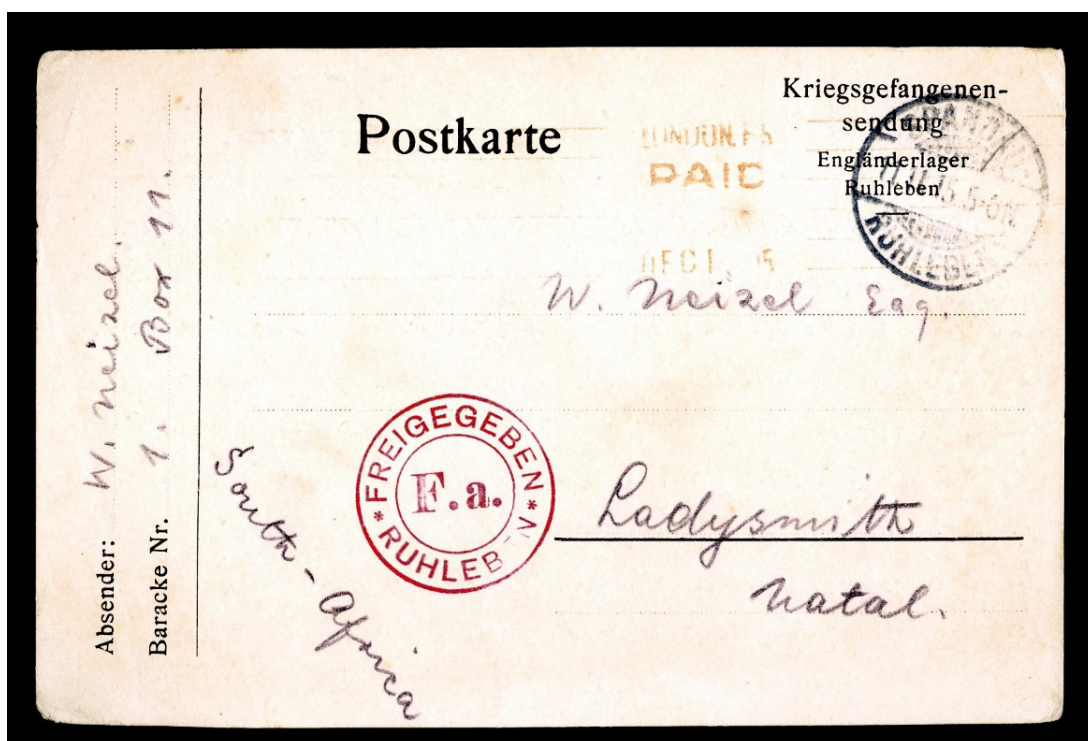


RUHLEBEN PRISONER OF WAR CAMP and Walter ("Wolly") Robert Neizel

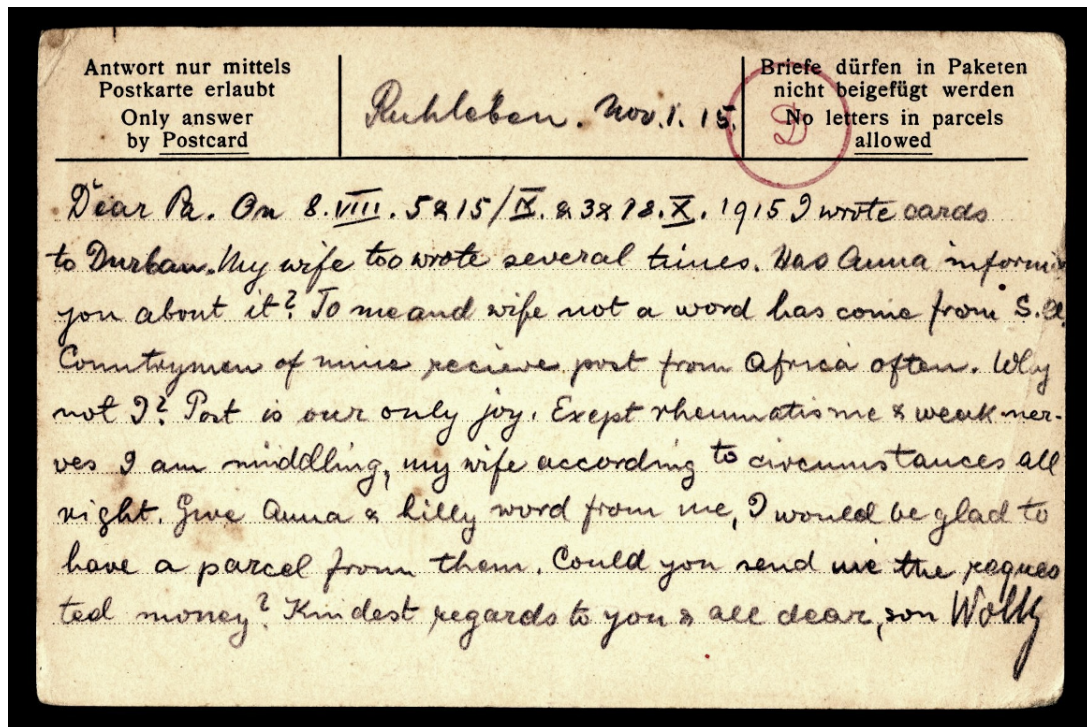
Philatelic Description of the item of Postal Stationery:

PRISONER OF WAR 1914-1918. Germany to South Africa - 11th November 1915.

