



Did You Know?



January 1999








-  In the December 1998 issue of DYK I stated that the inland Express rate had increased by 50c to CHF 8.50, but I had fallen into a trap with my eyes open. Since 1997 there has been no PTA weekly, in which such a change would have been announced, clearly, and for all interested parties, of which philatelists form a part. Becoming suspicious I asked at six different PO information stands in November, far too late as only two answers were the same - 1st May 1998. I could reject 'a few months ago', 'July 1st', 'sometime in May' and 'can't remember, but it was in the newspaper'. I had taken my information from the new rates table issued on 1st September, stupidly. The rise is caused by VAT, now being applied to PO services. Postal historians 'it's back to the 18th century' - you have been warned.
-  On 1.1.99 the inland Express rate will rise to CHF 10, but also includes A post rate for 1 kg. I have not seen this in writing. Rates for parcels also change. The Express label will also be the receipt, i.e. no stamps needed (as before in some places). Stamps are allowed if requested, but for how long?
-  The auction house in Biel, Giorgino, started a trend last year by having all illustrations in full colour, right next to the bid details. Now this year we have the same from Rapp and Chiani in nearly the same way. Before they were in three parts: colour, b&w pictures and bid text each separate and on different paper. Now the two latter have them all together on the same paper, many more in colour and the b&w being on better paper are of much higher quality than is usually found. Beautiful books to keep for reference.
-  The SP's new CEO, Reto Braun, has been on TV and gave a generally positive report. There will be no closing of 1000 of the 3600 Swiss POs, as had been feared. The yellow buses will not be sold off to the SBB, but ways have to be found to increase the sales at the counters, including travel tickets and life insurance! A new savings account is also being launched.
-  The sales of the two 'Chinese' stamps have reflected their acceptance by collectors. I hope you have bought your three small sheets, for the two blocks of four, horizontal and vertical pairs, the strips of three, and a pair of singles at the end.
-  The self-adhesive 90c stamp booklets have been a great success, and are now sold out. In March a new booklet will come out, produced by Courvoisier, who made the 70c booklets, as they were apparently much cheaper than the first firm, Heusser in Bern. As the SP offer little publicity for such things it is left to philatelists to spread the news, a strange situation for a 'sales-orientated management'.
-  A new R-label (type 10) has appeared, see Figure1 below, according to international rules; note RR and CH. Another new SP service is a special packing for bottles of wine in which has printed on it the label below (Fig.2). Not yet seen as a separate label.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Did You Know?



February 1999

- In the new SP organization there seems to be no person, or office, responsible for keeping archives, in particular keeping records of rate changes for future generations of postal historians. "No profit in it" being the motto.
- Inland telegrams will be abolished at the end of March 1999. Foreign telegrams will then no longer be accepted by phone, one must go to a PO. This is understandable; even I have a fax with telephone now, i.e. the same number. But the fax is already being overtaken by e-mail.
- The attractive new aerogramme, with the pair of China-Swiss stamps printed on, is not available at normal POs, only at Philatelic counters, but it can be used normally. The special overprinted version for the flights to China (four of them) can only be bought at CHF 2.5 each, cancelled and with the Chinese arrival marks at the back, from the Philatelic Bureau in Bern. Is this a souvenir only, or a Ganssache? I hope these two points will be noted in the new Ganssachen-Katalog.
- The six or seven special postcards which came out last year were also only obtainable from Philatelic counters. Ordinary POs didn't even know if the stamps impressed on them were valid! This tendency of souvenirs, instead of postal items, is to me dangerous, or am I out of step? The profit of the Philatelic Bureau is, in the short term, certainly higher with the sale of souvenirs of no postal intent.
- FL has declared that all stamps printed before 1996 will be de-monetised at the end on 1999, except for the excellent set of 11 Frama's, and the three stamps depicting the noble ruling family. In the latest issue of the FL Philatelic News of January 1999 a hint is given that the period may be extended. This will make all those collectors think about the effect of the Euro stamps in 2002 on their mint sets.
- The Swiss Philatelic Bureau has advertised the sale of mint booklets of the SPI for Italian tourist postcards, at nominal prices, unexpectedly. See page 83 of the Newsletter from November 1998 for details.
- I must apologize to Messrs Shipley and Stiles for the tricky questions they asked in 1997 on peculiar perforations of the Tell boy stamps they had. I cannot yet answer, but the search has led me into all sorts of places. PTT Archives and even to the National Postal Museum in London (got 'in' just before the doors closed, forever?). An article is in preparation, certainly one of the most illuminating projects I have ever undertaken. The interspace holes were just a part of it, thanks.
- The three cancels shown below are interesting for the following reasons: figure 1 is the last day of the 'Self-service' PO in the Lilie department store in Schlieren, on the western boundary of Zürich. The lily has been in the arms of Schlieren since 1340. Time to write my articles on these POs before they all vanish; figure 2 is used from 7th to the 30th of January in a PO in one of the window spaces of the Loeb department store in Bern, perhaps to bring in some customers in an otherwise 'dead' month; figure 3 shows a machine cancel rarity, Bern, Lausanne and Zürich advertising for an event in the Tessin, slogan No. 4.1.1240, used in most Tessin machines as well.



