

# THE UK INTERNS HER RESIDENT REFUGEES FLEEING THE THIRD REICH (1940-1942)

**Purpose and Scope:** This exhibit is created to show internee mail of prewar UK-resident refugees from the Third Reich, 90 percent of whom were Jews, during their internment in England and the Isle of Man, as well as Canada, and Australia. It includes examples of domestic and international mail in these four locations. Highlighted is censorship resulting in delayed and altered correspondence, internment camp markings, and frankings relevant to internee mail. Primary organization of the exhibit is by country, presented in the order internees first entered their jurisdiction. Sub-sections provide examples of mail involving 24 of the 27 total camps known.

**Background:** Refugees from Germany and German occupied territories were given resident status in the UK until the beginning of World War II, with preference to those with desirable occupational skills. Beginning in Spring 1940 and with the threat of a German invasion imminent, 27,000 of the 55,000 resident refugees were rounded up and eventually interned, in England/British Isles (19,000), Canada (5,500), and Australia (2,450).

Following arrest, individuals spent weeks or months in transit camps in England before their transfer to long term camps on the Isle of Man. Large groups then boarded ships destined for long term camps in the dominions. Soon determined to pose little threat to the homeland, the UK ordered most internees released by 1942. Many returned to the UK to rejoin families and resume lives in freedom. Others entered military service against the Third Reich.

**Significance:** This exhibit highlights a relatively unknown aspect of civilian internee postal history in World War II, illustrating a single internment program spanning four jurisdictions. Archival and personal research have been incorporated into the presentation.

**Key Items:** Items of special philatelic or historical note are bordered and annotated in bold.

## Plan

### 1.0 Prologue

- 1.1 Kitchener Refugee Camp
- 1.2 Children's Transport

### 2.0 England/British Isles

- 2.1 Transit Camps
- 2.2 Isle of Man Internment Camps

### 3.0 Canada

- 3.1 Transport to Canada
- 3.2 Undercover Mail
- 3.3 Internment Camps
- 3.4 Refugee Camps

### 4.0 Australia

- 4.1 Transport to Australia
- 4.2 Internment Camps

### 5.0 Release and Return

- 5.1 Release from Internment
- 5.2 Return to England