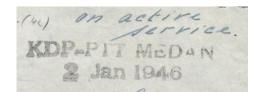
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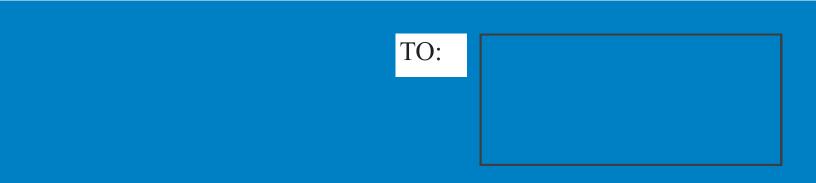


# Magazine of the American Society for Netherlands Philately

Volume 45/6













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# **NETHERLANDS PHILATELY** Magazine of the American Society for Netherlands Philately; Volume 45/6

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|--|--|--|---|--|
| Dickinson, TX 77539-3400<br>asnpmagazine@gmail.com   | Dear Fellow Collectors,  |  |   |  |
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| Ben Jansen<br>1308 Pin Oak Drive<br>Dickinson, TX 77539-3400   | Cheers,  |  |   |  |
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## **Collecting Postal History of the KDP and RAPWI.**

### by Marinus Quist

#### PART 1

In *Netherlands Philately*, Vol. 42, No. 3 of January 2018, there appeared a fascinating article, by Hans Kremer, about the Kantoor (voor) Displaced Persons ("KDP") in Medan, Sumatra in the Netherlands East Indies ("NEI") during 1945-1946. The article tells the story of the establishment of this (primarily) civilian aid agency near the end of WWII by the NEI government in exile in Brisbane, Australia. As recounted in Kremer's article, the Medan, Sumatra branch office of the KDP provided aid (including registration, identification documents, and even postal services) to newly liberated civilians and POWs (primarily Dutch and Indo-European) during the confusion and chaos brought on by the Indonesian independence movement immediately following the Japanese surrender. Kremer also briefly touched on the establishment of an Allied military organization named Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees ("RAPWI") that would end up working with the KDP, not just on Sumatra, but on Java and some of the other NEI islands, as well. In this article, I would like to provide a little more information about RAPWI and the KDP and to discuss and illustrate the postal markings employed by both organizations in the NEI.

Kremer's article included several excellent illustrations of the most common postal markings used by the KDP (Bulterman type NO 28c), and he went on to mention that several other postal markings listed/illustrated by Bulterman were used by the KDP in Medan between December 1945 and March 1946. Since not everyone has a copy of Bulterman's beautifully-illustrated 579-page monumental work entitled *"Poststempels Netherlands – In-dië 1864-1950"*, I would like to take this opportunity to describe/illustrate all five of the postal markings employed by the KDP in Medan. As noted on page 349 of Bulterman's book, these 'noodstempels' (emergency cancels) were listed as type "NO" and consisted of the following:

NO 26: a 43 mm diameter circle with three lines of text, namely: "K.D.P.- P.T.T." in the first line, a separate-

ly-applied date stamp in the second line, and "MEDAN" in the third line. This cancel was used only during December 1945 (see Figure 1, which is faintly dated 19 December 1945).

- *NO 27:* a 65 mm-long two-line cancel, reading "KDP-MEDAN" in the first line and dated in the second line. This cancel was used only from the end of December 1945 till February 1946 (see Figure 2).
- *NO 28a:* a cancel consisting of three lines ("KDP-PTT, MEDAN", and date). According to Bulterman, this rare marking is known to have been used only on 31 December 1945. (Unfortunately, my online bid in the spring of 2020 for an example of this elusive item was unsuccessful, so I can offer no illustration of this marking.) It is the same as the two cancels described below, BUT WITHOUT THE DECORATIVE ARROWS OR POINTING HANDS.

| Aan<br>het <sup>N</sup> ederlandsch Indische Roode Kruis<br><u>BATAVIA</u> .<br>Kaungplei - W.3 | K.D TTT.               |
|---|------------------------|
| BATAVIA.  | Aan Carbine Contractor |
|   |                        |

Figure 1: Emergency cancel NO 26.

*NO 28b:* a three-line cancel, just like NO 28a, but with decorative arrows on each side of "MEDAN". This cancel is known to have been used only from 31 December 1945 to 5 January 1946 (see Figure 3).

*NO 28c:* a three-line cancel, just like NO 28b, but with decorative little pointing hands on either side of the date. This cancel is known to have been used from 14 January 1946 till 30 March 1946 (see Figure 4).

10.(4c) on active Jervice. BY AIR MAIL KDP-PIT MEDAN PAR AVION 2 Jan 1946 Figure 2: Emergency cancel NO 27. ajoor Wr. C. Schouten Aletel des Indes 4. Rapiri Balaria C R. 56661/4 PER LUCHTPOST. K P.PTY -MEDAN-4 Januari 1946 Figure 3: Emergency cancel NO 28b. AAN PRESIDENT EN DIRECTEUREN VAN DE JAVASCHE BANK BATAVIA. 15. (44 ON ACTIVE SERVICE AIRMAIL MEDAN -Den HoogEDGestr.Heer Majoor Dr. C. SCHOUTEN Hotel des Indes , Figure 4: Emergency cancel NO 28c. BATAVIA. Lt.E.ERKELENSK Hotel de Boer MEDAN. 56664/4

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As Kremer's article mentioned, no stamps were available in Medan at the time; and I have never seen any KDP cancels on stamps. Bulterman mentions that NO 26 and NO 27 were applied using black ink. Although he mentions nothing about the ink color used for NO 28a, b, and c, most of the examples that I have seen are also black, but I do have one example of NO 28c (weakly applied) in light violet ink (see Figure 5). Interestingly, a couple of

KOP PET MEDAN 25.3.96 KOR-FIT -MEDAN-26 Magel 19 Majour Dr. C.Schouter. Hetel des Indes.

Figure 5: Light violet imprint of NO 28c.

KDP cancels which Bulterman did not list, were mentioned in Part II of an article which appeared in Vol. 10.1 (Sept. 1985) of Netherlands Philately. It was written by G. A. Geerts for original publication in the Dutch quarterly, "Goudapost" and was subsequently translated into English by Paul E. van Reyen. The article, "The Resumption of Postal Activities in the Former Netherlands Indies from April 22, 1944", did not say very much about the KDP cancels. It merely mentioned that several varieties exist and illustrated four of them. What is significant, however, is that an UNDATED two-line version of what Bulterman called NO 28 was said to be known, as well as a three

-line cancel enclosed in a large rectangular box. For an illustration of the latter, go to the ASNP website, <u>www.asnp1975.com</u> and locate page 13 of Vol 10.1 in the back issues section. Although I have never seen either of these KDP cancels, they may very well have been used in Medan during the chaotic days of late 1945, early 1946. Examples, anyone?