Figure 1



Figure 2

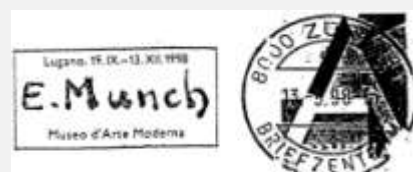


Figure 3



Did You Know?



📖 March 1999

☞ They have had another thought in Vaduz and the validity of their stamps will be extended by two years to three, i.e. to the end of 2001. From then onwards it seems that all issued stamps, except ATMs, will be valid for three years only, to be confirmed.

☞ The long-awaited Swiss Perfin catalogue has appeared, written by Martin Baer, as No.4 of the studies published by the GanssachenVerein, in German, 240 pages, AS with a 24 page introduction in English. Send CHF 40 in notes to Martin Baer, Hohmoos 10, CH-8051 Zurich, Switzerland, and mention the Newsletter.

☞ The 10c Chillon stamp was first printed in 1936 as Z.203 purple, in various forms about 665 million times. Then in 1939 the brown version appeared, Z.242, 350m, then the reddish-brown, Z.257 in 1942, no less than 994m times, and then in 1948 the green Z.286 with 292m sold. The grand total is 2251 million stamps. Now in 1994 another colour turned up, in red! According to the PTT it seems that when one of the Postage Due Large Numerals was to be printed, the wrong printing cylinder was put in the machine. How many were printed, and how the single sheet escaped destruction is not known. See figure 1, taken from a 1994 catalogue of Paul Bach AG of Basel.



Figure 1

☞ There are more than 12 000 places or name changes listed in the new 287 page handbook "*Chronicle of all Swiss Post Offices, 1849-1999*" Karl Gebert, 1999. This comprehensive book lists all places in Switzerland which used a postmark for handling mail during these 150 years. In addition to all POs, depots & parcel acceptance agencies, postal acceptance & passenger offices are included, never listed officially. Date of opening, or start of financial accountability, name changes, closures and present status. Dates of first SL cancel and cds make this a treasure trove!

As the Swiss Fund for Furthering Philately (capital CHF 5.9m) would not assist with printing costs Herr Gebert has paid these himself! Except for the cost of postage he offers this book free as his way of celebrating the 150 years of Federal Posts. Order from: Karl Gebert, Kappelestrasse 27, CH-9642 Ebnat-Kappel, Switzerland and enclose either a £5 note or \$10 or DM 15.

☞ Felix Winterstein has issued an A4 brochure '*Faszination Philatelie*' containing reprints of 25 of his articles previously published in SBZ, BBZ, Zack and others covering the period 1973 to 1998. 98 very useful pages obtainable from Zumstein at CHF 24.50.

☞ A very important document was shown to postal historians by Marc Imobersteg of the PTT Archives, which now forms one half of a 120-page brochure, A4, issued by Rudolf F Buschhaus, '*Quellen zum grenztiberschreitenden Postverkehr 1652-1798, Schaffhausen*'. This key document is an instruction from the 1775 postmaster Franz von Meyenburg to his son on how the international posts going through Schaffhausen at that time were organized. As this town had a central position in Europe many fascinating details are revealed, especially as this was a private document CHF 91 from Zumstein.

☞ Heiner Dürst has published the 2nd volume of the 5th edition of his Handbook on the franking machine impressions of Switzerland, right up to date and listing many special items not to be found anywhere else, in German, 230 pages, CHF 30 order from me.

☞ I have two puzzles; Figure 2 shows a cancelled PJ forerunner, what is peculiar? Figure 3 shows two 60c Lake Tannay stamps, why are they cut so badly?



Figure 2



Figure 3a



Figure 3b



Did You Know?



