zürich at least. Instead of the previous handstamp in black they now use a meter impression in red. See the illustration right, sent by Tony Hoyle. This also gives them a total for the day. See also a previous article in the Newsletter of August 1996.



Pitney Bowes have been introducing their new 'Easy Mail' system for about 3 years worldwide and now in Switzerland. Shown below, together with a UK type. The 11 digits provide a code for machine identification, and to separate mailing costs of different departments, of a particular firm.





## Did You Know?



### February 1998

- The first issue of the Swiss Post 'Stempel News' has not yet appeared. Non-philatelic information on general changes to the postal services is still hanging in the air; we have heard that a new publication, in newspaper format, is being planned. It just shows how easy it is to destroy a functioning system, before one has something else to offer one's customers.
- A dealer in Swiss stamps has received a lot of newspaper coverage for his 'service' of providing customers with mint Swiss stamps at below face value. Firstly he supplies firms at CHF 200 minimum order value, and always old stamps which are still valid. He gets these from auction houses and individuals who stacked up piles of sheets in the sixties and seventies. His turnover in 1997 was some CHF 800 000. However, he says that his stamps are being collected by the recipients of business letters, so perhaps that will feed back into a rise in interest in philately.
- The new (7.1.98) block of four special stamps for 150 years of the New Constitution and 200 years since the French occupation, do not bear comparison with those of 1948, as forcibly pointed out by Zumstein in the January BBZ.



Please don't ask them, or me, what the splashes of colour represent. What is clear is that the outline of the country, as shown more clearly in the FD cancel (see left), does seem to indicate where there are holes in the frontier which can be used by those looking for asylum, a political hot potato today.

- A new customer-operated parcel weighing and stamping machine is to be tried out soon; four manufactured by Frama. We will see how much better it is than the IBM experimental machine used last year in Aarau. There I was told only philatelists had the time to work through all the 'easy to read' instructions.
- The number of special cancellations, including slogans, fell by just over 10% in 1997 compared with 1996, i.e. 172 instead of 196. In 1995 it was 240. This was because many postcodes changed and new K-cancels were made to suit. Dr Jann Etter keeps these figures for the SVPS and the NZZ, most usefully.
- In 1996 Liechtenstein made a name for itself with the feathers, wings and other things which broke through the outer ring of the FD cancels. Now in 1997 they used, for their usual four issues per year, motifs from the four seasons, i.e. appropriate flowers (see below). From their latest brochure it seems this idea is being repeated.



- The Swiss 'Ganzsachen-Verein' has issued No. 2 of their series of special studies, this one devoted to the Suchard postcards issued from 1875 to 1912. Philippe Suchard was born in 1797 near Neuchâtel, and after completing an apprenticeship as a confectioner he went to America. In 1826 he returned and founded the first mechanical chocolate factory in Switzerland at Serrières, near Neuchâtel.
- According to Zumstein there is an increase of interest in Swiss stamp booklets, therefore they have included eleven pages in their 1998 catalogue on all booklets, normal, Pro Juventute, Pro Patria, Sport, and the little 'Tickets', with practically all front covers shown in colour and all priced. The 1910 5c Tell Boy going for CHF 5500.



## Did You Know?



### 📖 March 1998

- ☞ Swiss Post is busily removing all signs of its predecessor, the PTT; no costs spared, but it will still take time. I will still use SP as a suitable abbreviation.
- ☞ Perhaps as a consequence of the flourishing trade in mint stamps mentioned last month, the SP (rumour has it) will soon be announcing plans to demonetise all old stamps and stationery, starting with all items issued in 1969 and before. Then for the following decades, until new issues will have a life of 5 years only.
- ☞ If there was a prize for the most idiotic stamp, the fight would be won by the new definitive 90c, showing a road marking post, where not even the Canton is mentioned. One should in time have one for every Canton, at least. Thematic collectors will no doubt rejoice, that item has been missing in all Road Transport and similar themes, congratulations to the SP.
- ☞ The new set of three SP postcards for the Olympic Winter Games candidacy in Sion in 2006 (and for Nagano 1998) are quite attractive, but at CHF 4 the set, rather expensive, i.e. CHF 1.33 each. However, they are marked 'Taxe Perçue', so are valid for everywhere in the world. The FD was 5.2.1998. Hardly any notice given.

