

British and French Prisoner Mail during French Wars and Insurrections, 1779-1871

Scope of exhibit: This exhibit presents mail of military and political prisoners generated during French wars and insurrections, from the time of the Anglo-French War, French Republic and subsequent Napoleonic Wars, through the fall of the Commune of Paris in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. It focuses

Plan

Anglo-French War
(1778-1783)

French Republic (1792-1799)

Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815)

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte
(1808-1872)

Commune of Paris (1848)

Franco-Prussian War
(1870-1871)

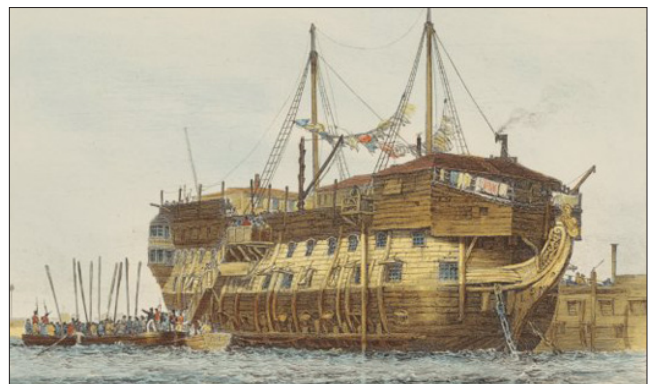
Commune of Paris (1871)

on incoming and outgoing mail of British and French military prisoners as well as French citizens caught up in civil war. Letter content reveals personal circumstances of individual prisoners, including hardships endured and their attempts to be released.

Organization and development: Throughout much of the nineteenth century France was at war with Europe or itself. The exhibit follows chronologically by conflict, from the Anglo-French War (1778-1783) through the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) and its aftermath, the last French conflict of the century. Letters show

treatment of prisoners based upon military rank (privileged parole vs. imprisonment on prison ships and land installations) or civilian status (imprisonment on prison ships and land installations.)

Significance: The postal history of French wars throughout the nineteenth century has been widely documented in writing and exhibiting. However, prisoner mail has been largely neglected, in part because relevant material seldom appears in the philatelic market place. This exhibit, spanning nearly a century, illustrates the hierarchical treatment of military and civilian prisoners of two major European nations signatory to the Hague Convention of 1899, the first multilateral treaty to specify guidelines on the humane treatment of prisoners of war.



A 19th century British prison ship (hulk)

Exhibit highlights are bordered in red and annotated in bold italics.