April 1999

- Under the sponsorship of VW Motors the Swiss Post celebrated its 150 Years anniversary with a gathering of about 100 invited guests in the Museum of Communication, in which a special exhibition opened at the same time. Less than a handful of philatelists were there; were the philatelic luminaries not invited we wondered.
Apart from this exhibition and a single uninspiring 90c stamp, not much has been done on this notable occasion, no special cancels, no machine slogans, not even a set of stamps, compare that to 1949. The whole SP organisation is, of course, still in a state of shock following the break-up of the old PTT and the new cash-orientated thinking needed in the liberalized situation of today.
- There is no longer a weekly PTA, I suddenly realized that I had not heard about when to order a copy of the annual OV (List of Places). At 'Stempel News' I was told that such information did not fall under Philately, but they would find out for me. It seems that the OV is being revised and might come out in the autumn, but more likely next year, when the lines of transport are definite.
- One of the big reorganizations taking place now is that of the transport of parcels from the three new centres, and the two existing ones, to the distribution centres, and back. From the code-sorting floor the parcels will fall into containers, which will be put on to the train wagons automatically, and no longer man-handled into the train. Unloading also being automatic. Trains will, however, be used less than before, but the total will not fall below 67% long distance, and the remaining third for the shorter distances by road. When the summer timetable commences on 31st of May the new system will start up. All parcels will by then have a coded label, but which I do not understand as yet.
- At the moment all POs are returning the stamps they no longer need to Bern, either because they no longer match the rates, e.g. 2.75, 3.75 and others, and because so many POs now have computer terminals at the counter which print out the labels for parcels and other items and for which no stamps are used. These values will still be obtainable at the Philatelic Bureaux, but will be found even less used.

- Answering the two questions from last month: The Littau cancel shown was issued on 18.VII.36, so quite clearly has been backdated. Only in July 1914 was the change authorized to a Cross in the upper segment and the Postal District number in the lower segment. The trouble is that this label is not a postage stamp so it was not illegal for a PO clerk to misuse his canceller. It is only the crazy philatelists who push the price of such items up and up. Just be careful. This is a typical example.



Question No. 2 concerns what are known as 'Industrial Coils'. Firms use special machines to automatically stick on the stamps, cancel them, and seal the covers and everything else. For this they buy rolls of 10 000 stamps, the 60c was first so issued on 3.1.96. The first stamp shown is from a roll badly separated from the rest in the PTT Printing Works, and is being offered by Bach at CHF 375 each, mint. A strip of eleven (to prove it does not come from a sheet) costs CHF 3495. The second is badly cut in the machine that sticks them on the covers. Who will pay me a million for both errors on the same stamp? (60c issues reproduced from last month's Newsletter.)



- Swiss Post announced on Sunday 21st March that a 90c stamp would be issued on March 24th to mark the successful Round-the-World flight of the Swiss Breitling Orbiter III balloon. The two-man crew, which included a Wiltshire man, landed in Egypt after 28 000 miles non-stop. The balloon was built in Bristol, England.



Did You Know?



May 1999

- When Orbiter III crossed the 9 degree west meridian at 10.45 CET on Saturday 20th March it had completed the circumnavigation of the earth, and the 3m (some say 5m) special stamps had already been printed by the SP in Bern. Printed in four-colour offset, they had to be checked manually and distributed to 3600 POs, ready for sale on Wednesday the 24th. This astonishing effort was fully acknowledged by the public and collectors, as they were sold out in many places in the morning, especially in the western part of Switzerland. Full TV, radio and Sunday papers' coverage had worked well.



On Wednesday a reprint was promised, and these stamps came on sale at philatelic counters on Tuesday the 6th of April to meet demand. It will be interesting to see the figure for numbers sold in due course. A special cover and a FDC cancel were also available.

- The St. Gallen NABA is being organized, publicized and run by the ex-Postal District Director of St. Gallen, who had been made redundant. At the Stage II exhibition in Buchs, the 'Philabu 99' over the weekend of 9-11th April, he gave the Swiss Postal History Club a resume of all the things planned, which should put this show in a class of its own. With 2800 frames there are plans for a more concentrated coverage, and many ideas will break up the overall classic layout of previous shows. The catalogue will be in two parts, the smaller with information to take along, the larger to enjoy at home, with its coverage of the wealth of aspects and features of philately; 280 A4 pages in all, mostly in colour, on sale at all POs from December 1999, CHF 7. The first of two blocks will be issued on the 9.9.99 at the Winterthur 'Open', with three stamps, 20, 70 & 90c. The second will be issued at the exhibition. Don't miss a visit.
- The postal history club mentioned above (SVP) is heir to the old Swiss Specialised Club (SSV) and some others; it has been rejuvenated recently, with the new name, but is celebrating its 75th anniversary with a non-competitive exhibition of about 100 frames, in Kilchberg, on 5-7th November 1999, to cover all aspects of postal history. Kilchberg is on the convenient Zürich tram line No. 7 from the main station.

