

The Ruhleben internment camp post

In 1914, Ruhleben was a small village about 4km West of Berlin boundary on the way to the suburb of Spandau. It was the site of a race course some 20 acres in extent which had been rented by the German Government to house farm workers working or nearby country estates. At the outbreak of War, the camp was first used to house 1000 Russian labourers, however, by the end of 1914 was in use as an internment camp for British nationals. By March 1915 there were some 4400 internees.

As a civilian internment camp, funding was provided by Britain and the inmates were mainly dependant on self administration to run all internal activities. Ruhleben was not a military POW camp, but a civilian internment camp and as such, the British Government were responsible for funding British internees costs. The military administration refused to deliver incoming mail to the barracks and the internees resented the long walks to post and receive mail.

In Spring 1915, the Postmaster Albert Kamps was given permission for a Camp Postal Service - Ruhleben Express Delivery (RXD) - which commenced services on July 19th, 1915. As well as providing a collection and delivery service for external mail and parcels, an internal camp service was established which was immediately popular with the inmates. For the internal services Kamps issued both stamps and postal stationery. Whether or not Mr. Kamps was a philatelist is unknown.

In October, 1915 the Berliner Bismarck-Zeitung carried an article about the RXD which caused an immediate outcry as it contravened the German Postal Monopoly Laws of 1839 and worse, it was the "enemy" that were doing it!

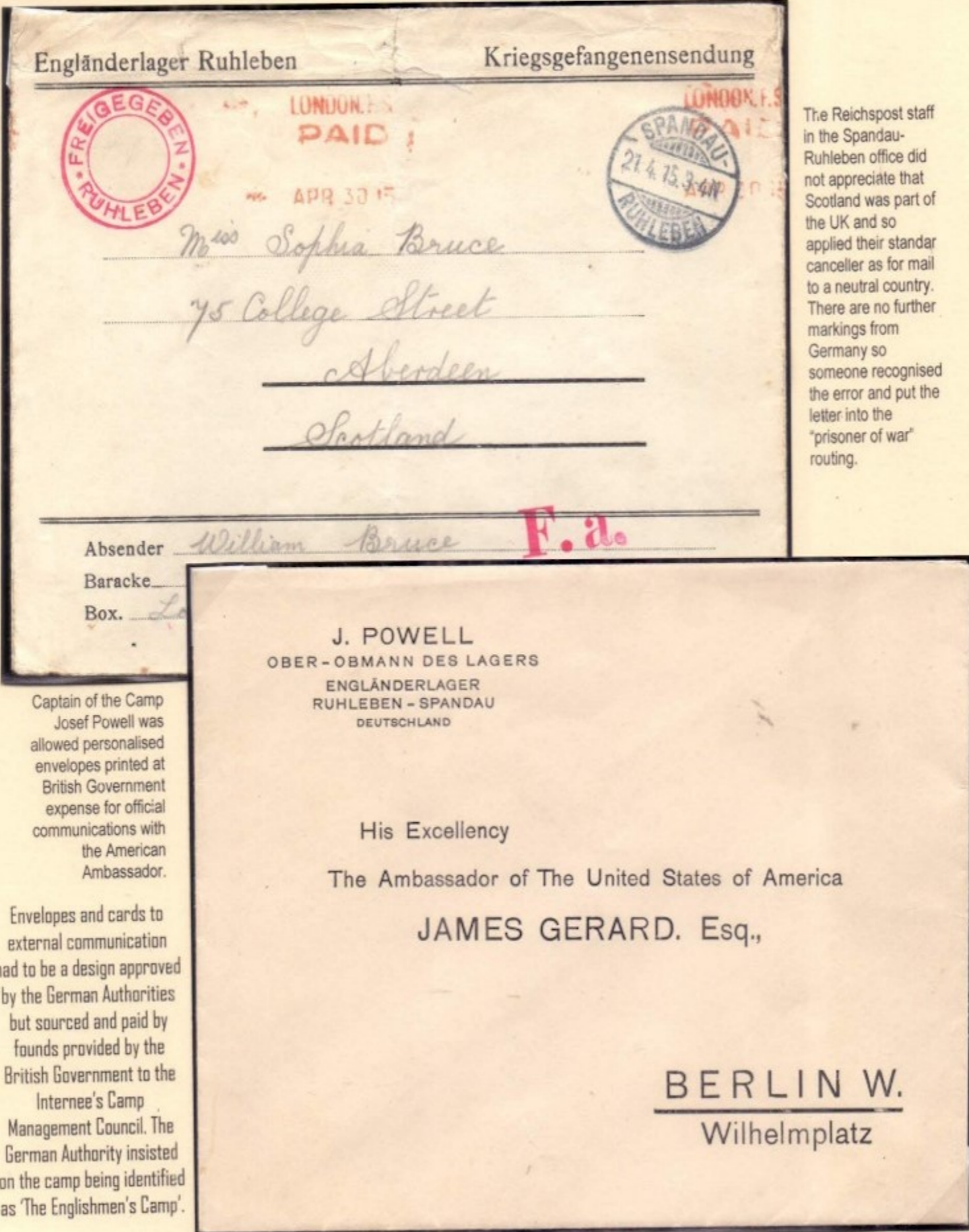
The RXD operated for 8 1/2 months from July 19th, 1915 to April 3rd, 1916. The founder Kamps provided for mail boxes and postmen in each barrack. His brother was in charge of stamps and postal stationery production. The postmen collected and delivered RXD mail 8 times a day. They also handled outgoing and incoming mail for the German Censor Office. Services included regular, registered, special delivery and parcel post mail.

The RXD was closed by the camp authority on April 2nd, 1916 and despite having had official sanction, Kamps was tried by a German Military Court and received 3 weeks solitary confinement. RXD was replaced by a stampless postal service to maintain collections and deliveries. The entire stock of RXD stamps and stationery was impounded and presumably destroyed.

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1. Before the Ruhleben Express Delivery RXD	2
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7. Mail to Ruhleben	16

1. Before the Ruhleben Express Delivery (RXD)

Until March, 1915, each prisoner was allowed to write one nine-lined postcard per week and two four-page letters per month. The monthly allotment of notepaper, envelopes and/or postcards was sold for 10 pf.



The Reichpost staff in the Sportplatz-Ruhleben office did not appreciate that Scotland was part of the UK and so applied their standard canceller as for mail to a neutral country. There are no further markings from Germany so someone recognised the error and put the letter into the "prisoner of war" routing.

Envelopes and cards to external communication had to be a design approved by the German Authorities but sourced and paid by funds provided by the British Government to the Internment Camp Management Office. The German Authority insisted on the camp being identified as "The Englishmen's Camp".

2. Stamps

2.1. The provisional issue. The initial plans called for a 1/3 d. stamp value compared to the 3 pf. rate for printed matter prevalent in Germany at the time. Using pre-gummed paper, a perforator, rubber stamp dies and inks obtained from a Berlin firm, the stamps were prepared in sheets of 3 rows of 5 stamps each. Some 3,000 copies were prepared.



Twenty sheets of 10 (2x5) were overprinted "DUE" diagonally for unpaid messages so that the recipient could pay 1/3 d.

2.2. Definitive issue. Since even the surcharged values were too limiting in their accept, a definitive issue was designed and prepared in sheets of 10 (2x5). It was put on sale of October 23rd, 1915 and consisted of 5 values.



Besides the "DUE" overprint, an official stamp was also produced for use of Mr. Kamps in corresponding with his agencies throughout the camp and with the organizations and publications that used RXD services. "On Service" overprint was applied.



A popular souvenir for the internees was a set of stamps on cover. This full set is addressed to the British Camp Captain Powell. The values are printed in second color, perforated 11 1/2.

3. The cancellations

While the postage stamps were designed and valued in English, these cancellations were initially developed to accommodate the bi-lingual users of the RXD.



The first cancelling device is a single line rubber stamp with removable type staying day, date, month, year, and time in German.

This German format was quickly evaluated as inappropriate for an English Post Office and replaced by the English version. The day name portion was dropped soon after.



Just the date, month, year and time were left.

3. The cancellations

On September 5th, 1915, 7 weeks after the RXD opened, a new canceller was put into use. It was a 3-line device.

