

The Journal of the France & Colonies Philatelic Society



Cover postmarked London 27 February 1941 from the Red Cross to Henri Vedel aboard the *Banguinvill* [sic] at Libreville and forwarded to Douala. The letter was opened and resealed by the British and again by the French at Libreville with, on the reverse, three strikes: an oval *Ouvert par l'Autorité Militaire*, a double circle *Contrôle Postal Commission C* and a small circle *C3*. This is one of the many covers and documents illustrating the fascinating story of Henri Vedel and the aviso *Bougainville* in Marty Bratzel's article '*Chère Maman – A Sailor's Story – from France and the Mediterranean to Gabon and Cameroun – the Vicissitudes and Impact of World War II*' (See pages 82-110)

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Whole Number 285

**THE FRANCE & COLONIES
PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN**

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The Society

The Society was founded in 1949 and is affiliated to the ABPS. Its affairs are managed by a Committee comprising President, Officers and Committee members, elected annually.

All inquiries about and applications for membership should be addressed to the General Secretary.

2017-18 Annual Subscription Rates

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The Society subscribes to two French philatelic magazines, and has circuits organised for those who wish to read them. For further details contact the circuit organiser:

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* * *

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The Journal of the France & Colonies Philatelic Society

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SOCIETY NOTES

Editorial

It has been a long wait for you all since the publication of the last Journal back in June but from now onwards we shall be publishing at regular four-monthly intervals. In compensation for your long wait though you will find that the December Journal is a larger edition than usual.

The main feature in this edition is the article '*Chère Maman* – A Sailor's Story – from France and the Mediterranean to Gabon and Cameroun – the Vicissitudes and Impact of World War II' by one of our regular contributors, **Marty Bratzel**. Last year Marty acquired a large file of correspondence and documents about a French sailor who was aboard a Vichy warship that was shot out from under him during the Gabon campaign in November 1940. The texts contained a fascinating combination of politics and postal, military, personal, and social history and the covers provided a wide range of postmarks, cachets and more. Marty thought it would make a promising article for publication in the Journal but after further original research he confessed that the draft had "grown like Topsy" into over 50 pages and 40 images. At this stage in the discussions it was agreed that splitting the article into several parts spread out over several editions would render the story rather disjointed and less appealing and so it was decided to publish it now in its entirety. So thank you Marty very much indeed for giving us the opportunity to publish this magnificent piece of work and to share the results of your research.

Mick Bister

* * *

New Members

The Society is pleased to welcome members 1461 David Hockett (France), 1462 Raymond Hart (London) and 1463 Roger Niven (Surrey).

* * *

Resignations

Member 1303 D G Woodhouse has advised us that, sadly, he will not be renewing his membership.

* * *

Members Deceased

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of member 998 Mr Brian Brookes. We offer our condolences to his family.

* * *

Members' Displays

At the 90th anniversary meeting of the Amicale Philatélique de Calais (21-23 April 2017) our member **Robert Abensur** displayed "Lettres entre la France et les Amériques: la voie d'Angleterre (1814-1849)".

At the 7th meeting of the Cercle International de Rencontres Philatéliques (Saint-Médard-en-Jalles, 16 September 2017) **Guy Dutau** displayed "La purification des lettres de 1724 à la fin du XIX^e siècle"; **Jean-François Gibot** displayed "Les lettres recommandées du Japon pour

la France"; and **Peter Kelly** displayed "La frontière algéro-marocaine: les bureaux de poste et le développement des communications avant 1910".

* * *

Future Events

Please do not forget to support your regional groups. All members are welcome to attend whether you bring material to display or not.

The **Wessex Group** has finalised its programme for 2017-2018. The next meeting will be held on 10 February at the Scout Hall, Lower Street, Harnham starting at 10.30 am when **Richard Stupples** will be showing 'The stamps and postal history of the Sower issue'. Following lunch, the afternoon will be devoted to members' displays. The date of the summer meeting is 30 June (not July as indicated on the programme card) when displays will be given by **Ingrid Swinburn** on 'Censorship of French colonial mail and POW mail' and by **Carol Turner** on 'The French anti-malarial campaign'. The autumn meeting will be on 13 October when **Chris Hitchen** will be showing 'Aspects of Paris postal history'.

The **London Group** will be meeting on 10 February from 11.00am to 4.00pm at the Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8JR. In the morning **Len Barnes** will be showing 'French Colonial Aviation' followed by lunch taken at the Calthorpe Arms. The afternoon will be devoted to members' displays.

The next meeting of the **Northern Group** is to be held at Rotherham (Broom Methodist Church Hall) on 24 March. Light refreshments will be served from 10.15 am with the meeting starting at 10.30. Lunch will be taken at a nearby pub. The whole day will be devoted to members' displays and members are encouraged to bring some material however small.

* * *

Charlecote Weekend 2018

Members attending the Society's Philatelic Weekend at Charlecote (9-11 March 2018) will have the good fortune of seeing **Stephen Holder**'s magnificent collection of material relating to the Franco-Prussian War. It is currently believed to be the prime collection of the subject in the United Kingdom having won four international gold medals and one large gold. The collection is shortly to be sold and this will be the last opportunity to see it in its entirety.

The display will cover all aspects of the 1870-71 conflict - the War, the Siege, Alsace-Lorraine, the German forces, the Commune, the September tariff, Bordeaux printings, etc, as well as ephemera and pictorial documentation of the period.

To be sure not to miss this opportunity, book your place now at the Charlecote Weekend on the enclosed application form.

Mick Bister

* * *

Exhibition Successes

At NAPEX 2017 (McLean VA, 9-11 June) Large Gold and Collectors' Club of New York Best Foreign Exhibit to **Ed Grabowski** for "The Era of the French Colonial Allegorical Group Type - The French Pacific Colonies"; and the Single Frame Grand and Large Gold to him for "The Era of the French Colonial Allegorical Group Type - Obock". Gold to **Jeffrey Bohn** for "Accountancy Markings Associated with the 1857 Franco-British Postal Convention". Ed also gave a seminar on "Réunion - the Use of Due Stamps in Lieu of Regular Postage Stamps (31 Dec 1900 - 20 Jan 1901)".

At OKPEX 2017 (Midwest City OK, 16-17 June) Large Gold and The Postal History Society Post Horn Award to **Ed Grabowski** for "The Era of the French Colonial Allegorical Group Type - Postal History from Madagascar to Dependencies".

At the Rocky Mountain Stamp Show 2017 (Denver CO, 26-28 May) Vermeil to **Stan Luft** for "French Army of the Orient (1915-1923)"; and Single Frame Large Vermeil to him for "From Adversity to Achieving the American Dream".

* * *

A letter of thanks from the Stevenson family

Peter Stevenson has contacted the Society on behalf of the family to express his thanks and gratitude for the "heartfelt messages of condolence" for his late father, Iain Stevenson.

In his letter Peter writes:

"He shared with me on many occasions his love of French philately and postal history and I have been moved by the outpouring from people who shared his passion. It has been apparent over the past few months how many lives my dad touched within his philatelic and academic circles to publishing and beyond. We his children thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we hope that his life and his passion for French and Colonial stamps will spur you on to continue to explore this rich and diverse area of philately."

The letter is signed Peter, Miriam, Isabella and John Stevenson.

* * *

Obituary

Brian Brookes



Members will be sad to learn that Brian Brookes died, aged 79, on 24 May 2017 after a long and courageous fight against cancer.

Brian led a busy professional life running a family business involved in the recycling of metals up to his retirement and the sale of the business but always found time to indulge in his love of stamps and postal history. During his lifetime he amassed a number of important collections of which the best known was his collection of St Kitts that was displayed over 52 frames at the Royal Philatelic Society and the subsequent award by the Royal of the prestigious Tilleard medal for the best display of that year. He also had significant collections of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Wight and Nelson letters as well as his French material, some of which we have seen displayed at Charlecote. He had excellent collections of the postal history of both Guadeloupe and Martinique as well as an extraordinary collection of letters written by eminent military and civil figures during the Napoleonic period that he had acquired from Robson Lowe many years ago. Up until his death, Brian had been working on a collection of the early village manuscript postal marks of

Martinique for which his book on the subject is almost completed and should be published in the near future. Brian never exhibited competitively but collected to the highest level and his displays will always be remembered for the quality of his material.

Brian always enjoyed our meetings at Charlecote and had also joined in and participated in the joint meetings held at Marcophilex at Rouen and Dunkirk. He was always prepared to help others and share his knowledge and, together with his wife Jean, enjoyed the company of their many friends at our meetings. He will be greatly missed.

The Society was represented at his Remembrance Service by Peter Kelly and Chris Hitchen.

Peter Kelly.

LIST OF RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Compiled by Colin Spong and Maurice Tyler

Bulletin de la COL.FRA

N° 160, 2^{ème} Trim 2017: La Poste Express de la Côte des Somalis en 1894 (Strobel); Les Bordereaux de Commande des Timbres Coloniaux à La Monnaie de Paris [cont./end] (Millet); Madagascar: Le Tarif Franco-Colonial du 30 Octobre 1944 (Bergossi); Les Timbres [Découpés] de la zone Gabon-Congo (Pernnacchiotte); Territoire Occupé en Allemagne, L'Ambulant Metz à Sarrbruck (Mercier); Togo, Le Courrier (Hurpe).

N° 161, 3^{ème} Trim 2017: Les Missions Militaires Françaises en Roumanie et en Russie du Sud 1916-1918 (Jusserand); Gabon-Congo, Faux et usage de Faux (Pennacchotti); Pourquoi l'Archipel des Comores? (Hurpet).

Cameo.

Vol 18 N° 2, June 2017: Mail route from French Guinea to Togo in 1906 (Mayne); Cameroun in WW2 Internement Camps and Internees [ctd] (Parren, Collet & Bratzel); Cameroun: Displaced Overprint on the 75c «Corps Expéditionnaire» of 1915 (Collet); Destination Victoria, Cameroon West Africa: Tale of a GB Post Office, Postal Stationery Wrapper (Courtis).

Vol 18 N° 3, Sept 2017: Modern Postal Censorship in Cameroun (Perren); Cameroun Sterling and Reunification Issues with Specimen Handstamp (Bratzel); CEF Overprints on Kamerun Yacht Stamps: Update N° 7 (Bratzel).

The Collectors Club Philatelist

Vol 96 N° 4 July-Aug 2017: The Coins Issue of Morocco, 1976-1982 (Benziane & Sanchez); The Ink Staining of Stamp Paper - Redux (-); Use of the Postage Due Jubilee Overprints of New Caledonia (Grabowski).

Vol 96 N° 5 Sept-Oct 2017: The Coins Issue of Morocco, 1976-1982 (Benziane & Sanchez).

Documents Philatéliques

N° 233 3^e Trim 15 July 2017: La voie aéropostale du Mékong, La première liaison Saigon-Savannakhet de 1926 (Estel); Lettre à un prisonnier mexicain détenu en France (Vernot); Le droit de timbre des colis postaux dans les territoires sous dépendance française. Le cas particulier de la Syrie et du Liban (Flotte); Ambiguïtés et non-dits de la circulaire N° 502 de janvier 1867 sur les boîtes mobiles des courriers d'entreprise (Lissarrague).

L'Écho de la Timbrologie

N° 1918 June 2017: La recommandation en France: les envois en port dû de 1844 à 1848 [1] (Lavigne).

N° 1919 Jul-Aug 2017: La recommandation en France: les envois en port dû de 1844 à 1848 [2] (Lavigne); Le Petit Sablon (Aronis). Olympiades 2017 de la Grande Guerre (-), Début de la campagne d'été 2015-2016 (Venturini).

N° 1920 Sept 2017: La recommandation en France: les envois en port dû de 1844 à 1848 [3] (Lavigne); Les sénateurs de la V^e République (Bastide-Bernardine); Au

cœur de la campagne d'été 2015-2016 (Venturini), Du pilote à la légende: Georges Guynemer (Albaret).

N° 1921 Oct 2017: La recommandation en France: associée au chargement...avant d'en être dissociée (Lavigne); L'Union Marcophile fête ses quatre-vingt-dix ans (Albaret); La relève des PARTEX (Venturini).

France & Colonies Philatelist

Whole N° 329 (Vol 73, N° 3) Jul 2017: Daguin Machine Cancels: in Maroc (Gardner); Toulon France & its RF overprints during WWII (Bussey); A visit to St Pierre [but not Miquelon] (Nilsestuen); Concerns about Professor Segno and Residual Success Waves (Anon).

Gibbons Stamp Monthly

Vol 48 N° 4 September 2017: The Comoro Islands Part 1 (Round).

Vol 48 N° 5 October 2017: The Comoro Islands Part 2 (Round).

The Indo-China Philatelist

Vol XLVII N° 4 (Whole N° 229) September 2017: Postage Markings on Early North Vietnam Military Mail (Düring); 1944 Design Competition for Indo-China Stamps (Dykhouse); Provisional Government of South Vietnam (Bentley).

Vol XLVII N° 5 (Whole N° 230) November 2017: Ethiopian Postal Card used from Indochina (Bentley); The Saigon-Savannakhet Mekong River Airmail Route of 1926 (Estel); A Survey of Matchbox Labels (Wiert); 1957/1958 Flag on Mot-Cot Pagoda Plate Variety (Gebhardt); Counterfeit Alert / North Vietnam Land Reform 1955/56 (Gebhardt); Délégation des Paracels Mystery Cover (Dykhouse).

Timbres Magazine.

N° 190 June 2017: Les annulés: surchargés, fictifs, paraoblitérés, comment les collectionner? (Rucklin); Tous les chemins...mènent à Port-Louis! (Veglio); Patrick Derible, valoriser son archive (Barbier); La publicité et les timbres [2] (Gomez); Les préalables à l'émission des timbres fiscaux (Danan); Une lettre aux 5040 parcours possibles! (de La Mettrie); Les Présidents de la République [2] (Zeyons); Réexpédition et taxation (Prugnon).

N° 191 Jul-Aug 2017: Navigation philatélique en eau douce: Boules de Moulins (de Pellinec); Une Visite de l'Atelier de timbres-poste (Gomez); L'art du portrait: inspirations d'artistes de timbres (Nowacka); Quand la Poste officie sur le rail (Singeot); Le millésime 2016 des TAAF (Dreyfus); Philippe de Ferrari [1850-1917] Un collectionneur méconnu (Schouberechts); Les annulés: surchargés, fictifs, paraoblitérés [III] (Rucklin); Les préalables à l'émission des timbres fiscaux (Danan); De Buenos-Ayres vers l'Europe (de La Mettrie); Debout les damnés de la terre (Zeyons).

Continued on page 110

Paris: the post office for the Place du Châtelet and les Halles

Chris Hitchen

The small area between the Place du Châtelet and les Halles has seen two major redevelopments in the last century and a half. Through all the changes with major building works and new roads the post office has continued to serve its customers, changing address and premises as need be but only for a very short period of some four years did it actually close completely.

When *la Petite Poste* began operations as a local post in June 1760, Office A opened its doors in the Place du Chevalier-du-Guet, a reference to the night-watchmen who looked after the city in medieval times. The Place du Châtelet lay just to the south of the markets and the area would have been a somewhat malodorous rabbit warren of small streets associated with the butchery business. The word 'Châtelet' is a diminutive of *château* and there was indeed a small fortified building called Le Grand Châtelet (**Figure 1**) which originally protected the Pont au Change close to where the Rue Saint Denis reached the river. The building ended up as a prison with a morgue and was demolished between 1802 and 1810. The first map is of 1834 (**page 77**) and shows the area as it was up until 1854 with the various locations of office A in this period.

In 1849, work began to extend the Rue de Rivoli eastward from the Palais Royal, finally finishing at the Rue de Sévigné which was reached in 1856. Amongst the many old

streets that vanished beneath it was the Rue des Mauvaises Paroles. There had always been markets in this area from medieval times but in the 1850s the great development of Les Halles took place with the glass and iron pavilions conceived by Victor Baltard.

One of the main roads to the new markets was the Rue des Halles which opened in 1854. That development entailed the disappearance of the Rue de la Limace amongst others. From 1820 the post office had moved a little northwards away from the Place du Châtelet and closer to the markets. This new construction however meant that in 1854 the office had to move a little further away to 1 Rue Tirechappe. That road too was soon to disappear as the northern section of the Rue du Pont Neuf replaced it. That new road was extended south of the Rue de Rivoli in 1866 in order to reach the river and the bridge from which it takes its name. One other change in 1854 was the extension eastward of the Rue Jean Lantier from the Rue des Lavandières-Sainte-Opportune to the Rue Saint Denis which meant the loss of the Place du Chevalier-du-Guet.

In September 1863, all district offices were given numbers to replace the letter designations. Office A became office 17 at 1 Rue Tirechappe. In July 1867 it took 17 Rue Pont-Neuf as its new address although it was actually situated in the same location on the corner with the Rue de Rivoli.



B. N.

Le Châtelet en 1780.

Figure 1
Le Châtelet in 1780

August 1880 saw the office make its final move to 9 Rue des Halles (Figures 2 and 3) opposite the Place Sainte-Opportune on the corner with the Rue des Lavandières Sainte-Opportune. The church after which the little square is named was demolished in 1797 but a small statue of the

saint has been placed on the front of the building which now houses the post office. In October 1901 the office was renumbered 117 (Figures 4 and 5) to avoid any possible confusion with the newly created Central District Office XVII.

BULL. MENS. N° 28. — 743 —

EXPLOITATION POSTALE. — 1^{re} DIVISION. — BUREAU DE L'ORGANISATION.

CRÉATION DE RECETTES SIMPLES DES POSTES.

DÉPARTEMENTS.	NOMS DES COMMUNES où les recettes doivent être établies.	DATES DES DÉCISIONS.	NUMÉROS D'ORDRE.
1	2	3	4
Côte-d'Or.....	Chambolle-Musigny.....	29 juin 1880.....	6887
Vendée.....	Saint-Mesmin.....	31 juillet 1880.....	6888

CHANGEMENT DE DÉNOMINATION D'UN BUREAU DE POSTE.

En vertu d'une décision ministérielle du 9 août 1880, le bureau de Paris « rue du Pont-Neuf » prendra la dénomination de Paris « rue des Halles ».

Figure 2

Bulletin Mensuel N°28, August 1880, page 743 announces the move to the Rue des Halles



Figure 3

Rue des Halles late 19th century.

Some artistic licence has been taken; the post office probably never occupied so much of the building

The Rue des Halles would have been a busy street when the markets were in operation. In 1971, their demolition took place and the once thriving thoroughfare has become a rather quiet backwater, not quite a dead end but leading only to a number of underground car parks. That is probably the reason behind the relocation of the entrance

around the corner into the Rue des Lavandières Sainte-Opportune (Figure 6) sometime after 1987. In the same year the decision was taken to drop the use of numbers for designation by the Paris offices and in October 1987 the office took the name Paris Châtelet. It can now be seen from the bustling Rue de Rivoli just a few yards away.

— 724 — OCTOBRE 1901.

Bureaux de Paris.

Changements d'indicatifs applicables à partir du 1^{er} octobre.

Page 448. Ajouter les articles suivants :

Paris-Beaumarchais...	112	C. ☒	Boul. Beaumarchais, n° 68.	
Paris-Hôtel de ville...	113	C. ☒	Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville.	
Paris-rue de Strasbourg	114	C. ☒	R. Strasbourg, n° 8 et 10.	
Paris-des Saints-Pères.	115	C. ☒	Rue des S ^{ts} -Pères, n° 22 et rue de l'Université, n° 1.	
Paris-Réaumur.....	116	C. ☒	Rue Réaumur, n° 47.	
Paris-Halles.....	117	N/2 ☒	Rue des Halles, n° 9 et rue des Lavandières- S ^{te} Opportune, n° 27.	Ouvert de 6 h. matin en été et à 7 h. matin en hiver ; service prolongé jusqu'à 21 h. soir.
Paris-rue-Amsterdam.	118	N/2 ☒	Rue d'Amsterdam, n° 19 (gare Saint-Lazare).	Ouvert jusqu'à minuit.
Paris-Richard-Lenoir..	119	C. ☒	Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, n° 108 et rue de la Fo- lie-Méricourt, n° 47.	
Paris-Saint-Thomas...	120	C. ☒	Boul. S ^t -Germain, n° 195.	

Figure 4

Bulletin Mensuel October 1901 page 724 showing the renumbering of the office as 117.
Note its very long opening hours



Figure 5

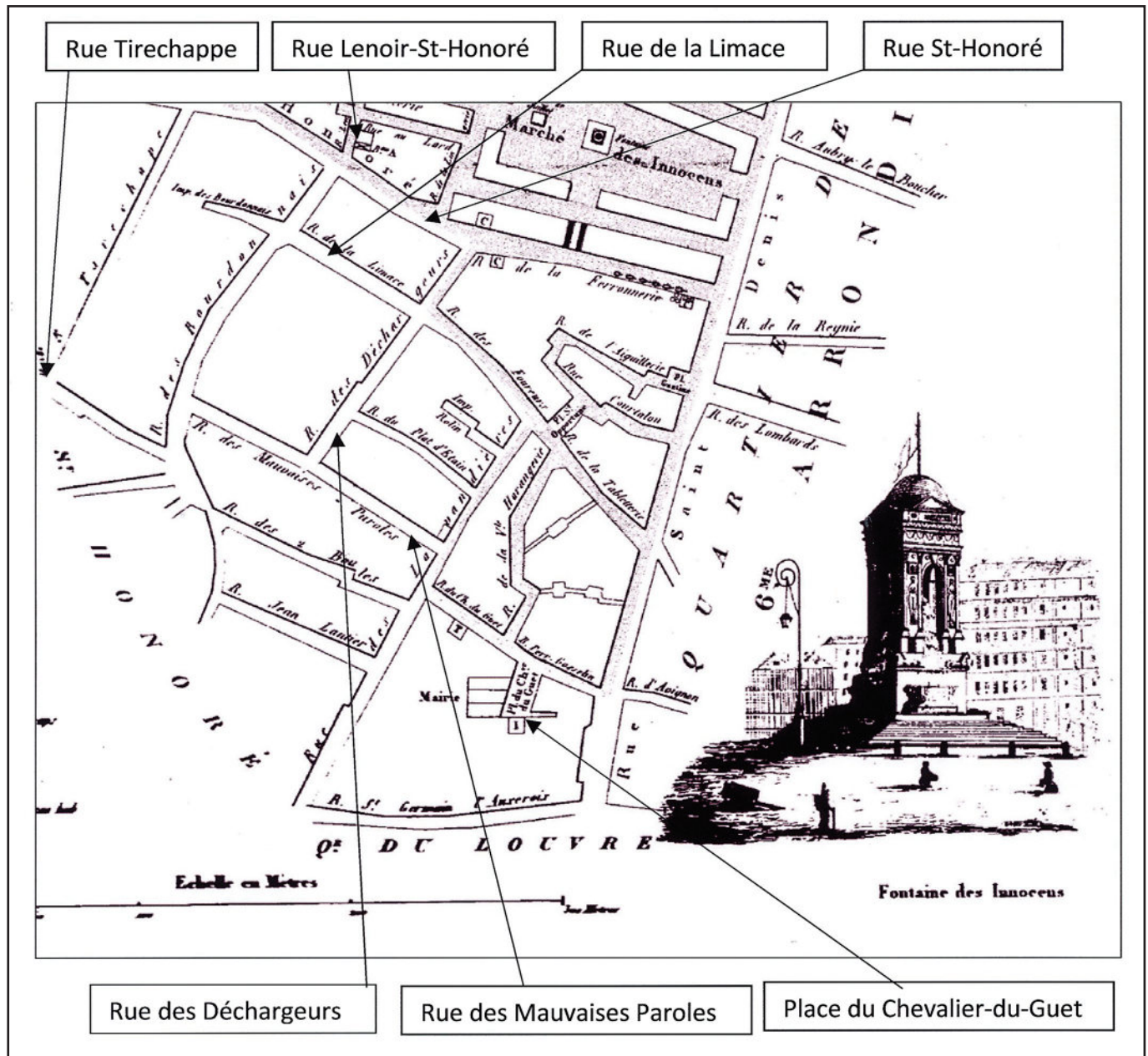
Bureau 117, 9 rue des Halles around 1920
(note the statue of Sainte Opportune on the left of the picture)



Figure 6

The Rue des Halles is to the right behind the tree in the top picture.
The new entrance to the renamed Paris-Châtelet office is now at the top of the Rue des Lavandières-Sainte-Opportune.
The statue of Sainte Opportune is to the right in the bottom picture

The history of the office from 1760 to 1854 with supporting covers (Figures 7-10)



1760 Place du Chevalier du Guet (now the eastern end of the Rue Jean Lantier)

1777 Rue des Déchargeurs

1788 Rue des Mauvaises Paroles (now beneath the Rue de Rivoli)

1790 Rue de la Limace (now beneath the Rue des Halles)

1798 closed

1802 Rue des Déchargeurs

1810 Rue des Mauvaises Paroles

1820 Rue Lenoir-Saint-Honoré (now the northern end of the Rue Bourdonnais north of the Rue St-Honoré)

1838 Rue Saint-Honoré

1854 1 Rue Tirechappe (now that part of the Rue Pont-Neuf north of the Rue de Rivoli)

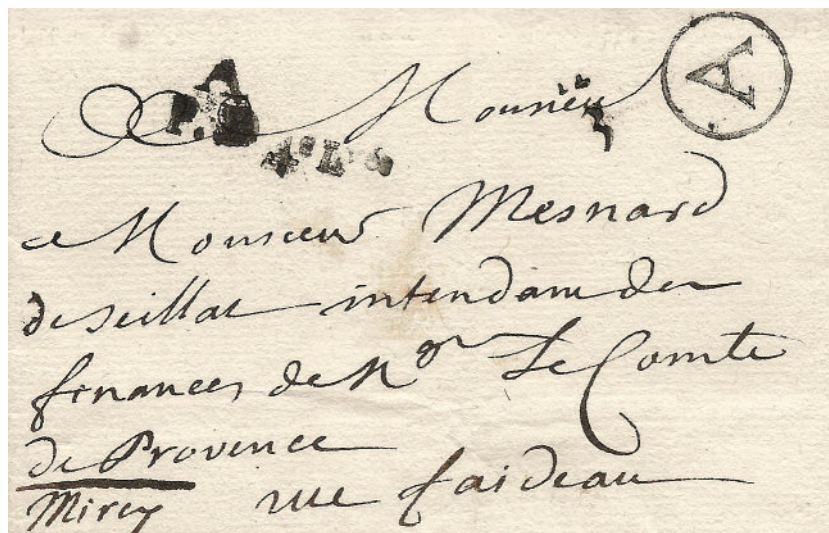


Figure 7
Office A, Place du Chevalier-du-Guet,
3 March 1774

An unpaid letter marked with the office designation A and A P.D for postage due handed in for the 4th collection of the day.