- ☞ Two issues of the fortnightly 'Stempel News' have appeared announcing, as before, new special, K and machine slogans. Also, the FD cancel for Sion, for the candidacy for the 12.2.98 (see right).



- ☞ I received two letters from the SA Philatelic Bureau where '8049 Zürich' had been left out, however, somehow with the new computerized address lists both letters were delivered, from the name and street only.
- ☞ The strip of four 'Happy People' stamps has aroused some comment, as living people are not allowed on current stamps, but who are they, perhaps they are now famous?
- ☞ Going back to the query on 'GV' & 'PV' I have been able to clear this up; GV = Grande Vitesse and PV = Petite Vitesse but what does it mean in practice?

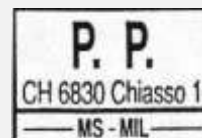
Various cancels are known with these letters, but were used only on rail-freight documents, not on postage stamps. PV was used for 'Frachtgut', green forms, ordinary freight; GV was for 'Eilgut', red forms for fast handling on freight trains; then there were 'Bahn-Express' yellow forms, where smaller-sized packages could be sent by passenger train.

The offices for the GV and PV were separate at the various stations and, therefore, the customs offices as well, as shown on the two customs cancels in the DYK column of August 1997.

- ☞ In the BID Bern I found in the card index a new machine cancel crown for 6830 Chiasso 1, 28mm, reserved for the Swiss Post International, see below.



See also the stickers used on periodicals coming from Italy. The first shows the old name MS for Mondial Sped (as on the stamp booklet) MIL for Milano. This is, of course, the profitable part of the business. Normal Chiasso 1 machine cancels have 22mm crowns.





# Did You Know?



## April 1998

- Swiss Post says they have no plans to invalidate old stamps. I imagine that collectors, stamp dealers and the Philatelic Services have presented many positive reasons for leaving things as they are. On the other hand one hears that as soon as most POs are equipped with the new terminals, then payment for parcels will no longer be possible with stamps, only cash or credit card, to suit the standard coded address labels now coming into use.
- The split-up of the old PTT into Swisscom and La Poste is proceeding; the liberalization allows competition for both telephone and postal services. The 'Post' retains the monopoly on letters and parcels only up to 2kg. The richer 'Telephones' have for years subsidized the post, now the post stands alone. However, the Federal Council is still the main shareholder of the re-organized post to ensure that all parts of the country are equally served. Naturally this is not easy and costs have to be reduced. We will see how it develops.

- The old labels for foreign Express mail have been replaced with the UK type which is, apparently, now the world standard. I cannot think of a poorer design, see example right. Prices remain the same, an additional CHF 8 for all countries. From 1.2.98 the reference of the label is Form No. 237.22.



- There is a new service 'Priority Business' (English name, naturally) for a guaranteed delivery time for parcels into four zones in Europe. The cheapest is for a 2kg parcel to Germany at CHF 48, but a part of the customs costs are included. All four zones lie north of the Alps. I found out about these two items by accident, now there is no PTA (official bulletin) to tell normal customers about changes in services, only 'internal' memos.

- The three new official postcards I mentioned last month for the Nagano Winter Olympics in Japan are sold only by the Philatelic Counters, so that the ordinary PO has no idea about them nor, of course, what 'Taxe Perçue' means. Is this the new philosophy, new stamps and other items only for collectors and philatelic subscribers?

- So far this year one has heard only strong words against the number, and quality, of the new stamps, and lack of warning. It seems that the new 90c 'road post' has found some interest in the theme of 'Dogs, and their Habits'. I refuse to buy it, or use it.

- Another disaster was the joint 'Swiss-Thailand' issue. The Thais were apparently not prepared to print a commoner on the same stamp as their king. The firm of Bach in Basel has found the way to get hold of Thai FDCs, see left, in which they have reduced the Swiss cancel diameter by 2mm, and enlarged their own by 2mm.



