



Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutsche Besetzung im 1. Weltkrieg e.V.



Display to the Royal Philatelic Society London
to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I

15. November 2018

Dedicated to the citizens of all nations, who suffered as a result of the Great War.

1914-1918

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft is delighted to be invited to give a display to the Royal Philatelic Society London. We recognise the significance of the timing and hope that our reaching out to friends in London makes a small contribution towards preventing the recurrence of such a catastrophe in the future.

In the London Philatelist we announced the display as follows:

Thursday 15 November 2018 at 1 pm: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutsche Besetzungen im Ersten Weltkrieg e.V. – Group display.

Members of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft will give a display to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the end of WWI. Members will display their collections of the stamps issued in the occupied territories, postal history and materials dealing with the political effects of the war, including changes in Germany. Occupied areas include the Western Front, the occupations in the East and in Romania, as well as a small section of the very difficult 10th Army occupations of Russia. Particular focus in all these areas will be civilian mails and the restrictions placed on mail passages, censorship and developments during the war.

Individual displays are by:

Patrick Maselis RDP, FRPSL President of the Royal Philatelic Society London

Emmanuel Lebecque

Lars Boettger BPP

Dr. Robin Pizer FRPSL

Dr. Johannes Hoffner BPP

Heinrich Wasels BPP, FRPSL Vorsitzender Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutsche Besetzungen im ersten Weltkrieg e.V.

Germania Stamps in Occupied Belgium during the First World War

Introduction

During the First World War (1914 - 1918) Belgium was divided into three areas:

The "Etappen" area included the supply and re-equipment zones for the troops and was located between the front, the operational area and the General Government of Belgium. It extended mainly over East and West Flanders, including the area under the control of Admiral Schröder's Marine Corps and the districts of Arlon, Bergen (Mons), Doornick (Tournai) and various municipalities of the northern French departments behind the front.

The General Government of Belgium was the area between the Etappen area and Germany. As the Etappe shifted according to the position of the front, the borders of the General Government also changed. This was the case on 1 October 1916, 10 March 1917 and 28 February 1918. The two most significant border changes were on 15 September 1918 and 31 October 1918.

The General Government of Belgium had its own postage stamps. These were Germania stamps with the overprint "Belgien" and values shown as "Centimes" and "Franc". The first stamps appeared on 1 October 1914. The stamps of the General Government were also valid in the 'Etappe' until 15 December 1916. On 01. December 1916 the Etappen zone received their own stamps. These were also Germania stamps, although without the Belgian overprint. As of 15. December 1916, only these stamps were valid in the Etappe.

The overprint processes were the subject of meticulous work. Nevertheless, a handful of curiosities got past the vigilant printing staff. We know of some spectacular curiosities:



*Pair of the 3 Cent. on 3 Pfennig with overprint omitted on the upper stamp.
Cancellation of CHARLEROI on 6.11.18*

There is also a strip of four copies of the same value stamp with only part of the overprint:



For the 10 cents overprint on 10 Pfennig, the same part-missing overprint exists in a vertical strip of three:



Registered letter from Ixelles on 22.5.1918 to Brussels. 25 cents overprint on 20 Pfennig and three 10 cents overprint on 10 Pfennig forming a franking of 55 cents (15 cents for a simple letter, 10 cents for the next weight-step and 25 cents for registration; overfranked by 5 cents probably due to the lack of lower value stamps.

For the 15 cents on 15 Pfennig value the same curiosity exists but looks even more spectacular:

Block of 20 stamps from the edge of the sheet, on two of which there is no overprint at all. Two other adjacent positions have a partial printing defect.



According to expert Georg Bühler, this block is probably unique.

The values in 'francs' also have curiosities in the overprint. The most common is double printing. Once again, the care taken in making the overprints means that there are very few of these listed curiosities.



2Fr. 50 C.' on 2 Mark blue of the issue of March 18, 1915 with double overprint.

From Plate 145, positions 9, 10, 13 and 14.

A Printing Error

A sheet of 20 stamps each with one Mark face value was sold in Charleroi with the overprint *Belgien 2f50 Cent* instead of *Belgien 1f25 Cent*. 13 examples of these stamps are known to have survived, all cancelled in Charleroi on 18 June 1917. In philatelic circles these stamps are known as the *Erreur de Charleroi*.

