

Falklands or Malvinas?

Synopsis

Recent Updates

Exhibit has been refocused from the period 1833 to 2023 to the period 1770 to 1982. Much post-war material has been removed, with new eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century material added.

Challenge Factor

The population of the Falklands is small (less than 2,000 in 1981), so the amount of available island mail is fairly small. The 1982 Falklands War was also short, just over ten weeks. It is worth noting that the Falklands are very muddy, thus much war mail is soiled.

Material Highlights

Very Early Report on State of Falklands: Letter dated August 24, 1836 from a Royal Navy captain to rear admiral addressing the sad state of the Falklands shortly after the reassertion of British administration in 1833.

Removal of the Argentines as related by Captain John James Onslow: 1842 letter from the Royal Navy captain that removed the Argentines from the Falklands in 1833. Letter discusses the Royal Navy action and the Argentine reaction.

Early Rumblings: Unofficial harassment by Argentine postal employee in 1927. One of two known by Stefan Heijtz. Also, earliest known use of propaganda label (1928) supporting Argentina's claim.

Design Materials: Design materials from the Falkland Islands 1933 Centenary of British Administration commemorative series. Also, design material from the £1 high value from the 1963 British Antarctic Territory definitive series. First BAT stamp to show a map of the British Antarctic claim.

Evacuee Mail: Letter to boy at the Stanley boarding school. Boy had been evacuated to his home settlement at Goose Green where he was detained at the recreation hall with the other residents of the settlement. Unique item.

Incoming Sailor Mail Returned by Air Force: Very rare Argentine Air Force operational cachet for free postage that was subsequently applied to an incoming letter to a sailor on a ship that had been disabled by the British. Unique item.

First and Last Day Cancels: OHMS cover cancelled April 1st (hours before the invasion) that shows the last day of use of the "Official Paid" cancel (in sporadic use since 1899) and the first day of the Argentine flag cancel on April 6th. One of two that I know.

ARA General Belgrano Sailor Mail: Posted day before final voyage during which this Argentine cruiser was sunk by the Royal Navy.

British Internee Mail: Given the speed with which the captured Royal Marine garrison was released, there is no British POW mail. However, some British servicemen entered neutral countries as part of their missions and were detained as internees of war. This letter is from an RAF Captain detained at Rio de Janeiro after conducting a bombing raid on Port Stanley.

Argentine POW Mail: Repurposed British Forces aerogramme sent by an Argentine POW in Stanley on July 7, later forwarded by the ICRC in Buenos Aires by registered mail on July 13.

Main References

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The philatelic contest between Britain & Argentina for the islands

Introduction

After the first landing by the English in 1690, de facto control of the Falklands transferred amongst the French (1764-1767), the British (1765-1774), the Spanish (1767-1811), the Argentines (1829-1833), and finally back to the British in 1833. However, the Argentines objected to this outcome, continuing to argue for and eventually fighting for, their claim in 1982 (a.k.a., The Falklands War).

Objective

Show through postal material and related ephemera the history of the conflict that culminated in a modern war that cost over 900 lives.

Exhibit Plan

1) Opposing Claims (1770 – 1970) - Frames 1 and 2

In the eighteenth century the British and Spanish (successors to the French claim) had a contentious relationship over the islands. Both countries later withdrew their presence, with the British re-establishing full control of the Falklands in 1833 (despite the Argentines vigorously maintaining their counter claim). This section includes an 1836 Royal Navy letter reporting on the state of the Falklands. Also, an 1842 letter by the Royal Navy captain who ejected the Argentines from the Falklands in 1833 provides a contemporaneous assessment of the political situation. Beginning in 1910 some minor postal-based protestations supporting the Argentine position began to appear. This was followed in 1933 by a significant philatelic commemoration of the centennial of British administration. This kicked off a period of tit-for-tat philatelic reprisals in the form of stamps, postal cards, cancellations, cinderellas, and postal harassment.

2) Prelude to War (1971 – 1982) - Frames 2 and 3

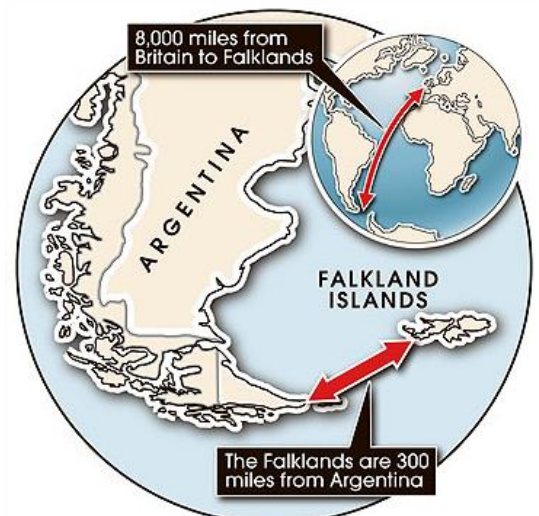
Anglo-Argentine talks about the islands took place during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the major outcomes was the *Joint Declaration of Buenos Aires* of July 1, 1971. This agreement improved communications and commerce between the islands and the Argentine mainland. Unfortunately, it seemed to also set the expectation that the British were getting ready to withdraw. When this did not happen the Argentines invaded the islands.

3) Argentine Invasion (April 2-25, 1982) - Frames 3 to 5

On April 2, 1982 the Argentines invaded with a force of over 10,000. The tiny British garrison was quickly overwhelmed. Civilian and military mail document this period. Several days into the occupation, local life for the Falklanders started to return to normal (somewhat). The Port Stanley post office reopened and postal communications within the islands and with Britain resumed, albeit under the Argentine post office.

4) British Repossession (April 25, 1982 - 1985) - Frames 5 and 6

The Argentines underestimated Britain's resolve and response, with preparations to retake the Falklands beginning almost immediately. Military encounters between British and Argentine forces started by mid-April, with the recapture of South Georgia by the Royal Marines on April 25 and the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* by the Royal Navy on May 2. The British later landed in force at San Carlos (50 miles west of Stanley) on May 21. Argentine forces in the Falklands surrendered on June 14, with the Argentine garrison on Southern Thule surrendering on June 20. This section examines mail during the major period of fighting until the final capture and repossession by the British.



Symbols Used

Exceptional Items – ★

Original Research – ●

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