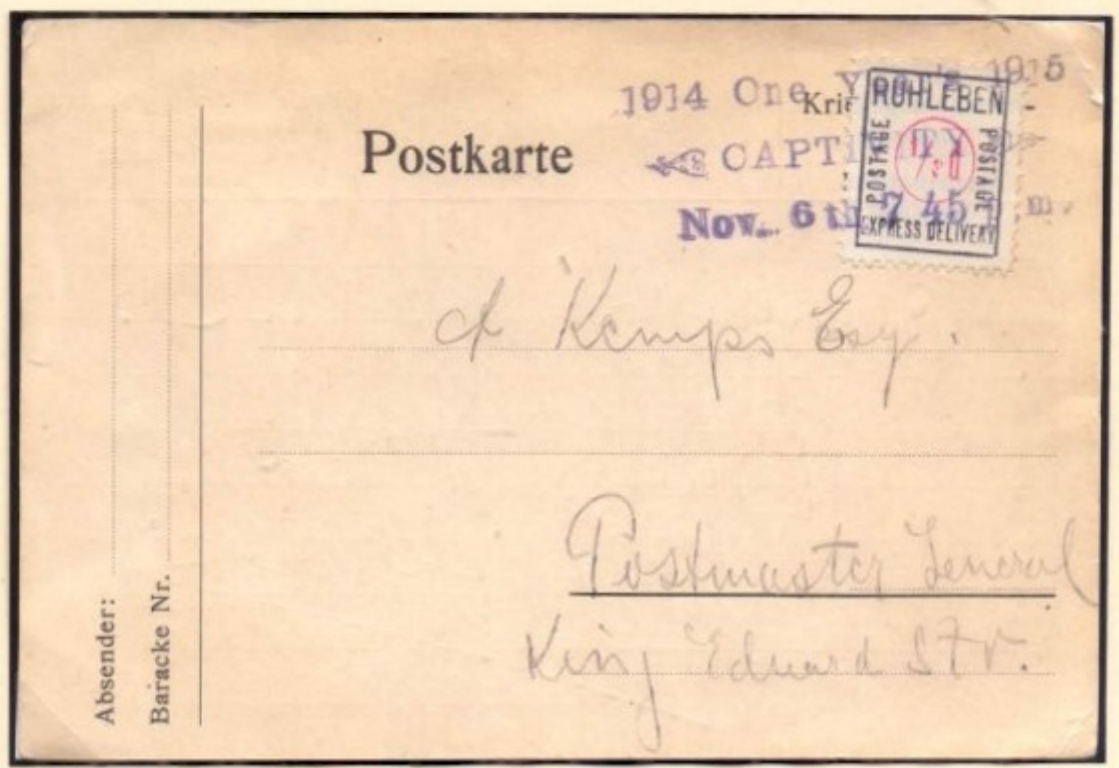
Arabic numerals were used for the month designations in the date, except during the months of October, November, December and January when one of the cancellers used Roman numerals, like this above - January, 1916.



A cancellation was also used on receipts following normal British business practice to signify payment made.

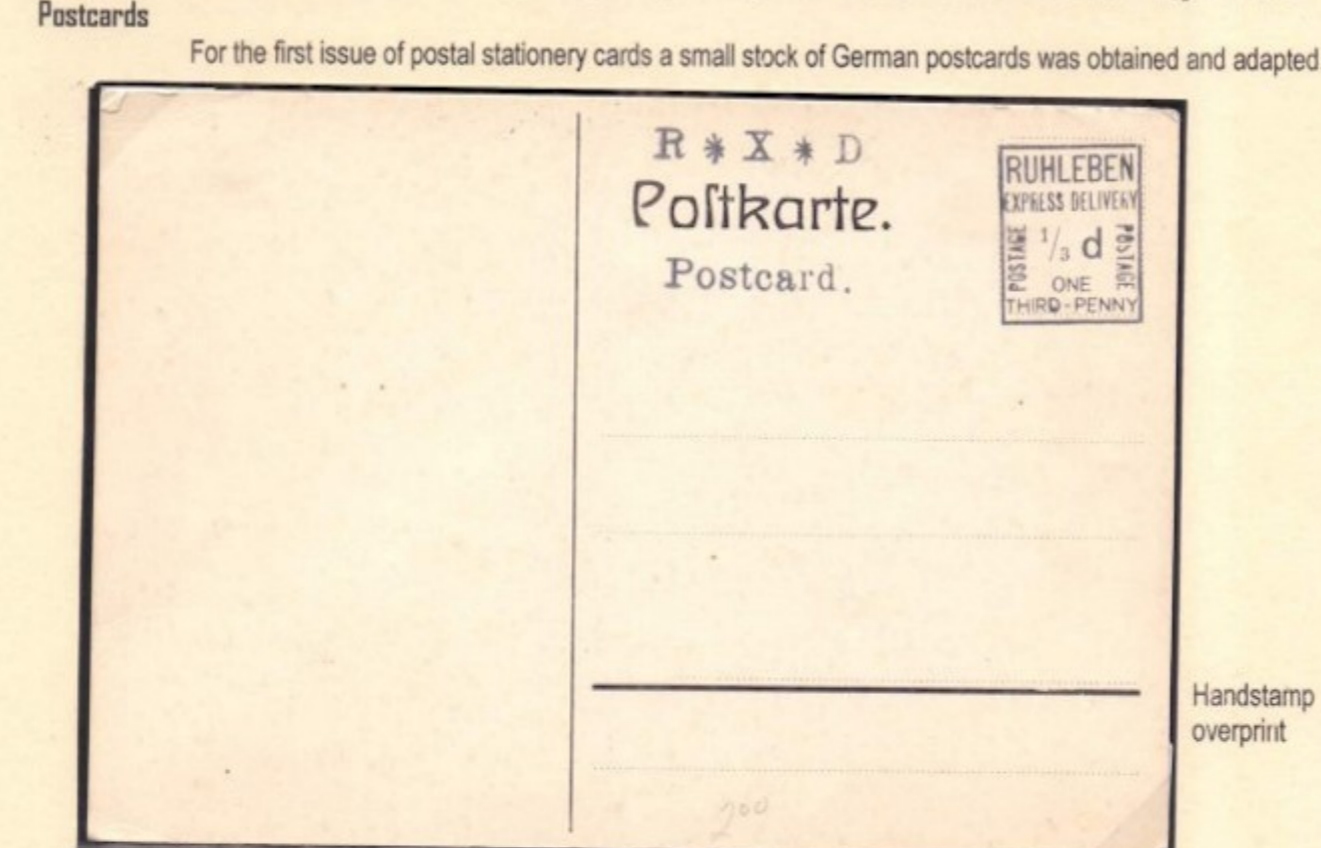
The influence of philatelists is most apparent when on November 6th, 1915, a special cancellation appeared commemorating the anniversary of the camp's "mass English internment" one year before.

It was quite fancy: "1914 One Year's 1915 CAPTIVITY Nov. 6th, 7:45 a.m."

