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Canadian Military Mail Study Group

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EDITOR

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After what seems like a long 'holiday' it must be time that the editor should attempt another newsletter!

It takes awhile to get back in step- please bear with me. Was visited this summer by Jon Johnson, our Study Group Co-ordinator, and by Bill Robinson on his way through the valley. While travelling myself, had a chance to call on Steve Luciuk in Saskatoon and wish to thank him, and his wife, for their hospitality.

NEW MARKINGS?

Now that Canada is part of the UN Peace Keeping Force in Iran-Iraq we must have some new military mail, and likely cancellations? Hope that someone responds in time for the next N/L.

INDEX

Am sure we all could use an index to this newsletter. Of course there is one from # 1 to 50, but what about thereafter? Let not everyone do it, but if you would like to, please advise the Editor - first volunteer gets the job!

BNAPEX

This September the convention is in Virginia Beach and we were asked to have the usual seminar. However, in talking to several members of this group, we decided to give it a rest this year as the load always falls on the same few (Toop and Robinson). We should plan for a super one in Hamilton next year.

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

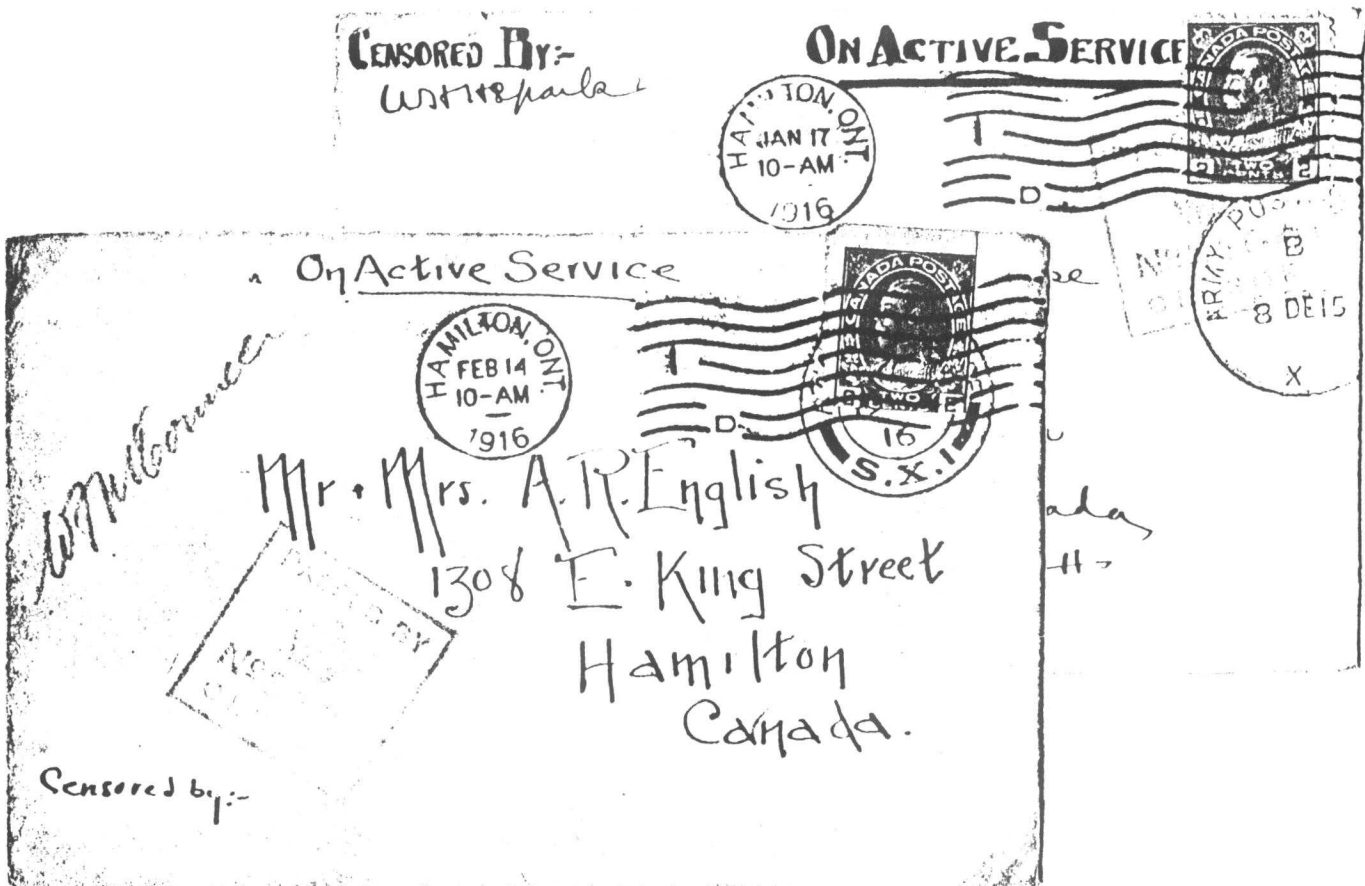
Our membership stands at 43 plus 6 complimentary N/L's go out to BNA and other 'officials'. Things are looking up as we have had two letters in the past week expressing interest in our Group.

