

THE ICAO CORNER

by Albert Pelsser

JERSEY: REVERSE REGISTRATION NUMBER



Figure 1

This month's story of the series titled "The ICAO Corner" focuses on the illustrated first day cover, shown at Figure 1, issued by the cachet maker Mercury in the Isle of Man on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first official airmail service to the Isle of Man and the 40th anniversary of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). As one can notice, the alphanumeric string on the fuselage of the aircraft shown in the cachet reads: ACXI-G, which is the aircraft registration number, whereas the string on the 11p stamp shows G-ACXI.

The aircraft registration is a unique string of letters and digits that identifies a civil aircraft, in similar fashion to a license plate on an automobile. Annex 7 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (also named Chicago Convention, signed in 1944) sets standards for the use of letters, numbers and other graphic symbols to be used in the nationality and registration marks, and spells out where these characters shall be located on different types of airborne vehicles.

The aircraft registration is made up of a prefix selected from the country's callsign prefix allocated by the International Telecommunication Union (making the registration a quick way of determining the country of origin) and the registration suffix. Depending on the country of registration, this suffix is a numeric or alphanumeric code

and consists of one to five digits or characters.

The de Havilland two-engine D.H.84 Dragon aircraft shown on the cachet was operating in the 1930s; therefore, its marks follow the regulations defined by the Convention for the Regulation of Aerial Navigation, which was signed in Paris in 1919 and came into force in 1922 with the establishment of the International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN, i.e. the Organization preceding ICAO). Annex A to this Convention made provision for nationality marks for each country and the British Empire was allocated letter G. At the 1927 International Radio-Telegraph Conference, the United Kingdom (UK) was allocated several radio callsign prefixes; within this new allocation, the United Kingdom continued to use the prefix G- for all aircraft, but the sequence was restarted at G-AAAA, which continued into the 21st century.

It is therefore curious to note that the country code G allocated to UK and the registration number within the country (ACXI) are reversed on the cachet and correctly spelled on the stamp. The D.H.84 aircraft shown on the cachet was operated by Railway Air Services Ltd. (RAS) since August 1934. On 20 August 1934 with this aircraft, RAS opened the Glasgow / Belfast / Isle of Man (IOM) / Manchester route, using Ronaldsway airport situated near Castletown, IOM. This was the Island's first experimental