- I had not fully realized the differences between the old stamps printed on the earlier recess machines, SSR I to III and those printed on the new 'Helvetia' (SSR IV), in the SP Printing Works in Bern. The illustrations below show a comparison of stamps of about the same size, but finer perforations. On the left is the old 11¾ perf, and on the right the new 13¼, about. This is to compensate for a thicker paper. The 'old' left-hand stamps are RBZ, i.e. Rotation-Harrow



Figure 1

perforated, per sheet, and the right-hand are RKZ, i.e. Rotation-Comb perforated.

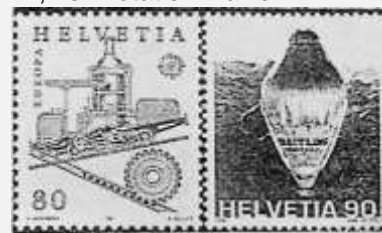


Figure 2

Figure 1 in a two-line comb and figure 2 in a single-line comb. The former could have a correction tooth for the third from the right, and the latter the second tooth from the right. Is any other member making a study of these 'new' stamps? Have you any questions on them?

- It seems the problem of the 'pink 10c Chillon' has been studied for more than 10 years, and that the pink hue is not the same as that of the Postage Due stamps (as suggested in last month's Newsletter) and that chemical tests have not been able to change the printed violet to this tone of salmon. The mystery remains.



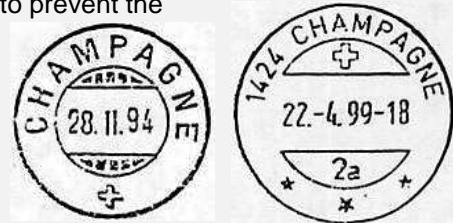
Did You Know?



June 1999

- I was not the only one to miss out the connection between the new 70c self-adhesive booklet with sketches from various books by Rodolphe Töpffer and the 5c PJ stamp issued in 1946 at the centenary of his death. He was born and died in Geneva, and illustrated his own books. Only "Zack", the young collector's magazine, noted this connection.
- One of the statistics still issued by the SP is on the number of postmen bitten by unfriendly dogs: 130 in 1998, but steadily dropping from 179 in 1990. Luckily Switzerland is now officially rabies-free, including a 2-300 km-wide zone right around the country.
- In Stempel News No.7/99, published on 6.4.99, there is a list of alternative cancellations, for the first time, to the official FD cancels for the new stamps. Because of his intimate knowledge of the K cancels, Giovanni Balimann was asked to make up this list, with subjects matched to the stamps, as far as possible. In previous years similar lists were available at the Philatelic counters.
- Otto Wicki has published another book on the old posts, this time *'Postboten Alter Zeiten, die Bergpoststellen im Entlebuch'*, over 400 pages, with many illustrations, in German. He is a well-known surgeon and has been collecting letters and documents for a long time. A true 'Heimat' collector.
- The Consilium Philateliae Helveticae is publishing the complete Güller record books in July, in five linen-bound volumes at CHF 390 in Switzerland, and CHF 440 foreign. From 1867 until 1977 (some a little longer). A must for researchers.

- Recently the last packet of bilateral regulations with the EU has been satisfactorily settled, from trains to aircraft landing rights. Toward the end of years of haggling the French had suddenly put a major spanner, sorry, item, on the table. The Swiss had to prevent the wine being sold in the tiny village of Champagne (near Yverdon) from having the place name on the label: just ordinary white wine. The matter was settled without compensation, but the French Army remains on alert. The other day I found one of the old cancels, and have now obtained a new one, for the record.



- I owe an apology to many members who replied to my article in the Newsletter of March 1994 on the Elzevir Trial Cancellations. How time flies. An update was planned for last year, but some new items have turned up. I have just realized that the only one illustrated in the Güller registration books; that for Zürich, is in fact not the same one as shown in the AW book. Of the former I have found ten, and for the latter, 20 impressions, which overlap in usage. See illustrations 4 (the '71 is fictive). Please have another look, especially on the back of covers. A fully illustrated up-date is on the way, mentioning last dates, so any date you have is of use.