As can be seen from my illustrations in this article, many of the KDP postal markings are faint, uneven, or smeared, undoubtedly because the KDP's cancelling devices were, as Kremer's article points out, "make-do" devices. In fact, these cancelling devices were probably made of rubber, were struck individually by hand on each envelope, and used whatever ink and ink pads that were available during the general chaos and material shortages of the times. Like Kremer, I find that the lack of stamps on the outgoing mail was treated inconsistently by the

Dutch PTT when KDP-marked mail was received in the Netherlands, even when the sender clearly marked "ex P.O.W." on the envelope (see Figure 6). However, as far as I have seen, KDP-marked mail to the rest of the NEI and even to Malaya was not hit with postage due charges at the point of receipt (see Figure 7).

No KDP postal markings are known from Java. However, that does not mean that the KDP wasn't active there. For example, similar to the KDP Medan registration card illustration in Kremer's article, the KDP on Java issued temporary identity cards to internees as they were liberated from Japanese or Republican (Indonesian) camps (see Figure 8).

> Figure 6: Postage due on ex P.O.W. mail to the The Netherlands.

| Ex. P. o. W. 4 + ( (S. )   |       |
|--|-------|
| NO SAMEDAN   |       |
| Aan den Heer en Mevr. W.M.Van Der VER 1945   | 110   |
| Aan den heer en Mevr. W.M.Van Der VEER 946   |       |
| vanBeverninckstaat 42  | -     |
| Den Haag   |       |
|  |       |
| HOLLAND  | N. N. |
| No. of the second secon | 1     |
|  |       |
|  |       |
| 56615/4  | 11    |
| and the second s | 3     |
|  |       |

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51 FROM ST.PR.Srinivasan Chettiar. No. 21, HINDOE STRAAT, International Red Cross MEDAN DELI, P.PT SUMATRA E. C. \$12429 MEDANbruari 1948 Jo. Chettian Esq. maniau 324 Jalan Rais West,

Figure 7: Mail to Malay.

Because most internees were destitute, the KDP provided them with food, clothing and even money (see Figure 9). In fact, the KDP and RAPWI were so short of personnel on Java that they borrowed Dutch military and newly liberated internees as staff and ended up merging their Java operations under the direction of RAPWI. Even the postal history bears this out, since several covers that I have seen (see Figure 10 as well as Figures 2 and 6) addressed to RAPWI's Java headquarters in Batavia are directed to Majoor Dr. C Schouten. It turns out (based on a number of covers to/from Schouten that I have seen for sale on the internet) that he previously served as a medical officer with the NEI government in exile at Camp Columbia in Brisbane, Aus-

| BIJZONDERHEDEN,    | DEPARTEMENT VAN JUSTITIE.  | IDENTITEITSKAART.  | Ontvangen Goederen<br>Omschrijving Aantal |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Kin angla baudan # | Dienst van Sociale Zaken,  | Registratienummer: W. B. 073 15                          | In the selection                          |
|                    | KDP.   | Naam: Hulles.<br>Voornamen: Herman,                      | 1 de Can Inicia                           |
|                    | 12 19003   | Geboren: Haandam 13-11-297.<br>Landaard: Mat.            | 3 g - 1/ 1 meetros 1                      |
|                    | TIJDELIJKE<br>Identiteitskaart   | Geslacht: M/# Geslacht:                                  | - 1 mars - integlishi                     |
|                    | soor<br>Bevrijde Geinterneerden  | Weduwe (nant)<br>Gescheiden                              | i Runa falled 1711                        |
|                    | De tot het bezit van dit bewijs gerechtigde is verplicht het   | Beroep: Leloschoolhoofd<br>interations Handteekening var | 1 for dath 10-10- 1/2                     |
|                    | te allen tijde bij sich te dragen en desgeverderd is tonen.<br>ALLEEN IN TE VULLEN DOOR DEN DESBETIEVENDEN | get The There ?  | 1 Br Ren Jalle 11-11-16 P.                |
|                    | AMBTENAAR,   | Argeneven te: Batairia<br>d.d. 27-9-46 door 20           | -A-Tongo ( 1 full out                     |
| माने ।             | Misbruik wordt gestraft,   | Miniscoules - F-   | . I J. on derbrock Is /                   |

*Figure 8: Temporary identity card issued to liberated internees.* 

Figure 9: Identity card with record of received goods.

tralia, the very place where the KDP was formed! Interestingly, Schouten later (circa 1947) wrote a 172-page historical overview about RAPWI entitled "Geschiedkundig Overzicht der RAPWI". Several interesting sections of this work have been re-published in the online forum Java Post (<u>https://javapost.nl</u>) run by Bert Immerzeel.

BRIE CART certe Resicht april - adres conjetion 23-11-43 //EXP

Figure 10: Postcard addressed to RAPWI headquarters in Baravia.

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#### PART 2

So, what exactly was RAPWI? RAPWI was an Allied (primarily British) military unit established in February of 1945 at the headquarters of the South East Asia Command ("SEAC") at Kandy, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). The new organization was tasked with locating and rescuing the many thousands of Allied POWs and (primarily) western civilian internees being held by the Japanese in SEAC's geographical area of responsibility. SEAC, which had been formed in August of 1943, was under the command of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten and had a huge theatre of operations. For example, by early 1945, SEAC's area of responsibility encompassed Burma, Siam (Thailand), Malaya (including Singapore), French Indochina, Hong Kong, and Sumatra.

Most of the Dutch military forces in Asia that had not succumbed in battle or been taken prisoner by the Japanese as a result of their rapid takeover of the NEI in early 1942 had fled to Australia, where they were later incorporated into the new South West Pacific Area ("SWPA") war theatre under the command of General Douglas Mac-Arthur. As a result, these Dutch forces were able to participate in the liberation, by the Allied Forces, of several parts of the Eastern NEI, including Netherlands New Guinea, Morotai, and Tarakan and Balikpapan (Dutch Borneo). SEAC, on the other hand, was make up largely of British officers and British Indian troops, with only a few Dutch participants.