All stamps of the General Government were printed in Berlin and not in Belgium. According to the State printers, Gemfils, this sheet was the only sheet that was left at the printers. It was sold and used in Charleroi without anyone noticing the mistake. This has been assumed after many years as no other used stamps from another office with the same or a different date have appeared. Likewise, as already mentioned, no unused stamps with this incorrect overprint are known.



Unissued Stamps Overprinted "Flandern" and "Wallonien"

In the summer of 1917, the General Government was divided into two political / administrative areas. As a result, two independent postal administrations were set up on 21. October 1917. Brussels was the main postal center in Flanders, and Namur in Wallonia. Presumably it was planned in Berlin to replace the *Belgien* overprints respectively with *Flandern* and *Wallonien*. Trial printings were made at the end of 1917 and in early 1918.

In the end, this project never came to fruition. So far, we know of two or three sets of these proofs, including those in the Berlin Postal Museum.

"Flandern" overprint



3 Cent.
auf 3 Pf - braun



5 Cent.
auf 5 Pf - grün



8 Cent.
auf 7,5 Pf - orange



10 Cent.
auf 10 Pf - rot



15 Cent.
auf 15 Pf - violett



25 Cent.
auf 20 Pf - blau



40 Cent.
auf 30 Pf - rot



50 Cent.
auf 40 Pf - karmin



75 Cent.
auf 60 Pf - lila



1 F.
auf 80 Pf - rosa



1 F. 25 Cent.
auf 1 M - karmin



2 F. 50 Cent.
auf 2 M - blau



6 F. 25 Cent.
auf 5 M - grün und karmin

“Wallonien” overprint



3 Cent.
auf 3 Pf - braun



5 Cent.
auf 5 Pf - grün



8 Cent.
auf 7,5 Pf - orange



10 Cent.
auf 10 Pf - rot



15 Cent.
auf 15 Pf - violett



25 Cent.
auf 20 Pf - blau



40 Cent.
auf 30 Pf - rot



50 Cent.
auf 40 Pf - karmin



75 Cent.
auf 60 Pf - lila



1 F.
auf 80 Pf - rosa



1 F. 25 Cent.
auf 1 M - karmin



2 F. 50 Cent.
auf 2 M - blau



6 F. 25 Cent.
auf 5 M - grün und karmin

German Etappen Post in the District of Valenciennes, 1914-1918.

WWI was declared between France and Germany on August 3rd, 1914 and Valenciennes was occupied on August 25th. On the 1560 days of war, the Germans stayed in Valenciennes 1530 days until November 2nd, 1918.

This occupation left various postal traces of which the most well-known is the stamp of the Chamber of Commerce of Valenciennes issued on September 7th, 1914.

When trench warfare began, the District of Valenciennes was a very important point in the German order of battle behind the front. This town was successively the seat of several lines of communication inspectorates (Etappeninspektion), postal censor offices (Postüberwachungsstellen) and military administrations such as the Mining Administration (Bergverwaltung) and the Banking Control Agency (Bankaufsichtsstelle) the influence of which exceeded very widely the limits of the District.

In retaliation for the economic blockade led by France and Great Britain, the French occupied territories were more harshly treated by the Germans. The population was de facto held hostage to put pressure on the French Government.

Among other deprivations, private mail was forbidden and administrative and business mail must have had a link with the "German interest", if not it was not authorized. For this reason, the flow of mail was weak. Etappen mail in the occupied French territories is therefore much rarer than the mail circulating in the General Government of Belgium and also in the Etappen area of the 4th German Army in Flanders where postal conditions were better.

This display will show the postal aspects of the German occupation of the French occupied territories during the four years of the WW1.



Letter from the town hall of Sebourg to the mayor of Valenciennes.

At that time, the village of Sebourg was located in the sector of the 6th Bavarian army, while Valenciennes was located in the sector of the 2nd German army.

This letter was censored twice. One time on departure by the postal censor office of the 6th army in Tournai (marks Zulässig 4. Postüberwachungsstelle and Postüberwachungsstelle) and one time on arrival by the civil administration of the 2nd Army (paper seal).

