

# FILATELIC PHORGERS

## FRANCOIS FOURNIER

1846 - 1917

Fournier's extensive range of forgeries is best illustrated by his own price list of 1914 which in 64 pages listed no less than 3,671 different forgeries. Not all were produced by Fournier himself, many were the products of others.

In addition to forging, Fournier also operated a repair clinic and published his own journal 'Le Fac-Simile'. Between 1910 and 1913, the journal boasted over 20,000 regular readers.

World War 1 with its mailing restrictions and censorship wrecked Fournier's business and aggravated his failing health. He died in July 1917 and was buried in his birth town of Croix de Rozon in the Compesieres district of Switzerland.



German Colonies - pane of 12 for various Colonies

Following his death in 1927, L'Union Philatelique de Geneve purchased the Fournier stock, thus preventing it falling into unscrupulous hands. The stock consisted of a third of a ton of forgeries, plus gummed sheets and the printing and perforating machines. All forgeries were identified by overprinting with the word FAUX. The Society employed local students to mount representative selections in 480 special albums. These albums were sold in 1928 for \$25 each.

## JOHN D HARRIS of BIRMINGHAM

George Whitehurst and John D Harris, stamp dealers in Birmingham and Smethwick, England, produced forged first-day cancellations on Coronation Day covers purporting to originate on May 12, 1937. The following territories in particular are concerned.

Tulagi, British Solomon Islands  
 Gilbert and Ellice Islands  
 Ascension Island  
 St Helena  
 Belize, British Honduras  
 Roseau, Dominica  
 Accra, Gold Coast  
 Blantyre, Nyasaland Protectorate and  
 Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia.

Whitehurst applied the forged cancellations, using dies prepared for him in Leeds, to stamps and covers supplied by Harris. Harris also supplied genuine covers to Whitehurst from which the forged markings were copied.



Robson Lowe exposed the scheme and the forgers in a series of articles in the Philatelist in 1937-38. At the subsequent trial, both Whitehurst and Harris were found guilty and sentenced to terms of imprisonment of eighteen months and nine months, respectively. Evidence was given by the police that 3,283 forged first-day covers of the Gold Coast, Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Northern Rhodesia and British Solomon Islands had been sold for £2,119. A conservative estimate of the actual cash received for all the forgeries was £10,000 to £12,000.

## ALAN WILSON of LUTON

In June 1994, a leading GB dealer, Alan Wilson, walked into Luton Police Station and admitted perpetrating the biggest philatelic fraud in modern times. By making subtle alterations to gum and phosphor, he had made over £100,000 by offering his creations among regular specialist material. The court case that resulted was virtually unique as Wilson prepared his own prosecution providing the police with evidence and witnesses. He had also compensated all of his victims who could be traced. Wilson pleaded guilty to four specimen charges and asked for a further 86 offences to be taken into consideration. He was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment suspended for two year and fined £30,000.



### References:

Daily Telegraph Feb 4, 1995

Phoenix International Auction 106 - 9 Sept 1995

Internet