- An up-date of the series of 'Razor Blade' articles is also being prepared, many new finds have been reported, and I have been able to examine a number of these cancellers in the Museum for Communication in Bern. All are type II, only 6.05 is type III!



Did You Know?



July 1999

-  The UPU in Bern is getting worried about a new type of stamp forgery being carried out by philatelic agencies in various parts of the world. They print stamps without the permission or the knowledge of the country whose name appears on the stamps, and for whom they have never printed stamps. The BBZ for May/June mentions a name, the "Brussels' Stamp Center", which has only a Tel/Fax Box No. address. Rumour has it that many of these illegal stamps are printed in Switzerland, and the problem is how to prevent them being catalogued.
-  On the 8th June the head of SP reviewed the financial situation of the new Post, and stated that the profit was insufficient. Postage rates will go up soon; as Switzerland is the cheapest in Europe, after the UK (for A-letters up to 50g) and the 41 000 staff would be allowed to 'run down' at the rate of 800 per year.
-  A peculiar situation is to be found in some (many?) main POs in that leaflets are to be found on special racks advertising the rates and services of DIAX, the main competitor to Swisscom! Telephone cabins and telephone books are seldom provided in any POs today. Electronic 'books' are provided in the increasing number of Swisscom telephone kiosks. DIAX and the other firms are more interested in mobile phones, called 'Handys' in German-speaking countries now, to the confusion of tourists and others.
-  The current exhibition in the Museum for Communication in Bern is devoted to 150 years Swiss Posts. Many interesting videos and other items to see; until the 12th September 1999. There is an interesting book to buy, in either French or German, 232 pages, CHF 68. Written in 1998, many previously unpublished historical photographs.
-  The new coding system, (see page 42 in last month's Newsletter), has now been extended. Zürich, with one of the largest installations in Europe, completed the change-over of their eight machines during March 1999, and Aarau, two machines, at the end of April. The others will follow.
-  The three new computer-controlled parcel sorting centres are still having 'software' problems, so that late delivery is now common. This has meant more use is made of the Express service, which is, in turn, becoming overloaded. Tests have also shown that only 90% of A-letters are delivered the next day. Staff overwhelmed with new rules and instructions. Public getting restless.
-  At the Swiss Open in Winterthur the first block for the St. Gallen 2000 exhibition will be issued on 9.9.99-9, which will be the most exciting thing about this block. There will be three stamps, for 20, 70 and 90c, and one 'no-value' vignette.
-  The 'Stempel News' for 17.5.99 gave information on the TPOs still using their named cancels. Martigny-Le Chable and Montreux-Zweisimmen had their last day on 30.5.99. (See page 12 of the February 1998 Newsletter.)
-  Aerophilatelists have apparently noted the number of 'flown' covers for the round-the-world Piccard balloon flight, seem to be rather high. Be careful when being offered one.



Did You Know?



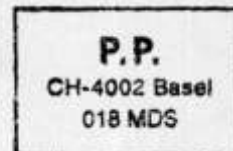
August 1999

- As mentioned last month, the SP is getting, deeper and deeper into the mire of late deliveries of letters and parcels. The amount of overtime required has now reached levels which cannot be compensated for, so about 700 temporary workers are to be taken on, parallel to staff-cutting programmes.
- There are many rumours about concerning closing hundreds of small PO's. With 3600 offices Switzerland has the highest density in Europe, but politically they have to cover the whole country. Installing POs in supermarkets or village stores is being discussed, and seems a realistic solution, as practiced in the UK for many years.
- Dr Balimann found a curious new machine cancel in his post with 'Packetbasis' in the lower half circle, from Horgen, but with another postcode. He asked the editor of 'Stempel News' why this had not been notified to collectors - "to reduce the quantity of philatelic covers" was the answer. But he found out that there are six of them so far; the others are Glattbrugg, Effretikon, Bulach, Hinwil, and Frauenfeld. All have letter cancelling machines already, and Frauenfeld has one of the three new automated parcel sorting and distribution centres. Why does a parcel 'base' need to send out so many letters; apologies for late delivery - hardly!

From a previous SP handout I have found that 60 such bases are planned. This is a considerable number to collect and they started around June 1999.