I have mentioned before that this up-and-coming firm produces price lists with useful groupings of similar stamp categories. Their latest list 'Winter 98' is worth getting, from Jean Paul Bach AG, Steinenvorstadt 53, CH-4010 Basel.

- Another item in the new list is a PJ booklet, issued by the Basel office only, containing three blocks of four of the 'official' 70c fish, and the other 70c mistletoe, and the 90c frog. The example shown here gives the impression that the stamps are se-tenant, but they are not.





## Did You Know?



### 📖 May 1998

☞ A new contract is being drawn up between Liechtenstein and the newly independent Swiss Post to regulate the postal affairs of the two countries for 1.1.99. No changes in practice are expected, as the Swiss government is still in charge of postal policy.

☞ It seems likely, therefore, that similarly a new agreement is needed to be made with the UNO. I wonder if they will have the sense to drop the ridiculous issue of BIT, WHO, UPU and other stamps whose only purpose is to be bought by stamp collectors. Mention this to the Philatelic Bureau in Bern with your next order.

☞ The sedate NZZ had a good idea for a 1st April whiz. The previous Postal Director Jean-Noel Rey is not being re-elected, for a number of reasons. Some say he is responsible for the dramatic drop in popular appeal of recent stamp issues. The hastily-produced stamp for the promotion of Sion 2006 Winter Olympics was 'overprinted' with a text commemorating the rise in price of a normal letter from 50 to 90c during his 'reign' from 1990 to 1998.



☞ The demise of the 11 Postal Districts is now documented in the new cds of ordinary PO's. See example left for the latest one newly issued to Roveredo in the Italian-speaking part of Graubünden on 16.2.98 (with PK No.11), and the example right for Cortailod on 19.3.98, the first without PK No. 4 (Neuchâtel).



Note that 'GR' is needed for the former to distinguish it from the place with the same name in Canton Ticino. Both these cancels appear to be replacements for damaged ones.



☞ At last on the 8th September 1998 the SP will issue the promised booklet of ten 70c self-adhesive stamps. The poor appeal of the 90c did not prevent their success so it will be interesting to see how the 70c will go with 2 x 5 pictures of youth, leisure and sport.

☞ On 25.11.98 there will be a curious China/Switzerland joint issue, a 70c Chillon and a 20c Chinese Bridge No. 24. With two of each you can send a letter to China.

☞ From the 29th April until the 3rd May there will be the 12th International Book and Press Show in the Genève Palexpo, which for the first time will include the Europhilex '98 philatelic exhibition and bourse. A good idea, pity I will not be able to go.

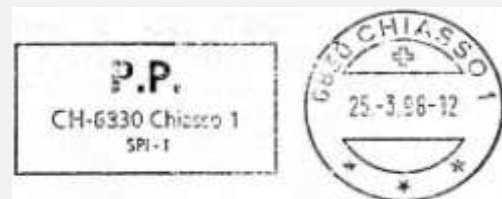
☞ The well-known green Giro 'inpayment' forms have been replaced by a modified version in pale pink. I don't know if green was the colour used in 1906 when the Giro started, but it was an immediate success, as the banks were not interested in small customers. Switzerland was not the



first, but perhaps the only country where the payee at the counter does not have to pay the transfer costs (giro to giro being free).

This can result in a serious loss to club finances, so most clubs now have a higher fee if dues are paid at the PO counter. See left for an example of the 1956 slogan.

☞ At last we have been able to get an example of the new SPI PP slogan used in Milano for SVPS New Issue Service subscribers. The illustration shows it as used on mail going through Chiasso.



☞ The Philatelic Society of Rapperswil-Jona has decided to boycott Swiss stamps by sending all their mail to members via Liechtenstein. Who will follow?



