

# Russian Mail to Britain "via Hamburg"

This exhibit covers all postal routes in the period 1817-1847 when mail from Russia was carried to the Hamburg then transferred to British Mail Packets for London

The exhibit illustrates all the routes from Russia to the Hamburg City Post Office along with rates and markings. It includes all the important aspects of the subject especially the impact of the various Postal Conventions and Agreements including the **British-Hamburg Agreement** and the associated **Lubeck Arrangement** between Russia and Prussia.

The purpose of these Conventions and Agreements was to speed the delivery of the mail and reduce the costs and they were effective. From St Petersburg to London, the delivery time in 1817 was 24 days; in 1827 20 days; in 1841 13 days; in 1844 10 days. The collect postage was reduced from 1/8d to 8d per 1 oz letter.

It begins with the earliest known 1817 entire from St Petersburg endorsed "via Hamburg" and concludes with the termination of steamer mail concessions to Hamburg and Lubeck, the new service "via Stettin" and the private arrangement between Hamburg and Hull. A significant majority of British mail from Russia did not exit "via Hamburg" but was transported on the Prussian rail network to Ports on the Dutch Coast then by ship to English Ports.

The Exhibit is presented by **Routes to Hamburg** where the mail was transferred to steamers with mail contracts for London.

**Russia - Prussia - Hamburg City Post - London**

**Russia - Finland - Sweden - Hamburg City Post - London**

**Russia - Prussia - Prussian Post in Hamburg - Hamburg City Post - London**

**Russia - Lubeck - Prussian Post in Hamburg - Hamburg City Post - London**

**Russia - Hamburg - London**



## Russia - Prussia - Hamburg City Post - London

This route is overland from the Russian City by mail coach to the border with Prussia where the mail was transferred to the Prussian Postal Administration. The Prussian Border office was **Memel** [now Klaipeda, Lithuania - a port on the Baltic Sea] just 5km from the Russian border. Memel was the terminal on the Prussian Post Road to Berlin where it joined the 250km Post Road to Hamburg.

1817 St Petersburg "via Hamburg" to London & Warrington

British Mail Contracts Hamburg - London signed December 1816 effective 1 January 1817



Double letter-sheet with commercial report enclosure **St Petersburg 27th March 1817<sup>1</sup>** [8th March N.S.]

**SANCT.PETERSBOURG** 46mm x 3mm straight-line hand stamp

"28" - "60" Register number 28. "Second Number" is charge from Memel to Hamburg in kopecks.

**P.P.** = Post Paid - applied at Memel the Prussian Border office. No Hamburg marking by ship to London

**London Foreign Post Office FPO MY 2 1817. Warrington MY 3 817**

"4/10" collect postage - triple rate. 24 days St Petersburg - London

From 1809 to 1814, the Prussian mail transit trade was in difficulties caused by Napoleon's military activities. With the collapse of Napoleon's new order in early 1814 and the first Treaty of Paris of May 1814, the Prussian mail route was quickly restored. Following the 1815 Congress of Vienna, Prussia rapidly repaired the postal roads and started negotiations with adjacent countries, including Russia, on the management of transit mail.

The "Second Number" system noted on the backs of entires sent from Russia was probably introduced by the Prussians who were invited by the Tsar to organised the Russian Postal Administration in the late 1700s. This number is the postal charge, in kopecks, from Memel border office as far as postal agreements allowed. Prior to the 1821 Postal Convention between Russia and Prussia, only **40 examples<sup>2</sup>** have been noted in the literature

<sup>1</sup> Earliest example known to exhibitor - personal research

<sup>2</sup> Personal research

## Russia - Finland - Aland Islands - Sweden - Hamburg City Post - London

This *"via Sweden and Hamburg"* routing of Russian mail for continental Europe and England was developed from 1809 when Finland became a Grand Duchy under control of the Russian Empire in the Treaty of Fredrikshavn which followed the defeat of Sweden in the Finnish War. The impact of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe [1809 - 1814] increased its importance but its usefulness was restricted by the consequence of reduction in trade.