Putting out extra issues last December, February and April has left us low on funds, but not bankrupt. After this N/L we will have approximately \$25 left in this years account. Since many have pre-paid dues there is also \$119.50 in next years reserve. In the November N/L we will call for dues from those of you not in a credit position.

As you may know, we exchange N/L's with this group in Britain. Their Bulletin Editor, Alan Brown, does a great job. Their Society deals with the world and all periods of military postal history. If interested you could contact them through Alan at 17 Wimbledon Park Court, London, SW19 6NN, England.

Alan Brown sends along a note and photocopies in a follow up to Bill Bailey's Order of St. John article. Alan says "... the two covers on the enclosed photocopy might be of interest. Although they are not necessarily connected with the Order of St. John, they both come from the 4th Canadian General Hospital in Salonika. Both have the same censor mark, 3164, one being postmarked ARMY POST OFFICE X, 8 De 15, and the other ARMY POST OFFICE SX1, 19 Ja 16." Two nice covers - thanks Alan.

From Michael Dobbs, also of FPHS, "...I am in the process of updating and rewriting my notes on No. 6 (RCAF) Group in Bomber Command in the UK (WW II). ...Another project is a detailed look at the Canadian Base and Reinforcement/Holding Units and organization in the UK." Michael "... enjoyed the Order of St. John article by Bill Bailey (March 88 N/L)" and points out a small correction which we will add to the next N/L after Bill Bailey recovers from moving his residence about Vancouver. (now 108-7155 Granville St., Vancouver V6P 4X6)



BNAPS LIBRARY

Word this summer from Clinton Phillips says our library has acquired newsletters to replace #1 to #49 that were missing from the files. Good news from Clint!

CANADIAN TROOPS IN THE BAHAMAS IN WORLD WAR II

This is the topic of our major article this time. It is taken from the British Caribbean Philatelic Journal, Vol. 28, No. 2 of June 1988. The article came in by way of Robert Lemire and permission to reprint has been given by M.W.S., Editor of that Journal. Reference is also made to the subject in ARMS, MEN AND GOVERNMENT by C. P. Stacey on page 156, and in Jack Davis' article in our N/L #56 on the Veteran's Guard of Canada.

There are four covers in the Editor's accumulation from the Canadian Army in the Bahamas, and five RCAF attached RAF TC. Most are postage free, but those with stamps do not have the 'security' postmark as seen in Figure 4 therein. This is another interesting aspect of Canadians serving throughout the World. If you have anything you think is unusual concerning this operation, please send a photocopy to the Editor.

HELP WANTED

I am attempting a follow-up article to one prepared by Mike Street on the subject of World War Two P.O.W. Christmas postcards. (TOPICS, Vol.43, no. 6). Questions remain about aspects of these scarce Christmas postcards printed on Form 1.0. 20 by Canadian Y.M.C.A. agencies. Specifically:

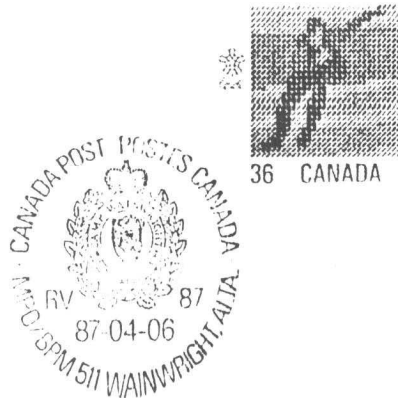
1. How many designs were actually produced during the course of the War? (At least 4 and possibly 5 basic designs are known to date).
2. Some designs had the year printed on the postcard. Others did not. Information is needed to clarify doubtful years of usage.
3. Details on distribution of these Christmas postcards are needed. For example: numbers given to each P.O.W., other relevant information, and so on.
4. Was there some sort of reciprocal arrangement for Canadian P.O.W. held by Germany?
5. Finally, there is an apparent lack of published source material. Titles of books or articles dealing with this subject are needed. (I will, of course, be contacting archival sources).

