

Salisbury House, London in WWI.

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A number of Germans and Austrians from South Africa and a few from Rhodesia and other British areas in southern Africa were interned during the first world war. The larger camp was Fort Napier in Pietermaritzburg. For many years I had what looked like a reused registered envelope (fig 1) from the camp to the Deutsches Hilfsverein (German aid association) in Stockholm, sent 1 June 1915. It had a trilingual PRISONER OF WAR handstamp on the front. It transited London on 22 June and arrived in Stockholm on 28th. A stamp had been removed and the envelope was censored by the "HOSTILE COUNTRIES' CENSOR, / SALISBURY HOUSE, LONDON". FJ Carter¹ records that the rare Salisbury House mark usually occurs on registered letters from the Colonies.



Figure 1a June 1915 cover front



Figure 1b Reverse of June 1915 cover

I recently found a similar cover from the same camp but dated 18 October 1915 (fig 2). This one however was addressed to Bohemia – Austria via a Bureau in Neuchatel, Switzerland where it arrives 15 November. Like the first it has a stamp removed. Both covers are resealed by the pink resealing label (usually found on POW mail) and marked POST FREE / P.C. / PRISONERS OF WAR.

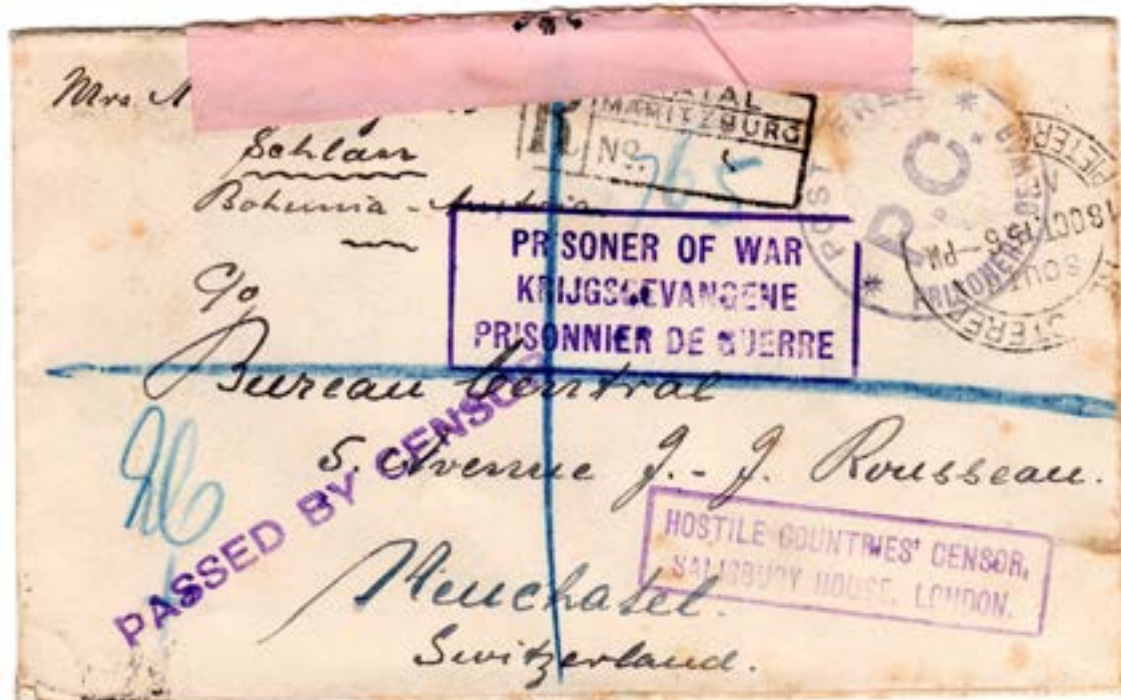


Figure 2a Oct 1915 cover front



Figure 2b reverse of Oct 1915 cover

I conclude that the stamps were removed by the censors, but I have seen very few WWI registered POW items to know if this was usual. Both were addressed to neutral countries but obviously destined for forwarding to “the other side”! Can anyone show others?