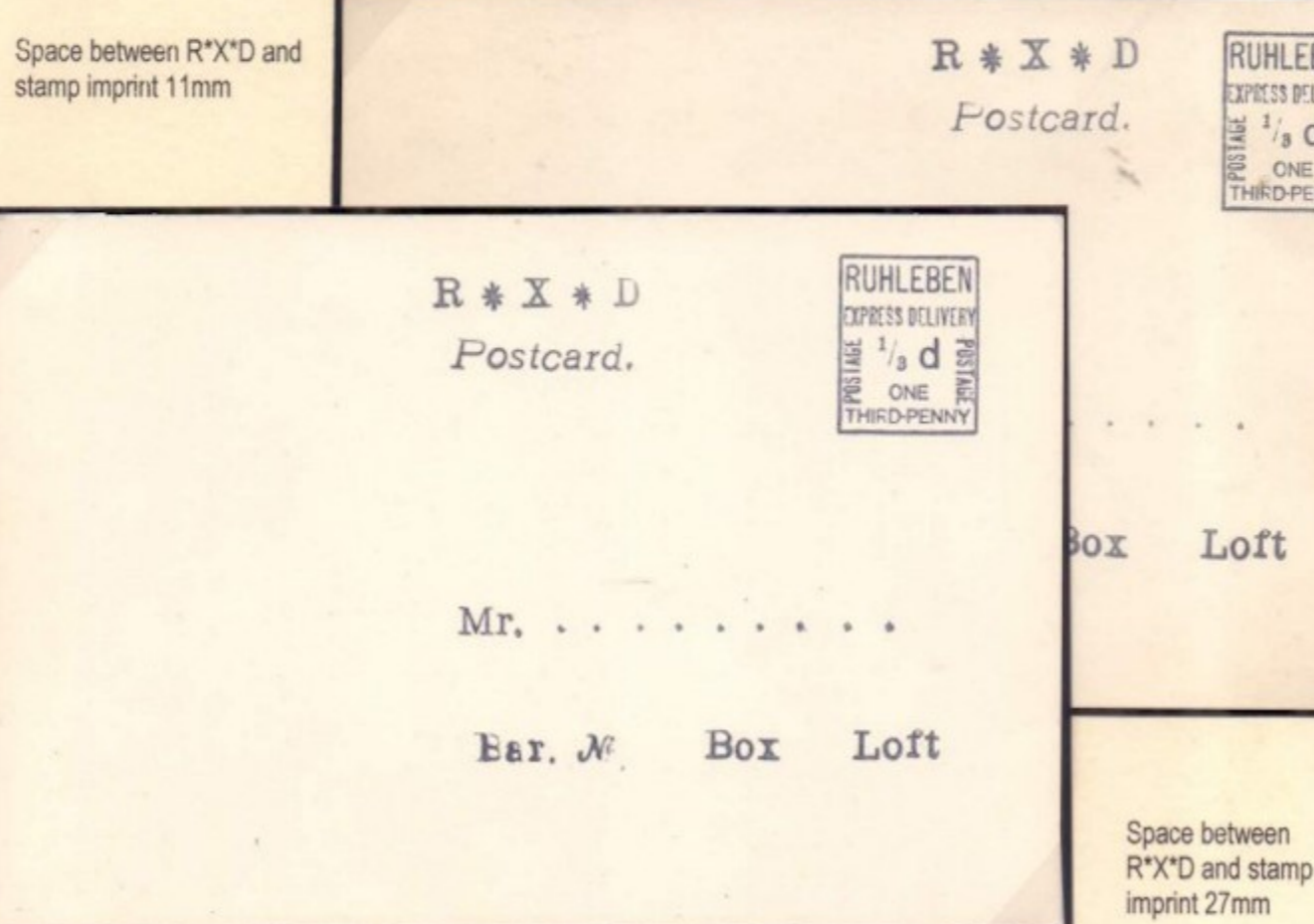


4. Postal stationery

Postal stationery came into its own soon after the RXD. It was produced by applying the rubber stamp directly to any available item for the internees. It was preferred over postage stamps as they did not have to hunt around for something to write on.



Produced in relatively small batches the postcards have a variety of minor differences in layout.

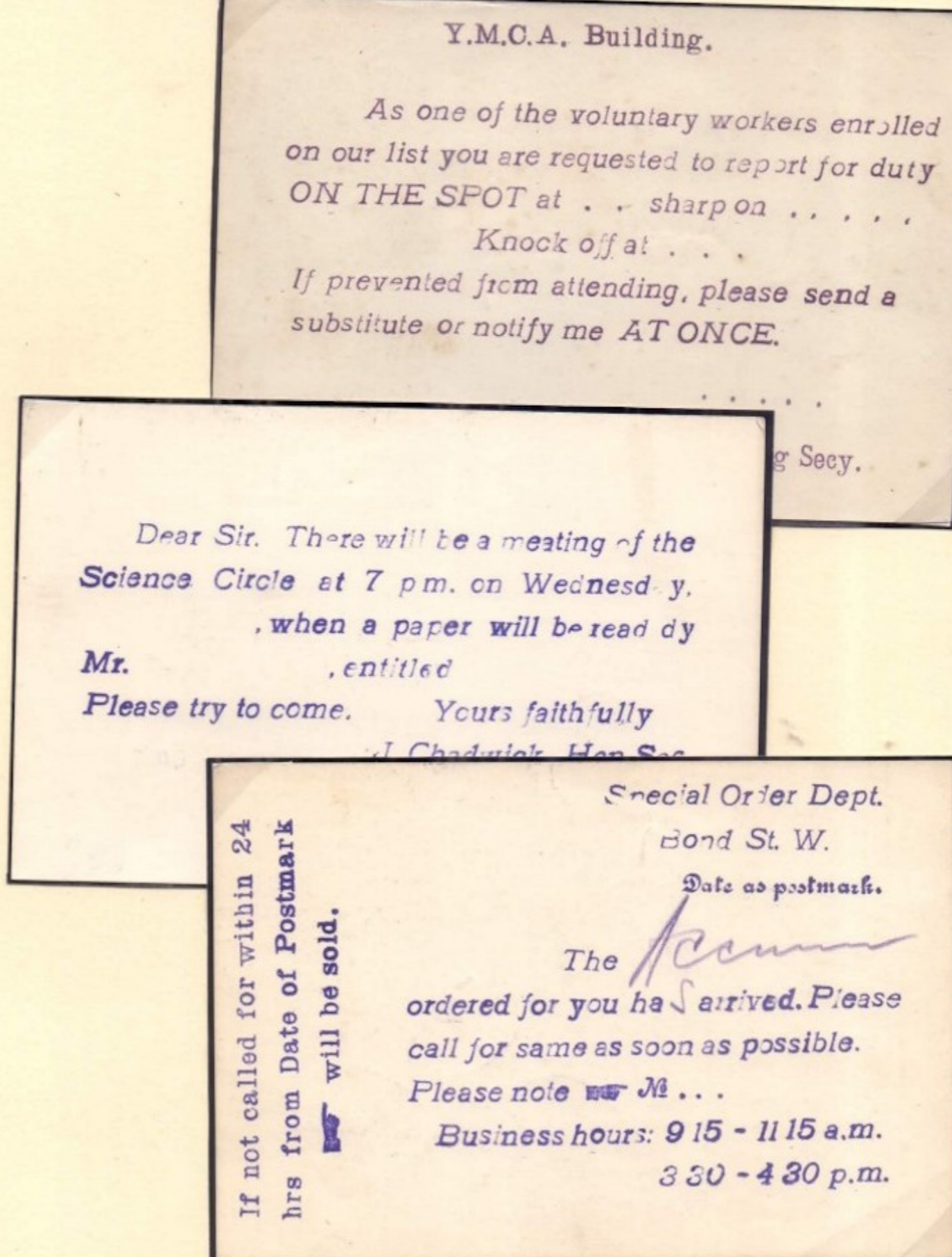


Space between RXD and stamp imprint 11mm

Space between RXD and stamp imprint 27mm

4. Postal stationery

The RXD produced customised cards in small batches for the various camp offices, businesses and committees resulting in a variety of minor differences to the front layout.



4. Postal stationery

Some postcards were printed in Berlin for correspondence outside the camp with "Postkarte" in upper left of card and "Kriegsgefangenen/Sendung/Engländerlager Ruhleben" in upper right.



