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# The Prussian Field Post-Relais in Denmark – 1864

## Mail in Denmark Handled by the Static Prussian Field Post Offices

*By Christopher King*



The Prussian Field Mail on its way to the Front (Source: *Illustrated London News*, February 20, 1864).

Count Otto von Bismarck's first war of German unification was between Denmark and the German states over the Duchies of Slesvig and Holstein, which had been part of the Danish royal domain for almost 500 years. They were subject to the Danish Monarch, but not part of the Kingdom. Under the leadership of Austria and Prussia, with the sanction of the German Bund, and together with Hanoverian and Saxon troops, Denmark was attacked in February 1864.

Between February 1, and October 31, 1864, Denmark lost the Duchies including Lauenburg, the Danish post office in Hamburg, access to the western ports of Tönning and Husum, and 40 percent of her territory where one-third of her population lived.

When the second armistice was agreed on July 20, 1864, the only part of the Duchy of Slesvig still held by the Danes was the Island of Ærø, while the island of Fanø was the only part of Jutland remaining in Danish control, besides the eastern Jutland islands.

During the conflict, the Prussian Field Post was organized into mobile and static offices with the latter named Feldpost-



Circular date stamp for Feldpost-Relais No.9 at Kolding.



Rectangular date stamp for Feldpost-Relais No.26 known from Sønderborg.

Map showing the Feldpost-Relais cancels used in Jutland, Slesvig, Holstein, and Lauenburg



Prussian-Austrian Feldpost-Relais datestamps from war with Denmark, 1864.

| Location          | No. | Format |
|-------------------|-----|--------|
| Aabenraa          | 6   | cds    |
| Aalborg           | 23  | cds    |
| Aarhus            | 13  | cds    |
| Aarhus            | 19  | cds    |
| Altona            |     | frame  |
| Augustenburg      | 8   | cds    |
| Burg              | 14  | cds    |
| Cappel            | 28  | frame  |
| Cappel?           | 16  | cds    |
| Christiansfeld    | 7   | cds    |
| Christiansfeld    | 8   | cds    |
| Eckernförde       | 12  | cds    |
| Flensburg         |     | cds    |
| Frederikshavn     | 25  | cds    |
| Grenaa            | 27  | frame  |
| Haderslev         | 7   | cds    |
| Heiligenhafen     | 11  | cds    |
| Hjørring          | 24  | cds    |
| Hobro             | 21  | cds    |
| Horsens           | 17  | cds    |
| Horsens           | 9   | cds    |
| Husum             | 26  | frame  |
| Husum             | 16  | cds    |
| Kiel              | 11  | cds    |
| Kolding           | 9   | cds    |
| Kolding/Kjærstrup | 6   | cds    |
| Mariager          | 21  | cds    |
| Neumunster        | III | cds    |
| Nimtofte          | 25  | cds    |
| Not known         | 4   | cds    |
| Not known         | 15  | cds    |
| Not known         | 29  | frame  |
| Not known         | 31  | frame  |
| Not known         | 32  | frame  |
| Not known         | 33  | frame  |
| Randers           | 17  | cds    |
| Randers           | 20  | cds    |
| Ratzeburg         | 5   | cds    |
| Rendsburg         | 1   | cds    |
| Rødekro           | 16  | cds    |
| Schleswig         | 10  | cds    |
| Silkeborg         | 30  | frame  |
| Skærbæk           | 27  | frame  |
| Skanderborg       | 18  | cds    |
| Skive             | 22  | cds    |
| Sønderborg        | 19  | cds    |
| Sønderborg        | 26  | frame  |
| Veile             | 13  | cds    |
| Viborg            | 22  | cds    |



Relais, meaning staging post or relay station.

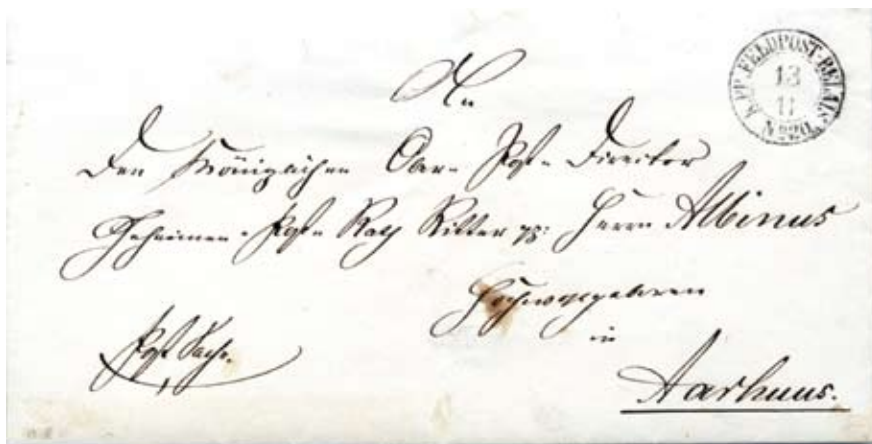
The eight mobile posts followed the troops, while the static offices were fixed in towns. These static offices were numbered and there are 37 listed in the literature, of which 12 date stamps are rectangular and the others circular.

