











Did You Know?

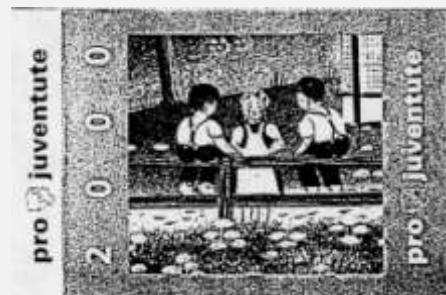


January 2001

-  I wish you all an interesting 2001, not too sticky and be careful of your perforations! I really hope to clear up a number of outstanding queries this year (good resolution No. 1) and I don't mind you sending me a rocket to get me back on track.
-  Last December the Philatelic Counter in Zürich moved from the first floor of the Fraumünster Post to the ground floor (old Swisscom office) giving them an improved location at street level, almost equal to that in Luzern.
-  Fribourg was upgraded from a sub-centre to a Regional Centre in October, and equipped with two of the newest Siemens (AEG-Electrocom) coding/sorting machines type IRV/DBCS (Integrated Reading and Video system/Delivery Barcode Sorter) which can handle up to half a million letters per day. The coding remains the same.
-  In Zürich Sihlpost the same type of machines are being installed as the daily pressure of 2.5 million letters has risen to 3.5 million.
-  The auction house of Kronenberg in Basel had an auction (13th December) in which two items stand out. A part sheet of the Geneva Doubles, i.e. the top with all the instructions and two rows of ten stamps (five pairs) mint. The green colour is considered truer than the part sheet in the Museum of Communication as it has lain undisturbed for 70 years in a bank safe. The other item is a corner block of four Basel Doves with wide margins. This was bought in 1930 for the vast sum - then - of CHF 75 000. Starting price today - a million.
-  In the December edition of SBZ there was an article by Dr Andreas Burkhardt (and R Schmidt), who was until recently Curator of the Museum for Communication, on the rumoured poisonous ink used for printing the Basel Dove stamps. He can guarantee that this is not the case. The six-page, fully-illustrated article in colour handles many other aspects of this stamp. It also illustrates how scientific methods of incredible complexity can today be easily applied to stamp forgeries, in ways unthinkable a decade ago.
-  Readers of *Focus on Stamps* are privileged. The general public in Switzerland do not know that pre-stamped covers can be bought at all POs, A & B post in sizes C6 & C5, at the nominal prices of 90 or 70c, that is the envelopes are free. They are for internal use but can be up-rated by adding the appropriate stamps for foreign countries. As an additional attraction the A & B service remains even after the next rate change. That is perhaps why selling them is not being pushed, a funny way for an organisation devoted to selling in today's market. So get hold of them before they are withdrawn because of lack of demand (see the figures right).



-  Last month I wondered about the number of possible PJ booklets. However, it is not four, but only one. The 70c value is that of the booklet cover (see figure) and the 90c the boy with the umbrella, as used in the PD cancel and shown in last month's Newsletter. Nicely done.





Did You Know?



February 2001

On Monday the 1st of January (the 3rd being the first working day) the SP presented a whole basketful of new systems, and some new Prices, and you can guess which way.

1. New letter rates, in four categories inland, see table below.
2. Inland Registration replaced by Recorded Delivery.
3. Parcels also now A&B, Priority or Economy. Details next month.
4. New rules for business franking machines. See DYK December 2000, and figure 1.
5. New Express rates.
6. "Pauschalfrankiert" (all inclusive) postage for Official offices has been withdrawn.

Type	INLAND: JAN.1 2001						FOREIGN: JULY 1 2000					
	Size	mm	g	A	B	LSI	g	Priority Zone1	Priority Zone 2	Economy Zone 1	Economy Zone 2	
Standard:	B5	20*	100	0.90	0.70	5.00	20	1.30	1.80	1.20	1.40	
			50				50	2.00	3.00	1.70	2.00	
			100				100	3.00	4.30	2.00	2.50	
Midi:	B5	20*	250	1.30	1.10	5.00						
Large:	B4	20	500	2.20	1.80	5.00	100	3.50	4.50	2.50	3.00	
			250				250	6.00	8.00	3.50	5.00	
			500				500	11.00	14.50	6.00	8.00	
Maxi:	B4	50	1000	5.00	4.50	6.00	250	8.00	10.00	5.00	6.00	
							500	12.00	17.00	7.00	9.00	
							1000	19.00	30.00	11.00	16.00	
							2000	29.00	47.00	19.00	29.00	

New Swiss Letter Rates:

All prices are in Swiss francs (CHF). Weights in grams (g)

Dimensions in millimetres (mm = maximum thickness) B5 = 250x176 max. B4 = 353x250 max.

