

# VARIETIES OF THE AIR MAIL STAMPS OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

By Andre du Plessis (Pretoria Philatelic Society)

Artists were not invited to submit designs and the Department of Post and Telegraphs approved a design of a Bi plane in flight. An order was placed with the Cape Times, Cape Town for the printing of the stamps at a cost of 3 shilling per thousand stamps.

This design was finally drawn by Arthur Cooper, an engraver employed by the Cape Times.



Stamps were placed on sale on 26 February 1925.

Printing was done under tight supervision of a Post Office official.

Three firsts can be associated with these stamps:

They were the **first** stamps to be designed and printed in the Union of South Africa.

For the **first**-time stamps were printed and issued with Afrikaans inscriptions. In 1925 Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language. SUIDAFRIKA, spelled without a hyphen, replaced "ZUID AFRIKA" (Dutch) as printed on the first Union stamp and first Definitive Issue.

These were the **first** definitive Air Mail stamps to be officially issued within the British Empire.






Considering the fact that the Cape times did not possess the specialist equipment necessary for stamp printing, they did an astounding job and printing errors and flaws are few.



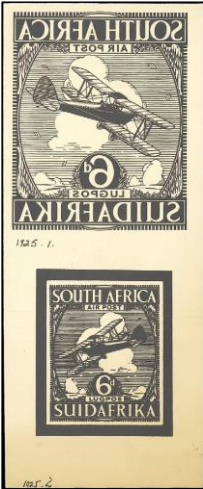
Slight colour differences are found in all four values.

Forgeries of these stamps exist and will be dealt with separately.

## VARIETIES

### 1d

 <p>Missing serif to "d" in left value tablet ex Row 6 and 12/2 UHB - V1</p>	 <p>Smudge on "R" of SUIDAFRIKA ex Row 7/9 UHB - V2</p>	 <p>Top of "R" in SUIDAFRIKA open ex Row 11/10 UHB V3</p>	 <p>Reversed "h" for "d" in left value tablet ex Row 11/8</p>	 <p>-Inking variety-Airman's face in solid colour Various positions on sheet</p>
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 <p>Imperforate at left margin UHB - V4</p>	<p>MISAPPROPRIATION</p>  <p>In June 1925, a piece of paper showing the impression of <b>TWELVE (12)</b> of the 1d stamps in imperforate condition was bought by a Cape Town dealer from a youth stating he obtained it amongst some waste</p> <p>The block was cut up into single stamps and sold as imperforate's. Despite the bad condition, it reposes in Union collections</p>	<p>MISAPPROPRIATION</p>  <p>Unaccepted Engraver's master design. Three sets of these designs found their way into the hands of collectors</p>
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3d



Dash under wheel  
ex Row 3 and 9/8  
UHB - V1



Stroke through strut  
ex Row 3 and 9/9  
UHB - V2



Imperforate at left margin  
UHB - V3



-Inking variety-  
Airman's face in solid  
colour  
Various positions on  
sheet

6d



Stop in front of LIUGPOS  
ex Row 1 and 7/6  
UHB - V1



Circle between "I" and "R"  
of AIR  
ex Row 3/9  
UHB - V2



Flaw in "G" of LUGPOS  
ex Row 1/10



-Inking variety- Airman's  
face in solid colour  
Various positions on  
sheet

9d



"Extended strut" flaw  
ex Row 5 and 11/1  
UHB - V1



Oblique stroke through  
left value tablet  
ex Row 5 and 11/6  
UHB - V2



Broken "R" in  
SUIDAFRIKA  
ex Row 12/8  
UHB - V3



-Inking variety- Airman's  
face in solid colour  
Various positions on  
sheet

9d



Imperforate at left margin  
UHB - V4



Imperforate at left margin with extended strut  
(Bottom left stamp)  
ex Row 5/1  
(It also appears on Row 11/1)  
UHB - V4



Imperforate bottom  
margin  
Row 6  
UHB - V5

## SECOND AIR MAIL STAMPS

The establishment of a regular Air Mail service in the Union of South Africa in August 1929 necessitate the amendment of the postal rates. Government Notice 1280 of 19 July 1929 reads: "A supplementary charge for the conveying of postal articles (exclusive of parcels) by Union Air Mail, 4d per ounce..."

It was decided to issue two Air Mail stamps of the denominations 4d and 1/- that were placed on sale on 16 August 1929.

As for the 1925 stamps, no invitations were extended for submission for stamp design. A design by a staff member the Government Printer, who printed the stamps, were accepted.



