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The Journal of the Postal History Society

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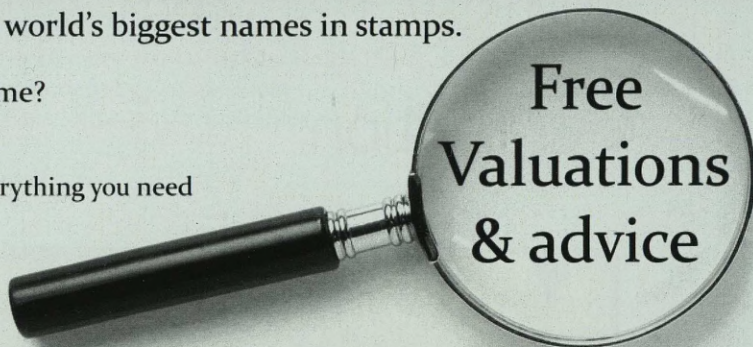
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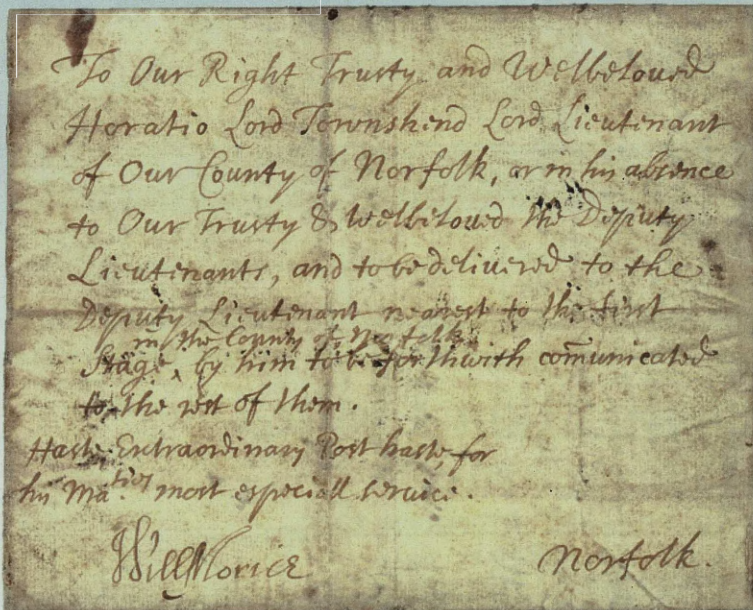
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Postal History

The Journal of The Postal History Society

Number 355, September 2015 Hon Editor: CLAIRE SCOTT

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EDITORIAL

There seems to have been no let up in interesting philatelic events this year and as I put the journal together a number of our members will be in Singapore for the International, either exhibiting or visiting. It hardly seems possible that I am working on the September Journal, and my thanks go to those of you who have provided articles and for your original research. As you all know, the Journal can be only as good as the articles received and this is a small prompt to those who have not yet sent in their promised pieces.

At the A2SN meeting at Ironbridge Gorge, Diane DeBlois, the Editor of Postal History Journal, our equivalent in the United States, and I had a discussion about the two Societies collaborating. We agreed to send each other an article for publication and at times for us to publish the same article at the same time. I think this is an exciting move for both Societies.

THE PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

Half of the year has passed and it is time to peruse the auction catalogue and make plans for attending Conference - this year's programme is very interesting and varied and also sees the return of the outing, as in our previous format. I look forward to seeing many of you there and please let Graham Winters know when you have booked your accommodation or if you plan to come as a day visitor as he needs the numbers for housekeeping.

At the International in New York next year the American Postal History Society has a stand which they have invited us to share. This will enable us to advertise the Society across the pond, but in order to make the most of this generous offer, we need volunteers to provide some cover for the stand. Can any member who is planning to attend and who is willing to give a few hours in support of this initiative please contact me so that I can continue the dialogue with Diane. Your committee has worked hard over the last decade to promote the hobby to those not involved already and in joint collaborations with other societies outside the realms of philately and this is an exciting new venture. It has been many years since we met last in Europe and if any members have particular contacts on the Continent how about getting the ball rolling by suggesting somewhere not too far distant for another gathering, preferably in conjunction with a society over the Channel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Following the publication of last month's 'Challenge to our members' the following response was received from Mike Dovey of the TPO & Seapost Society which provides additional information on the subject.

"The "Medon" was launched in 1923 and was the first Motor Vessel (MV) to be employed by Alfred Holt (Blue Funnel Line), all of their previous vessels being Steam Ships (SS). The usual route for any Blue Funnel Line vessel was through the Mediterranean, into the Suez Canal, and onwards to all ports around Indonesia and the Far East. However, with the advent of the Second World War, it was deemed safer to go the long way round the Cape of Good Hope. It was quickly realized that ships were safer in convoy and all ships bound for South Africa, and even for South America, were marshaled into convoys until they reached Freetown from where they proceeded on their own. Likewise all ships going in the reverse direction to the UK would wait at Freetown for a convoy allocation before venturing further north.

In this case the "Medon" would have left its home port of Liverpool and met up with other vessels

to travel in convoy to Freetown. All post for crew members would have been addressed to the Company's mail office where it was sorted, bagged and then sent forwards to meet the respective ships at their next port of call. In this case the mail for the "Medon" was sent to the shipping agent in Freetown but arrived there after the ship had left on its voyage south. The mail would have been forwarded to Lagos as the next port of call in the hope of catching up with the vessel there. In Lagos it was probably found that the ship had long since sailed and so the letter was checked by the Censor and presumably the Paquebot mark was applied on the only available space on the reverse to indicate that it was high seas mail bearing British stamps. In the absence of further marks on the envelope it seems likely that the letter was returned to the shipping agent in Freetown before eventually making its way back to Liverpool.

In August 1942 the "Medon" was torpedoed by an Italian submarine near Para in the dead of night and, on the following day, when dawn broke, the submarine then attempted to sink the ship by gunfire. This attempt at target practice having failed, a second torpedo was fired, the ship duly sank and the crew were rescued from lifeboats, although one contingent was at sea for five weeks and suffered extreme hardship as a result. It should be remembered that if a seaman was in the Merchant Navy his pay was stopped on the day that his ship went down and did not resume until he was able to sign on aboard another vessel.

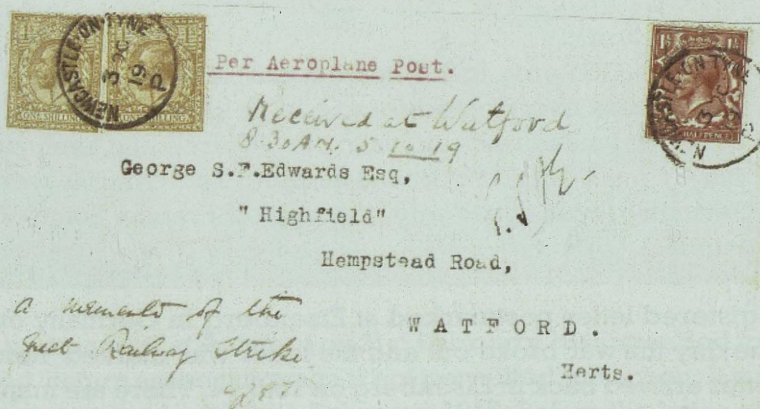
All in all the envelope is a superb item from the Second World War and if the contents of the letter had survived as well and we knew more about both the sender and the recipient it would have been even more tremendous than it is already'.