Inland: To include insurance up to 500 fr, plus 9.- (LAS)

COD to a maximum of 10,000 fr, plus 11.-

* indicates that if up to 50 mm thick then plus 2.30 fr, A & B post.

LSI = Lettre Signature including A post against a signature but no insurance.

(Equivalent to 'Recorded' in UK)

Foreign: 'Registration an additional 5.00 fr.

Zone 1 is Europe and the Mediterranean; Zone 2 is the rest of the world.

Express: Separate lists will be published later.



Figure 1: An early use of the new business franking machine marks, in blue, see 4, above. Found by Giovanni Balimann.

Since 1891 letters could weigh up to 250g as the one and only step, when anything heavier was a parcel. Then, in 1991, an additional step was added, up to 500g. In 1996 this was raised to 1000g. Now the first step has been reduced to 100g and a new step, called "Midi", has been introduced.

Liechtenstein Post AG has issued its own A4 seven-page leaflet on their new rates, as from 1.1.01, and in some ways it is clearer than the new Swiss equivalent. This confirms that the old contract made with the Swiss in 1921, regarding common customs, posts and currency, is still in force.

The Tourist Bureau in Arosa now have their own "stamps" for postcards mainly, sold for CHF 1 in hotels and other places. The stamped cards are handed in to the Tourist Bureau, who make a bulk "PP" sending at the PO. As this CHF 1 is cheaper than the foreign rate the Tourist Bureau has to make up the difference, but gain on the publicity that this stunt has brought them. See example right, who will be next?











Erwin Steinbrüchel had to postpone the publication of his study of the Swiss Frank stamps, Z.2-16, 1911 to 1943, as so much new information has been discovered. Publication should be at the end of this year, about 600 pages: in full colour CHF 400; in b&w CHF 100.



Did You Know?



March 2001

-  Once upon a time one could have relied on a special commemorative stamp on a major anniversary of every entry into the old confederation, never missed until 2001. Basel joined on 13th July 1501, and Schaffhausen accepted on 10th August 1501, becoming the 11th and 12th members respectively. The last stamp issued for such an event was for Basel Country, on 26th May 1983 (40c, Z.700), for 150 years following the split from Basel Town. No such stamp, or stamps, is planned according to the latest 2001 list of new issues. Perhaps there will be a pair of machine cancels?
-  Perhaps we will have the compensation of chocolate-flavoured gum for the 90c Chocosuisse stamp to be issued on the 28th of March this year. I can't wait.
-  When Ulrich Gygi, the CEO of the SP, announced that 25% of the 3600 POs would have to close within the next 5 years, he emphasised that would reduce the losses by only 20% of that demanded by Parliament! In Graubünden, the worst affected region, 75% of their POs would have to close. Each village is expected to find a way of combining the PO with a local shop, or even the local council office. I managed to get a complete list of GR Post Offices.
-  During the recent Christmas rush some PO sorters stuck new address labels on insured packets sent by jewellers. Wives, or girl friends, being the "new" recipients. That they had not realized was that the correct address was already in the electronic memory, which directed the packet to the relevant parcel distribution office, There the discrepancy to the label address was immediately discovered. At first it was thought there had been an electronic failure, but when more such "mis-sent" packets arrived. . . This illustrates one valid reason why the PO is not always keen to answer questions on operational procedures. Philatelists should keep to stamps, in their view.
-  Giovanni Balimann has now issued his two books on the "*History of PP*", via the Consilium. Volume A deals with Regulations from 1910 onwards, and Volume B the cancellations used, hand and machine, by every PO. Hard bound, in German (text in 6 colours), about 250 A4 pages each, CHF 140 each volume. Something fantastic for specialists.
-  The SP has also taken no notice (so far?) that it is 10 years since Switzerland followed the UK initiative of 1968 and introduced a two-tier mail system, and went a bit further by being the first to apply it to foreign mail as well.
-  In the Kronenberg auction the part sheet of 20 Geneva large eagles went for CHF 230,000 (plus 15%). Refer to page 7 of the January Newsletter.
-  Shown here is a new cancellation, in black, 29mm diameter, on a stampless cover from Bern, SP Finance Dept, but cancelled in Basel 39, without hours in the date bridge. According to the last OV of 1998, and to the latest PLZ list of June 1999, Basel 39 is not listed. See how long it takes to find another one.