The design depicts a sideview drawing of a De Havilland 60 Cirrus Moth in flight against the background of Table Mountain, Cape Town.

Shades of colour exist in both values.





### CHARACTERISTIC

A characteristic appears on every stamp of both values. It takes the form of an oblique white line through the tail.

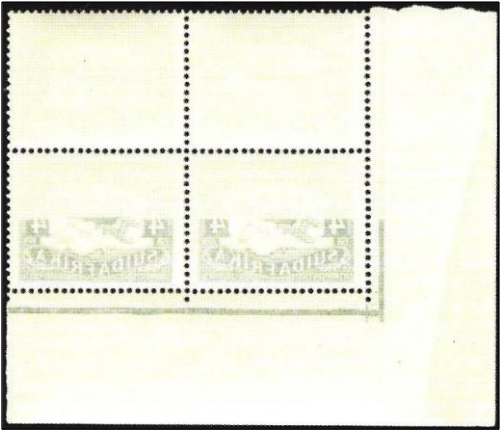




### VARIETIES

#### 4d

 White blob between "A" and "F" of AFRICA ex Row 3/8 (Top pane only) UHB - V1	 Short "I" in AIR ex Row 3 an 9/9 (Top and bottom pane) UHB - V2	 Retouched frame under "U" and "G" of LUGPOS ex Row 12/5 (Bottom pane only) UHB - V3	 Retouched clouds ex Row 12/9 (Bottom pane only) UHB - V4
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#### 4d and 1/-

 Offset at back - partial UHB - V5	<p>1/-</p>  White blob under "U" of LUGPOS ex Row 12/5 (Bottom pane only) UHB - V1	 Two slightly different essays for a 6d value in black on stout, surfaced paper, each measuring 103 x 82mm. Small differences in the background and side ornamentation as well as the landscape. Numbered "1929/1" and "1929 /2" in black ink
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# THE 1½d STAMP OF 1937

## CHARACTERISTICS

On every Afrikaans stamp a small curved dent appear near the right-hand end of the bottom frame line.



### ISSUES 1 TO 3

In all three issues only the exterior cylinders were screened.

The first stamps of Issue 1 appeared with an inverted watermark. In later printings, it appears upright as well as for Issues 2 and 3.

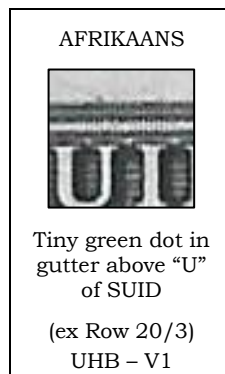
Printed in metallic-gold and slate green and Yellow-buff and greenish slate. Shades of metallic-gold and slate green;- pale, deep or brownish buff or grey-green.

An English stamp appear as first stamp on the sheet.

The language above a stamp indicate the language setting of the stamp on which the variety appears.

### MULTIPOSITIVE

The same multipositive was used to etch more than one cylinder. It follows that any flaw that had appeared on it during the preparation stage will be repeated. Also with each new use, ones would appear or removed.



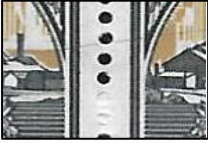
### ISSUE 1




#### Headplate 6933: Frameplates 62

#### November 1936

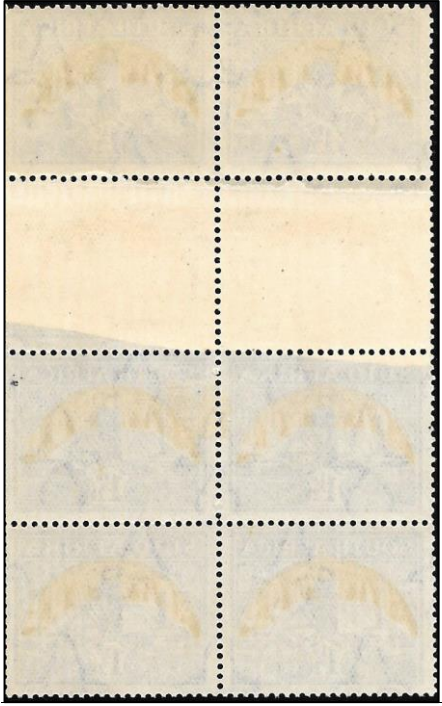

AFRIKAANS	AFRIKAANS	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	VARIOUS
Broken chimney and top of headgear much fainter (ex Row 11/6) UHB - V2	Bulge in right frame above center (ex Row 13/2) UHB - V3	Short green line, "Ladder" above bottom right corner (ex Row 15/5) UHB - V4	Nick in left of headgear near center (ex Row 16/6) UHB - V5	Flag on small chimney at right (ex Row 20/2) UHB - V6	Short faint vertical green line above bottom right corner (ex Row 20/4) UHB - V7	Completely/Partially missing shading on mine dump (Various positions on sheet) UHB - V8