The postman has countersigned it as he had to guarantee the postage due from the recipient.

The day of the month 3 is also marked

Figure 8
Office A, Rue de la Limace,
20 April 1793
A letter under franchise
from the office of the Mayor of Paris
to the Section de la Butte des Moulins
(originally known as
the Section du Palais Royal)
regarding an escaped prisoner

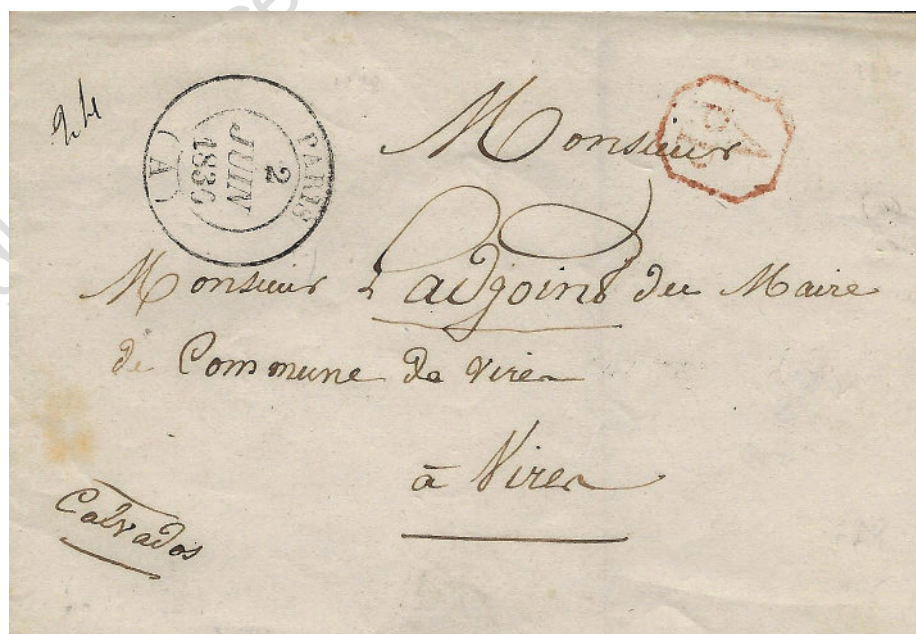
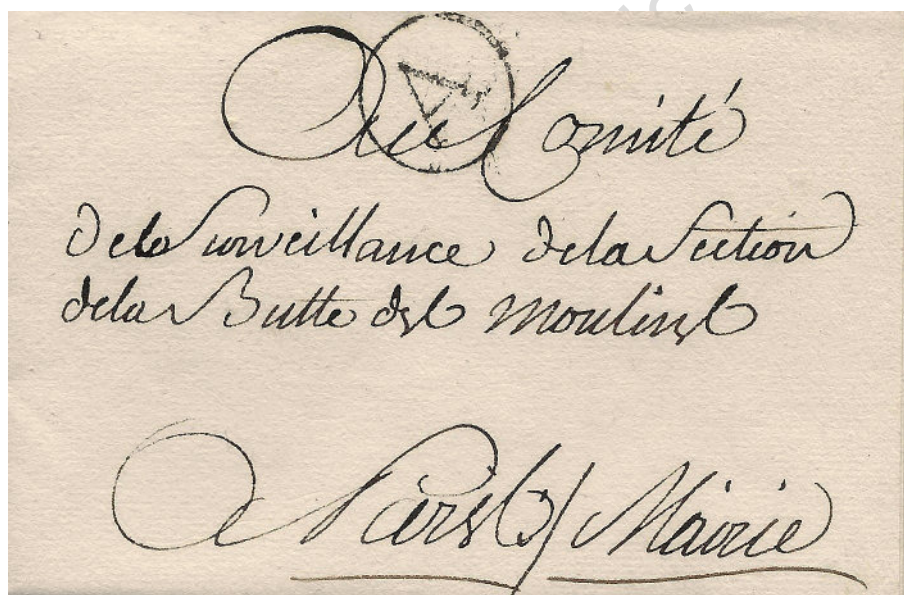


Figure 9
Office A, Rue Lenoir-Saint-Honoré, 2 June 1836
To Vire in Normandy, type 14 datestamp and prepaid 6 décimes (on the back)
for a distance up to 300 kilometres at the tariff of 1 January 1828



Figure 10
Office A, Rue Saint-Honoré, 28 February 1849
40c second weight step inland letter to Melun

The history of the office from 1854 to 2016 with supporting covers (Figures 11 to 16)



1854 Office A later Paris 17: 1 Rue Tirechappe (now that part of the Rue du Pont-Neuf north of the Rue de Rivoli)

1867 July Paris office 17: 17 Rue du Pont-Neuf (the same location on the corner with the Rue de Rivoli)

1880 August Paris office 17 later 117: 9 Rue des Halles

Post 1987 Paris Châtelet : (the same location) but entrance via 27 Rue des Lavandières Sainte-Opportune



Figure 11
Office A, Rue Tirechappe, 27 July 1861
Losange bâton A on a local registered wrapper with 10c local postage plus 20c registration

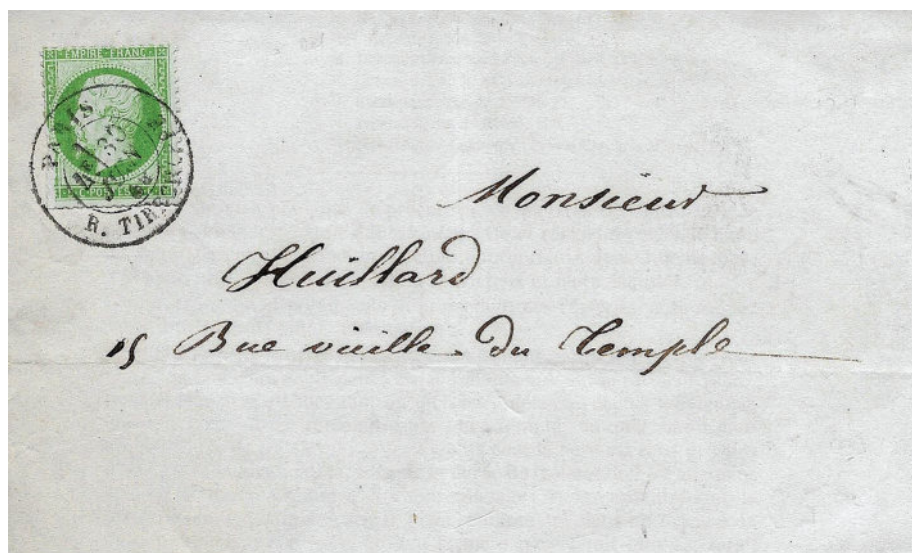


Figure 12
Paris 17 R Tirechappe, 30 June 1865
5 centimes for a local unsealed printed matter item at the tariff of 1 August 1856



Figure 13
Star 17 R du Pont Neuf, 17 April 1874
To Constantinople by sea

Figure 14
Paris 17 R des Halles, 23 February 1898
20c franking = 15c postage + 5c late fee

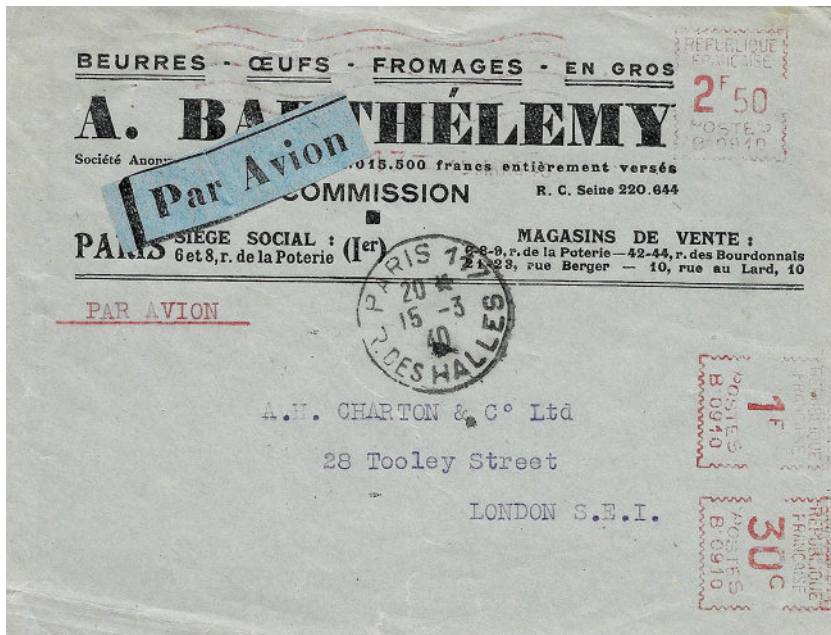
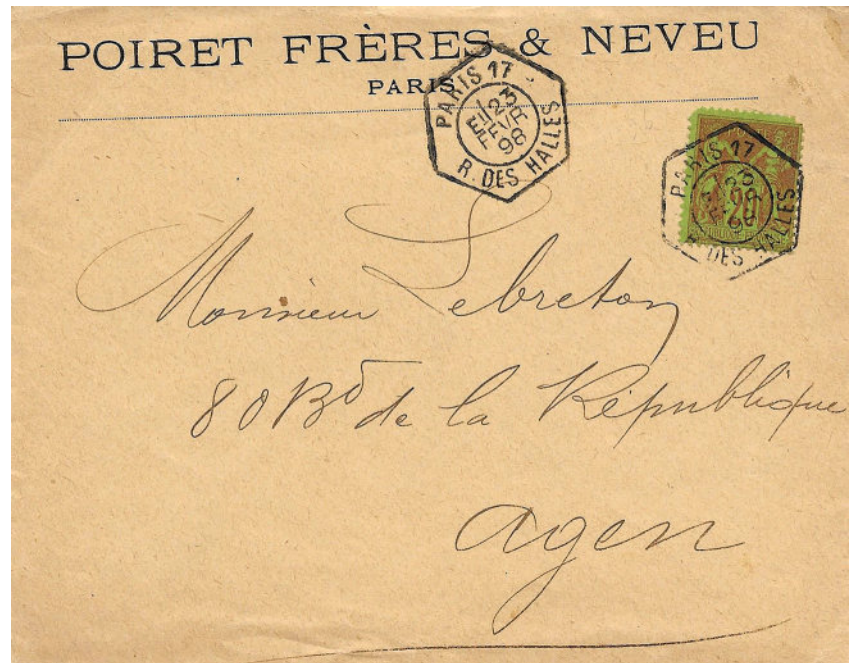


Figure 15
Paris 117 R des Halles, 15 March 1940
Incorrectly franked
as there was no air surcharge to Great Britain
by this time and foreign postage was just 2F 50c



Figure 16
Change of name from Paris 117 to Paris-Châtelet recorded in the PTT souvenir album entitled
'La Poste change ses enseignes' published in 1988

Chère Maman – A Sailor's Story – from France and the Mediterranean to Gabon and Cameroun – the Vicissitudes and Impact of World War II

Marty Bratzel

Introduction

Diversions! Oh, those unexpected, annoying, serendipitous diversions! Here is one which proved most enlightening.

The primary focus of '*Les Oblitérations du Cameroun 1914-1960*', published in 1990, was the postmarks of Cameroun under French administration (Ref.1). A considerable amount of additional information has been compiled since then, warranting preparation of a revised and expanded version that also addresses the postal history of the territory. One section will focus on Cameroun during World War II – postal censorship in the territory (with Maddocks' landmark publication (Ref. 2) as the point of departure), Cameroun's contributions to the armed forces and the military campaigns, and prisoners of war and internees held there.

The diversion began with the acquisition of a massive file about a young sailor who was aboard the Vichy Aviso¹ *Bougainville* when it was severely damaged off Gabon then beached in November 1940. This ship caught my interest because of correspondence regarding two other sailors from that ship, both interned in Cameroun, one at Batschenga and another at Mokolo.

The extensive personal correspondence from a loving son to his mother traces his formative years, his joining the navy in 1938, and his service through mid-1940. This is followed by her correspondence with naval authorities, the Red Cross, and others after the fateful Gabon campaign in November 1940. Together, the correspondence provides interesting insight into naval postings immediately prior to and during World War II, allegiance to de Gaulle's Free French movement, the challenges of communication during the war, and a mother's frantic concern about the fate of her son and her desire to hold on to his memory.

This study is a blend of politics and postal, military, personal, and social history. Indeed, these cannot be separated. Let's begin the story in the middle, with the Gabon campaign of October - November 1940 and with the Aviso *Bougainville*, then expand in both directions.

The Gabon Campaign of October - November 1940

The summary presented here of the events in August 1940 and the Gabon campaign of October - November 1940 is compiled from References 3-5.

Weeks of behind-the-scene discussions, manoeuvring, and negotiations culminated in three eventful days in late August 1940 that significantly boosted General de Gaulle's Free French movement. On August 26, Governor Felix Éboué of Tchad became the first prominent French

colonial leader to declare adherence to the cause². On August 27, Ubangi and Cameroun joined the movement and, on August 28, the Middle Congo, thereby aligning most of French Equatorial Africa with de Gaulle. However, Gabon remained loyal to Vichy and, with a common border with Fascist Spanish Rio Muni and with Germans resident there, a counter-coup could not be ruled out. Between October 8 and 12 General de Gaulle met with Colonel Leclerc and other senior staff at Douala and, on October 12, issued orders for an offensive against Vichy forces in Gabon (Figure 1).

The campaign began on October 27 when Free French forces crossed over into Gabon, penetrating 70 miles to take the town of Mitzi and, on November 5, Vichy forces at Lambarene surrendered. Also on November 5, an armed force under the command of Colonel Leclerc departed by sea from Douala for Libreville. On November 8, the British sloop *Milford*, patrolling the Gabon coast, sank the Vichy French submarine *Poncelet*. Also on November 8, Free French troops under General Koenig made a late-night landing at Pointe La Mondah near Libreville and, on November 9, Free French Lysander aircraft based at Douala bombed the Vichy aerodrome at Libreville. At sea, the Free French Aviso *Savorgnan de Brazza* reduced its sister ship the Aviso *Bougainville* (Figure 2) – which was in the service of the Vichy French naval force – to a wreck and forced her to beach to avoid sinking. The last Vichy forces in Gabon, at Port-Gentil, 70 miles south of Libreville, surrendered on November 12.

The campaign resulted in the capture of both civilian and military Vichy French personnel. Prior to October 16, 1940, those in French Equatorial Africa and Cameroun who remained loyal to Vichy and/or did not want to join with de Gaulle were repatriated to Vichy French West Africa or to Vichy France. However, Gabon's secession and the ensuing military campaign closed that option. Civilians were thus interned at various locations in French Equatorial Africa. Vichy French troops from Gabon, under the command of General Têtu, could not be persuaded to join the Free French cause and, as a result, were transferred to a POW camp at Brazzaville (Ref. 3).

The crew of the Aviso *Bougainville* was another story. An examination of postal history and other information informs us that some joined de Gaulle but those who did not were interned.

Loyalty to Vichy France

The *Bougainville* carried a complement of 135 officers and crew in peacetime and up to 183 in wartime. Jennings (Ref. 3) reported that, after the battle, about 100 from the ship were detained. Some were interned at Batschenga and others at

1 An 'aviso' (cf French word 'avis' for advice or warning) was originally a class of 'advice boat' or dispatch boat. The term was later adopted by the French navy to classify its medium-sized warships designed for colonial service (Ref. 7)

2 In fact, the New Hebrides pandemonium in the South Pacific was first on 22 July 1940 but materially and politically could contribute little in support of de Gaulle.



Figure 1

Franchise militaire cover postmarked Yaoundé 26 October 1940 to London. Manuscript F.M. notation accompanied by a cachet Général de Gaulle / Le Commandant de la 1^{ère} Brigade. Opened and examined by reader A-4 at Douala. Tape tied by two strikes of the elliptical cachet. Envelope subsequently opened and resealed by the British.

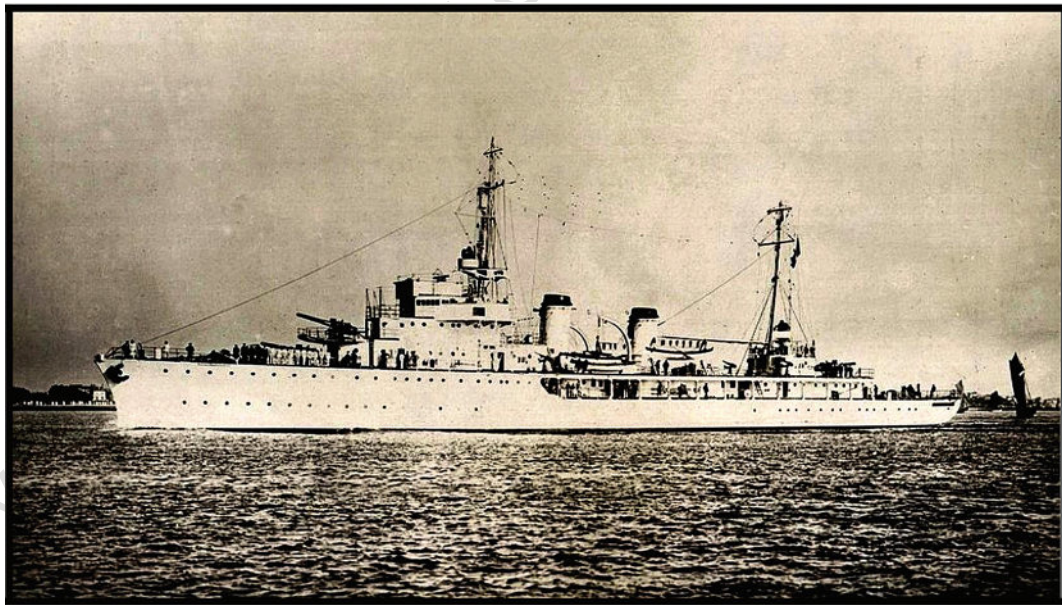


Figure 2

The Aviso *Bougainville*, circa 1939. The *Bougainville* class was a type of colonial aviso or sloop of the French navy of the 1930s designed to operate autonomously from French territories in Asia and Africa. Eight ships of the class were built and commissioned between 1931 and 1939, including the *Bougainville* and the *Savorgnan de Brazza*. A ninth was still under construction upon the fall of France in June 1940, and a tenth was never laid down and was cancelled. Each ship in the class had a length of 103.7 metres, a beam of 12.7 metres, and a displacement of 2,000 tonnes. With two diesel engines, the ships had a speed of 15.5 knots and, with a 300 ton fuel capacity, an endurance distance of more than 9,000 nautical miles (17,000 kilometres). Their shallow draught of 4.15 metres allowed them to operate on large rivers. The peacetime complement was 14 officers and 121 crew, in wartime, 166 or 183 men. The ships were capable of carrying an infantry company. (Refs. 6-7).

Mokolo; relevant correspondence to or about *Bougainville* internees is illustrated and discussed in Refs. 8-10 and 20.

From the numbers presented above, we can infer that about 35 former crew joined the Free French. The remainder of this article focuses on Henri Vedel, one sailor who chose to continue the fight.

Allegiance to Free France – the Story of Henri Vedel

An acquisition on eBay consisted of Henri Vedel's military pay and record book, correspondence from him to his mother prior to the Gabon campaign, and her correspondence and enquiries via naval authorities, the International Red Cross, and others after the campaign. The materials track the development of Henri's naval career including service on the *Bougainville*, the frantic attempts by his mother to learn of his fate after the *Bougainville* was destroyed, and the grieving desire for information after his untimely death at N'Kongsamba, Cameroun in 1943.

The Early Years

Henri Vedel was born at Saint-André-Lachamp on 21 April 1920 to Joseph Vedel and Maria Victoria Philomène Combaluzier³. The extract of information from his birth registry in Figure 3 is dated 9 May 1940 and signed by the local mayor. It was intended for use by the military. The *Mention marginale* notation reads 'adopté par la Nation suivant jugement de la 1^{re} chambre du tribunal de l'Ardèche séant à Privas en date du 12 mai 1927'⁴. As a result of the terrible slaughter of World War I, a law was promulgated in 1917 whereby children of those killed as a consequence of war (including those who later died of injuries) were given substantial aid and support (especially financial) until they reached the age of maturity (21 at the time). From this we conclude that Henri's father had died. Indeed, most of Henri's letters to his mother are addressed to the *veuve* / widow Vedel. The various addresses indicate that Mme. Vedel was an employee of the French PTT and was periodically transferred.

Coupled with financial support from the French government and Mme. Vedel's employment, Henri and his siblings did not live at home but attended a series of boarding schools. The first letter in Henri's correspondence, sent when he was only eleven years old, to *chère Maman* is dated 11 August 1931 from the *École Serdieu*, Laurac. That letter is also signed by brothers Julien and Alexandre. The three were in the care of a Madame Raynaud, who is mentioned in some later letters. At the time Mme. Vedel was living in Paris.

The next letter in his file is datelined La Boissière 8 November 1931 and is signed by him alone. Henri was now a student at the *École Militaire Enfantine Hériot*, La Boissière, confirmed by a *Bulletin Mensuel* / report card (Figure 4) for February 1933 and the return address on his letters (Figure 5). Mme. Vedel was now in Alfortville.

The next significant event in Henri's life is summarised in a

letter (Figure 6) dated 29 September 1933 from Lieutenant-Colonel Adjoint, *Direction de l'Infanterie, Ministère de la Guerre* advising Mme. Vedel that her son did not satisfy the tests of the annual examination for admission to a military preparatory school. A statement of his academic scores is appended. The letter was addressed to Mme. Vedel in Paris.

Henri's letters beginning 18 January 1934 are from the *École Primaire Supérieure*, Valréas (Figure 7). Mme. Vedel is now with the PTT in Meaux. Brother Julien is also at the school. His letters beginning 6 January 1935 are from Champagne (Figure 8), but without Julien. A letter datelined 30 May 1936 places Henri and Julien together again, at Château de Silly-la-Poterie.

Entry into Naval Service – 1938

Shortly after his 18th birthday, at Paris on 9 May 1938, Henri voluntarily enlisted in the navy for three years. Upon arrival at the naval base at Rochefort on 11 May, Henri received a *livret de solde pour officier-marinier et marin*, a standard pay and record book issued to petty officers and sailors (Figure 9). The record indicates that he was a *matelot 2^e classe s./spécialité*, a sailor, second class unskilled.

From 1 June 1938 through 21 April 1939 Henri was assigned to the *Base Aéronautique Navale*, Rochefort (Figure 10). In his earlier letters he writes about his upcoming training and possible future assignments and postings. Most of the letters additionally contain urgent requests for money. Also, Mme. Vedel is back in Paris.

Beginning 21 January 1939 Henri's letters are datelined Brest, and one letter is on paper imprinted *Le Triomphant*. His letters indicate that he had been imprisoned at Brest since late November or early December for an infraction and was to appear before a naval tribunal in early February, facing possibly five years' imprisonment or a very large fine. He requires funds to pay for his defence lawyer. The upshot was that Henri was granted a reprieve and released from prison, and that he had returned to the base at Rochefort. On 21 February 1939 Henri was demoted to *apprenti-marin* / naval apprentice (Figure 11).