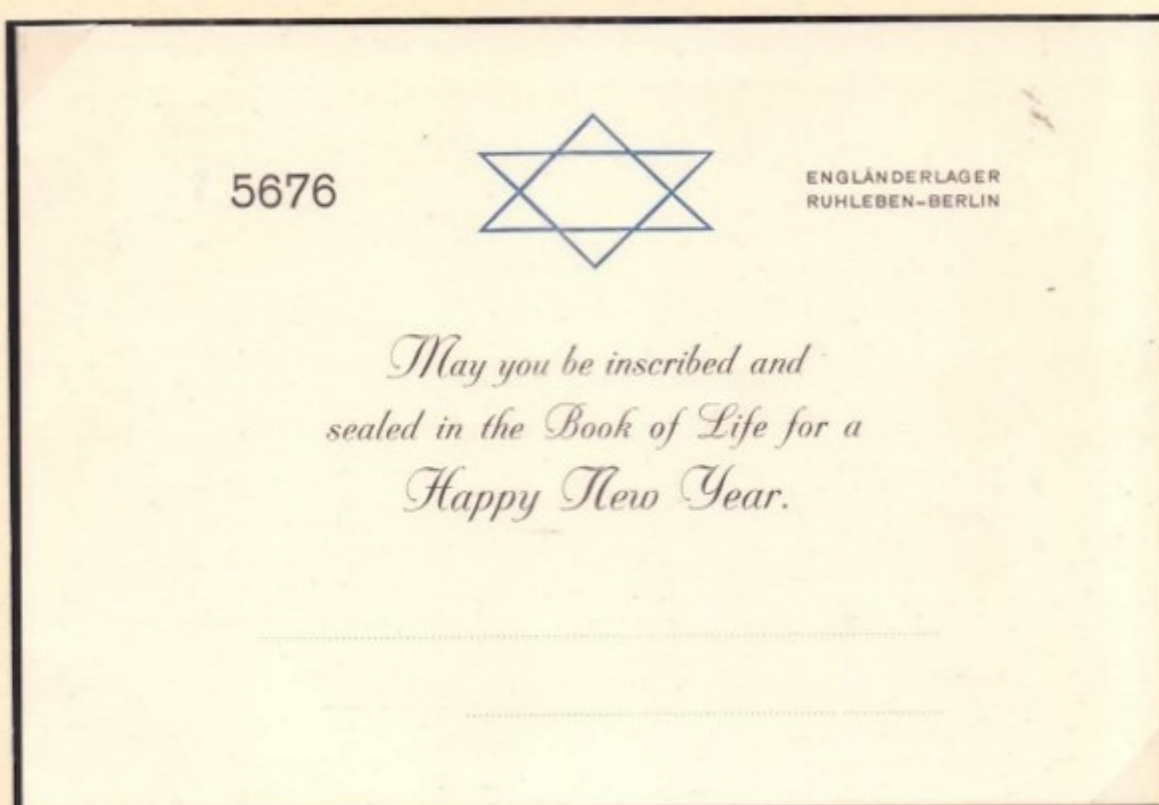
Christmas 1915 was for most internees the first time they had been family separated from their families. To least morale, the Camp Management Council approved the printing of a seasonal greetings card with payment from central funds. These cards were then available to internees free of charge.

4. Postal stationery

Postcards There were many Jews from the Berlin business community amongst the British internees. For the Jewish New Year 5676 on September 29, 1915, the Camp Management Council authorized the printing of two greeting cards (in English and German) for internees to send to family and friends.



Back of the 1915 Jewish New Year card - German text



The same in English.

4. Postal stationery

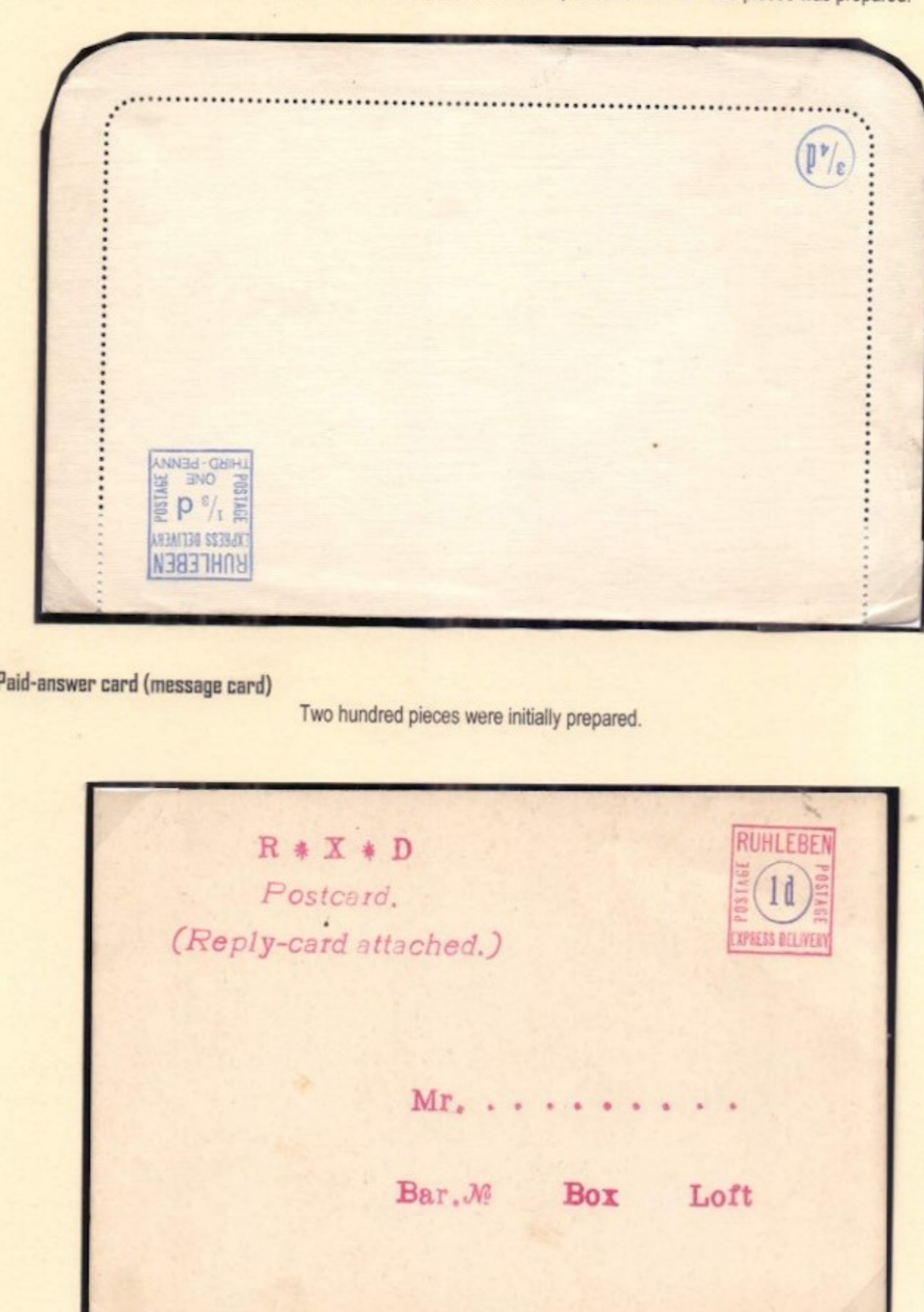
Envelopes Envelopes were sold in small (120x95) and large (152x124) sizes; a total of 1500 envelopes were prepared.



"Official" Ruhleben large envelope. Mail from Jack Murray, the Ruhleben Boxing Sport Organizer to the Sporting Chronicle in Manchester dated July 24th, 1915. No doubt the contents were a report of the latest tournament.

4. Postal stationery

Letter card Letter cards were sold in small (128.80mm) and large (160.96mm) sizes. A total of 1500 pieces was prepared.



Paid-answer card (message card) Two hundred pieces were initially prepared.

Reply paid double card (1d. + 1/3d.) - expensed and certificated.

5. Censor markings

An infrequently used censor stamp was a purple double ringed oval (34mm x 20mm) enclosing "Engländerlager/Geprüft / Ruhleben". It was used on incoming and outgoing mail.



As well as envelopes for outgoing mail, there was matching notepaper. It is believed that only one sheet folded to make four pages was allowed by the German Authorities per envelope. Only very few sheets still exist and even less sheets with their original envelope.

6. After the RXD

The normal outgoing mail the Camp Management Council funded, and had printed postcards and envelopes, which conformed to the German Authorities required wording of "Prisoner of war mail" and "Englishmen's Camp" in German. Mail passed through the camp military censor and routed for onward transmission through neutral countries to London. There, as Ruhleben mail was not from a prisoner of war it did not receive postage free status and a meter marking was applied. This postage was paid for by charitable societies regardless of final destination.



6. After the RXD



The Christmas card issued for 1916 reflected the longing for a return home felt by the internees while the 1916 Christmas and New Year card held a slightly more optimistic outlook for the future.