Dear Claire

In June 2004, Vol. 38 No.3, Fred Taylor published an article based on my collection of RAILWAY STRIKE MAIL in Railway Philately.

Fred is keeping a database and our aim is to issue an update including illustrations of all the known surviving items of mail. If any of your members have any items in their collections I would be grateful if they would contact either Fred at f.will.taylor@btinternet.com or they can contact me on 01325 730695.

Thank you
Max
W.M. Melrose



GERMAN OCCUPATION OF BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE 1914-1918

ROBIN PIZER

Germany invaded Belgium on 4th August 1914 and by mid October occupied most of Belgium for the duration of the First World War. Belgium was effectively divided into four parts :

1 The General Government (GG) area in the centre, east and south. The boundary between the GG Belgium and the rear areas changed from time to time. The GG Belgium area was at its greatest extent in September 1916 but on 1st October 1916 Tournai was re-assigned to the rear area of the 6th Army, followed on 1st January 1917 by Mons to the new 1st Army and the southern part of the Province of Luxembourg to the 5th Army, on 8th December 1917 a small part of the district of Ath around Chièvres to the 6th Army and on 1st February 1918 the remainder with the district of Lessines to the 6th Army. The French areas from Givet to Fumay and around Maubeuge were included within the GG Belgium in 1915 but excluded in 1918 and 1916 respectively. The boundary between the GG Belgium and the rear areas moved eastwards in 1918 particularly in the autumn as the end of the war approached;

2 The rear area (Etappengebiet) administered by the various German Armies which were controlled through a Rear Inspection Area (Etappen-Inspektion). Within the Rear Areas there were rear area districts (Etappenkommandantur) under the control of a rear area commander (Etappenkommandant). So far as Belgium was concerned the rear area mainly comprised East and West Flanders. From mid October 1914 the rear area was controlled by the 4th Army and mail was channelled via the postal censorship office at the Gent Rear Inspection Area which was numbered 33 in spring 1917. East and West Flanders (and the Tournai area in Hainaut) were sometimes described as the western rear areas. By 15th March 1915, if not earlier, the Tournai area in Hainaut was excluded from the rear area of the 4th Army and must have been in the rear area of the 6th Army. From 1917 other German Armies had parts of their rear areas in Belgium as indicated above.

3 The operational area (Operationsgebiet), under the control of German Divisions and Corps along the North Sea and the border with France including those parts of northern France occupied by the Germans, in southern Belgium and including those parts of France bordering southern Belgium occupied by the Germans.

4 A narrow strip of land between the river Yser and the French border including Ypres which remained in Belgian hands throughout the war due to flooding of low lying land along the Yser between Nieuwpoort and Diksmuide in the last few days of October 1914.

General Government Belgium

In the General Government (GG) area for Belgium a postal service was organised for the civil population with German stamps overprinted for use in Belgium. These were available from 1st October 1914. There were very many restrictions in the GG area and even more in the Rear Areas under the control of the German 4th Army based at Gent. The controls were most severe in the Rear Areas of other German armies especially in occupied France. Some of these problems will be illustrated in this article.

Figure 1 shows a registered letter postmarked at Eisenberg in Germany on 4.8.14 intended for Brussels. This was the day the war broke out and the letter was marked 'Return on account of the war situation'. The letter arrived back in Eisenberg on 13.8.14. There are many different cachets of this type which were used on mail to countries that Germany was now at war with.



Initially the mail service was restricted to Brussels and the area south east towards the German border. Gradually other parts of Belgium were added to the GG. Mail from these areas to foreign countries was slow to develop and restricted to countries allied to Germany or neutral. For instance mail was permitted to the Netherlands from 7th February 1915 from some places.



Figure 2 shows a letter postmarked at Antwerp on 21st February 1915 intended for Gilze, near Breda in Holland. It was marked 'Return as the language is not permitted' at Aachen. It was probably written in Flemish which was not permitted until 26th February 1915. Before the letter could be returned to sender Flemish was permitted, the return cachet crossed out and the letter released. It is postmarked Breda 2nd March 1915 on the back.



Figure 3 shows a letter postmarked on 7th May 1915 at Lier which is south east of Antwerp in the district of Mechelen (Malines). It was intended for The Hague (Den Haag) in the Netherlands. It reached Aachen in Germany through which mail for the Netherlands had to go. Here it was marked first by a circular cachet 'Aachen foreign section / released' but then the blue rectangular cachet was added 'not permitted return' when it was realised that Lier was in an area from which mail to the Netherlands was not permitted at that time. It arrived back in Lier on 12th May 1915 according to a postmark on the back.

Although Fumay in France had become part of the GG from 15th January 1915 letter mail was initially restricted to GG only and not extended to Germany until 4th October 1915. It was never extended to other foreign countries.



Figure 4 is a letter postmarked at Aachen in Germany on 29th August 1915 intended for Fumay. It was returned to sender with the rectangular cachet 'Return / place not permitted for service with Germany'.

Mail for France and Great Britain was not permitted from GG but this did not stop enterprising third

parties in The Netherlands and Switzerland acting as forwarding agents.



Figure 5 shows a postcard postmarked 21st October 1915 in Brussels addressed to a recipient in Meppel in The Netherlands. Here the Meppel address was rubbed out and an address in Aberystwyth, Wales was inserted and the card forwarded on 28th October 1915 from Meppel to Wales. Another card in the author's collection was postmarked 23rd March 1916 in Brussels and addressed to a private house in Rue de l'Arquebuse, Geneva in Switzerland. This address was crossed out and an address in Folkestone, Kent inserted. It was forwarded from Geneva on 28th March 1916.

From 14th April 1915 the French language was not permitted to be used in official correspondence with the Authorities in Belgium.