There are no recorded examples for some of these marks.

In addition, there were rectangular, but unnumbered, postmarks for Altona and Flensburg, both of which had Danish post offices until 1864.

Feldpost-Relais No.7 is recorded by Karsten Wildschütz on January 14 from Haderslev, Feldpost-Relais No.8 on March 6 in Christiansfeld, and Feldpost-Relais No.6 on March 7 from Aabenraa. Latest use in the Monarchy is from November 18 in Kolding with Feldpost-Relais No.9, and November 25 in Christiansfeld. During the period between these dates, Prussian Field Post mail can be found from as far north as Hjørring.

For a brief period, the entire peninsula of Jutland was in Prussian hands, with the Post-Inspektoratet for Jylland based



September 13, 1864 letter addressed to the Royal Post Director Albinus in Randers carried free.



July 11, 1864 civilian mail mailed on board ship to Lübeck, carried to Randers, and delivered by Feldpost-Relais No.20 on July 14, eight-skilling rate from April 1, 1864.



in Randers under Oberpostdirektor Albinus. On July 20 the Prussian Field Post Service took over civilian mail handling in Jutland, initially through 11 Feldpost-Relais offices, which continued also to carry military mail. However, examples of civilian mail handled by the Feldpost-Relais are known from before this date.

On August 10 the number of Prussian Feldpost-Relais offices for mail within Jutland was increased from 11 to 19 by Danish request. Therefore, 19 different numbers were used within the Jutland borders as redrawn in July, 1920, and either because mail was carried to the Feldpost-Relais offices for sorting, or office locations were changed, items are known from 29 different places. Wax seals with the Feldpost-Relais numbers can also be found.

Danish stamps were invalid in the Duchy of Slesvig from midnight on March 31, 1864, and earlier in Holstein and Hamburg. Then from July 24, Danish stamps became invalid in occupied Jutland. The Prussian rate, payable in cash, was six skilling for single letters and four skilling for a town or local district letter. Cash on delivery and postal order services were not available.

On August 1, 1864, a preliminary peace treaty was signed in Vienna, and the postal services between Haderslev and Kolding, and from Ribe to Tønder, on either side of the new border, were resumed. The registered letter illustrated here was among the first to be sent to Copenhagen.



August 14, 1864 letter from Holstebro paid to Fredericia, both within Jutland, but charged six skilling by the Prussian Field Post.



July 30, 1864 registered letter from Randers carried south by the Slesvig railway via Lübeck and thence by sea to Copenhagen. The Jutland ports were closed and the letter went via Slesvig and Holstein.



August 14, 1864 letter from Nakskov on Lolland paid to Randers but charged six skilling by the Prussian Field Post.



September 17, 1864 civilian mail charged six skilling; Danish Antiqua VI canceller HORSENS.

On August 9 the military governor, Generalleutnant Eduard Vogel von Falkenstein, opened nine ports on the Jutland east coast for connection with the islands and foreign countries. These were Aalborg, Randers, Grenaa, Ebeltoft, Aarhus, Horsens, Vejle, Fredericia, and Kolding.

The rate for letters was still six skilling for single letters to be delivered within Jutland or the local four-skilling rate. That is, the Danish postage was valid only to the port with further charges for onward delivery. Danish stamps were valid for postage but only to unoccupied Denmark. All Jutland ports were opened for connection with the islands and countries overseas from August 21.

On September 1, postal delivery in Jutland was resumed by Danish officials but under Prussian oversight. Danish stamps were reintroduced for delivery within Jutland, but were not always used.

Postal orders and cash on delivery could still not be handled to, within, or from Jutland. An agreement was signed concerning the exchange of post between Jutland and Slesvig, and on September 3 the land route via Kolding and Haderslev to the Duchies and beyond was reopened. Stampless mail can be found from September utilizing Danish date stamps on both civilian and Prussian military mail.

On October 15 the military governor announced that the postal delivery in Jutland must again be handled by the Prussian Field Post Office from November 1. This was confirmed as late as October 29, but the signing of the peace treaty the next day made it redundant. The post continued to be handled by the Danes, overseen by the Prussians.

The Peace Treaty was ratified in Vienna on November 16. Martial law in Jutland officially ended and withdrawal of German and Austrian forces in Jutland began. On November 22, the postal service in Jutland was again administered from Copenhagen. By December 6, all Prussian troops who had taken part in the campaign had left Jutland.

The same Feldpost-Relais date stamps can be found in 1865 and 1866 used in Slesvig and Holstein in the military movements associated with the Austro-Prussian War in which Bismarck gave Prussia superiority in Germany and removed the Austrians from Holstein.

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*Author's Note:* The sources are not entirely consistent, and the author will be pleased to receive corrections and further information. He can be reached at PO Box 37460, London, N3 1 TD, United Kingdom; email, [chris.king@postalhistory.net](mailto:chris.king@postalhistory.net). ■

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