What got Henri into hot water with the authorities depends on who to believe. Henri wrote about a traffic accident but that the accusations had nothing to do with him, rather, none of his comrades admitted guilt and he was chosen at random to be the scapegoat. The lawyer, on the other hand, informed Mme. Vedel that the charges had not been serious – some pilfering of sailors' shirts. The tribunal recognized that Henri was only 18 and that his actions had been immature.

On 21 April 1939 Henri was assigned to the 5^e *Dépôt des Équipages de la Flotte*, Toulon (Figure 12). In his letters he continues to ask for money. A letter dated 12 May 1939 places him with the *Batterie du Titan*, Île du Levant, an island off the coast of the Riviera, near Toulon.

Girundia II Yacht Club de France

In a letter dated 30 August 1939, Henri tells his mother that he had been assigned to the civilian yacht *Girundia II* Y.C.F. (Figure 13) but was still based at Toulon. In early September Mme. Vedel was transferred to Limoges. Henri's letters written during that month are all forwarded,

³ Maria Combaluzier was born on 8 January 1894. She married Justin André Hippolyte Roussel on 9 April 1911. After his death, she married Joseph Vedel on 8 May 1919. Information is taken from an extract of Mme. Vedel's birth certificate, issued 11 February 1956, where Mme. Vedel's two marriages are noted in the *Mention marginale*.

⁴ 'Adopted by the Nation in the ruling by the First Chamber of the Ardèche Court, sitting at Privas on 12 May 1927'.

DÉPARTEMENT DE L'ARDÈCHE
ARRONDISSEMENT de Largentière

EXTRAIT
du Registre des Actes de Naissances de la Commune de **S'-ANDRÉ-LACHAMP**
pour l'année **1930**

Nom : **Vedel**
Prénoms : **Henri**
fil de **Vedel Joseph**
et de **Combazguez Maria Victoria Indonène**

N° **2**

NAISSANCE
de **Vedel Henri**

est né le **Vingt un avril mil neuf cent Vingt**
à **S'-ANDRÉ-LACHAMP** ainsi qu'il résulte de l'acte transcrit sur le registre des actes de l'état-civil de cette Commune.

Mention marginale : **Placé par le Gladiateur suédois jugement de la 1^{re} chambre du tribunal de l'Arèche à Andria. Prises en date du 12 mai 1933**

Pour extrait délivré sur requête et destiné à un usage public.

S'-ANDRÉ-LACHAMP, le **neuf mai mil neuf cent quarante**
Le Maire *[Signature]*

Scans de la Mairie

MAIRIE DE S'-ANDRÉ-LACHAMP
(480642)

Imprimé - 100 - L'Imprimerie de Largentière - 2007 - 1100

Figure 3
Extract from birth registry for Henri Vedel.

ÉCOLE MILITAIRE ENFANTINE HÉRIOT

Année Scolaire **1932-1933**
Mois de **Janvier** **1933**
3^{ème} Trimestre

Bulletin Mensuel

concernant
L'élève **Vedel** de la **3^{ème}** classe Compagnie

Conduite **6. Bien** Travail **Bien** Tenue **A. Bien**

Classement **13 sur 29 élèves**

Appréciations		du Commandant de Cie
du professeur	du professeur principal	
<i>S'agit d'un bon élève, mais, pourrait mieux faire avec un peu plus d'énergie.</i>	<i>En progrès!</i>	<i>semble se réveiller; il y a du mieux.</i>
	<i>Travail</i>	<i>Parly</i>

Appréciation d'ensemble du Commandant de l'Ecole
A. Brun

La Boissière, le **1 MARS 1933**
Le Commandant de l'Ecole, *[Signature]*

Figure 4
Monthly report for Henri Vedel, February 1933,
École Militaire Enfantine Hériot.



Figure 5

Cover from Henri Vedel to his mother postmarked 13 March 1933 with handstamp
École Militaire Enfantine Hériot, 2^{ème} Compagnie.

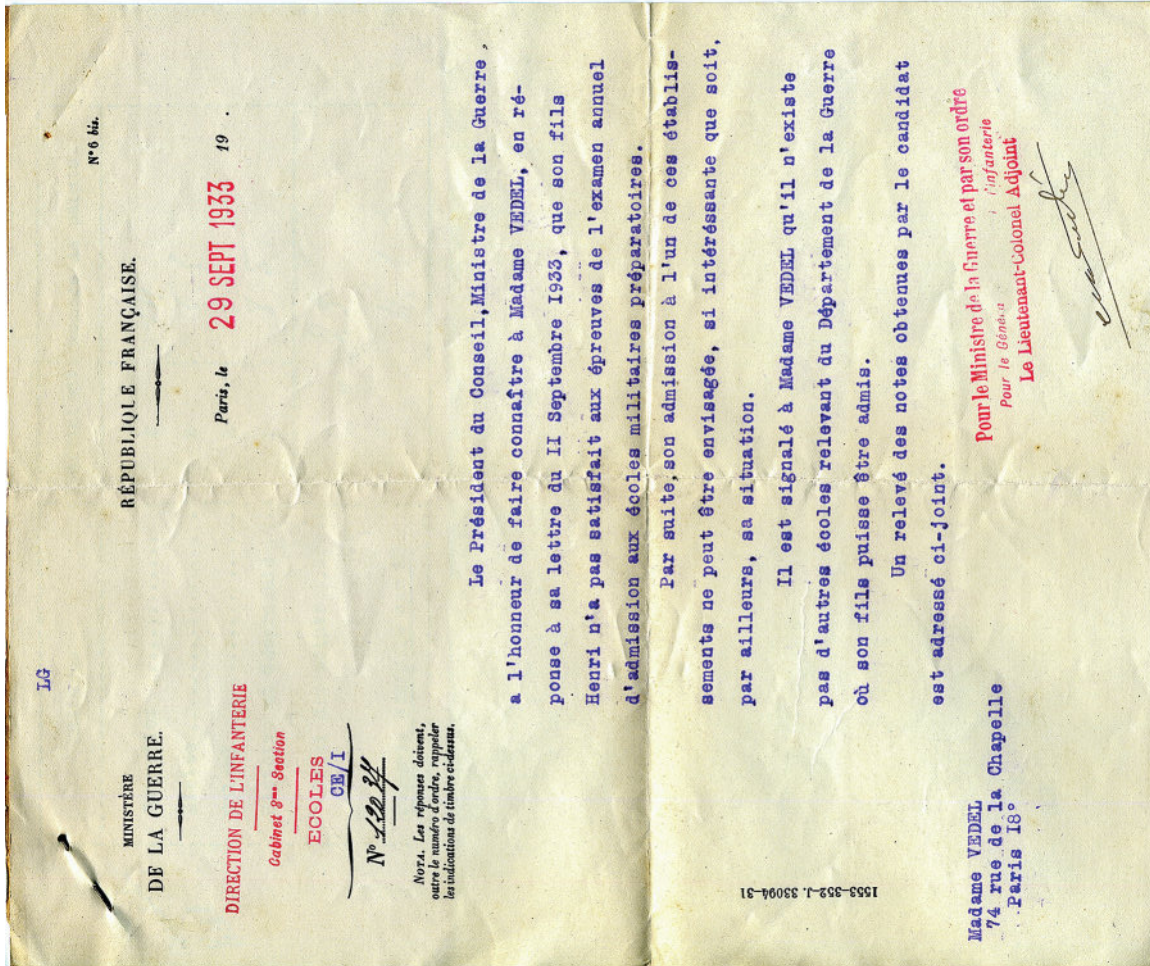


Figure 6

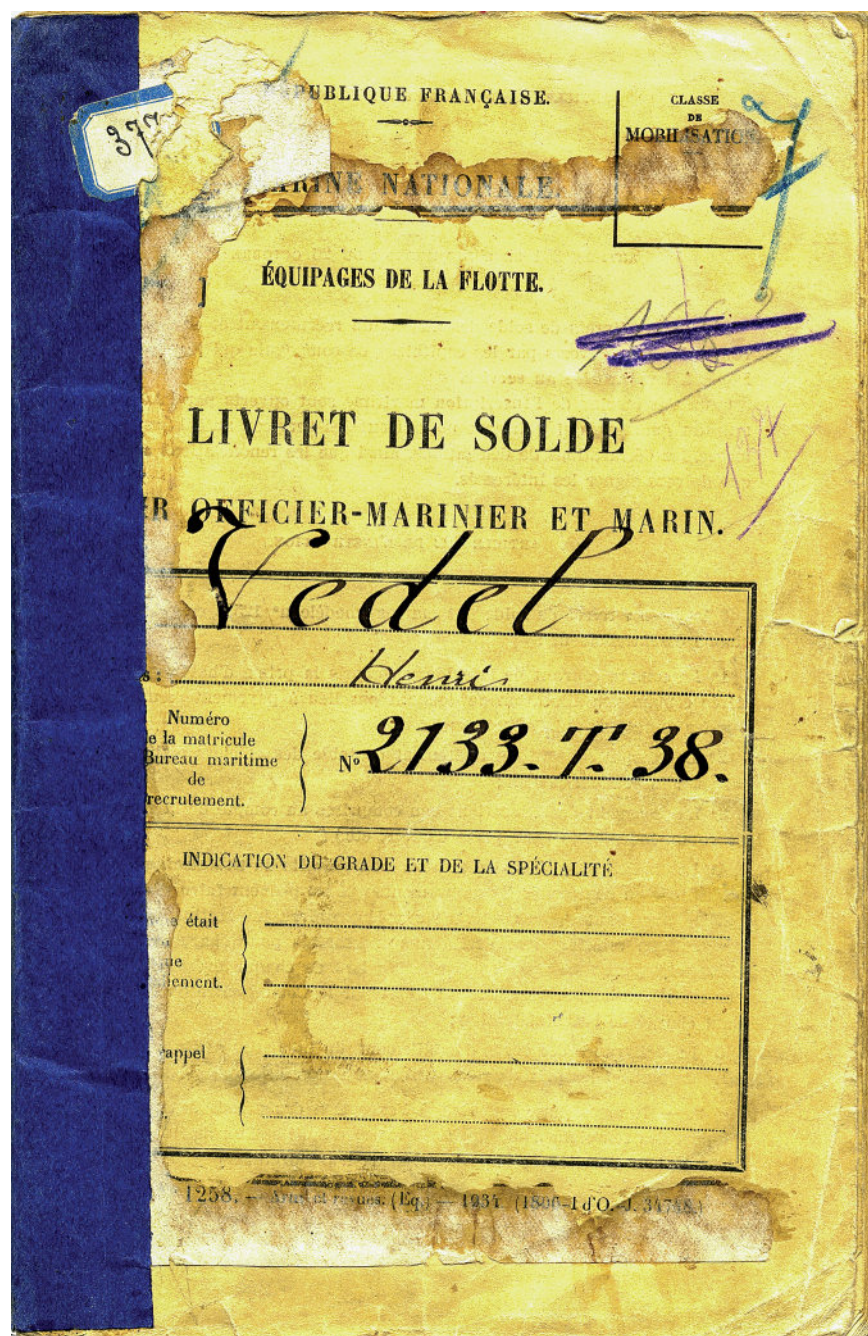
Letter from the Ministry of War dated 29 September 1933 to
Mme. Vedel regarding the academic test results for her son Henri.



Figure 7
Cover from Henri Vedel postmarked Valeras 16 February 1934 with
handstamp École Primaire Supérre Valréas (Vaucluse).



Figure 8
Cover from Henri Vedel to his mother postmarked Champagne s/ Seine
7 January 1935.



The booklet recorded essential information, including:

- Date and place of birth
- Date and place of recruitment, service / serial number, the projected date of separation from service, and subsequent required service in the reserves
- Rank and dates of promotion
- War campaigns and commendations
- Assignment locations and dates
- Pay record
- Clothing and other allowances such as for travel or loss of effects
- The rights of the holder to allowances in money and movements / assignments which may affect them, such as pay scales, supplementary deductions, imputations, and declarations relating to entitlements to allowances for dependents.

Official information was certified by the appropriate administrative authority.

The booklet presents an impressive array of marine and other crimes with consequent penalties. Also included is general information concerning the obligation for the bearer to be clean, be sober, fear venereal diseases, play sports, heed special advice while on board and specific advice while on shore and advice when in the colonies ... and to get married young!

Supplementary information drawn from [Ref. 19](#).

Figure 9

Front cover of a *Livret de Solde pour Officier-Marinier et Marin*. This pay and records book (Model No. 1258) was provided to petty officers and sailors upon entry into naval service. Henri Vedel's booklet, which contains 132 pages, was to remain with him during his career.

Figure 11 (right)
Page from Henri Vedel's
livret de soldat with
notation regarding his
demotion to *apprenti-
marin*. The demotion
is also recorded – with
case number – in the
pay records section of
the booklet. Also, a
pencil notation at the
bottom confirms Henri's
allegiance to de Gaulle
on 12 December 1940.



Figure 10 (above)
Letter dated 30 August 1938 from Henri at the Base Aéronautique Naval,
Rochefort and postmarked Rochefort s/ Mer 31 August 1938. Cachet
Marine Nationale / Service à la Mer / Vaguemestre.

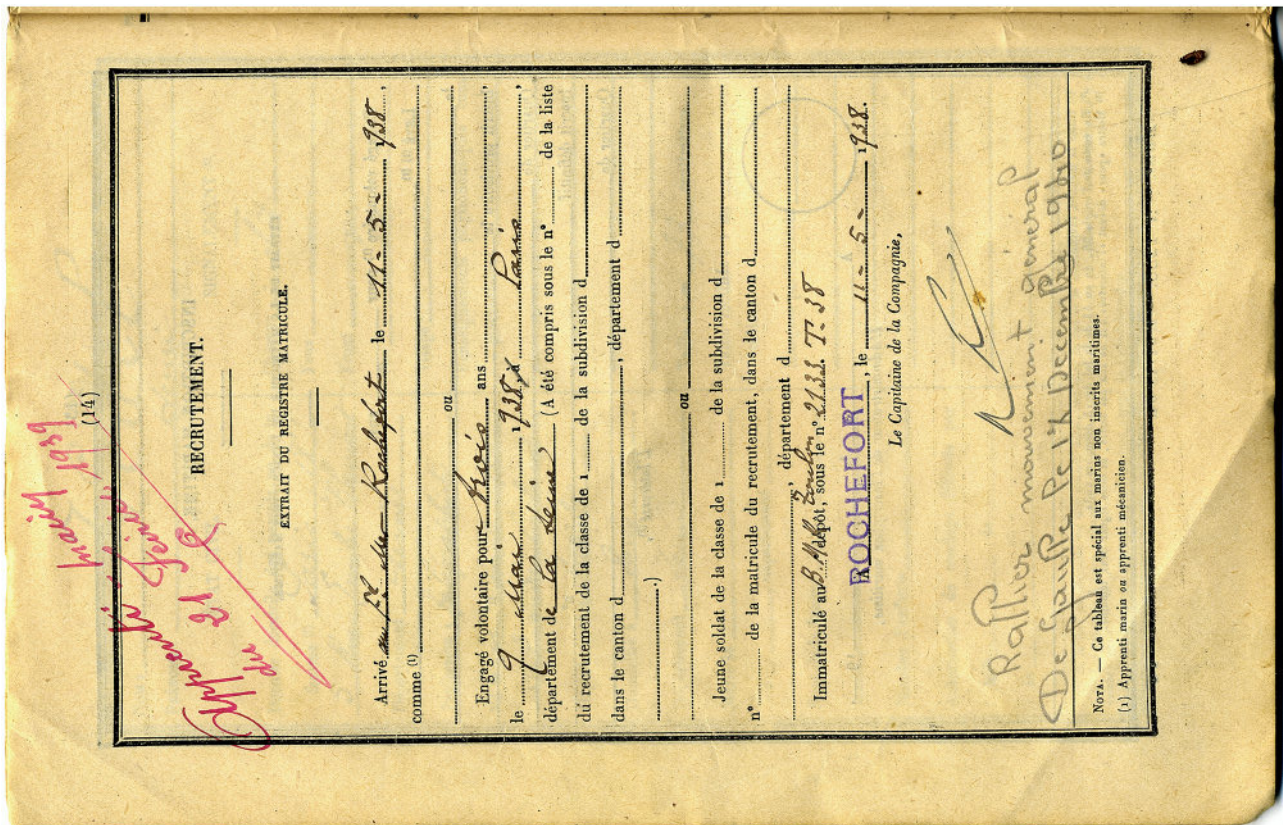




Figure 13

The steam yacht *Girundia II* at the Port of Marseille. Constructed at the John Brown & Co. shipyard at Clydebank, Scotland for Solomon B. Joel of Glasgow. The yacht had a length of 70.4 metres, a beam of 9.5 metres, and displaced 1200 tonnes. She was powered by two triple expansion steam engines, and her maximum speed was 14 knots. Launched in April 1910 and completed in July, she was originally named *Doris*, after Joel's daughter. In 1914, after Doris had married without her father's permission, the yacht was renamed *Eileen*. On 4 November 1914 the *Eileen* was requisitioned by the British admiralty for use as an auxiliary patrol vessel. On 30 April 1919 the yacht was returned to its owner. At the end of 1931 the yacht was sold to Pierre Dupuy and renamed the *Girundia II*. On 28 August 1939 she was requisitioned at Cannes by the French navy, armed, and sailed as the *AD185*, serving as a patrol boat and auxiliary minesweeper. The yacht was disarmed and sold to Armement Henri Levendi, Sète in 1946. In 1951 the yacht was sold to P. Atchides of Greece and renamed *Poupela*. The yacht was sold again in 1954 to the government of Kuwait and renamed *Al Salimi* and, in 1960 sold to Fadhil Fathallah (Iraqi flag). The ship was de-registered in 1973 (or 1976, according to one source). Refs. 11-15.



Figure 12

Letter dated 22 August 1939 from Henri at the Foyer des Équipages de la Flotte, after his assignment to the 5^e Dépôt. Sent franchise militaire and postmarked Toulon-sur-Mer 23 August 1939.



Figure 15

Formula Carte Priorité Navale from Henri sent franchise militaire and postmarked Ajaccio 15 September 1939. Circular cachet Commandant de la Marine en Corse.



Figure 14

Letter from Henri aboard the Girundia II sent franchise militaire and postmarked Ajaccio - Naval 25 September 1939. Circular cachet Marine Nationale / Service à la Mer.



Figure 16

Cover from Henri postmarked Poste Navale 18 March 1940 with circular cachet Marine Nationale / Service à la Mer.

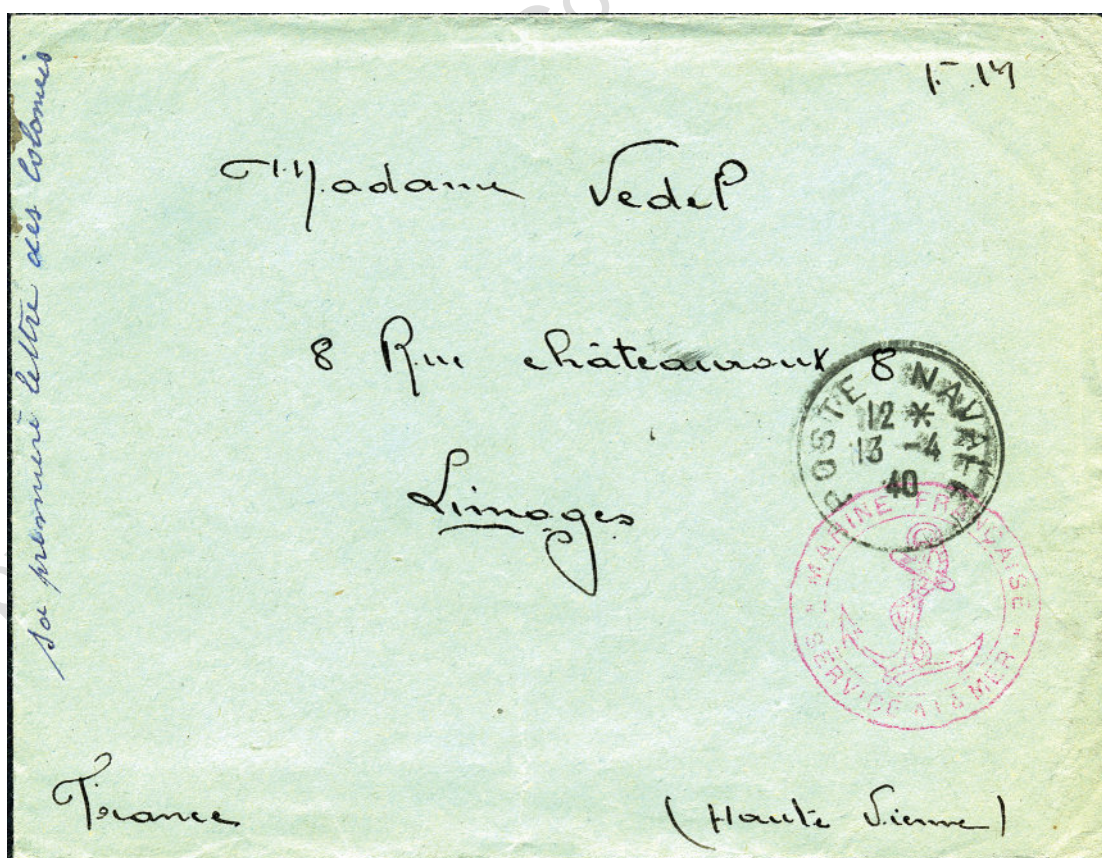


Figure 17

Cover from Henri, now aboard the Aviso *Bougainville*, sent *franchise militaire* from Casablanca, Morocco and postmarked Poste Navale 13 April 1940. The circular cachet Marine Française / Service à la Mer was assigned to the *Bougainville*. Notation on the left edge, 'sa première lettre des colonies' (his first letter from the colonies), probably added by Henri's mother.

until he got his mother's new address. In a letter dated 4 September he mentions their forthcoming departure for Spain and his letter dated 14 September places him at Ajaccio, Corsica. His letters (Figure 14) are interspersed with the formula *Carte Priorité Navale* (Figure 15).

On 9 November Henri was transferred to C.A.M. Ajaccio⁵ and then on 1 January 1940 to C.A.M. Marseille where he remained until 1 April 1940. Ajaccio and then Marseille were apparently the base of operations for the *Girundia II*. During his shipboard assignment Henri initially gave his address as *Girundia II*, Ajaccio Naval, Corse and later as A.D.185, Toulon Naval, Var.⁶ And he continued to request money! He also mentions a girl friend (or friends) and that he had grown a moustache.

His last letter from the *Grundia II* is datelined 18 March 1940 (Figure 16). During this time he spent a total of seven months and six days at sea aboard the yacht.

The Aviso *Bougainville*

On 1 April 1940 Henri was briefly transferred back to the 5^e *Dépôt* and then on 8 April to the Aviso Colonial *Bougainville* which put to sea on 12 April. His letter datelined 13 April 1940 is headed Aviso Colonial *Bougainville* and he was now in Africa (Figure 17). His *livret de solde* indicates that the ship was at S.A.N. Maroc.⁵ The last letter in Henri's correspondence to his mother, dated 3 July 1940, places him at Dakar. He gives his mailing address as 'à bord de l'Aviso *Bougainville*, via Paris Étranger'.

The last envelope in his correspondence is postmarked Dakar 23 July 1940 and was received in Limoges in unoccupied France on 2 August 1940 (Figure 18). Henri's *livret de solde* indicates that his 'campagne de guerre contre l'Allemagne' ended on 10 November 1940, the day after the *Bougainville* was beached.

Mme. Vedel's Frantic Quest for Information

On 17 November 1940, the quartermaster of the Torpilleur *Tempête*, based at Casablanca, wrote a short letter to 'mon bien cher collègue' that confirms the fate of the *Bougainville* but that the crew were safe and sound. However, he could shed no further light on the subject. The letter (Figure 19), which has been censored with pieces cut out, at some point, came into the possession of Mme. Vedel.

Mme. Vedel was now back in Paris. On 14 November 1940, five days after the naval battle, frantic for information about her son, she wrote to the naval authorities in Paris. In their reply dated 21 November, the navy advised her that communications with Gabon had been interrupted and that they had no information concerning the *Bougainville*. In a follow-up letter dated 3 December, Mme. Vedel was advised that the crew were unharmed, except for one who had died. A subsequent letter dated 11 December advised her that the crewman who died was named Picq, from which she could take some comfort that her son Henri was still alive. A further letter dated 30 December (Figure 20) advised that there were no concerns regarding the

condition of the wounded and that it was not possible to obtain further information. Small comfort to Mme. Vedel to know that her son was alive – but where was he and what was the state of his health?

On 24 February 1941 Mme. Vedel again wrote to the navy in Paris. The reply, dated 6 March, informed her that Henri was in Brazzaville in good condition recovering from his wounds. The last letter in this portion of the file from the navy to Mme. Vedel is dated 27 September 1941 and advised that it had not received any bad news from Gabon.

During this time communication with Equatorial Africa was via telegram since radio equipment was not under French control as mentioned in the previous letter of 30 December (refer back to Figure 20). Further, the letters to Mme. Vedel were from naval authorities in occupied Paris, who had to consult with Vichy authorities in unoccupied France.

