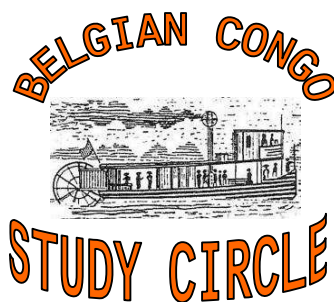


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BULLETIN 149

December 2008

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Our website address

www.belgian-congo-study-circle.be

Saturday 14th March 2009 - General Meeting and A.G.M.

at

*Hotel ERASME,
Route de Lennik 790 Lenniksebaan
B-1070 Bruxelles*

Telephone: +32 (2) 523 62 82

Fax: +32 (2) 523 62 83

0900 - Tea and Coffee will be served

0930 - AGM

10.30 approximately – Members presentations and displays

12.30 approximately - lunch in the hotel dining room

1400 approximately – Members presentations and displays

1600 - Close

*This popular and convenient venue offers accommodation at attractive rates. The hotel is 300 metres from the **1B Erasme/Erasmus Metro terminus** - a short rail link into the city.*

Any member wishing to reserve accommodation should contact the Hotel direct and state their attendance at the Study Circle's meeting.



MonacoPhil 2009

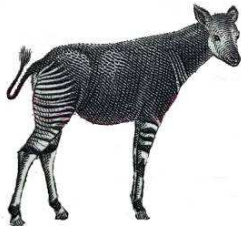
4th – 6th December 2009

Belgian Rarities Exhibited at Monacophil 2009

As part of the international exhibition 'MonacoPhil 2009' and in conjunction with the traditional exhibition of '100 timbres et documents philatéliques parmi les plus rares du Monde' (100 of the world's rarest stamps and philatelic documents).

This event, being held in the Principality from 4th to 6th December 2009, will also witness the publication of a fully illustrated anthology written in several languages. This work, a veritable touchstone for this theme, will highlight Belgium's best material in terms of historical interest, rarity and quality.

From the Editor



The Bulletin and Auctions – *from 4 to 3.*

The ‘work load’ undertaken by both the editor and auctioneer in preparing the Circle’s Bulletins and Auctions, is very demanding of time. We are both very happy to continue in our respective roles but have decided to propose to the next A.G.M. that the frequency of each should be reduced from 4 a year to 3 a year.

In doing so, it is not our intention to reduce the overall volume. Providing the incoming material available to us remains the same, then members can expect no diminution in content, just a reduction in frequency from one every three months to one every four.

Philippe and I will formalise our proposal at the A.G.M. so that the membership fully understands the position and in anticipation that it will be accepted as necessary. Of course, if there are any volunteers out there who feel able to take on our contribution and continue to produce 4 of each, then it goes without saying that we will gracefully retire.

Stuart Smith and Philippe Lindekens

Index 1951-2008

It is my intention to publish an update of the ‘**Index**’, the last of which was compiled by me and Norman Clowes, just before his death. It was Norman who undertook the original ‘*by hand with a typewriter*’ task. When I started to enter all the material onto my computer records, we didn’t know then that Norman was seriously ill and would no longer be able to continue to assist.

The ‘Index’ was last made available in 2004 and covered all bulletins published by the Study Circle since first issued in 1951 up to and including #133. The next should be completed in January and will include cross references to all bulletins including this.

Those who presently receive the Bulletin, etc. by e-mail will automatically receive it, but those requiring hard copy will probably be asked for a nominal contribution to cover the cost of materials and postage. A decision has to be made and you will be kept informed.

British ‘Packet’ in circulation

I am pleased to be able to confirm that a ‘Packet’ is presently in circulation to all those British members believed to have indicated their wish to receive it.

Any queries should be addressed to the Packet Secretary, Hal Hoyte. Contact details on page 22.

Membership News

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our three new members. **Philippe Kridelka** joins the ever increasing band of Belgian members and as a local, perhaps we will have an opportunity of meeting him at to our March meeting in Bruxelles.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Button, who prefers to be called ‘Minou’, was born in Buta and along with her husband, Professor Bryan Button is relatively new to ‘Congo’ philately, though both are already members of the Belgian Study Circle.

Finally we welcome **Mrs Joan Soriano**, who I believe is our first resident member in Zimbabwe. She has been a member of the Rhodesian Study Circle for several years and now joins us.

When she first became a member, we exchanged emails frequently, but that line of communication is presently quiet and hopefully is not a sign of problems for her.

- Belgium** - **Ph. Kridelka;** *Delegation Belge Unesco – via Affaires Etrangères
Rue des Petits Carmes, 15. 1000 Bruxelles*
e-mail: Not known
- U.K.** - **Anne-Marie V.C.C. Button-De Groot;**
Silver Birches, 8 Endsleigh Gardens, Edwalton, Nottingham. NG12 4BQ
e-mail: bryanandminou.button@ntlworld.com
- Zimbabwe** - **Joan Soriano;** e-mail: jsoriano@barkersogilvy.co.zw

Competition successes and Congratulations

Congratulations again to our young Danish member **Johan Jantzen**, who was the ‘World Champion of Youth Philately’ at Belgica 2006 and in his first competition in the senior ranks, received 82% in the ‘WIPA 08’ FEPA exhibition in Vienna last September.

Corrections and ‘Updates’

Bulletin #148 – ‘A Postal History of Slavery at the Congo coast’

Figure 10, cover 5 Letter written by Officer Seymour on board the H.M.S. Crowler. Patrick Ellis also draws attention to the fact that “*there never was a ship of this name in the Royal Navy. The correct name is H.M.S. Growler*”

Bulletin #148 – ‘World War II, Foreign Censor Marks – Addenda’

Following publication in our last Bulletin, I have received a letter from Graham Mark, Editor of the CCGS - ‘Civil Censorship Study Group’, from which the following extracts are of note.

Nigeria, cover 7

The ‘L over B’ triangle is known to have been in use between March and August 1942.

Southern Rhodesia, cover 8

The ‘Triangle censor 3’ mark is the earliest date so far recorded.

Trinidad, cover 10. U.S.A.!

The RETURN TO SENDER / SERVICE SUSPENDED mark was applied in the U.S.A. The label at the left side was applied in the U.S.A. and confirms that the letter got as far as New York.

British Military censorship, cover 12

POW and Internee mail should have been ‘free of postage’ for surface mail, but it was usual to pay for airmail – so the 8 francs of postage stamps was to cover that cost.

The British circular censorship stamp with number 2497 was applied in Bonn.

The number on the British censorship tape no longer had any relevance as it was then old stock being used up.

China, cover 15. BURMA!

