



# Canadian Military Mail Study Group

## NEWSLETTER

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1995

NEWSLETTER No. 119

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### CHAIR PERSONS MESSAGE

With maybe a little editing, here is a message from Bill Bailey who seems to be stranded on Juniper Island, somewhere in Ontario.

"How goes your summer? (By the time you get this it will be over.) Ritch Toop thought it was about time I took more interest in our CMMSG so I was volunteered as your new President/Chairman. Our task is to get our study group back on the rails (so to speak). Initially we will use guest editors for our bulletin, and later we hope to have someone take over. There is lots of study material we haven't touched as yet; Pre-1900 Military Mail, Military postal rates, checklists for WW 1 & 2 military censor marks, modern types of UN/CFPO markings - I could go on!

I wish I could join you in Edmonton but, unfortunately, a family anniversary must take precedence so I am in Ontario until mid-September. The best to you all and please send in any material to me, Wm.J.Bailey, 5 - 8191 Francis Road, Richmond, B.C., V6Y 1A5" (See below for an addition to this address)

YE OLDE EDITORS Colin and Ken are putting this N/L together in an effort to get our Study Group rolling again. The response from those few we have asked for material has been wonderful. In fact there will be several items to hand over to the next editor.

### NEWS!!!!

Have just been talking to Bill Bailey and he tells me we have an EDITOR for the next three issues. This person is likely very familiar to all of you as he has done much writing in past Newsletters. Let us welcome Dean Mario (PO Box 342, Main PO, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 3L3) who has volunteered to do the 'job' for three issues, at least. Please do send items to him and help to get us on the move again. The editor's job is not bad if the members help out!

By the way, if you have sent items to the past editor(s), and they have not appeared in the Newsletter please re-submit them to Dean. We don't need a fancy N/L, but we do need some real meaty articles.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION As you have deduced, this is being put together by Colin and Ken, both really olde hands in the Newsletter business, if we may say so. However the presses have not run for some time and the system is quite rusty. It seems that there is a lot of writing in places and not any pictures where there should be some. Please forgive us!

## CANADA MILITIA REVISITED

At a recent Bob Lee Auction Sale, on 20 May 1995 to be exact, the 30 year collection of Colin Campbell's Canada Militia was put on the block. Some of the prices realized may be of interest to our members:

Lot 485 comprised of 13 Field Post Office / Canada Militia cancels on covers/cards sold for \$260.

Lot 488 Beamsville Militia on cover sold for \$180.

Lot 492 Farnham Camp Militia on cover sold for \$180.

Lot 509 St. Jean, a very hard to acquire item, sold for \$375.

Lot 515 being hammer #1 from Valcartier brought \$180.

These are just a few of the items sold and we are informed that in Bob's next sale is a Camp Borden roller cancel piece being on a cotton cutout from a wrapped parcel. The auctioneer notes that this is the "only known example of this rare roller" and the Est. is \$100. There is also a very nice Barriefield Militia on cover being offered. Both items are from the Campbell collection. This Lee catalog should be out very soon now - 23 September 1995, we have learned. *IS THE SALE DATE.*

This leads us on to a recent letter from CMMSG member Doug Sayles wherein he asks for "any help you can give" on the Canada Militia.

Firstly: Goderich Camp history: Evidence requested of pre and post 1911-1912 camps. (dated post cards are a good source). What were the postal arrangements? A report to Doug listing the cancel dates would be useful. (The writer has a 20 June 1912 cover.)

Secondly: The Barriefield question arises again. Is anyone able to say that there were two Militia hammers? Colin suggests that his #2 hammer could be the same as #1 - possibly repaired? Can any member add to this?

Thirdly: Petawawa Camp 1905 -1940. Doug would like information for an article that would detail the registration and parcel services at the camp. Photocopies would help greatly!

Let us give Doug a hand and perhaps more information will be forthcoming in a future Newsletter. Doug Sayles address is in the last N/L #118.

