## **Captured and out of luck**

During the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), France commanded some of the world’s finest ships but lacked experienced sailors. Britain exploited this by imprisoning as many French sailors as it could for the duration of the war.

In 1758, out of 60,137 French sailors, a third (19,632) were detained in Britain. Across the period of the Seven Years' War as a whole, there were 64,373 French sailors imprisoned in Britain.

Some of these men died from disease and malnutrition, but many others were released. In the meantime, their families waited and repeatedly tried to contact them and exchange news.

Morieux said: “These letters show people dealing with challenges collectively. Today we would find it very uncomfortable to write a letter to a fiancée knowing that mothers, sisters, uncles, neighbours would read it before it was sent, and many others would read it upon receipt.