Mme. Vedel, through the International Red Cross, also sought information from the Free French authorities in London. A letter from the FFL *Service des Recherches* at Carlton Gardens dated 16 May 1941 requests assistance to locate Henri (Figure 21). His name is followed by F.N.F.L. (*Forces navales françaises libres*), indicating that he was now in the service of the Free French. At the request of Mme. Vedel, the British Red Cross Society, in a letter dated 4 September 1942 (Figure 22), asks the *Service des Recherches*, *Forces Françaises Combattantes* to locate Henri.

Two other envelopes, unfortunately without contents, also show the involvement of the Red Cross. The first (Figure 23), postmarked London 27 February 1941, is addressed to Henri, a/b du *Banguinville* [sic], Libreville, Gabon and was backstamped there on 23 May. The cover, opened and censored by the British and also at Libreville, has the address crossed out in red crayon and the notation added, 'Voir Douala'. A handwritten notation on the back indicates receipt there on 28 May. The receipt notation appears to be Henri's handwriting.

A second cover (Figure 24) sent by the French Red Cross at Pointe-Noire and postmarked 14 June 1942 is locally addressed to Henri Vedel, F.N.F.L., Pointe-Noire.

So, what happened to Henri after the *Bougainville* was destroyed?

A certified copy (Figure 25) of a hospital report, prepared at Pointe-Noire on 10 May 1943, tells us that Henri was admitted to hospital at Libreville on 10 November 1940, the day after the *Bougainville* was beached. The diagnosis was a shrapnel wound to his left thigh above the knee and a burn to his right ankle. On 26 November the attending physician provided the further observation that the shrapnel wound was superficial.

A pencilled notation in his record book confirms that on 12 December 1940 Henri pledged allegiance to General de Gaulle, "Rallier mouvement général de Gaulle le 12 décembre 1940". (Refer back to Figure 11).

In an undated letter (Figure 26), Henri requested authorisation from the naval commandant at Pointe-Noire that he receive the medal awarded to those who had been

⁵ The meanings of the acronyms C.A.M. and S.A.N. are not known to the author. Enlightenment would be appreciated.

⁶ AD185 was the designation assigned by the French navy to the *Girundia II*. See caption for Figure 13.



Figure 18 (above)
Last correspondence received from Henri, sent *franchise militaire* from Dakar on 23 July 1940 and received in Limoges on 2 August 1940. Circular cachet Marine Française / Service à la Mer assigned to the *Bougainville*. The letter that had been enclosed was not, however, in the file.

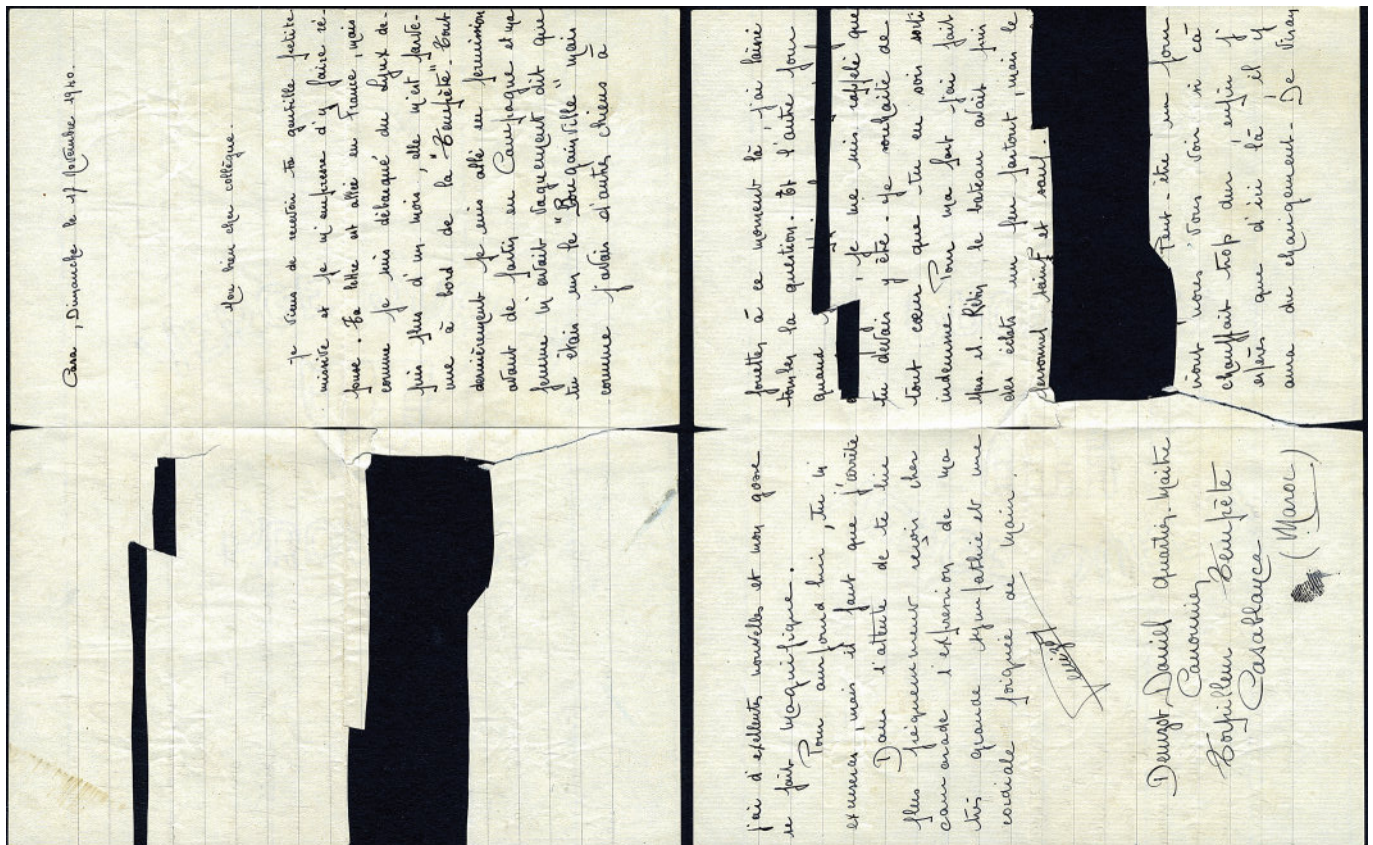


Figure 19 (right)
Censored letter written at Casablanca and dated 17 November 1940.

SERVICE LOCAL
DES
OEUVRES DE LA MARINE
PARIS
PARIS, le 30 Décembre 1940
RENSEIGNEMENTS
AUX
FAMILLES

13. RUE DE L'UNIVERSITÉ - PARIS VII^e
LITRE 93-95

Réponse à vos lettres des 21 et 26 Décembre.

Nous avons consulté à Vichy l'original du télégramme que nous vous avions montré à notre Bureau, donnant des nouvelles de l'équipage du "BOUGAINVILLE".

Ce télégramme portait bien l'indication NEDEL et non VEDEL, mais nous supposons qu'il s'agissait bien d'une erreur de transmission.

On nous a affirmé qu'aucune inquiétude n'existait concernant l'état des blessés.

Il n'est malheureusement pas possible de demander des informations par radio, puisque l'équipage n'est pas sous contrôle français actuellement.

Madame Veuve VEDEL
5 rue Emile Blémont
PARIS XVIII

Cour

Figure 20

Letter from the Service Local des Oeuvres de la Marine, Paris dated 30 December 1940 to Mme. Vedel, in response to her queries about the fate of Henri.

FORCES FRANÇAISES LIBRES
ETAT-MAJOR -
Service des Recherches
4, Carlton Gardens,
Londres, S.W.I. le 16.5.41.

Le Général Chef d'Etat-Major
(Service des Recherches)
à M. VEDEL
F.N.F.L.

N° à rappeler
en nous écrivant : 26D02 B

Miss C. WEAVER,
demeurant à Stapely Grange, Nantwich (Cheshire)

nous a demandé si vous faisiez partie des Forces Françaises Libres, de la part d'un Mr. Richard, habitant Arles, *en rapport avec vos parents*.

Selon la règle qui a été établie, nous n'avons donné aucune réponse. Nous vous laissons le soin de lui écrire vous-même si vous le jugez bon.

Nous sommes à votre disposition pour faire une enquête si vous préférez, avant de répondre, pour avoir des renseignements sur la personne qui vous réclame.

Dans tous les cas, nous vous serions obligés de nous accuser réception de cette lettre, afin que nous puissions classer définitivement votre dossier.

p.o. L'officier chargé du Service des Recherches.

Nayman, Mrs -

Figure 21

Letter from the Forces Françaises Libres, Service de Recherches, London dated 16 May 1941 requesting assistance to locate Henri Vedel.

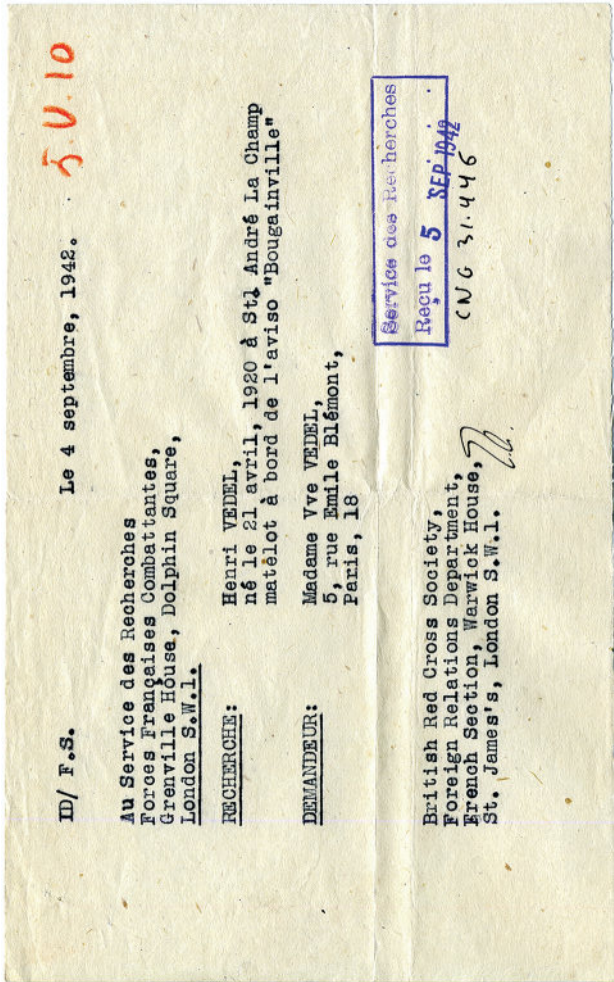


Figure 22 (above left)
Letter dated 4 September 1942 from the British Red Cross to the Forces Françaises Combattantes, London, sent on behalf of Mme. Vedel requesting information about Henri.

Figure 23 (front cover and above right)
Cover postmarked London 27 February 1941 from the Red Cross to Henri Vedel, aboard the *Banguinville* [sic] at Libreville. Forwarded to Douala with manuscript notation received 28 May 1941. Opened and resealed by the British and again by the French at Libreville (C-3 reader's cachet). As an aside, note the admonition in the wartime London postmark to save waste paper, metal, bones, rags.

Figure 24 (bottom left)
Cover postmarked 14 June 1942 from the Red Cross at Pointe-Noire to Vedel Henri, F.N.F.L., Pointe-Noire. Authorising Red Cross cachet at bottom left. No backstamps.

389

Copie de Billet d'Hôpital - Entrée et sortie

1 CERTIFICAT DE VISITE

Le Sr. V E D E L
grade : matelot s/spté
sera admis à l'hôpital, étant atteint de :

1°) Indication de la) Plaie face antérieure de la cuisse gauche
blessure ou de la) au-dessus du genou par éclat d'obus brûlure
maladie.) de la région malléolaire externe droit.

2°) Moyens curatifs)
déjà employés)

3°) Observations)
générales)

Libreville, le 10 NOVEMBRE 1940
P. Le Médecin-Major
signé : CHAVENON

OBSERVATIONS DU MEDECIN-TRAITANT :

exécuté le 26 NOVEMBRE 1940. :

Plaie superficielle de la face anté- :
rieure de la cuisse au-dessus du genou :
gauche; brûlure de la région malléo- :
laire externe droit. Le Médecin-Traitant,
signé : CHAVENON

Pour copie certifiée conforme : Le Médecin-Chef p.i.
signé : BEAUTES

P. Noire, le 10 MAI 1943
P.C.C. L'E.V. de 1ère classe AUFFRET
Commandant Marine P. Noire

F.M.F.L.
EW
A.E.F.L.

Le matelot Radio P.C.C. Henri M¹ 10118.F.M.F.L. 40
stagiaire à la C.M.T.A.F.C.

en

Monsieur le Commandant de la marine
de Pointe-Noire

S/c. de M. l'Officier des Equipages radiotelegraphistes
chef du service des transmissions

Objet :
Demande d'admission
de la médaille des Blessés

J'ai l'honneur de solliciter
de votre bienveillance l'obtention
de l'autorisation du port de
la médaille des Blessés, à
laquelle j'ai droit, comme en
fait foi le certificat de
visite N° 389 dont copie
authentique ci-joint

Autouré
P. Noire 11/3/43
E.V. 1^{re} Classe
Auffret

Libreville, le 10 NOV 1940
H. L. Cdt. de la marine à Pt. Noire

Signature

Figure 25 (left)

Certified copy of report, dated 10 May 1943, of Henri's admittance to and release from hospital at Libreville, Gabon in November 1940, after the loss of the *Bougainville*.

Figure 26 (above)

Henri's letter to the naval commandant at Pointe-Noire requesting award of a medal for having been wounded. The medal was approved 11 March 1943.



Figure 27

QO41 Audierne. No good photos of the *QO42 Larmor* could be located. Depicted here is its virtually identical sister ship, *QO41 Audierne*. The Classe Chasseur 41 was the name given to a group of wooden-hull warships designed to hunt submarines. A total of eight ships were constructed at the Chantier de Normandie naval shipyard at Fécamp, France between 1939 and 1943; four or five of the ships were ultimately completed for service in the German navy.

The general characteristics of Chasseur class ships were a length of 37.4 metres, beam of 5.53 metres, and displacement of 126 tonnes. The ships, with a draft of only 2.4 metres, were powered by two diesel engines and reached a speed of 15.5 knots.

Each ship's complement was 23 officers and sailors.

The Chasseur *QO42* was launched 18 September 1939 and placed in service in 1940. The ship participated in the evacuation of Dunkerque between 26 May and 4 June 1940 (one source indicates 20 May through 3 June). The *QO42* arrived at Portsmouth on 18 June and was seized by the Royal Navy on 3 July.

On 16 September 1940 the ship was renamed *QO42 Larmor* and based at Cowes. After service close to home and refitting, the *QO42 Larmor* participated in the Anglo-Canadian Dieppe raid on 19 August 1942. Shortly thereafter, on 14 September 1942, the *QO42 Larmor* and its sister ship *QO43 Lavandou* departed for Pointe-Noire, Gabon. En route they rescued 29 seamen from the *Georges Thatcher*, a freighter torpedoed by a German submarine. Between 3 November 1942 and 24 April 1943, the *QO42 Larmor* underwent further refitting. In 1944, the ship proceeded to Alger, to provide escort service between ports of call. The *QO42 Larmor* continued in service after the war until condemned on 27 January 1950. (References 16-18)

wounded. The letter gives his serial number as a member of the F.N.F.L. and notes that he is *matelot-radio*, indicating that he had received specialised training. The commandant approved the request on 11 March 1943.

Alas, Henri died later in the year at the age of 23. At the time of his passing, he was posted aboard a Free French naval ship Chasseur *QO42 Larmor* (Figure 27), and possibly stationed at Douala.

Henri's Death and Mme. Vedel's Further Quest for Information

Henri died at N'Kongsamba, Cameroun on 26 October 1943. In a letter (Figure 28) dated 5 July 1944, the mayor of the 18th *arrondissement* of Paris forwarded a letter from the Red Cross confirming Henri's death. At some point, Mme. Vedel received a handwritten death certificate, date of preparation not given. We know from a plethora of correspondence after Henri's death that his mother was sorely grieving. Having lost both husbands and with

another son in a POW camp in Norway (discussed later), she doggedly sought as much information about Henri as possible.

In a letter (Figure 29) dated 19 December 1944 from the naval commandant at Douala to the head of the Red Cross at Douala, we learn that Henri, assigned to Chasseur 42 *Larmor*, was sent to the naval convalescent centre at N'Kongsamba and died there on 26 October of *bilieuse hématurique*, i.e. a liver ailment with red blood cells in the urine. He had been under the care of a military physician Dr. Philippe Bonavita and had been ill for twelve days before he died. Two other officers attended him during his last moments. Naval officials at Douala arranged for the funeral, which took place at the cathedral there (Figure 30) with full military honours, and Henri was buried at the cemetery at Douala. The letter, certified to be a correct copy, stamped and dated by the Red Cross on 9 February 1945, was subsequently forwarded to Mme. Vedel.

In a letter to Mme. Vedel, dated 26 December 1944

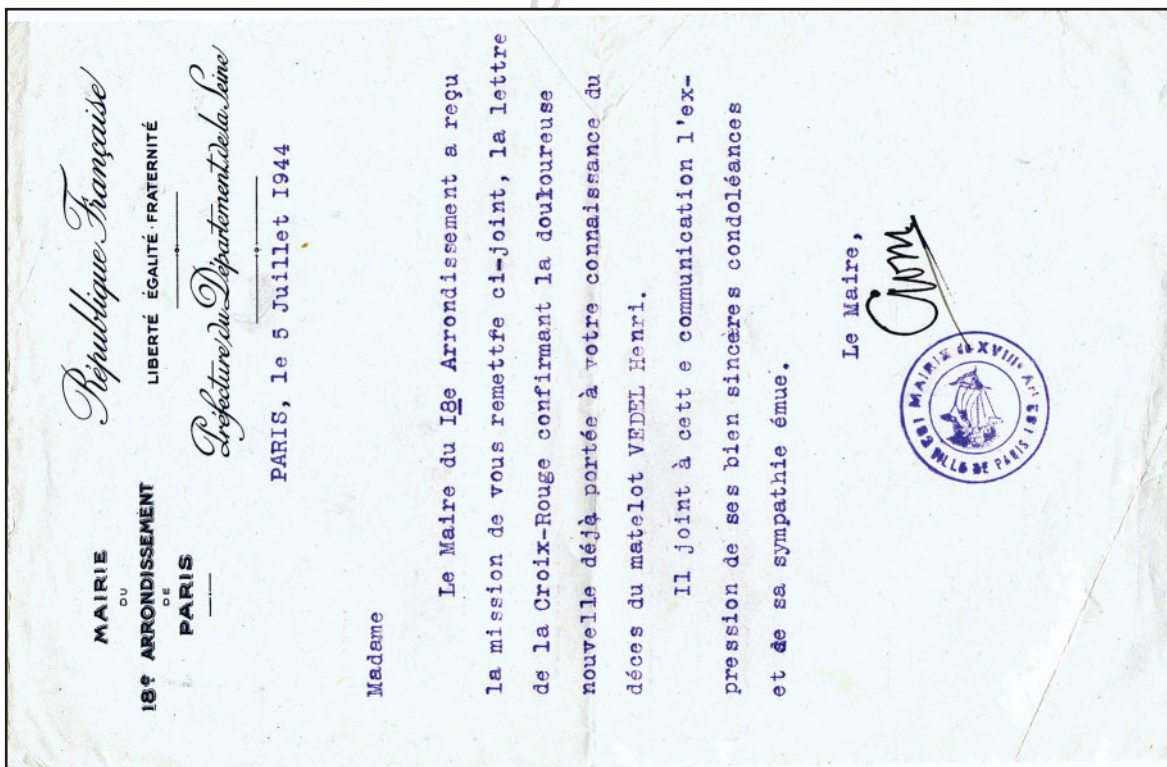


Figure 28

Letter dated 5 July 1944 from the mayor of the 18th Arrondissement, Paris to Mme. Vedel advising her of the death of Henri. As an aside, note the printed letterhead of *République Française / Liberté Égalité Fraternité*. Pétain had abolished the Third Republic four years earlier and had replaced the tripartite republican motto with that for the *État Français* – *Travail, Famille, Patrie*. Certainly not reflected here.

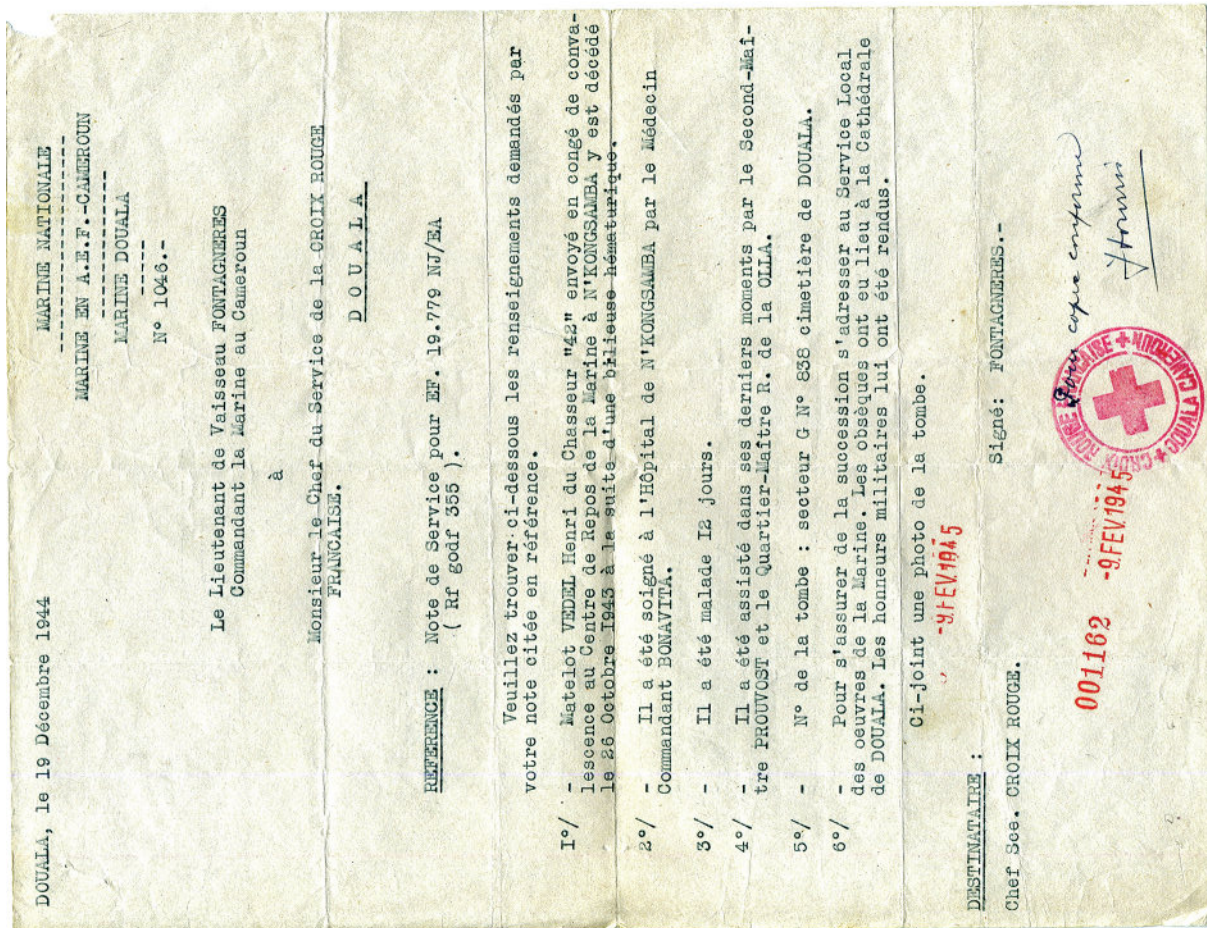


Figure 29

Certified copy of a letter dated 19 December 1944 from naval commandant at Douala to the head of the Red Cross, also at Douala. The letter, which summarises events in the days leading up to Henri's death, was forwarded to Mme. Vedel.