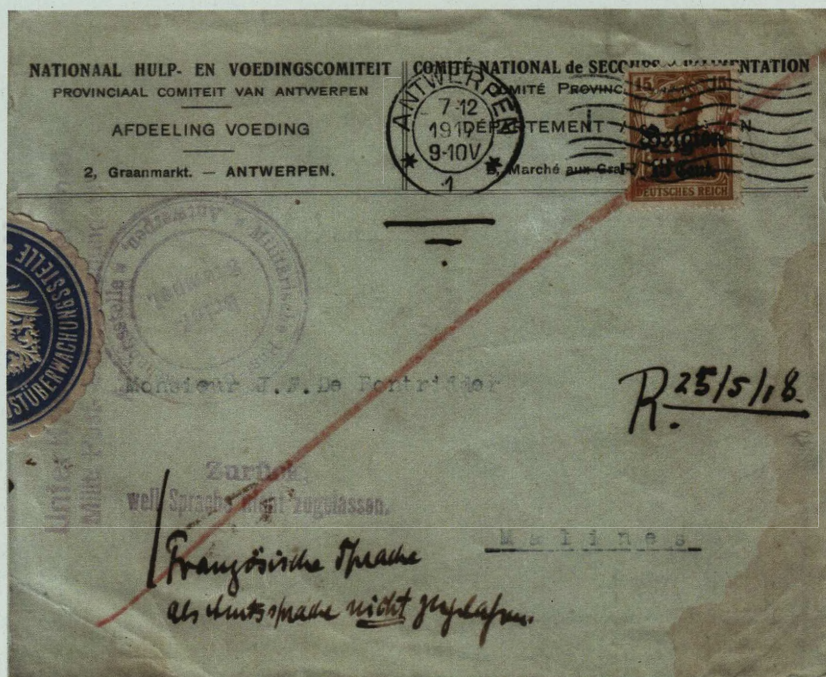


Figure 6 shows a letter postmarked 7th December 1917 in Antwerp from the Nutrition Department of the National Committee for Aid and Nutrition addressed to Malines (Mechelen). Over the back flap is a 'released for forwarding' cachet of 'The President of the Civil Administration for the Province of Antwerp'. The letter was 'opened under war regulations, military postal supervision office, Antwerp' (2 line cachet at left partly under blue paper seal of the 'Imperial Government Antwerp, military postal supervision office'). The circular cachet is the 'letter cachet' of the 'military postal supervision

office Antwerp'. The letter bears a second two line cachet 'Return / as language is not permitted' which has been modified in manuscript to amplify that the 'French language is not permitted as an official language'.

Rear Areas

Mail with the Rear Area of the 4th Army was examined at Gent (Gand). Instructions on how this mail was to be handled changed over time. In 1915 it had to be placed inside a second sealed envelope with the correct address of the recipient and 'An die Etappen-Inspektion Gent, postlagernd Brüssel' (To the rear area inspection Gent, poste restante at Brussels)'. Only the outer envelope was franked and the letter, if approved, was forwarded to the rear area commander nearest the recipient who would then collect the letter.

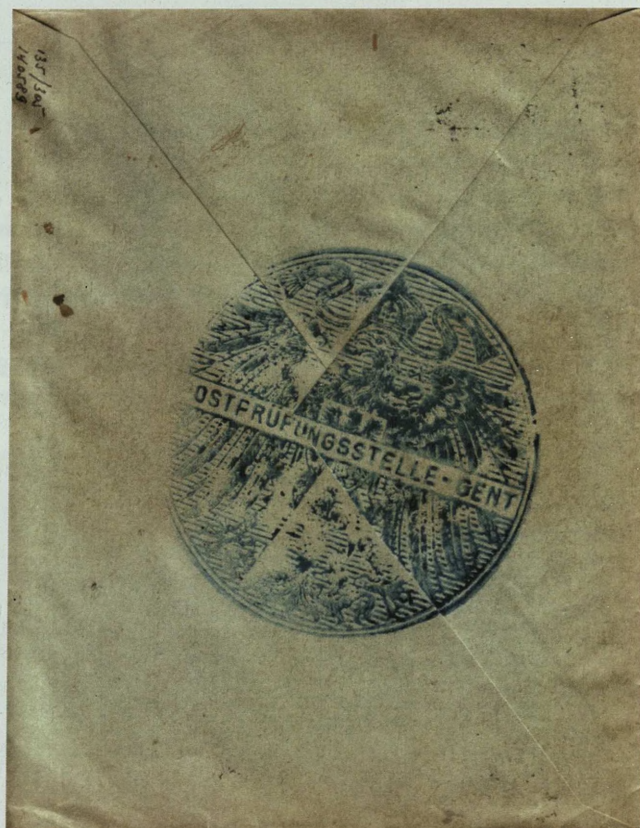
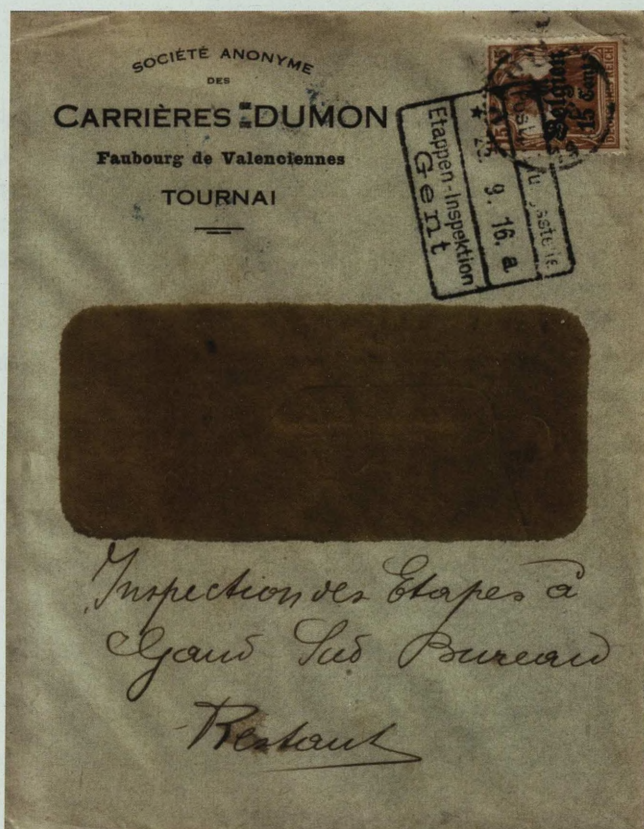
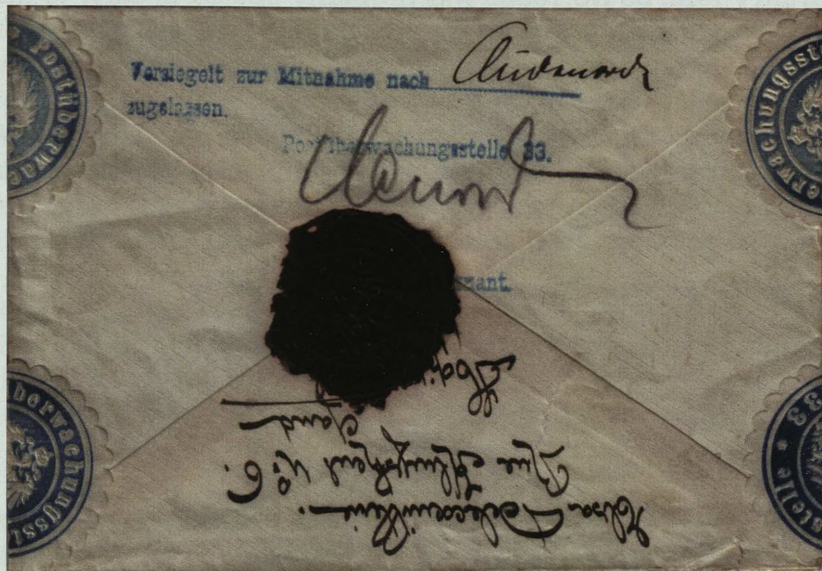