Any assistance and/or photocopies would be greatly appreciated and your contribution would be acknowledged in the forthcoming article.

Contact Steven Luciuk, 1542 East Heights, SASKATOON, Sask., Canada, S7J 3B5.

C.A.P.O. # 1

A new early date for this office has been turned up, not by a military collector, but a Newfie groupee, Doug Hannan of Kelowna. The previous early date noted was September 7, 1941. Doug's nive copy advances the date by one day to September 6 for this CAPO at St. John's, Newfoundland. This may not seem important to you, but it may be the first day of use of the hammer?? (See N/L # 61 of January 1985.)



BELATEDLY PRINTED PAGE, from Dave Haines.



CANADIAN FORCES EXERCISE "RENDEZ VOUS 87"

Two special commemorative covers have been produced to commemorate RENDEZ VOUS 87, a Canadian Forces exercise at detachment Wainwright and CFB Suffield in Alberta.

The covers depict the blue and red logo of RENDEZ VOUS 87 with Mobile Command (FMC) crest. The RV 87 logo was designed by the Graphic Arts Section at FMC Headquarters.

Two Military Post Offices (MPOs) are operating during RV 87. Wainwright is served by MPO 511 since 6 April 87 and Suffield by MPO 513 activated on 27 April 87.

The concentration takes place from 6 April to 12 June 87 inclusive, under the direction of Lieutenant-General J.A. Fox, CMM, CD, Commander FMC.

Canadian Troops in the Bahamas in World War II

by Harold G. Gosney and Gale J. Raymond

In the military postal history of the West Indies, certain covers can be considered modern classics of the World War II period. A "new" one of only three* known from the Canadian troops in the Bahamas has just come to light. This sheds additional information on their postal arrangements. According to the "OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN ARMY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR", by Colonel C. P. Stacey, Vol. 1, p. 181,

"In April 1942 the United Kingdom asked that Canada give further assistance by providing a company for Nassau in the Bahamas, so that a British company on duty there might rejoin its battalion in the U. K. Protection was particularly important at this point as a member of the Royal Family, H. R. H. the Duke of Windsor, was Governor of the Bahamas. The War Committee agreed on 9 April to provide the troops. A new company of the Veterans Guard of Canada (No. 33) was organized for the purpose and arrived in Nassau in June. This was "N" Force. The Veterans were relieved in the autumn of 1943 by a company of the Pictou Highlanders. The Canadian Garrison left Nassau only in the spring of 1946, simultaneously with the relief of the troops in Jamaica and Bermuda."

