THE GERMAN OCCUPATION OF NORTHERN FRANCE

WORLD WAR I

by R. T. Harrison

Map showing limit of German occupation

Most of occupied northern France remained within the Etappen Zone but the regions of Givet, Fumay and Maubeuge were considered sufficiently safe to be attached instead to the General Government Postal Administration of Belgium.
Details of Post Offices

By a compilation of various sources and with the help of the late Ted Coles of the France and Colonies Philatelic Society, the following towns are listed as having Post Office status for civilian use during the war:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Date Opened</th>
<th>Date Closed</th>
<th>Main Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aubrives</td>
<td>11.3.16</td>
<td>31.1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givet</td>
<td>15.1.15</td>
<td>31.1.18</td>
<td>Givet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vireux-Molhain</td>
<td>1.1.16</td>
<td>31.1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumay</td>
<td>30.6.15</td>
<td>31.1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haybes</td>
<td>30.6.15</td>
<td>31.1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maubeuge</td>
<td>1.6.15</td>
<td>6.10.16</td>
<td>Maubeuge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hautmont</td>
<td>30.4.16</td>
<td>6.10.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeumont</td>
<td>30.4.16</td>
<td>6.10.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleret</td>
<td>15.9.16</td>
<td>6.10.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Postal Cancellations Used

The table below lists the known cancellations, together with the relative scarcity. As would be expected, it is the three main towns of Givet, Fumay and Maubeuge which are the most frequently encountered but it should be stressed that none of these cancellations are commonly found being of interest to both Belgian and French collectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Diameter</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Relative Scarcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aubrives</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>26.5mm</td>
<td>Aubrives//(Frankreich)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colliert</td>
<td>French Single Circle</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Colliert/Nord</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumay</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Fumay//(Frankreich)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givet</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>24mm</td>
<td>Givet//(Belgien)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>24mm</td>
<td>Givet/<em>/a</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>24mm</td>
<td>Givet/<strong>/</strong>*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belgian Railway Cancel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Givet No. 2</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hautmont</td>
<td>French Single Circle</td>
<td>24mm</td>
<td>Hautmont/Nord</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French Double Circle</td>
<td>24mm</td>
<td>Hautmont/Nord</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haybes</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Haybes//(Frankreich)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeumont</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Jeumont//(Frankreich)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maubeuge</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Maubeuge/**(Frankreich)*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straight Line</td>
<td>29 x 5mm</td>
<td>Maubeuge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sars-Poteries</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>27mm</td>
<td>Sars-Poteries/**(Frankreich)*</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vireux-Molhain</td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>28.5mm</td>
<td>Vireux-Molhain//(Frankreich)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>28.5mm</td>
<td>Vireux-Molhain/**(Frankreich)*</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German ‘Bridge’</td>
<td>28.5mm</td>
<td>Vireux-Molhain/2/**(Frankreich)*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - the higher the number, the greater the scarcity
'AUBRIVES'
Postal Stationery Card from AUBRIVES dated 3rd January 1917
Registered at Givet.

The Post Office at Auberives was opened on 11th March 1916 and closed on 31st Jan 1918.

Givet acted as the main office to which this card was sent for censorship.

Note: this post cover is from the LETAER collection addressed to TROIS POINTS.
Letter Caro from FUMAY to BRUSSELS dated 14th Aug 1916
Added adhesives stamps and Registration label.
Cancelled FUMAY (FRANKREICH) C.D.S.
Fumay was one of the French border towns which came under the Government General of Belgium and had its own postmark.
Backstamped arrival Brussel 1c 15th August.
Oval censor cachet of Namur.
Postcard from FUMAY to BRUSSELS dated 20 December 1916.
Franked with 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted Belgian 10 Cents.
Cancelled FUMAY (Frankreich)
Censor mark Geprüft Kreischef Philippeville.
Brussels postmark 748 in circle.
GIVET (BELGIEN)

Envelope from AUBRINES to CHARLEROI dated 15th April 1915. Franked with 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted 'Belgien 10 Centsime' Cancelled GIVET (BELGIEN). This canceller was in use between 15th January 1915 and 31st May 1915 then withdrawn due to GIVET being in FRANCE not BELGIUM.

Censor cachet 'Geprüft Kreischef Philippeville'

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Map showing GIVET in Belgium and France.
Envelope from **GIVET** to **BRUSSELS** dated 18* April 1915.*

Franked with pair of 5 Pfennig Germania, overprinted 'Belgien. 5 Centimes'
Cancelled **GIVET (BELGIEN)** bridge-type C.D.S.

This canceller was in use between 15th January 1915 and 31st May 1915 then withdrawn due to **GIVET** being in France and Belgium.