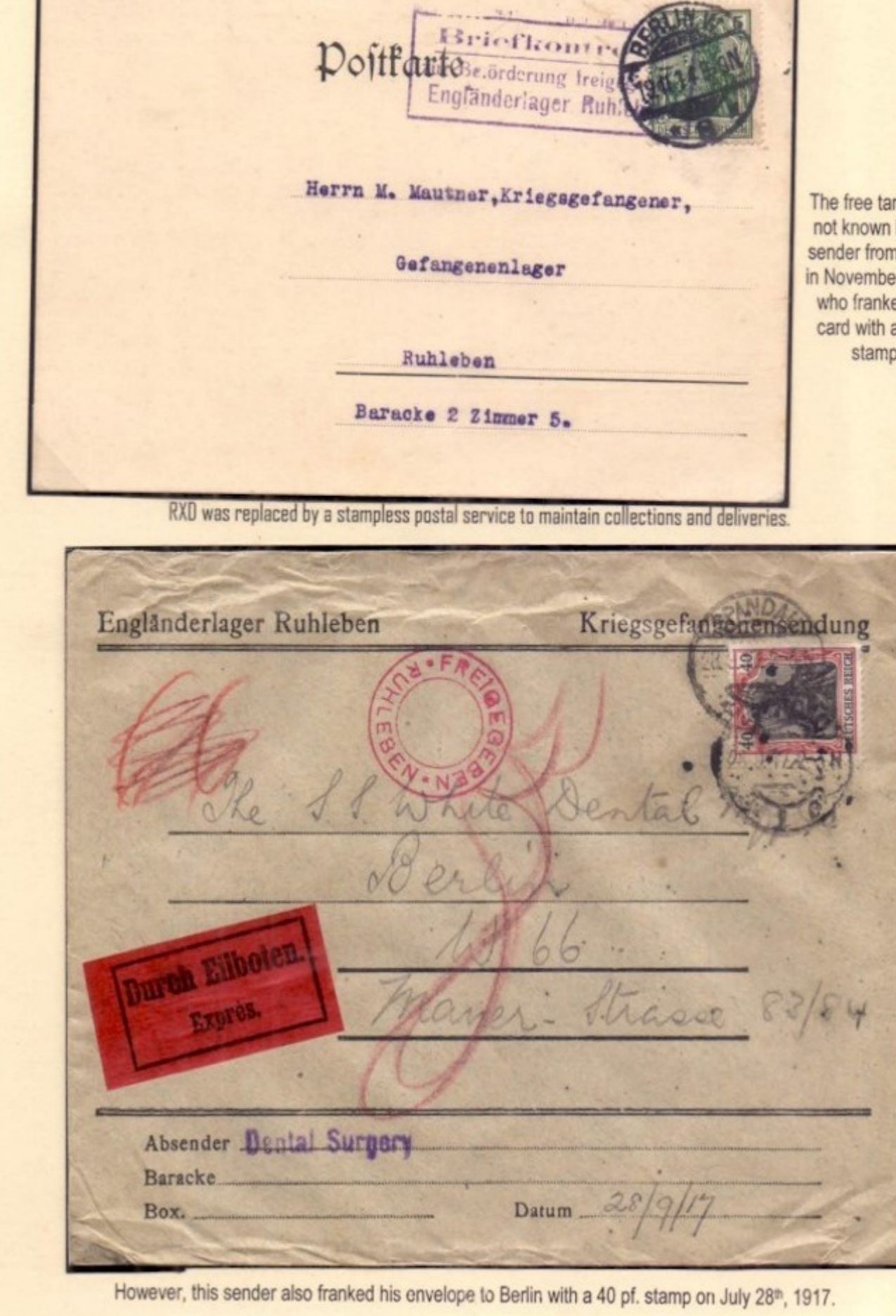
6. After the RXD

The Christmas cards for 1917 showed that time was really dragging, however, the outlook for 1918 was full of optimism for an early release from captivity.



7. Mail to Ruhleben

Items addressed to internees at Ruhleben was carried free of charge by the Reichpost if it was marked as prisoner-of-war mail (Kriegsgefangenen-Sendung).



The free tariff was not known by the sender from Berlin in November, 1914 who franked the card with a 5 pf. stamp.

However, this sender also franked the envelope to Berlin with a 40 pf. stamp on July 28th, 1917.

The Ruhleben internment camp post

In 1914, Ruhleben was a small village about 4Km West of Berlin boundary on the way to the suburb of Spandau. It was the site of a race course some 20 acres in extent which had been rented by the German Government to house farm workers working on nearby country estates. At the outbreak of War, the camp was first used to house 1200 Russian labourers, however, by the end of 1914 was in use as an internment camp for British nationals. By March 1915 there were some 4400 internees.

As a civilian internment camp, funding was provided by Britain and the inmates were mainly dependent on self administration to run all internal activities. Ruhleben was not a military POW camp, but a civilian internment camp and as such, the British Government were responsible for funding British internees costs. The military administration refused to deliver incoming mail to the barracks and the internees resented the long walks to post and receive mail.

In Spring 1915, the Postmaster Albert Kamps was given permission for a Camp Postal Service - Ruhleben Express Delivery (RXD) - which commenced services on July 18th, 1915. As well as providing a collection and delivery service for external mail and parcels, an internal camp service was established which was immediately popular with the inmates. For the internal services Kamps issued both stamps and postal stationery. Whether or not Mr. Kamps was a philatelist is unknown.

In October, 1915 the Berliner Briefmarken-Zeitung carried an article about the RXD which caused an immediate outcry as it contravened the German Postal Monopoly Laws of 1899 and worse, it was the "enemy" that were doing it!

The RXD operated for 8 ½ months from July 18th, 1915 to April, 3rd, 1916. The founder Kamps provided for mail boxes and postmen in each barrack. His brother was in charge of stamps and postal stationery production. The postmen collected and delivered RXD mail 8 times a day. They also handled outgoing and incoming mail for the German Censor Office. Services included regular, registered, special delivery and parcel post mail.

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2. Stamps

2.1. **The provisional issue.** The initial plans called for a 1/3 d. stamp, value compared to the 3 pf. rate for printed matter prevalent in Germany at the time. Using pre-gummed paper, a perforator, rubber stamp dies and inks obtained from a Berlin firm, the stamps were prepared in sheets of 3 rows of 5 stamps each. Some 3,000 copies were prepared.



Twenty sheets of 10 (2x5) were overprinted "DUE" diagonally for unpaid messages so that the recipient could pay 1/3 d.

2.2. **Definitive issue.** Since even the surcharged values were too limiting in their scope, a definitive issue was designed and prepared in sheets of 10 (2x5). It was put on sale of October 23rd, 1915 and consisted of 9 values.



Besides the "DUE" overprint, an official stamp was also produced for use of Mr. Kamps in corresponding with his agents throughout the camp and with the organizations and publications that used RXD services. "On Service" overprint was applied.



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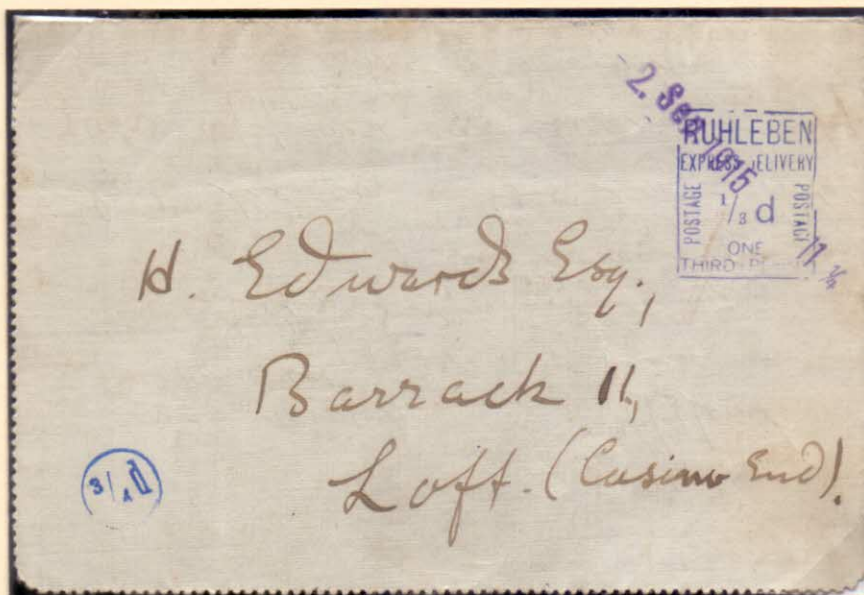
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It was quite fancy: "1914 One Year's 1915/CAPTIVITY/Nov. 6th, 7:45 a.m."



