

# COMMUNICATION WITH PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIANS INTERNED IN EUROPE. (Leaflet P 2280E)

## For communication with prisoners of war and internees in Japan and Japanese occupied territories see separate Post Office leaflet P2327B

1. This leaflet applies primarily to the writing of letters and despatch of parcels from the United Kingdom to British (including Dominion, Indian and Colonial) prisoners of war interned in enemy and neutral countries, and in it the term "Prisoners of War" includes all interned persons, naval, military, air force, merchant navy and civilian.

As regards Telegrams see Section 8.

The method of communicating with Allied prisoners of war is referred to in Section 7.

### LETTER POST

#### 2. Letters to Germany, Italy and Enemy-occupied Territories.

(i) **Air Mail.** (a) An air letter-card, specially designed for writing to prisoners of war, is on sale at most Post Offices, and costs 3d. By using this card relatives give the prisoner the best possible chance of receiving news from home quickly.

No enclosure may be sent.

The air letter form, price 6d., sold at Post Offices for writing to members of H.M. Forces serving in certain theatres of war, must not be used for writing to prisoners of war.

(b) Letters written on private stationery may be prepaid for air transmission at the rate of 5d. for the first ounce and 3d. for each additional ounce (plain postcards 2½d.). They should bear a blue air mail label in the top left-hand corner under the superscription "Prisoner of War Post," etc. (see Section 5).

(c) Air mail correspondence under (a) and (b) above, which is addressed to Germany and Italy, is sent all the way by air.

(ii) **Surface Mail.** Letters and postcards sent by ordinary post are post free, but they usually take several weeks longer to reach Germany and Italy than letters sent by air mail.

#### 3. Advice as to who should write, how to post, how often to write and what not to say.

Correspondence whether sent by air or surface mail should be posted in the ordinary way and should not be sent to the British Red Cross to be forwarded. (Service personnel and members of the Merchant Navy should adhere strictly to any special instructions they may have regarding the despatch of correspondence.) Letters cannot be registered or insured.

Only relatives and close friends should write. Letters should be clearly written or typed and should not exceed two sides of a normal-sized sheet of notepaper. Only plain paper or paper with horizontal lines may be used (but printed addresses are allowed); letters must not be written

on paper ruled with squares or on airgraph forms. In addition to being reasonably short and clearly written, letters should not be sent by the same family more than once a week. These restrictions are in the interests of the prisoners, as delays in the censorship abroad are likely to be increased if letters are either too long or too numerous. Strangers should appreciate that by writing to prisoners of war they may be instrumental in causing delay to letters from relatives and friends, and should accordingly refrain from writing.

Letters and postcards must deal only with purely personal matters. No information of any kind which might be of use to the enemy should be given. No references to naval, military, aerial, economic or political matters are allowed. No reference may be made to the movements of any member of H.M. Forces or the Merchant Navy, nor may the name or movements of any warship or merchant ship be mentioned.

4. **Enclosures.** Any enclosure in a letter may cause delay. Snapshots or unmounted photographs of a personal nature are, however, allowed and should have the name and address of the sender and the name and address of the prisoner written on the back. Tin type photographs are not allowed. Bank pass-books or detailed statements of accounts and cheque books may not be sent, but a note of current balance and particulars of Pay and Allowances credited may be sent. Forms for Powers of Attorney may also be sent.

International reply coupons must not be sent: their use for the prepayment of air mail letters is unnecessary and is not permitted.

Picture postcards, birthday or greeting cards bearing pictorial illustrations and pictorial matter of any kind are forbidden. The letter post may be used only for letters and postcards, and on no account should it be used for small articles, such as packets of razor blades, chocolate, etc.; such items may only be sent in the next-of-kin parcel (see Sections 9-14).

5. **Method of address.** (i) It is essential that the details of the address should be correct; otherwise the letter may not reach its destination. The latest address supplied by the prisoner should be used. It must be typed or clearly written in ink both on the envelope and on the letter itself.

It is forbidden to use adhesive address labels, previously-used envelopes, economy labels, or "made up" envelopes (that is, envelopes made from paper printed for other purposes).

The method of address for a prisoner of war in Germany, whose Camp address and prisoner of war number are known is shown in the specimen overleaf.



The details underlined in this specimen are merely examples: the appropriate details furnished in letters sent by the prisoner must be inserted in the address of letters sent to him:—

Leave half-inch margin here for Censor's label.	<u>Hants.</u> <u>Andover,</u> <u>33, Maple Road,</u> From Mrs. J. Smith.	(Stamp required here if sent by Air Mail.)
	Prisoner of War Post. *KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST.	
	<u>Stoker J. SMITH,</u> or <u>Corporal T. ATKINS,</u> or <u>Leading Aircraftman K. JONES,</u> British Prisoner of War No. <u>3306.</u> <u>Stalag XXA (2a),</u> Germany.	