During 1943 and 1944, a small number of missions were carried out on Sumatra by SEAC commando units, mostly by infiltration from submarines. Not all of these missions were successful, but gradually the Allies were able to pinpoint the location of the many of the POW and civilian internment camps, such as the POW forced labor camps along the route of the notorious Pakanbaru Railway. The plan initially was for RAPW teams to locate and liberate all of the Allied POWs and internees and to repatriate, as soon as possible, all of those which were not Dutch or Indo-Europeans, such as those from the British Commonwealth and the U.S.A. However, several last-minute developments greatly complicated RAPWI's mission. First, Mountbatten was informed at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 that, effective 15 August 1945, SEAC's geographic area of responsibility would be expanded to encompass most of the rest of the NEI, including Java. This decision was taken primarily to free up General MacArthur to focus on the planned invasion of Japan. Second, as a result of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese unconditionally surrendered on 15 August 1945, which was far earlier than SEAC's leadership had anticipated and was prior to the bulk of the NEI being liberated by the Allies. Finally, the Indonesian declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 by Soekarno (Sukarno) and Mohammed Hatta put SEAC in a really difficult situation, especially on Java, where the Indonesian freedom ("Merdeka") movement was very strong, where there were many thousands of Japanese occupiers to disarm and repatriate, and where the Dutch were most anxious to regain colonial control.

As a result, RAPWI and the KDP, with limited resources and little time for planning, were expected to immediately jump into action to start rescuing POWs and interned civilians in the NEI. Immediately following the Japanese surrender, SEAC started parachuting commando teams into Sumatra to try to reach some of the camps in the interior. Also, by late August SEAC aircraft started dropping leaflets over the camps (see p. 414 of Bulterman's book for a couple of such air-dropped leaflets). These leaflets advised the prisoners to stay put in their camps under Japanese protection until help could arrive. Because SEAC was stretched so thin, Mountbatten had ordered the Japanese to continue to guard their prisoners; but this time, not against escape, but against the Indonesian freedom movement, which was virulently anti-Dutch. In some cases the Japanese followed these orders, although in other cases they simply abandoned the camps or even joined forces with the Indonesian rebels. Shortly after the leaflets were dropped, SEAC aircraft began dropping food and RAPWI teams over some of the camps.

Rescuing Allied POWs became the most urgent priority, because many of them were near death due to sickness and malnutrition brought on by years of slave labor under hellish conditions and starvation diets. Nevertheless, to those awaiting rescue, progress seemed excruciatingly slow and many POWs (and internees) got understandably impatient and came up with disparaging names for RAPWI, like Retain All Prisoners of War Indefinitely and Rotzooi Achter Prikeldraad Weer Ingesteld meaning "reinstitution of rotten mess behind barbed wire."

Mountbatten, in order to avoid open warfare with the Indonesian rebels ended up only occupying limited bridgeheads in the NEI, primarily larger cities near the coast. On Sumatra that meant its three (3) largest ports, namely, Medan, Palembang, and Padang. In some cases, however, this still involved considerable fighting with the Indonesian rebels who saw the British Army as acting on behalf of the Dutch wish to re-colonize the N.E.I. For example, in the area around Medan, fighting started in mid-October 1945 and escalated sharply in early December of 1945. There were many casualties of both sides and the area was not fully secured until the Indonesians re-treated in April of 1946. Getting POWs out had the highest priority; and in some cases it was possible to air lift rescued POWs to Singapore or Ceylon. Rescued civilian internees, on the other hand, were usually brought to recovery camps in Medan, Palembang, and Padang to await evacuation by ship. Thus it was that RAPWI, like the KDP, found it necessary to operate a temporary post office in Padang, on Sumatra's west coast, as the Indonesian

rebels controlled the old NEI postal system and could not be relied upon to handle the mail of their old colonial overlords. Again, no stamps were available and mail was handled on a postage-free basis. According to Bulterman's book, RAPWI's postal marking in Padang consisted of a 28 x 17 mm rectangular box with three lines of text reading 'RAPWI - POST, PADANG, N.E.I., and (date). It appears that the date was applied separately (see Figure 11). Bulterman goes on to mention that the RAPWI postal marking which is known in both black and violet ink, was used from December 1945 through the first months of 1946 (March is the latest month that I have seen).

> Figure 11: RAPWI postmark used in Padag, Sumatra.

| CO HQ AI | ). Uhlenbroek<br>F Sumatra, P | aden.          | Cn e     | otive service               | ; |
|----------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------------------|---|
|          |                               | R14            | - [      | RAPWI-POST<br>PADANG N.E.S. | - |
|          | Brown Er                      | others Marrima | n & Co., | · ·                         |   |
|          |                               | 67 Wall Stre   | et,      |                             |   |
| 5        |                               | Nev-7          | fork     |                             |   |
|          |                               | E.Y.           | , U.S.A. |                             |   |
|          |                               |                |          |                             |   |
|          |                               |                |          |                             |   |
|          |                               |                |          |                             |   |

#### PART 3

Meanwhile, matters on Java became even more complicated. Java had only a few Allied POWs by August of 1945, but it had many, many internment camps housing an estimated 250,000 civilians. As in all the rest of the occupied islands of the NEI, civilians were housed in separate camps for men and women. Young boys were imprisoned with their mothers; but, once they turned twelve, they were sent to a men's camp. Java was also very densely populated and was home to the Republican (Indonesian) leadership, as well as numerous violently anti-Dutch youth groups (the Pemuda) and the Japanese-trained Indonesian militia (the Sukarela). As a result of these difficult factors, SEAC's limited troops and resources, and a desire to avoid open conflict with the revolutionary forces of the Indonesian rebels, Mountbatten resisted pressure from the Netherlands and the NEI government in exile to liberate all of Java. As on Sumatra, Mountbatten's British-led, Indian forces only sought to occupy a number of large city bridgeheads, primarily on the coast. That way, ex-prisoners could be brought from camps in the interior for recovery and/or repatriation purposes.

The first RAPWI teams did not land on Java (at Batavia) until 8 September 1945 and British-Indian troops only started coming ashore (again at Batavia) on 28 September 1945. By then, the Pemuda and Sukarela had started to become aggressive, and many Dutch men and older boys who had chosen to leave the camps were attacked. It was at this time that many Indo-Europeans, most of whom had avoided being imprisoned by the Japanese, were rounded up and imprisoned by the Republican (Indonesian) rebels or were persecuted by the Pemuda and/or the Sukarela on the grounds that Indo-Europeans were too pro-Dutch. Christian Indonesians and ethnic Chinese Indonesians were also persecuted. The resulting violence and chaos in the fall of 1945 is what became known as the "Bersiap" period.