The green triangular censor mark was applied in Burma, either in Lashio or Rangoon. On this occasion it is thought to be most likely, Rangoon.

French Colonial Censorship stations

Page 20 lines 5 and 9.

Correction: references to ‘French East Africa’ should read ‘French Equatorial Africa’.

Cover 16

This cover is described by Graham Mark as a puzzle. He states “*one would expect an item ‘Returned to sender’ from South Africa to travel by sea and not go near Elisabethville.*

Addresses such as ‘F145’ were used quite extensively in London for servicemen, especially for parties or whole divisions about to depart for overseas service.”

Additionally and very helpfully, Patrick Ellis has been able to clarify the person’s most likely name. The writing was not easy to read and it has now been suggested that ‘Mr. Fangag’ (apparently a new and fictitious name concoction) was indeed more likely to be a French man called ‘Tanguy’.

A Postal History of Slavery at the Congo coast

By – Patrick Maselis

Part 3

5. Letters written to members of British ‘Anti-slavery Patrols.’

In addition to the letter previously referred to from Dr. Burke, we know of two covers sent from Dublin to Dr. Burke, aboard H.M.S. Jaseur.

Figure 15, *Covers 10 and 11*
– *Dublin to H.M.S. Jaseur, West Coast of Africa.*

The first letter was posted 9th October 1868 and the second 9th March 1869.

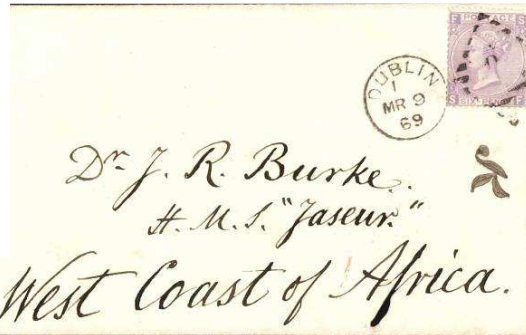
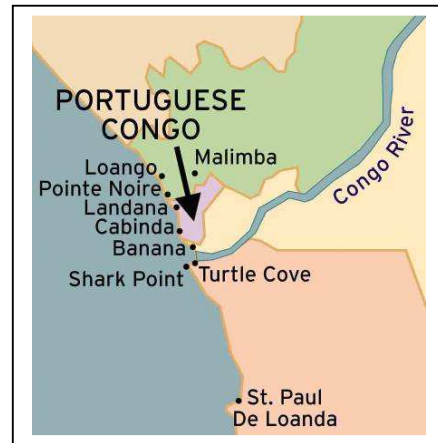


Figure 15

Both bear a British 6^d stamp (6 pence and the rate for letters to West Africa), and is each tied by the Dublin duplex numeral canceller. The second cover has a Liverpool 10 March 1869 transit stamp on the reverse side. All covers from the crews of *British anti-slavery patrols* were forwarded to Freetown in Sierra Leone, where the local headquarters of the ‘Royal Anti-Slavery Patrol’ was established. At Freetown, the whereabouts of all Naval ships were known and letters were dispatched to the addressees by all possible means (other naval and merchant ships, etc). This explains why a cover with an apparently impossible address - ‘West Coast of Africa’ - could get quite easily, to the intended recipient.

6. Letters written by participants of ‘American anti-slavery patrols’ in the Congo area

We know of three covers (covers 12, 13 and 14) and all are very interesting.

Figure 16, *Cover 12 and contents.* Dated 7th and 14th January 1858.

– *Written at sea between ‘Congo and Cape Verde’*
and subsequently re-posted in New York.

What seems, at first sight, to be a domestic and internal American cover from New York City to Boston, did in fact originate from the Congo. It was written on board the USS Dale, an ‘Anti-slavery patrol ship’ on its way from the Congo to the Cape Verde Islands.

The contents tell us that the letter was to be left behind in Port Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, to be forwarded to the U.S.A. on the first available ship. Apparently, the person to whom it was entrusted in Port Praia, didn't take care of it. He waited for 7 or 8 months before giving it to a passenger of a ship bound for America.

U.S. Ship, Dale January
 at sea 7th 1858
 My dear James, Lat 14° 50' or Long 21° 40' W
 after a cruise of nearly
 four and one half months upon the
 coast of Africa, we are now located
 within about one hundred miles, from
 Porto Praya Cape de Verde Islands, during
 our cruise, we have been along the African
 coast from Cape Palmas at the
 mouth of the river of Benue, through
 the Gulf of Benue, touching at every place
 hauling every sail we went
 out for slaves; after searching
 the coast to Princes Island which
 lies upon the Equator in about 8°
 latitude, here we watered, and
 which it abounds in tropical fruit
 very warm, we went as far south
 to the latitude of St. Paul de Loude
 on our return north we went in to the
 large African river the Congo, which



Figure 16

That messenger dropped it into a mail box in New York City where it was presumed to be an American domestic item and received the circular New York 10cts stamp of origin instead of a ship mark.

At that time the letter rate for Boston was 3 cents single rate and 6 cents double rate. For unpaid letters, the tariff was 5 and 10 cents respectively. This letter weighed between 1/2 and 1 ounce, and was therefore taxed at 10 cents.

Figure 17, Cover 13 and contents, dated 24th March 1885

Letter from the 'Congo River'.

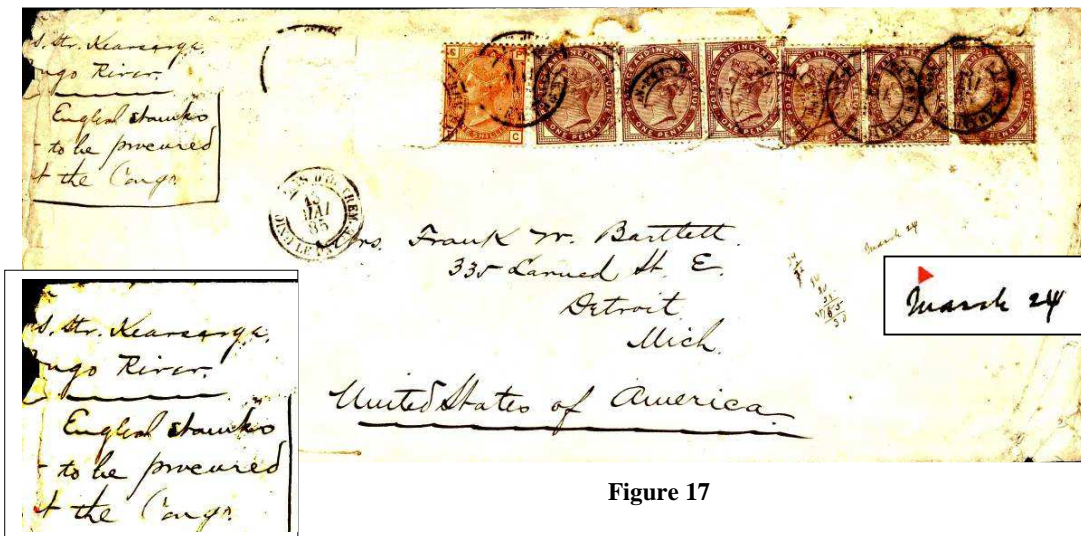


Figure 17

This cover was the subject of a previous article by Walter Deijnckens that appeared in Bulletin #133, p.11.

