



Danish Aviation History - a Paraphilatelic View

-Part Two

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Until the end of World War One, there was not a lot of philatelic activity in Denmark involving aviation. The explosion of interest in the phenomenon known as Poster Stamps, (Samlermærker in Danish) resulted in images of airplanes used on many poster stamps in the years 1913 and 1914, and these will be explored in a later article. Aviators and engineers in Denmark, and other countries as well, were working diligently at improving the design and construction of their aircraft, and as tensions increased around Europe, there was an undercurrent of interest in adapting the airplane for use as a military tool.

B & S Monoplane

The fledgling aviation “industry” really didn’t exist in the early days. The first truly Danish designed and built airplane was constructed at the Burmeister & Wain Shipyard in Copenhagen. Two of the engineers at the shipyard, Olaf Berg and Louis Storm, worked on their own time there and produced three monoplanes during the period of 1909 to 1911, the second and third had engines designed by Niel Petersen, also a Dane, known locally as the “Engine Doctor”.



Burmeister & Wain Poster Stamp

Burmeister & Wain Master Mechanic Peter Nielsen had been present when the first B&S Monoplane had crashed at the Klampenborg Racecourse in 1910, and he was eager to fly the new model – the B&S II.



Peter Nielsen in front of a B&S monoplane in the hangar at Kløvermark Aerodrome, spring 1911.

In order to do that, he first needed to teach himself to fly. So, in the spring of 1911, one early morning the conditions were right for flying. The Engine Doctor, Niels Petersen, started the engine by pulling on the propeller, and a few helpers turned the plane to face down the field at Kløvermarken.

Nielsen sped down the airstrip to the end, and the

helpers ran down to turn the plane around so he could race the plane back up the airstrip. He trained for a few days this way, always on the ground, taking note of how the rudder would steer the aircraft. When he felt ready to take to the sky, he did so, but when he attempted to land, he was unsure of the procedure – he was still turning and broke a wing and damaged the undercarriage when he hit the ground.

After a month, the plane was ready to fly again, and this time Nielsen flew only in a straight line and then landed without turning. Once he was comfortable with the controls he was able to practice his turns, and on July 6, 1911 he received his Flying Certificate as the first Danish pilot flying a Danish airplane with a Danish engine.

Ulrich (Ulrik) Birch

Ulrik Johan Carl Birch was born on October 25, 1883 in Copenhagen. He was trained as a printer, but became interested in the new field of aviation at an early age.



Ulrik Birch, c.1912

By 1910, he began his pilot training on the island of Amager with Robert Svendsen. In early 1911 Birch traveled to Paris along with fellow aviator Niels Leth Jensen, where they trained at the French flying school at Issy-les-Moulineaux. This was where Birch made his first solo flight, leading to his acceptance as a student at the Farman aerodrome in Étampes, where he received his training from Maurice Chevillard. On May 9, Birch crashed during a test flight, and suffered a broken femur. After an extensive healing process, he was able to obtain his pilot’s license in 1912.

In the summer of 1912, Birch returned to Denmark and attracted the attention of Prince Axel of Denmark, who was very interested in flying, and was the first member of the Danish royal family to obtain a pilot's license. With Axel's aid and encouragement, Birch demonstrated some acrobatic and passenger flights around Copenhagen and from Tivoli. In July, Prince Axel promised Birch a champagne luncheon if he could fly with Birch from Kløvermarken (south of Copenhagen) to the Hermitage in Dyrehavn (about 10 miles north). Despite warnings from his lieutenant about the high winds, Birch agreed to take Axel on the flight. Not only was the flight successful, but they even beat the previous height record by achieving 580 meters.

Later in July, Birch determined to be the first air-mail carrier in Denmark, with a planned flight during the Summer Festival at Hareskov. He was either unaware of, or didn't care about, the mail carried by



Postcard depicting Ulrik Birch and his wife Lili

In 1913, Birch, along with his Farman biplane, named "Eagle", was hired by the newly formed Naval Air Force as a pilot instructor. Birch traveled to Paris once again to learn about, and how to fly, newly developed sea-planes. He soon returned to Denmark

with his new knowledge and began teaching students with the new planes. Sadly, he suffered a serious crash in the fall of 1913, in which he suffered numerous life-threatening injuries. Birch died of tetanus, in the hospital, about a week after the crash, on October 10, 1913.