In the coastal city of Semarang there was heavy fighting, first between the Japanese and the Republican Indonesian) forces, and then between the Republican (Indonesian) and the British-Indian forces. In the nearby towns of Ambarawa and Banjubiru (Banjoebiroe), where thousands of civilian internees were trapped in camps, there were fierce Indonesian attacks (including, snipers, mortars and fire bombs) on the camps and the RAPWI aid workers. These attacks were carried out by Indonesia extremists, many of whom had received military training from the Japanese and who were well armed with Japanese weapons, including tanks, mortars, machine guns, and antiaircraft guns. As a result, there was intense fighting, there, that lasted weeks before the internees could be evacuated. Much the same occurred in Bandung (Bandoeng) in Central Java, where RAPWI had set up a regional headquarters in the Preanger Hotel and brought in thousands of RAPWI aid workers to deal with the estimated 84,000 former internees stuck there. Armed British truck convoys made numerous road trips between Batavia and Bandung to bring in badly-needed food through the rebel food blockades, and the British-Indian forces were forced to fight numerous battles along the road, especially where major roadblocks had been erected. The fighting in November of 1945 in the large port city of Soerabaja (Surabaya) was even more intense. There, a great many Dutch civilians just coming out of internment camps and Indo-Europeans were violently attacked and the British moved in to rescue them and occupy the city. The battle, which was very fierce and involved shelling by British war ships in the harbor and close air support of the ground troops by the Royal Air Force ("RAF"), lasted for more than three weeks, caused much of the city to be destroyed, and resulted in the death of British Brigadier General A.W.S. Mallaby at the very outset.

Matters became very critical in some areas, with constant kidnappings, sniper attacks, executions and mutilations of Europeans, Indo-Europeans, Christians, and all Western military personnel, as well as fire-bombings of civilian internment camps in Bandung and Ambarawa. For example, the twenty-two survivors (RAF crew and British – Indian soldiers) of an unarmed British Dakota plane that crashed near Meester Cornelis (a Batavia suburb) were captured, hacked to death, and buried in shallow graves near Bekasi by Indonesia extremists in mid-November. As a result, the British command, although trying not to take sides on the political independence issue, was forced to use substantial force, including the use of attack aircraft, to try to stop the violence. Just in the short period between October 16 and November 16, the RAF flew some 800 attack sorties and lost 14 aircraft to rebel action. During the same period, the RAF transport aircraft made more than 1100 evacuation flights, carrying 14,000 passengers (including 900 casualties) and Netherlands transport planes carried more than 8,000 passengers on approximately 1500 flights.

Meanwhile, RAPWI was able to establish its Java headquarters in Batavia in the plush Hotel des Indes under the command of Colonel K.M.G. Dewar (British) and Lt. Kolonel D.L. ("Dick") Asjes (Dutch), the latter of Pander Postjager fame to those of you who are aero-philatelists. Fortunately, there was less fighting in Batavia (mostly in the Kramat neighborhood and on the outskirts of Batavia), but there was still the constant danger of rebel sniping, kidnappings, and lootings while RAPWI aid workers were trying to deal with thousands upon thousands of civilian internees, all of whom were attempting to locate and reunite with family members. In an effort to deal with the reigning mass confusion, RAPWI established the 'Centraal Contact en Postbureau' (Central Contact and Post Office) to deal with the daunting communications issues facing the Allied and their charges. Much of the work of this organization was handled by the KDP and the NEI Red Cross ("NIRK"); and, when SEAC shut down RAP-WI in April of 1946, NIRK continued on with what it called the 'Centraal Informatie Bureau' (Central Information Office). The KDP also continued with its tasks, as shown by the dates on the document illustrated in Figure 9. (For nearly day-to-day accounts of the fighting and rescue operations by the British-Indian army and RAP-WI on Java in the fall of 1945, see "Netherlands News" magazine, published during WW2 by the Netherlands Information Bureau in New York. A hyperlink to the last 4 issues of Vol. 14 covering the period of November and December 1945 is set forth in the last source indicated below.)

In most parts of the NEI, the future for Dutch and Indo-Europeans civilians who survived the internment and the violence that followed was dim, at best. Most of them had been reduced to penury, their health was largely fragile, and many had no homes or businesses to return to. In fact, the circumstances were so changed that most Dutch and Indo-European civilians had no choice other than to be evacuated to lands many had never seen before: either to the Netherlands (for permanent resettlement in most cases) or to Australia/New Zealand (for short term rehabilitation and hoped-for eventual return to the NEI). The task of housing and rehabilitating such Dutch and Indo-European civilians, in anticipation of their eventual evacuation (mostly by ship, but some initially by air) to Singapore or Ceylon, fell to the KDP and RAPWI. Dutch POWs, meanwhile, were to be handled by the Leger

Organisatie Centrum ("LOC"); and, after medical rehabilitation, were largely slated to go back into service, unless they were eligible for discharge. However, because of the political situation and the (often) poor health of the POWs, this could not occur right away; and most Dutch POWs were left languishing in recovery camps for many months, some as long as a year after the Japanese surrender.

The RAPWI post office apparently took a while to become operational; and, according to Bulterman, no postal

23 Janmani 1946 Den Heer J.M. de VEER. Kamp 4, blok 7, sectie 1 TJIMAHI. -----P.J.Verwijs. Fourier stafschrijver. Waterlooplein Z. 32 Batavia.

*Figure 12: Semi-mute emergency cancel NO4 stamp.* 

it was. The RAPWI cancel was a four-line, 29 mm violet circular date cancel in violet ink with "RAPWI POST-

KANTOOR" on the first two lines, a separately-applied date stamp in the middle and "BATAVIA" on the last line (see Figure 13). Bulterman says this postal marking is only known to have been used in February of 1946. The RAPWI cancel was short-lived and it was followed by several other emergency postal markings, such as a similar one with the name "AMACAB", which stood for Allied Military Administration Civil Affairs Branch (see Figure 14). Also, a cover in my collection with a similar AMACAB cancellation from Palembang (Sumatra) dated 11 May 1946 and addressed to the head of the KDP in Batavia further evidences that the KDP continued in existence after



cancels from Batavia are known prior to mid-December 1945. On 26

December 1945, however, a 31.5 mm violet circular semi-mute date stamp (no place name) with eight vertical stripes and a horizontal date bar in the middle came into use in Batavia until February of 1946 (see

Figure 12). Bulterman labels this cancel as NO 4, when used in Batavia; as NO 37, when used in Sema-

rang (usually in violet ink, sometimes in blue ink, and sometimes with the name "Semarang" stamped

above or across the circle); and as

NM 4a, when used, from April till

June by the Dutch military in Bata-

via as a 'veldpost' (field post) can-

cel. It is unclear whether this semimute cancel was the product of the RAPWI post office or not, but based on the relevant situation in Batavia and the fact that the semi-mute cancel was immediately superseded by a

RAPWI cancel suggests strongly that

Figure 13: RAPWI emergency cancel.