**ISSUE 2 and 3**  
**Headplates 62 and 6930: Frameplate 15**  
**November 1936**

<p style="text-align: center;">AFRIKAANS</p>   <p style="text-align: center;">White spot near center of two parallel columns on building at left (ex Row 20/3) UHB - V9</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ISSUE 2 ONLY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ENGLISH/AFRIKAANS</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Thin green line running upward through the lower right hand to center and showing best where it enters and leave the frames (ex Row 4/2 and 3) UHB - V16</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ISSUE 3 ONLY</b></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">ENGLISH</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Long green line, "Ladder" in bottom right corner (ex Row 3/5) UHB - V10</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ENGLISH</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Thinned frame line below large "1" of 1½d (ex Row 9/1) UHB - V11</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AFRIKAANS</p>   <p style="text-align: center;">Green "ball" in bottom right corner (ex Row 11/4) UHB - V12</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AFRIKAANS</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Nick in top frame above "D" of SUID (ex Row 12/1) UHB - V13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AFRIKAANS</p>   <p style="text-align: center;">Serrated outside edge and smears in side lower right-hand frame line (ex Row 17/6) UHB - V14</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">AFRIKAANS</p>   <p style="text-align: center;">Nick in top of larger one of 1½d (ex Row 20/5) UHB - V15</p>
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**GENERAL**

<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Joined paper UHB - V17</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Missing center (Various positions) UHB - V18</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Green over the gold of the vignette (middle stamp) (Various positions) UHB - V19</p>
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## MEMORABILIA

To endorse the 1925 experimental service, it was decided to print special presentation cards on which to mount a full set of stamps.

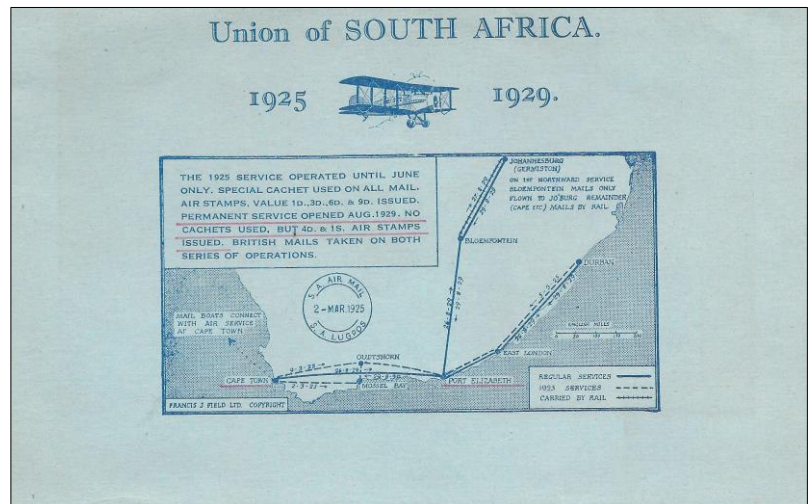


Cards signed by the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs or the Postmaster-General were presented as a souvenir to the pilots and other persons associated with the service.

No official record was kept of the number used for this purpose, but it is believed that less than 30 of these cards were presented and are of very great rarity.



Official souvenir card inscribed in French dated April 1925, issued to members of the Universal Postal Union.



Map folder published by BCM/AIRFIELD, LONDON to commemorate the Air Mail Service by the Union Government in 1929. The folder indicates the routes flown by the services in 1925 and 1929.

### Comments

A further variety "Offset at back" is described in the Union Handbook for the 6d and 1/- and is not illustrated above. (I have never come across one).

Please note that images are not according to scale.

### Acknowledgement

Permission from Spink to publish appropriate images from auction catalogues are acknowledged with thanks.

### References

Handbook/Catalogue – Union of South Africa Stamps 26.03.1952: Dr A Kaplan/Sam Legator/William N Sheffield, pp 33 - 49

South African Airmails 2008: N Arrow: pp 27 – 9

The Airposts of South Africa 1936: L A Wyndham (Aerophilatelic Society of SA Feb. 1980): pp 17 - 28, 95 - 9

The Stamps of the Union of South Africa 1910–1961: Handbook catalogue, Definitive Issue 1986: SJ Hagger - pp 18 – 21, 83 - 5