From 1814 the use of the routing via Sweden then sealed mail bag to Hamburg was largely restricted to Finnish mail. The Russian border office was **Eckero** [Aland Islands] and the Swedish office was **Griselhamn** north of Stockholm. The service was part of the feudal duties for the islanders on Eckero and Vado [where Griselhamn stands] by boat except in winter when horses were used on the frozen sea. Mail was transported in sealed mail bags to Sweden then by mail concession steamer to Hamburg for resorting and onwards distribution. Very few examples are known.

### 1820 St Petersburg - Griselhamn - Hamburg to London

A rather sad letter detailing the arrangements made following the death of the daughter. The writer advises:

*"Please write on the outside of your letter to us Via Sweden and Hamburg."*



Letter written St Petersburg September 10th 1820 [22 September N.S.]

**SANCT PETERSBOURG** 46mm x 3mm straight line stamp

**GRISLEHAMN** 35mm x 4.5mm Swedish border office straight line stamp

London Foreign Office **FPO OC 20 1820** London town office **OC 20 820** in double circle

*"4/1"* collect postage

29 days St Petersburg - London

This little used route ceased when the Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty of December 1821 gave Prussia almost total control of Russian mail to Europe and beyond.

## Russia - Prussia - Prussian Post in Hamburg - Hamburg City Post - London

The **British - Hamburg Postal Agreement**, in negotiation from early 1840, came into effect in **January 1841** and ended in 1846. A **special oval marking 22 x 28 mm** with a large **T** [meaning Transit] over a **date** [described in the Agreement as **English Date** [new style] as opposed to a Russian date which was in Gregorian calendar and 12 days different.] This is always impressed in red on the address side. This Transit charge of **2 schillings = 2 pence** to the Prussian Post Office was applied on British mail transiting the Prussian Post Office in Hamburg and the Hamburg City Post and transfer to the British mail steamers.

The Agreement also called for this payment to Prussia for each letter carried between the Prussian Post Office in the Free City of Lubeck and the Prussian Post Office in the Sovereign City of Hamburg under the **Lubeck Arrangement** between Russia and Prussia. [Prussia actually transported this mail at its cost to ensure that it remained in control]

### 1841 St Petersburg "Via Hamburg & London Steamer"



Letter written **ST PETERSBURG** 25 November [7 December] 1841 34mm datestamp **25 NOV 1841**.

"64½" Postal Charge in kopeks to Russian Border + Prussian Transit to Hamburg.

**T 17 DEC** Hamburg Transit charge [2 pence] "1/8" collect postage includes the Hamburg transit charge

London **20 DE 20 1841**.

13 days St Petersburg-London

## Russia - Lubeck - Prussian Post in Hamburg - Hamburg City Post - London

### The Lubeck Arrangement:

During the late 1830's a new shipping service developed between St Petersburg and the Free City of Lubeck. This service was backed by the Government with an agreement to carry mail in addition to passengers and cargo. By Government decree in 1839, such Russian outgoing mail had to be handed to the postal authorities at the Port. This threatened the Prussian control of the mail routes which had been almost total following the **1821 Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty**.

A political compromise - the **Lubeck Arrangement** - enabled Prussia to establish a postal agency in Lubeck and for the staff to unload mail from the Russian steamers. The mail was then transported by Prussian mail coaches at [Prussian Post cost] to the Prussian Post Office in Hamburg with the 2d charge transferring to the Hamburg City Post and despatch by British packet boats. **Effective early in 1842**. This arrangement was an advantage to mail to Britain with mail St Petersburg to London taking less than 14 days.