## Did You Know?

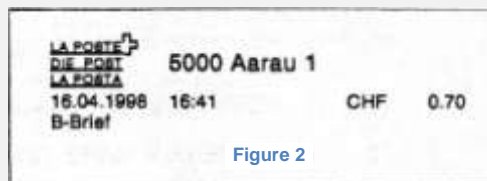


### June 1998

- It was announced in the PTA that, in August 1996, new counter computer-controlled parcel and letter labels would be on trial at some POs in Geneva and Lausanne. I sent three addressed covers to Genève Rive with an open signed postal cheque. A week or so later I received a letter from Rive saying that the machines would not be ready for service on the FD announced, but my letters, with parcel labels would be sent as soon as possible. (See the Newsletter, September 1996.)



On the 18th April 1998 I received the three covers, with the FD of another trial with a new style of label (see figure 1). Note the weight of the letter, but minimum parcel rate as requested in 1996. Not bad, bravo PTT/SP. Figure 2 shows a B letter of the same machine type.



- Another positive story: My son sent a letter from Winterthur to me, but it didn't arrive. He asked at Winterthur PO and was told that all lost letters went to a central 'Lost & Found' depot in Chiasso. He had to fill out a long form and pay CHF 10. Three weeks later they told him "not found", and paid the 10 back to him!
- The SP is still without a General Director; 65 replied to the advertisement, but none were suitable. Only Swiss can apply.
- In 1993 the Pro Patria charity led with two low-value stamps of 60c each, followed by the Pro Juventute in the same year, and both have followed each year since. Now the Pro Patria has put out a set of five stamps, 2 x 70c and 2 x 90c, and one for 110c (for Europe). The Pro Juventute is not following the idea in 1998, at least, but still not a bad idea.
- The Pro Patria issued four different versions of their new booklet in 1989; I think more by accident than by design. However, the Pro Juventute booklet shown in the April DYK is different, and I think it is a form of 'co-operation' between J P Bach and the local Pro Juventute organisation, which causes more harm than good.

As John Cordingley mentioned in last month's Newsletter, one thinks it is an official issue, but it is not. It must be remembered that the Pro Patria and Pro Juventute booklets have never been produced by the PTT in any way, except for providing sheets of stamps, mint or cancelled (in a flat-bed printing machine for the whole sheet), and then taking over a number of booklets, put together in sheltered workshops, for sale at philatelic counters only.

The charity organisations sell more via school children and door to door. They should not authorise 'specials' arranged by dealers, nor should the SP provide them with cancelled sheets. Only in this are the PTT/ SP to blame.

- The other point raised by John last month, about his block of nine stamps, is tricky. I think that the Philatelic Bureau should provide this service, but where does it end, and which other countries do it, should it be free, or at twice the price?
- In Luzern there was a new style of exhibition presented by Rolf Rölli, together with the Swiss Postal History Society, local philatelic societies and others. 'Stamps Tell Stories' was the title and 'invited' exhibitors were expected to explain their collection to the interested public at specific times. A very good idea, with high public attendance. Five stamp designers signed covers. On show also was the set of 12 volumes of the 1926, 1943 and 1958 cancel registration cards, in facsimile, at CHF 1200.