Figure 7 shows a method used in 1916. The letter has a sender's address in Tournai (which was in the GG until 1st October 1916). It was postmarked at Vaulx lez Chimey on 16th September 1916. It bears the address 'Inspection des Etapes à Gand Sud Bureau Restant' and a rectangular postmark of the Rear Area Inspection at Gent dated 25th September 1916. On the reverse it bears a 69mm circular cachet of the Gent Postal Examination Office. The main part of the design was the Imperial German eagle. This would have been forwarded to the recipient as before.

In February 1917 instructions were given to disguise military addresses and the Gent Postal Examination Office became Postal Supervision Office 33. One aspect of their work which is rarely seen concerns mail hand carried by a person from one place to another bypassing the post office completely.

Figure 8 shows the back of such an item. The sender's address is Gent (Gand) and the recipient is south at Oudenaarde (Audenarde). The four line cachet in blue says 'permitted to be sealed for taking to / Postal Supervision Office 33. / / Lieutenant.' with 'Audenarde' and a signature added

in manuscript. The flaps of the envelope were sealed with four blue and white paper seals and one dark red wax seal. These show the German Imperial eagle in the centre surrounded by the words 'Postal Supervision Office 33'.



Bank mail was given special treatment with its own set of Bank Oversight Offices (Bankaufsichtsstelle). In 1917 these too were made anonymous.

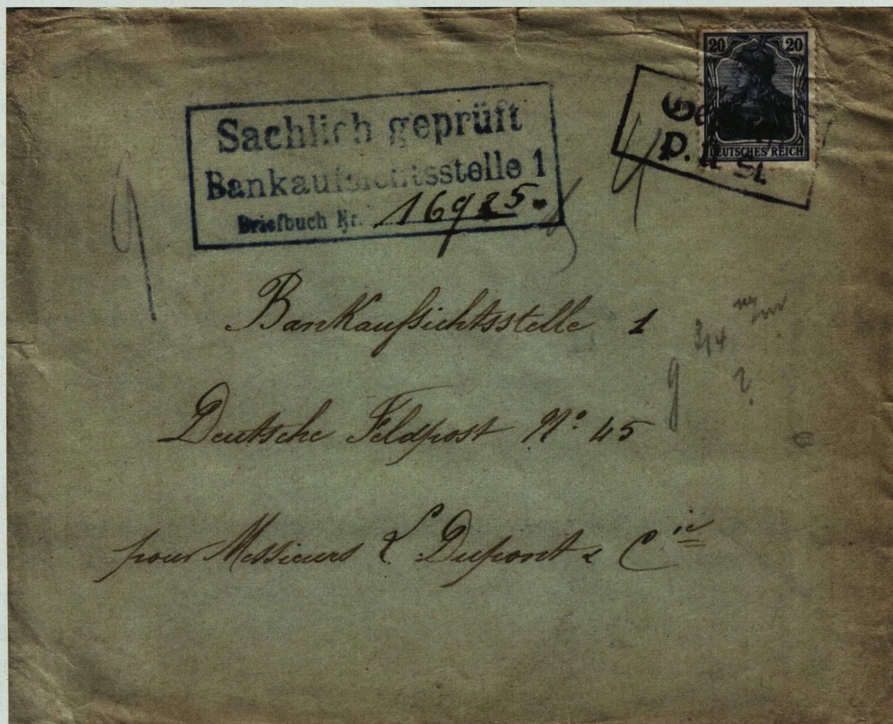


Figure 9 shows a letter franked with a 25c overprint on 20pf Germania stamp available since December 1916 for use in the rear areas. The stamp is not cancelled by a dated postmark but by a rectangular censorship device reading 'Geprüft / P. U. St.' (checked Postal Supervision Office) believed to be used by the German 2nd Army based in Valenciennes, France. The letter is addressed to the Bank Oversight Office 1 at the German Field Post Office No. 45 both of which are known to have been at Valenciennes.

The large rectangular cachet reads, in translation, 'expertly examined / Bank Oversight Office 1 / Letter book No.' with the number 16925 added in manuscript. This too is a Valenciennes

cachet. The Valenciennes Bank Oversight Office opened in April 1916 and they started putting the 'Letter book No.' on the covers from early 1917. Sometimes the covers have a dated postmark and for instance an envelope with No.16603 is postmarked 18th February 1918 and another with No.16731 was dated 23rd February 1918. So No.16925 was probably posted in early to mid March 1918 at a place in or close to Valenciennes.

The End

As the war drew to a close the boundary between the GG Belgium and the Rear Areas moved eastwards. Thus the Rear Area Postal Supervision Office 33 at Gent closed about 23rd October 1918 and re-opened about 27th October 1918 at Antwerp. Mail got caught up and delayed in the final days of the war.



Figure 10 shows a postcard postmarked 20th October 1918 in Brussels addressed to Calmphout

EARLY DAYS OF THE BRITISH POSTAL SYSTEM IN MOROCCO

DAVID STOTTER

The first British post office in Morocco opened in the British Legation in Tangier on 1st April 1857. Although there would not be British post offices as such in the other coastal towns until the 1880s, for years the British vice-consuls there had been handling mail and, of course, their own voluminous dispatches, and, as we shall see, this was set to continue. It is known that the first British postal agent in Tangier was W.S. Lukin, appointed at the end of March 1857 but soon replaced by Haim Sicsu¹. My recent research has established that Lukin in fact left almost immediately because of non-payment of his debts!

On 2nd June 1857 Frederick Carstensen, vice-consul in Tangier, on behalf of the Consul General John Drummond Hay, wrote to the vice-consuls along the Coast informing them that Lukin had resigned and been replaced by Haim Cicsoo (his spelling). Drummond Hay also wrote to Edmund Cresswell, the Gibraltar Postmaster, informing him of the reasons:

"We have been constantly troubled with complaints against Mr Lukin for non-payment of his debts...and I directed the vice-consul to inform Mr Lukin that on the next complaint against him I should be compelled to deprive him of the office of Post Agent, as it was not decorous for a person in the employment of this Mission to behave in the manner which Mr Lukin does to his creditors.

Upon receiving this notice Mr Lukin has wisely resigned for the man knows, I suppose, that he has already too many outstanding debts even at Tangier to escape unscathed from his creditors. It appears the foolish fellow has a mania for purchasing any bauble he fancies.