-  To celebrate their commercial freedom the Liechtenstein Post AG issued a new slogan from 1.1.01 used in Vaduz & Schaan, No, 3,318, local publicity, which was used as PO publicity has been closed down. The colours would be blue above and red below.





Did You Know?



April 2001

I was surprised to see in an old 1996 sales list, of a top Swiss philatelic firm, the three PJ vignettes shown right. The text said "Kat. Fr.8350 mit Attest, Fr.4500". I think they would know today that the Bern canceller used on the "French" and "Italian" labels could not have been made before 1914. The "German" label is not clear. Just a reminder to collectors to keep an eye open for cancellers with "cross and PK No." in the upper and lower segments, where the date indicates a "premature birth", that is a FAKE.



Only 125 postmen were bitten by dogs during 2000. This is a drop from 144 cases in 1999, perhaps because of the present curb on vicious dogs. Ten postmen were off work for 4 days or longer.

In the January 2001 issue of the *Phila News* (No. 8) it was mentioned that four TPO routes operating out of Luzern had been closed. This sort of information has never been given before. One of these routes was Luzern to Engelberg, and that was interesting, because of the named TPO cancel used. Last Day cancels could be ordered up to the 16th of February. See illustration left for the last day, 29.12.00-143. This train 143 was the last daily "collector" train, leaving Engelberg at 18.45; and, after stopping practically everywhere, arriving in Luzern at 19.44, in time for the collected letters to be code/sorted and sent off for delivery the next morning, anywhere in Switzerland. Now motor transport is used, more flexible, and can collect direct from the various PO's.



Until July 2000 (I have not been able to establish the exact date) it was possible to refuse acceptance of an item, either at the counter or on the doorstep, in fact one could go to the PO a few days later and hand in a refused item. The original sender had to pay the return postage. Lately it seems the PO has had trouble in collecting these fees. Now to save trouble, the recipient has to pay the return Postage. However, unsolicited objects can in law be kept; sender's loss. On the new LSI (i.e. old registered) covers one now sees the text (see right) which allows such letters to be returned by B-post. This is applied by the sender.

**Falls refüsiert oder nicht
abgeholt als taxpflichtige
B-Post zurücksenden!**

On the 13th of March a stamp was issued for 100 years of the Swiss Aero Club. Again a good opportunity was missed. No collector of aircraft themes will touch it, because the plane is not identifiable. Perhaps a work of art, but who wants it?

In the two issues of "Tell" for 2001 there has appeared an interesting article by Heinrich Heissinger where he summarizes the series of 19 articles by Toni Abele which appeared in the SBZ from July 1944 till July 1948, on the "*Philatelic Literature of Switzerland*", and on examples from his own library. Very useful indeed.

Shown below is the 40c Europa stamp of 1983, the celestial globe made by Jost Burgi in 1594 in Kassel. This object is kept in the National Museum in Zürich and they have published a fantastic book (German and French editions, at CHF 15 (70 pages).



Many colour enlargements show the intricate detail of his work for which he made the calculations. With John Napier he discovered logarithms. He was born in Lichtensteig, Canton St Gallen.



Did You Know?



May 2001

- According to the April issue of the SBZ the world-famous stamp printing firm of Courvoisier will close down at the end of April 2001. This is astonishing news, but it seems that they can no longer compete where quantity is more important than quality. For about 70 years a small group of specialists delivered stamps to many countries. Now the last 33 will lose their jobs, and philately will lose a great source of wonderful stamps.
- It seems the last stamps from La Chaux-de-Fonds for the SP will be the chocolate issue of the 9th of May, 90c stamps with a real chocolate flavour, but bitter-sweet too!
- During a conversation I chanced on the subject of pre-dated stamps sold at exorbitant prices and mentioned those of a 1996 price list (see DYK last month). My acquaintance could recall these as having been immediately withdrawn from sale and in fact, kept as an example of that sort of faking.

- The PJ forerunner opposite shows another kind of trap, offered in an auction in April this year with the description, "CTO in Bex with back-dated canceller". True, but still a fake for the next buyer. The cross in the upper segment proves that the cancel could not have been in use in 1912. Why are stamp collectors so interested in non-postal labels?