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Postcards

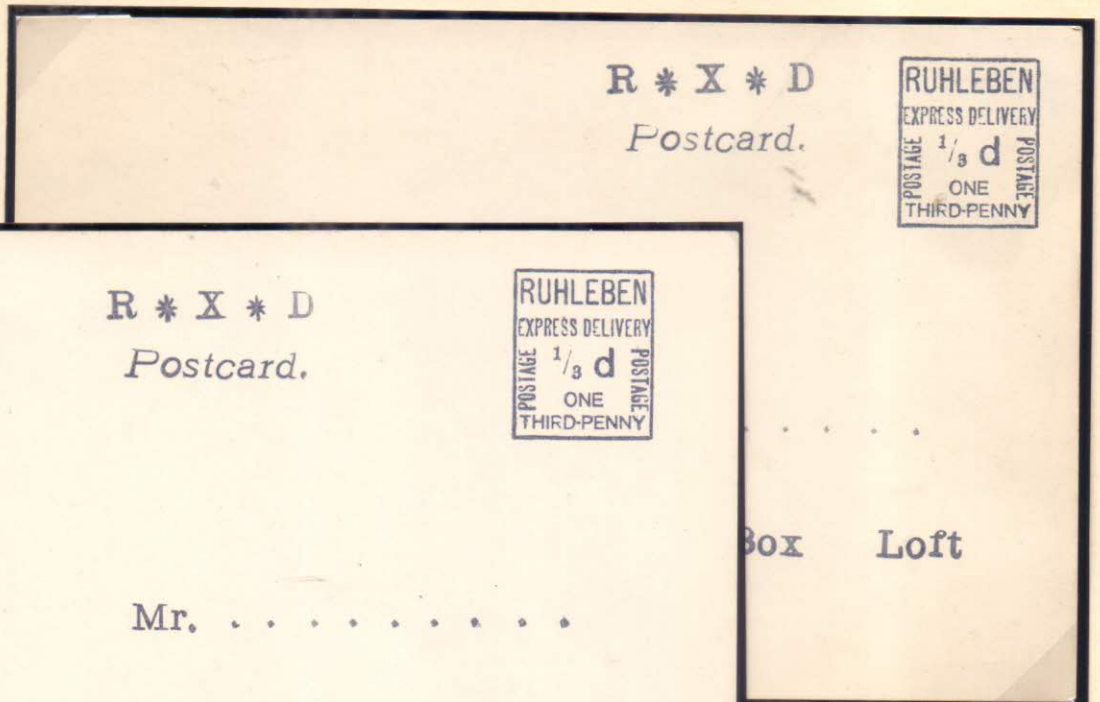
For the first issue of postal stationery cards a small stock of German postcards was obtained and adapted.



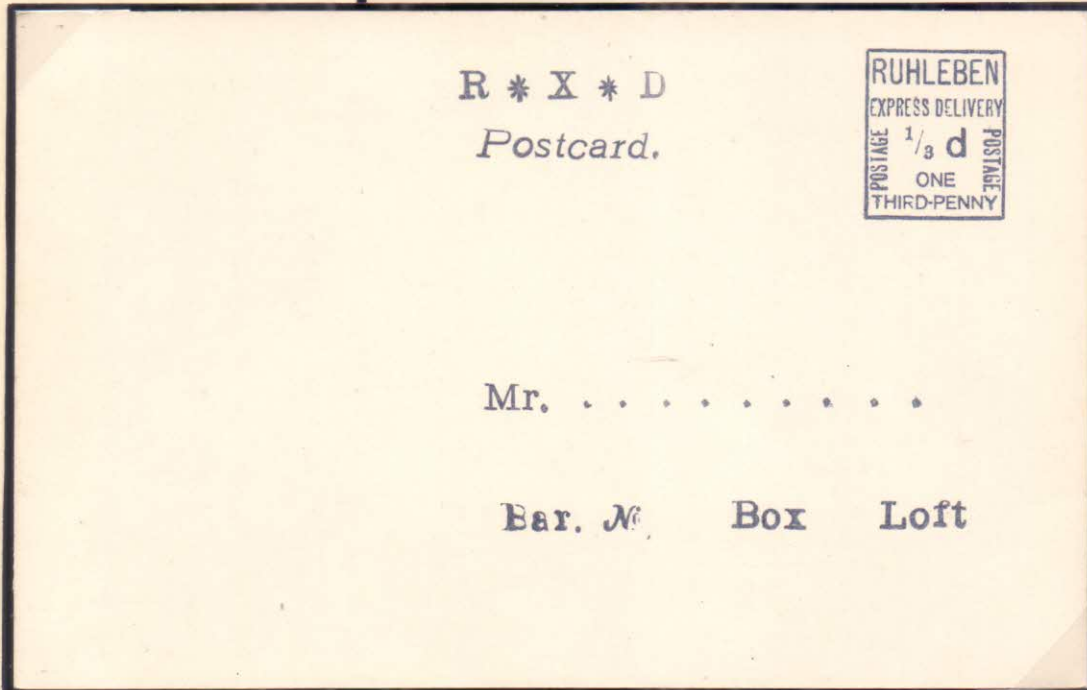
Handstamp overprint

Produced in relatively small batches the postcards have a variety of minor differences in layout.

Space between R*X*D and stamp imprint 11mm



Box Loft



Space between R*X*D and stamp imprint 27mm

4. Postal stationery

Postcards

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Y.M.C.A. Building.

As one of the voluntary workers enrolled on our list you are requested to report for duty ON THE SPOT at . . . sharp on

Knock off at

If prevented from attending, please send a substitute or notify me AT ONCE.

g Secy.

Dear Sir. There will be a meeting of the Science Circle at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, when a paper will be read dy

Mr., entitled

Please try to come. Yours faithfully

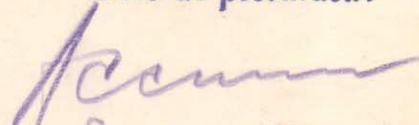
J. Chadwick, Hon Sec

Special Order Dept.

Bond St. W.

Date as postmark.

The



ordered for you has arrived. Please call for same as soon as possible.

Please note No

Business hours: 9 15 - 11 15 a.m.

3 30 - 4 30 p.m.

If not called for within 24 hrs from Date of Postmark will be sold.

4. Postal stationery

Postcards

Some postcards were printed in Berlin for correspondence outside the camp with "Postkarte" in upper left of card and "Kriegsgefangenen/sendung/Engländerlager Ruhleben" in upper right.



Christmas 1915 was for most internees the first time they had been forcibly separated from their families. To boost morale, the Camp Management Council approved the printing of a seasonal greetings card with payment from central funds. These cards were then available to internees free of charge.

4. Postal stationery

Postcards

There were many Jews from the Berlin business community amongst the British internees. For the Jewish New Year 5675 on September 9th, 1915, the Camp Management Council authorized the printing of two greeting cards (in English and German) for internees to send them to family and friends.