I have named to the post the son of my interpreter, Mr Haim Cicsoo, an active young man who I think will do the work more efficiently. I have told him as a rule not to charge [for delivery] more than one blanquee [about a halfpenny] unless letters addressed to the wealthier merchants were very bulky, or that he suspected parties were in the habit of getting several letters sent under cover to one person for distribution. It appears that even if Mr Lukin had not resigned several of the merchants intended to have complained to me of the delay in the delivery of the letters. I may add that half of Lukin's work was done by my clerk or by the vice-consul so it is a good riddance.²

Until now very little had been discovered regarding the early system of couriers (rekkas) for sending mail arriving at Tangier to the towns down the Atlantic Coast, but my research enables me to describe it here in some detail: On 24th April 1857 Drummond Hay wrote to the vice consuls at Laraiche, Rabat (also responsible at this time for Casablanca), Mazagan, Saffi and Mogador as follows:

"As I believe it is not improbable that the existing arrangements for the conveyance of official and private letters from one port of this [Moroccan] Empire to another may be discontinued in consequence of several parties withdrawing their subscriptions, and as I think it would be desirable that the regular postal communication should not be interrupted, I have to transmit for your information and consideration the following plan for the establishment of a new service of which the direction would remain entirely in our hands..."

The "existing system" had been set up in 1837 and was organised and run by European and Moroccan merchants but superintended by the foreign diplomats in Tangier, and I am now able to describe this also: Couriers ran the Tangier-Mogador route and return twice monthly and the foreign consulates made use of this facility free of charge for official dispatches. For the merchants it was subscriptions-based, like the later Spanish system that I described here previously³, and by the 1850s it was well-established and ongoing. However, in 1857 the French government agreed a grant of Fr 1,600 p.a. to allow a more frequent, entirely French, courier system to be established, and French merchants were withdrawing from the previous system thus making it no longer viable. It must be emphasised that this and the proposed new system below were the responsibility of the consulates and not the Post Office. Drummond Hay continued:

"Much will depend upon the amount of subscription that may be made at the different ports by the [British] vice-consuls and by the merchants, as to the number of couriers to be dispatched. I will authorise the vice-consul at Laraiche to deduct from his private subscription one once [four blanquilles or 2d] for every official letter he may receive; the vice-consul at Rabat 6 blanquees [blanquilles]; the [future] v. consul at Dar el-Baida [Casablanca] the same (6 bls); the v. consul at Mazagan 8 bls; the v. consul at Saffi 10 bls, and the consul at Mogador [the most distant port] 12 bls. Upon every dispatch weighing more than 4 ounces a double charge may be made. The vice-consuls will be careful to mark, on the backs of all letters on the public service, the amount of postage charged upon them, and include the same in their contingent accounts at the end of the year. As I understand a service of couriers has been established by the French Consulate General, the couriers of which service are appointed to depart from Tangier on the 1st, 11th and 21st of each month; it is suggested in the accompanying prospectus that the British couriers should leave this place on the 6th, 16th and 26th of each month, and then an arrangement might perhaps be come to with the French company for the mutual and gratuitous conveyance of letters."⁴

So the new system would also be subscriptions-based but presumably improved in some way, probably in terms of the frequency of couriers, three rather than two a month, and by cooperation with the French. There had been a French post office in the Legation in Tangier

since 1852, predating the British equivalent by five years, but this is the first reference I have found to an early French courier system. Drummond Hay's draft prospectus, which was very detailed, can be summarised as follows:

Six couriers to be employed, Rabat to be the starting point for each. Three couriers were to journey to and from Mogador once a month regularly, three others to and from Tangier. The timings from Tangier were as above to meet the Mogador courier at Rabat who would then proceed south, so: Leave Tangier 6th of the month arrive Rabat 11th; second courier departs Rabat 11th arrives Mogador 18th; then departs Mogador 21st arrives Rabat 28th; first courier returns Rabat to Tangier 28th arriving 3rd.

It was proposed initially that the Consul General and the vice-consuls would pay a fixed monthly subscription, the vice-consul at Mogador, for example, paying two dollars (Spanish dollars worth about four shillings). Merchant subscribers would pay not less than a dollar a month. The vice-consul at Rabat would select the couriers and arrange their pay. If total subscriptions exceeded costs then the surplus would be returned on a proportional basis, but if costs exceeded subscriptions these would be raised. So the methods of payment, and the central position of Rabat, were the same as the later Spanish service (ref. 3), and the latter may well have been modelled on the British and French systems by then in existence. As with the Spanish service, Tetuan was omitted so there must have been a different British courier arrangement linking that town with Tangier. In the Spanish case from 1862 couriers went between the Spanish consulate in Tetuan and Ceuta (which is of course a Spanish enclave and part of Spain's own postal system) in an arrangement that began with military mail during the war of 1861.⁵

Non-subscribers could use the proposed British service on payment of a fee per letter to the vice-consul at the port of arrival. For letters under two ounces from Tangier the fees were (in onces, so units of 2d or so): Laraiche, 2; Rabat, 4; Casablanca, 5; Mazagan, 6; Saffi, 7; Mogador, 8. So a letter sent from Tangier to Mogador would cost 1/4d which is a lot; and a three ounce letter would be charged double. No newspapers were to be carried for non-subscribers.

Couriers caught carrying unauthorised letters "to be proceeded against with all rigour before the Moorish authorities" (which meant they would certainly be flogged), and the addressees would be liable to a triple payment penalty. The important Tangier-Fez route, and also any urgent dispatches, would continue to require the British consuls to hire special couriers.⁶

There was a strong political element in all this that included concern about British dispatches entrusted to a French system. However, Drummond Hay later wrote that, "If foreigners subscribe I have no objection that foreigners be named as agents at some of the intermediate ports, but Tangier, Rabat and Mogador must be in the hands of British officers. ... It would be, to say the least, a matter for comment that the postal service of Morocco should be chiefly conducted through the agency of officers of a foreign government but ... it is not in the spirit of opposition that the English postal service on the coast is proposed to be established."

I can here confirm that (1) the French courier service began in April 1858 and (2) the proposed British courier system was implemented shortly thereafter at the beginning of July 1858 with the aid of a retrospective government grant of £30 p.a., about half that of the French. This allowed official dispatches to continue to be carried free of charge and a weekly rather than thrice-monthly service.

