

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS



PURPOSE: This display exhibit presents the role Great Britain played in the workings and activities of the League of Nations from its beginnings in 1919 to its demise in 1946.

BACKGROUND: The League of Nations was the first truly international civil service organization dedicated to preserving peace and fostering universal cooperation among nations. Born of the ashes of World War I through the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the League was established by the victorious powers led by Great Britain and France. As a result much of the internal operations and international activities of the organization were entrusted to these countries.

EXHIBIT PLAN:

- A. Forerunner Peace Activities
- B. International Cooperation
- C. The Great War
- D. Versailles
- E. League Union
- F. The London Period and Early Years
- G. League London Offices
- H. Conferences
- I. Mandates
- J. Demise of the League
- K. Epilogue

IMPORTANCE:

Stamps and postal history of the League of Nations provides us a unique perspective on how an international organization active in the early to mid-20th century functioned and helped shaped the history of the world during that timeframe. Although the ideals and aims of the League were rather lofty (and never fully achieved) the League of Nations was a success. It confirmed that nations could work together for the common good, and its legacy continues to this day in the embodiment of the United Nations Organization.

ORGANIZATION:

The exhibit is generally organized in a chronological fashion starting with forerunner material representing Great Britain's early activities associated with fostering peace and international cooperation. The exhibit then flows from the period following World War I with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles through the formation of the League of Nations and highlights major activities Great Britain had a significant contribution to. Within each chapter, relevant historical facts are woven into the fabric of the story line and are exemplified through the postal and ephemeral artifacts presented. The mail of the International Labor Organization (ILO) is included in this study, as the ILO was a significant autonomous body under the League.

CONDITION and RARITY:

This exhibit was assembled from arguably the largest single collection of League of Nations service mail in private hands. This collector has spent nearly 40 years acquiring, studying, and documenting League of Nations postal history. As an officer in the United Nations Philatelists for several decades, I have befriended and corresponded with almost all of the influential philatelists worldwide with interest in the League of Nations. The material presented in this exhibit has been extraordinarily difficult to acquire as most of the League's activities were not celebrated through philatelic keepsakes and very few specimens of League service mail from or to Great Britain have actually survived.

HIGHLIGHTS: (Identified with a light blue border)

- 1. 1 of 5 known covers from the second International Radiotelegraph Convention 1912 (page 1)
- 2. Earliest recorded League correspondence in private hands (page 3)
- 3. 1 of 2 known small formal service covers from the SG of the London Naval Conference of 1930 (page 6)
- 4. Only known cover from the Council of Foreign Ministers to the UN Preparatory Commission (page 8)