
Castellum



**Luxembourg
Collectors Club**

3304 Plateau Drive
Belmont, CA 94002
U.S.A.

E-mail: lcc@luxcentral.com

Web: <http://www.luxcentral.com/stamps/LCC/>

Gary B. Little, President (gary@luxcentral.com)

Edward H. Jarvis, Secretary-Treasurer (ejsf98@yahoo.com)

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President's Message

by Gary Little

I hope you all had a very enjoyable summer, I certainly did. My highlight was a European vacation which included, of course, a trip to Luxembourg to take in the Juvalux 98 World Philatelic Exhibition held on June 18-21. I wasn't the only one from the LCC who made similar plans—fellow members Ed Jarvis, Jim McGee, Fred Penning, and Bob Danzer were also there. Bob exhibited his "Luxembourg 1645-1900" postal history collection and received a Vermeil award. Congratulations, Bob! I hope you noticed that the last issue of *Castellum* was mailed from the floor of the exhibition on June 18. Don't throw out the envelope—it's a first day cover!



Juvalux 98 souvenir sheet issued on June 18

I met many interesting people at the exhibition, including Jacques Doppée of Brussels, designer of the beautiful Juvalux 98 souvenir sheet as well as three other new Juvalux stamps that depict a town postman from 1880, a pre-philatelic letter from 1590, and a country postman from 1880. I also met Pit Weyer, the designer of several Luxembourg stamps, including the two Europa 1998 stamps honoring Luxembourg National Day (June 23) and Luxembourg Remembrance Day.

Weyer's National Day stamp depicts the fireworks show that takes place above Adolphe Bridge after dusk on the eve of National Day. This was just a day after Juvalux closed, so I decided to stay one more night in Luxembourg so I could witness the celebration. My viewpoint was the Passerelle viaduct only a few hundred meters from Adolphe Bridge. The show was spectacular! My only regret was not seeing the Grand Duke—that remains on my Luxembourg to-do list.

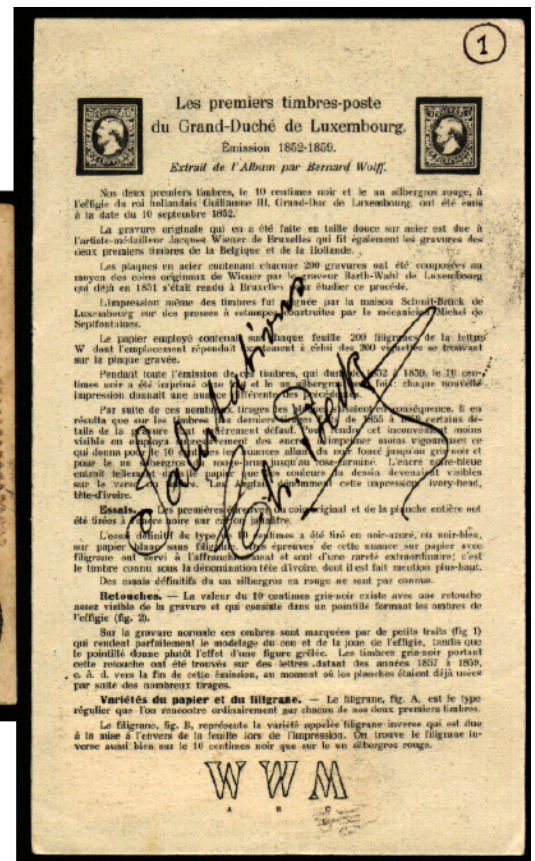
Pioneer Airmail Flights of Luxembourg

by Gary Little

The first airmail flight in Luxembourg was planned as the spectacular closing event for the International Postage Stamp Exhibition held at the Luxembourg Municipal Palace on September 4-8, 1927. This exhibition was organized by the *Union des Timbrophiles de Luxembourg* (UTL) stamp club to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first Luxembourg postage stamps of 1852.

This pioneer flight was made by balloon and was sponsored by *Le Soir*, the daily newspaper of Brussels. The only postal items carried were special cards sold at the exhibition for 1 Franc each. These black-and-white cards, designed by UTL, have a printed cachet resembling a postage stamp as well as a small drawing of the balloon on the front; on the reverse side is a brief extract from UTL President Bernard Wolff's album describing (in French) various aspects of the William III first issue of Luxembourg. All the cards I've seen have been franked with Charlotte profile definitive stamps, not the Grand Duchess Charlotte & Prince Félix commemoratives issued at the exhibition on September 4 (Scott B20-4)—collectors probably did not want to break up a premium set of new stamps to frank the flight card. The stamps on the cards were canceled at the exhibition with a three-line postmark reading "Par Ballon | Exp. Phil. Luxembourg | 8 Sept. 1927".