- For those who have been considering a collection of Thematics, based on Russian planes shown on Swiss stamps and cancellations, they can make a good start with this example. The plane in the cancel, to be used as indicated, is a Russian-built Antonov AN 2, well-known in many third-world countries for its short landing and take-off powers. Here it is used for towing sailplanes up to a suitable height. It is a slow and reliable aircraft.



- The SP is thinking of reducing the number of code/sorting centres from 13 (plus 10 satellite sort-only) to four or five super-centres, made possible by improved computer software and the low-cost petrol and diesel fuel.
- The new self-adhesive stamp booklets, 70 & 90c, to be issued on the 9th of May, are a cheap solution in that both have existed before as sheet stamps, but the 70c is now to be printed in Australia by the Post Office. They will also make the dispensers for both values, for 100 stamps each, following the UK style. More next month when I have seen them. More details in *Focus on Stamps 2/2001*.
- The round self-adhesive stamps of 15.9.00 had annoyed me, particularly the pair of 10c non-usable, to the unforgivable effect that I had not noticed that both booklets had been printed in the UK by Questa. The first stamps not to have been printed in Switzerland for about 70 years. Where will the next ones come from? Sweden is a great booklet country!
- The remaining three Evangelists, Mark, Luke and John are no longer on sale after 40 years, though it seems that, if you hurry, you can still get a couple of sheets of 25 each, of John, at CHF 20 each, from the Philatelic Bureau.
- It is becoming difficult to define mint and used these days, as the various Philatelic organisations produce one wonderful 'unique' souvenir after another. Liechtenstein put out a pair of "scratch" stamps on the 5th of March, adding another two variations, see right, and now Bern has discovered the whiff of chocolate. How many whiffs between mint and used, that is the question?













Did You Know?



June 2001

-  In June 2002 the Swiss Post will close their stamp printing works in Bern, due, they say, to a drop in the use of stamps, and financial forces. Today all large POs have computer terminals, and medium POs have SFS 'stamps', so only the smallest ones (i.e. those to be closed) need stamps at all. The Philatelic Bureau will be able to get their souvenirs from the big countries. A sad day indeed.
-  From a philatelist's point of view this can bring all sorts of varieties as paper supplies run down next year, and foreign suppliers use the wrong sort of paper, strange perforations etc. It will be worthwhile keeping your eyes open and the magnifying glass handy. Good hunting, and don't let the tears blur the vision.
-  The Alma Lee auction by Rapp in Wil SG on the 8th of May achieved high to very high prices; nothing was unsold during the time I was there. Three items were of special interest: the pair of Zürich 4 on cover dated 8 April 1847 fetched almost double the starting price with net CHF 220,000, which was also reached by the triangular cover with a Zürich 6, and then the Rayon II with cross in black frame at CHF 240,000. (Who said an over-franked cover was of little interest?)
-  The SPI have been made to close down their postcard collection in Italy, sometime at the beginning of this year, by the Italian PO. A recent postcard from Paris to Charles LaBlonde in Colorado, USA, went via a re-mailing service in Athens. Apparently this can still be done as a 'stamp' is not involved (only a rubber 'stamp'). Collectable items.
-  The SP is making scientific studies to determine in which 17 Swiss cities the number of POs can be halved. In Zürich, of the present 46 POs, 22 have been selected for closure but 9 better-located ones could be built, giving a total of 33. Opposition is growing, and it does not help to say that EU countries have even fewer POs!
-  The "Fundación Bose" of Buenos Aires is probably not read by many members to keep up with Argentinean postal history, but in No. 4 of 2000 there is a long article by René Jacobsohn of Zürich, a member of the Swiss Postal History Society, on the cancellers made by Güller for Argentina during the first 20 years or so of the 20th century. Also shown are a number of covers where the use of some of these cancels is illustrated. Who will write the next article on the foreign use of the Güller cancellers?
-  I have been given another rare book, the 66th volume of the "*American Philatelic Congress*". Only unpublished articles on original research are accepted. In this volume there is a 24-page article on the WW II correspondence of a firm on the Lake of Zürich, making textile machinery, to a firm called "Canadian Cottons" in New Brunswick, Canada. Much of the correspondence to Canada has survived as the recipient, the manager, was a collector and it is still to be found at bourses and fairs in North America. The article is based-on such letters, and fascinating details of the factories at both ends, put together by Charles LaBlonde, after years of research.
-  The illustration shows an interesting "cancel" found in the PTT archive lately by Hans-Ulrich Sieber, the most knowledgeable man on old cancellers. It was by a French maker of cancellers, Leppe, giving his change of address to the Swiss PO on 16th April 1850. Did he make any cancellers for Switzerland?