Official stampless buff postcard pre-printed in black "Postkarte/ Kriegsgefangenen-/ sendung/ Engländerlager/ Ruhleben" with message from W. Neizel written to his father in Ladysmith, Natal. Posted from SPANDAU/ RUHLEBEN cds with d/c FREIGEgeben/ RUHLEBEN/ F.a. h/s applied in pink plus another circular "D" censor's h/s in pink on reverse, sent via LONDON/ PAID/ DEC 1 15 machine transit cancel applied in red.



Absender: W. Neizel Baracke Nr. 1 . Box 11
Addressed to: W Neizel Esq, Ladysmith, Natal



TEXT: Ruhleben Nov.1.15

Dear Pa. On 8.VIII.5&15 / IX. & 3&18.X.1915 I wrote cards to Durban. My wife too wrote several times. Has Anna informed you about it? To me and wife not a word has come from S.A. Countrymen of mine receive post from Africa often. Why not I? Post is our only joy. Except [sic] rheumatism and weak nerves I am middling, my wife according to circumstances all right. Give Anna & Lillyⁱ word from me, I would be glad to have a parcel from them. Could you send me the requested money? Kindest regards to you & all dear son Wolly

Comments:

Ruhleben Prisoner of War Camp was a male civilian detention camp during the 1914-1918 World War. It was located on a racecourse in the village of Ruhleben, 10 km west of Berlin near Spandau. The camp was originally a horse racecourse.

On 4 August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany. The detainees were mainly British citizens who were unfortunate (or unwise) enough still to be in Germany in November 1914. These included those on holiday, gymnasium and university students, businessmen, the crew of merchant vessels docked in port or arrested within German waters and other foreigners many of whom were married to local women. The camp was to house some 5,500 prisoners *in toto*.

The German authorities allowed the detainees to manage their own affairs. Books, food packages, letters and sports equipment were all allowed into the camp. The detainees organised their own printing press, camp magazine, library, police force and postal service.

The postal service, known as the Ruhleben Express Delivery, was organised by Albert Kamps and began operating on 19th July 1915. It issued stamps, postal stationery, managed 25 letter boxes in the camp, handling some 6000 pieces of mail per month. On 3rd April 1916, following a complaint by German philatelists, postal authorities closed the service; and extraordinarily Kamps was sentenced to solitary confinement.

Walter ("Wolly") Robert Neizel was born Erasmusdam, Natal, South Africa on 13th April 1883 and appears to have lived first in Ladysmith, Natal and later Germany.

Martin Crawford, Cape Town in 2009 writes to <http://ruhleben.tripod.com> :

Six years ago my wife and I bought a postcard album at a philatelic auction of the Royal Philatelic Society of Cape Town. It contained a collection of over 350 old picture postcards from the first decade of the 1900s. My wife, Marilyn, has developed it into a social history exhibit which she has entered in the past at the annual National Philatelic exhibition in South Africa (we live in Cape Town). It tells the life of a Lilly Neizel whose father was a baker in the early 1900s in Ladysmith, Natal, South Africa. Her father was German, the brother of a German missionary who had settled in South Africa in the late 1800s. Lilly married a Scot who worked for the Eastern Telegraph company and they were posted to various places around the world. There is correspondence to them from relations and friends in Scotland, Germany, South Africa, St Helena, Spain, Suez, Mozambique, etc, etc!

Recently another batch of this correspondence has surfaced some of which we have acquired and among these items was a Ruhleben-Spandau Engländerlager Internment Camp censored card. Lillie had a brother Walter Robert Neizel who was born at Erasmusdam, Natal, South Africa on 13/04/1883. He and one of his brothers went in the early 1900s to live in Germany, where he was an electrical engineer. (The brother seems to have died soon after they arrived there). We know Walter lived at times in Mittweida and/or Berlin, as we have other correspondence from him to Lilly. She corresponded regularly with him, in German, and he died in 1966. The Ruhleben card was sent by him with Christmas greetings to Lilly in 1914. He appears on your listing as an inmate in December 1916.