### NEWS FLASH!!!

Just heard via the barbed wire fence line that Jon Johnson has located a very rare post card of a WWI hospital ship...H.M.H.S. NEURALIA. Jon is now a full time resident of Vernon, B.C.

Please note CHANGE OF ADDRESS of the writer of this page... Ken V. Ellison, 14600 Middle Bench Road, Oyama, B.C. V4V 2C3 (This change is solely the work of Canada Post who say they are improving service to Rural Route 'customers'. In actual fact they have moved the post box half a mile away whereas it used to be 100 feet away!!!

"Honour" or "Privilege" concession in the R.C.N.

W. Whitehouse

Reference is made to the article on this subject in NL #54, dated September 1983, pages 331 to 334 inclusive. The only new information that has come to my attention since that article is a rubber stamp certification which measures 69mm long X 22mm high (Fig. 1)

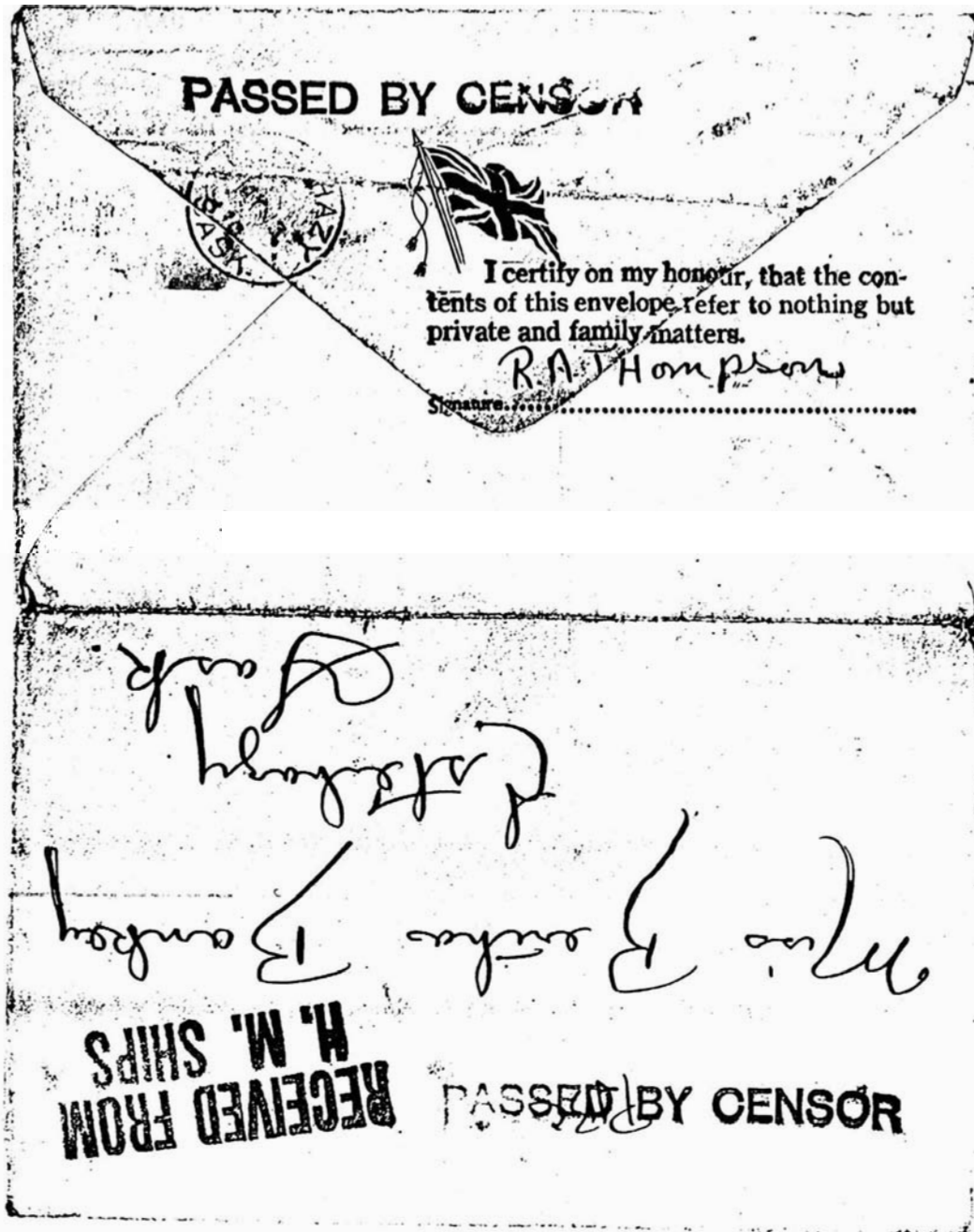


Fig. 1 - This cover originated in a unidentified ship of the R.C.N. while in Halifax early in May 1940.

**CANADIAN MILITARY MAIL FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA 1939-**  
**1945**  
**BURMA**

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Brian Plain M.D.

In my article in the *CANADIAN MILITARY POSTAL HISTORY ANTHOLOGY* <sup>1</sup>, I mentioned that wartime postal items from BURMA had proved very elusive, and that until an identified correspondence could be found, all items that I had seen up to that point had proven suspect. Now, thanks to research by John Frith into the location of 436 Squadron RCAF and the acquisition of portions of a numbered correspondence I am now able to update my comments.