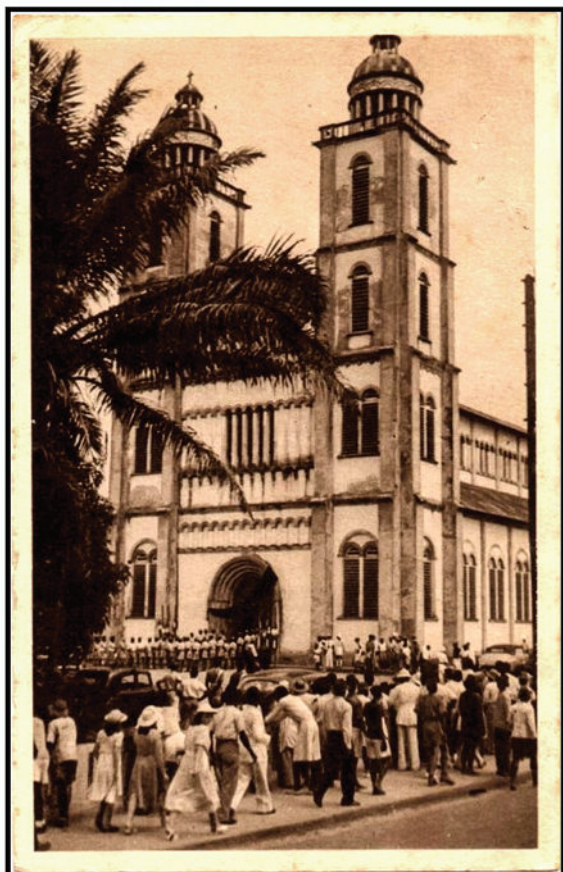


Figure 30
Douala Cathedral

(Figures 31 and 32), the Superior of the Catholic mission at N'Kongsamba, J. Ruer, tenderly tries to comfort her and provide information about Henri's last days. Henri had received permission to leave his ship and travel to N'Kongsamba, which had a more healthful climate than Douala. Ruer confirms the ailment which had taken so many in the colonies and that the doctor had given close personal attention to Henri. Ruer said that Henri spoke to him of his love for his mother. Henri seemed to be improving but took a sudden turn for the worse, Ruer administered the last rites, and Henri died peacefully. His coffin was covered with fresh flowers provided by the Sisters and the schoolchildren. Although we mourn, the priest said, we can take comfort in our faith.

In addition to the original handwritten letter from Ruer to Mme. Vedel, there are three typewritten copies in the file.

Mme. Vedel wrote to Dr. Bonavita. In his reply dated 14 February 1945, Dr. Bonavita tried to explain the illness that took Henri's life (Figure 33). He had administered what medications he could but felt helpless to provide satisfactory treatment. He also tried to provide sympathy and comfort, speaks of Henri's skill as *un spécialiste de la radio*, and that he died for France – *mort pour la France*.

The file contains the original handwritten letter plus a typewritten copy which has, on the back, the specific location of Henri's grave in the cemetery at Douala.

A letter dated 5 March 1945 from the *Direction du personnel militaire de la flotte* to Mme. Vedel certifies the place and date of radio telegraphist Henri's death with mention '*mort*

pour la France'.

In correspondence (Figure 34) dated 15 June 1945 from the Red Cross at Geneva, Mme. Vedel received a letter from the naval commandant at Douala and a photograph of Henri's grave.

A lady who had befriended Henri during his brief sojourn at N'Kongsamba sent a letter dated 6 October 1945 to Mme. Vedel (Figure 35). The sender had tried to take photos of Henri's grave at Douala but without good success and also expressed her condolences.

Not consoled, Mme. Vedel sought return of Henri's personal possessions and contacted the Red Cross in late 1945. In turn, General Mathis, Executive Officer for the Red Cross at Dakar, wrote to the Governor of Cameroun. However, the French navy no longer had a presence at Douala. Therefore, the Governor had sent General Mathis' letter and Mme. Vedel's query to the Red Cross representative at Douala. All the representative could do was to forward the correspondence to the naval commandant at Pointe-Noire, presuming that Henri's sought-after personal possessions had been turned over to the appropriate naval authority. Nonetheless, he had checked the possibility that the naval authorities had turned the items over to the civil authorities in Cameroun, but such was not the case. Also, Dr. Bonavita had been transferred, posting unknown, and furthermore it was doubtful whether he knew anything on the subject. Likewise, the administrator and his assistant for the Mungo Region, which included N'Kongsamba, had left Cameroun. All this was explained in a letter dated 18 June 1946 from the representative of the Red Cross at Douala back to the Secretary of the Red Cross delegation at Dakar (Figure 36).

The file contains other envelopes from the Red Cross at Dakar to Mme. Vedel. One is postmarked 14 June 1945 (Figure 37) and another postmarked April 1946. Neither has contents⁷.

Mme. Vedel had apparently written simultaneously to the civil central maritime service in Paris (*Service Central Maritime d'État-Civil*) regarding Henri's personal possessions. They, in turn, on 12 December 1945 wrote to the naval commandant at Pointe-Noire who, on 2 January 1946 wrote back advising that all estate items that they had for naval forces in A.E.F.- Cameroun had been shipped to the Service by seapost. Among these were two sealed packets inscribed with the name Vedel.

In a letter dated 2 July 1946 (Figure 38), the commandant at Pointe-Noire advised General Mathis at Dakar of the preceding and included certified copies of his 2 January 1946 letter and the inventory of Henri's possessions, made on 30 October 1943, shortly after his death. He further advised that all the documents had been sent to the staff general at Alger on 6 November 1943. The commandant

⁷ These two envelopes, plus another with uncertain postmark date, may have conveyed letters from the Red Cross at Dakar to Mme. Vedel, acknowledging receipt of her various enquiries. See, for example, the wording in the first paragraph of the letter in Figure 40. The specific responses to her enquiries were sent subsequently, for example, the correspondence depicted in Figures 36 and 40.



Figure 31 (above)

Envelope addressed by J. Ruer, the Supérieur at N'Kongsamba, Cameroun conveying a letter (Figure 32) to Mme. Vedel and endorsed by him on the front, lower left. The enclosed letter was dated 26 December 1944. The cover and letter were forwarded to the naval commandant at Douala who placed his authorising return address on the back. A boxed F.M. cachet and a circular cachet accompany the

Poste Naval postmark dated 3 January 1945.

Figure 32 (right)

Letter from J. Ruer to Mme. Vedel. The handwritten original was sent in the envelope depicted in Figure 31. For ease of reading, a typed copy, which was in the acquisition, is shown.

N'Kongsamba, le 26 décembre 1944

Madame,

Monsieur le Lieutenant de Vaisseau Fontagnères, commandant la Marine au Cameroun, vient de me faire part de votre désir de recevoir quelques renseignements sur la mort de votre fils Henri et me prie de vous adresser directement ces renseignements.

Etant le Supérieur de la Mission Catholique de N'Kongsamba, il m'a été donné de visiter votre fils durant la dernière maladie qui l'emporta. Laissez-moi d'abord vous dire combien je comprends votre douleur de mère dont le fils chéri est mort si loin d'elle et combien je prie le Bon Dieu de vous donner la grâce de supporter cette perte avec patience et résignation.

Votre fils, étant de passage à Douala avec son bateau, avait obtenu la permission de monter jusqu'à N'Kongsamba où le climat est plus salubre, pour se reposer durant quelque temps. Il y tomba malade d'une bilieuse, cette maladie qui emporte tant de colons. Il fut soigné d'une façon parfaite par le médecin-commandant Bonavita de N'Kongsamba qui passa plusieurs nuits à ses côtés. Moi-même, j'ai été le voir et Henri était heureux de ma visite que je renouvelais plusieurs fois. Il me parla de vous avec l'encour d'un fils pour sa mère chérie. A un moment, la maladie semblait se calmer et le docteur avait bon espoir. Puis, tout d'un coup, cela s'aggrava et des syncopes fréquentes me disaient rien de bon. Un matin, le mardi 26 octobre, on vint me chercher rapidement car Henri venait d'avoir une nouvelle syncope plus grave. J'accourus immédiatement et lui donnai les sacrements d'Extrema-Onction, mais à peine avais-je terminé que votre fils s'éteignit doucement sans douleur, entouré des quelques camarades qui étaient avec lui en permission. Ce doit donc être pour vous, Madame, un sujet de consolation qu'Henri ne soit pas parti complètement abandonné et qu'il ait pu recevoir les consolations de notre sainte religion. Aussitôt sa mort, j'avertis les sœurs qui travaillent à notre Mission et elles partirent avec les petits enfants européens qui vont en classe chez elles. Des fleurs couvrirent le cercueil de celui qui était mort pour coopérer à la libération de la France. Le lendemain, après une dernière absoute, le cercueil descendit à Douala; accompagné par un premier maître de la marine et c'est dans ce port du Cameroun que repose actuellement votre cher enfant.

Encore une fois, Madame, je m'unis à vous dans votre deuil et votre malheur: vous pouvez être fière d'Henri, ce jeune marin qui dans nos temps troublés, a suivi le chemin de l'honneur. Ce chemin, j'en suis persuadé, l'a conduit au ciel où il vous attend et où vous le reverrez, car vous chrétiens, la mort est une séparation douloureuse, mais qui aura une fin. Au Ciel, nous nous reconnaitrons et nous reconnaitrons surtout ceux que nous avons le plus aimé ici-bas.

Veillez croire, Madame, à mes sympathiques condoléances et à mes prières pour vous et tous les vôtres.

RUER
Supérieur Mission Catholique
N'KONGSAMBA

N'Kongsamba, le 14 février 1945

Madame,

Je réponds à votre lettre me demandant des détails sur la maladie de votre regretté enfant que j'ai soigné, en vain malheureusement, pendant les douze jours durant lesquels il a lutté contre son tragique destin. Votre fils Henri était venu au repos pour quelques jours à N'Kongsamba, son chasseur étant mobilisé à Douala. La vie est rude sur ces petits bâtiments dans les mers tropicales. Il venait d'arriver depuis 2 ou 3 jours, lorsque sur le coup de midi la fièvre bilieuse s'est déclarée. La bilieuse est une maladie coloniale... ou plus exactement une maladie qui survient chez les colons, car ceux-ci en sont atteints même pendant leur séjour en France, maladie qui provoque la destruction des globules rouges; l'hémoglobine dont sont composés ces globules rouges du sang est alors éliminée par les reins et passe dans les urines qui sont rouges couleur vin, c'est pourquoi le nom de cette maladie est fièvre bilieuse hémoglobinnique. Cette affection est assez fréquente et hélas souvent mortelle. L'année où j'ai soigné votre fils, j'en ai soigné 3 cas, un seul a survécu, c'était un jeune enfant de 8 ans. Deux lésions si je puis m'exprimer ainsi sont cause du décès du malade dans cette maladie. D'abord l'anémie intense consécutive à la destruction massive des globules rouges; le malade devient comme un blessé qui saigne sans arrêt, perdant la majeure partie de son sang sans que son organisme que le temps de le reconstituer; enfin la seconde cause est le blocage des reins et le malade s'en va d'urémie par manque total d'élimination urinaire. Pardonnez-moi ce long exposé, Madame, mais j'ai compris que vous étiez avide de connaître cette maladie terrible qui avait emporté votre cher enfant, et j'ai fait de mon mieux pour vous la faire comprendre. Dès que votre fils est tombé malade un de ses camarades est venu me chercher. Ma demeure est à 50 m. du centre de repos de la Marine, c'est vous dire qu'il ne m'a pas fallu longtemps pour me rendre auprès de lui et lui donner les soins nécessaires. C'était une forme très grave accompagnée d'une fièvre élevée (41°). Je lui administrai sur le champ du sérum antihémorragique sous Glucosé, enfin tous les médicaments utiles en pareil cas. Dès cet instant votre fils Henri est demeuré dans sachambre, étant trop gravement atteint pour pouvoir être transporté ailleurs. Un service de garde était organisé et les infirmiers se relayaient jour et nuit. Votre fils avait toute sa conscience mais dès le début mon pronostic était sombre car il n'urinaît presque pas. Je fis dès lors tous mes efforts pour essayer d'amener une réaction plus abondante de ses reins. Au 6^e jour de sa maladie, ses camarades le pensaient sauvé car il était sorti de son abattement et quoique faible paraissait volontiers avec eux. Mais le fait que ses reins refusaient un fonctionnement normal me faisait redouter le pire. Malheureusement il retomba le lendemain et je perdais tout espoir. Les reins me paraissaient irrémédiablement bloqués. Il a duré et lutté 5 jours encore. Naturellement, étant donné la gravité de son état, j'allai le voir plusieurs fois par jour et par nuit. Il ne parlait pas beaucoup, ce n'était pas une nature expansive, et du reste, la maladie l'abaissait beaucoup. Il m'avait néanmoins dit que vous étiez veuve de guerre et qu'il était votre seul soutien. Il a naturellement prononcé maintes fois le mot de "Maman" au cours des derniers jours,

Figure 33

Letter from Dr. Bonavita to Mme. Vedel dated 14 February 1945. The original is handwritten. For ease of reading, a typed copy, which was in the acquisition, is shown. On the reverse of the second sheet is the reference to the location of Henri's grave.

mais sans pouvoir s'expliquer plus amplement, étant tellement abattu. Il n'a pas beaucoup souffert, sauf pendant les 2 premiers jours à la période algide. Un prêtre catholique lui a donné les derniers sacrements "in extremis". Sa chambre a été transformée par les bonnes sœurs en chapelle ardente remplie de fleurs et de couronnes de fleurs fraîches. Ses camarades l'ont veillé tout le jour et la mise en bière a eu lieu le soir en ma présence. Le cercueil a été veillé la nuit et amené par voiture à Douala dans la matinée où des obsèques solennelles se sont déroulées en présence des autorités militaires et civiles. Son acte de décès porte la mention "mort pour la France" ce qui je le pense vous ouvre un droit à pensions puisque votre fils était votre soutien. C'est une chose à ne pas négliger, dans ces périodes difficiles que tous les Français traversent, où tout est si cher et où la vie matérielle est un souci quotidien. Vous me demandez s'il se ressentait de sa blessure, je ne le pense pas car il ne m'en a pas parlé, ses camarades m'ont dit qu'il avait été blessé à la jambe par un éclat sans gravité. Mais au Gabon il avait été souvent malade et très impaludé, il faut voir là une origine de la maladie qui l'a emporté. Je ne puis vous mettre en relation avec ses camarades qui du reste l'aimaient beaucoup, ni avec ses chefs qui l'appréciaient énormément car il était devenu quoique jeune un excellent spécialiste de la radio. Le Ministère de la Marine pourra sans doute vous donner tous les renseignements que vous pouvez désirer. Je suppose qu'on vous remettra ses affaires, si ce n'est déjà fait, qui se trouvaient sur son bateau, car il n'était venu à N'Kongsamba qu'avec une petite valise, sa permission étant de courte durée.

Je m'excuse, Madame, d'avoir ainsi ravivé votre douleur par tous ces détails, j'ai moi-même quoi que endurci par mon métier sié ému de remuer ce souvenir de la mort prématurée d'un bon et brave garçon. La vie sous les tropiques est rude, Madame, et vous ne vous doutez pas en France des sacrifices de jeunes hommes qu'exige le maintien de notre pavillon dans ces régions riches mais insalubres. Votre Henri n'est pas seul à avoir payé du suprême sacrifice la garde de notre empire. Trop nombreux sont les jeunes hommes, ses frères d'armes, qui reposent côte à côte au cimetière de Douala, emportés dans leur jeunesse des suites des fatigues, des privations des cruelles journées de mer sous un ciel implacable. Leur mort n'est pas moins glorieuse et méritoire que celle des autres jeunes hommes qui sont tombés sur un champ de bataille sous les coups de l'ennemi. Les uns et les autres sont "Morts pour la France".

Puisse cela Madame être une consolation à la grande douleur devant laquelle je m'incline avec une respectueuse sympathie. Croyez que je m'efforcerais à votre disposition pour tout ce qui pourrait vous être utile et veuillez accepter mes hommages dévoués.

Médecin Commandant BONAVITA - N'Kongsamba - Cameroun

Lieu d'inhumation

Secteur G Tombe n° 83p

Plan du Cimetière de

Douala

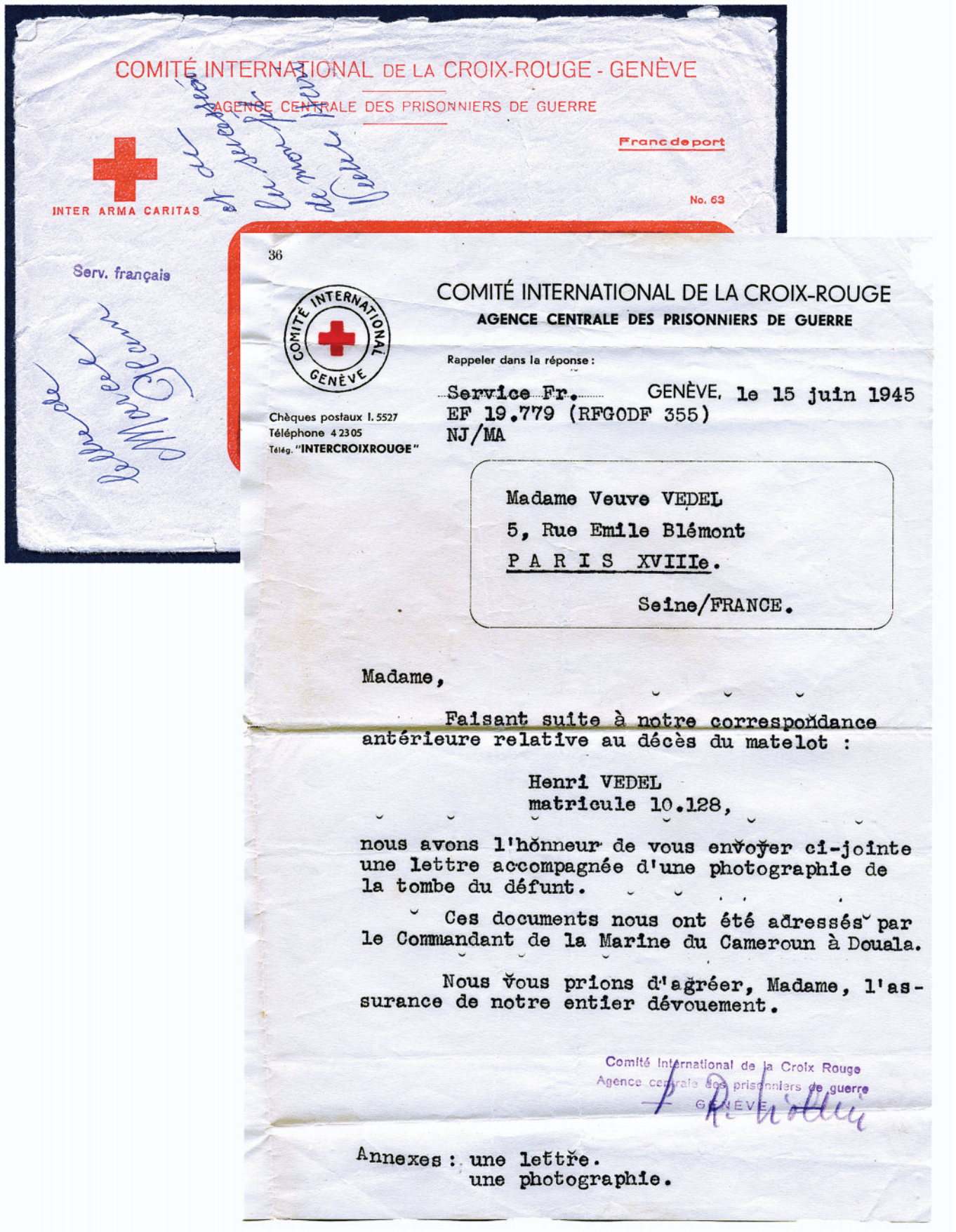


Figure 34

Letter dated 15 June 1945 from the Red Cross, Geneva, to Mme. Vedel conveying a letter from the naval commandant at Douala and a photo (regrettably not in the file) of Henri's grave.



Figure 35

Registered air mail letter postmarked Nkongsamba 6 October 1945 to Mme. Vedel conveying further information about Henri's last days.

CROIX ROUGE FRANCAISE

C A M E R O U N

N°.....

Douala, le 18 Juin 1946

Monsieur le Secrétaire

DELEGATION GENERALE DE LA CROIX ROUGE FRANCAISE

D A K A R

Succésion

Henri VEDEL

matelot décédé

à Kongsamba (Cameroun)

le 26 oct. 1943

La Marine Nationale n'existant plus au Cameroun, ni aucun représentant des œuvres de la Marine Monsieur le Gouverneur a transmis au Comité Croix-Rouge qui subsiste encore à Douala la correspondance de Monsieur le Général MATHIS demandant à ce que satisfaction soit donnée aux demandes très légitimes exposées par Madame Maria VEDEL (5 rue Emile BLEMONT VIII en PARIS) tendant à rentrer en possession des objets personnels de son fils Henri VEDEL.

Ce jeune homme est décédé au Cameroun et il est à supposer que tout ce qui lui appartenait fut appréhendé par le Curateur aux Biens vacants, c'est à dire par l'Intendant de la Marine puisque le défunt était mari matelot.

Comme tous les représentants de la Marine Nationale ont quitté le Cameroun, je n'ai pu faire mieux que de transmettre au Commandant de la Marine à POINTE NOIRE la correspondance sus-dite du Général et la lettre de Madame VEDEL.

Pendant toutefois que la Marine, en quittant le Cameroun aurait peut-être confié les objets recherchés à l'Administrateur des Colonies qui fait fonction de Curateur aux biens vacants pour les civils, je l'ai interrogé, mais vainement ; il ne détiend rien.

Quant au Docteur BONAVIDA (médecin militaire) qui assista Henri VEDEL au cours de sa dernière maladie, il n'est plus au Cameroun depuis une quinzaine de mois et je ne sais où il a été muté. Il serait d'ailleurs douteux qu'il sache quelque chose à ce sujet. J'en dirais autant de l'Administrateur Chef de Région et de son adjoint à l'époque, tous deux ont quitté le Cameroun définitivement.

Je suis au regret de ne pouvoir rien pour cette dame dont je comprends les regrets de n'avoir pu retrouver les objets qu'elle réclame. Si jamais j'en trouvais trace, je lui en ferais part.

Douala, le 18 Juin 1946

C A M E R O U N

N°.....

Monsieur le Secrétaire

DELEGATION GENERALE DE LA CROIX ROUGE FRANCAISE

D A K A R

Succésion

Henri VEDEL

matelot décédé

(Cameroun)

le 26 oct. 1943

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Figure 36

Certified copy (prepared 31 August 1946) of a letter dated 18 June 1946 from the representative of the Red Cross at Douala to the Secretary of the Red Cross delegation at Dakar. See also the letter in Figure 40.



Figure 37 (above)
Registered cover from the Red Cross, postmarked Dakar
14 June 1945 to Mme. Vedel.