The content of this item of correspondence was probably written on 24th March 1885, because this date has been minutely noted on the front of the cover. It was written by a crew member of the “USS Kearsage” and the British stamps would have been procured at the ‘Congo’. (See handwritten notes in the upper left corner.)



S.S. Kearsage

The letter was franked with British stamps and two are missing. From the many folds on the edges, we know it must have been a heavy letter and therefore think that the two missing stamps were of 6^d (6 pence) each, so that the letter was initially franked with 30^d = 2/6^d (the UPU rate for a letter weighing up to 120g from West Africa to the USA).

The rate can be explained as follows: *for each 15g the UPU rate was 25c plus 50% (for maritime letters carried over 300 miles) = 37.5 cents or 3.75 pence. A letter of 120g (8x15g) had to be franked with 8x3.75 pence = 30^d.*

Because British stamps were used, we are sure the letter was entrusted to a British vessel that on its way to Britain, called in Le Havre. At Le Havre the postage stamps were tied by the stamp ‘UNION-PAYS D’OUTREMER/12/MAI/85/LE HAVRE’. This was used to cancel any postage stamps on incoming maritime mail. From Le Havre the letter continued its journey on board the ‘Normandie’, belonging to ‘Cie Générale Transatlantique’. It passed through New York (transit stamp on the back: “NEW YORK/PAID ALL”) and reached Detroit end of May 1885.

This letter took 2 months to get to its destination. If the author had kept the letter on board the ‘Kearsage’ and mailed it from the next port where the ‘Kearsage’ called, namely Porto Praia in Cabo Verde (Cape Verde Islands), it would have been in transit only one month. We know this because one letter that travelled on the ‘Kearsage’ to Port Praia, has survived. It reached its destination in the USA merely 35 days after it was written in Banana (Refer to the next cover).

Figure 18, Cover 14 and letter dated 2nd May 1885

Letter from ‘Banana Point’ to the U.S.A.

This cover was sent from Banana Point to the USA. It bears a 100 reis Cabo Verde (Cape Verde) stamp cancelled 21 May 1885 with the date stamp ‘Correios de Sao Vincente – Cabo Verde’. For letters up to 15g, 100 reis was the UPU-rate from Cape Verde to the USA; the country joined the UPU on 1st July 1877.

On the reverse are transit marks of London 30 May 1885, New York 8 June 1885 and arrival at Erie, 9 June 1885.



Figure 18

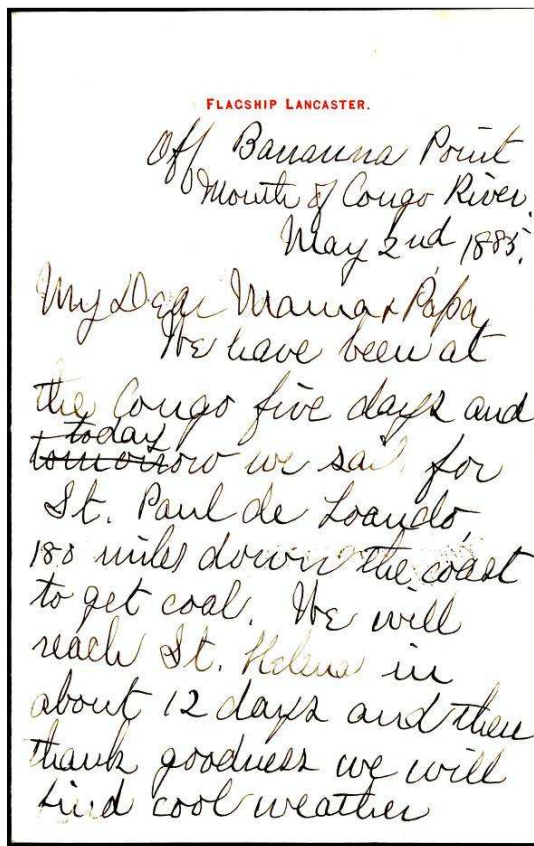
At first glance one would think this is a Cape Verde Islands cover - however, it isn't!

From the contents we know the letter was written on 2nd May 1885 by a member of an American 'Anti-slavery Patrol' "Off *Banana Point*" more than 2000 miles away from Cape Verde. The author says he "would hand it over to a member of the crew of the USS Kearsage sailing north in one hour".

In turn, the crew member of the Kearsage posted it at Sao Vincente, Cape Verde, the first post office he arrived at - only 2000 miles down the road !

The Kearsage is the very ship on which the author of the preceding letter was a crew member. He, along with other soldiers and officers were apparently ignorant of how their mail could get most speedily to the USA.

Had the previous correspondent kept his letter on board and mailed it on arrival in Cape Verde - rather than handing it over to the British ship - that letter would have reached the USA at the same time as this one, some 4 weeks earlier.



7. Letters written to crew of American 'Anti-slavery patrols'

All covers known were sent to Angola, either to the capital city St. Paul de Loanda or to the second biggest port, Benguela. To restock (*coal, food, etc*) the American warships had to go to 'friendly waters'. Portugal had always been a close ally of the USA during the 19th century and that was the reason why all 'anti-slavery patrol ships' active in the region went to *Portuguese* Angola for replenishment. It is therefore no wonder that all mail to crew members of US navy ships was addressed to Angola. It is even possible that there may have been a US Navy office in that country.

We know of three covers from America to crew aboard 'US Navy' ships in Angola. The first was a letter from Salem

Figure 19

Cover 15 and letter dated 11th March 1856.

According to the text this correspondence was carried from the USA by a messenger, Captain Gabbage, to Benguela an important port in the south of Angola. Since the letter travelled privately, it doesn't bear any postal marks and therefore we are unable to confirm when it arrived in Angola.