Occupation of Luxemburg 1914 - 1918

While most people are aware that the German Empire declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914 and on France on 3 August 1914, the following incidents are far less known. On 1 August 1914 a small troop of German soldiers destroyed the railway and telegraph lines at the train station of Troisvierges in Luxembourg. On 2 August 1914 the whole Grand Duchy was occupied by German troops. The corps of volunteers, about 250 strong, was no match for the invaders. They surrendered, a sensible thing to do.

During August 1914, the German army used Luxembourg as a transit country for the invasion of Belgium and Northern France. On 30 August 1914, German emperor Wilhelm II. moved the "Großes Hauptquartier" (main army headquarter) to Luxembourg. It stayed there until 25 September 1914. Grand Duchess Marie-Adelaide followed an invitation of the emperor for dinner, which did not sit right with her people after the war. On the other side, how could she have refused?

Technically – in a legal sense – war was never declared on Luxembourg. All the institutions like police or taxes remained under Luxembourg administration. The postal service was never officially closed. But, and that is a big "but", de facto Luxembourg was occupied by German forces. The field post offices of the German army moved with the troops westward, but a German field post office was installed near the train station to serve the so-called "Landsturm" troops – mostly older men in their forties and fifties. Mail to and from Luxembourg was censored by the German foreign censorship office in nearby Trier. But not only mail to foreign countries underwent German censorship, a handful of letters are known where the German military power was monitoring inland letters.

Luckily, the country was never part of a front line. Although there are French and German military cemeteries in the city of Luxembourg, apart from bombing raids of the railway lines and the steel producing industries by allied aircraft, no fighting occurred on Luxembourg soil. Then again, that does not mean that Luxembourgers did not fight. It is estimated that up to 1.500 volunteers served in the French army, among them the first foreign Tour de France winner François Faber. On the other side, the Germans were always eager to introduce every able man in their armies. Men who could not prove that they were of Luxembourg nationality were often pressed into service and in some cases even Luxembourg citizens.

When the war finally ended on 11 November 1918, German troops had to leave France, Belgium and Luxembourg. Some cards and letters tell from their time in Luxembourg: "I am fine, looking forward to see you again". On 21 and 22 November the US and French armies liberated Luxembourg and marched through Luxembourg city. But that was bittersweet for the Grand Duchy – as Luxembourg never declared war on Germany, the allied forces regarded the country more as an ally of the Germans than a potential victim.

Grand-Duchess Marie-Adelaide was forced to abdicate. In a referendum the people choose her sister, Princess Charlotte, as new Grand-Duchess and decided against a republic. American forces remained in the country until August 1919. They also censored mail, but were less restrictive than the Germans. Most of the US field post offices moved with the American troops but two field post offices remained in Luxembourg. One in the city, one in Esch-Sur-Alzette.

The strong ties to Germany were cut after the war. It is said by historians that Luxembourg citizens started to become aware of their nationality after the Great War. There is a grain of truth in that, because when Germany invaded in 1940, the position of government and population was different.



Figure 1: Postcard from Luxemburg rejected as Neufchateau was not admitted to have postal relations with Germany!.



Figure 2: Prisoner of War mail from Russia written by possibly a Luxemburg Citizen in the German Army, referring to Luxemburg as Germany.

German Occupation of Belgium and northern France 1914-1918 postal history

The display is arranged more or less in date order and concentrates on return to sender mail but shows a few other unusual items. Germany invaded Belgium on 4 August 1914 having already declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914 and France on 3 August 1914. The German Post Office issued three notices (Bekanntmachung) which were pinned up in post offices and described the initial postal restrictions.

Notice No. 1 was issued to post offices and dealt with internal mail to western Germany ie mostly west of the Rhine. Some German internal mail postmarked from 28.7.14 was affected by this.

Notice No. 2 had been issued to post offices and dealt with mail to foreign countries but the copy seen is undated. Only unsealed letters written in German were permitted. German mail to foreign countries postmarked from 31.7.14 was effected by this.

Notice No. 3 listed the countries Germany no longer accepted mail for and was dated 2.8.1914 headed by Russia and France in manuscript. Other countries were added later.