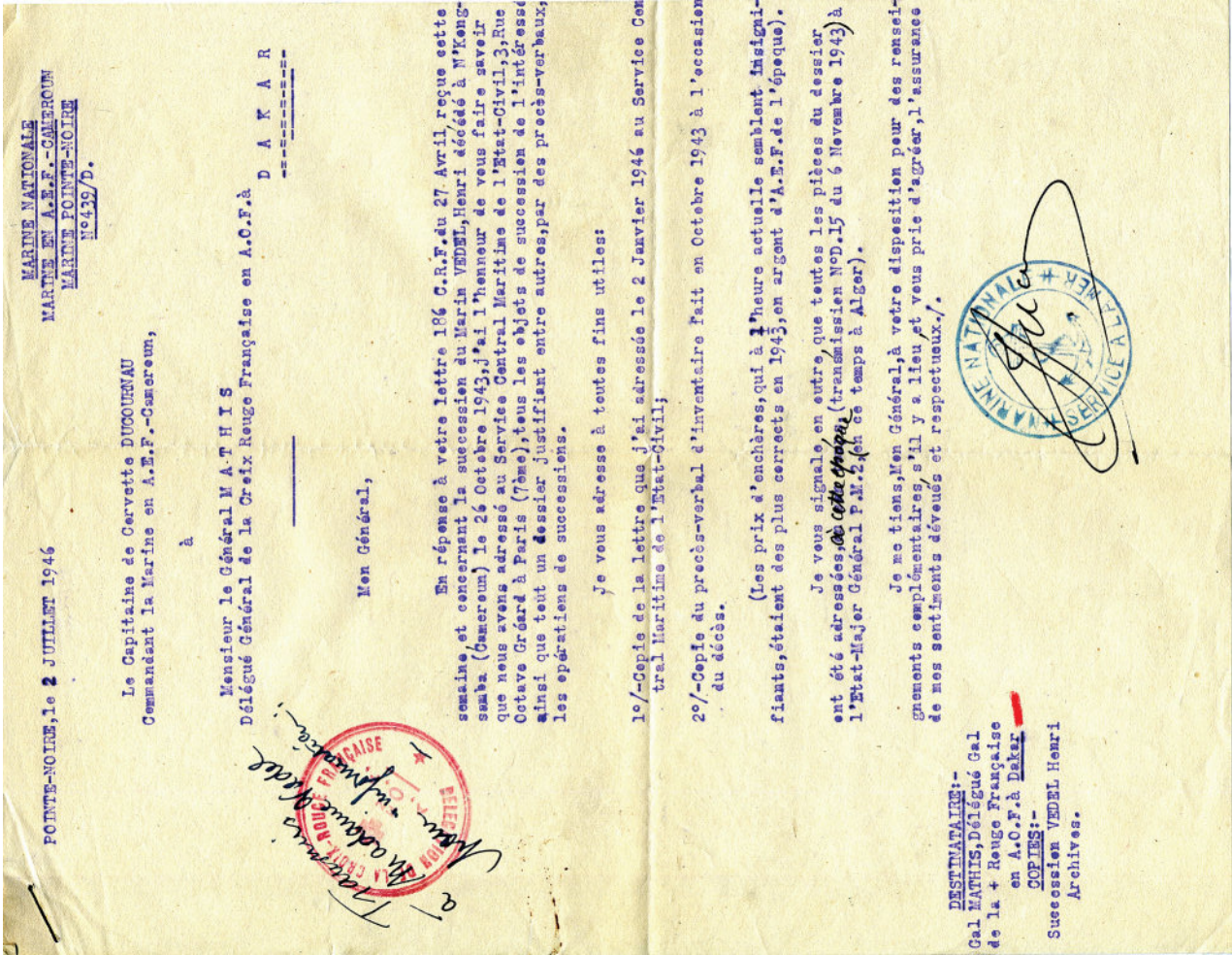


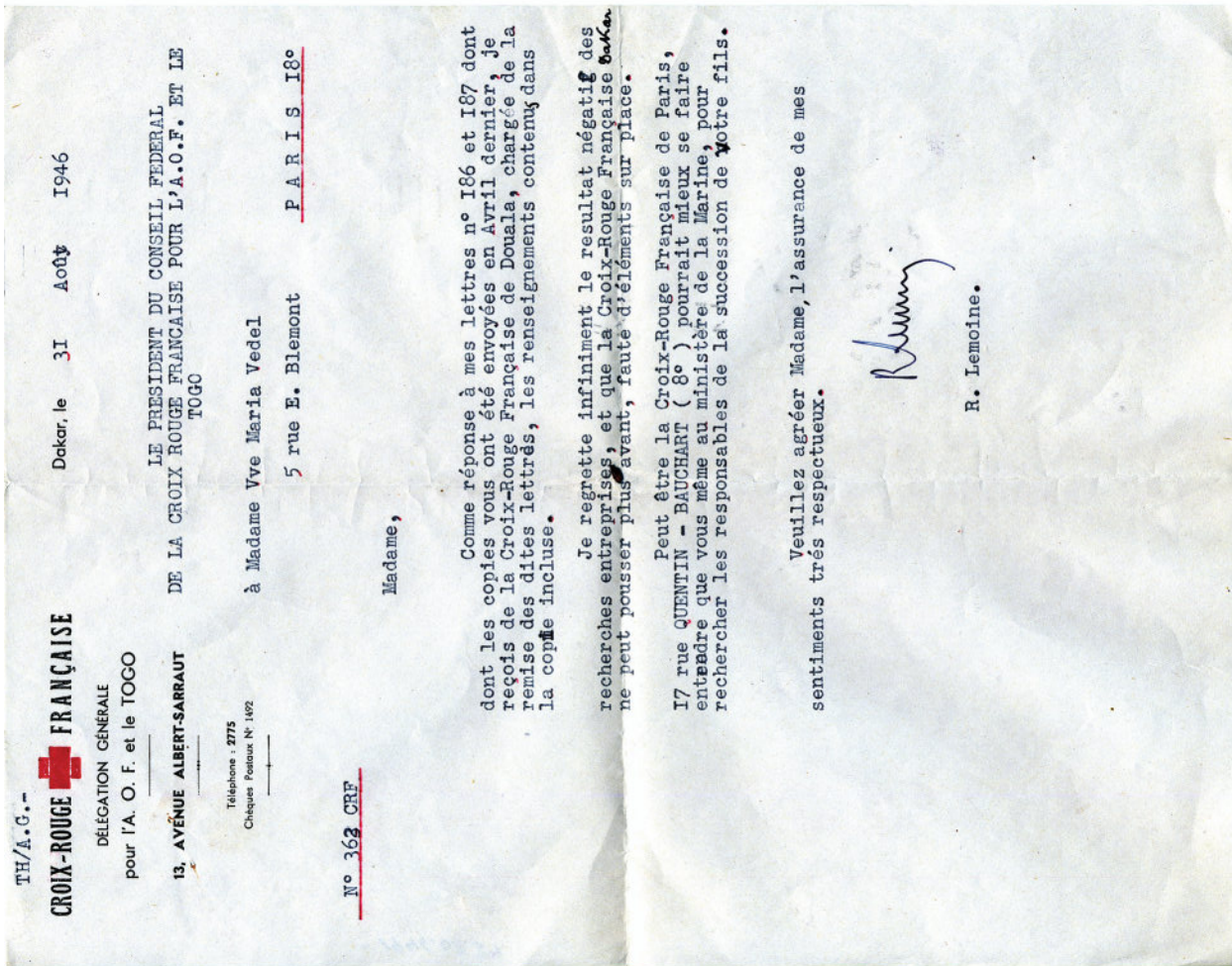
Figure 38 (right)
Letter dated 2 July 1946 from the naval commandant at Pointe-Noire to the head of the Red Cross at Dakar regarding the disposition of Henri's possessions. A copy of the letter was forwarded to Mme. Vedel.



Figure 39 (above)

British O.H.M.S. envelope that contained two identity cards issued to Henri as well as his passport. The envelope had been officially sealed by Ensign Birden of the Chasseur 42 *Larmol*⁸. A wax seal and additional circular cachets were applied to the back. A second, identical envelope contained a packet of personal letters which were also returned to Mme. Vedel.

Figure 40 (right)
Letter dated 31 August 1946 from the Red Cross at Dakar to Mme. Vedel accompanying the letter depicted in Figure 36.



⁸ Information about Jean Henri Birden can be accessed through Ref. 16. Born 9 July 1919, Birden was less than a year older than Henri Vedel. Birden had a distinguished naval career, rising to the rank of *contre-amiral* / rear admiral. He left active service on 10 October 1971 and died 9 January 2001



Figure 41

Registered cover to Mme. Vedel from the *Bureau Spécial des Pensions Militaires de la Marine*, postmarked Toulon-sur-Mer 20 June 1950. The envelope was sent sealed / *clos par nécessité* to ensure confidentiality of the enclosed documents. The envelope was turned, having previously been used to send a letter to the naval authorities at Toulon.

sent a copy of his letter to Mme. Vedel.

Two British O.H.M.S. envelopes, each handstamped by the commander of the *Chasseur 42 Larmor* but undated, were eventually forwarded to Mme. Vedel with some of Henri's personal items (Figure 39). One contained a packet of personal correspondence and the other his passport and two identity cards issued in 1941 and 1943. Several of the covers illustrated in this study must have been included in the one packet. Presumably Henri's *livret de solde*, discussed earlier, was also returned at this time, as was his medal awarded for having been wounded. Both had been recorded in the above-noted inventory.

That said, the Red Cross at Dakar sent a letter (Figure 40), dated 31 August 1946, to Mme. Vedel advising of their lack of success in locating the desired information for her, and enclosing a certified copy of the reply (refer back to Figure 36), dated 18 June 1946, received from their representative at Douala. Apparently the letter writer at Dakar had not seen the letter and attachments sent on 2 July 1946 by the commandant at Pointe-Noire to General Mathis!

Epilogue

A completed form, dated 24 March 1950 and sent by the *Bureau Spécial des Pensions Militaires de la Marine* at Toulon to Mme. Vedel advises her that she would be receiving 17,000 francs. A follow-up form, dated 16 June 1950 apparently provides a correction to the amount. The envelope (Figure 41) transmitting this follow-up form was turned, having originally been sent on 5 June 1950 to the *Bureau Spécial de la Marine* at Toulon. Envelopes must have been in short supply.

The last correspondence in the file is two letters, dated 30 December 1950 and 17 January 1951 from a monument maker to Mme. Vedel. He quotes prices for a proper monument to be placed in the family's burial plot in Vénénobres, a small village southeast of Alès, recognizing Henri, including an enameled photo in a medallion and a plinth to be placed under his plaque from Cameroun. There is no mention whether Henri's remains had been brought back to France and re-interred, but it seems likely.

Henri's Siblings

The acquisition about Henri also contained some correspondence between Mme. Vedel and various other relatives, including Henri's brother Julien Vedel and his half-brother Justin Roussel. They too were in service to France during World War II.

Julien was in a POW camp at Øvre-Årdal, Norway. He may have been captured at Narvik in 1940. A registered air mail special delivery letter dated 14 May 1944 that he sent to his mother has several chemical washes looking for secret writing. Another letter, dated 29 June 1945, from the French legation in Stockholm to Julien informs us that Julien was in Sala, Sweden and was to travel by train to Göteborg and depart from there on the steamship *Drottningholm* on 10 July. From this, we can conclude that, after his release from the POW camp in Norway, repatriation was via Sweden and he was undoubtedly reunited with his mother.

Several letters from Justin inform us that he was with the army in the Rhône in September 1939 and early 1940.

The fates of Mme. Vedel's other children are not known. She may have had a daughter, but this cannot be confirmed from the correspondence in the file.

Further Information

Only selected items from the acquisition have been presented here. The other material is available for study, upon application to the author.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Michael Wright for providing a copy of the cover in Figure 1. Profound thanks are especially extended to Maurice Tyler for reading and providing the gist of selected letters – the handwriting was beyond me! Maurice also provided insight into some of the subtleties of the meaning of various French words and phraseology, for example, explaining the *mention marginale* on Henri's birth certificate. With Maurice's generous assistance and insight, Henri's story has been more properly told and better appreciated. Last but not least, thanks to Mick Bister for his adroit editing skills which certainly improved the overall presentation.

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N° 193 Oct 2017: L'oblitération des timbres 1849-1945 (Singeot); Les timbres coupés de l'Oxus (Monteret); Les Trente Glorieuses quel paysage pour le timbre français? (Nowacka); Navigation philatélique en eau douce III (de Pellinre); Les Vignettes de l'école Pigier (Gomez); Des lettres pour les Deux-Siciles (de La Mettrie); "Monsieur De Lespée là où il sera! (Baudot); Le rayon frontier (Prugnon).

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N° 370 (3^{ème} Trim 2017, Sep 2017): La rubrique Daguin: Les premières dates connues en province (Cas); Des nouvelles de Paris assiégé pendant la guerre de 1870-1871 (Ibert), Identification d'une boîte rurale rt de sa lettre timbre (Atelier Histoire de la Poste en milieu rural); Histoire de la double relation postale du Principat d'ANDORRA, Chap II: En cette fin du XIX^e siècle la tentative avortée d'une émission de timbres-poste et l'apparition d'un vrai faux cahet «muet» (Dupré); Un Alsacien en mauvaise posture à Verviers (1917-1918) (Flotte); Timbres à date français avec mentions «Aérien-Aérodrome-Aérogare-Aéroport-Aéropostale-Aviation-Avion» (3^{ème} partie - fin) (Lavenas); Usage détourné du timbre du décime rural supplémentaire en guise de timbre de taxe locale (Lebecque); Timbres «EXPRESS» et «DISTRIBUTION PAR PORTEUR SPÉCIAL» (2^{ème} partie) (Guillard & Abensur).

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SOUTH OF SUEZ

O. Dahl

(Revisited by Michael Round)

*When researching actual usage of stamps, especially in out-of-the-way places, there can be fewer more reliable sources than a philatelist "on the spot." Here, of particular interest to members collecting **French Somali Coast**, are the findings of a collector, Mr O Dahl, living on the Horn of Africa during World War Two. They first appeared in 'The Stamp Lover', organ of the National Philatelic Society (Oct-Nov 1944, pp 58-9). The original article was unillustrated: I have added a few scans from my collection and from that of Mick Bister. I have also added current SG and Yvert catalogue numbers, partly for reference and partly for readers to check how far, if at all, Mr Dahl's predictions of scarcity were fulfilled! - MR*

During the last two years it has been my fate to live in various places in Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Somalilands. Though these two years have to a large extent consisted of unpleasant journeys by dhow, cattle ships, slow, dirty trains and rickety lorries, though it has been a period of much heat and sweat and too often of filth and flies, nevertheless I have been fortunate enough to see the recent history of these remote parts unfolded in the language of philately. Even now, as I sit on my verandah overlooking the Gulf of Tadjurah, I can see in front of the Governor's Palace, that battered hulk in which the survivors left Obock after most of the Europeans had been massacred there many years ago; while in that cluster of warehouses is the office of an Arab merchant where I once found a brown envelope on which were two triangular Obock stamps in perfect condition.

When France fell, Djibouti was in the hands of the Vichy-

ists and for two years suffered a blockade, during which the population lived on durra [*sorghum* – MR] and haricot beans, and held no communication with the outside world. When the blockade was lifted there was instituted a special air service from Madagascar via Djibouti to Khartoum. The existing Djibouti stamps were used on the first planes (the Governor Lagarde and the Mosque sets). A special cachet was used and not more than a few hundred letters were sent. If you are lucky enough to get one of these covers you have indeed found a real philatelic rarity (**Figure 1**).

Fifty-Five Times Face Value!

There are only 800 Europeans in French Somaliland, apart from the army, and there is only one post office which, of course, is in Djibouti. There are seldom more than two or three bags of mail per week. Thus Djibouti stamps have always been rare, and when a set of French Somaliland stamps overprinted "France Libre" was produced, they were immediately sought by collectors (**Figure 2**). The French authorities, however, are very strict with regard to the export of stamps and very few found their way on to the London market. The set, which has a face value of 6/6, soon commanded a high price and is now being sold at £18 mint in England. I have never seen a used set offered for sale, and it is of great satisfaction to me that I received such quantities of these stamps on my business letters that I was able to complete one set in fine used condition as well as to have a large quantity of odd values for exchange purposes.



Figure 1

"...a real philatelic rarity..." , A cover from the post blockade period with a cachet marking the first airmail connections (22 January-17 February 1945) between Djibouti and four other Free French territories. Interesting but not really a philatelic rarity.



Figure 2
One of 59 stamps overprinted 'FRANCE LIBRE'
(SG 325, Yvert 201).



Figure 3
"...picture of a steam engine..." 'France Libre' pictorial definitives, designed by Edmond Dulac and, according to the catalogues, issued in 1943 (SG 361/74, Yv 234/47).

The definitive set with its picture of a steam engine (Figure 3) was on sale in London and I understand there were many buyers. In fine used condition, however, this set should be well worth acquiring, especially the lower values from 5 centimes to 2frs. 50c., as the lowest postal charge is 4 francs (Figure 4). Two other sets have appeared this year which were for use in all French colonies. In each case only 1000 stamps were allotted to Djibouti, and thus a fine cover with a Djibouti postmark is well worth looking for. The first set was inscribed "Aide aux Combattants". Though I

have seen pictures of the first five values of this set, I have not yet seen the top value illustrated in any magazine. This stamp is a very large one with a blue Cross of Lorraine and it has a face value of 100 francs (Figure 5). Even here I doubt if I have seen more than half a dozen copies. The second set consisted of a single stamp inscribed "Oeuvres de Guerre" and it had a face value of 50 francs [probably SG 88, Yvert 66, though this item is actually inscribed "Oeuvres de Solidarité Française" - MR]. As nobody was allowed to purchase more than two copies of both these two sets,



Figure 4
"....the lowest postal charge is 4 francs". Here is a cover dated 28 April 1945 to Aden Camp bearing such a franking which had been the foreign surface letter rate since 1 February 1942. The surface rate to France at the time was 1 franc 50.



Figure 5 (left)

The large “100f” stamp (actually 1f50 + 98f50) nowadays catalogued under ‘General Colonies’ (SG 87, Yv 65). Very few were actually used in, or even sent to, the colonies.



Figure 6 (above)

Received “just lately,” the Dulac-designed airmail set (SG 295/301, Yv PA 1/7), accompanying the postage values (Figure 3). Yvert suggests an issue date of 1943: SG’s date of 1941 perhaps relates to their first appearance in France.

used specimens on cover must be very rare indeed. Just lately Djibouti has received the new airmail set, which is in the same design as the other colonies of the Fighting French (Figure 6). Once again it is exceedingly difficult to find used copies of the two top values. There are only two or three firms in Djibouti which have a large outward mail and it is very seldom that a letter bears as much as 100 francs postage.

In Djibouti we have had a steady flow of letters from Madagascar. It is interesting to note that the latest Supplement to Part II of Gibbons’s catalogue lists the definitive Madagascar set but mentions only two stamps overprinted “France Libre”. In actual fact there are as many overprinted stamps as there are in the Cameroons or French Equatorial Africa. Particularly interesting are the airmail series (Aeroplane and map of Madagascar). I think I am correct in stating that the 50 francs of this series [SG 253, Yv. PA 51] has the highest value of any of the “France Libre” stamps. Even without the overprint [SG 176, Yv PA 14] the used stamp was catalogued at 15s. and thus it seems likely that the stamp with the overprint will become a most desirable item for those who collect the stamps of the war.

Great Britain Used in Abyssinia

Two days’ journey from Djibouti, eight thousand feet above sea level, stands Addis Ababa. When the war started Ethiopia was using the stamps of Italian East Africa and a special Italian issue for Abyssinia itself. After the Allies had entered Addis Ababa for a short time British stamps were used by civilians as well as by the army. I have seen a cover with a full set of Great Britain to the 1s. on it postmarked Addis Ababa. The person who showed me the envelope asked £5, which I considered too expensive for something that is little more than a historical relic. It was not long, however, before the first Haile Selassie set was issued in three values, 4, 10 and 20 centimes. These stamps were printed by the Nasik Press, but the value tablets were left

blank and filled in later at Khartoum [SG Ethiopia 323/5]. There were several errors in the Amharic wording of these values, but I doubt if they will be of much interest to collectors. Throughout history there have been so many errors and misprints on Ethiopian stamps that it would be a life’s work to collect them all. Certainly the errors have never been catalogued and it is doubtful if they ever could be without patient research.

The second Haile Selassie set had the values inserted at the time the stamps were printed. There are eight values, 4, 8, 10, 12, 20, 25, 50 and 60 centimes [SG 326/33]. As the ordinary air mail postage is 70 centimes for 5 grammes, it will be appreciated that this series does not adequately cover the postal needs of the country. Every week the outward mail is plastered with stamps, often as many as forty or fifty on one envelope. At the present moment the Ethiopian authorities are considering two new series, one ordinary and one airmail, each with eight values up to \$2 or \$5. One provisional set was issued this year and once again I have not seen it catalogued anywhere. It consisted of five of the Haile Selassie stamps overprinted to commemorate the setting up of an obelisk which was erected in honour of the British soldiers who relieved Addis Ababa [SG 334/8].

Nearly eight hundred miles from the Ethiopian capital, along a mountainous road which contains some of the most magnificent scenery in the world, stands Asmara, a living monument to the fallen greatness that once was Italy. Eritrea, since the defeat of the Italians, has been administered by the British military authorities and for that reason it uses British stamps overprinted M.E.F. The old Cairo printing of this series did not last long as the top value of 5d. was insufficient for any heavy mail. In the Cairo printing there are numerous variations, especially in the full stops, some of which are round and some square. These do not yet appear to have been catalogued* and I am keeping a large packet of these varieties against the day when one can more accurately assess their value. The London printing now current

has nine values and I should recommend any interested collector to make a point of obtaining fine used copies of the 2d., 9d. and 2s. 6d. as these are very difficult to find.

Around the block of territory of Ethiopia, Eritrea and French Somaliland there is a ring of British or British protected countries. To my office in Addis Ababa there flows a continuous stream of stamps from the Sudan, Aden, Kenya, British Somaliland, with occasionally some E.A.F. stamps from Mogadischu or some of the new Aden stamps from Mukhalla or Seiyun. To most readers of this article names like Berbera, Massawa, Dire Dawa and Djibouti are names of history and romance, but to us who work in these parts the truth is apparent in the dictum of an old sea captain, who said that it was much better to see these places on the films or collect their stamps, because that was the only way to avoid the heat and the stink.

One of my great difficulties is that although I have vast quantities of highly desirable stamps, there seems to be

no way of getting rid of them in exchange, owing to war-time regulations. When the war is over and I can bring my stamps to England I intend to have an orgy of selling through the clubs and dealers. I shall then put all the money I make into fine copies of the British line-engraved and early surface-printed stamps. There is something eminently comforting about the "Penny Black", something one associates with muffins, and antimacassars, and blazing coal fires, and the London fog, and the warmth that means England to us exiles out here. But the 10 francs Djibouti "France Libre" [SG 341, Yv 231], valuable though it may be, will always be a reminder of the salt-swept barren rocks and the pitiless sun glaring on the deep blue sea that has been my daily portion in French Somaliland.

* *The M.E.F. overprints are of course catalogued now, by SG under British Occupation of Italian Colonies, Middle East Forces. The Cairo overprints with square stops are SG Nos M1/5, with round stops M6/10 and the London printing M11/19. - MR*

SHORTER ITEMS - INCLUDING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1902 annotation curiosity



The above cover is an unsealed 5c Blanc postal stationery envelope cancelled 27 January 1902 which contained a visiting card. It has been posted at the Paris 30 office in the Boulevard Diderot and addressed to a recipient in the Avenue Daumesnil; both are located in the 12th arrondissement.

Two unsuccessful attempts have been made to deliver the item and these are recorded on the reverse by two signed XII/4 postman's marks from Office 12 in the Rue Erard. On the front, the same office has applied a return to sender strike but with its pre-1901 office number 23. So far the item appears to have circulated solely within the 12th arrondissement.

However, the cover is countersigned in red with what appears to be the name of the supervisor 'Reynaud' and his location. 'G de PLM', (Gare de PLM), which is in the 7th arrondissement. According to de Vries and van der Vlist in their 'Les Bureaux de Poste de Paris' the station was a *bureau annexe* designated to the Paris 30 office above and which may explain the item's detour.

But, according to the same authors, at the time of the above correspondence the *bureau annexe* was known as the *Gare de Lyon* (PGL) and only became known as *Paris Gare P.L.M.* from 1910. Furthermore, what is the significance of the pen stroke resembling a tax mark but unidentifiable either as a letter or a numeral?

Mick Bister

Mauritania: The 1F50 Brown-Red



Possibly uniquely among the engraved French Colonial pictorials of the time, the Mauritania 1F50 brown-red of 1940 (SG 100a, Yvert 112A) is priced out of all proportion to the rest of the set (currently £140).

Yvert, Scott, Michel and Maury all price this stamp mint and used, Maury also on cover for good measure – yet Yvert lists (or certainly used to list) this stamp in italics, normally indicating an unissued item. If so, legitimately used copies should not exist.

This item was discussed in two places hard to find in the literature and therefore worth recapitulating. The first reference came in the *Bulletin Philatélique du Midi* (November 1946, pp 3-4), the second – quoting it – from Robert G Stone in the US society journal *France & Colonies Philatelist*. The Stone reference could easily be overlooked: it was somehow omitted from the society's later cumulative

index (1981), and its location (Whole N° 118, September 1964, p 15) was further clouded by a wrong numbering of the relevant issue as part of Volume 21 rather than the correct Volume 22!

Stone, confusingly calling it “a reprint” (not the same thing), considered the brown-red as a change of colour simply left unannounced at the time of issue – hard to believe, given the appearance of three other colour-changes on the same date (5 March). On perhaps surer ground, he remarked that this value “was almost gone before anyone noticed. Only about 4,000-5,000 were sold, mainly in March 1947” – a useful piece of new information if true, post-dating as it did the original *Bulletin Philatélique du Midi* reference of 1946.

I ventured to suggest to Stanley Gibbons that this item, being (as I thought) unissued, should only be priced mint. I am glad they took no notice. Mint are not hard to find, but I wonder how many covers – or even loose used – exist? Given the value of the mint item if left alone, fake cancels are unlikely to prevail.

Michael Round

Unissued ‘Peace’ design



A query has been received from non-member Grace Davies FRPSL who has recently acquired a proof of an unadopted ‘Peace’ issue designed by Edmond Dulac and engraved by Raoul Serres. She says that any information about this issue would be very much appreciated.

The design is mentioned in ‘*Ceux qui créent nos timbres - Tome III*’ published by *Le Monde des Philatélistes* in 1956. In the chapter on Raoul Serres’ work the design is illustrated under the title ‘*Paix*’ and is stated to have been engraved in 1944.

Mick Bister

FRANCE CATALOGUES 2018

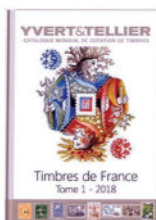
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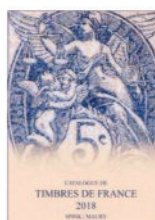
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Cabolé - Dahomey et Dépendances



I specialise in West African colonies postmarks to 1907 and have just acquired this stamp via Delcampe. I shall be most grateful if you could please publish the attached scan in an attempt to find out from any member whether they know where this cds comes from or indeed anything about

this post office. I have never heard of or seen any reference to CABOLE – DAHOMEY ET DEPENDANCES in my extensive library of reference books, neither does a Google search return any information whatsoever! This is a mystery.....

Simon Binsted

Have you tried these websites? They all mention **Cabole**, sometimes with the alternative spellings of **Kaboli** or **Kambole**.