Back of the 1915 Jewish New Year card -- German text

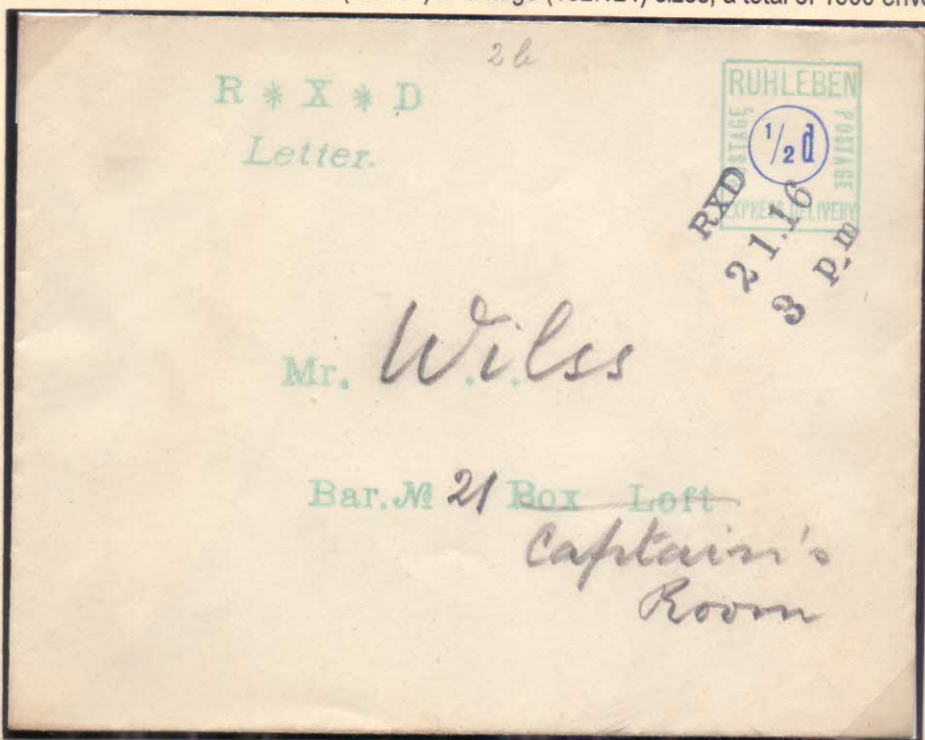


The same in English.

4. Postal stationery

Envelopes

Envelopes were sold in small (120:95) and large (152:124) sizes; a total of 1500 envelopes were prepared.



Small size envelope

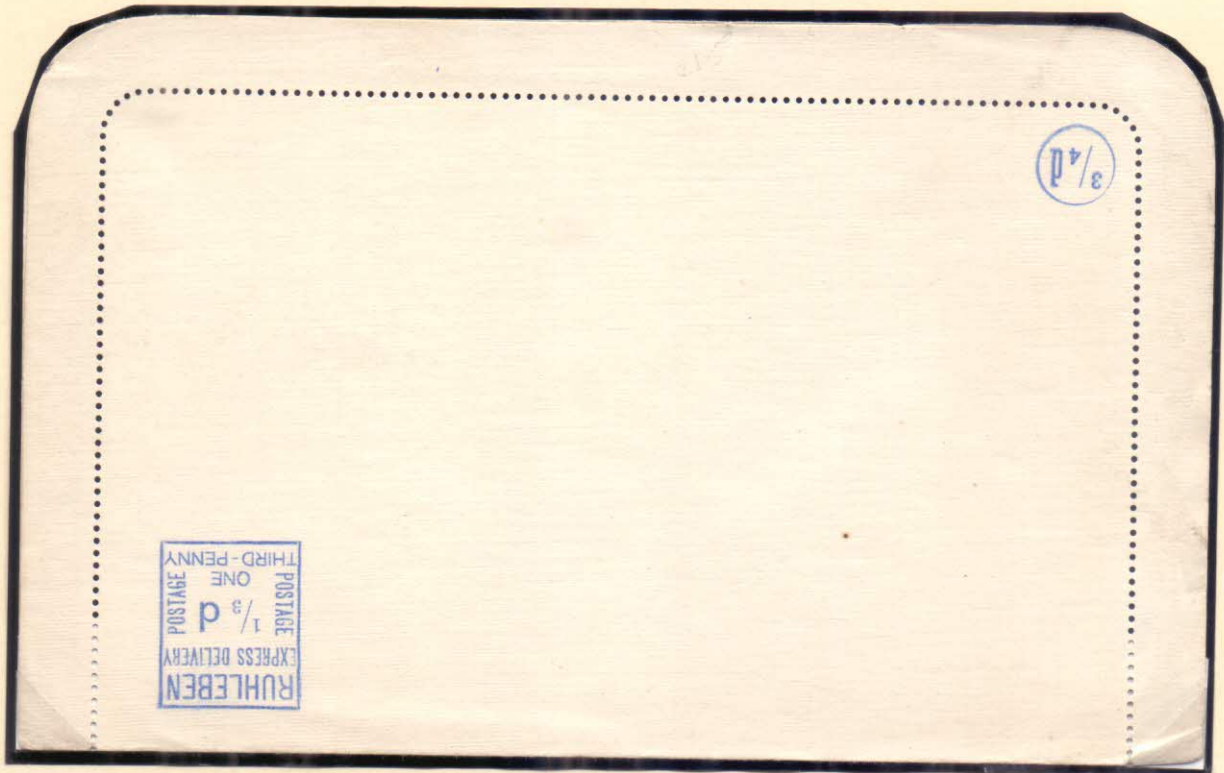


"Official" Ruhleben large envelope: Mail from Jack Murray, the Ruhleben Boxing Sport Organiser to the Sporting Chronicle in Manchester dated July 24th, 1915. No doubt the contents were a report of the latest tournament.

4. Postal stationery

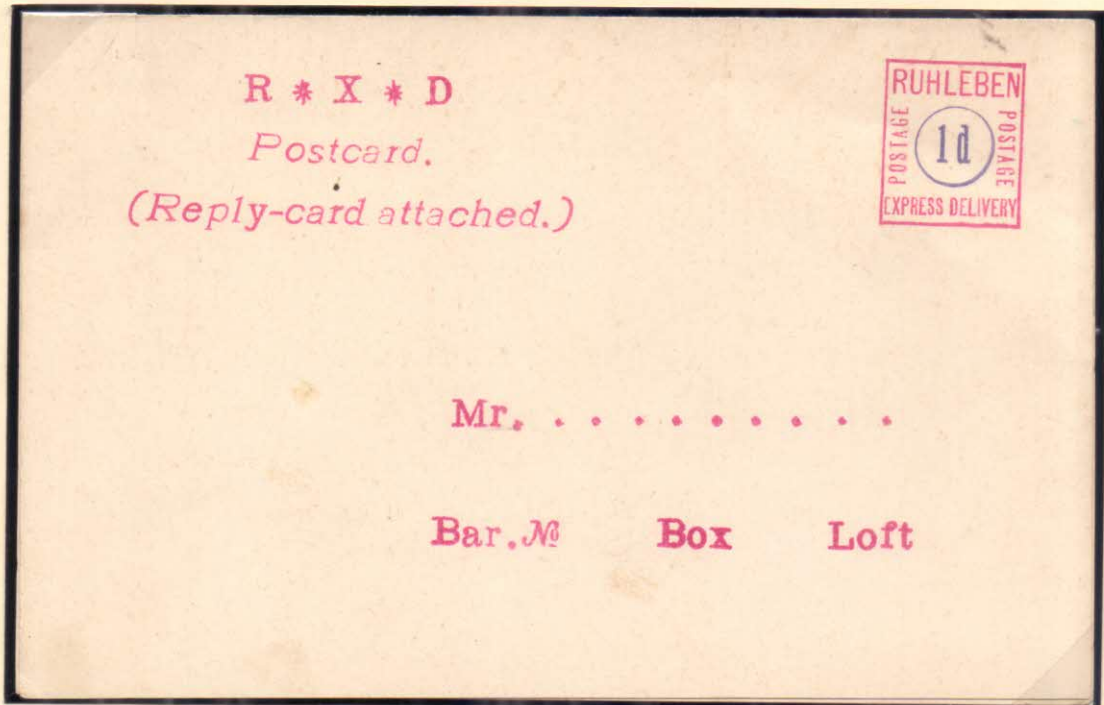
Letter card

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Paid-answer card (message card)

Two hundred pieces were initially prepared.



Reply paid double card (1d. + 1/3d.) – expertised and certificated.

5. Censor markings

An infrequently used censor stamp was a purple double ringed oval (34mm x 20mm) enclosing "Engländerlager/Geprüft / Ruhleben". It was used on incoming and outgoing mail.

Absender: Engländerlager Ruhleben

Theodor Andly

Baracke I. H.

Box 5

20 November 1916

An - To M *Frau Theodor Andly* Ort Cöln - Nippes

Mauernheimerstraße No. 78 I

GELD IST AN INTERNIERTE PERSÖNLICH ZU SENDEN } MONEY TO BE SENT BY POSTAL ORDER
 UND ZWAR AUSSCHLISSLICH DURCH POSTANWEISUNG. } ONLY, NOT PER REGISTERED LETTER. -
 - AUF DER RÜCKSEITE DES ABSCHNITTES IST DER } ADDRESSEE'S FULL NAME MUST BE WRIT-
 VOLLE NAME DES EMPFÄNGERS ZU WIEDERHOLEN. } TEN LEGIBLY ON COUNTERFOIL SLIP.