The balloon lifted off from a square in the nearby Limpertsberg district around 5:00 p.m. on September 8 to much excitement and fanfare. The flight lasted about three hours, ending when the balloon came down, under control, in a field 15 km east of the capital near Roodt-sur-Syre. From here the mail was brought to the Roodt post office where each card received a "Roodt 8.9.27 8-9 S." arrival postmark before being forwarded to the addressee by regular ground delivery.



The front and back of a special card carried on Luxembourg's first airmail flight—the balloon flight of September 8, 1927.

It was not until 1929 that the Luxembourg post office began offering its customers conventional airmail service using winged aircraft. But since Luxembourg had no airfields at this time, the service involved delivering the mail by ground transportation to a neighboring country (France, Belgium, or Germany) where it was forwarded by air to the final destination. The arrangements with these countries required mixed franking on envelopes—Luxembourg stamps, of course, but also stamps of the country actually charged with flying the mail.

On April 10, 1931, Luxembourg issued its first airmail stamps (Scott C2-5), a set of four with a common design—a beautiful engraving showing a biplane flying over the stone railway viaduct of Luxembourg City. Luxembourg still had no airfields, but use of these stamps on envelopes served to remind foreign postal administrations that airmail service was expected. As shown in the illustration below, all airmail covers sent on the first day of use of the stamps have a small green circular cachet reading “Poste Aérienne | Luxembourg | 10 Avril 1931”.



A first day cover for the four Luxembourg airmail stamps issued on April 10, 1931. Notice the small green circular cachet used to highlight the first day of use.

The first airmail flight involving an airplane departing from Luxembourg soil was another philatelic event organized by *Union des Timbrophiles de Luxembourg*. It was held in conjunction with a philatelic exhibition in Echternach on August 14-17, 1932. The flight took place on August 17 and carried special souvenir envelopes to Brussels. These envelopes include a “Première Poste | par Avion | Echternach (Luxbg.) - Bruxelles | 17 Août 1932” printed cachet. The special postmark reads “1^{re} Poste Par Avion | Echternach (Luxbg.) | 17 Août 1932 | Bruxelles” and includes small drawings of an airplane and of the Echternach basilica. The envelopes were prepared by UTL and sold at the philatelic exhibition for 4 Francs each.



A special envelope carried on the Echternach - Brussels flight of August 17, 1932. This was Luxembourg's first airmail flight by airplane.

UTL organized similar special flights in conjunction with philatelic exhibitions held during the summers of 1933 (in Diekirch) and 1934 (in Luxembourg-Hollerich).



A special envelope carried on the Diekirch - Brussels flight of July 16, 1933. This was Luxembourg's third airmail flight.

The Diekirch flight took place on July 16, 1933 and the destination was again Brussels. Special envelopes and cards were carried that include a “III^e Courrier aéropostal | Diekirch-Bruxelles | 16 juillet 1933” printed cachet. (Larger envelopes were also carried, but they are rare.) The special postmark reads “Exposition Philatélique | 16-18 juillet 33 | Diekirch (Luxbg.)”. The envelopes and cards, which sold for 4 Francs each, were franked with the two supplemental values of the biplane airmail stamps that were issued on the previous day (50c, 3Fr; Scott C1, C6).

The Luxembourg-Hollerich flight was on July 23, 1934 and the destination was Troisvierges near the northern tip of the Grand Duchy. The special envelopes that were carried include a “IV^e Courrier aéropostal | Luxembourg-Hollerich - Troisvierges | 22-23 juillet 1934” printed cachet and the special postmark reads “Exposition Philatélique | 22-23 juillet 34 | Luxembourg | 3^{me} Vol Par Avion”. (Note that the postmark refers to this as the third flight *by plane* but the cachet refers to this as the fourth *airmail* flight—both claims are correct because the very first airmail flight was by balloon.) All the envelopes also have a green rectangular rubber stamp marking that reads “Par Avion | Troisvierges | 22 - 23 / 7. 34”.



A special envelope carried on the Luxembourg-Hollerich - Troisvierges flight of July 23, 1934. This was Luxembourg’s fourth airmail flight.