SEAC had disbanded RAPWI (see Figure 15) Regular NEI PTT postal cancellations returned to use in the larger NEI cities during 1947; and, by 1948, most of the emergency cancels had been phased out.

| de Ruyte   | m b a n g              |
|--|------------------------|
| PAR AVION<br>LUCHTPOST<br>Wits Luiknos per curste<br>Uncht 4 & per week  | Aan: Hoofd K.D.P.Java, |
| Mild. M. 400 P.T. T. RETOUR AFZENDER AAN<br>22 NUM. 60 NBEKEND ON NIET AFLEHAALD<br>BATAVIA- Den Weled. Heer<br>(AMACAB) Den Weled. Heer<br>M. M. Onas | <u>Batavia-C.</u>      |
| Atzender C. J. Nies Jr.<br>Adres v. O. Stadesdr. 549.<br>Den Haag.   |                        |

Figure 14: AMACAB emergency cancel.

Figure 15: AMACAB emergency cancel used in Palembang.

#### PART 4

So, is there any more RAPWI postal history relating to the NEI? Perhaps. For example, it is possible that RAP-WI was involved to some degree with the Netherlands post office established on 4 September 1945 in Bangkok, Thailand. After all, Thailand was in SEAC's geographic area of responsibility. However, as Bulterman described on page 355 of his book, that post office was started by Dutch ex-POWs who had worked in the NEI postal system before the war. According to Bulterman, the postal cancellation used by that post office didn't go into service until 26 March 1946, which was just before RAPWI was disbanded. A better example might be the fact that a Netherlands Information office was established in Singapore as early as August of 1945, which RAPWI then took over and turned it into the RAPWI Information Bureau and Post Office ('Informatiebureau en Postkantoor'). Most likely this is the post office that served Camp Wilhelmina and several other camps in Singapore where

BY AIR MAIL AVION

Figure 16: Netherlands Postoffice Singapore cancel.

Dutch and Indo POWs and civilian refugees were sent to recover and await transport,. It is probably the same post office described on page 356 of Bulterman's book as having been established on 22 September 1945 in the building of the 'Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij' (Netherlands Trading Company) in Singapore. Initially, due to the lack of postage stamps, all mail sent out by Dutch military personnel on active duty and by newly-liberated Dutch POWs and civilians could be sent from this post office postage free. However, at some point, civilian mail sent to the Netherlands without stamps became subject to single rate postage due at the receiving end. According to Bulterman, the Netherlands post office in Singapore utilized several postal markings, but only one of them was actually employed during part of RAPWI's term of existence. This was a 34 mm circle in violet ink with the word "Netherlands Postoffice Singapore" around the circumference and with a separately-applied date stamp across the middle (see Figure 16).

Then there exist occasionally-encountered covers, primarily from the Netherlands, addressed to family members care of RAPWI at various locations. For example, I recently bought a rather ugly cover mailed in December 1945 from the Netherlands to family members on board the *SS Nieuw Amsterdam* at 'Kamp Ataka near Suez, care of RAPWI' (see Figure 17). That cover really piqued my interest. First, I discovered, whilst reading a book entitled *"The Dutch East Indies Red Cross, 1870-1950"* by Leo van Bergen, that the *SS Nieuw Amsterdam* was in Egypt at the time this cover arrived. She was on her very first repatriation voyage for Dutch refugees from the NEI, who had embarked at Colombo, Ceylon.

LUCHTPO AVION anson Thise mois Hog C. Janse de Kleek.

Figure 17: Front (top) and back (bottom) of cover mailed from The Hague to Kamp Ataka.

Second, after a number of searches on the internet, I found out that Camp Ataka (sometimes written "Ataqa") was an old British army base in the Egyptian desert between Port Suez and Port Adabiya near the southern end of the Suez Canal (see Figure 18, and visit <u>https://www.britain-atwar.org.uk/ww2/Transport\_Home/</u> <u>Ataka\_Pamphlet/index.htm</u> for an Ataka pamphlet.



Figure 18: Location of Kamp Ataka.

At first, this base was used by the British Military to clothe, feed, and entertain British RAPWIs (consisting primarily of former POWs, also known as FEPOWs, and some liberated civilian internees) being repatriated from the Far East to the UK. The clothing outfitting was done at Camp Ataka, which was about five miles up the coast from Port Adabiya, while entertainment facilities for the British RAPWIs, were located at Port Adabiya. These included a beach, a restaurant, a cinema, a swimming pool for men, and boat tours to Green Island or the Port Adabiya harbor, which had been built by the Allies during WW2. There were two British RAP-WIs. Since the repatriation of British RAPWI's had been largely completed by December 1945, arrangements were apparently made to allow the Dutch Government to use the facilities at Camp Ataka to outfit Dutch RAPWIs, who were primarily destitute civil-

ians, with shoes and winter clothing and to provide some food and entertainment in the process.

Thus it was that, prior to transiting the Suez Canal, the Dutch repatriation ships anchored or docked at Port Adabiya, from where the refugees were taken in groups by train or bus to large warehouses at Camp Ataka. There they were fed, entertained with music, and outfitted with new clothing and shoes. Leo Keukens in his yet-to-be published book, "With Nothing but Our Lives" (see <u>www.leokeukens.com</u>), writes "It felt like Christmas, Easter and Birthday rolled into one. There were flags and decorations hanging from the rafters all sorts of food and drink, cookies and candies, and a band dressed in white jackets played cheerful music. But the most exciting of all, there were racks and shelves of clothing waiting for us" Many high resolution photos of Camp Ataka and the repatriation ships docked at nearby Port Adabiya, largely taken by photographer Willem van de Poll, can be found in the image bank of the Netherlands National Archives at:

http://ww.gahetna.nl/collective/afbeeldingen/fotocollectie/zoeken/q/zoekterm/Ataka

So what about RAPWI? Did it actually have anything to do with Camp Ataka? My guess is that they likely played some role in connection with the camp (perhaps arranging with the British Government to let the Dutch Government use the camp) and they may have played some role in connection with the two field post offices at Port Adabiya. However, the repatriation voyages for Dutch RAPWIs and the handling of Dutch RAPWIs at Camp Ataka were largely carried out by NEI Repatriation Service (Repatriëringsdienst Indië) and the Netherlands Red Cross. Because Dutch RAPWIs were not allowed to disembark at Port Adabiya, except in controlled groups to catch the train or busses for the short trip to Camp Ataka, it does not appear that they were able to make personal use of the two British Field Post Offices at Port Adabiya (if they even still existed by December 1945), although the cover shown in Figure 17 may, very well, have been handled and delivered to the ship from there.

