



Courtesy - Murray Payne Auction 14 - Lot 421  
3d Block of 32 with Interpanneau gutter

### Introduction

Despite its vast size, South Africa was extremely slow to introduce an air mail service to speed up the delivery of local mail. Eventually, in 1925, the Civil Air Board in South Africa decided to institute a three monthly Experimental Air Service between Cape Town and Durban, to establish whether such a service could be provided economically and reliably. The British Post Office agreed to take part as well and the route was from Cape Town, via Oudtshoorn, substituted for Mossel Bay due to the presence of fog, Port Elizabeth and East London to Durban.

### The Air Mail fee

#### The Standard Rate for Surface Delivery

1d for Postcards and 2d for letters

**The Air Surcharge Rates** (which were wholly illogical!) were  
**For Postcards**

1d for delivery within South Africa and 3d Overseas

**For Letters** - The rates per ounce were 3d and 6d respectively

**For Parcels** - The rates per lb were 6d and 9d respectively

### The 1925 Airmail Stamps

A set of four Air Mail stamps was specially printed specifically for the Experimental Air Service that was inaugurated on 2 March 1925. The chosen denominations bore the above rates in mind and include a 1d, 3d, 6d and 9d.

These stamps were only valid for the carriage of mail on the foregoing service. An orange Airmail etiquette was also produced.

The stamp Issue was printed on unwatermarked paper by the Cape Times using photo-lithographic offset in sheets of 120 stamps divided into two panes of sixty by a central gutter. As the same master negative was used for each pane, the minor plate varieties are repeated on each sheet. The Union Handbook Catalogue lists two to three varieties for each value.

### Perforations

Gauge 12 using a single line treadle machine being a rather crude and amateur fashion. One line of perforations was omitted at the edge of some panes and sheets and affects all values except the 6d.

There were no Control numbers or marginal arrows, but on each sheet in the centre of the right hand margin of each pane there is an enlarged value tablet. These also appear in the centre of the top and bottom margins.

The set was issued on 25 February 1925 and available in the areas served by the new service. In addition they were available in Johannesburg, Pretoria and at the High Commissioners Office in London.

The stamps were only valid for the Airmail surcharge, thus ordinary stamps had to be employed for the normal postage rate.

### Official Souvenirs

In addition to the stamps, an Official Souvenir Card was issued for members of the U.P.U. and a different Official Souvenir Card, inscribed in English and Afrikaans, was also prepared, each with a set of stamps attached. Signed by either Thomas Boydell, the *Minister of Posts and Telegraphs* or by E.G. Stuurman, the *Postmaster General*.

### Withdrawn and Destroyed

The use of the 1925 Airmail stamps was discontinued at the end of June 1925 but remained for sale in Pretoria until 31 October. After that all residues of stamps, as well as the plates were destroyed.

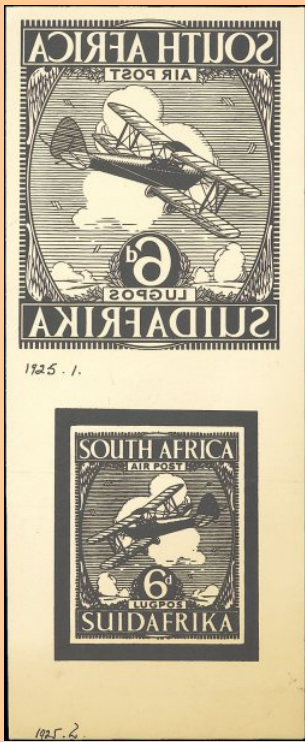
### Misappropriated

Two items that appear to have been misappropriated from the Printers are: Three sets of prints of the Engraver's unaccepted designs and an imperforate block of twelve 1d stamps found amongst waste by a youth. A dealer cut them into single examples and as may be anticipated their condition is not very good.

### Forgeries

Unfortunately this issue has attracted the attention of forgers, but the forgeries are quite easy to spot as the perforations are to a different gauge being 11, 11½ or 13. The forged stamps also show differences in the presentation of the design as well - poorly printed, the colours look faded as compared to the genuine stamps.

A report on the above appeared in the November 1953 edition of *The South African Philatelist* on page 197 (See further down page)



Misappropriated - Unaccepted Proofs  
One of three known



U.P.U. Official Souvenir Card



1d Proof in Black



3d Proof in Red



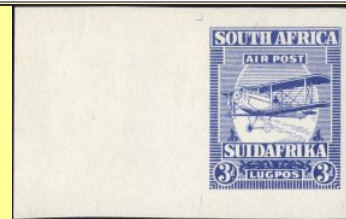
9d Proof in Blue



9d Proof in Black



Official Souvenir Card Signed by P.M.G.



9d Proof in Blue - Ex Murray Payne



9d Imperforate on left Margin





Value Tablets in Top, Bottom and Right hand Margins  
Ex Bloom Collection - Courtesy of Spink



Varities 1d Pair and 3d Imperfate to Left Margin - 9d Vertical Pair Imperfate at Foot to gutter  
1d Single Imperfate ex waste sheet of twelve

Courtesy Spink and Murray Payne

### Forgeries of the Union 1925 Air Mail Stamps





### 1925 Air Mail Stamps Forgeries

A report on the above appeared in the November 1953 edition of *The South African Philatelist* on page 197

Illustrated below a set of clever forgeries of the Union 1925 air mail stamps which was reported by Mr Francis J. Field of Sutton Coldfield, England, who in 1953 presented them to the Expert Committee of the *Philatelic Federation of Southern Africa*.