The next special flight of note in the Grand Duchy was a demonstration rocket flight on July 17, 1935 in Clervaux. This remarkable flight was conducted by the prolific rocketeer Karl Roberti and although it did carry mail, it did not do so for any postal authority. The flight was a private enterprise.

The rocket carried many envelopes, each of which had previously been franked with a 10c Intellectuals stamp (Scott B65B) and canceled with a “Visitez | Clervaux | Son Abbaye | Son Château” tourism postmark by the Clervaux post office before being handed back to Roberti. Roberti later affixed two different private labels showing his rocket in flight above Clervaux. (Labels other than the two most common ones illustrated below were used on some envelopes.) He also canceled the labels with a purple marking that includes the following text (in German):

1. Raketenflug
Mit flüssige treibstoffen
(Kohlensäurerakete)
Clerv-Clervaux 17-7-35
R.Kr.1 Luxemburgia

Translation: 1st rocket flight | With liquid propellant | (Carbonic acid rocket).

All the envelopes also bear a blue “Mit Rakete | Par Fusée” (“By Rocket”) label and are signed and numbered by Roberti.

Roberti conducted similar flights in Belgium and The Netherlands in the mid-1930s, but I know nothing else of the career of the man that left us with such fascinating philatelic souvenirs.



An envelope carried on Roberti's rocket flight of July 17, 1935 in Clervaux.

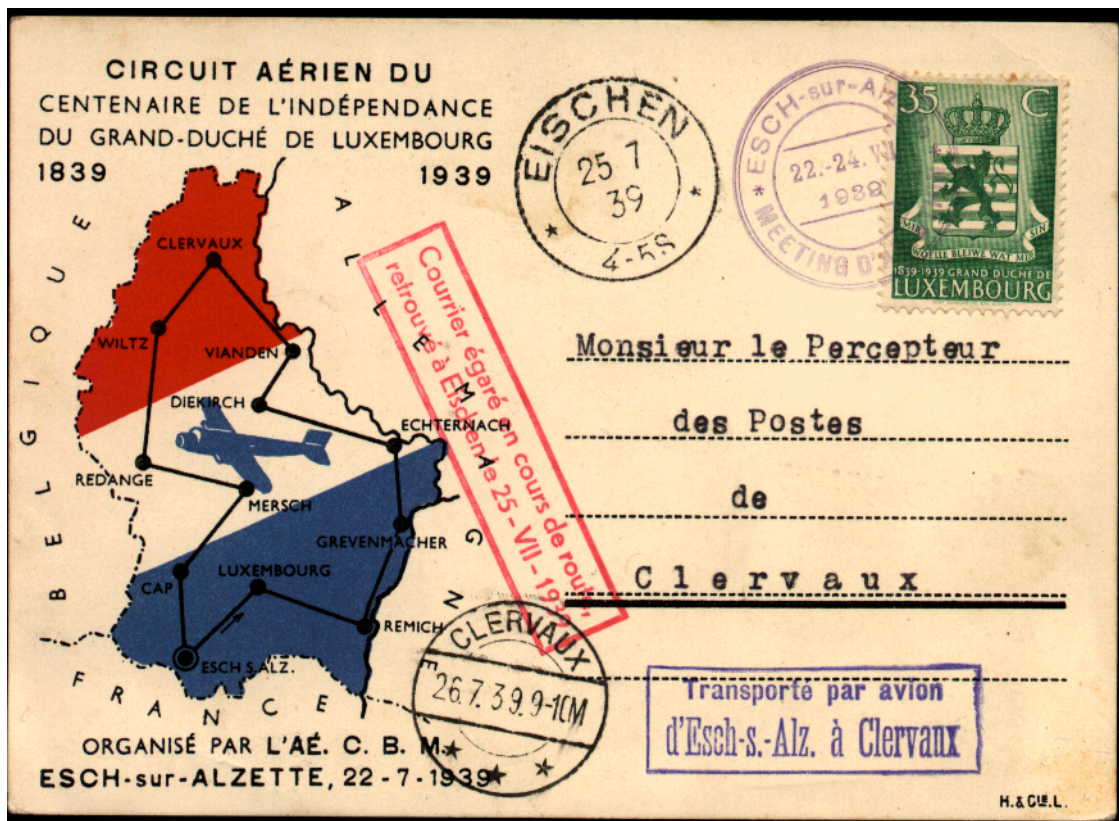
Let's now move ahead to 1939, the year in which Luxembourg celebrated the centenary of its independence. The Treaty of London of 1839 established the present-day boundaries of Luxembourg by transferring to Belgium almost two-thirds of the territory that the Congress of Vienna had reserved for the Grand Duchy in 1815. (This lost territory forms the present day Belgian province of Luxembourg.) This was done as part of a settlement with The Netherlands (whose King also ruled Luxembourg) that confirmed the independence of Belgium following the Belgian revolution of 1830. Although the loss of territory was painful for Luxembourgers, 1839 marked the beginning of greater economic and political stability, and is considered to be the date of birth of an independent Luxembourg.