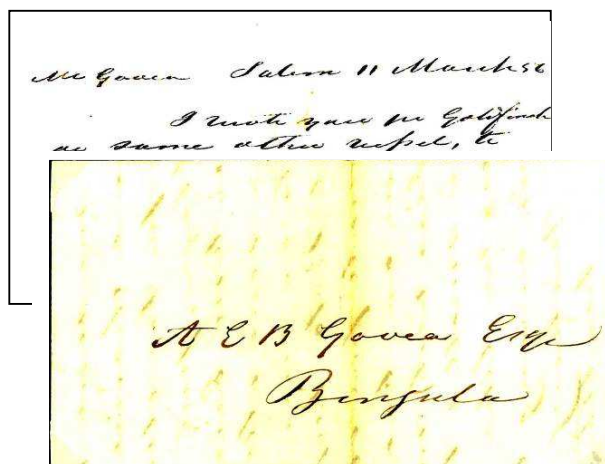


Figure 18

Figure 20, Cover 16 from Augusta, Georgia to St. Paul de Loanda, Angola dated 19th January 1861.

This is the second cover referred to in this category and was sent from Augusta, USA, to a crew member of the USS Mohican in St. Paul de Loanda, Angola. It was franked 33 cents made up with 3 x 10 cents and 1x 3 cents stamps - each cancelled by the Augusta mark. It also carries the receiving office mark - AUGUSTA/JAN19/ME.

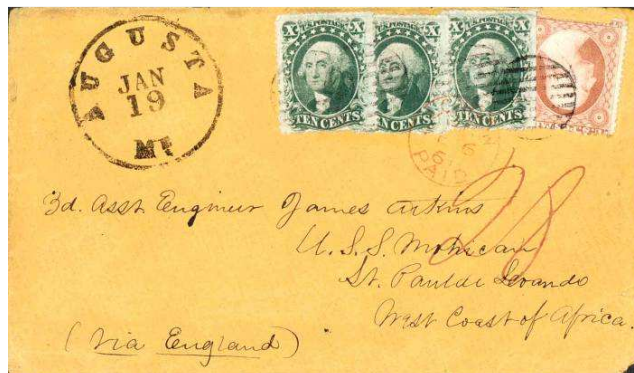


Figure 20

The letter travelled via New York where a manuscript 28 in red ink was applied. This indicated the amount due for its overseas journey: - 24 cents by sea from the USA to England and an additional 4cents for forwarding to an overseas destination beyond Britain. The remaining 5 cents was the domestic rate within America. On the reverse of the envelope there is a New York transit mark, January 22, 1861.

The cover travelled with the Cunard line to England, by train to London (transit stamp of February 6, 1861). From there it went to Liverpool and reached Angola on board a ship of the 'African Ship Company'.

Figure 21, Cover 17 from Brunswick to St. Paul de Loanda, Angola dated 19th February 1861.

This cover is very similar to the previous one, differing only in its origin - in this case:
BRUNSWICK/FEB/19/1861/ME and the London transit mark March 4, 1861. The franking and routing are identical to that from Augusta.



Figure 21

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- De Cock, A., *Le Congo Belge et ses Marques Postales*, R-Edition, Antwerp, Belgium, 1986, 217p.
- Du Four, J., *Cinquante ans d'histoire postale*, Editions de la Revue Postale, Farcennes, Belgium, 1962, 507p.
- Gudenkauf, G., Abbé, *Personal communication*, Brussels, Belgium, 2005
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- Maselis, P., *From the Azores to New Zealand*, Roularta, Roeselare, Belgium, 419p.
- Torres, A., *Personal communication*, London, 2005
- Van Der Linden, J., *Personal communication*, Baelen, Belgium, 2008

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following auction house and collectors for permission to use their covers in this article:

- Dr. Paolo Bianchi, Milano, Italy
- Siegel Auctions
- Mr. Dany Swart, Sandton, South Africa
- Mr. James Van der Linden, Baelen, Belgium

U.S.A. to the Congo Clipper Flying Boat Service - the postal connection, 1941-1946

By - Walter Deijnckens and Stuart Smith

Two separate articles about the Trans-Atlantic Clipper flying boats have been published. These were in the October 2008 editions of the 'Airpost Journal' and 'Cameo'.

That in the 'Airpost Journal', written by Bob Wilcsek and John Wilson, is an in depth study and report of a 'Special Group's' findings on the FAM 22 Clipper Flying Boat service from U.S.A. to Africa which remained operational for less than a year.

In addition to its other functions, FAM 22 provided a postal link to the African west coast. The first flight started in New York on 6th December 1941 and returned on 12th December 1941. It was directed from New York to Miami, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Port of Spain (Trinidad), Belem, Natal (Brazil), -Bathurst (Gambia), Lagos (Nigeria) and then on to Leopoldville.

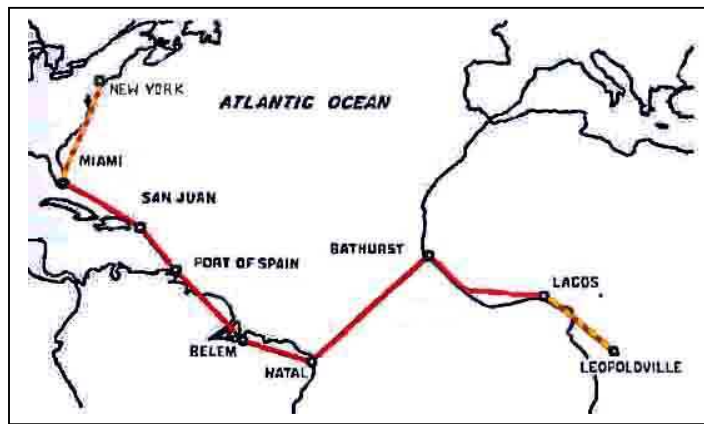
Until November 1942 the service was made once a fortnight and from 7th February 1942, Bathurst was replaced by Fisherman's Lake (Liberia) for militarily strategic reasons. Mail from Africa was censored in Trinidad but the service ceased during mid November 1942.



Commercial mail – 'First return passage'

Of particular interest to us, the authors declare *“that the view of FAM 22 as a traditional air route to Africa is simply wrong. Only on the rarest occasion did a Boeing 314 depart Miami for a through flight to Africa and even rarer was a continuation on to Leopoldville.”*

Whilst the airport in Leopoldville provided the Belgian Congo link, Lagos was the hub for connections to the Clipper operating FAM 22 and indeed mail from the Congo was flown to Lagos by BOAC 'C' Class flying boats twice a week. However from mid November 1942 the FAM 22 service to Miami ceased, and with it censorship in Trinidad.



FAM 22 route

Wilcsek and Wilson tell us “that by the end of 1942, the only trans-Atlantic route was FAM 18”, which operated in both directions out of Lisbon. Dependant on whether it was summer or the winter schedule, flights used either what are commonly referred to as the ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ routes. It is not my intention to quote from or report further details that this excellent investigative article provides, but it is to be commended as ‘significant and important’.