Belgium was divided into 4 parts :

- the General Government area in the centre, east and south
- the Rear Area (Etappengebiet) administered by the various German Armies
- the Operations Area (Operationsgebiet), under the control of the German Corps and their Divisions
- A narrow strip of land between the river Yser and the French border including Ypres which remained in Belgian hands throughout the war. The Belgian Government moved to Sainte Adresse in Le Havre.

The postal service for the civilian population differed greatly in these 4 parts. The postal service in occupied northern France was very restricted and similar to the Operations Area in occupied Belgium except in the areas of Maubeuge, Givet and Fumay which were attached to the General Government Area in Belgium for a time.

The first frame deals with the consequences of this in 1914. The second and part of the third frame cover 1915 while the fourth frame completes 1917 and 1918 ending with three unusual examples of mail taken by hand to the Postal Examination Office of the Rear Area Inspectorate of the 4th Army, struck with a 4 line cachet completed in manuscript which allowed the letter to be sealed and to be taken by hand to a named place. Two other unusual items are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

The reasons for returning mail are too numerous to list in this summary but one was returned because the language was not permitted with a note added in manuscript stating that French as the official language was not permitted !



Figure 1 : Unsealed letter with postmark Ambulant 24.9.14 on a train from a Swiss freight forwarding agent at Interlaken, Switzerland addressed to the North German Lloyd Agency in Antwerp. As the route via Germany was blocked, it was sent via France although there is no indication of this. It arrived in Antwerp on 4.10.14. Here it was held for a compulsory 3 days before being released on 7.10.14 for delivery by the Post Office. The two line release cachet is 'Autorisation d'envoi / Commission Juridique d'enquête' which translates to (Authorisation to send / Legal Commission of Inquiry). The North German Lloyd Agency was probably closed by this time as the German staff would have left in early August 1914 so the letter remained at the Post Office. By now the German Forces were closing in and captured Antwerp on 10.10.14. The Germans found the letter and wrote in pencil on it 'Unbedenklich' (harmless).