In Mr Field's letter on the subject, he mentions that he has been unable to get the facts of their history, but believes they came from a source which has been responsible for the appearance of many clever fakes of medium and high value modern stamps produced with the intention of marketing them as genuine to wholesalers and others. He adds that some people are of the opinion they were produced in France since the War.

The Forgeries, as can be seen by comparison with the genuine 9d stamp shown in the centre of the set of four, are remarkably good reproductions, but a close scrutiny quickly reveals a number of features which enables them to be detected for what they are.

Though something not entirely new in the field of Unions', forgeries of the nature discovered in this air mail set are of a pattern we were not previously aware of and to the best of our knowledge they represent the first serious attempt to counterfeit any of the comparatively higher priced Union issues.

**Continued in next column**

In the following list we give some of the more prominent features peculiar to all four values of the forged set and the presence of anyone of these characteristics will serve as a guide to distinguish the imitations from the genuine copies of these stamps.

1. The forgeries are perforated 11½ instead of 12.
2. The design is about ¼ mm. narrower in width and ¼ mm. shorter in height than on the genuine stamp.
3. The series of horizontal lines in the framework surrounding the aeroplane are drawn much finer on the forged stamps and in addition, their thickness and spacing- varies, which is not the case in the original design. Also, the ends of these lines, on both sides of the stamp, show a marked unevenness in their length whereas on the genuine item they present a perfectly straight perpendicular line.
4. The colours are either lighter or darker than the originals and under a Quartz Lamp the backs of the forged stamps each have a distinctive and different tint which shows up as brown on the 1d, green on the 3d, grey on the 6d and lilac on the 9d, The backs of all four values in the genuine issue have a white appearance under the Quartz Lamp.
5. A quick and easily observed feature of the spurious stamps is the spacing of the 2nd and 3rd horizontal lines under the word AFRIKA. On each value they will be found drawn fairly close together, whereas in the genuine printing they are spaced the same distance apart as that of the lines immediately above and below them.

## 1929 Airmails SG 40 and 41

Introduction by Nick Arrow

In one sense, the 1925 service was successful, proving that it was possible for mails to be sent between Durban and Cape Town to a realistic schedule - although due to adverse weather, mails to Durban arrived on Friday morning on two occasions and once mails from Durban did not reach East London on the Wednesday evening as scheduled, the mails always arrived in time to reach the departing mail steamer - but financially it was a disaster, as the cost of the service comfortably exceeded the incomes generated, and this despite the free use of S.A.A.F. airplanes and pilots.

Following the conclusion of the 1925 service, the South African Government said it would consider proposals for other air mail services, but realistically did nothing to promote them.

However, after much lobbying by Major Alister Miller, the South African Parliament agreed to subsidise an air mail service for three years, which was to be run by Union Airways (Pty) Ltd, a company formed with a capital of £5,000 largely by Alister Miller himself. The schedule was again arranged around the arrival and departure of the mail steamers, but the original route was changed - the stop at Oudtshoorn was omitted as the new service used Gipsy Moth aircraft which had a more substantial range and, more importantly, the service divided at Port Elizabeth, where a second leg was introduced, to Johannesburg via Bloemfontein.

Government Notice 1280 of the 19th July announced **[a] supplementary charge for the conveying of postal articles (exclusive of parcels) by Union Air Mail, 4d per ounce**. Two stamps, of 4d and 1/- values, were issued. These show a De Havilland Moth flying over Table Mountain.

The design was by an unknown member of the Government Printing Works in Pretoria - as no invitation for submission of designs were issued, the so called *Rejected designs* are entirely without status. The rate values chosen were rather more logical, but items posted required additional franking for surface delivery, and the air stamps, when initially issued, were valid only for the air surcharge although this was later changed to include surface delivery. As well as the British Post Office, the postal authorities of the Irish Free State, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Canada and the United States, agreed to take part. Mail from these countries is scarce at best!

The stamps are monochrome and were produced, by typography on unwatermarked paper in sheets of 120 stamps - Two panes of sixty (6 rows of 10) stamps per pane, separated by a gutter 13.5mm wide. As the same master plate was used for both panes, the errors (which were few) appear twice per sheet (e.g. the **Short I in AIR** is found on stamp 9 of both rows 3 and 9). Single jubilee lines in the colour of the stamps surround the panes of stamps which are unbroken save for a break above and below the fifth stamp in the top and bottom rows respectively. A dot is placed roughly in the middle of each break, intended as an aid to positioning the sheets for perforation, which was done by a single-comb machine to the gauge of 14 x 13½.

Colour trials were made of the 1/- value, in five colours, printed on the back of obsolete Government land charts, as well as "Paste-Ups", to a size of 5.35 x 4.3mm. Imperforate proofs in black were made of both values.

The stamps were issued on the 16 August 1929, in time for the first flight of the new service, which took place on the 26 August.