# Did You Know?



## July 1998

- The new opening hours of the Museum of Communications in Bern (formerly the Post Museum) are now reduced from 8 to 2 per week: 2pm to 4pm on Wednesdays. Unfortunately this reflects the lack of interest among philatelists for the written word. However, up to 20 black and white copies and 2 coloured can be obtained free, but if they have to do research for you that costs CHF 60 per half hour. Try them. Philatelic literature, books and magazines are sent free, but the return postage has to be paid by the sender.
  - I have not been able to find out which TPOs have been taken out of service when the summer timetable was in force from 24th May 1998. But the 'Burgdorf-Langnau' TPO travelled only as far as Zollbrück from 1.6.97, therefore this cancel was replaced with an SBB type 'Bahnpost-Ambulant'.
- This has happened before when the indicated route has changed. I have heard that in June 1999 all TPOs will be withdrawn, as all sorting will be done only in the big centres. See the February edition of the Newsletter.
- Also shown in the February Newsletter was a temporary cancel of Coppet dated 29.IX.04. According to the latest catalogue of these cancels by Pierre Guinand of Morges in September 1990, this cancel has a nominal value of CHF 45, i.e. plus 50%. It is the 6th of 13 shown, a large number for such a small place. M Guinand is pleased to hear of any new discoveries.
  - The SPI have informed me that they are going to put out four new booklets this year for postcards from Italy (see the Newsletter of September and November 1997). Four new pictures are to be used, of Venice, the Coliseum in Rome, Naples, and Milano, per booklet. I have not seen them yet.
  - The Roll of Distinguished Philatelists is being signed this year by, among others, the well-known Swiss philatelist Teddy Dahinden, for many years President of the VSPHv and chief organizer of the NABA in Zürich in 1984, and others. His main collecting field is (was) Astro-Philately, and no collection in that field have I found to be so well founded in science as his, not a welter of covers from the moon etc. Congratulations. He is also a main promoter of the 'Open Class'.
  - In the last week of May four Frama machines were put on trial in Bern, Geneva, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Zug. I visited the last on the first day. Dealers were being rationed to 15 minutes a time; as I would have had to wait 3 hours, I didn't. The machine issues the usual Frama Four Seasons ATM stamps, either as stamps or for a letter, or for a parcel, in the correct value. The four-colour touch screen seems easy to use and one can select German, French, Italian or English, and the receipt comes out in this language.



Only the receipt indicates that this machine has been used, as the stamps are normal. Parcels can be weighed, but registration cannot be selected (at least not yet). Change is given only in stamps, and payment can be made with cash or a card. A typical receipt is shown left.

- It is not often that a living philatelist is shown on a cancellation, but Austria has done it to honour Roland Kohl for his latest handbook on Austrian Airmails. Very well deserved. He is best known for his work on the Swiss 'Luftpost Handbuch' and his book on the Air-Rates from Switzerland.





## Did You Know?



### August 1998

- ☞ For the first time the US Post Office launched a new issue outside the USA, i.e. in Berlin on the 26th June for the stamp commemorating the Berlin Airlift.

The NZZ comments that Switzerland beat them to it, in that the Swiss 90c stamp 'Sion 2000' was launched in Japan on 12th February 1998. They do not mention that this affair, with the three postcards, did not do much to help Jean-Noll Rey from being sacked. The new PO Chief is Reto Braun, brought back from North America as a top manager.

- ☞ There are many rumours about how the new Post will be reorganized. One is that the yellow postal coaches, long a loss maker, will be taken over by the SBB, as they are really an extension of the railway system.

Looking back 150 or so years, only the Post moved letters, parcels, cash and people around Switzerland. This centralization has gradually been eroded, by the railways (at first all private), by the banks, and now more and more by private parcel carriers. So the world changes.

- ☞ Now is the time when people start to have their mail diverted to their Swiss holiday addresses, by filling in a form about 10 days in advance and paying CHF 5.7. Or the mail can be held back at the local PO. Parcels in Zürich, and other big towns, get distributed separately from letters, they also get sent on. Privately delivered newspapers can also be sent on by post, by informing the publishers. The system has worked well for decades. Only optimists try to have their mail re-directed to a foreign country.

- ☞ I have just received the first letter, from St Gallen, with the new coding layout of the orange-red bars. It partially follows the new German system. More details later. I heard about it some months ago, but expected it later in the year.

- ☞ When announcing the latest three stamps of the new series in *Focus on Stamps* a list was given, rather belatedly, of matching postmarks for the first six stamps. For the ridiculous 90c (nobody has ever sent an envelope to me using one) they give 7558 Strada in Graubünden. I will check it out; if only we had a dog!

- ☞ The SP is very busy removing all 'PTTs', with religious fervour, one could say. Below is an example of the new 'Philatélie' cancels used at ten philatelic counters. In this Zürich example the postcode has been changed from the 8022, which indicated that the counter was in the old Fraumünsterpost building, and the 'PTT' has been removed from 'Philatélie'. One must now ask where it is to be found, as all now have neutral postcodes, with no branch office given.