\*Blue air mail label required here if letter is sent by Air Mail.

It is important to remember that:—

(a) the words "Prisoner of War Post" should be written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope (but leave a half-inch margin all the way down the left-hand side for the Censor's label). If for a prisoner in German hands the equivalent word "Kriegsgefangenenpost" should be added, and if for a prisoner in Italian or French hands the words "Service des prisonniers de guerre";

(b) the address should show the addressee's rank (unless he is an interned civilian) and the prisoner's name should be written clearly: initials first, followed by the surname in Block Capitals;

(c) prisoners in German hands are given a prisoner of war number. This number is a very important part of the prisoner's address and must be quoted correctly: it must not be confused with the regimental or service number given him by the British authorities. Only if the prisoner of war number is unknown should the British Service number be inserted before the rank and name of the prisoner;

(d) prisoners in Italian and French hands are not usually given a prisoner of war number. The British regimental or service number must, therefore, be quoted for these prisoners;

(e) the words "British Prisoner of War" are important. On letters to a British civilian interned in Germany or Italy or any enemy-occupied territory in Europe, the words "British Interned Civilian" should be used instead;

(f) the Camp address should be quoted in full. For prisoners in German hands the Camp name and number are shown after the words "Lager—Bezeichnung" on letters and postcards sent by the prisoner. Any additional lettering or numbers usually indicate the details of a working Camp and it is important that they should not be omitted. Place names, both in the case of Germany and Italy, should be included in the address only when they form part of the address given by prisoners—their incorrect inclusion may result in non-delivery;

(g) no mention should be made either in the address or in the letter of the unit or regiment in which the prisoner of war was serving at the time of his capture;

(h) the name and address of the sender should be written on the back of the envelope. If the sender is in H.M. Forces he must on no account give the address of his unit; instead, he should state the address of a relative or friend in this country who would be willing to send on any reply; members of the Merchant Navy may give the address of a Sailors' Home, or a Merchant Navy Club or Hostel—a billet address must not be used. Members of Allied Forces when in doubt should apply to their Headquarters for instructions;

(i) except as provided in (ii) below, no attempt should be made to communicate with prisoners of war through intermediaries in neutral countries.

(ii) To prisoners who are known to be in German or French hands but whose Camp address has not yet been announced. Relatives may send letters through the International Red Cross Committee, Geneva, addressed as follows:—

Regtl. No..... Rank..... Name.....  
(in block letters)

British Prisoner of War,  
 P/W Number (if known),  
 C/o Agence Centrale des prisonniers de guerre,  
 Comité International de la Croix-Rouge,  
 Geneva,  
 Switzerland.

(iii) To prisoners who are known to be in Italian hands but whose Camp address has not yet been announced. Relatives may send letters through the Italian Red Cross, addressed as follows:—

Regtl. No..... Rank..... Name.....  
(in block letters)

British Prisoner of War,  
 C/o Croce Rossa Italiana,  
 Via Puglie, 6,  
 Rome.

(iv) The addresses in (ii) and (iii) above should only be used until the Camp address is known: after that the Camp address should be used as shown in (i).

Air mail is available to prisoners of war whose camp address is not known. The air letter card may also be used and the printed address panel should be amended to conform with the instructions in (ii) and (iii).

**6. Letters to prisoners of war in neutral countries.** Letters and postcards may be sent post free by ordinary surface mail. They should be addressed as indicated in Section 5 (i) with the words "Prisoner of War Post" and the French equivalent "Service des prisonniers de guerre" in the top left-hand corner of the envelope: the address given by the internee should be quoted in full.

Letters may be sent by air mail where an air mail service is available to the country concerned, and at the normal charges. Particulars can be obtained from any Post Office.

Air letter cards (see Section 2 (i) (a)) may be used for writing to prisoners of war in Switzerland, Spain, Portugal and Sweden.

**7. Letters to Allied prisoners of war.** Letters and postcards may be sent to Allied prisoners of war in Italian or French hands or in neutral countries in the same way as they are sent to British prisoners of war (see Sections 2-6). Letters and postcards may also be sent in that way to American prisoners of war in German hands; but persons wishing to reply to letters received from Allied (other than American) prisoners of war in German hands should use the letter card or postcard attached to the prisoner's letter.