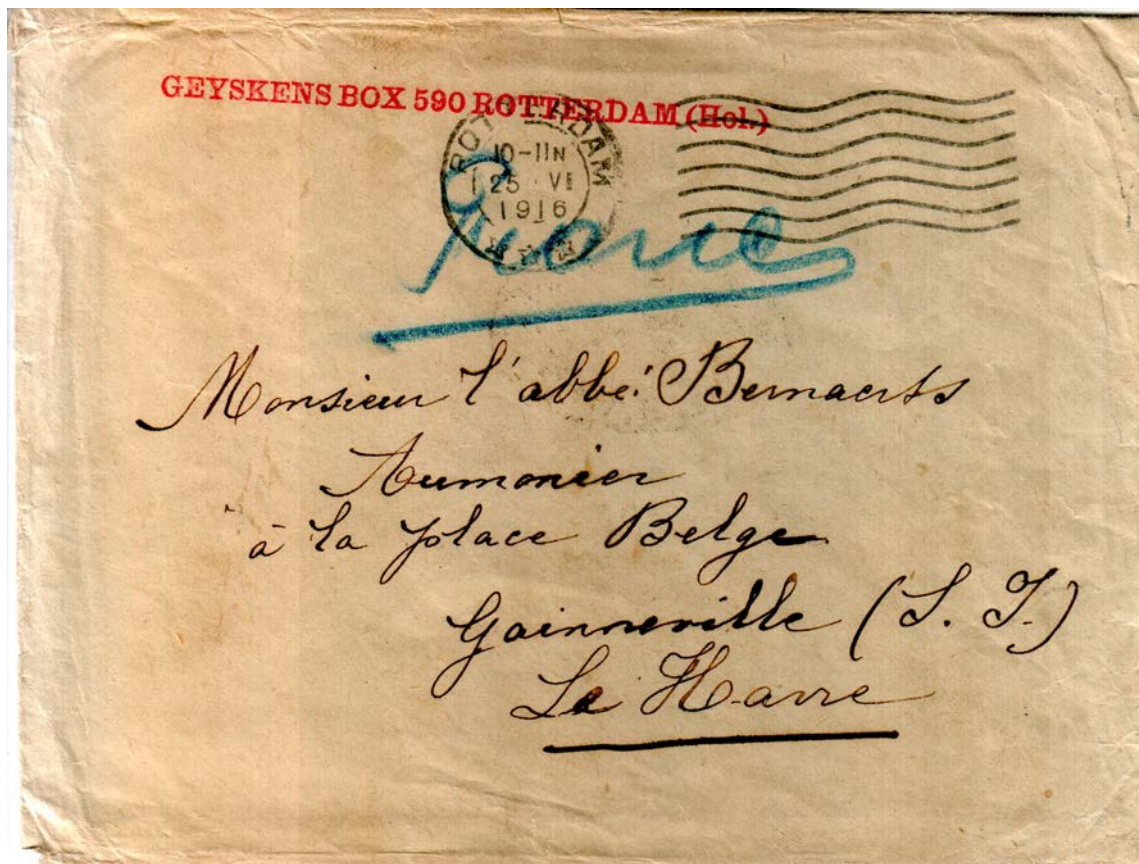


Figure 2: Geyskens Box 590 Rotterdam, the Netherlands was one of a number of companies offering a mail exchange between people living in different countries on opposite sides in the war. The unfranked letter was postmarked 25.6.16 at Rotterdam and went via Dieppe where it was opened and resealed with a standard French censorship label tied by an 'OUVERT Par l'AUTORITÉ MILITAIRE' (*opened by military authority*) cachet that might have the number 24 (Dieppe used numbers 1-50). It was addressed to an abbot acting as a chaplain at 'la place Belge' in Gainneville, France about 12 km east of Le Havre, so probably came from occupied Belgium in a second envelope.

The text of the label translates to :

Mail for all of Belgium and occupied France
GEYSKENS - BOX - 590 - ROTTERDAM (Holl.)

1. Send letter under double envelope.
2. (Leave) the inner envelope unsealed with the address of the correspondent.
3. Seal the outer envelope with my address and stamped at 0.25.
4. Attach 13 international reply coupons or international money order of 1.50 Gulden (4frs.)

For the ungraded military (other ranks) only, the price is reduced to 5 international reply coupons or international money order 50 cent (1fr 50)

1918/19 The End of the German Empire and the Beginning of the Weimar Republic

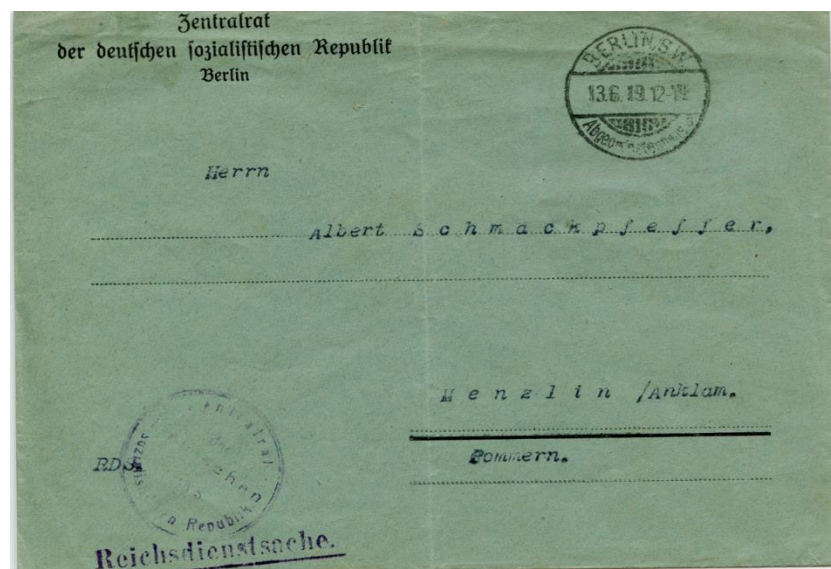
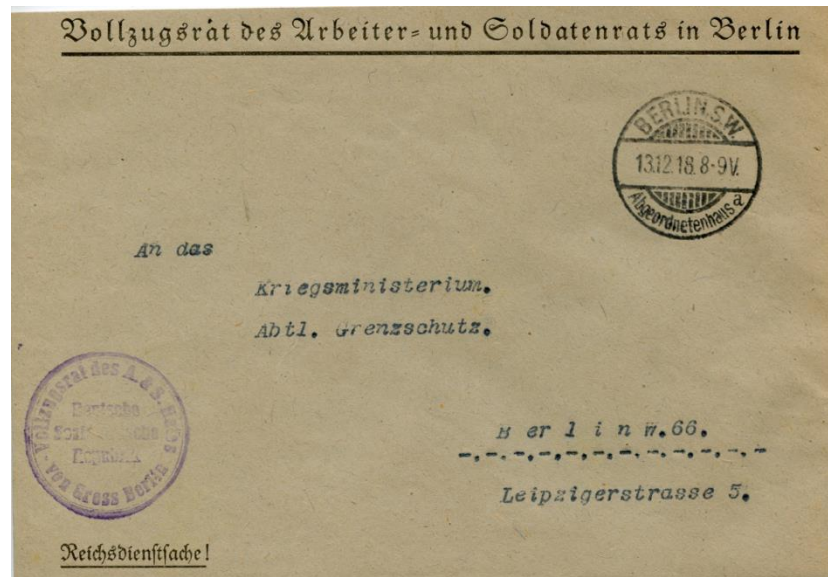
The war of 1914 – 1918 was reckoned as „*the* great seminal catastrophe of this century“. It changed the political landscape of Europe fundamentally. Millions of people were killed, or died due to undernourishment and infectious diseases, three major European empires Germany, Austria and Russia vanished, new national states rose, and disappeared. The survivors suffered from many following wars all over Europe.