Did You Know?



July 2001

Another blow to philately has been decided by the SP, namely that five of the eleven well-equipped philatelic counters must close; Geneva at the end of May 2001, and Aarau, Chur, Luzern, and Neuchâtel at the end of June. Aarau received a pictorial K-canceller only recently, No. 1336 on 23.2.00 (see right). Although all are located in SP buildings they probably could not cover the rent; some of these buildings now belong to Swisscom, no doubt.



The POs in border regions, and generally all main POs, all told 430, will be able to accept Euro currency from the 1st of January 2002. Also all the main supermarket chains will accept Euros, as well as the Post buses in the border areas.

I've mentioned before that I did not like the Aero Club stamp issued on the 13th of March 2001. Now a further negative aspect has been drawn to my attention. Every stamp of the eight in the miniature sheet is different and rates a separate catalogue number!



In the example shown here is an enlargement of the top left corner of the sheet showing

how the arrangement of the clouds encroaches over the line of perforations giving another background. I wonder if in 100 years time some enthusiast will re-discover this and make a statistical study to discover the rarest and most expensive version. I doubt it.

The chocolate sheetlet of 15 stamps (9.5.01) avoids this trap by careful design. The SP has revealed how the original chocolate aroma is achieved. A 5th printing cylinder applies a clear lacquer which consists of millions of micro-spheres each filled with chocolate perfume. When a finger is rubbed gently over the top layer of the stamp, the bubbles burst and allow the perfume to escape.

Many children will be disappointed this Christmas, and next. The K-cancel No. 734 for 'Wienacht-Tobel' is shown right. Now this name has nothing whatsoever to do with 'Weihnacht' (Christmas), but some years ago some child wrote to Father Christmas at that address, and received a small present from the postmaster. Over the years this has grown to become a major exercise, handled by the local tourist office. Now the SP is closing the PO, and has stirred up a wave of opposition. We will see what happens.



From 9th - 10th of June the train timetables changed from winter to summer, and many organizational things in the PO and SBB/CFF also change on that day. I suspected that one or more of the three remaining private TPOs would be withdrawn then. But so far none of my covers to the Rhätische bahn, the Furka bahn, nor the Brig-Zermatt bahn have come back, so I cannot say what has happened.

Liechtenstein, from 1961 to 1970, issued a series of 17 excellent stamps showing scenes from a medieval illustrated book of love poems (Minnesänger). Switzerland followed in 1988 with four in the Pro Patria series. The K-cancel on the left shows a scene for the 1111th year festival in Teufen (ZH). On the right is the 75c Liechtenstein stamp (Z.372) of the same event. The place, Teufen in Canton Zürich having once belonged to Wernher von Tüfen, the knight shown leading his love to?





Did You Know?



📖 August 2001

☞ Two further MLO satellites, Neuchâtel and Lugano, are to close, as the letters for their sub-regions will now be sorted in Biel/Bienne and Bellinzona respectively. This is caused by the old sorting machines wearing out, and the drop in letters due to e-mail and fax. One of the advantages of the mechanical sorting machines is that their electronic control can easily be used for statistical purposes. In this way the Post know for every minute of the day (if necessary) exactly how many letters got from A to Z, allowing exact planning. If the many letters one sees without coding can be a significant percentage, I do not know.

☞ The name of Courvoisier is not dead. The firm has been taken over by Walsall Security Printers in the UK, and the printing presses are being moved to their new home, so that they can continue under the old name. A Swiss sales office will be maintained in Neuchâtel.

☞ I was finally successful in getting samples of the last three TPOs using named route cancels, see below. It had not been clear at the time of the change to the summer timetable (always an important date for the PO too) on the 9-10th June 2001, whether the TPOs would be withdrawn, or at least would not cancel any letters. We will see next year. I am sorry to say that I have not



been able to clear up if any SBB/CFF TPOs still use their 'Ambulant-Bahnpost' cancels.