## TELEGRAMS AND INQUIRIES.

8. Telegrams making inquiry regarding the welfare and whereabouts of prisoners of war cannot be sent to countries abroad and there is no telegraph service to prisoners of war. In cases of grave emergency, however, it is sometimes possible for the British Red Cross to send a message to the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva, who pass it on to the prisoner concerned. All inquiries regarding the despatch of messages in such cases and regarding the welfare and whereabouts of prisoners, should be addressed to the Prisoners of War Department, War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John, St. James's Palace, London, S.W.1.

## PARCEL POST.

**Parcels or packets sent to prisoners of war otherwise than in accordance with this leaflet will be returned to the sender. Parcels cannot be sent until a Camp or Hospital address is known.**

### NEXT-OF-KIN PARCELS FOR PRISONERS IN GERMAN, ITALIAN AND FRENCH\* HANDS.

9. (i) As explained in Section 19, supplies of food and other necessaries are sent regularly to British prisoners of war by the British Red Cross. In addition once every three months, the next-of-kin of a prisoner in German, Italian or French\* hands is allowed to send him a "next-of-kin" parcel. The parcel may not weigh more than 10 lb. and may be posted without charge at any Post Office, provided it bears a special tie-on label issued by the British Red Cross.

One of these labels, bearing the address of the packing centre through which the parcel is to be forwarded, is sent each quarter to the next-of-kin, together with a supply of clothing coupons, three copies of a form on which the contents of the parcel must be entered (the three copies of this form, duly completed, must be included in the parcel), and full instructions about the sending of the parcel. Unless the parcel bears the special label, it will not be accepted at a post office.

(ii) The parcel should be packed as for the inland post, and the sender should fill in particulars of the prisoner's Camp address as used for letters (see Section 5 (i)) on the tie-on label, and after tying the label on should copy the full address, including that of the packing centre, in ink on the cover of the parcel.

The name and the address of the sender should also be written in ink on the cover of the parcel, unless the sender is serving in H.M. Forces, when he must not write his own address, but must give the address of a relative or friend to whom any acknowledgment from the prisoner may be sent.

If the sender requires an acknowledgment of the receipt of the parcel by the Red Cross, a stamped addressed postcard should be enclosed. An acknowledgment card for return by the prisoner is enclosed in each parcel.

\* For the present parcels cannot be sent to civilians interned in camps in the former Unoccupied Zone of France.

No letter or message to the prisoner may be included in a next-of-kin parcel.

**10. Permissible Articles.** These are liable to change from time to time and next-of-kin should consult the detailed instructions sent to them each quarter with the special label.

Among the articles which may be sent in a next-of-kin parcel for despatch by the British Red Cross, as described in Section 9, are the following :—

Attaché cases.

Blankets, boots, boot laces. Brilliantine in tins. Brushes of all kinds.

Button-cleaning outfits (solid, not liquid polish).

Chewing gum. Chocolate in solid slabs (no filling).

Cigarette filter tips and cigarette rolling machine but not cigarettes or cigarette papers.

Clothing, including underwear, civilian or Service shirts, any footwear, knitted comforts or uniform. (The Service Departments will not supply uniforms, as sufficient for all prisoners are sent in bulk through the British Red Cross.) See Section 11 for prohibited articles.

Coloured silks and cottons, plain linen or canvas for embroidering.

Dentifrice (solid or powder but not in tubes).

Frames with talc or unbreakable glass.

Hussifs containing usual items.

Kit bags (without locks or metal eye holes). Knitting needles and wool (in skeins, if possible).

Pencils. Pipes and tobacco pouches.

Safety razors and blades. Screw tin openers.

Shoe polish (solid, not liquid or in tubes). Shoe leather and nails for mending ; metal studs for toes and heels.

Small musical instruments.

Soap of all kinds (except soap flakes and soap powder).

Towels, face cloths and sponges.

**11. Prohibited Articles.** The following articles may not be enclosed in next-of-kin parcels :—

- (i) Written communications (letters must be sent separately).
- (ii) Printed matter.
- (iii) Pictorial illustrations and photographs.
- (iv) Money, stamps, stationery and playing cards.
- (v) Articles in glass containers, tubes, tins and other receptacles which are breakable or which cannot easily be opened for inspection.
- (vi) Candles, spirits or solidified spirit for cooking stoves, matches or any other inflammable material.
- (vii) Photographic apparatus, field glasses, sextants, compasses, electric torches and other instruments of use for naval and military purposes.
- (viii) Haversacks.



- (ix) Complete suits, coloured or grey flannel trousers, corduroy trousers; black or coloured shirts normally worn without coats; sports coats or blazers, mackintoshes, leather waistcoats, or any kind of overcoat. (These items of clothing with the exception of black shirts, may, however, be sent to civilians.)
- (x) Food (except solid chocolate) (see Section 10).
- (xi) Tobacco, cigarettes (see Sections 17 and 19).
- (xii) Medical comforts. These include medicines of all kinds, drugs and bandages.
- (xiii) Soap flakes, soap powder and toilet paper.
- (xiv) Watches, nail files, scissors (except small or nail scissors), glass mirrors, knives and tools.
- (xv) Pen nibs and fountain pens.