It may be difficult to find the information on these pages but the summaries I have found (via Google) refer to them clearly. Here is the page of sites I found:

- **Full text of “Dahomey” - Internet Archive**

archive.org/stream/dahomey00grea/dahomey00grea_djvu.txt

“The Niger drains the greater part of Upper Dahomey by means of its affluents the more or less parallel with the western frontier, by **Kaboli (Cabole)**, Bassila, ...”

- **Dahomey - ANOM, Etat Civil**

anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/.../recherche.php?... DAHO...

“Dahomey. Créé en juin 1776 par un édit royal, le Dépôt des papiers publics des colonies, plus communément appelé DPPC, était chargé de conserver au ...”

- **[PDF] IBS No. 124 - Benin (BN) & Togo (TO) 1972**

fall.fsulawrc.com/collection/LimitsinSeas/IBS124.pdf

“Inland from the Atlantic Ocean, the Dahomey-Togo

boundary extends northward for Point where the Pira-**Cabole (Kambole)** road crosses the Perekete.”

- **Bosqueia welwitschii in Global Plants on JSTOR**

plants.jstor.org/compilation/Bosqueia.welwitschii

“Ivory Coast: Morenou, Chevalier, 22480; Indenie, Zaranou, Chevalier, 16278. Dahomey: near Savalou, Pira, Chevalier, 23748; Savalou, between **Cabole** and ...”

- **Archives de la société des africanistes. - Persée**

www.persee.fr/doc/jafr_0037-9166_1975_num_45_1_2198

“by O Gollnhofer - 1975: 56 : Courriers postaux et lignes télégraphiques du Dahomey, croquis d’une vers Bassila, Cabole) », notes diverses sur les rites et talismans protecteurs, ...”

- **Slavery and its Abolition in French West Africa: The Official Reports of ...**

www.academia.edu/.../Slavery_and_its_Abolition_in_French_West_Africa_The_Official_Reports_of_...

“Répression de l’esclavage en Guinée, à la Côte d’Ivoire, au Dahomey, au Soudan. demi Mahis de **Cabole** (Dahomey), le frère aîné hérite de part légitimaire. “

Maurice Tyler

Now that I have all the various names it is a lot easier to research.

From what I have read so far, it appears that Cabole (*sic* without the accent) (Kaboli, Kamboli, Kambolé) is now just inside Togo, these days, having been ceded to Germany in

1912. It’s way up north and must have been the back of beyond in 1904.

I would still like for the scan to be published, just to see if anyone can give me any more details about this Post Office, but the strike must be very rare.

Simon Binsted

Renovated post office in Burgundy



While driving through Burgundy earlier this year on the D980 between Saulieu and Autun I came across the recently renovated post office in the village of Chissey-en-Morvan (Saône-et-Loire). Looking back at earlier images on the internet, the renovation has been faithful to the original building and in particular to the style and colour of the lettering. One could imagine that inside the office the stock book on the counter was still crammed with Sowers and Mersons.

Mick Bister

Request for WWII German Handstamps

I am studying the German handstamps applied to mail from French POWs in WW2 Germany and I am looking for examples of POW mail to any of the French colonies. If you have such material could you please send me scans

to david.trapnell@mypostoffice.co.uk? I would greatly appreciate your kind help and every reply will be gratefully acknowledged. Many thanks.

David Trapnell

Calling all Colonies collectors

John Parmenter is conducting a survey to update the known dates of usage of censor handstamps and sealing tapes in Madagascar. He has created a most informative and well illustrated questionnaire of all the known types and is inviting members who collect such material to complete and return it with their own findings. If you would like a copy for reference and especially if you have information to share please contact John.

John has also produced informative spreadsheets on the postage rates and airmail surcharges of Madagascar, (post war to independence) based on data in the Madagascar editions of the 'Journal Officiel'. Likewise he has produced

spreadsheets on the postage rates of all the French colonies that did not use the current rates or currency of Metropolitan France ie AEF, AOF, Cambodia, Cameroon, Djibouti, French India, Indochina, Laos, Madagascar, Polynesia, New Caledonia, Reunion, Saint Pierre et Miquelon and Togo. The data has been obtained from the biannual 'Guide Officiel des P.T.T.' for the years 1947 to 1966. This will be an invaluable source of reference to any collector who struggles to comprehend rates using the local currencies and the CFA franc.

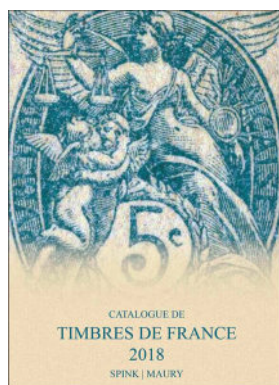
Write to John at 23, Jeffreys Road, London, SW4 6QU or contact him on 0207 622 4851 or at publications@fcps.org.uk.

BOOKSHELF

Compiled by Michael Round

Spink/Maury, *Catalogue de Timbres de France*, 121st edition 2018.

ISBN 978-1-907427-80-0. Illustrated throughout in full colour. Text in French. Retail £27.50 / 29,90€, exclusive of postage and packing.



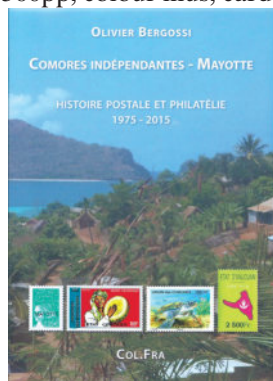
A flyer enclosed with this issue of the Journal gives basic information on the latest edition of this ever-welcome publication. Members unfamiliar with it may care to look up my review of the 119th edition (F&CPS Journal, September 2016) – I also reported the 120th in June. New features include extensive coverage of definitives from Marianne de Cheffer onwards.

Sheet, booklet and coil versions are carefully distinguished, as are deliberate variations of gum, paper, colour, type and phosphor bars, the last feature adding a “how to recognise the different bars” glossary. Shades among classic stamps have been re-categorised, eliminating potential confusion with underlying paper colour.

The two volumes (only available as a pair) divide at the year 1960. Hardback Volume 1 runs from 1849, each pre-1907 stamp having a page to itself; softback Volume 2 continues right up to date. A generous helping of “back-of-the-book” sections is appended to each. Spink/Maury is obtainable from the website, www.spinkbooks.com, or by telephone (020 7563 4119 for UK readers), or through our own Richard Broadhurst (see inside front cover for contact details).

Archipel des Comores, 40 ans de Philatélie depuis l'indépendance en 1975, by Olivier Bergossi.

360pp, colour illus, card cover, A4 format. Text in French.



Price 50€, post free to Col. Fra members, 58.50€ to non-members. Details from Col. Fra editorial secretary Alain Hurpet, 1 rue des Jardins, 10230 Mailly le Camp, France. Email: colfra-publications@orange.fr Overseas members may be able to pay by euro cheque payable to Col.Fra; otherwise (including UK members) via PayPal (paypalcolfra@gmail.com).

The Comoro Islands, situated between Mozambique and Madagascar, are a seriously obscure collecting area. They are known to the outside world, if at all, by the discovery there in 1938 of the prehistoric fish long thought to be extinct, the coelacanth. Comoros issues up to 1975 are

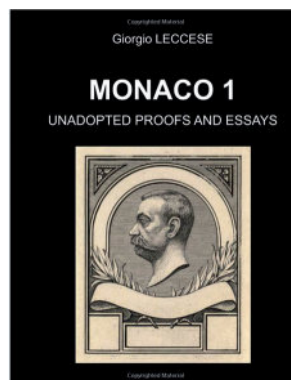
popular in France and fetch high prices there, like those of the other ‘*Départements d’Outre-Mer*’ (New Caledonia, St Pierre et Miquelon, and so on) - but post-independent Comoros issues are little known anywhere and there has been no non-simplified SG coverage of them since the 1980s. Even the current ‘Stamps of the World’ has huge gaps in its listings. This book is therefore all the more welcome, and Olivier Bergossi – “man on the spot” for many years – the perfect author for it.

Of the four component islands, Mayotte voted to remain part of France in 1975, issuing its own stamps from 1997 to 2011 (it now uses French ones), while the other three islands – Anjouan, Grand Comore and Mohéli – became first the Independent Federal Republic of Comoros then, from 2002, the Comoros Union. Sensibly, given their political and philatelic differences, Olivier Bergossi divides his book into two equal parts, Comoros and Mayotte.

Here is practically all anyone could know about their stamps and postal history – with the proviso that the vast quantities of irrelevant Agency thematics are given short shrift. Postmarks, meter-marks, registration labels, reply coupons and fiscals are all carefully dealt with, and there are eye-opening sections on fiscal stamps and Anjouan’s short-lived (1997-2001) claim to independence. Most valuable is the coverage of surcharges, which rival Benin or Guyana in sheer numbers and which are listed complete only in the Michel catalogue. Of some items, only five copies are known – less dramatically, M Bergossi states that practically any non-philatelic cover from the Comoros (Mayotte less so) is probably scarce.

Pre-independent Comoros may already be popular with collectors, but apart from magazine newbits there is little written about them either. Perhaps M Bergossi can be persuaded to follow up this excellent, superbly illustrated and highly recommendable publication with an “up to 1975” companion volume.

Monaco, *Unadopted Proofs and Essays*, 4th edition, Giorgio Leccese. 5 vols, A4 format: Vol 1, 1910-40; Vol 2, 1941-55; Vol 3, 1956-63; Vol 4, 1964-70; Vol 5, 1971-2015. Approximate prices US \$23-36. Details via Amazon.



Practically every facet of metropolitan French philately has by now been well covered in the literature. Selected colonies also have respectable bibliographies of their own – but Monaco, which in the minds of many collectors seems to fall between ‘France’ proper and ‘Colonies’, is not quite so comprehensively served. Giorgio Leccese (born Taranto, 1961) here

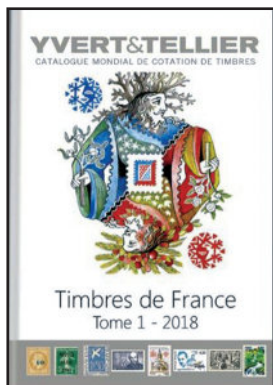
plugs a notable gap in our knowledge, with no less than five

volumes devoted to unadopted and preliminary material guaranteed to intrigue all lovers of stamp-design in general. Some items from S.A.S. Prince Albert II's collection have been (for the first time ever) made available for a private citizen to illustrate.

The over-280-page Volume 1 (the only contents page available for viewing as I write) extends from the first Albert I issues to the Louise Hippolyte and Honoré III issues of 1940. A 20-page preface – enlivened by eye-catching multicoloured printing in various fonts - describes condition criteria. Rarity is relative: material existing in more than 15 copies is considered not rare at all, that accolade being reserved for items of which only one or two copies are known. All in all, this is an excellent insight into some priceless material few of us may even know of.

Yvert et Tellier, *Timbres de France 2018*. Hardback, pp1296. 150x210mm. Price 22.90€, postage and packing extra. Yvert et Tellier, 2 rue de l'Etoile, 80090 Amiens Cedex 3. Internet: <http://www.yvert.com>

Review by Richard Broadhurst



The 2018 edition of *Yvert & Tellier France Tome 1* was published in late September; the page-count is up 60 on last year. An additional 240 new postage stamps and 15 miniature sheets are added, thanks to La Poste's ever more enthusiastic issuing policy! This year's edition is printed on high-gloss paper which makes for a most attractive appearance.

As in previous years a number of new sections have been added, no doubt as a result of competition from the annual Spink/Maury catalogue. The ten-page section on Paris Stars is a useful addition which lists prices for all the combinations of numbers on the relevant stamps, but no attempt has been made to price them on cover. Another notable addition is a back-of-the-book listing on French international stamp exhibitions from 1900 - a somewhat unusual topic probably justified on the grounds that a number of these vignettes were officially issued by the PTT and La Poste.

Yet again there is a reluctance to add a section on *Publicitimbres* (booklet stamps with advertising labels). The 2006 edition contained a very useful 38-page listing which has never since been included. Considering the work involved in creating this list it is difficult to understand why it has never appeared again. It would be a simple matter to add this popular area of collecting as presumably all the artwork exists and all that is needed is an update on prices. Maury/Spink has an excellent fully illustrated listing of these, something Yvert should definitely take into account when planning next year's edition.

The section on *Préoblitérés* has had a makeover, an illustration for each stamp now bringing it into line with the rest of the catalogue and a most welcome feature. (Previously only the main types were illustrated.) The biggest change is to the *millésimes* area. This has been

completely reworked in tabular form, each pair having its own illustration. There is an enlarged explanatory section and all pairs are now priced both unmounted and mounted mint (previously mounted only). A number of price increases are noted confirming the scarcity of many of these pairs.

As with previous years, general price changes are few and far between with only a handful of increases until you get to the modern issues. The most impressive changes are to the *Blocs-souvenirs* from 2010 where increases of 100% or more are not unusual. The 2013 Notre Dame issue (78) is up from 10 to 20€, the 2014 Equestrian (97) up from 12 to 24€ and 2014 Photography set of 6 (101-106) up from 33 to 72€. Just why this should be the case I am not sure but it may reflect the relatively small numbers printed and the fact that these have been generally overlooked by collectors in the past. Considering that they were on sale for around 3€ each they will have made a very good return for anyone who put a few aside!

Many miniature sheets (*blocs*) since 2005 have seen decent price rises, especially the *Salon de Timbre Jardins de France* large *blocs*, the 2006 issue (*Bloc 120*) up from 50 to 60€. Among recent new issues, the St. Valentine's and Red Cross are good upward movers, the star player being the 2016 UEFA (*Bloc 137*) up 200% from 10 to 30€! A particular favourite of mine is the unique 2012 *bloc* – *Le retable d'Issenheim* (F4675). This depicts three saints which are revealed when the closed doors are opened, and is up from 23 to 35€. This is also one of the few modern *blocs* not to feature a most unattractive bar-code!

Since 2003 La Poste has issued a number of reprints of earlier definitives in euro currency. The first was the Lined Sower (Yv 3619) from the booklet *La Semeuse de Roty* (*Carnet 1511*). A number of similar booklets featuring classic definitives (*Carnets 1512 to 1518*) followed, accompanied by various miniature sheets. These have proved very popular with collectors and many show healthy price-rises in this edition. The mixed *carnet* Yv 1510 contains the only source of the 1F orange *Marianne du 14 Juillet* Type II (Yv 3101c) and is up from 50 to 60€. The rather uninspiring pair of booklets 1516 & 1517 *Présidence Française de l'Union Européenne* is up an impressive 19€ from 51 to 70€. The trio of unusual mixed double-page definitive booklets have all fared well - 1520A (*Marianne et la Jeunesse 2013*) is up from 22 to 30€, 1521 (*La Lettre Verte a 3 ans*) up from 19 to 25€ and 1522 (*Marianne de la Libération*) nearly doubles from 17.20 to 30€. Many of the never-ending deluge of self-adhesive commemorative *carnets* are up in value, as are a number of the auto-adhesif definitives only to be found in *Blocs Personnalisés*. Modern collecting may not be to everyone's taste but it is encouraging for once to see a decent return for the many of us who are interested in this fascinating area!

With all the additions over the past few years this is now a very handsome publication. It is the "go to" listing for France collectors with its universally recognised numbering system and represents excellent value for such a comprehensive catalogue. Copies are available to members at £25 + P&P. Please contact Richard Broadhurst for details (contact information on page 115).

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF 6 MAY 2017

The President **Steve Ellis** opened the meeting at the Calthorpe Arms public house, 252 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1 at 11.30am in the presence of 14 members.

(1) Members Present: Maurice Alder, Len Barnes, Mick Bister, Richard Broadhurst, David Chalcraft, Steve Ellis, Chris Hitchen, Ken Howitt, Dominic Joyeux, Hugh Loudon, John Morton, Barbara Priddy, Bob Small, Maurice Tyler and Alan Wood.

Guests: Marian Bister and Annette Tyler.

Apologies: David Hogarth, Peter Kelly and Jeremy Martin.

(2) Minutes of the previous AGM of 7 May 2016, published in Journal 281, were accepted unanimously as a true record of that meeting.

(3) Matters arising from these minutes. No issues were raised.

(4) President's Report - Steve Ellis

"As I look back on my third and final year as your President I want to pay tribute to the dedicated and hard working team who enable our Society to function so well. This encompasses the day-to-day activities, the careful plans for the future and the unexpected situations which inevitably arise and result in a flurry of activity to resolve them.

"A prime example of this is John West who has battled through a worsening illness to maintain his high standard of operation of the Colonies Packet. Sadly the time has come to hand over to another member (and our thanks go to David Chalcraft for this), in respect of which John will oversee the smooth transition of the old to the new packet. It is in recognition of John's many years of dedicated service to the Society that I am delighted to present him with the George Henderson award.



John West (right) who was unable to attend the AGM receives the George Henderson Award for his services to the Society including 20 years as Packet Secretary (France). It was presented to him by his successor to the post, David Chalcraft

"Two further smooth transitions in the running of the

Society have come to fruition, namely Richard Broadhurst in taking over the running of the France packet and David Hogarth the role of Secretary. I doubt that when offering to do this he anticipated leading the re-writing of our constitution in order to bring it up to date, but this he did with great efficiency. The team which now produces our award winning Journal, most capably led by Mick Bister, has been greatly assisted by the technical skills of Peter Allan out in Australia. Sad to report but no-one has volunteered to take on the role of Journal Manager: we are very grateful, therefore, to Mick who has offered to continue in his position for a further period of time, albeit with a necessary reduction in his workload by the production of three rather than four Journals per year. Finally, John Parmenter now fulfils the role of overseeing sales and stock of publications. My thanks to all of you.

"So, the Society functions well! We also offer buyers and sellers an auction to increase/decrease their collections and a weekend of convivial company, a bookstall/bourse and the opportunity to see high class displays at Charlecote each year. I urge you to consider giving it a try next March; I doubt that you will be disappointed! I suppose if I were honest I would say that my only sadness would be the decline over the years in the attendance at our regional meetings. The London, Wessex and Northern groups continue to offer regular get-togethers, but it would be nice to welcome more new faces. Sharing the company of like-minded French stamp/postal history collectors is good in itself but equally important is the opportunity to learn from the experience of others. I certainly know this to be true for myself – how much I have learned since my early days in the Society! This has come about, in large part, from discussing with others my areas of interest and learning from being able to see their displays. The internet and email scans are wonderful things but there is, in my humble opinion, nothing better than face-to-face meetings which help us keep our hobby alive and flourishing.

"I know the Society will be in good hands under our incoming President so please continue to support him, as you have supported me. Thank you everyone."

(5) General Secretary's Report - David Hogarth

"This is my first report as General Secretary and I would like to thank both my predecessor, Peter Kelly, for his help in easing me into the role, and also the Officers and Committee members of the Society for their assistance and guidance.

"The membership continues in slow decline, as shown in the following table, based on Mick Bister's annual 'headcount'. Broadly the UK membership has reduced from 262 to 246 and the non-UK membership from 62 to 61. This reflects in my view the situation with many societies, but we should not be complacent about its inevitability and we should perhaps consider the appointment of an officer charged with publicity.

UK		Non-UK	Total
262	On 1 January 2016	62	324
-13	Resigned	-3	-16
-1	Suspended	-1	-2
-8	Died	-0	-8
0	Transfers	0	0
+6	New members	+3	+9
246	On 1 January 2017	61	307

"The issues raised in the previous year's secretarial report regarding the Packets and the Journal will be dealt with in other reports, but I would add my thanks to the members who have agreed to take on these responsibilities. To maintain and even increase the services offered by the Society, more members need to become involved in the management of the Society, otherwise there may be a steeper and faster decline amongst Officers and Committee members than in the Society as a whole! The priority at the moment is for a Journal Manager, and I hope that a member will come forward to take on this role.

"The Committee have spent some considerable time during the year on revising and updating the Society's Rules which will be considered at this AGM. Trying to cover every eventuality is in many ways a crystal-ball-gazing exercise, but the draft, which I hope will be approved, seems to me to cover all of the areas which need to be in a society's rules.

"I look forward to the current year with a degree of hope that we can as a Society grow and that other members will come forward be found to assist with the running of the Society."

(6) Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts - Chris Hitchen

"We have enjoyed two years with quite substantial surpluses due to the sale of the library and the winding up of the France packet run by Bob Wood. In 2016 the surplus was £0000.00. Changes being forced upon us by a lack of volunteers to perform the tasks needed to provide the Society's services make the future more difficult to predict.

"On the positive side we are fortunate to have a new packet secretary David Chalcraft to continue the running of the Colonial packet managed for so long by John West. However I would anticipate rather less income from the exchange packets in the future than has been the case in past years. The exchange packet income includes £0000.00 from the France packet managed by Bob Wood which he wound up last year, the balance coming from the current France and Colonial packets run in 2016 by Richard Broadhurst and John West who will make their usual reports. The cost of printing and distributing our journal will of course drop as we move to 3 instead of 4 issues per year. In the current year I expect to see both expenditure and income decrease but the differences will not be clear until the year end.

"As a matter of prudence I would therefore propose leaving the maximum subscription levels as they are for 2018."

The report by the examiner to the accounts is set out at the bottom of the balance sheet on page 122.

Acceptance of the accounts and the 2018 subscription was proposed by Len Barnes, seconded by Maurice Tyler and carried unanimously.

(7) Auction Secretary's Report - Steve Ellis

"The proceeds for the Society from the three auctions, plus the Charlecote bourse, during 2016 amounted to £0000.00. Comparisons with previous years are rendered difficult by virtue of the extra (library) auction in 2015. It should also be noted that some of the residual books were included in the February 2016 auction.

"It is a satisfactory result which arose from the production of three full auctions during 2016, with a total of 1520 individual lots (which was only made possible through the offering of material from the collections of both a deceased member and one sadly who is in poor health). The percentage of lots which sold dropped slightly to 37.6%. Stamps are generally less in demand than postal history and unusual material is more likely to sell than that which is run-of-the-mill.

"My thanks go to all who offered material for sale and for all those members who submitted bids for without them there would be no auction! My aim is to continue with three auctions per year and already I am aware of some interesting collections which will feature in 2017's auctions so there will be opportunities to start collecting a new area or simply adding to existing collections.

"I am pleased, therefore, to report that the Society's auction remains healthy."

The Auction account is shown in detail on page 123.

(8a) Packet Secretary's Report (France) - Richard Broadhurst

"2016 was a challenging year for the France Packet. Bob Wood, who had run the packet for many years, announced that he would need to step down for serious health reasons.

"Having advertised the position in the Journal previously, no one came forward to take the position over. Rather than allow the packet to close down I agreed to take it on for a trial period from May. To simplify the situation we decided to close down Bob's operation, pay off the vendors and start afresh with a new simplified system. I am pleased to say that the changeover happened smoothly without any break in the distribution of packets.

"There are approximately sixty recipients of the packet spread from Scotland to Cornwall. Historically insurance for the packets was charged to the vendors at 2% of the value of the material in their booklets. Over the years a number of arrangements for individual members to pay lower amounts had occurred making the accounting somewhat complicated. I have now introduced a flat level of 2% which has been accepted by all the vendors. The Society pays over £0000 a year in insurance. This has to be deducted from any surplus we make before any money can be handed over to the general funds.

"Other than minor day-to-day mistakes made by participants, which could be eliminated with a little

**FRANCE & COLONIES PHILATELIC SOCIETY
BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2016**

CURRENT ASSETS20162015

Cash at bank
Sundry debtors

DEDUCT CURRENT LIABILITIES

Sundry creditors
Subscriptions in advance
Magazine circuit float

TOTAL ASSETS

Represented by

MEMBERS FUNDS

Uncommitted funds at 1.1.2016
Year surplus

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2016Expenditure20162015Income20162015

Meetings
Journal 4 issues
Postage and expenses
Insurance

Year surplus

Auction
Library disposal
Exchange packet
Sale of publications
Donations
Subscriptions

"I have examined the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended December 31st 2016 and the Balance Sheet at that date and I certify that they are in accordance with the books and records of the society. I have not carried out an audit.

D G PARMLEY CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Liverpool, 20 February 2017"

more care, the operation of the packets continues with remarkably few problems. We now have six circuits each with around ten members and generally a new packet being dispatched to each circuit monthly.

"Currently we are able to accommodate new members who would like to see the packets and we would also be delighted to receive more material to sell, especially anything unusual! For those who have not participated before, it is an excellent and enjoyable way of both buying and selling stamps. If you would like any further details please do not hesitate to contact me."

(8b) Packet Secretary's Report (Colonies) - John West

"Income from the Colonies packet has, I regret to report, fallen from the figure I have regularly achieved over the

past few years. I am happy to accept some blame for that, since my health has not made it easy to complete the preparation and parcelling up of the eight packets that have to be dispatched every 5 or 6 weeks. Add to that the continued diminution in numbers of members taking the packet the portents for the future are not good. My efforts are also hampered by certain members retaining the packet(s) for far too long, others failing to address a packet correctly - which invariably leads to a delay exceeding one month before the Post Office returns it to me, which in turn costs the Society extra postage expense if I have to address it properly and forward it again.