The **1843 Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty** allowed this arrangement to continue but required that the letters *"be appropriately endorsed for the service"*

### 1844 St Petersburg "p Lubec Steamer via Hamburg" - London



Correctly endorsed Entire letter-sheet written St Petersburg 16 / 28 June 1844, annotated as received 8 July 1844

**ST PETERSBURG 17 JUN 1844** [29 June N.S.] 17mm x 53mm boxed 2-line datestamp

**HAMBURG** 19mm cds 4 7 7-8 N [Prussian office]

**T 5 JUL** Hamburg City Post

London **8 JY 8 1844** "1/8" collect postage 10 days

The route was **St Petersburg City Post foreign section**, by horse-drawn wagon to **Finland Railway Station** then by rail 32 Km to Gara the **Kronstadt railway station** then by wagon to **Kronstadt Dock**, loaded on the **Steamer for Lubeck** for the 1411 Km trip to **Lubeck Docks** [5 days]. Prussian mail coach Lubeck to **Hamburg** 67 Km. Transferred from Prussian office to the **Hamburg City Post**, loaded on **British Mail Boat**, down the River Elbe to **London Docks** [650 Km] unloaded and by wagon to **London Post Office foreign mail section** for collection.

1846 St Petersburg "p Lubeck Steamer" - London<sup>1</sup>



Endorsed  
**"P Lubeck Steamer"**

Double weight letter  
[Same 2d Transit fee]

**ST PETERSBURG**

**23 SEPT 1846**

[4 October]

**HAMBURG 7-8N 10 10;**

**T 10 JUL**

London **14 OC 14 1846**

"3/4" collect postage

10 days

**Latest Date of Transit  
Mark**

The 1843 Russo-Prussian Postal Treaty provided Prussia with a solution to the [postally and fiscally unsatisfactory] **Lubeck Arrangement**. A new shipping route was agreed between **St Petersburg to Stettin** with costs to be shared equally. A protocol was signed within a few months and sailings began in 1845. With the Stettin-Berlin railway which was completed in 1843, Prussia regained total postal control. The **Lubeck Steamer Government concessions** to the service were withdrawn during 1846 and the Transit Charge from the British-Hamburg Agreement ended. The British Mail Packet Boats now collect mail for Britain and beyond at Stettin and collect postage was reduced from 1/8d to 8d.

Endorsed "*franco tout*"

**ST PETERSBURG**

**5 MAY 1845** [17 May]

**FRANCO** = paid  
[at St Petersburg]

**STETTIN 26 MAY**

London **28 MY 28 1845**

"8" collect postage

11 days

**Earliest date Stettin Service<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Latest date of Hamburg Transit marking - personal research