- ☞ The new 70c booklet will be issued on the 8th September 1998, with five different stamps per page. There will be no FD service as such because no one has yet invented a machine to stick self-adhesive stamps automatically on to covers. However, the thoughtful SP is providing blank covers and a suitable FD cancel for DIY collectors.

The stamps themselves do have a youthful appeal and will be a success. As with the 90c booklet these self-adhesive stamps can be washed off the rubber adhesive. Does anyone know of any other country which has this feature? The USPO recently announced that 80% of the stamps they sold were self-adhesive, with a rising tendency.



## Did You Know?



### September 1998

- ☞ In 1997 Courvoisier of La Chaux-de-Fonds printed 325 stamps for 29 countries, the main six being: Bosnia, San Marino, Thailand, Ethiopia, Senegal & Taiwan. How many of them do you collect?
- ☞ A famous Swiss General was captured by the British when wounded, after being in action against them. That taught him a lesson, which has benefited many. Don't guess; an article is in preparation.
- ☞ The 'Fund for Furthering Philately' has laid down new principles: the present capital is just below CHF 6m, and it must not be allowed to fall below 5m; each of the four newly defined areas of operation have more freedom within a strictly defined budget. St. Gallen 2000 being the next big exhibition.
- ☞ In 1840 the UK introduced a uniform rate of postage over the whole kingdom. On the 1st January 1973 Switzerland followed, when the 10km local rate was abolished. Has anyone seen a table stating when other countries took this big step? So far I have not found one on the subject of uniform postage.
- ☞ On the 1847 railway timetable there was a small note, affecting the trains running from Zürich to Baden and back, it says "The above departure times are according to the station clock, passengers please note". This is a real sign of the times. Until then each place had its own time, midday being more or less when the sun was at its zenith.

With the railways this all changed, across the whole world. In 1851 'Bernese Time' was introduced, using the telegraph system for co-ordination. Paris, Berlin and others also. So for the 30-minute trip, including stops in Dietikon, Schlieren and Altstetten, the station clocks ensured synchronization, but who set all these clocks, there was no telegraph then (the railways were the first to use it). Did the loco driver's watch do the job? Probably.

- ☞ Another railway story has come to light, not so amusing. On the 11th March 1997 a firm in Basel produced nice FDCs having all four of the stamps celebrating 150 years of Swiss Railways nicely cancelled with the curious old cancel of Uetikon SBB, in black or red.

This cancel used to be one of a set for all the ship landing stages on the lake of Zürich, see figure 1. Then the anchor was removed and the cancel used for letters and other items, later given the station number 806 by the SBB, see figure 2. Later again changed with No. 3105, figure 3. I was one of those who occasionally got examples at the SBB station.

In 1992 the SBB got sick of this and forbade its use in any form, as a normal station rubber canceller had existed all the time, for office use. The question is how did the firm in Basel get hold of this cancel, and remove the station number before using it on hundreds of covers?



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 1

- ☞ Zumstein is planning a new edition of their Ganzsachen-Katalog, in co-operation with the Ganzsachen-Verein. If you have any comments or corrections to make now is the time to write, in English, to Zumstein
- ☞ A new label has appeared, bright yellow with black lettering, dated February 1998. Self-adhesive, 165 x 40 mm. See the article in the March 1996 Newsletter.





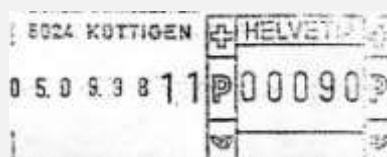
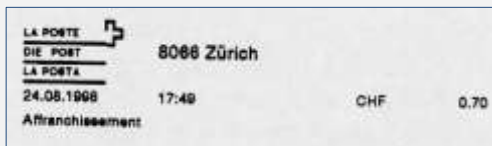
# Did You Know?