References:

1. South African Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg
 2. Ruhleben P.O.W. Camp Stamps. <http://www.filatelia.fi/forgeries/ruhleben.html>
 3. The Ruhleben Story. <http://ruhleben.tripod.com>
 4. The Story of Emil Burmester. www.pelteret.co.za/pdf/research_notes/e_burmester.pdf
 5. The Berlin Missionaries in South Africa and their descendants. Zöllner, L & Heese, J.A. Publ: Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria. 1984
 6. Personal Communication Johannes Wassermann, University of KwaZulu-Natal
 7. Wassermann, J M. The Natal Afrikaner and the Anglo-Boer War. Doctoral Thesis. University of Pretoria. 2004
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NEIZEL FAMILY TREE

[this should be read as work in progress_December 2009]

1 Albert Neizel * 9.7.1839 Krokow, Preußen arr. 1859 † 5.7.1896 Emangweni, Natal m. (first)
 1868 Emma Augusta HANNEMANN * 29.5.1844 Rahmal Westpreußen † 7.6.1874 Emangweni
 1 Albert Neizel * 9.7.1839 Krokow, Preußen arr. 1859 † 5.7.1896 Emangweni, Natal m. (second) 1875
 Helene BÖHNERT * 22.6.1841 † 21.3.1921 Danzig, Germany
 1.1 Christian George Wilhelm * 9.6.1869 † 18.6.1869
 1.2 George Ludwig (medical doctor) * Emangweni 23.9.1870 † Pretoria 14.10.1944 m. Edendale district
 Pretoria Anna Mathilde Charlotte SCHLOEMANN * dist. Waterberg 17.2.1887 † Pretoria 8.8.1964 (do.
 Hermann Heinrich Theodore Schloemann). No offspring
 1.3 Pieter Christian (farmer) * Emangweni 8.12.1871 † Erasmusdam dist. Escourt 13.1.1948 m. Winterton
 30.4.1906 Petronella Wilhelmina Johanna Nellie VAN DER MERWE * "Rooidraai" dist. Winterton
 31.10.1882 † Erasmusdam dist. Escourt 28.3.1940 (do. N J van der Merwe & Petronella
 LABUSCHAGNE)
 1.3.1 Emma * Erasmusdam 4.3.1907 m. Philip R HORNER
 1.3.2 Albert * Erasmusdam 28.8.1908 † Pietermaritzburg 12.5.1973 m. Escourt circa 1932 A J
 BOSHOFF
 1.3.2.1 Erika
 1.3.2.2 Emma
 1.3.2.3 Ena
 1.3.2.4 Petronella
 1.3.2.5 Peter
 1.3.2.6 Frances
 1.3.3 Anna * Erasmusdam 10.3.1910 m. Escourt 27.6.1933 Daniel Petrus BOSHOFF * Greytown
 20.5.1906 1.3.2 9.2.1978 (so. DanielPetrus Boshoff & Frederika Adriana VAN ROOYEN)
 1.3.4 Wilhelmina * Erasmusdam 2.1.1912 m. Winterton 6.11.1934 Nelson Fredrich Heinrich ERFMANN
 * Hanover 21.12.1909 (so. Johannes Heinrich Erfmann & Bertha Petronella LAATZ)
 1.3.5 Christian * Erasmusdam 28.9.1917 m. Winterton 7.12.1943 Hendrina Magdalena VAN RENSBURG
 * Vosburg 3.3.1909 (do. Petrus Jakobus van Rensburg & Anna Magdalena SWANEPOEL)
 1.3.5.1 Reinet Maria * Pietermaritzburg 16.7.1945 m. Durban 7.10.1962 Bernard George HUYSAMEN *
 Kroonstad 14.1.1942
 1.3.5.2 Annemarie Wilhelmina * Escourt 5.3.1949 m. Durban 3.1.1970 Christian Wentzel HOLLENBACH
 * Durban 8.12.1948 (so. Arrie Johannes Hollenbach & Alice WENTZELL)
 1.3.6 Wilhelm * Erasmusdam 18.1.1921 x Durban 7.11.1942 Isabella FARQUHARSON * Durban
 25.3.1921 (do William Milne Farquharson & Margaret Aletta ROONEY)
 1.3.6.1 Clive Malcolm * Durban 8.7.1943 m. Umkomaas 29.4.1967 Pauline Jessica ROBINSON
 1.3.6.2 Felicity Jean * Ladysmith 4.6.1946 m. Escourt 4.7.1964 Hylton Spenser GRANT
 1.3.6.3 Neil Wilhelm * Escourt 22.7.1947
 1.3.6.4 Hillary Ann * Escourt 3.5.1951 m. Escourt 9.2.1980 Brian Clive BAKER
 1.3.6.5 Christian * Escourt 22.8.1959
 1.4 Anna Pauline * 26.1.1873 † 20.3.1874
 1.5 Adelbert Theodore * 1.5.1874 † 27.7.1874
 1.6 Helena Johanna (twin) of Zoppot, Germany
 1.7 Emma Augusta m. LOCKEMANN (twin) of Hamelin, Germany

ⁱ It seems as if Lilly Neizel (possibly German from the Morley German settlement towards the Drakensberg - between Estcourt and Ladysmith) associated with the local Natal Afrikaners and was thus suspected by the British / Natal authorities of treason. Ref: Wassermann, J M. The Natal Afrikaner and the Anglo-Boer War. Doctoral Thesis, University of Pretoria. 2004