In addition to John Wilson’s contribution as joint author to the article referred to above, he has at the same time produced a complementary article appearing in ‘Cameo’. Here, there is some more *Congo specific* information.

He believes there is evidence that Pan American Airways flights were probably replaced by BOAC Boeing Clippers in November and December 1942 and refers to 5 Leopoldville to New York covers from that period of which 4 bear Bermuda censor labels and ‘I.C. marks. It is also relevant that as from 26th October, Sabena started a once weekly flight service from Leopoldville to Lagos and any mail addressed to New York (U.S.A.) would then have been conveyed from Lagos to join “the only air mail route running to America – the FAM 18 winter service”. Mail carried on this route would have been censored in Bermuda, rather than in Trinidad.

As previously and still so in November and December, BOAC was not only flying to Lagos on the ‘West Africa service’ but was also crossing the Atlantic to Baltimore via Trinidad and Bermuda ^[1] using 3 Boeing 314’s it had bought from Pan Am. For practical purposes mail would now have been censored at the latter.

It may be very difficult to differentiate which airline carried what. However, to see if we can contribute to the evidence it would be helpful if members provided details of covers from or via Leopoldville during the remainder of 1942 and early 1943.

Our recently reported study of foreign censor marks and labels on Belgian Congo mail during the period 1941-1945 ^[2] has provided us with a broad overview of the routes taken.

1941 – 1942 Of the 25 covers seen, 23 had been censored in Trinidad. Records of the ‘Pan Am South Atlantic Chronology 1941-1944’ indicate stops/transfers in Leopoldville and Lagos (Nigeria) until mid-November 1942, which is in accord with all the covers on file. However Wilcsek and Wilson’s observation and very legitimate comment that “FAM 22 rarely continued on to Leopoldville” does call into question our previous understanding of the service.

Unfortunately until now, we had not studied in any detail any covers immediately following the cessation of FAM 22, that is during the period November – December 1942 and therefore no means of determining if BOAC took over the mail from Pan American Airways.



Illustrate above is the one cover known to us which only confirms that it had been censored in Bermuda – whether using the FAM 18 or BOAC cross Atlantic route is not clear.

However, whilst it received the Leopoldville transit mark ‘10.11.42’, 10th November 1942 and a New York December arrival mark, it doesn’t answer the question ‘which specific route did it take’ - albeit it must have been one or the other. From the information Wilson had obtained ^[1] the letter may have been carried on the BOAC West Africa service and transferred to FAM 18 at either Fisherman’s Creek or Lisbon, on the southern route. Alternatively according to Wilson, “*The only other aircraft flying the Atlantic crossing in this period were the three Boeing 314’s of BOAC and from BOAC records ^[1] he established that BOAC’s ‘Bangor’ was in Lagos 22nd to 26th November, then flying to Baltimore via Trinidad and Bermuda.*” Despite calling in Trinidad, Wilson accounts for why this correspondence was censored in Bermuda rather than Trinidad.

1943 From our records ^[2] for the year 1943, of the 18 covers recorded 6 were censored in Bermuda and 3 in Lagos Nigeria. The remaining 9 had only foreign censor labels from the US. Although the Pan American flight records show no stop in Nigeria, we presume that mail was taken there by Sabena and flown by Pan American on the northern route to the USA.

1944 In total we only have 6 covers recorded for 1944. One was censored in Lagos, Nigeria. The others show only American censor labels. The Pan American flight information states that the south Atlantic route to Leopoldville via Miami was reopened on the 13 of September 1944.

In summary –
 FAM 22 flights to and from
 the U.S.A. operated from
 December 1941 until
 November 1942, and almost
 all mail carried on it, show
 Trinidad censorship. There
 appears to be no evidence, that
 the flight itself used
 Leopoldville as a pick up
 point.

During the second half of
 November 1942 until
 September 1944, mail
 addressed to U.S.A. was
 carried to Lagos for onward
 connection to FAM 18 by
 either Sabena or BOAC and
 usually censored in Bermuda.



Leopoldville → Brazil 'via P.A.A.' March 1942



Registered, Leopoldville → New York. Aug. 1944
 Censored in the Congo and on arrival in N.Y.



Leopoldville → New York. Sept. 1942
 Censored only in 'CONGO BELGE'

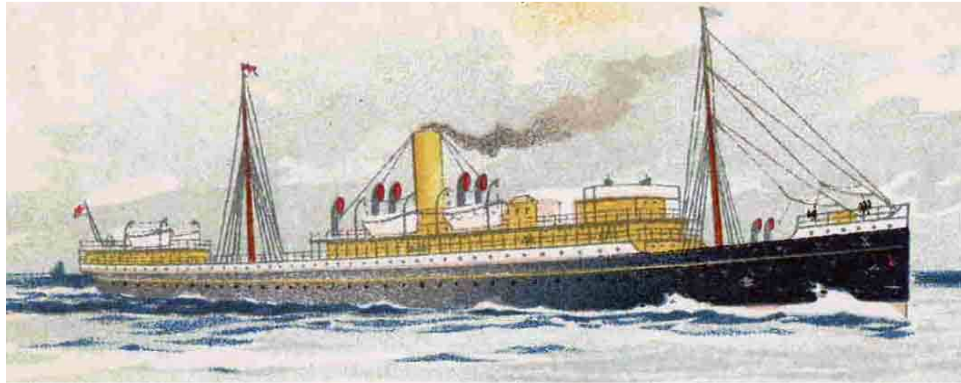
We thank Jozef Deruyck and Alan Morvay for drawing our attention to the two articles reviewed.

1. Data from B.O.A.C. movement records files was extracted by permission of the British Airways Museum who retain the copyright.
2. Deijnckens *B.C.S.C. Bulletin* 143

A History of the Antwerp – Congo Mail-boat Service

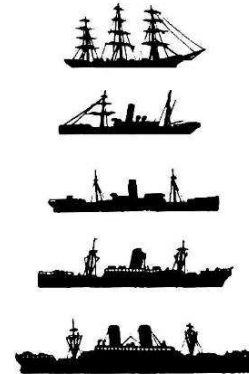
By – Charles Stockmans and Roger Gallant

Part 1. 1880-1914



Preface

We acknowledge and thank the authors for permission to reprint the content of their previous publication which set out to present the historical background of the foundation and establishment of maritime links between Belgium and the Belgian Congo. In the absence of little historically detailed information, it is not easy to determine the mix or type of traffic - some ships carrying passengers and freight and others freight only. Furthermore, none of that early documentation gave any clear indication of which ships carried mail and we are indebted to Abbé Gudenkauf who was instrumental in assembling, interpreting and recording this late 19th and early 20th century activity.^[1]



Historical background

In about 1880, at a time when exploration of the Congo was being undertaken, a few Liverpool registered British ships were already plying the southern parts of the African coast. These called intermittently and unpredictably at Banana on journeys which lasted variously up to two months, due in part to the many calls made along the Guinea to Niger coast.