With this philatelic collection, I try to illustrate the fundamental changes in Europe using the German Empire as an example: starting with the romanticized end of the 19th century, when Wilhelm II was emperor, followed by the initial success during the war, finally ending with a defeated Imperial German army. The point of culmination was the period of Nov 9th until Nov 11th. The emperor abdicated, the socialist party declared a Soviet republic and co-instantaneously the social democrats declared the free republic. Two days later the civil government signed in Compiègne the armistice of Nov 11th 1918. Perfidiously the military and nobility did not take any responsibility. What followed was a time of civil war, occupation, poverty, and later on high inflation.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed June 6th 1919, and entered into force as from Jan 10th 1920. This treaty was a heavy burden for the new republic. Despite all poor conditions, Germany rapidly developed a representative democracy, freed itself from the stranglehold of the occupational forces and became a member of the newly founded League of Nations.

Revolution

During November 1918 thousands of workers' and soldiers' councils formed all over Germany. In the evening of Nov 10th 3000 delegates met in Berlin. They formed a kind of parliament called "Vollzugsrat des Arbeiter- und Soldatenrats in Berlin". The same evening they installed the Council of the People's Deputies as a transitional government. The Vollzugsrat gave up power to the freely and democratically elected National Assembly on Feb. 13th 1919.



In order to supervise the Council of people Deputies the “Zentralrat der deutschen sozialistischen Republik” was founded by the Vollzugsrat.

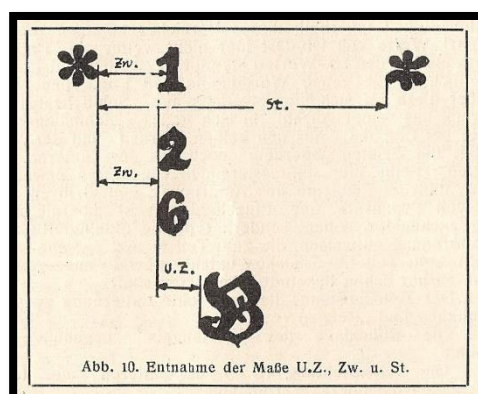
Two very rare covers of both workers’ councils. Both used the postal service free of postage, as the covers were accepted as official mail indicated by “Reichsdienstsache” (Imperial Mail)

The beginnings of modern philately

How it all began; it might be seen as just the collection of an obsessed researcher who measured and recorded everything. But the engineer from Nürnberg was much more than that. Walter Richter set a trend, he methodically analysed the material available to him drew conclusions and published his findings. One of his more important works: Neues von den Deutschen Kriegsmarken is in the Library of the Royal and was presented by Richter himself at WIPA in 1933. Richter displayed his collections competitively and had significant success at international level. His influence on philately as a whole cannot be underestimated. The German State Printers (Reichsdruckerei) had begun around 1904 to introduce internal references to be printed on the margins of stamps. The end of the Great War left significant quantities of mint stamps in complete sheets without postal value from the previously occupied countries. This material reflected the issues of the Reich, therefore the study of the overprinted 'left overs', which were cheap at the time, could be transferred to the un-overprinted stamps. Richter's categorisations of the obvious and some of the not so obvious colour variations were new territory and allowed collectors to look at philately in a different way. His early specialisation was copied by philatelists all over the world.