☞ In a recent SP publicity leaflet there was a chronology of the posts, from which I have extracted the following:

- 1830, first post coach crosses the Alps via the St. Gotthard.
- 1857, Post and Railways work together, with the mails, 20 years after the UK, special coaches put into service.
- 1903, first motor coaches carry the mail.
- 1906, Post-check (Giro in UK) system introduced.
- 1919, first airmail on a regular basis, Zürich-Dübendorf to Bern-Oberlindach* to Lausanne-Blecherette, and later to Genève-Cointrin (?) *(note that in the Luftpost-Handbuch the adjacent village of Kirchlindach is mentioned, and no mention is made of Cointrin, which I have added.).
- 1920, PTT formed from the previous departments of Posts, Telegraph, and Telephone.
- 1939, Letter boxes and stamp dispensers change from dark-green to yellow.
- 1961, the last horse-drawn mail coach in Avers (GR) retired.

☞ It is a long time since someone sent me a telegram. Don't hurry, it is too late! On the 1st of May 2001 all foreign telegraph services were suspended, following the suspension of inland telegrams on the 1st of January 1999. Herbert Judmaier, who writes a lot about Swiss posts, mentions in a short article in the German DBZ, that in 1997 there were 200,000 foreign telegrams sent, but in 2000 only 40,000. Reason - yet again e-mail and fax.

☞ The opposition to the announced closures of about 25% of all POs (75% in the Grisons) is rising with demonstrations, petitions and such. The quasi-scientific survey made by the SP said that closing half the POs in the City of Zürich would not make much difference. They forgot that with only half the number of counters, the queues would then be twice as long.

☞ At the GABRA IV, September 21-23 in Burgdorf, the last MPO will be dusted off and again use the old cancellers, in a different language every day. Not to be missed.

☞ From about March this year the Philatelic Bureau has been using a new sealing label for its covers to standing order customers, in yellow as before, giving more details of their addresses.



Did You Know?



September 2001

☞ 17 years after they stole the ancient Unspunnen Stone, the Jura Freedom Fighters have returned it, on the 11th of August in Saignelégier. This 83.5 kg stone was first used in 1805 in Interlaken, during an Alpine Festival, and was heaved a few metres. In the meantime a replica has been used, and this will perhaps remain in use as the original has been damaged and now weighs less. See Z.655, right.



☞ Without any visible publicity the SP introduced new abbreviations for all European countries during 1999, following an instruction from Brussels (?) to use the current ISO regulations instead of the old system introduced in about 1965 (by the CEPT countries?). In this the motor car international identifications were used to precede the postcode numbers, and had usually only one letter, e.g. F, D, I etc. Some had two letters as CH & FL.

Although this system proved to be a great help, it was rejected, by the United Kingdom. However, everyone used GB as seen on British cars all over Europe. Now two letters are to be used consistently, as in the internet and e-mail addresses. Note that CH remains, but Liechtenstein becomes LI. See the three slogans below: figure 1 is No.3.79; figure 2 is No.3.266; and figure 3 is No.4.6.283, i.e. not for continuous use, and shows the www address with 'LI'.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

☞ An up-to-date list of these abbreviations does not apparently exist for SP customers, only in the latest Postcode booklet of June 1999 have I found an incomplete list. If you have more interest than the SP then perhaps a kind clerk will look up your question on their computer, without a printout. PS found the list, copy with the Editor.

☞ I was given a 16-page A4 booklet on the new letter rates, with the curious title of "Transparent and fair", Tariff for business customers. As I am not such, I was glad to have found a kind clerk. This publication has no number (and is not the only one), so how does the SP organize its stock-keeping and re-ordering? It contains an excellent list of all main rates, with old and new clearly shown. Excluded are the rates for Swiss-Express, as this is another firm!

☞ The above booklet, in addition to a number of meaningless full-page pictures and sales guff, has a remarkable announcement, i.e. that in future the sender of an inland under-franked letter (if his name and address are known), will have to pay the additional 50c fine, instead of the recipient as at present. I will make a few tests on this curious change of policy. Some years ago I wrote an article in the Newsletter on these cards, and the "Taxe Perçue" rubber cancels, which are sent to collect only the missing postage on inland and foreign letters.

☞ Three MPO cancellations (I, F & G) will be used during the three days of GABRA IV and are shown in the latest issue of *Focus on Stamps*. The previous 'last day' was at the launch of a number of stamps in Martigny of 11.3.97, when no slogan was used, see illustration right. The last use with an event slogan (rubber) was for the Escalade in **Geneva** in 1995.



☞ There will at least be a special cancellation to celebrate the entry of Basel into the Confederation 500 years ago. That was for both half-cantons, as only in 1833 did Basel Land split from Basel Town. The text reads "*The Festival of Basel - 500 years with the Swiss*".