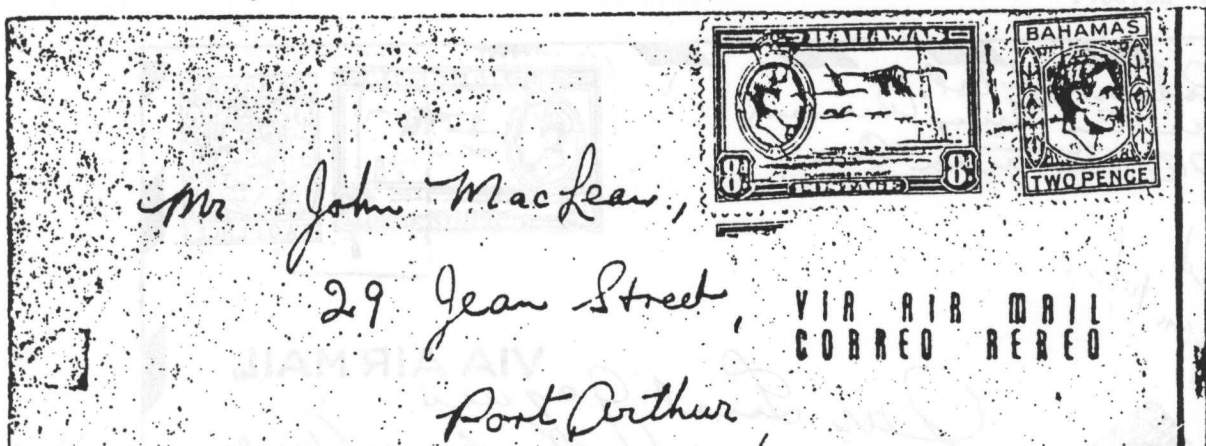


Fig. 1

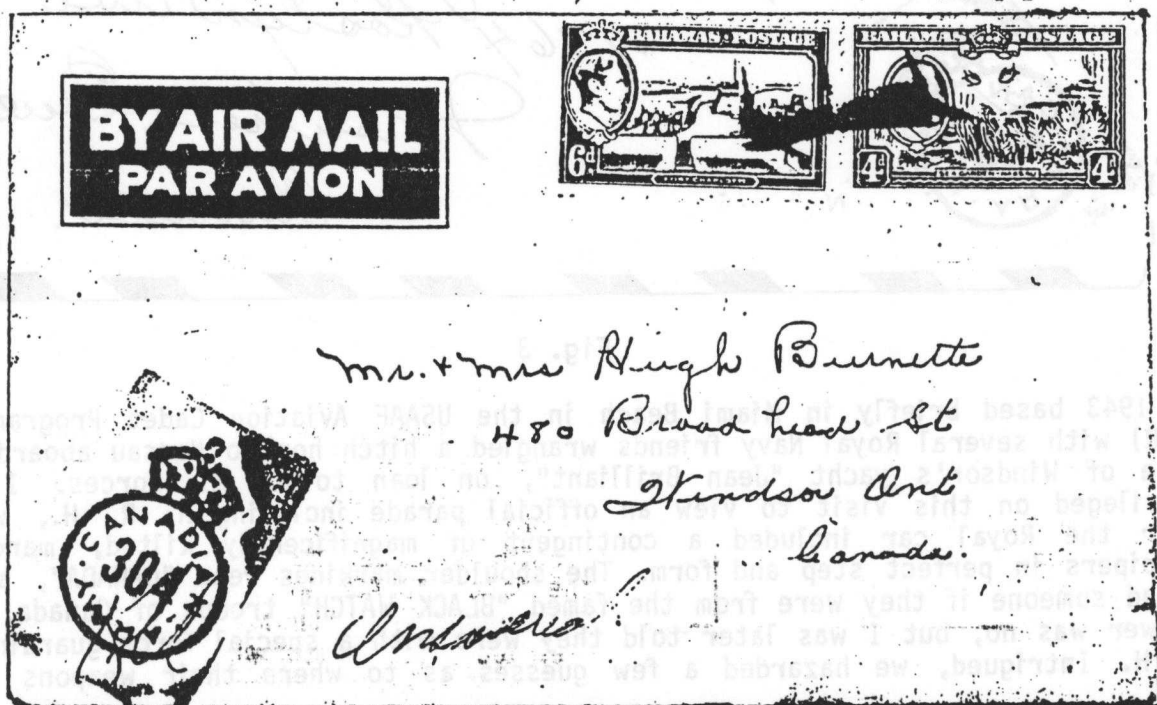


Fig. 2

The size of the Bahamas detachment is not now known, but the scarcity of any covers suggest that it was certainly a small one. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate two covers recording the fact that, rather than an official Forces post office, troops utilized the normal Bahamas postal system with a 10d. rate to Canada. Military mail was handed unsealed to the censoring officer, who placed his initials or signature in the lower left corner. Some time in 1944 a Crown Circle CANADIAN ARMY 304 censorship mark, probably about the same time No. 316 was allotted to "Y" Force in Jamaica, appeared on Canadian Forces mail from the Bahamas. Consistently "N" Forces mail carried Bahamas postage stamps cancelled by a rectangular handstamp with center bar. This is a dumb-killer used at the Nassau GPO as a "security cancel" for Forces mail and sometimes as a paquebot marking for naval or ship mail. We do know that such a marking with a large "T" at the left end was available as a Postage Due marking, but was rarely if ever so utilized. Postage due marking was a GPO function, generally ignored in practice, then as now.

The latest cover to come to light (Fig. 3) fortunately includes the "official" return address of Lt. J. R. Robson, "N" Force Canadian Army Overseas, B. P. O., Ottawa, Canada. An inscription, "Ansd. Jan 16/45", gives a date frame at last. None of the three otherwise carries a dateline with this type of security cancel. Reports of any other "N" Force covers would be highly appreciated by the authors c/o Editor.