In due course, European travellers started visiting the Congo on Portuguese ships departing from Lisbon whilst freight was mostly carried by British lines out of Liverpool. Slightly later, both German and Portuguese ships also visited Matadi but it was not until 1886 that departures from Europe became more regular.



Vlaanderen

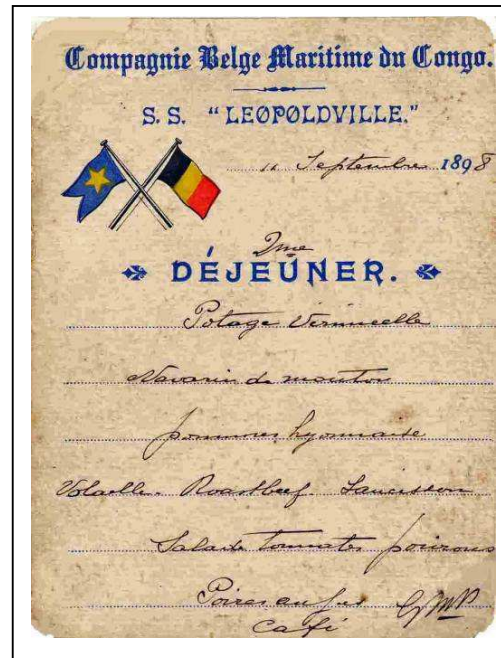
That same year the first Belgian 'Compagnie Gantoise de Navigation' steamer trials took place by the 'Lys', the 'Vlaanderen' and the 'Brabo' – the latter sailing upstream as far as Boma for the first time. ^[1]

This entrepreneurial undertaking did not last long because within two years, and faced by fierce competition from foreign shipping companies, 'Compagnie Gantoise de Navigation' gave up and withdrew its shipping links. Between 1888 and 1894 all traffic between the Congo and Belgium was undertaken either by the Germans out of Hamburg, the British out of Liverpool, the Dutch from Rotterdam or the Portuguese from Lisbon.

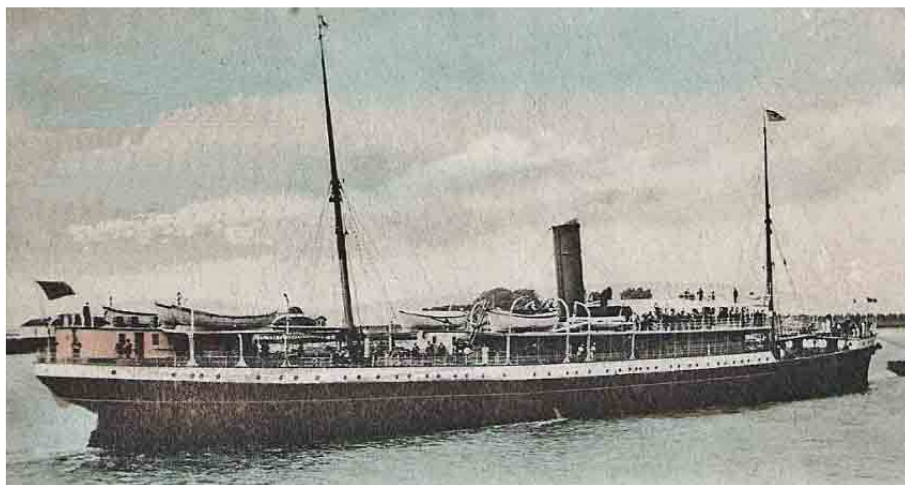
In 1891 an agreement was signed by a Liverpool based syndicate of the 'British and Africa Steam Navigation Company' with the 'African Steam Ship Company' and the 'Woermann Line' of Hamburg. The syndicate undertook to despatch steamers from Antwerp to Matadi on the sixth of each month – completing the outward journey in 25 days at the most and the return in 30 days. This was a considerable improvement and provided a degree of regularity.

Many far-sighted and wise Belgians wanted a shipping transport system to operate under the Belgian national flag. A few years later, as the result of increasing interest in the Congo, a new slightly improved service started with the nearly simultaneous creation of two Belgian shipping lines. These were the 'Société Maritime du Congo', established 20th February 1895 as a subsidiary of the 'Woermann Line', and 'Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo', 24th January 1895 – a subsidiary of the African Steamship Company, managed by Liverpool based Elder Dempster.

Among the founder members of 'Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo' was the ship owner and maritime agent John Picard Best from Antwerp, representing the board of the 'African Steamship Company'. He was appointed manager and 'Agent' of this new company.



Each of the two companies provided ships - 'Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo' the rather old 'Coomassie' and new 'Leopoldville 1'.



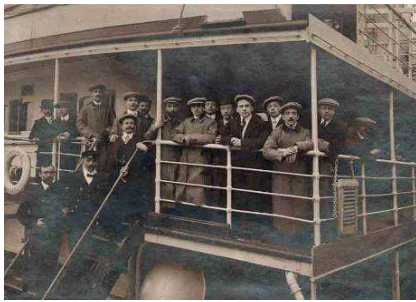
Leopoldville 1

'*Société Maritime du Congo*' initially provided the 'Eduard Bohlen' but this was later replaced by the more modern '*Bruxellesville 1*'.

A monthly service under the Belgian flag was jointly initiated and the 'Leopoldville 1' made her maiden voyage from Antwerp to the Congo on 6th February 1895. It arrived in the Congo just 20 days later. The 'Eduard Bohlen' followed shortly after, leaving Antwerp on 6th March and the Coomassie on 6th April. It was not until 6th May 1898 that the '*Bruxellesville 1*' joined the fleet.



Eduard Bohlen



Aboard Albertville 2



During the following years the frequency of sailings increased slightly due primarily to the establishment of many new Belgo-Congolese trading companies and with them an improvement in dock unloading facilities in the Congo. Against this background the two new shipping companies developed quickly and from 1900 six steamships were operating the route leaving Antwerp on the 1st and 16th of each month. The six steamers were: - Albertville 2, Anversville 1, Bruxellesville 1, Leopoldville 2, Philippeville and Stanleyville 1.