Figure 2

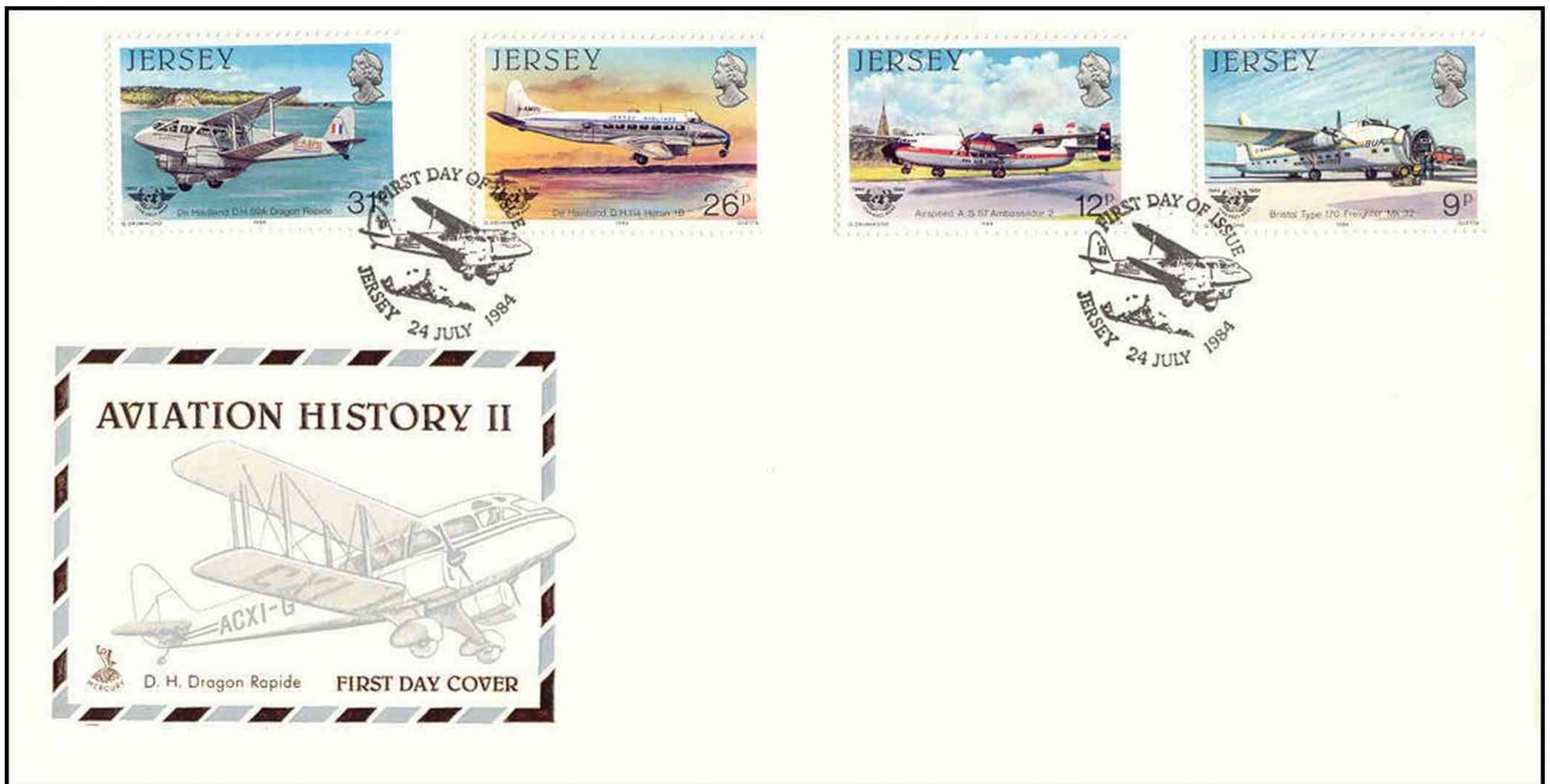


Figure 3

airmail service. 797 letters and postcards were carried on this first flight; letters weighing less than two ounces were carried at no extra cost.

The second error noticed on the cachet is the name of the airline, which is written United Air Services Ltd., instead of Railway Air Services Ltd. as correctly spelled on the official first day cover shown at Figure 2.

Mercury cachet maker used a rather similar picture for the cachet on the first day cover issued in Jersey on 24 July 1984 for the second series of Aviation History and the 40th anniversary of ICAO (see at Figure 3). The text in the cachet indicates that the aircraft is a D.H.89 Dragon Rapide

(which distinctly has tapered wings and a faired-in undercarriage), when in fact it is a D.H.84 Dragon bearing the same registration marks as the ones on the Isle of Man cover. Maybe, the designer wished to make an allusion to the 31p stamp of Jersey's issue, which pictures a Dragon Rapide of Channel Islands Airways (registered G-AGPH in United Kingdom).

It is also to be noted that the marks (CXI) under the wing on the starboard side are truncated. While the philatelic notices were printed by the Post Offices at the time of stamp issues, it is hard to realize such an accumulation of design errors.

CHECKLIST

Isle of Man	262-266	1984 Apr 27	50 th anniversary of the first official airmail service to the Isle of Man and 40 th anniversary of ICAO
Jersey	336-339	1984 Jul 24	Aviation history Series II and 40 th anniversary of ICAO

REFERENCES

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Havilland_Dragon
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Havilland_Dragon_Rapide