As mentioned in the previous article, the RCAF presence in Burma was primarily #436 Squadron, which was engaged in flying supplies to British ground forces in the area. <sup>2</sup> Attached to #342 Wing / #232 Group RAF, this squadron operated from two different sites between March and September 1945. From March 17 - May 14, 1945, it was at Maunubyin, Akyab, a base on the tip of a small peninsula, and from May 15 - September 9, 1945 it was at Kyaukpyu on Ramree Island off the Burmese coast. Both locations were on the East side of the Bay of Bengal. <sup>3</sup> They were flying Dakota aircraft with an approximate range of 250 miles which, when combined with flights out of Imphal in what is now Bangladesh, provided air cargo service over most of Burma. <sup>4</sup>

The first two items shown below are from a numbered correspondence to Toronto from a Cpl. "Gus" Dimson.

Item #1 is #F19 in his personal series and carries the marking:

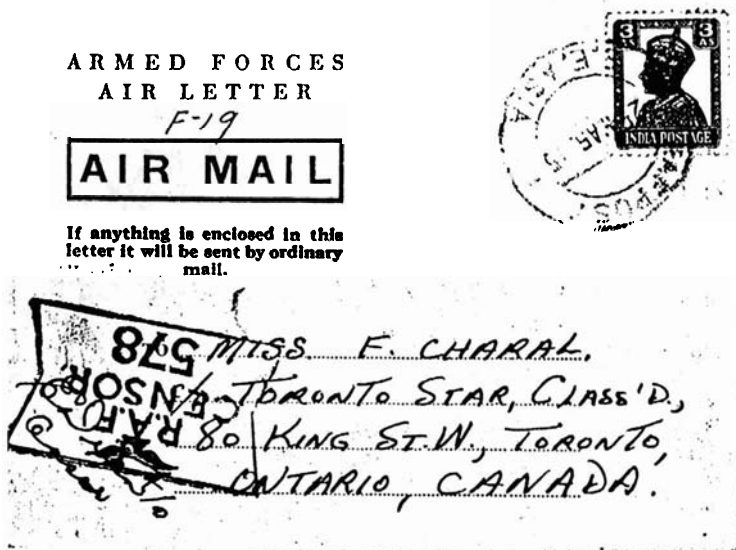
RAF POST / 5 / S.E.ASIA and is dated 25 MAR 45

and as such, was thus mailed from the base at Maunubyin, Akyab. The contents of the letter were written on March 22, only five days after the arrival of #436 Squadron. The Canadian AFAL is self-censored and bears the RAF chevron censor mark 578. It carries the correct 3Annas postage for an airletter and has a company receiver's marking dated APR 16 1945.

