

By Mike Burrows

Of all the early pioneer flights that made philatelic history, one of the most interesting to the perfin collector was the mail service carried out by Aviator Grade, who ran the Grade Aviation School at Bork, in Germany.

The first mail carrying flight, piloted by Pentz, in Grade's monoplane, commenced from Mars aerodrome, Bork to the postal station at Bruck, about 25 kilometres, on the 18th February 1912. These flights appear to have continued at regular intervals until 23 rd June 1913.

For the flight of 26th February 1912 a special vignette was issued. Printed litho in violet, without any indication of value, on thick glossy paper, imperf. In the centre of this semi-official space was left for the ordinary adhesive to be affixed. This was indicated by the inscription "Platz Fur Freimarke".

On offer at the Marquess of Bute sale of Airmails on 25th March 1959, was an example of this early air post vignette used on cover to Hamburg with circular cachet. A 10 pf Germania was superimposed in position on the vignette and cancelled at Bruck on the day of issue. This item is illustrated on page 185 of 'The Philatelist' for March 1959. From this excellent reproduction it can be clearly seen that the 10 pf perfined as follows,



G.R. 15,17 7½m.

As only 90 flown covers are known from this flight, we may never know whether the perfin was performing its appointed task on an item of commercial mail, or if the stamp just happened to be on hand at that particular point in time and was used to pay the postage on a piece of souvenir mail.