

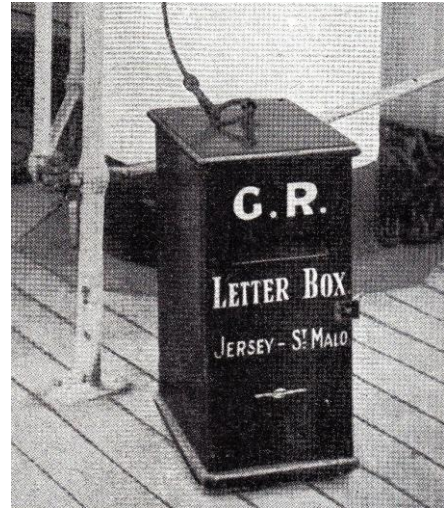
# MOVEABLE BOX MAIL UNDER THE ANGLO-FRENCH POSTAL CONVENTIONS

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Despite the countries' often bitter political differences in the early 1800s, the British and French postal authorities needed each other. France needed the principal British ports as outlets to the Americas, while Britain was anxious to avail herself of the routes through the French ports for mail to the east.

Several postal treaties and conventions were drawn up between the two countries in the Victorian era, the two major ones being those of 1843 and 1857, *"to regulate..the communications by Post between their respective dominions upon a more liberal and advantageous basis.."*

This three-frame marcophily exhibit examines one of the key provisions of those conventions - that of Moveable Box mail, using boxes such as that seen here, which were placed on board private steamers for the posting of letters between the closing of the post office and the departure of the vessel - the aim being to extend the services provided by the official packets. The exhibit covers the introduction of the service in 1843, its various uses, and its ultimate demise at the beginning of WWII. It shows the various MB marks and takes each of the major ports listed in the conventions, following through the use of Moveable Box mail at each of them, focusing on the relevant postmarks and cancellations, while covering rates and routes as appropriate.



Although Moveable Box mail was principally a feature of the French and British mainland ports, it found particularly important application on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, where the British had an urgent interest in improving the postal service. Some Mediterranean ports were also included in the conventions, thus the exhibit also covers the Marseille-Malta- Alexandria route, where certain ships serving those ports were equipped with Moveable Boxes. Ports where the spirit rather than the letter of the conventions was being followed are included.

Captains of vessels carrying Moveable Boxes received payment for the service. Moveable Box mail was generally cancelled 'on the other side' – giving rise to British stamps being cancelled in French ports – and vice versa. It should be stressed that all surviving Moveable Box items are extremely scarce, while many of the items shown are rare. Covers – especially French ones with British marks, are particularly scarce. The rarest items in the exhibit are highlighted in maroon.

The postal rates are given in grey boxes.

## PLAN OF THE EXHIBIT

- 1: Purpose and Scope
- 2-4: Introduction of the Moveable Box
- 5-21: French Ports receiving Channel Islands Mail (*St Malo, Granville, Carteret, Port Bail*)
- 22-26: French Ports receiving other British Mail (*Le Havre, Boulogne, Bordeaux, Cherbourg, Dunkirk*)
- 27-29: Channel Islands ports receiving French Mail (*Jersey, Guernsey*)
- 30-42: Mainland British Ports receiving Channel Islands and French Mail (*London, Southampton, Folkestone, Newhaven*)
- 43-45: The Mediterranean (*Marseille, Malta, Alexandria.*)
- 46-48: WWI and the inter-war years – the demise of the Moveable Box.