Item #2 is #H22 of Cpl. Dimson's sequential correspondence. It too carries the mark:

RAF POST / 5 / S.E.ASIA but is dated 6 JUN 45

which places its mailing in the period when #436 Squadron was at Ramree Island. It appears on a somewhat unusual Air Letter that has the word CANADA on the masthead. It bears no serial number and is unwatermarked and is quite different from the usual AFAL. It is possible that this type was locally printed. There is no evidence that postage was applied but in spite of this, the company receipt mark is dated JUN 19 1945. The RAF chevron censor mark 578 appears and the letter was censored by J. Jaudette

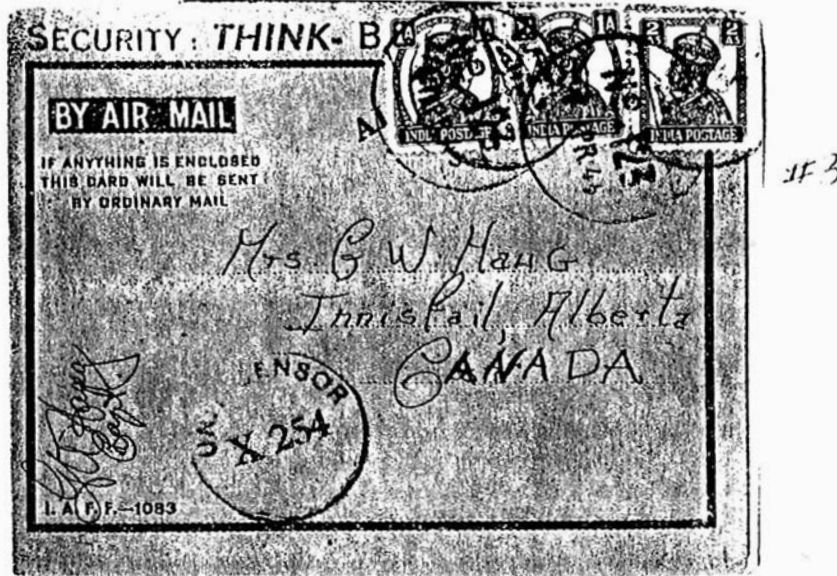


Item 1



Item 2

Item #3 presents a bit of a conundrum. It is from a Canadian officer attached to the British 14th Army in Burma. That it is from Burma is not in doubt, as in the body of the letter Capt. Haug states: "... Just 18 more days in Burma, and I count every one." It is on a British style Air Letter and bears 4Annas postage. As the postage is made up of a 2As and 2x1As stamps, the postage rate for the British was apparently higher than that for the Canadians because Capt. Haug had the correct postage stamps for the lower Canadian rate. The cover bears the British type F.P.O. / No. 123 / marking dated 4 APR 1945 and carries the unit censor marking X 253. The problem arises in that FPO # 123 is listed in Crabbe & Kennedy as having been used in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Libya and Palestine). It would seem highly unusual to have the mail from Burma handled in any of these centres, as there was a major mail facility in Karachi. If anyone has any further information on British FPO #123 in 1945, I would be grateful for your input.