Another reason why I concluded that RAPWI might have had some involvement with Camp Ataka is based on the wartime accounts of a young British Women's Auxiliary Air Force nurse, Iris Porter. She volunteered to work for RAPWI from September to December 1945 at a nearby camp in Port Tawfiq (across the water from Port Suez), where British FEPOWS and civilian internees stopped by on their way home for food, clothing, shoes and enter-tainment (see <u>www.elinorflorence.com/blog/waaf-egypt/</u> for Iris Porter's interesting experience).

Similarly, according to a memoir that I recently read ("Our Childhood in the former Colonial Dutch East Indies, Recollections Before and During Our Wartime Internment by the Japanese" by Ralph Ockerse and Evelijn Blaney), RAPWI was also involved with Camp Irene (in Colombo, Ceylon) and Camp Kandy (in Kandy, Cylon), which were used in 1945-1946 as way stations for NEI refugees going to the Netherlands. Thus it is possible that mail to/from refugees at these camps might occasionally have used "RAPWI" in the return address or in the address of the intended recipient. For example, I recently saw a cover for sale online which had "Dutch D.P. Camp...Kandy, Ceylon" in the return address, but it is possible that similar mail might use the term "RAPWI Camp" or "c/o RAPWI" or similar wording.

All in all, RAPWI and the KDP carried out a difficult job with limited resources amidst the horrors of an on-going war; and they were able to help thousands of Allied POWs and civilian internees back on the road to normal lives. By the end of the summer of 1946, the large wave of repatriations from the NEI was past and, ultimately, it is estimated that some 70,000 evacuees took advantage of the repatriation service to the Netherlands. In the process, RAPWI and the KDP were unknowingly instrumental in the creation of some really interesting postal history, and some of it is still floating around out there. So keep an eye out for it! If you run across any KDP or RAPWI markings other than those described above or outside of the above-mentioned date ranges, or in different ink colors, please let me know at: <u>marinusxquist@gmail.com</u>.

#### SOURCES

 The following additional sources were used for general information:

 <u>https://www.indischekamparchieven.nl</u>

 <u>www.en.afscheidvanindie.nl/archieven</u>

 <u>www.oorlogsgetroffenen.nl</u>

 <u>www.wikipedia.org</u>

 <u>https://wikipedia.nl</u>

 Netherlands News, Vol. 14, No. 1 (November 15, 1945) – Vol. 14, No. 4 (January 1, 1946), at

 <u>https://books.google.com/books?id=PFA8AQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\_ge\_summary\_r&

 cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

</u>

## Dutch Coding- and Sorting Systems and their Effect on Mail Items. Part 2.

## by Eddie IJspeerd

#### Video coding machine

The AEG Alima's with HSH are able to read postal codes in addresses that are applied in print, in typewriting or in legible handwriting. Automatic reading of unclear handwritten postal codes remains a problem for the time being. Therefore, a considerable part of (mostly) private mail still must be indexed manually via a HIA. To also process this type of mail more efficiently, an experiment with a 'Videocodeermachine' (Vicoma) (video coding machine) took place in Roosendaal (Figure 36).

For this purpose, an Alima with HSH is linked to a video coding station. When the postal code is not detected by optical character recognition, a digital image is made of the mail item and send to a 'Videocodeerplaats' (VCP) (video coding station) (Figure 37).



Figure 36: The video coding machine (Vicoma) in EKP Roosendaal.

Figure 37: Drawing of a stand-alone Vicoma video coding station.

An operator reads the postal code on the screen, types it in on a keyboard and in the Vicoma a bar-no bar sorting index is sprayed on the envelope. Such an index can be identified by the Vicoma code characteristic and the video coding station number. Both are located to the left of the sorting index.

The Vicoma video coding station number is encoded according to the binary numeral system. Figure 38 explains how to decode a binary number, and a binary-encoded barcode is decoded using the same principle (Figure 39).

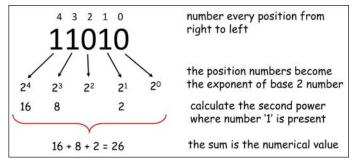


Figure 38: Explanation of the binary numeral system.

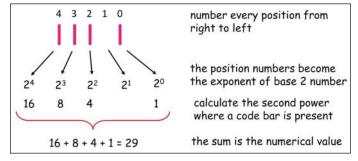


Figure 39: Decoding a binary encoded barcode.

Two Vicoma code types have been used in succession. In these and other linear code types, that will be discussed later, starting bars are always present. These bars only serve to control the software and do not affect the content of the code.

A). Vicoma code type I (Figure 40): This code type is relatively easy to identify by the two code bars (the Vicoma code type feature) between the sorting index and the video coding station number.

B). Vicoma code type II (Figure 41): For reasons unknown to us so far, the Vicoma code type feature has been moved all the way to the left, making recognition of this code type more complicated. A useful tool is the place name in the postmark. This code type can only be found on mail items cancelled in Roosendaal.

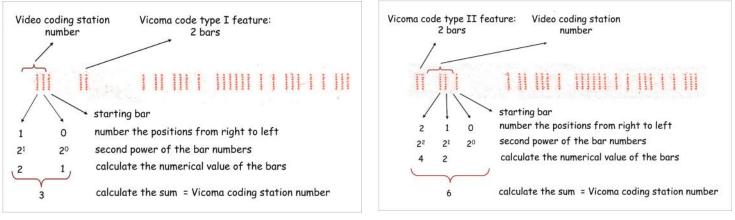


Figure 40: Structure of a Vicoma code type I and the decoding of video coding station number 3.

Figure 41: Structure of a Vicoma code type II and the decoding of video coding station number 6.

#### OCR-Video Integrated System (OVIS).

A next phase in automated indexing is reached with the introduction of the OCR-Video Integrated System (OVIS). The Alima and the Vicoma systems are now merged into one machine. The optical character reader software has been improved and is now called 'Post Code Reader' (PCR).

An OVIS has a dual mail input. The mail items are alternately taken from the left and right mail stack and fed to the detection system (Figure 42). In an OVIS, mail items are indexed using inkjet technology. Each code bar consists of eight inkjet dots (Figure 43). An encoded machine number is always present in an OVIS index.



A and B: dual letter input C: reading, indexing and pre-sorting module

Figure 42: OVIS with the dual mail input in the foreground.

To recognize the postal code in an address, three detection systems are active simultaneously. It depends on the quality of the address data which detection system is successful in recognizing the postal code of the addressee.