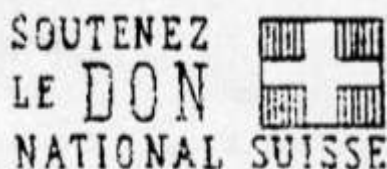
- The rumours are thickening that the planned rise in the postal rates will mean CHF 1.10 for a 50g letter, i.e. the present maximum weight of 250 g will be lowered to 50 g. This 250 g for the lowest weight step was introduced in 1891, on the 1st December, costing 5c for the local 'rayon' of 10km, and 10c for the rest of the country. It was a great help as it meant that practically no letters needed to be weighed.

- Dr Balimann received another curious letter in his post, see illustration below. Note that the date has no time reels, and that the smaller flag is on the right. This is a private re-mailing from Germany, 018 MDS is the return address, for the 'Mail Distribution Service', but the cancellation is applied by the SP in Basel.



- In your *Focus on Stamps* for June 1999*, you will have seen the new block in colour, and I suspect you are as enthusiastic about it as I am, i.e. not at all. However, I am impressed that a stamp is being issued for Carl Lutz, one of the few who upheld the name of Switzerland, against all official threats and directives, during WW II.

- I came across the official text regarding the proportions of the Swiss Cross. Dated the 12th December 1889, it confirmed the decision of the Diet of the 4th July 1815 that it consists of a white cross on a red background, square in shape. The length of the arms to be one sixth longer than their breadth. The illustration shows this on a square of 52 units, arms 10 units wide, 12 units



long, exactly symmetrical in four directions. The example here shows the incorrect proportions used by the Swiss 'Frontists', i.e. the Nazi followers who tried to take over the country. This slogan, No. 2.1.11, used in February and March of 1942 in French-speaking towns, was replaced quickly, with a cross having the correct proportions.



Did You Know?



September 1999

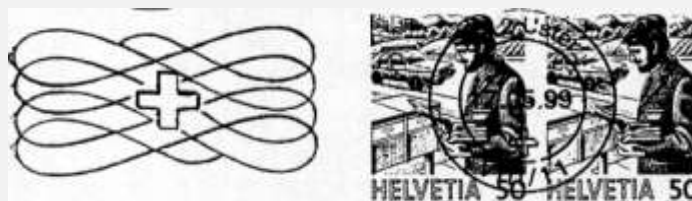
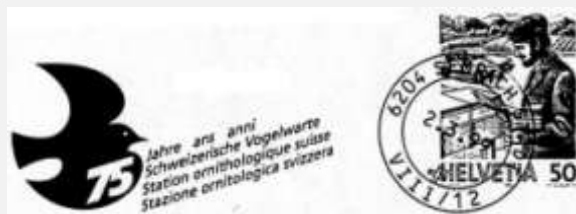
- ☞ The CPhH has now published, in a set of five A4-size volumes copies of the ten record books of the cancellers made by the Güller firm for Swiss, and many foreign administrations, from 1867 to about 1992. Although reduced to 90% the copies are mainly of outstanding quality. Many pages have been copied twice to suit light and heavy impressions. The English version of my introduction (in German) will be reproduced in the Newsletter. Order the set of five volumes from: Paulo Vollmeier, PO Box 108, CH-6976 Castagnola; CHF 390.
- ☞ Rumours suggest letter rates for 20, 50 and 100 g, but the opponents of the SP say that the letters are not allowed to subsidize the parcels. It should be solved soon, but will not be cheaper.
- ☞ The new parcel sorting offices cannot handle the load fast enough. It seems that the electronic address readers are too often baffled by handwriting and the position of the address on the parcel itself; not enough advance education of the public.
- ☞ It appears the SP printing works in Bern are no longer capable of producing steel-engraved stamps, only offset in up to four colours.
- ☞ It is not often that the prestigious 'American Philatelist' has an enlarged Swiss stamp on the cover, but in May 1999 they showed the 1981 70c (Z.651) 'Der Gemeindeschreiber' to illustrate an excellent article on 'Public Letter Writers' by Dale Speirs. However, this functionary is an employee of the village or town administration, to keep the official minutes of meetings, keep track of inhabitants and other such matters. The French name 'Le Secrétaire communal' is explicit. In 1981 the PTT used the expression 'The Parish Clerk', which was possible in the 18th cent., before the secular authorities progressively, took over the work in the cantons. In a nutshell, he would never have written letters for members of the public.
- ☞ From the 1st December all SP counter staff in the 530 busiest POs, 5600 people, will be required to wear only official SP uniforms, in yellow. Blouses, shirts, pullovers, ties - but no mention of skirts or trousers, socks or shoes. Perhaps these are no longer needed.
- ☞ On the 31st May 1932 the first official FDC was issued by the PTT for the three Gotthard stamps, Z.191-193, quite rare.