## October 1998

- In September 1999 there will be the 2nd Swiss Open, again in Winterthur, 5 years after the first, and very successful that was. The opening day will be the 9th, so the FDCs can be cancelled with 9.9.99-9, the SP taking this opportunity to issue their autumn special issues on this date too. Further, the first of two planned miniature sheets for the NABA 2000, to be held in St. Gallen in June, will also be issued on this portentous date.
- During the show in Winterthur visitors (the younger ones) will be encouraged to practise their skills at the sports shown on the new 70c self-adhesives.
- On page 67 of the September Newsletter is mentioned the 70c stamp (Z.600) of the Mendrisio Procession, as part of a most useful and interesting article. At the time, 1977, I wrote to the PTT and asked what was the language used on the tablet being held aloft, as it didn't look like Hebrew. Their answer was that they had defaced the Hebrew of the original, as they didn't want Switzerland to be boycotted by certain countries if Hebrew was blatantly used on a Swiss product. Politics in philately!
- When John Cordingley's request for a block of nine '150 Years Switzerland' stamps was refused by the Philatelic Services, it set off my puzzle as shown in the July issue of the Newsletter. Now I cannot help thinking of another one. There would be four different blocks of nine, which show all the possible combinations of 2 and 4 stamps, but how many of only one type of block would be needed to obtain all four blocks of '4' and all eight pairs?
- Zumstein has catalogued all five SPI booklets in their 'small' 1999 edition. Perhaps genuine used postcards with the 'labels' will be catalogued next year, there must be many to be found.
- In 2001 there will be the next Swiss Expo (one remembers those of 1914, 1939 and 1964, and their philatelic 'fallout' positively) and the art director, Pipilotti Rist, is already coming under fire. The NZZ draws attention to the one stamp she has designed, the 150c 'Centenary of the Cinema' of 1995 (Z.884) without enthusiasm.
- The 1997 PTT Report, the last under that title, covers all the ground in a very superficial way. A graph shows the number of 'printed stamps' issued as falling again, to only 666m (PTT 540m and Courvoisier 121m). It was 830m in 1990.
- The older SFS machines from Frama are being pushed out of bigger POs by the new computer-controlled counter printers, although no one claims that they are faster. On the opening day of the newest Zürich PO, Letzipark shopping centre, I found that at one counter the printer had been set incorrectly and was only printing in a very small type. So, with a 70c label from one counter and a normal 20c label from the other a very special FDC was constructed; no cancellation needed

On the 20th July about 20 of the older, superseded, SFS machines were put back in service at smaller POs, and without a machine number as there was only one machine there, and the Roman numerals are dropped as there are no postal districts now.





## Did You Know?



### November 1998

☞ The so-called 'small national' exhibition held in Yverdon from 15-18th October was well attended (entry and catalogue free) with a generally happy atmosphere. The 117 exhibitors, average eight frames each, and 58 juniors were somewhat too many for the space available, it was rather a labyrinth, and the lighting was poor in the modern halls. But the quality and range of exhibits was excellent, a good time was had by all. A couple of HPS members were spotted. There were also 23 leading dealers present.

☞ The 'stamp' used on the official postcard was a bit obtuse, see figure 1, but without the help of the designer herself, present at the show, I worked it out, see figure 2. The 'Y' for Yverdon, from the top half of the arms, and the waters of the lake (of Neuchâtel) from the lower half, put in an abstract melting pot and shaken about.



Figure 1



Figure 2

During the Bernese occupation, from 1536 to 1798, the town, built on its Roman predecessor, was called Iferten, and is so listed in the tariffs of the Fischer posts.

☞ Markus Seitz, specialist firm for ATMs (and editor of the Michel ATM World catalogue) in Luzern, has just issued his 1999 catalogue (the 5th) for CH and FL, in two volumes, each at CHF 34. The first part is the Handbook, 140 pages crammed with historical and technical information, right up-to-date with the latest trial machines. The second part, 118 pages covers the prices of all types and sub-types. Essential for specialists.

☞ According to Markus Seitz, when the SP have installed sufficient Schapos (pronounced chapeau, i.e., Schalter Post Automation) parcels will no longer be accepted with stamps on them at these POs, as the machines produce their own bar-coded labels which do not need conventional stamps.