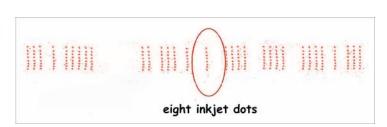


Figure 43: The sorting index of an OVIS can be identified by the eight inkjet dots that make up each code bar.

A). Postal code is recognized by the OCR module

The postal code is recognized by the Optical Character Reading (OCR) software. It only works well when postal codes are printed or typed. The sorting index has a feature that shows that the postal code is recognized by the OCR module. This feature consists of five empty bar positions in the code (Figure 44).

B). Postal code is recognized by the 'Post Code Reader'

To improve the recognition of handwritten postal codes, the PTT promoted the use of special postal code boxes on envelopes. In practice, it appears that the six postal code elements (four digits and two letters), placed in separate boxes, are written more clearly and, due to the uniform size of the boxes, almost all are the same size. The recognition efficiency of the 'Post Code Reader' module therefore increases significantly. When the postal code is recognized by the PCR module, an index is applied with a PCR feature consisting of five fixed code bars (Figure 45).

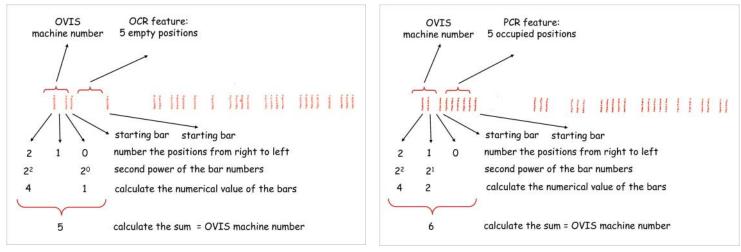
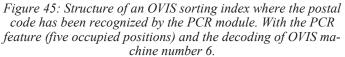


Figure 44: Structure of an OVIS sorting index where the postal code has been recognized by the OCR module. With the OCR feature (five empty positions) and the decoding of OVIS machine number 5.



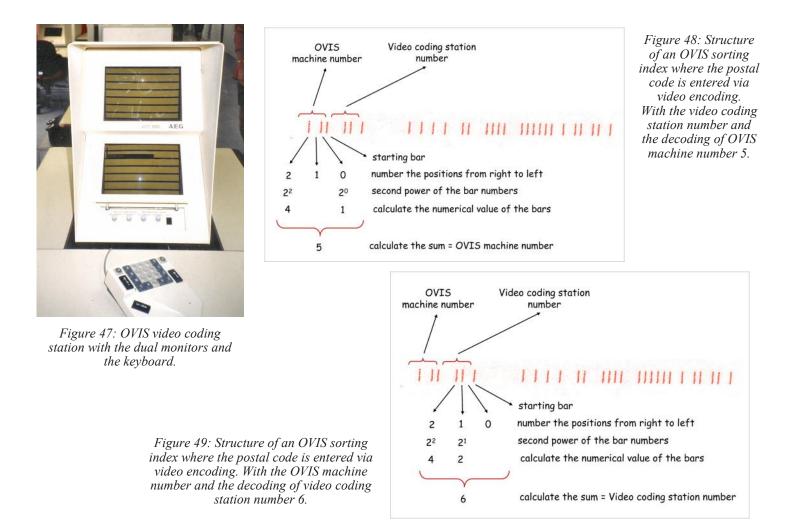
#### C). Postal code is entered via video encoding

When a postal code is not recognized by the OCR module or the PCR module, a digital image of the letter is made and presented on a monitor to video operators. The operators don't sit next to the OVIS, but in a comfortable vid-



eo coding room (Figure 46). They read the postal code on the monitor and enter it with a keyboard (Figure 47). In the OVIS, a linear index is then applied to the postal item. In the index, an OVIS machine number and a binary encoded video coding station number will now be present (Figures 48 and 49).

Figure 46: OVIS video coding room in an Expedition Hub.



#### Sorting machine

Finally, the indexed mail items from HIA, Alima, Vicoma and OVIS go to the 'Sorteermachines' (Sorma's) (sorting machines) where they are distributed over a large number of destinations (Figure 50). The sorting machines do not leave a marking on the mail items.

#### MAIL SORTING CENTERS

#### Project 'Briefpost 2000'

From 1992 onwards, as part of project 'Briefpost 2000', new 'Sorteercentra brieven' (SCBs) (mail sorting centers) were constructed in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, 's-Hertogenbosch, Nieuwegein and Zwolle (Figure 51). The EKPs were successively closed and their mail processing equipment was dismantled or moved to one or more SCBs. The first new-style mail sorting center is located in the converted EKP Rotterdam on the Terbregseweg. Since 1995, new mail processing systems are tested on this location.

In order to mitigate to some extent the personnel consequences of the closure of the EKPs in Sittard and in Leeuwarden, address correction centers were set up in Sittard and in Drachten. All kinds of mail that cannot be delivered, mostly due to an incorrect or incomplete postal code in the address, go to those centers where operators try to correct the error.

If that has succeeded in Drachten, a correction label with the correct address information is stuck on the mail item (Figure 52a/b). On the label, the corrected postal code is encrypted as Royal Mail 4-State code (RM4SC) (Figure 52b). During the reprocessing of the item, this code provides the sorting machine software with the correct postal code information.



Figure 50: Sorting machine for mail items indexed by HIA, Alima, Vicoma or OVIS and on which a linear fluorescent bar-no bar code is present.



Figure 51: Map of the Netherlands showing the six locations of mail sorting centers and their postal code-based service areas.

| Angeststeft doo: PTT Post<br>Bocke is veryige-trass<br>POSTBUS<br>7550 AB TENGELO OV<br> I-1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1-1 1 |   |
|--|---|
|  | Aangebracht door PTT Post<br>Sticker is verwijderbaar |
| POSTBUS 94   | POSTBUS 94<br>7550 AB HENGELO OV                      |
| HENGECO  | րողերինդորդիրը  |

Figure 52a/b: Mail item where the address lacks the two postal code letters (AB). On the envelope a Drachten correction label with the correct postal code for PO Box 94 in Hengelo.

On the label, the corrected postal code is encrypted as Royal Mail 4-State code (RM4SC) (Figure 52b). During the reprocessing of the item, this code provides the sorting machine software with the correct postal code information.

The RM4SC has been developed by the English postal services. The code consists of a linear row of black bars of four different lengths. PTT and its successors use this code till today for different purposes during mail processing. The key is shown in Figure 53. The letters X and C in the code ensure that during the recognition process the code information on the label is preferred over the address data.