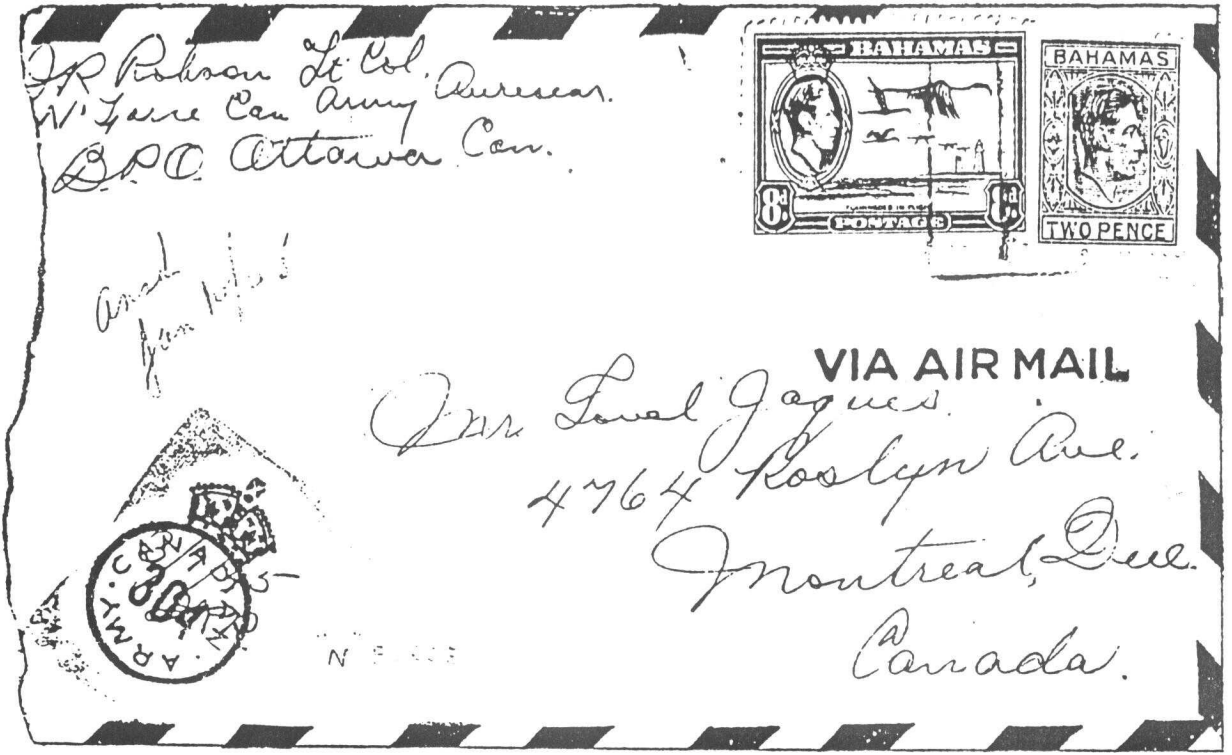


Fig. 3

In 1943 based briefly in Miami Beach in the USAAF Aviation Cadet Program, I (GJR) with several Royal Navy friends wrangled a hitch hop to Nassau aboard the Duke of Windsor's yacht "Jean Brilliant", on loan to H. M. Forces. I was privileged on this visit to view an official parade including H. R. H., which near the Royal car included a contingent of magnificently kilted, marching bagpipers in perfect step and form. The shoulder markings read "CANADA", and I asked someone if they were from the famed "BLACK WATCH" troops of Canada. The answer was no, but I was later told they were with a special force guarding H. R. H. Intrigued, we hazarded a few guesses as to where their weapons were

concealed, but as with other kilt mysteries, the answer is still ahanging. Was this a part of "N" Force? Surely someone closer to the source will inform us even at this late date.