*Liebes Annschen! Ich empfang Deine Kart. N^o 204, herzlich Dank.
 Anbrennen darauf jedenfalls wegen des Anstands etwas neu zu hören, aber
 leider muss ich Dir mittheilen, das wir hier alle noch nichts wissen aber auch
 garnichts! Viel
 werden mit jed
 diesem grüßes
 das der Anstan
 Grunde, gibt es die
 fort andugh, la
 Aber es dauert un
 ist geradezu ein
 ein einiger Ostwin
 recht warm, wenig
 einen Werth! -
 auf morgen hoffen
 Sauer, Walle,*

As well as envelopes for outgoing mail, there was matching notepaper. It is believed that only one sheet folded to make four pages was allowed by the German Authorities per envelope.

Only very few sheets still exist and even less sheets with their original envelope

Engländerlager Ruhleben **Kriegsgefangenensendung**

Frau Theodor Andly

ENGLENDERLAGER GEPRÜFT RUHLEBEN

Cöln - Nippes

78 Mauernheimerstraße II

23.11.16 8

RUHLEBEN

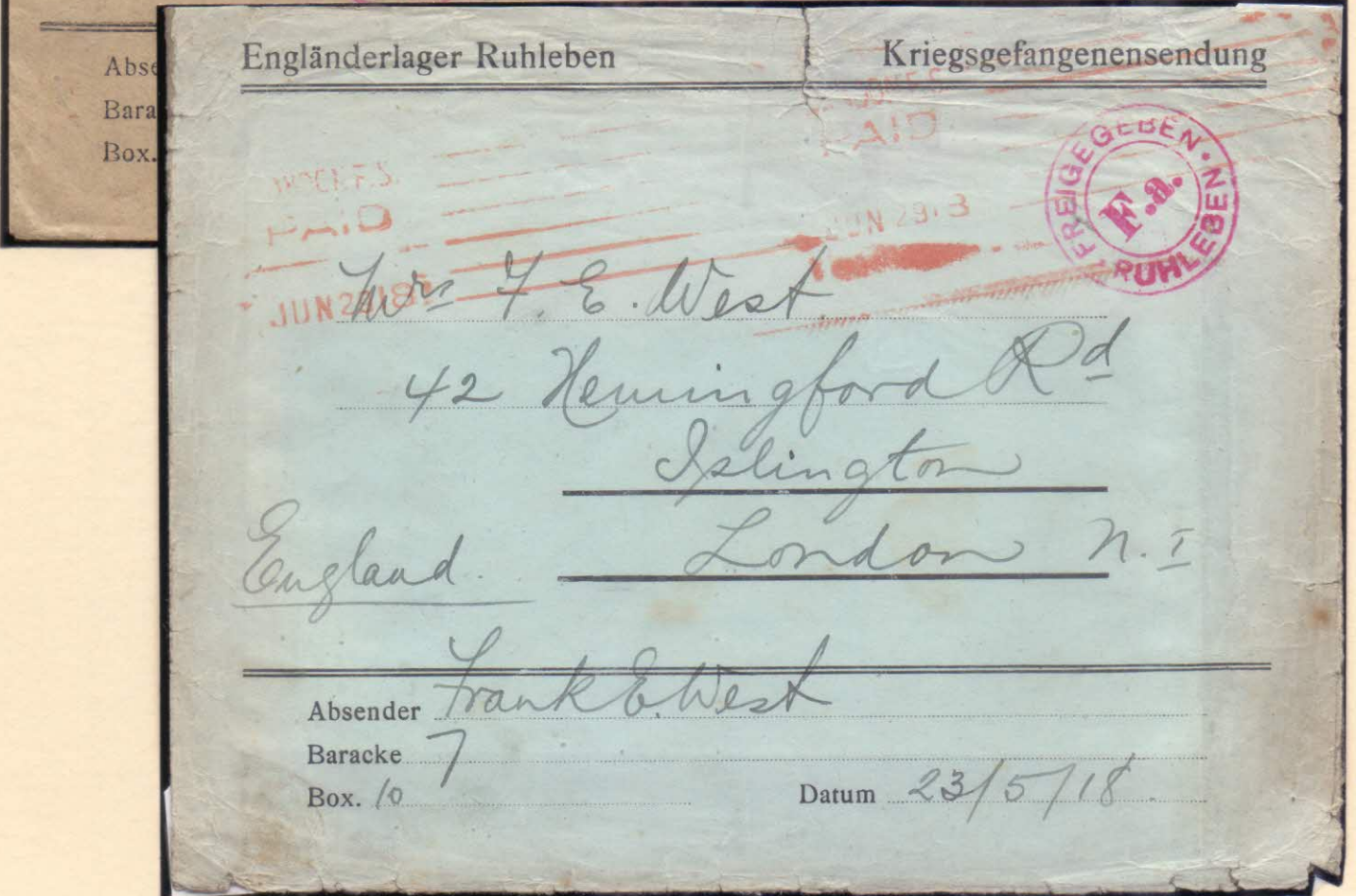
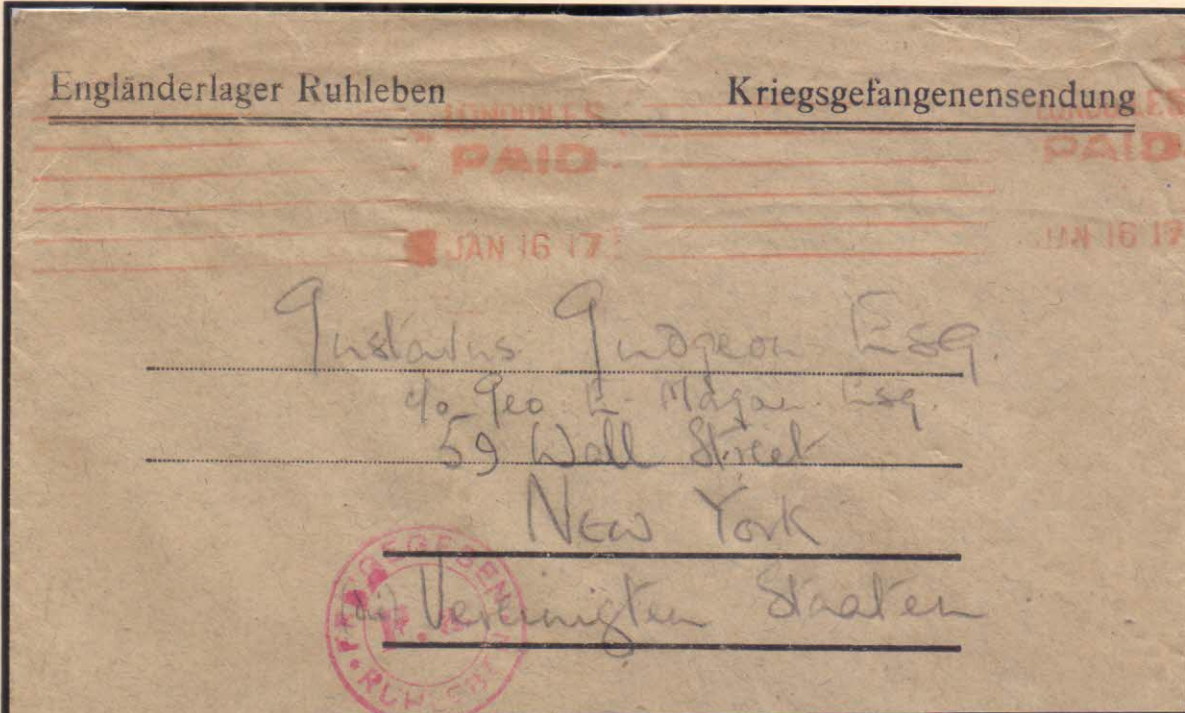
Absender *Theodor Andly*

Baracke I. H.

Box 5 Datum 21 Nov. 1916

6. After the RXD

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The free tariff was not known by the sender from Berlin in November, 1914 who franked the card with a 5 pf. stamp.

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