In 1937 Richter sold his collections through Köhler as he had reached his 60th birthday and the material disappeared. However, he produced a sale catalogue, which conclusively proves that the material shown as my first section were from the original collections of Walter Richter. Today is the first time that a section of his original collections is displayed in over 80 years. It has gone through a number of hands and unfortunately a couple of stamps have been removed. The collection itself is largely intact and the extent of the research is fully reflected. I would like to point out that it is not my intention to beautify myself with someone else's feathers but I consider the collection of such importance to philately as a whole that it simply has to be shown as part of the exhibits on this occasion.

Richter's two copies of the overprint error of the Charleroi have not been seen since. Your President will show one copy from sheet position 19 and I will show another, so you will have the very rare opportunity to see two copies in one display. Below is a brief overview from Richter's publications on how the plating of Mark values is carried out. In this case plate III of the 2 Marks Charleroi plate.



III											
0-0	1-3	0-8	2-3	2-2	1-8	2-5	1-9	22-5	22-5	23-1	22-6
1-0	0-5	1-0	1-2	2-6	2-2	2-2	2-7	23-2	22-5	23-1	23-0
1-5	0-7	1-4	1-3	1-8	2-2	1-9	2-9	22-6	22-8	22-4	23-6
1-5	1-5	1-2	1-3	2-3	2-1	1-8	2-9	22-9	23-0	22-4	23-2
0-9	0-5	0-9	1-2	2-6	2-3	2-2	2-4	22-7	22-5	22-9	22-8
UZ				Zw				St			



Figure 1: The plate reconstruction of the error and the copy from field 5 on show today.

The Charleroi overprint error, so called as it was discovered in Charleroi is one of the better known Germany errors and has been highly prized ever since it was discovered. Richter has made an attempt at plating the errors, but a newly discovered credible copy does appear to struggle with being put into any particular field in the reconstruction according to Richter.

Although the main thrust of my collections is the material from the Western Front much of which was shown at Ypres I endeavour to show mostly other material. The small number of Western items shown illustrate specific points or are hopefully significant enough to warrant my straying.

Other Occupied areas:

Romania



Figure 2: Postsache (Postal Matter) from the time when the Landespost in Romania was being prepared.

Aspects of Romania covered include registered mail, postage due, postmarks and oil letters.

Other areas

The occupation of Russia covers Ober Ost, the areas of Kiew, Charkow and Rostow on Don river and the area of the 10th Army, as well as Russian Poland, where there is a specific focus on Stadtpost.

The Allenstein Plebiscite

The Plebiscite was held mainly at the insistence of David Lloyd George in the southern part of Eastern Prussia. Other Allies wanted to give the area straight to Poland. The Plebiscite was described by contemporaries as somewhat chaotic in the sense that the Polish support of the Abstimmung did not get its act together and lost by a margin (over 97%) that suggested that a Plebiscite was an entirely pointless exercise.

The Allied commission took over on 14. February and left on 12. August 1920. Plebiscite day was on 11. July 1920. This section of the display covers the stamps in issue, varieties such as inverted overprints and postal history as it occurred at the time.



Figure 4: Allenstein Stamps from the specimen collection of a former Portuguese colony in Africa.



Figure 5: Allenstein 3 Mark Michel number 14DD with double overprint.



Figure 6: Allenstein 1 Mark Michel number 24 K with inverted overprint.



Figure 7: Allenstein 3 Mark Michel number 28K also with inverted overprint.



Figure 8: Allenstein 3 Mark Michel number 28DD with double overprint used in Liebenmühl.

Besides the stamps I am dealing with postal rates and Allenstein as a part of the Reich with its postal rates and usages.