Did You Know?

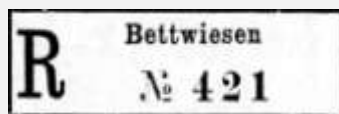


October 2001

 I should have mentioned a month or so ago that I am in a state of confusion, i.e., more than usual, as we are making some house alterations, which means that I am losing the two main rooms of my "archive". This archive consists mainly of thousands of only partly sorted covers, old magazines, and other odds and ends. About 95% can be thrown away without much loss to international philately, but where are the worthwhile 5% hiding? So a lot of temporary housing is needed, not too damp. Much will be taken away by friends who are interested in "PP" or red meter frankings, for instance. However, a major consideration is stopping progress; I am always finding something of interest, which with a few more still to be found, could make a valuable article in the Newsletter. So please be patient, in the end (2001 I hope) something should come out of it all, of use to members.

 Karl Gebert is the well-deserved recipient of the 2001 Award from the Consilium Philatelic Helvetica, mainly for his enormous work to produce the book *Postellen-Chronik* and the disk version. This may well be the first major philatelic work produced in this form. A copy of the long-sold-out book has turned up, if anyone is interested contact the Editor.


 The illustrations here show an interesting development; one shows the PTT design of the Recorded Delivery label from the 1890s, with the number clearly shown. Now we have the 2001 version. On practically all those I have seen there is either a stroke made with a pen to indicate where the number starts or the last four or five figures are




marked with a red pen


to make this stand out. A remarkable show of progress, on a practical level, well away from the computer screen!



 Karl Gebert discovered, in a small PO, that the SP has issued a new 216 page edition of their postcode list, in June 2001. Now we have in one volume the Alphabetical, Numerical and the street lists of the major towns, with their postcodes. Previous list was June 1999. It is not easy to show, but more and more firms are sending out accounts and other items in window envelopes which have nothing printed on the cover, not even stamps. All the data is shown on the enclosed letter and is visible through the window. Usually the letter has been coded and this is the only proof of it having gone through the posts.

 The German philatelic fortnightly DBZ has started a series of articles on the "postmarks" used today on the various Swiss lake-steamers, and where one should write to obtain examples. All the ships in service are listed.

The "Gallia" is being withdrawn for a complete overhaul. This was the last paddle-wheeler to enter service in 1913, and is the fastest of the five remaining ships on the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons, i.e., Lake Luzern.

 The new, 8th edition of the Ganssachen Schweiz catalogue has just been published by Zumstein, having been updated and re-arranged by Georges Schild. A very successful combined effort to achieve a new milestone in Swiss philatelic literature. It is so up-to-date that the GABRA IV special postcard is included! In German, with the introduction also in French and English, A5 soft-bound 352 pages, CHF 48.



Did You Know?



November 2001

☞ The new Liechtenstein Post has to handle a great number of letters and parcels for which they receive no cash at all, because everyone is still using up their stocks of old 1967-95 stamps, including many dealers and collectors in Switzerland. When in 1998 they decided to demonetize all pre-1996 stamps (except those showing the ruling family, and the 1995 ATMs) there was an outcry from the "Speculators", so in May 1999 the FL authorities took the decision to retain the validity till 31.12.2001. As this date coincides with the introduction of the Euro in the neighbouring states of Germany and Austria, it was further decided to apply similar rules for the exchange of FL stamps for a period of 3 months, to the 31st March 2002. This would apply to those stamps valid on the 1st January 1996, whereby a fee of 15% would be charged, and the total value of the stamps exchanged during these 3 months not to exceed CHF 5.88m. (Note Swiss francs.)

☞ FL stamps issued after the 1st January 1996 will remain valid "forever". This has been confirmed to me by the Philatelic Bureau in Vaduz. This includes those in the brackets above. At no time will FL stamps show a value in Euro, only in Swiss francs. Payment in FL POs can be made in Euro notes, but the daily rate of exchange will be used to determine the equivalent value in Swiss francs. Change will be given in Swiss francs.

☞ On the 20th September 2001 the Swiss Post sent all mail, up to 100g, free to the USA and Canada, as compensation for the disruption caused to international mails in the aftermath of the



WTC New York and Pentagon bombings: I was told that "PP" cancellations would be used; there was not much publicity. Charles LaBlonde has returned to me the two covers I sent to him, together with copies of two other letters he received, all A-post (see the illustrations). Has anyone else seen such covers? It would be interesting to see what other combinations were used - PP machine slogans?