So far as I am aware, items clearly sent by this early courier service have not survived, other than, of course, the consular dispatches in the archives on which there are no postal markings. The earliest known cover from the Morocco Agencies went from Casablanca via Gibraltar to London in October 1860 and bears a 6d stamp (presumably sourced from Gibraltar) cancelled in transit in Gibraltar.⁷ Although this item dates from the time when postal matters were handled by the vice-

consulate in Casablanca, well before the British post office was opened there in 1887, it probably went from Casablanca by sea. Steamers and sailing vessels of course always provided a quicker alternative to overland couriers and would be employed for overseas mails whenever possible rather than sending them up the coast to Tangier and thence onwards. Another early cover from Marrakesh via Mogador and Gibraltar to London in November 1864 also probably went by sea from Mogador.⁸ However, a more likely candidate is the incoming cover shown below (John Smith Collection). Addressed from England to the British vice-consul at Rabat and Sale in 1867 it has a number of transit marks on the reverse including Marseille, Oran and Tangier, which very likely means it was landed at Tangier and went on down the coast by courier. In this case also it could have gone onwards by ship but at this time Rabat was not a well-frequented port.



¹R. Garcia, 'The British Postal Service in Morocco 1749-1906', The Postal History Society and the British Philatelic Trust, York (2009) p. 32 and D.A. Stotter, 'A Postcard from Tangier. A Postal & Social History of Tangier 1880-1958', The Postal History Society, Saffron Walden (2015) p. 202.

²The National Archives, FO 174/229 p. 5. Unsuitable appointments continued to be an issue for the Morocco Agencies and even as late as 1930 the Tangier Postmaster was writing, "It seems our fate with Casablanca that we either get sharp rogues or honest fools and both are a nuisance." The Postal Museum & Archive, Post 29/1178.

³D.A. Stotter, *Postal History* 346, 44 (2013).

⁴The National Archives, FO 174/229 p. 178.

⁵J.M. Hernandez Ramos, 'Boletín del Agrupación Filatélica de Ceuta' 17, 8 (1999).

⁶Stotter (ref. 1) pp. 35 & 173; these couriers were not affiliated to a specific postal service but were nevertheless professional rekkas for hire in a specific location in every large town.

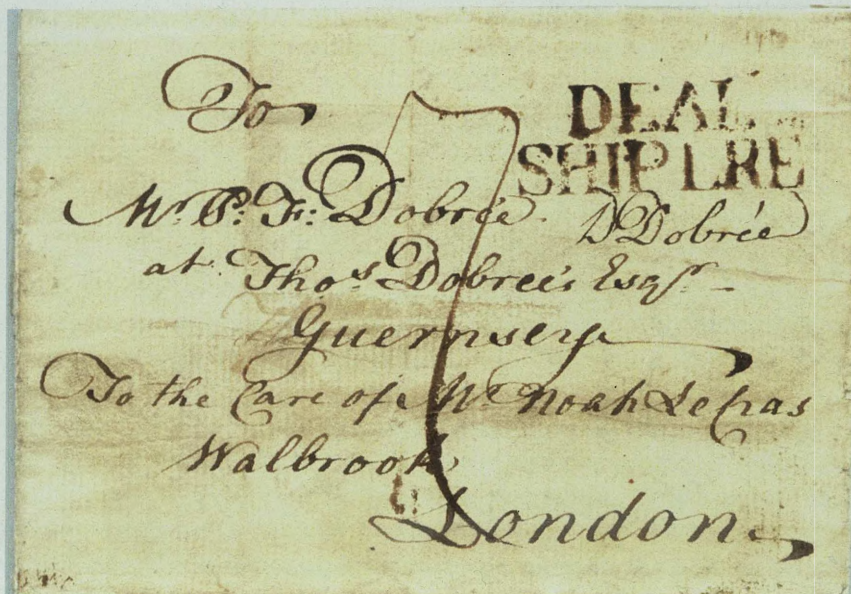
⁷Maurice Hadida Collection, illustrated in Garcia (ref.1) p.36.

⁸Larry Gardner Collection, illustrated in Garcia p. 40

IN POSTAL HISTORY NEVER TAKE ANYTHING AT FACE VALUE!

DAVID GURNEY FRPSL

When acquiring new material it is always important to check the detail and look again at rates for example to see if you are in complete agreement with the description given. I recently added this entire letter to my Letter Forwarding Agents collection and looking carefully at the address I was not convinced with the interpretation of the lettering of the *Care of* name.



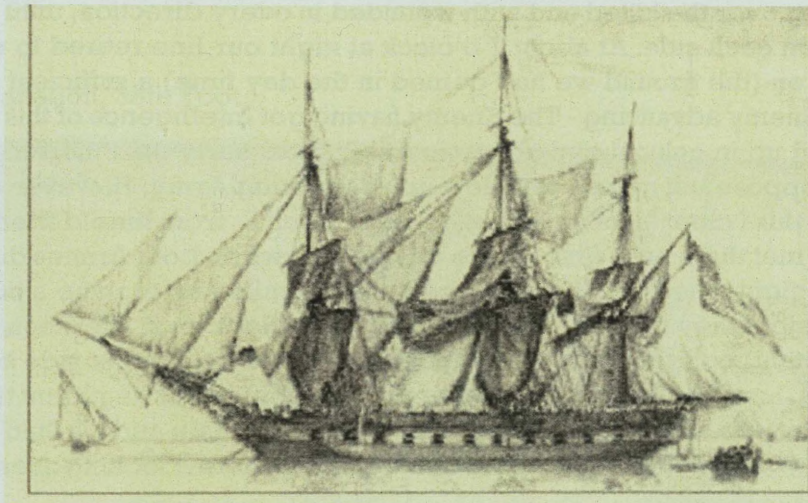
I had been aware of this letter some years ago and when researching for my book *'Letter Forwarding Agents of Great Britain handling Channel Islands letters 1673 - 1855'* I recalled that it had been sold to the previous owner as a rare London Forwarding Agent named Noah Sepas. However, this did not strike me as an appropriate name and certainly not a Channel Islands name as most London Agents handling Channel Islands mails were merchants, many of whom were related to Island families. Interpretation of 18th century hand writing can be difficult and following discussion some years ago with the staff of the Manuscript Department at the Guildhall Library in London (recently transferred to the London Metropolitan Archive) who are expert in deciphering early hand writing, we concluded this surname might in fact be Le Cras and not Sepas. They suggested a double check of the name by reference to the London Commercial Directories of the 1770s whereupon I found a Noah Le Cras listed as a Merchant at 6, Walbrook. Further I found that in 1776 Noah Le Cras had entered into partnership with Paul Le Mesurier, another Channel Island merchant, Forwarding Agent and future Lord Mayor of London. A very successful partnership of Le Cras and Le Mesurier ensued whereby they made a fortune as Prize Agents.

Noah Le Cras is a very scarce Agent as very few examples of letters handled by him are known. When I eventually read the contents of this very long and bulky letter mention was made of the Le Cras family in London who appeared to be closely associated with the writer who was a naval officer on board HMS "Deal Castle" at that time.