In trying to deal with the problem of decreasing membership, I have seriously considered the amalgamation of at least two circuits. The downside of doing this is that

AUCTION ACCOUNT for the year ending 31 DECEMBER 2016**INCOME****EXPENDITURE****2016****2015****2016****2015**

SALE OF LOTS
(including reimbursed Postage & Packing)

PAYMENTS TO VENDORS

February
May
November

February
May
November

LIBRARY

PRINTING

February: auction
Other sales

May
November
February

CHARLECOTE
(2016:net)
Bookstall/Bourse

CHARLECOTE
Bookstall/Bourse

BEQUEST
(R.W.)

POSTAGE
Expenses: admin

Float b/f from 2015

Surplus to Society
Float c/f to 2016

-
-

members will receive books they have already seen before - as they are very quick to point out! However, it must be appreciated that a circuit with just eight people on it is barely viable when they must spend £00.00 just to cover our postage costs. When you add to that my expenses in purchasing printing paper, printing cartridges, wrapping paper, parcel tape, address labels, telephone calls, Sellotape etc, it doesn't take a financial genius to work out how well we have done in the past. With the passing of such luminaries as George Barker, the circulation of good quality, sensibly priced, early material is drying up. All these are elements which contribute, in their own small way, to the demise of the packet.

All that said, I have received marvellous support and encouragement from the vast majority of our members who, I have to say, have been most understanding of my difficulties and extremely supportive of me as I try to keep the packet going. Nevertheless, I fear that the time has come for someone, better able than me, to take over this mantle and to provide you with a better service than I am able to do at the moment. It doesn't seem 20 years and I have had a lot of enjoyment, plus a few grey hairs, doing it. I have made a lot of friends

and, hopefully, not too many enemies, but all good things must come to an end. I offer my fulsome thanks to everyone for their help — not least, Chris Hitchen for helping me prepare the accounts each year — but everyone who, in their own way, helped to lighten my load along the way."

(9) Journal Manager's Report - Mick Bister

"We have enjoyed another very successful year with four editions of the Journal containing articles to appeal to most interests and which have been published on schedule. The hiccups of the previous year have, to a great extent, been remedied and many thanks as ever go to both the contributors of articles and to the members of the editorial team who make such an achievement possible. It is a publication that we can be proud of and I am honoured to be part of its making.

"I closed my report last year with another reminder that I was intending to stand down for medical reasons and that, anyway, my position as Journal Manager had been only a provisional one in what was termed our Plan B for the survival of the Journal. However, no-one has responded to the ensuing appeals for my replacement which both disappoints and frustrates me. I am afraid

there is no way that I can continue with the production of the Journal at its present pace but I will make every effort to ensure its continuation for the foreseeable future. In pursuance of this, at the Committee Meeting held at Charlecote on 10 March, I made the following proposals which were accepted.

“I am going to reduce the output to three editions a year - in April, August and December. Each edition will contain the same number of pages as now (ie *circa* 40). This will reduce my workload and alleviate the pressure on Peter Allan who, like me, is under constant demand to meet deadlines. This switch from a quarterly to triannual publication format will come into effect immediately after this AGM. However, as the membership has already paid for four editions I propose that we publish a regular edition in June as usual and then a larger edition in December to compensate for the loss of the September Journal. The June edition will contain a full report of the Charlecote weekend including a reference to the committee meeting discussion on the Journal thus alerting the membership to the reduction in the number of Journals. The full report of the AGM will not be published until December.

“Peter Allan and I will continue in our current posts until the end of 2018 and then reconsider our positions. In the meantime it is sincerely hoped that someone will step forward and take over the role.

“The aforementioned changes will create a knock-on effect with regards to the dates and nature of the auctions and to the timing and location of subsequent AGMs. These issues will be or will have been explained to you by the relevant officer.

“I hold enough material for the two editions remaining this year and with the promises I have received so far I should have enough for April 2018; thereafter I will have nothing. I am currently relying on just a small core of contributors for articles and would welcome and encourage others to pick up their pen and share their knowledge with their fellow members.

“I am saddened by the actions that we have been obliged to take and I thank you for your understanding.”

(10) Website Manager's Report - Jan Gane

“I took over the administration of the Website in September 2016. Thank you, Maurice, for all your help, and thank you too to the Committee for your patience with some of my questions; 12000 miles away we do things somewhat differently.

“I have updated the website after each Journal issue with forthcoming meetings, the information board, refreshed images from the Journal, repaired or deleted broken links to other websites etc. and updated general information as required between the issues. I would like a few more images to liven the site up; Auction images help but their time frame is quite limited.

“I have also instigated a new idea to publish a record of past meetings with images to show potential members what the various branches do at their meetings. For security, I

don't use members' names just their first name and their surname's first initial. I may use older items from past Journals to invigorate the site.

“Few members have requested a password into the Forum and it is used rarely - the last time in late 2016. The Society has 29 users and the topics, although quite old now, are interesting and informative – it's a shame it's not used more often as it can only get better with use.

“I have some ideas for the promotion of the Society and am happy to help with suggestions if we have a publicity officer.”

(11a) Publications Officer's Report - John Parmenter

“The final copies of ‘*Type Merson*’ sold quickly. There were slow and steady sales of Derek Richardson's ‘Tables of French Postal Rates’ and ‘Subject Index to Four French Philatelic Magazines’ and also of Geoff Gethin's ‘Fakes and Forgeries’.

“The only “new publication” was a CD of Bob Picirilli's ‘Postal and Airmail Rates in France & Colonies 1920 to 1945’. This was available on demand for £30, 30 Euros or \$30.”

(11b) Magazine Circuit Officer's Report - Richard Broadhurst

“The Magazine circuit once again operated smoothly. We subscribe to two French stamp magazines: ‘*L'Echo de la Timbrologie*’ and ‘*Timbres*’. The number of subscribers was similar to the previous year and once again we were able to maintain subscriptions at the previous rate of £8 per copy annually. This represents very good value and we are able to accommodate any new members who may wish to join the circuits.”

(12) Reports on Group Meetings

These are as published in the Journal Volume 66, Numbers 279-282.

(13) Proposed new Rules of the Society - Chris Hitchen

The draft rules had previously been issued to members with Journal 283, March 2017 with an invitation to submit their views to the General Secretary by 6 April. Fifteen responses had been received.

Chris Hitchen led the discussions leading the members present through each of the six sections of the Rules and reporting on the views received. Once any changes to the draft had been agreed, a vote to accept them was taken as follows:

Business	Proposer	Seconder
Rules sections 1 and 2	Chris Hitchen	Maurice Tyler
Rules section 3	J Morton	Mick Bister
Rules section 4	Richard Broadhurst	Steve Ellis
Rules section 5	J Morton	Mick Bister
Rules section 6	J Morton	Maurice Tyler

All the proposals were carried unanimously

(14) Election of Officers and Committee Members

The list of those willing to serve as officers and committee members had been published in the Agenda and their election *en bloc* was proposed by Bob Small, seconded by Barbara Priddy and carried unanimously.

(15) Appointment of an Examiner of the Society's Accounts

The retention of Mr D G Parmley Chartered Accountant, as examiner of the Society's Accounts was proposed by Len Barnes, seconded by Maurice Tyler and carried unanimously.

(16) Any other business

A short discussion took place concerning the rescheduling of the AGM from 2018 onwards. Opinions were divided but it was eventually agreed that the AGM would be moved to the Annual Weekend at Charlecote. Consequently, the May Room auction would be replaced by a postal one and the London Region would hold a normal members' meeting on the vacant date.

There being no further business the meeting was closed in time for members to adjourn for their 1 o'clock lunch.

MLB

President	Mr C J Hitchen
Vice-President	Vacant
General Secretary	Mr D J Hogarth
Treasurer	Mr C J Hitchen
Editor-in-Chief	Mr M S Tyler
Journal Manager	Mr M L Bister
Auction Secretary	Mr S R Ellis
Packet Secretary (France)	Mr R N Broadhurst
Packet Secretary (Colonies)	Mr D J Chalcraft
Magazine Circuit	Mr R N Broadhurst
Publications Stockist	Mr J Parmenter
Webmaster	Mrs J Gane
Committee Members	Mr P R A Kelly
	Mr A J Lawrence
	Mr C W Spong
	Mr P S Watkins
	Mr J C West
For information: Group Convenors	Mr L H Barnes (London)
	Mr S R Ellis (Northern)
	Mr P R A Kelly &
	Mr A J Wood (Wessex)

WESSEX GROUP MEETING AT SALISBURY 1 JULY 2017

Alan Wood: Before, during and after the Siege of Paris

The morning display was given by co-convenor **Alan Wood** who showed us an interesting and wide ranging selection of material. Starting back in 1867 Alan explained the position of France with the International Exhibition and the posturing attitude of Germany. Following the declaration of war France had initial success but disaster ensued with the siege of Metz and then Paris before the year end. A number of fine covers highlighted these events. We then saw a selection of balloon mail and the advent of photography with the pigeon post and then in early 1871 the *Boules de Moulin*. Alan explained some of the ways in getting mail out after the capitulation and in particular the censored mail sent out through Versailles. The display finished with philatelic material, a Letts facsimile, and permits for entry in and out of Paris.

After our normal excellent lunch at the Old Mill we had members' displays starting with **Mike Berry**'s balloon post

sent out from the *Bureau Central* consisting of an archive addressed to Arcachon. **Chris Hitchen** showed postal rates from 1 January 1876 explaining the need for France to align rate structures with those of other European countries. These gradually reduced over a period culminating in the postal reform of 1 May 1878. 1880 saw the introduction of machine cancels initially as trials for both efficiency and ink quality. **Ingrid Swinburn** showed civilian POW mail from WWII outlining the bad conditions of different camps in France and Algeria. **Richard Stupples** produced some Sower stamps incorporating varieties and postal history. **Peter Kelly** brought the meeting to a close with a display of precursor postcards and different uses and development.

We were very pleased to be able to welcome back Ashley Lawrence after his recent illness. Jeremy Martin, Peter Lawrence and Tony Swinburn (guest) also attended.

PRAK/AJW

NORTHERN GROUP MEETING AT ROTHERHAM, 15 JULY 2017

The Northern Group day meeting was held in Rotherham on 15 July and was attended by six members and four guests. An excellent occasion was enhanced with nine fine displays from the following:

John Morton: *Colis Postaux* items

Peter Maybury: France 1472-1603 and the *Canal du Midi*

Alan Goude: Dahomey – Postal Stationery

Stephen Holder: Memel – French administration

Trevor Smith: *Timbres Perforés* and *Type Merson*

Steve Ellis: Payment Markings on Cross-border Mail and West African maritime mail;

SRE

LONDON GROUP MEETING OF 5 AUGUST 2017

Mick Bister: Cartes de visite

Len Barnes: Military Hospitals and Red Cross

Mick Bister began his display with a brief explanation of the aristocratic ritual of exchanging visiting cards in the 18th and 19th centuries and showed early examples from 1778 onwards including those from a member of Napoléon Bonaparte's entourage and from Louis XVIII's doctor. These were followed by a selection of porcelain cards manufactured from the late 1830s which had been coated in white lead to provide a surface for more elaborate and colourful printings. Their production was subsequently banned from the mid 1860s due to the risk of lead poisoning. Next came several sheets of photo visiting cards, popular in the second half of the 19th century. Mick showed the work of several photographers and examples of the small envelopes (*mignonnettes*) and pouches in which the photo cards were sent.

Mick turned next to the printing process showing examples of copper printing plates, proofs and filing pockets. Advertising material and catalogues were displayed together with receipts and invoices including a 1935 request for payment from Thomas de la Rue & Co to Stern Graveur in Paris for two gallon tins of black bordering ink.

Visiting cards were integrated into the printed matter category from 31 December 1852. Nothing manuscript could be added to the card and envelopes had to be left unsealed for verification of the contents. 5c was charged for the local delivery rate and 10c for the office-to-office rate. Alternatively visiting cards could be sent under wrapper at 1c from 1 August 1856 to 31 August 1871, for 2c until 30 April 1878 and 1c again until 1903. Mick showed examples franked with Napoléon *non-lauré*, Cérès, Sage and Blanc issues. A 5c uniform rate was introduced in May 1878 for cards sent in envelopes and lasted until December 1916. During this period allowances were made for short messages to be written on the cards and special postal stationery envelopes were printed and sold at 5½ centimes each. Mick showed a full range of the stationery produced including the sales wrappers in which they were enclosed, private and *spécimen* items and mail struck with *jour de l'an* cancellations.

From 1 January 1917 the rate structure for the sending of visiting cards in envelopes was revised. From then onwards there would be three rates, one for cards with no added text, one for cards with up to 5 words of text and one for cards with over 5 words of text. The rate introduced with this reform were 5c, 10c and 15c respectively which corresponded to the contemporary printed matter, postcard (5 words) and letter rates, a pattern which continued with few exceptions for five decades. Mick showed two frames illustrating this three tier system with in each case the rate being represented by both the franked *mignonnette* and the enclosed visiting card. Examples included the 3Pf, 8Pf and 12Pf rates used in Alsace between 1940 and 1944 and the 1F50, 3F and 5F rates which lasted only one day on 1 January 1947.

Mick continued with material illustrating the postmarks and cachets from the 1955 and 1972 campaigns which enforced

restrictions on the minimum size of envelopes. He then closed his display with taxed mail for underpaid, returned and forwarded items. Amongst these were examples of the additional 2F penalty applied between 1910 and 1913 and the 1F penalty applied between 1920 and 1927.

Len Barnes replaced his advertised display of anti-tuberculosis labels with one on Military Hospitals and the Red Cross. He opened with a frame devoted to hospital ships and we were treated to a selection of covers from these vessels accompanied by illustrative postcards. These included a 1915 cover from HMHS 'Egypt', a 1917 cover from HMHS 'Asturias' with a fine ASTURIAS PASSED BY CENSOR cachet and a 1918 cover from HMHS 'Guilford Castle'. Other items included a 1916 postcard from the New Zealand hospital ship 'Marama' struck with an ON ACTIVE SERVICE NZ HOSPITAL SHIP MARAMA cachet and an item from the French *Navire Hôpital* 'Duguay-Trouin'. Len then moved on to land transport and showed us illustrations of British and Belgian field ambulances and associated covers. These included a postcard with the cachet of the HÔPITAL MILITAIRE JOHNSTONE-RECKITT in Paris and a 1917 cover with the cachet CONVOI AUTO.

We then saw correspondence from military and hospital personnel including a fine 1914 Expeditionary Force Belgian Red Cross cover and a 1917 Field Medical card recording the medical details of an injured soldier from the Royal Irish Rifles with FIELD AMBULANCE, HOSPITAL SHIP ST GEORGE and CLEARANCE cachets. Later came Red Cross and Order of St John enquiry cards and replies stating 'reported missing' and 'making all possible enquiries'.

Len closed with two frames of stamps issued to raise funds for the French Red Cross. Amongst them was a fine example of the scarce 1952 *carnet* and both perf. and imperf. printings of the 1960s issues.

After the usual enjoyable lunch served by the Calthorpe Arms, members returned to the frames for the afternoon displays.

Alan Baum stepped forward first with a selection of World War II issues. We saw the 1940 Dunkerque and Coudekerque *Besetztes Gebiet Nordfrankreich* overprints on *Paix de Laurens* and Mercury issues, both on and off cover, followed by several examples of the 1945 *Festung Lorient* overprint on the 1F50 Pétain and censored mail from the Lorient pocket. This was accompanied by a fine example of the 2F Chamber of Commerce provisional issue on a 1945 cover from the St Nazaire pocket. We were shown a complete set of the 1943-44 *Base Navale Italienne de Bordeaux* overprints on Italian stamps together with the 30c and 50c values on a cover from Bordeaux to Turin.

Paul Miller brought us two gems from 1949. Firstly he showed us a collection of proofs related to the 1949 *Centenaire du Timbre* and CITEX issues. Individual proofs were shown for each of the five values together with a splendid signed

épreuve d'artiste and a colour trial of the 25F *Marianne de Gandon* in violet annotated with its ink reference N°1502. This was followed by proofs of the five values making up the 1949 *Congrès International de Télégraphe et Téléphone* set including the magnificent composite *épreuve de luxe*. Finally Paul showed us two covers generously franked with gutter pairs of the 30c Mercury with the privately produced Neyrac-les-Bains *interpanneau 'pubs'*.

Richard Broadhurst stepped up next with his display of Anti-Tuberculosis propaganda material. A wide selection of items was put on the frame comprising sheet and booklet printings, covers and window stickers. Richard showed how although there was one design chosen for each year variations in the design could be found in the different printings. A display of the 1937 printings illustrated these variations. Richard also showed a file containing the full run of Anti-TB booklets with modified printings for the various *départements* participating in the campaign.

The afternoon closed with a display by **Chris Hitchen** who showed us more delights from his Paris collection. He explained that when France joined the General Postal Union on 1 January 1876 the French post office would have begun to realise how out of step France's post was compared to other countries. It set in train a period of some ten years which saw many changes and innovations.

Chris began with a range of different rates in use for various categories of mail between January 1876 and May 1878 at which date French postal rates were comprehensively reformed. We saw a wide range of material illustrating the new rates and weight steps including letters, postcards, newspapers, late fees, registered and insured mail and, of course, overseas mail. At the same time, the French post office was working to replace the old star and lozenge cancellations and we saw a series of trials conducted at the Paris Place de la Bourse office between 1880 and 1887 in a bid to find a more legible date stamp including the beautiful and rare 'windmill sails' design. The display concluded with the development of machine cancellations in this period including the Pearson Hill canceller of 1880 and early Daguin trials from 1881 to 1883. Included was the exceptionally rare essay of the vertical bars + broken circle design of which only a few are known dated between 27 February and 13 March 1883.

Chris gave the vote of thanks to the speakers and members who had provided such varied, entertaining and informative displays.

Members present: Maurice Alder, Len Barnes, Alan Baum, Mick Bister, Richard Broadhurst, Chris Hitchen, Hugh Loudon, Paul Miller, Barbara Priddy, Roy Reader and Maurice Tyler.

MLB

WESSEX GROUP MEETING AT SALISBURY 7 OCTOBER 2017

Peter Kelly: Type Sage Period - Unpaid Mail and Return to Sender

The principal display was given by Peter Kelly in two parts. Both covered the *Type Sage* period of 1876 to 1900.

The first part was devoted to postage due on unpaid and partly paid mail reflecting the different rate calculations over the period and the means by which the postage due was applied. In the first period to 1882 postage due stamps, the *timbres-taxe carrés* were only applied to local mail while territorial mail was taxed by means of the *double-trait* or *décime* handstamps or, more commonly, in manuscript. In Paris examples of the date stamps showing the tax payable were also used. In 1882 postage due stamps of the *banderolle* issue were applied to all taxed mail. Initially all underpaid mail was taxed on the basis of the unpaid rate less the amount paid. It was not until 1892 that the rule of double deficiency was brought in that had applied to foreign mail since 1876. Postage due on mail carried on reduced tariffs such as Printed Matter was calculated at three times deficiency initially.

In the second part the display related to problems that occurred where mail had to be returned to sender and where this was not possible. This included the treatment at the post office via the '*appel des facteurs*' where the letter

in question was brought to the attention of the different postal teams, the '*Rebuts*' and '*Réclamations*' services of the *Recette Principale* and larger offices and the eventual pulping of mail that was deemed undeliverable after a certain period. Attention was also given to mail damaged in the post or found damaged in the box as well as the fraudulent use of stamps that had already served.

In the afternoon displays by members included **Jeremy Martin**: A selection of early airmails, illustrated postcards and military mail; **Ingrid Swinburn**: Instructional marks, printed matter and insufficiently paid mail from abroad; and **Alan Wood**: Early tax marks and newspapers.

It has to be said that our last meeting was extremely poorly supported with the two conveners present plus two members and one guest. While there may be good reasons why members may not be able to attend it should be borne in mind that at this level the group is not viable. The preparation of a large display is time consuming and it has to be understood that the conveners cannot take the risk of inviting displays from outside the group unless we can be assured of a reasonable turnout.

PRAK/AJW

LONDON GROUP MEETING OF 7 OCTOBER 2017

Colin Spong and John Parmenter: Madagascar

We were delighted to welcome Marty Bratzel to our meeting. Marty is from Windsor, Ontario and has been an active contributor to the Journal with his articles on Cameroun philately and postal history.

Colin Spong began his display of WWII censor marks informing us that Madagascar was handed over to the Free French in February 1943. The current censors remained and operated as previously under a Mixed Control Commission except for Diégo-Suarez, now a naval base, with either navy markings or East Africa, British or French markings. In June 1944 Paris dispatched a team of *Services des Contrôles Techniques* to Madagascar which included one British representative and created new censor stations. Censorship ended in September 1945.

Colin illustrated the application and evidence of censorship with material from 1943 onwards starting with Commission A from Diégo-Suarez, Commission D from Majunga, Commission F from Tamatave and Commission G from Tananarive. Destinations included Réunion, Gabon and Cameroun. We then saw further examples of censor marks with resealing censor tapes and labels on 1943 mail to Jamnagar in India, 1944 mail to Natal and to Middle Congo and 1945 mail to New Zealand and Kenya.

We also saw incoming mail dated 1943 from South Africa and a particularly interesting item from the USA via South Africa to Diégo-Suarez which invoked much discussion concerning its five week journey. One of the scarcest items was a cover dated 5 August 1944 from the French Navy c/o Fleet Post Office N° 168 in New York to Diégo-Suarez and cleared through the Secret Mail Room. Colin's display closed with a cover from Tananarive to London dated 4 August 1945, only a short time before censorship ceased.

John Parmenter showed us a selection of airmail items from the post-Vichy period of Madagascar beginning with a cover from the last flight out to France on 22 July 1942. A 1943 cover to liberated Corsica intrigued members who entered into debate over its routing. John continued with post-war mail to illustrate frankings and rates. By 1951 there were huge differences between the weight bands as illustrated by covers franked 6F50, 18F and then 61F50 for three consecutive weight steps. Items incorrectly franked attracted heavy postage due penalties of which we saw two 1952 items to Lyon charged 135 francs and 144 francs.

John followed with a selection of items struck with the *taxe perçue* mark intended for use when stamps were unavailable. However, he demonstrated that the mark could be encountered both with and without accompanying stamps. A 1944 cover was seen struck with 5F50 *taxe perçue* at Tananarive and without any stamps. A 1945 cover had a 17F50 Majunga *taxe perçue* mark but was accompanied by stamps representing the airmail fee. A 1945 cover had a 22F Tananarive *taxe perçue* mark but was also accompanied by stamps to the same value tied by the strike.

John closed by informing us that he was conducting a survey to update the known dates of usage of censor handstamps

and sealing tapes in Madagascar. He distributed a most informative and well illustrated questionnaire requesting members who have such material to complete it with their own findings (see bottom of page 117 for details if you wish to participate).

After lunch, it was the turn of other members to put up material.

Chris Hitchen gave a short display of the *Service des Recouvrements*. This subject has been fully covered in the Journal with the articles by Edwin Voerman (see Journals 278 and 279) and this simply illustrated all aspects of the service. One particularly interesting item was an early one to the Hanover post office in Germany on 21 January 1881 just a few months after arrangements with that country were agreed on 1 August 1880. This used the first format of envelope 212 bis and had the conditions of service printed on the envelope itself.

Mick Bister gave a display of French Somali Coast tariffs during the period of the CFA Franc (December 1945-March 1949) and the early years of the Djibouti Franc. In the belief that copies of the *Journal Officiel Somalia* for that period had not survived Mick had only been able to illustrate the changing tariffs by converting the France internal tariffs using the CFA/French Franc rate operating at the time. The resultant conversions served their purpose but **Marty Bratzel** suggested a visit to the *Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer* in Aix-en-Provence where he believed relevant editions of the *Journal Officiel Somalia* could be unearthed.

Marty followed with two frames of items from Cameroun that had been mounted but not written up. Members were invited to examine the items and determine what was wrong in each case. After an entertaining interlude the members had identified amongst other faults forged overprints, overprint errors and incorrect date slugs.

Maurice Alder stepped up next with recent purchases for his Sage collection. These included an attractive 10c Sage Ripolin postal stationery item and a magnificent *maquette* submitted in competition in the 1895 *Concours* held to find a replacement for the Peace & Commerce design. The artwork in ochre and white was signed by the artist Ernest Michel and accompanied by a stamp sized photographic essay.

Finally **Alan Baum** showed us two frames of recently acquired Franco-Spanish material from family archives. The first frame displayed mail from France to Spain between 1828 and 1866 and the second from Spain to France between 1756 and 1792 with fine examples of the *Andalucia la Alta* strikes.

Mick Bister closed the meeting with a vote of thanks to all those who had participated and wished Marty a safe onward journey to Paris.

Members present: Maurice Alder, Len Barnes, Alan Baum, Mick Bister, Marty Bratzel, Chris Hitchen, Hugh Loudon, Colin Spong, John Parmenter, Barbara Priddy and Michael Wright.

MLB

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Compiled by J N Hammonds (Nos 1-3) and M S Tyler (No 4)

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**The President and Committee wish
all members and their families
a Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year
*Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année !***