There were many special events held throughout the Grand Duchy in 1939 to celebrate the centenary of independence. One in particular was an aerial tour of Luxembourg organized by *L'Aéro-Club du Bassin Minier* (The Aviation Club of the Mining Basin) as part of an air show held at the Esch-sur-Alzette airfield on July 22-24, 1939.

The special cards carried on this aerial tour feature an outline map of the Grand Duchy showing the route taken. The map is highlighted by three stripes in the colors of the national flag. A special

postmark reading “Esch-sur-Alzette | Meeting d’Aviation | 22.-24.VII.1939” was used to cancel the stamps and each card has a blue rectangular rubber stamp marking that reads “Transporté par avion | d’Esch-s.-Alz. à Clervaux”. The reverse side of the card shows a map of the southern part of Luxembourg as well as a detailed map of the Esch-sur-Alzette airfield.

The two mailbags containing these colorful cards were to be dropped by parachute from the plane while above Clervaux on July 22. On the first attempt, however, the two bags were caught on the fuselage of the airplane. When the pilot returned to Esch-sur-Alzette, he was surprised to find one of the bags still dangling from the plane; the other was lost somewhere along the 75 km path taken back to the Esch-sur-Alzette airfield. The bag in hand (containing 449 cards) was immediately flown back to Clervaux and dropped successfully.



A special card carried from Esch-sur-Alzette to Clervaux on the 1939 aerial tour. The notice in the red rectangular box states that the card was lost during the tour, but was later recovered at Eischen.

It turned out that the missing bag (containing 474 cards) had fallen from the airplane near Eischen, about 20 km west of Luxembourg City near the border with Belgium. When it was found three days later, the cards were postmarked in Eischen on 25.7.39 and then forwarded to Clervaux where they received an arrival postmark dated 26.7.39. The cards also received a red rectangular rubber stamp marking that reads “Courier égaré en cours de route, retrouvé à Eischen le 25-VII-1939” (“Mail lost during trip, recovered at Eischen on 25-VII-1939”).

L’Aéro-Club du Bassin Minier also organized a special airmail flight to London, the host city of the 1839 treaty negotiations, from the same air show at Esch-sur-Alzette on July 24. Special cards carried on the flight feature the Luxembourg flag and coat-of-arms in color. The violet postmark of origin that was applied reads “Esch-sur-Alzette | Meeting d’Aviation | 22.-24.VII.1939” and, upon arrival in London, each card was franked with a 1 1/2d King George VI definitive that was canceled on “28 Jy 39”. The cards also have a blue rectangular rubber stamp marking that reads “Transporté par avion | d’Esch-s.-Alz. à Londres”.



A special card carried on the Esch-sur-Alzette - London flight of July 24, 1939 to commemorate Luxembourg's centenary of independence.

The London flight marked the end of an era. It was the last special flight in Luxembourg before World War II interrupted almost all commercial and recreational aviation until 1945.

Summary of Pioneer Airmail Flights of Luxembourg

Date	Route	Description
8 September 1927	Luxembourg - Roodt-sur-Syre	1st airmail flight (balloon flight)
10 April 1931	various international destinations	1st flights using airmail stamps
17 August 1932	Echternach - Brussels	2nd airmail flight (1st flight by airplane)
16 July 1933	Diekirch - Brussels	3rd airmail flight
23 July 1934	Luxembourg-Hollerich - Troisvierges	4th airmail flight
17 July 1935	Clervaux	1st rocket flight (private)
26 September 1937	Esch-sur-Alzette - Stockholm	Opening of Esch-sur-Alzette airfield
22 July 1939	Esch-sur-Alzette - Clervaux	Centenary aerial tour of Luxembourg
24 July 1939	Esch-sur-Alzette - London	Centenary flight to Great Britain