Censor cachet 'Geprüft Kreischef Philippeville' with initials of censor.
German Postcard from **GIVET (FRANCE)** to **DARMSTADT** dated 11th May 1915.
Franked with 10 Pfennig 'Germania'.
Cachet 'KRIEGSGEFANGENENSENDUNG' - Prisoner-Of-War Letter-in violet.
Canceller 'GIVET (BELGIEN)' of German bridge-type, used to cancel the stamp and repeated clear of the stamp.
This canceller was withdrawn due to **GIVET** being in France not Belgium.
In use 15th January 1915 to 31st May 1915.

Card from Prisoner at Fumay to Prisoner in Camp at Darmstadt.
Envelope from GIVET to METZ dated 29 July 1917.
Franked with 14 x 2½ Pfennig of Bavaria plus one 5 Pfennig 'Germania' Registration label.
Cancelled 'GIVET 2'
Backstamped arrival METZ 30 July.
Sender - Telegrafen Bauführers Namur - 6 Army Area.

Einschreiben.

Herrn Paul Althöf
Paixhansstrasse Nr 41
Envelope from FROMELENES to BRUSSELS dated 15 May 1917.
Franked with 15 Pfennig "Germania" overprinted "Belgian 15 Cent"
Cancelled "Givet 1 a +"
Oval censor mark of Givet.

Fromelennes was a French village close to Givet.
Envelope from GIVET to BRUSSELS dated 1st August 1917.
Franked with 5 Pfennig and 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted 5 and 10 Cent.
Cancelled 'GIVET 88'
Rectangular military censor cachet No 1 of GIVET.
Envelope from HAVERSEN to BRUSSELS dated 19th July 1915.
Franked with 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted 'Belgien 10 Centimes'
Cancelled 'Givet + a +'
Censor mark 'Geprüft Kreischef Philippeville'

Geprüft
Kreischef Philippeville

Monsieur Fernand Mouvet,

Rue des Wynants, 23,

Bruxelles.

Map of the area indicating the locations of Givet, Beaurning, Couvin, Beauraing, and France.
Postal Stationery Card from FELENNE to TOURNAI dated 30th September 1915.

Felenne was a Dépôt-Railais office in Belgium but during WW1 came under the office of GIVET (France).

Censor mark of Philippeville in violet ink.

Arrival TOURNAI 2nd October.
Letter Card from VIREUX-MOLINAIN to BRUSSELS dated 14th August 1916.
Additional stamps for Registration fee.
Censor mark 'Geprüft Kreischef Philippeville'
Backstamped arrival Brussels 14th August.
Envelope from HEER to BRUSSELS undated.
Franked with 5 Pfennig and 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted 5 and 10 Centimes
Censor mark used as a cancellation on stamps: GIVET.
' MILITARISCHE POSTGERWACHNISSESTELLE * GIVET * ' in violet ink.
Heer was a village just inside Belgium near Givet.
Postman's delivery mark S in circle of Brussels.

Monsieur, le Directeur
Comité National de Secours
et de l'Alimentation
66, Rue des Colonies
Bruxelles.
Private Postal Stationery Card from HAYBES to BRUSSELS dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} August 1917. Cancelled HAYBES (Frankreich) bridge-type canceller.

Haybes was a French town near the Belgian frontier which came under the control of the Government General of Belgium. This office was opened on 1\textsuperscript{st} April 1916 and closed on 31\textsuperscript{st} January 1918.
JEUMONT

FRENCH FRONTIER TOWNS.

Envelope from MAUBEUGE to NAMUR dated 8th August 1916.
Franked with Germania overprints 5 Centimes and 10 Centimes (On 2/3)
Stamps cancelled JEUMONT (FRANKREICH) although envelope bears an oval
cover cachet of Maubeuge.
Backstamped arrival NAMUR NAMEN 10th August.

Comité National des Menseignements

pour les prisonniers de guerre

8 Rue du Collège 8 Namur

Belgian

Envoi de Mme Delos rue de l'eglise Boursot
jus Maubeuge
Herrn Heinrich Tommler, Brussels

Fieldpost

Maubeuge 29.7.15

Please forgive me for not writing until today. Well, again my most heartfelt thanks for your exceptional guided tour through Brussels. I hope you are as well as I am. Have you, in the meantime, guided anybody else? I hope I shall again have the opportunity to visit there. If I were to visit Brussels again I will most certainly call on you.

Warmest greetings with Heil and Victory.