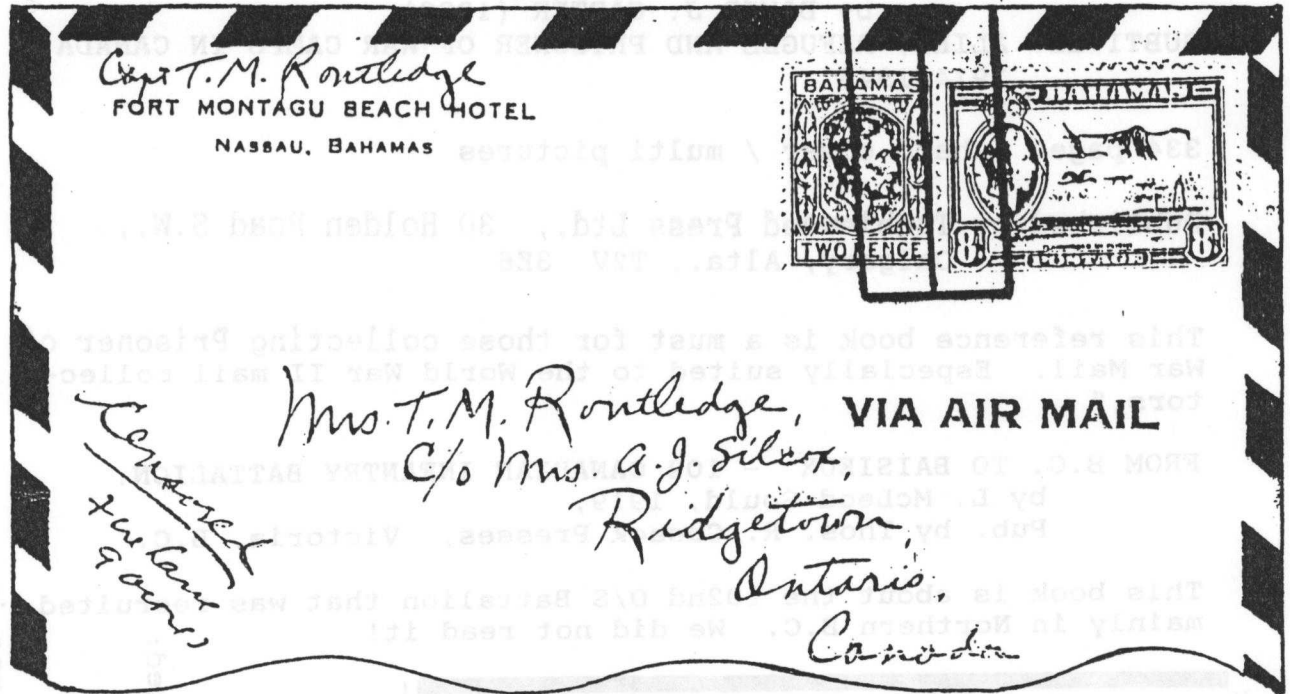
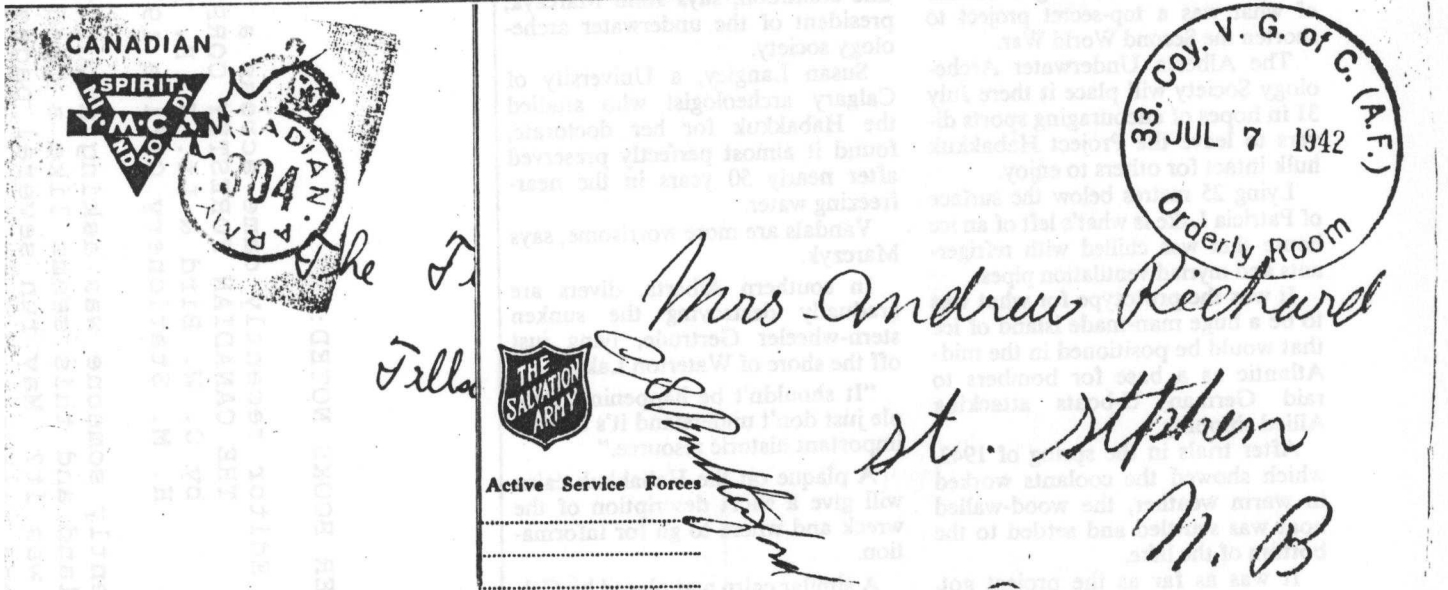