The letter was written on the 4th January 1774 on board the "Deal Castle" at Montserrat and was endorsed inside the folded flap "To Mr Nicholas Dobree, on board his Majesty Ship Deal Castle To be left at Messrs Scotts & Dover at Antigua". With the re-folding of the letter it is probable this endorsement was apparent on the back of this large letter when written



The letter was then carried privately to England and received where it was landed at (coincidentally) Deal where it received a good strike of the two line DEAL / SHIP LRE handstamp in black ink. It was charged 7d to enter the post being the inward ship letter rate of 1d at that time plus the inland letter rate to London of 3d doubled to 6d. The letter received the London Bishop mark dated 8 AP and was then delivered and carried privately to Guernsey. I had wondered at one stage whether the endorsed '7' was in fact an 18th century '3', but concluded that it was indeed a '7'. Perhaps someone may disagree with this conclusion and I would be very interested to learn any views on this.



Further enquiries have revealed that HMS "Deal Castle" was a 6th rate frigate similar to the above impression with 24 cannon built in 1756 by Perry at Blackwall, London. She is reported to have foundered on the 11th October, 1780 off Puerto Rico in the Great Hurricane which destroyed much of the British war fleet stationed near to St Lucia at that time.

Royal naval vessels lost in the Great Hurricane of 1780 in the West Indies were:
3rd Rate ship of the line "STIRLING CASTLE"

5th Rate frigate "PHOENIX"

6th Rate frigates "ANDROMEDA", "DEAL CASTLE", "LAUREL" and "SCARBOROUGH".

Sloops of war "BARBADOES", "BEAVER PRIZE" and "ENDEAVOUR"

Gun-Brig "VICTOR".

LETTER FROM BAYONNE

GREG TODD

St. Jean de Luz, 29th December, 1813.

My Dear Brother,

Since writing to you last we have been very hotly engaged with the Enemy in front of Bayonne. So much so that that I am completely done in - our Operations on the Left commenced early on the morning of the 9th instant and continued for three days successfully. The first as usual we charged a column of the Enemy on the top of a hill and above them along the main road to Bayonne but with a great loss of men on our part for in the course of 10 and 15 minutes, suffered in killed and wounded 4 Officers and 59 Men, never was hotter work seen than there was at about 12 o'clock of this day, there could in short nothing be seen but charging, roaring of cannon and musketry along the line - here we were walking over the killed and with wounded in every direction, until it was nearly dark when firing ceased on each side. At about 7 o'clock at night our line retired to where our cantonments were and left on (the ground we had gained in the day time) a sufficient Piquet to give the alarm in case of the Enemy advancing - The Enemy having got Intelligence of this movement of ours in the night, marched up in column and above in our Piquets early next morning and thought that they had nothing to oppose but merely to follow up a retreating Army. However while Soult was indulging himself with this I clear all of a sudden ... without a ch... from his old friends (the British) on the same ground we met them on at first, on the day before, when both Armies disputed every inch of ground until near night when the Enemy retired about a mile and took up a position on a height in our front, which height they remained on until nearly 3 o'clock next afternoon and from daylight that day (the 11th instant) no symptoms of hostilities were shown on either side but merely looking at one another's lines. Lord Wellington & Staff were in the Front of our Regiment the most of this day looking at the motions of the Enemy. Soult was to be seen quite plain and his Staff opposite this very place, who seemed in great spirits. So here were the great Generals looking at each other's Forces.

However in a short time Soult very impudently brought round a Gun opposite to where His Lordship was standing and discharged it. This commenced the business (3 o'clock, pm) which continued until dark night. He made this dash at us thinking to force our left and retake St. Jean de Luz and in order to encourage his Troops gave them double allowance of Rum and promised them a month's pay if they succeeded in this plan. However he was quite mistaken for from the time we commenced until we ceased firing (which was about 4 hours) he did not gain an inch of ground, but on the contrary was obliged to retire under cover of darkness to Bayonne where he has remained ever since and Lord Wellington, not being exactly prepared to move him from such a strong position, did not deem it proper to follow him up but ordered our Wing in to Quarters and at the same time to keep a very strong Piquet in Front which comes very often round us; there being a Brigade in at once which is composed of Three Regts. of Germans who deserted from the French Lines on the morning of the 11th. with their General coming and all the other Officers. We were in sight of them while passing through our Lines with their Arms reversed and after a short conversation the General had with Lord Wellington, were sent off to St. Jean de Luz, an escort (his Lordship's Headquarters) and thence to the Port of Passage for the purpose of being sent to Germany as we hear. They were in number Fifteen Hundred robust, lively, soldierly looking men - I had very narrow escapes in the course of the three days, indeed I had not the idea of escaping from being severely wounded or killed, the first day so thick were the Shells and Musketry. I had the command of a Company the last day in consequence of 4 of our Officers being wounded. The Colours fortunately were not troubled there being three Ensigns in the Regt. junior to me. I'm sorry to tell you that my Baggage Pony was taken by the Enemy while in a Foraging Party about eight days before we advanced which cost me per Bill on the Paymaster One hundred Dollars which is rather more than three month's pay. This loss will be very severe on me being obliged to purchase another at 40 Dollars payable in the same

manner, thus I am out four month's pay at once, but there is no help for it, it is the fate of War and I must just do the best until this is paid. Our Regt. lost 5 animals on this Party, we are subject to many losses of this nature, for if we do not lose them to the Enemy, the Spanish rascals will steal them - I have no other news, only we are keeping a very a strict lookout. I hear the Militia have not come forward as was expected in volunteering to go on Foreign Service, I see by the Army List Sandy MacBean has been appointed a second time Ensign notwithstanding the piece of Gallantry which took place 'twixt him and his friend - James Johnstone told me of Mr. Sandy's bravery some time ago when I was in Portugal, however he is once more put upon the stage and I hope will exhibit a better character than at first. If those Militia Bucks would come out here the would have lots of fighting, without duelling! We don't trouble our heads about duelling in this part of the World, wt. the recommendations which have gone in for our Regt.

I will be only four steps from the top of the Ensigns. I certainly expect to hear from you soon, you may depend no affair of any consequence shall take place without giving you an account of it. Wishing you many returns of the approaching season, I remain, my dear brother, yours most affectionately,

Pat. Bain,
Ensign, 1st Battalion, 38th Foot.



My Dear Brother,

St Jean de Luz 29th Decem^r 1813.