- ☞ The Pro Patria organisation sent out publicity material with the colourful PPI shown on the right. A number of firms and organisations are now using attractive printed-on labels. Perhaps they will soon be more appealing than the stamps produced by the SP!



- ☞ Some organisations are still using stamps to attract attention to their junk mail. The example left shows that of the 'Bird Protection Society' in Sempach, which is applied by letter press printing on the cover and stamp, produced, however, in the Zürich area, as shown by the number VIII/12. The example below 3 shows a pair of stamps cancelled, also in black, but with the usual 'franking' machine. The bulk rate required in each case was below 50c, but

the SP will refund the difference to encourage such lucrative mail. All the stamps are applied automatically from coils of 10 000.





Did You Know?



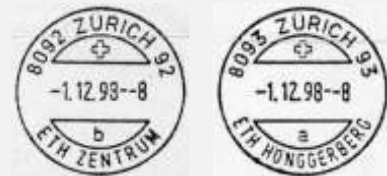
October 1999

The 2nd 'Swiss Open' held in Winterthur 9-12 September had predominately 'Open' exhibits, i.e. 64, with 34 Thematic, 22 Youth, and many exhibits from Holland, the guest nation. Some of the Open exhibits were remarkable, and also some who had not caught on. Up to 50% of the pages could be non-philatelic. The very hot weather, however, kept the number of visitors down, with two competing 'events' at that weekend. Only the first day with the cancel 9.9.99 was busy. For an unknown reason this is called in German 'Schnapszahl', but without an alcoholic slant. I think the name is derived from the children's game of 'Snap' played with playing cards, so I suggest that 'snap' is used in English, and 'snap date' for these curious, and sometimes long ones, when combined with the postcode.

The SP parcel post debacle has received much media attention of late. The three new 'Automatic' centres cost about CHF 500m, but have not yet reached a third of their designed capacity after five months operation, and Christmas is getting near. Three senior managers have been sacked, but one measure to 'improve' things has raised scorn among the public, namely that string may no longer be used for parcels under 10 kg in weight, only adhesive tape. It has now been revealed that the main problem is reading the address, and not only the postcode is determined, but also the street and number, so that the parcel can be sent automatically not only to the town, but also to the specific postman. This has been reached with letters, after many years, but parcels are far more variable. The testing time was practically zero.

In June 1999 the new postcode (PLZ) booklets were issued, both alphabetical and numerical, and are free at every PO. A folded wall map is also available at CHF 16.80, scale 1:300 000, showing all places with a postcode. Invaluable when looking for a place.

The two postal depots in the Federal Technical University (ETH) in Zürich received normal date cancellers, unannounced, on 1.12.98. Each office got two cancellers, 'a' and 'b'.



I cannot resist showing another two remarkable impressions on recent junk mail: figure 1 shows part of an advertising postcard on which a 90c stamp has been printed in full colour, then cancelled with a K-cancel 29.7.99 and below a reddish 4-state code used in GB only for sorting mail to foreign countries, and all reduced by 10%! The card was delivered as 'unaddressed mail' (cost 11c) about a month later than the date shown. I wonder if anyone is clearing up the legal issues. Figure 2 shows part of a heavy cover, (190c) with normal stamps cancelled privately (see September DYK) on 21.7.99, in gold.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Did You Know?