☞ Under www.post.ch one can read that in 2000 (=1999) the turnover of "Stamps & Philately" was 52 (55) Mio CHF, with a profit of 14 (22) Mio CHF, for 554 (600) Mio delivered stamps. The number of standing order subscribers has also dropped; inland 90 000 (98 000), and foreign 45 000 (48 000).

☞ The very attractive 90c Christmas stamp (on 20.11.01), is again designed by top artist Bernadette Baltis, but this time printed by House of Questa, London. The layout of the stamp is very similar to the set of four PJ stamps she designed in 1993, and which were then printed by Courvoisier.

☞ Four new ATM (Frama) stamps carry in the background, in sequence, a letter to form the word POST. This can be modified to read STOP, TOP etc. The longest word I have been able to make is 'STOOPS', with six stamps. Who can think of something longer? (See opposite, below.)

☞ Not only in the GABRA IV Catalogue did Giovanni Balimann write probably the best article ever on the Swiss Mobile Post Offices, but also in the monthly magazine of the SVPS. In a recent issue he showed all the various R-labels ever used in MPOs. If any member would like to see this five-page list, never before published, then they should ask the Hon. Librarian for issue 4/2001 of the SVPS magazine.


☞ Neopost, France, has taken over Ascom in Switzerland, and, thereby Hasler franking machines.





Did You Know?





December 2001


-  Peter Muggier of Zürich has produced a remarkable book; a catalogue of Swiss balloon posts, 900 pages in fact, in German, 15.5 x 21 cm, many coloured illustrations, for CHF 95. The main part of 590 pages carries all the historical flights (including covers to CH from Paris in 1870) and the multitude of charity flights, up to the latest Zeppelin flights over Switzerland. The second part is on the military cancels and covers in 23 pages. Then the last part with all the post from Swiss balloons in foreign countries, 165 pages. A feast for the aero specialist.

-  The Consilium has published another important work on postal history. A group under the leadership of Martin Gasser, after years of research in the Aargau Cantonal Archive, have produced four volumes, in A3 format, bound 1500 pages, for only CHF 590 for all four, and titled "*Postwesen des Kantons Aargau 1803-1852*". It includes the contracts made with other Swiss cantons and with foreign postal administrations, together with the tariffs, post-coach routes etc.

-  The cantonal archives have not been examined in the same detail as above, but one can hope that this will now change. The postal archives, and the Federal archive, do not tell the whole story. However, it is not easy to find the interesting books and boxes in the less well-organized cantonal archives, to which there are exceptions, such as Zürich, which is covered in one of the first set of volumes that were published by the Consilium.

-  In Switzerland "Pins" mean the coloured enamel badges "pinned" on jacket lapels, caps or hats. The number of subjects covered is, to put it mildly, innumerable, but the fashion has recently expired. In the Museum for Communication in Bern, from the 26th of November to the 9th of December 2001, there is a collection of about 2000 pins having a postal connection, presented by Heinz Pfister, postmaster of 3115 Gerzensee. Well worth a visit. I have a few, some of the PJ cantonal arms and other stamps of historical interest as, nicely made, they are difficult to resist.

-  A couple of months ago I enquired at a PO counter about the rates, reduced, for books to foreign countries. This information is not given in any published tariff lists, but is available to bookshops, publishers etc. I have usually been able to get copies of these lists and send books at the reduced rates. As so much changed on 1.1.01 I thought I had better keep up to date. No luck. "No longer exists", I was emphatically told. So a week or so ago I packed a book, put stamps on for B post to UK. At the counter the girl said all OK, but I needed a green customs slip on it, which she stuck on. When told the contents were a book, she asked "Why did I not send it at the cheaper rate". To prove she was right she made me a photocopy from her rates book: I could have saved a franc. But it was an example of the self-produced chaos found today. You must be careful and up-to-date.

-  I have been sent an interesting cover by a collector who saw my single-frame exhibit at GABRA IV, in which I showed the early use of an "Elzevir" cancel (the trial series by Güller of Hüttikon; these cancels are explained on page 26 of the Newsletter in April 2000). His cover is dated 24 V 66, a couple of weeks earlier than mine, but with no confirming arrival stamp on the rear. Can I accept that this date is correct?

Comments to the Editor please.