Fig. 4.

*We've just been reminded of a fourth cover (Fig. 4), illustrated by Don Welsh in BCPJ, Vol. 23, No. 2, W/N 125, April 1983, p. 55. Apparently also an "N" Force cover from a (Canadian) Captain, of uncertain date, it bears an unusually well struck example of the security cancel, as usual in violet ink.



Above two covers are from "N" Force in the Bahamas. Reference was made in the article to the size of the detachment there. The answer appears to be 6 officers and 151 other ranks.

MISCELLANY

A note just in from Colin (Campbell) "...was surprised to find a book in our library as follows:

BEHIND CANADIAN BARBED WIRE
by DAVID J. CARTER (1980)

SUBTITLE: ALIEN, REFUGEE AND PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS IN CANADA
1914-1946

334 pages / hard cover / multi pictures

Published by Tumbleweed Press Ltd., 30 Holden Road S.W.,
Calgary, Alta., T2V 3E6

This reference book is a must for those collecting Prisoner of War Mail. Especially suited to the World War II mail collectors."

FROM B.C. TO BAISIEUX - 102 CANADIAN INFANTRY BATTALION.
by L. McLeod Gould, 1919,
Pub. by Thos. R. Cusack Presses, Victoria, B.C.

This book is about the 102nd O/S Battalion that was recruited mainly in Northern B.C. We did not read it!

Sunken cairn to mark war-time secret's grave

By DON THOMAS
Journal Staff Writer

Divers will sink a cairn in a Jasper park lake near the submerged remains of what was a top-secret project to shorten the Second World War.

The Alberta Underwater Archeology Society will place it there July 31 in hopes of encouraging sports divers to leave the Project Habakkuk hulk intact for others to enjoy.

Lying 25 metres below the surface of Patricia Lake is what's left of an ice house that was chilled with refrigerants and myriad ventilation pipes.

It was the prototype for what was to be a huge man-made island of ice that would be positioned in the mid-Atlantic as a base for bombers to raid German U-boats attacking Allied shipping.

After trials in the spring of 1943, which showed the coolants worked in warm weather, the wood-walled boat was scuttled and settled to the bottom of the lake.

It was as far as the project got. Analysis showed ice islands would be impractical and far too costly. By late 1943 U-boats were much less of

a menace, anyway.

Divers who have explored the hulk say it remains in almost pristine condition, says John Marczyk, president of the underwater archeology society.

Susan Langley, a University of Calgary archeologist who studied the Habakkuk for her doctorate, found it almost perfectly preserved after nearly 50 years in the near-freezing water.

Vandals are more worrisome, says Marczyk.

In southern Alberta, divers are gradually destroying the sunken stern-wheeler Gertrude, lying just off the shore of Waterton Lake.

"It shouldn't be happening. People just don't understand it's a fairly important historic resource."

A plaque on the Habakkuk cairn will give a short description of the wreck and where to go for information.

A similar cairn was placed by Calgary divers near a submerged dam and townsite in Lake Minnewanka in Banff National Park.

OTHER BOOKS NOTED:

The Editor recently came across a small book titled:

THE CANADIAN FORESTRY CORPS

by C. W. Bird & Lt. J. B. Davis
H. M. Stationery Office 1919.

Recently someone was asking about the Forestry Corps in England and this seems like a good bit of information. WHO was it? May run several pages of it in a N/L as it gives a good account.