November 1999

- A few years ago the PTT introduced a dedicated Mobile PO to serve a number of very small villages in the Calancatal (the last Italian-speaking valley in Graubünden, before Tessin). Now a new version has started on 1.10.99 to serve the two villages 4115 Mariastein (SO) and 4117 Burg im Leimental (BE), from 4116 Metzleren (SO). This might become the solution, with a once weekly, full postal service to remote villages. The new cds has not yet been received by the postmaster of 4116!
To get to this area take the tram to Rodersdorf from Basel, and then go a few kilometres through France, before coming back in to Switzerland, and then walk, most enjoyable.
- The new ATM Handbook and Catalogue for Switzerland and Liechtenstein has been published, and written, by Markus Seitz of Luzern, in German, at CHF 34 for each volume. The best there is, and very good.
- An old wish of philatelists living outside (and inside) Switzerland has now been fulfilled, i.e. direct membership of the SVPPhV is now possible and not via a Club as before. Such members can now enter Swiss exhibitions and events, including receiving a copy of the SBZ every month.
- A peculiar 'mistake' has occurred; the SP is issuing a special postcard for the opening of the new Vereina train tunnel (under the Flüelapass, but starting in Klosters) on 19.11.99, but the picture shows the famous Albula viaduct! This is also a 'Taxe percue' card, valid for airmail to the whole world.
- Something is afoot with the printing of stamps. In 1999, for the first time, the Pro Patria stamps were not printed by Courvoisier in photogravure (AeTD), but by the SP in offset, and well done too. But it appears that AeTD has not been used by Courvoisier since about 1994, they use the new method of electronic scanning to prepare the offset printing rolls. In the UK it seems that this method has been in use by Questa for a number of years. Can anyone send me mint stamps of the GB 'Lighthouses and Endangered Species' series, for comparison, or any news that they may have about this new method.
- The bulk rate error made by Röllli, as mentioned in the June 1999 issue of the Newsletter, page 46, was caused by a printing error in the official rates booklet of 1.1.99; they got the decimal point wrong, twice. Corrected in the 1.6.99 booklet.



The above rates booklet also gives the new Express rates, namely CHF 12, 15, and 18 for delivery the next day before 9 a.m., before 9 p.m. if posted at the counter before 12 a.m. and for delivery before 17.45. The latter two only for larger places. This new service started with the summer railway timetable, which was on Monday the 30th May, not the 1st June, the date of the booklet. Just to keep the philatelists confused. Illustrations left show the new fast rate label, CHF 18.



- While exploring with Edythe Rawnsley a long time ago we 'discovered' the monument cut in the greenish Gotthard granite at an angle of about 40 degrees in 1898 as shown on the new 70c stamp (designed by the Russian, B Iliuchin). Illustration right shows this monument as used in the first day cancel.
- The SP have announced that in 2000 tests will begin with 'PC Stamps', that is private business franking on your own computer, as allowed in the USA from 9.8.99.





Did You Know?



December 1999

- ☞ Liechtenstein decided some time ago to break its links with the Swiss PTT and go it alone. They now have their own international telephone call sign '0423', this is not known everywhere, so the banks are apparently telling their customers to use the old number, via St Gallen, also because the new exchange is having troubles. This all costs money. And now the post office, stamps and philatelic services are following. That is the reason why their older stamps are no longer valid, from 1.1.00. My guess is that the new stamps and other items will come with the Euro, in 2002.
- ☞ The SP say the parcel chaos problem is solved, but only after the Xmas rush will the older parcel sorting centres of Däniken, Luzern and Lausanne be finally closed. We will see. Our local parcel delivery postman just laughs.
- ☞ During the weekend of the 6/7th November the new SVP (Swiss Postal History Society) held an exhibition in Kilchberg to celebrate their 75th anniversary, as they had revitalised the older, defunct, clubs /Spezial' and 'Altbrief'. There were 40 frames of bigger, classic exhibits and 60 frames of 'one frame' exhibits of specialities. Yours truly contributed 12 sheets of Güller and de Coppet research. A most instructive show. Worldwide 240 members.
- ☞ Approximately 600 main POs now close at 12 noon instead of 11.30 a.m. and in the evening the closing times have been extended, to match the closing times of shopping centres and other commerce.
- ☞ The new Luftpost Handbuch will be published by Birkhauser, who print the SBZ, price not yet released.
- ☞ The old BID PTT is now called 'PTT Historical Archive' and is open at the same place, Viktoria Strasse 21, 3030 Bern, from Monday to Thursday. Telephone No. xx41 31 331 11 51, and telefax xx41 31 331 1152, or e-mail 'archiv@ mfk.ch'

- ☞ The post office in the HQ building of the SP has now closed. It used to be called 'Generaldirektion', then, unannounced, 'Schonburg' from 1.1.99, until now Friday 29th October. This was announced in 'Stempel News' correctly. See the illustration right.



- ☞ There seems to be a new canceller designer at work for the philatelic services, see the selection below of very un-Swiss FD and other cancels, but not displeasing.



- ☞ On the 1st and 2nd of February, Sion, having lost their local publicity slogan, cancelled mail using the crown only. Then they got hold of a wavy line slogan and used that. It seems that all organisations wanting to advertise via slogans for machine cancellations have to pay not only for the metallic slogan itself, but also for it to be used on the mail. The number of new slogans is falling already so what will this bring?

- ☞ Yet another PPI (right) shows in full colour two Italian stamps, suitably modified.