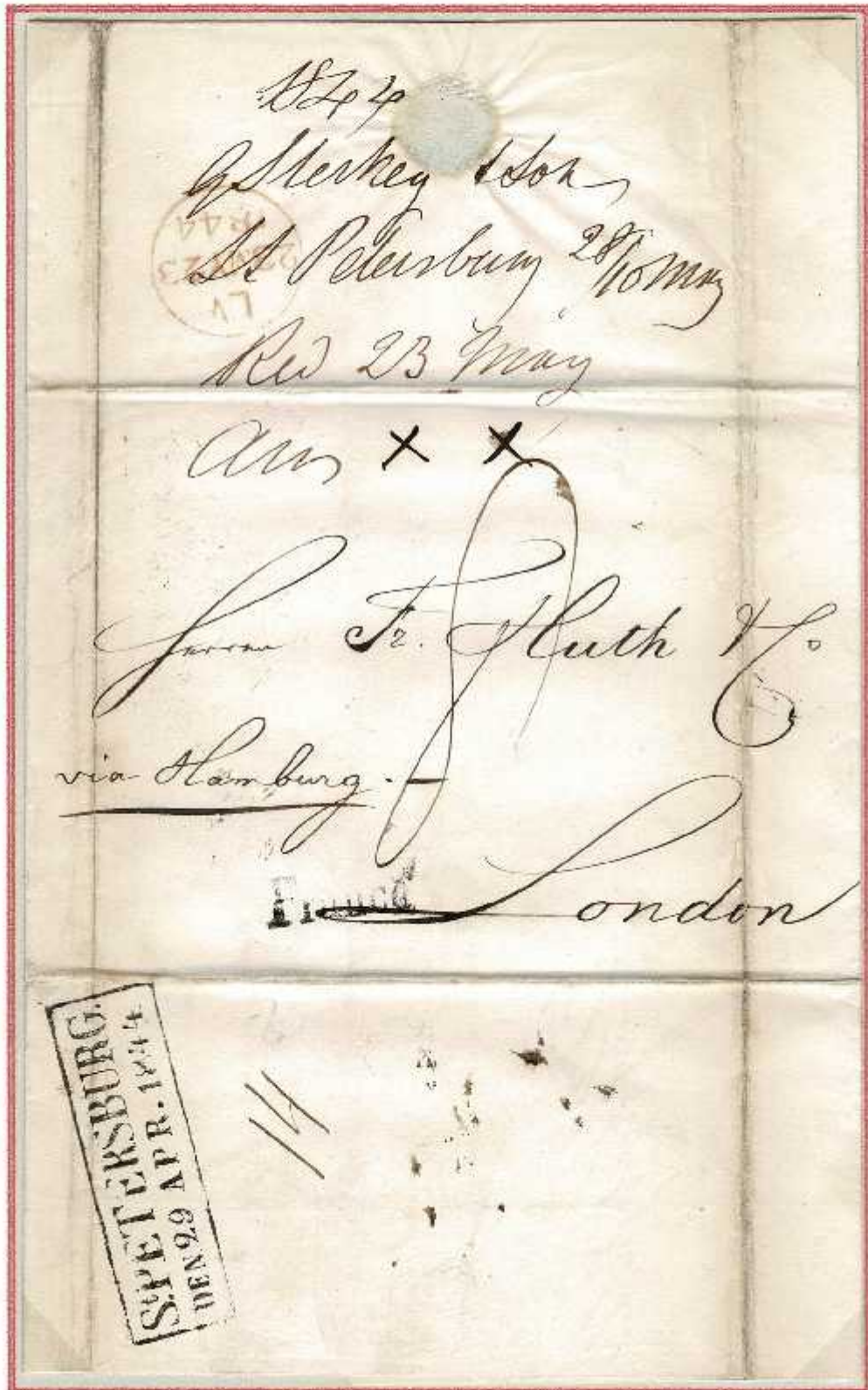
<sup>2</sup> Earliest date of Stettin service - personal research

Russia - Hamburg - London

1844 St Petersburg "via Hamburg" - London

No Prussian or Hamburg Markings - Direct ship mail to Hamburg and transferred to British mail boat

This commercial report St Petersburg 28 April / 10 May 1844 was received 23 May - 13 days after writing and 12 days after mailing. **ST PETERSBURG 29 APR 1844** [11 May N.S.] **Franco** = prepaid "14" 14 kopecks. Letter received in London **23 MY 23 1844** and collected the same day with "8" pence collect postage



## 1847 St Petersburg "via Hamburg" - Hull - London

A special Agreement between Great Britain and Prussia relating to the transfer of mail was signed in London on November 11th and in Berlin on 21st November 1846. It was concerned mainly with the declining arrangements via Lubeck and the developing new routing via Stettin.

An Agreement of July 7, 1847 opened official relations between the Post Office in Hamburg and the Post Office in Hull. Mail on this route was handed to the Hamburg City Post and sent on by private ship arrangements.



**ST PETERSBURG 19 JUN 1847** [June 30th N.S.] "*franco*" = paid Russia to Hamburg  
**HAMBURG 8/7** P. in oval at Hamburg confirming paid

**HULL SHIP-LETTER 10 JY 1847** - Known 1842-49 on private ship mail landed at Hull  
"*6*" 6d per ½ oz. being the rate charged on all incoming letters carried by private merchant ships  
London **PAID 12 JY 1847** 10 days to Hull; 12 days London

The 1846 Agreement between Britain and Prussia included a clause that Russian mail concessions on the Hamburg steamers would cease January 1848. With the Lubeck-Hamburg service replaced by Stettin-London, the Russian and Prussian Post route "*via Hamburg*" and British mail packets to London was terminated.