Marinens Flyveskole

In late 1910 The Ministry of the Navy requested that *Det Aeronautiske Selskab* (The Aeronautical Society) train naval officers to be pilots. *Marinens Flyveskole*, the Danish Navy's Flying School, was founded on December 14, 1911 and commenced operations in January 1913

with Peter Nielsen as the first teacher. The school started off with Robert Svendsen's plane "Dania", famous for its 1910 flight, which was donated in 1912 by Consul Ludvigsen and renamed "Glenten". An article in the newspaper *Nationaltidende* on September 23, 1912 mentioned that the Navy Flight School would open the following day, with First Lieutenant Ullidtz (Ullitz) leading the exercises. The first students were Prince Axel, and First Lieutenants Laub, Christiansen, and Boeck. The article points out that the exercises would be theoretical at first, since the Navy only owned a single biplane (Svendsen's donated "Dania"). The Danish Army owned the newest model of the B&S Monoplane, the model III, which was gifted to the school by Engineer Captain Grut, so the new pilots were trained on this plane as well.



Postcard carried by Birch at the Mid-Summer Festival in Hareskov

Svendsen the previous year, so he had special handstamps prepared that were applied to some postcards he would carry on his flight at Hareskov. One of the handstamps reads "FLYVEPOST No 1 ULRICH BIRCH" (First air mail Ulrich Birch), and the other simply read "Mid-Summer Festival in Hareskov 1912". Because there was a terrible rainstorm during the festival, it is unknown how many pieces of mail were actually carried. The cards were postmarked 29 July 1912, the day after the festival.

The following week, on August 3, Birch married Dagmar Elise Løvenskiold Berg. Ulrik and his new wife "Lili", spent their honeymoon flying around Denmark in a Farman biplane, much to the delight of the Danish people who formed large crowds eager to see the couple wherever they appeared.



Mærkat Poster Stamp - c.1944

Naval Station Holman, was working on improvements to the Donnet-Leveque design, and developed the Maagen (Seagull) class “Flying Boat” seaplanes, and produced eight of them in the period 1914-1917.



Letter Seal used by Orlogsværftet



Mærkat Poster Stamp - c.1944

Other Events

During the period leading up to World War One, there were many new developments made in aviation in and around Denmark.

One of the final events before the war was a planned flight around the North Sea in August, 1914. The outbreak of war in July forced the cancellation of the flight, but there is a souvenir that survives, an event publicity poster stamp printed by Andreasen & Lachmann with a design by P. Hagen Jørgensen. Text on

In 1913 two Donnet-Leveque flying boats were acquired by the school, as well as Ulrik Birch’s Farman biplane “Ørnen” (Eagle). But, in October 1913, following Birch’s death due to a flying accident, further training was outsourced to foreign factories. At this time, Orlogsværftet, a shipyard located at

the back of the stamp indicates that the flight had been organized by aeroclubs in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden.



Left and below:
Andreasen & Lachmann
Poster Stamp #1034
with design by
P. Haagen Jørgensen



Danmarks Luftværn

At the height of the war, in May, 1916, a group of “particularly interested men” assembled in the offices of Berlingske Tidende, Denmark’s leading daily



Danmarks Luftværn
fundraising Stamp - 1916



Post Card with “Danmarks Luftværn” fundraising stamp tied by Silkeborg July 9, 1916 Postmark.

newspaper. Chaired by Prince Axel, they undertook to establish the “Landsinsamling til vort Luftværn” (National Collection for our Air Force). There was no official National Air Force in Denmark until the late 1940s, and Denmark remained neutral during World War One, so the early efforts were a quasi-governmental civil air defense force. Part of the fundraising effort was the issuance of a poster stamp with a simple image of a B&S Monoplane inside a decorative border, with the text “DANMARKS LUFTVÆRN” at top and bottom.

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