The infrastructure development of the Free State did not progress as rapidly as hoped, in part due to a failure in completing the installation of new port facilities at several locations including Matadi. As a consequence the recently established regular frequency of departures from Antwerp was abandoned. '*Société Maritime du Congo*' withdrew its service from 3rd April 1901 leaving the '*Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo*' to continue alone with its 3 steamers. However, they maintained a regular three week departure service, providing a good degree of passenger comfort in the larger more modern steamers. At the same time the duration of the voyage was reduced to 19 days despite port calls at La Pallice, Tenerife, Dakar, Conarky, Freetown and Boma.



S.S. Philippeville

In 1910, after the Congo Free State became a Belgian colony, a group of Belgian capitalists led by Colonel Thys undertook the nationalisation of the line linking the colony with the new motherland. Driven by a degree of patriotism, Colonel Thys was one of the most active architects of Congo colonisation and by agreement with British maritime companies the '*Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo*', which was only Belgian by name, came under complete Belgian control.

Sitting on the Conseil de l'Agence with J. P. Best, Colonel Thys had been instrumental in founding 'L'Agence maritime Walford' in Antwerp on 24th July 1902 and this explained why the management of the company was entrusted to them on 1st February 1911.

Always wanting to improve this important service, the company decided to reduce the duration of the voyage to 18 days by abandoning stops at Tenerife and Freetown. Meanwhile they ordered two new steamers – the 'Albertville 4 (7,745 T.) which was launched in June 1912 at the Cockerill yard in Hoboken and the 'Anversville 2' (7,694 T.) which was delivered in August 1912 by the Glasgow yard of M.M. Alex. Stephen & Sons Ltd.

The 'Albertville 4', the Anversville 2' and the 'Elisabethville 1' built in 1911 by the Stephen shipyard, made up a group of fast steamers, each with twin propellers. This fleet was completed with the tug 'Colonel Thys'^[2], along with six deep sea and 4 river barges. The purpose of these was to partially unload and lighten the liners before they entered the estuary down river from Boma.

Departures from Antwerp continued at regular three week intervals.



The Tug-boat 'Colonel Thys' transferring workmen at the river estuary

1. Abbe G. Gudenkauf, *Mailboat services from Europe to the Belgian Congo*. Cockerill Series Booklet No. 41
2. Tug 'Colonel Thys'. Built in 1912 at MM Boele et Pot yard at Bolnes, Holland.

To be continued –

Postscript

From Stuart Smith

In addition to the introduction and use of 'Paquebot' marks and postal cancellations, there is an interesting sideline in *manuscript instructions*, directing and/or confirming which ship the writer was on or indeed to which ship the letter should be directed. The following relates to material confined to the period covered in the previous article.

The introduction of illustrated photographs of the earliest ships plying between Europe and the Congo which carried mail, are few and far between. Those that do exist are often inferior in quality, and reproduction can be difficult. However other documentary material is available to us by way of these 'Manuscript' marks.

There has always been widespread interest by members of the Study Circle in material associated with the transportation of mail both to and from the Congo. Having just prepared the previous article for publication and in the light of a recent article about the *S.S. Brabo*, written by Claude Delbeke^[1]. I consider it appropriate to add a little more on the subject.



Mr. Delbeke's discovery of the postal stationery card illustrated above with manuscript *S.S. Brabo* is particularly interesting and at the present time thought to be unique.

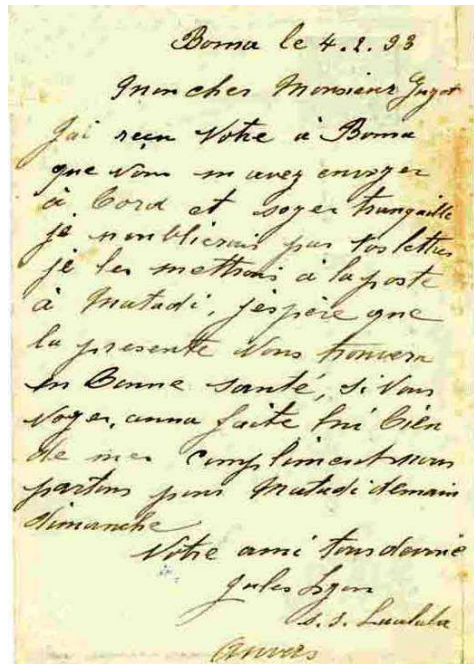
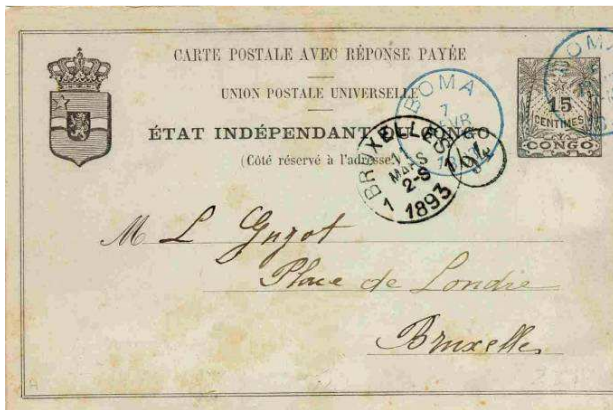
S.S. Brabo

The *S.S. Brabo* was one of three Steamers owned by the Belgian 'Compagnie Gantoise de Navigation' providing an early trial service from Antwerp to the Congo. As stated in the preceding article these started in 1886 but after only two years the company withdrew its service. The *S.S. Brabo* only completed two journeys and the card illustrated was posted in Banana and conveyed on the last of these.

In 'Mail boat Services from Europe to the Belgian Congo'^[2] the departure date from the Congo is recorded as 16th May and the arrival date as unknown, but the evidence provided by this card now confirms departure as no earlier than 26th May and arrival in Anvers on 2nd August – an extensive passage time of approximately 67 days. Journeys were always long and arduous, but thanks to Mr. Delbeke we now know that this one was even further delayed due to a fire on board whilst in Gabon.

S.S. Lualaba

From my own collection, I have three similar manuscript marks, each with its own short story. The first is of the *S.S. Lualaba*^[3] on a postal stationery card written in Boma 4th February 1893 by 'Jules Lyon' on the day after arrival from Antwerp - probably staying on board until she travelled up to Matadi the following day?



On the outward journey, the S.S. Lualuba had left Antwerp on 6th January and docked in Boma on 3rd February 1893.

In this particular case the manuscript annotation simply indicates the writers location address; the card must have been transported to Bruxelles on another ship as the Lualuba did not get back to Antwerp until 26th March.

Addressed to Bruxelles, the postcard went into the normal postal system, was cancelled Boma 7th February and arrived at its destination 32 days later on 11th March 1893.