Since writing you last we have been very hotly engaged with the Enemy in front of Bayonne some time so that Word completely done up - our operations on the left commenced early on the morning of 9th Inst^d and continued for three days successively - The first as usual we charged a column of the Enemy on the top of a Hill and drove them along the main road to Bayonne but ~~we~~ we a great loss on our part - for in the course of 10 or 15 minutes suffered in killed and wounded four Officers and 50 men - never was hotter work seen than there was at about 12 o'clock of this day, there could in short nothing be seen but charging, roaring of cannon and musketry along the line - they were walking over the killed and wounded in every direction until it was nearly dark when firing ^{ceased} on each side - about seven o'clock at night our line retired to where our cantonments were and left on the ground we had gained in the day time a sufficient Picquet to give the alarm in case of the Enemy advancing - The Enemy having got intelligence of this movement of ours in the night marched up in Column and drove in our Picquets early next morning and thought that they had nothing to oppose but were shy to follow up a retreating army - however while Soult was indulging himself with this Pleasure of a sudden met with the Regie from his old friends (the British) on the same ground we met them in at first on the day before when both armies disputed every Inch of ground until near night when the Enemy retired about a mile and took up a position on a height in our front which height they remained on until nearly three o'clock next afternoon and from day light that day (the 11th Inst^d) no signs of hostilities were shown on either side but merely looking at one another's lines - Lord Wellington & Staff were in front of our Post the most of the day looking at the motions of the ~~Enemy~~ ^{British} Staff.

The letter, addressed to the Ensign's brother, Robert Bain, 'Writer' (writer to the signet, a solicitor) in Elgin, Scotland, is endorsed at lower left as a Soldier's Letter "Fav'd by Lieut. Allan, 38th Foot" and travelled via PORTSMOUTH with 78 mileage datestamp on reverse (Feb 7, 1814). It was originally charged '8d.' (Portsmouth-London), charge deleted and replaced by '1s. 2d.' for Portsmouth-Elgin (rated for under 500 miles), deleted by 'Addl. 1/2d.' handstamps and eventually charged at 1s. 5d. (under 600 miles = 1s. 4d. + Scottish delivery of 1d.).

12th December 1813: Lord Wellington's Dispatches confirm the Nassauers (2 battalions) and one battalion from Frankfurt deserting to the British.

The affray 'General Hill's Affair' took place at Barouillet in front of Bayonne between December 11-13, 1813 and Marshall Soult's French forces. Most of the French taken prisoner were found to be young and inexperienced, the 38th had 50 men killed or wounded.

BOURNEMOUTH CONFERENCE - 2nd to 4th OCTOBER 2015

We have a stunning line-up of speakers at this year's conference by the sea in Bournemouth and it's not too late to ring the hotel on 01202 554545 and make a reservation – even if the East Cliff Court is full, their sister hotel immediately adjacent should have room – but please remember to tell the reservations team that you are with the Society and note that bookings cannot be made on-line.

Patrick Maselis RDP, a Vice-President of the Royal, opens the proceedings at 2.00 p.m. on Friday with what promises to be a stunning and unusual display on 'The Postal History of the Lado Enclave', and he will be followed by Bill Pipe with 20th century railways and Robert Danzig with 'Royalty on the Isle of Wight' which should appeal to spouses as well as members.

On Saturday we have yet another RDP, no less than Francis Kiddle, a Past President of the Royal, with the Postal History of Bournemouth, after which David Tett will show 'The Changi Postman', Alan Holyoake will show 'Corsini' and Julian Tweed will end the morning with 'Express Mail'. Sunday morning promises a fine start with the Presidential display of Brunei.

Apart from all this excitement there will be ample opportunity for members to show off their own material, the Saturday afternoon outing is back with a bus ride across the ferry to Swanage and we have an auction bursting with treasures at the most economical of prices. Don't forget the President's Prize after the Banquet on Saturday evening for the most popular one page entry, the A.G.M. on Sunday morning and the Society Cup Competition – all you need are 16 sheets on your favourite subject to enable you to join the Society's very own roll of honour!



Bournemouth Pier circa 1850

A CHALLENGE TO OUR MEMBERS 2

Spurred on by David Trapnell's article in the last edition, and by the response from Mike Dovey to my first challenge, I am encouraged to try a second venture with two covers which may well be associated as they came from the same bundle of family correspondence being offered for sale by a book dealer.

Both are endorsed respectively 'written in polish' and 'written in Greek A.O.S.' so as to reach the correct censor. The first (Figure 1) is addressed to the Polish Red Cross in Tel-Aviv and was posted in Ghazir in 1945. Presumably the marks in red are those of the censor but if any members can shed more light on the letters and numbers then please put pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, and send a letter to the Editor.



The second envelope (Figure 2) was posted from Aley to Konstantinos Bekridakis at 217 Camp Staff in the Middle East Forces in 1943.



From the manuscript notations on the reverse we know that the sender was Georgia Bekridaki at the Greek Refugee Camp, Hotel No. 1, c/o the Greek Consulate in Beyrouth, Siria. On the front there is a purple circular 'Deputy Chief Field (crown) Censor' and a purple number 17, not unlike the style on the first cover. Someone out there may know more than me about this refugee camp, or is it yet another challenge for the intrepid David Trapnell?!



LIBRARY NOTES

The eagerly awaited copy of Jacques Renollaud's book on Napoleonic Prisoners of War has been added to the Society's Library following the generous donation by the author and a review appears elsewhere. Other new titles added during the summer are as follows:

'An Atlantic Telegraph – The Transcendental Cable' by Robert Dalton Harris and Diane DeBlois, kindly donated by the authors, Schoharie, 1994.

Les documents officiels racontent la Poste a Luxeuil et dans les environs de 1851 a 1918' by B. Augustin, Le Havre, 1999.

'Lettres des internes du Camp des Milles 1939-1942' by G. Marchot, Aix-en-Provence, 2012.

Articles in other journals which might interest members more widely include:

'Les travailleurs who helped win World War 1' by David Trapnell. (Journal of the France & Colonies P.S., June 2015).

'The British Postal Era in Kuwait' by Douglas Muir. (Cross Post, Spring 2015).

'Post Office Express Labels 1916-1925' by A. Davis. (The GB Journal, May 2015).

BOOK REVIEW

'*Courrier des Prisonniers Francais en Angleterre*' – Mail of French prisoners of war in England' by Jacques Renollaud FRPSL, published by the author, Boulogne Billancourt, 2015. ISBN 978-2-7466-7766-1. Available from the author at jacques@renollaud.com

At one time it had been hoped that this important study would have been published as a joint venture with the Society and the generous help of several of our members including Graham Mark, Richard Farman and Chris Hichen is acknowledged by the author.

The book contains 265 pages of detailed information with accompanying text in both French and English, although the proof reading of the latter is sadly deficient and the taped binding seems unlikely to withstand much usage. That being said, the bringing together and description of so many letters from the Austrian War of Succession 1744-1748, the Seven Years War 1756-1763, the War of American Independence 1778-1783, the French Revolutionary Wars 1793-1812, the Napoleonic Wars 1803-1815 and the Hundred Days War of 1815 is long overdue.

The contents draw upon a wide number of collections apart from that of the author, including the late Barrie Jay, Alan Wood and Richard Farman as well as from articles and auction catalogues. Inevitably some of the illustrations suffer as a result but this does not diminish from the value of this publication which should feature on the shelves of any collector of this period.

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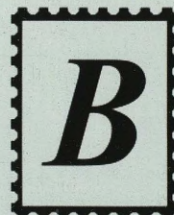
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