Christian Bering.
MAUBEUGE

Feldpost Envelope from MAUBEUGE to GERMANY dated 27 July 1915.
Unit cachet '2 Landst. JÄGER KOMP VII AK MAUBEUGE' in green ink.
Cancelled 'MAUBEUGE (FRANKREICH)'

[Image of the envelope]

Feldpost
Maubeuge

[Recipient's name]
[Address]
Envelope from BAVEU to LIEGE dated 16 April 1916
Franked with 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted 'Belgien 10 Centimes'
Cancelled 'M A U B E U G E (FRANKFORT)'
Oval censor cachet of Maubeuge.
Envelope from MAUBEUGE to BRUSSELS dated 28 August 1916. Franked with 3 x 5 Pfennig Germania overprinted 'Belgien 5 Centimes' cancelled 'MAUBEUGE (FRANKREICH)' Oval censor cachet 'Postamt Maubeuge'
From Maubeuge to Brussels undated.
Franked with un-overprinted 1dPf 'Germania'.
Cancelled by Maubeuge straight-line handstamp.
Marked:
Sender: Sister M. Rübesamen
Maubeuge
P.O.W. Camp 1

[Envelope with handwritten text:]

[Translation of handwritten text:]

ALF. KIPPMAN
M. Rubesamen
Mountings
Left mange Log 1

Dr. RING
Brüssel
Ringstraße 4
MAUBEUGE.

Fieldpost envelope MAUBEUGE to COLOGNE undated.
Cancelled BAHNHOF'S KOMMANDANTUR * of Maubeuge.
Free franchise - no censor markings or backstamps.
Sender of FELDLUFTSCHIFFGRUPPE - MAUBEUGE. (Airship group)

Familie

Sohnen. Kelm

Cöln - Oberfelder


Maubeuge.
Bank Envelope from MAUBEUGE to VALENCIENNES dated 23rd Jan 1918. Franked with pair of 10 Pfennig Germania overprinted '10 Cent' cancelled by bank cachet and 'Geprüft P.U. St.' boxed. Rectangular bank cachet with serial no 15621. Bank censor cachet in bottom corner.

Backstamped CRÉDIT-LYONNAIS MAUBEUGE 23rd Jan 1918.
Express registered envelope to Stuttgart dated 30 January 1917.
Franked with selection of overprinted Germania stamps.
Cancelled with handstamp of VIREUX-MOLHAIN (Frankreich)
Backstamped arrival Stuttgart 11th February.
LILLE.

Damaged envelope from LILLE to BRUSSELS dated 1st August 1918.

Franked with 20pf stamp of Bavaria. Cancelled POST ÜBERWACHUNGSTELLE - 'Geprüft. Original word 'Durch P.U. 40' (Through Post inspection 40) 'Censor' ZULÄSSIG 8 .... '

CRÉDIT LYONNAIS

LILLE

Généralkommissar für die Banken in Belgien

Für CRÉDIT LYONNAIS

1. VIII. 18

Zulässig 8

BRUXELLES

Sign. 4. U. 40
Envelope from LILLE to BRUSSELS dated 13th August 1918.
Franked with 3x 10 Pf and 5 Pf of 1914 Bavarian issue.
Cancelled 'POST ÜBERWACHUNGSTELLE ............' of 6th Army. The word Tournai was removed for security reasons.
2-line censor cachet.
Letter from VALENCIENNES to FAMAINS dated 18* Sept 1914.

Franked with the special stamp issued by the local CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and in use from 8* September to October 30th 1914.

Cancelled by the chamber’s oval cachet and straight-line date stamp.

This postal service was set up with the approval of the German Occupation during the early days of war and was run by the VALENCIENNES Chamber of Commerce solely for the Town and suburbs including Famais.
VALENCIENNES

Envelope from VALENCIENNES to VALENCIENNES undated.
Franked with 10 Pfennig 'Germania' - no overprint.
Stamp cancelled 'Militarische Ueberwachungstelle des Post & Guterverkehrs' in violet ink. (Post and goods control)

Official town envelope of Mayor's Office.
VALENCIENNES.

Cover from VALENCIENNES to BRUSSELS undated.

Franked with 5 Pfennig and 15 Pfennig 'Germania'.

Cancelled "Zulassig - Militärische Ueberwachungsstelle - des Post- und Guterverkehrs"
- cachet repeated at bottom (Goods traffic censor cachet)

Valenciennes back cachet and manuscript confirmation.
Bank Envelope from VALENCEennes to BRUSSELS dated 11th Feb 1918.
Franked with 20 Pfennig "Germania" overprinted "25 Cent."
Cancelled "Geprüft P.Ü. St." in rectangle.
Bank censor cachet
Bankstamped "CRÉDIT LYONNAIS 11th Feb 1918 VALENCEennes"