The present trials at about ten places ended successfully on 12th October. Now about 400 of the biggest POs will be equipped with a further 1000 machines, so that from about the middle of next year stamps will no longer be valid for parcels at those PO's. Letters are not (yet?) affected. Try him at [www.atms.ch](http://www.atms.ch).

☞ Another bit of 'secret' information gleaned by me, verbally, is that from 1st January 1999 the present parcel tariff of 30 steps will be simplified to only six, to make the heavier parcels, up to 30kg, less expensive, and the lighter ones . . . All previous rules, regulations and structures have been abolished, and the new ones are, shall we say, difficult to find.

☞ The SP fortnightly 'Stempel News' has been sent free until now to all the old PTA subscribers since January 1998. Now we are asked to pay CHF 29.50 per annum from November 1998, a 20% rise for less!

☞ The autumn sensation is the publication of an A4 brochure of 128 pages, in French and German, on all the postal labels issued since 1876 until 1997, with all in colour. This tremendous work was carried out by George Guignard of Yverdon, who unfortunately died just before publication. His work was completed by Louis Vuille and Pierre Guinand and a number of other enthusiasts. Published by the Consilium Philateliae Helveticae at CHF 45 plus postage. A wonderful reference book.



## Did You Know?



### December 1998

The new SVPS 'K' Handbook has been printed, quicker than expected, bigger, up-dated, all cancels illustrated and 120 listings for thematic collectors! In German and French, size A5, soft bound. The price in Europe is £17.

It seems the SP has relaxed their instructions on the use regarding postage stamps on parcels from 1999 onwards. They will not sell stamps for parcels at the newly computer-equipped PO counters (and letters?), but will accept the stamps put on by the sender. At the moment so many types of trial machine are on test that it is difficult to find out the accepted practice. See the 'Schapos' item in last month's DYK.

The day of issue for the Swiss-China joint issue is the 25th November, but the Chinese stamps have not yet been shown to the public. The Swiss side is very well documented in *Focus on Stamps* for October, but nothing could be said about the other side, until now.

The attractive block (with one stamp of 90c) is matched by the small sheet of eight stamps (four times 70c and four times 20c). Now of course the problem arises of how many sheets are needed to provide all blocks of four, vertical and horizontal pairs, and two singles?

The number of items and combinations available with two FD cancels, and the four special flight cancels, is quite baffling, and tending to be counter-productive.

Following abolition of the 11 postal districts in 1997, the SBB is also to reorganize in a similar way. The present three Regions will be replaced by three directorates, for passengers, goods and general services in December 1999. The three regions were:

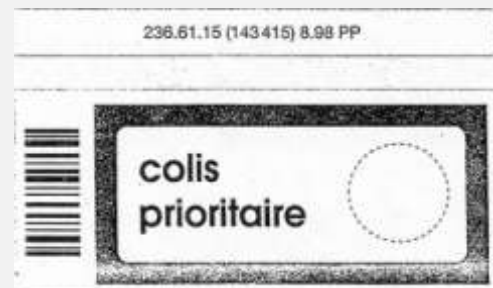
- I = Lausanne, for the west, including Bern;
- II = Luzern, from Basel to the Gotthard and the Ticino;
- III = Zürich, for the eastern, NE and SE parts.

A small map is available.

Without prior announcement the charge for an Express letter, inland only, was raised by 50c to CHF 8.50 on the 1st September 1998. The new name is 'Swiss Express'.

The new 'Priority' labels for parcels have appeared, in sheetlets of five, self-adhesive, No.236.04.2.

The example on the right is a new version of the earlier 236.04, but with a barcode at the left to designate the priority service, a bit confusing, all borders red.



A long article has appeared in the November SBZ on the inter-space holes in the old booklet sheets, to revive interest in the third hole size, very interesting, in German.

In 'Stempel News' the new allocation of the old Frama SFS counter machines is given (see November issue of the Newsletter) but with the remark that the cost of each label ordered is the 'B' rate i.e. 70c. I think this is justified, but I don't collect them any longer!

I have discovered a 'Thought for the New Year' - 'Stamps may come, stamps may go, but postal history goes on forever'. Merry Christmas.