S. S. Lualaba

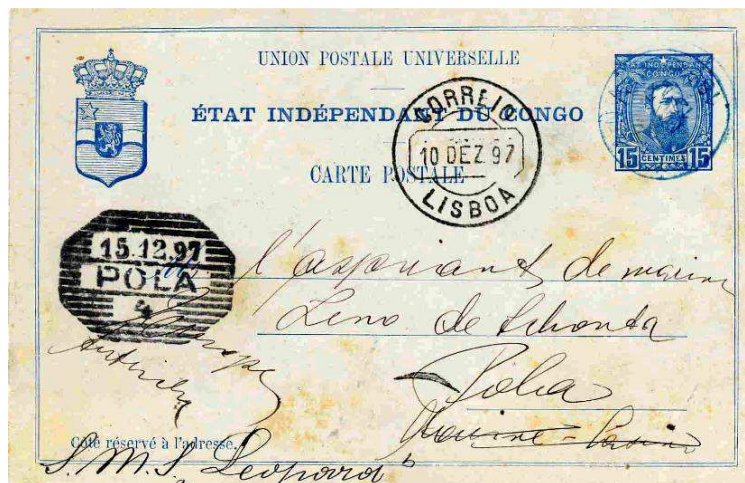


It is worth noting that the S.S. Lualaba was a '2 deck iron screw schooner' and one of the longest serving steamships of its type. It made its maiden 'Elder Dempster' sailing from Antwerp in 1888 and whilst sold on and renamed in 1895, she sailed the seas until 1934 when she went to Spain for demolition. Of particular note, this was the very steamer which some four years earlier, and under the command of Captain John Murray, had made the first and successful exploratory navigation of the river Congo as far as Matadi.

S.S. Leopoldville (2)

Most, if not all of us, use Abbé Gudenkauf's book as a major reference source. My final illustration fills a gap in the schedules provided in both that publication, and also in that available on-line on Charles Stockmans excellent website. According to both sets of records, the following schedule was followed by 'S.S. Leopoldville (2)' about this time..

S.M.S. Leopoldville^b



Depart Boma
6 Oct. 1897

Arrive Anvers
30 October 1897

Depart Anvers
6 January 1898

Arrive Boma
23 January 1898

Question: Was the 'S.S. Leopoldville (2)' lying idle for the 8 weeks period from November to December or was she undergoing maintenance work? 'Bottoms in beds and deckchairs' were vital to the company's finances!"

Answer: No. She was on another journey to the Congo returning and departing from Boma at the end of November (Stamp cancelled 'Banana' either 17 or 27 November 1897). The card received the Lisboa transit mark and was presumably off loaded on arrival there to travel overland to Pola on the Italian Croatian border, where it arrived 15th December.

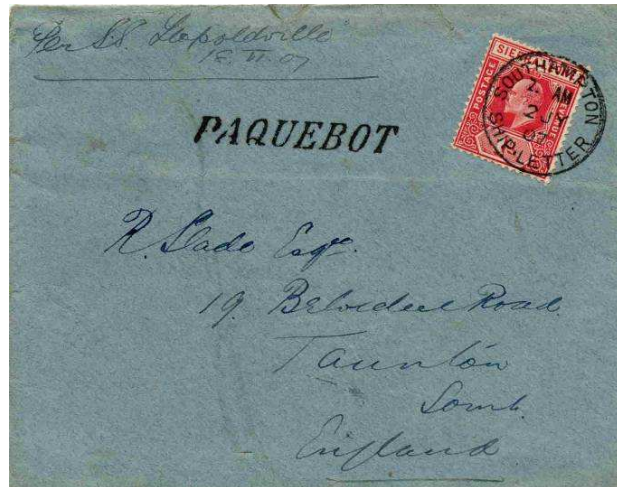
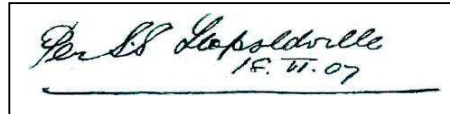
Assuming the S.S. Leopoldville (2) followed a normal schedule, she is anticipated as having arrived back in Antwerp about the 14th December – just in time for Christmas.

It occurs to me that between us, we will have more new information locked away in our collections. In support of the above, will members have a look at what they have and see if we can fill gaps and add to the historical documentation already available to us?

S.S. Leopoldville (3)

There is nothing very special about this cover other than being a nice item and adding a little more information on this topic.

The service from Antwerp to the Congo is known to have many scheduled calling places and Freetown, Sierra Leone was one of them. Perhaps this passenger joined the ship there or perhaps on departure from the Congo. We will never know; but it does appear he was probably British and we certainly know he chose to purchase his postage stamp in Sierra Leone.



We also know from the 2nd July Southampton mark that the S.S. Leopoldville (3) was on a scheduled passage from Matadi to Antwerp, having left on 13th June 1907 ^[2].

However, there appears to be little documentation, recording calls made at the various British 'Channel Ports' - 'en route' by this regular service.

Which was used and when?

As a British collector of Congo related 'Packet' material, it is not surprising there is a natural instinct to collect British cancellations on Congo stamps, confirming arrival and discharge at British ports.



Illustrated is another Southampton mark along with that of Plymouth.

Liverpool, situated on the west coast of England, was very much a terminus and does feature occasionally as both a port of departure and arrival. Illustrated are two examples of cancellations in use at this time.



Alan Morvay has previously made reference to *English Channel Ports of call*^[4] identifying both Southampton and Plymouth. It would be interesting to hear from other members of any ‘Channel Port’ marks in their collection and dates. Those offering postal facilities to visiting ships during this period are: Dover, Falmouth, Folkestone, Plymouth and Southampton.

Please send any information to me as editor and let’s see if we can get a fuller picture of what there is. Hopefully it may be possible to identify which ship the mail had been carried on.



Typically and as a complimentary item bearing a British stamp, the final card illustrated, was written on the first leg of the *S.S. Albertville* (2) final voyage to the Congo. She departed Antwerp on 10th March 1904 calling at Southampton and offloading mail destined back home! Perhaps the writer disembarked here and only used the ship as a ‘crossing the Channel’ convenience?



“ having had a very bad night as the result of a 3 hour storm, little sleep and following with interest the activities of a rat which shared my cabin!”



1. Belgian Postal History. Bulletin No. 64, December 2008
2. Gudenkauf. ‘Mailboat Services from Europe to the Belgian Congo’
3. S.S. Lualaba, built by Cunliffe & Dunlop of Glasgow for the British and African Steam Navigation Co.
4. A. Morvay. ‘B.C.S.C. Bulletin 126, December 2002.’

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