A correction label has not been used in the address correction center in Sittard. The corrected address data are transmitted digitally to a sorting center, followed by sorting.

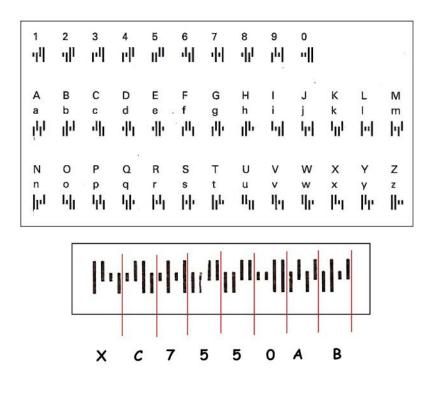


Figure 53: Key of the Royal Mail 4-State Code (RM4SC) and the decoding of this code on the Drachten correction label shown in Figure 52b.

[This is the second part of the second chapter of 'In de ban van UV-licht, merktekens en codestreepjes.' Future issues of Netherlands Philately will have subsequent part(s) of this and other chapters of this book issued upon the 50-year jubilee of the Post Mechanization Group of Po & Po.)]

## Erratum to Dutch coding- and sorting systems and their effect on mail items. Part 1.

The table shown on page 78 of the Jubilee book, and also on page 110 of Netherlands Philately 45/5, lists the wrong opening date for the EKP in Rotterdam. The corrected table is:

May 21, 1979 July 5, 1983 July 2, 1984 March 7, 1985 October 14, 1985 May 26, 1987 EKP Amsterdam EKP Arnhem EKP Sittard EKP Roosendaal EKP Groningen EKP 's-Hertogenbosch

June 29, 1982 May 28, 1984 October 29, 1984 August 22, 1985 August 16, 1986 May 26, 1987 EKP Rotterdam EKP 's-Gravenhage EKP Utrecht EKP Haarlem EKP Zwolle EKP Leeuwarden

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## An Unusual Way to Deliver a Postage Due Postcard, and a Surprise Connection with the Moesman Reprints.

## by Hans Kremer

Figure 1 is a typical example of the way the Dutch P.T.T collected postage dues on postcards that were short-paid.

Well Hen T. W. 7 SI. annasha STUK MET PORT BELAST P 273

A post card with more than a few words on it did not qualify for the printed matter rate. Such was the case here. The postcard (Figure 2), sent in October 1957, was franked with a 4 cent stamp (correct rate for printed matter). However it had too much text on it so the proper postage should have been 7 cent. Short 3 cent. Postage due was twice the missing amount (totaling 6 cent) with a minimum of 10 cent. The postcard was put in a 'window envelop', a 10 cent postage due stamp was stuck on it and then handed over to the addressee after paying the mailman the required ten cents.

Figure 1: Envelop used by PTT to deliver mail with postage due.

Since the addressee was J.W.F. Bunge (a well known philatelist) he gladly paid the 10 cent, and after reading the card, he put it back in the envelop and kept it in his collection.

But what to do if such a window envelop was, for whatever reason, not available (handy?).

Such was the case with the postal item shown in Figure 2.

In 1897 an underpaid postcard was sent from a foreign country to the Netherlands, where it was noticed that  $7\frac{1}{2}$  cent postage was due.

You gewette Her Berry myn nour - il hopen det det jam 1950 rewel von lew guert- Weled Hun J. W. F. heid als zahelyt un geed Jam moge wade Stude knime it mj EDERLAN Stute hereman at my SI. annasheat Uder jubicity. My mejon . The man is

Figure 2: Postcard in envelop shown in Figure 1.

The postal employee noticing the shortage grabbed a "Dienst" (Public Service) envelop which could be sent postage free, and wrote on the envelop: "Inhoudende een postkarte / Van Buitenland / Ontoereikend gefrankeerd." (Containing a postcard from a foreign country with insufficient postage). He added the name and address (Herrn Joh a Moesman in Utrecht) and "7 1 / 2" on the front of the 'Dienst' envelop and put it back in the mail (Figure 3). Mr. Moesman paid the mailman the 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent (contents unseen) and he was handed the foreign postcard which was inside the envelop. Hopefully he was happy with the postcard.



Who was Joh. A. Moesman?

Johannes Anthonius Moesman (Utrecht, 25 december 1859 - 9 januari 1937 in Utrecht) was a lithographer and



calligrapher in Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1859-1937. He published an untitled lettering model book in 1877 (Figure 4) and had his own store (Figure 5).

*Figure 4: Joh. A. Moesman Lettering, 1877.* 

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Figure 5: Moesman store at Neude 7, Utrecht.

Moesman was also a stamp collector and he is known among philatelists because in 1895 he made reprints of the original (worn) printing plate IV of the 1852 10 cent issue in various colors on paper without watermark. Click <a href="http://asnp1975.com/back%20issues/ASNP.Vol.18.1.pdf">http://asnp1975.com/back%20issues/ASNP.Vol.18.1.pdf</a> for the story as it was published in Netherlands Philately Vol.18.1, 1993.

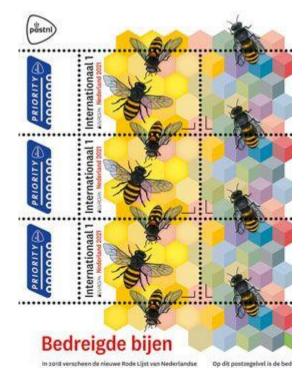
For those of you familiar with the Dutch language I recommend reading Maandblad maart 2019



Figure 6: Moesman reprints of the 1852 10 cent issue.

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## **Recent Issues**



bijen. Van de 318 toen bekende bijensoorten staat 55% ver op deze lijst. Maar liefst 46 soorten komen niet meer in naa ons land voor en 95 soorten staan als fernstiet bedreied in e

verbeeld. Op de postzegels li nastmotief dat op de postzeg in een natmon dat verstedel **Threatened Bees** 

May 10, 2021

The sheet contains 6 stamps in two designs by designer Karen Polder. The three stamps on the left depict seven moving bees that crawl across the background of the sixcornered structure of a yellow honeycomb. On the three stamps to the right are four immobile bees against a background of cubes in different colors, which represent an urban environment.



**50th Birthday Queen Maxima** May 17, 2021

The sheet contains four stamps of  $36 \ge 25$  mm, and one in the large format of  $35 \ge 50$  mm. The smaller stamps, show photographs of Queen Maxima in her role as queen, honorary chairperson, patroness and special advocate. The large stamp shows a private photograph of the Queen. The stamps were designed by Maud van Rossum.

See also https://www.postzegelblog.nl/

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