**12. Return of prohibited articles.** The parcel will be repacked by the Red Cross under censorship supervision and any prohibited articles will be withdrawn and returned to the sender.

### PARCELS FOR PRISONERS OF WAR IN NEUTRAL COUNTRIES.

**13.** Parcels for prisoners of war in neutral countries must be forwarded through the British Red Cross. They should be addressed in the same way as letters (see Section 5 (i)), with the addition of the following:—

C/o Next-of-Kin Parcels Packing Centre,  
British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John,  
14, Finsbury Circus,  
London, E.C.2.

No postage is required. No special label is necessary, but if clothing coupons are required they will be supplied, with a special label, under the same regulations as those for prisoners in enemy hands, on application being made to the Prisoners of War Department, British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John, St. James's Palace, London, S.W.1.

**14.** Parcels when posted by next-of-kin must not weigh more than 10 lb. and should be packed as for the inland post. A list of the contents should be put inside. None of the articles numbered (i) to (x) in Section 11 may be sent. The name and address of the sender must be written on the cover as described in Section 9 in order that any prohibited article may be returned.

### PARCELS AND PACKETS SENT BY PERMIT HOLDERS.

**15.** Books, Printed Music, Games and Sports Equipment (other than clothing, boots, skis and skates) may be sent to prisoners of war in German, Italian and French\* hands and in neutral countries, through any of the leading book-sellers, newsagents and stores, who hold special permits from the Censorship Department.

Packs of Cards may be sent in the same way except to prisoners in Italy.

Holders of permits can only accept orders for despatch direct; they can in no case accept books, etc., for forwarding to prisoners.

**16. Newspapers and Periodicals** may be sent in the same way as books to prisoners of war in neutral countries, but not to prisoners of war in enemy countries.

**17. Tobacco and Cigarettes** may be sent by firms holding special permits, to prisoners of war and interned civilians in German, Italian and French\* hands and to prisoners of war in neutral countries. Relatives should place orders with these firms, and the minimum quantity which may be sent free of duty in one parcel is 4 oz. net.

**18.** Customs duty is not charged on parcels sent to prisoners of war, and Customs Declarations and Despatch Notes are not required for parcels to prisoners in **German, Italian or French hands**. Permit holders despatching parcels (not packets) to **neutral countries** must, however, send the appropriate number of Customs Declarations and Despatch Notes with the parcel. The parcels should be addressed in the manner indicated for letters (see Section 5 (i)). A duplicate label should be enclosed in parcels to enable delivery to be made in cases where the outer label becomes illegible. The maximum limit of weight for parcels despatched to neutral or enemy countries is 11 lb.

### PARCELS SENT BY THE BRITISH RED CROSS.

**19. Standard parcels** of food, soap, cigarettes and tobacco are provided and despatched by the British Red Cross for distribution to prisoners in German, Italian and French hands. The British Red Cross also despatches clothing for these prisoners and among the articles sent are greatcoats, uniform, boots, underclothing, towels, etc. Contributions towards defraying the cost of these parcels will be gratefully accepted and should be sent to the Accountant, Prisoners of War Department, St. James's Palace, London, S.W.1, or to the Scottish Branch British Red Cross Society, 206, Bath Street, Glasgow, C.2.

**20. Invalid Comforts.** The Invalid Comforts Section of the Prisoners of War Department of the British Red Cross is responsible for the despatch of invalid food and comforts and medical supplies to the camps and hospitals in Germany, Italy and France\* where there are British prisoners of war and interned civilians. Despatches of this nature can only be made through the Invalid Comforts Section of the British Red Cross.

**21. Educational Books.** The Educational Books Section of the British Red Cross arranges for prisoners of war to continue their preparation for examinations, and enables them to undertake vocational training with a view to preparing themselves for the after-war period. The Section gives advice, and arranges for books to be sent to any prisoner wishing to read a special subject. Forms of request for these books are sent to the prison camps. Correspondence courses cannot be sent direct to prisoners of war, but on application to the Section help will be given as to possible means of despatch.

**22. Indoor Recreations.** The Indoor Recreations Section of the Prisoners of War Department of the British Red Cross despatches supplies of books, games, musical instruments, etc., to all the camps for general use.

Sports equipment for outdoor games is also sent by the British Red Cross.

General Post Office.

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\*For the present parcels cannot be sent to civilians interned in camps in the former Unoccupied Zone of France.