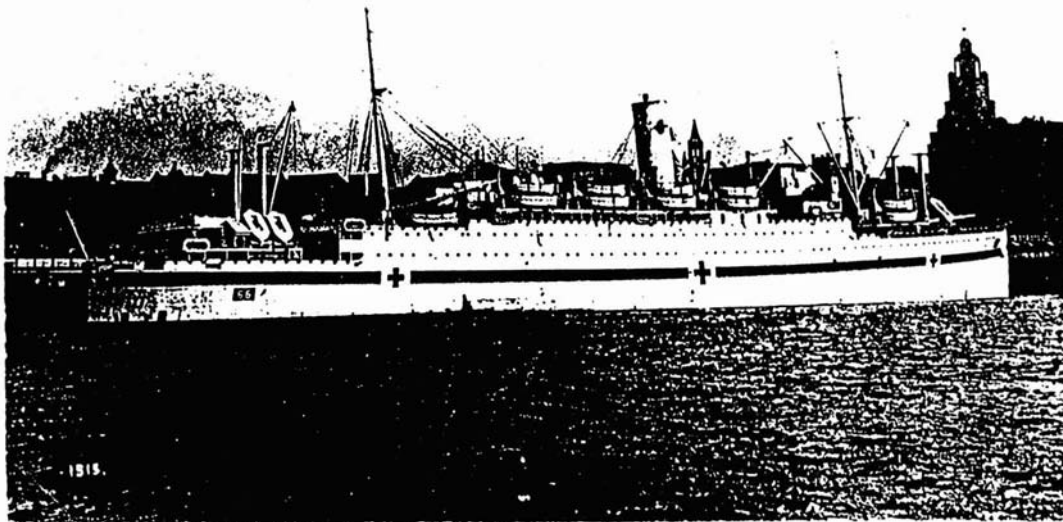
Brian included an excellent map with his article but space does not permit its inclusion. The map shows Burma as it was in 1945 and notes the air supply economic ranges of the Dakota aircraft from the three airfields of IMPHAL, AKYAB and RAMREE. The 250 mile range of the aircraft is plotted to the east over Burma.

In summary, as previously postulated, the Canadian mail from S.E.ASIA shows primarily the postal markings of the British forces to whom they were attached. We can now identify the fact that RAF POST / 5 / S.E.ASIA was with #342 Wing/#232 Group RAF in the Burmese theatre, at least from March to September 1945.

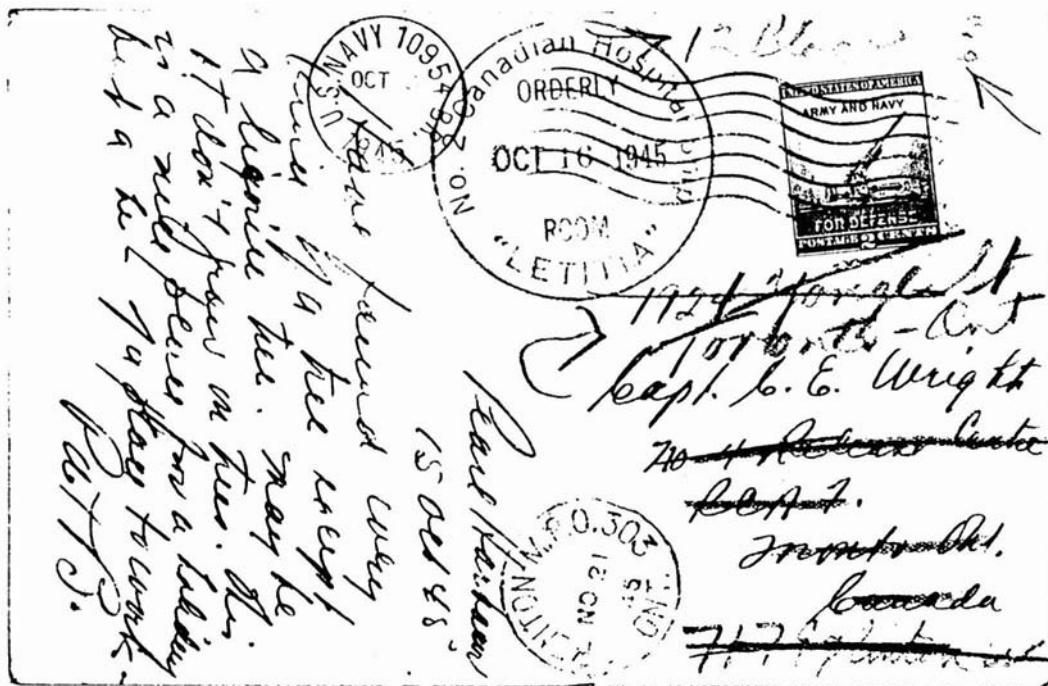
**References:**

- 1: Brian Plain M.D. *CANADIAN MILITARY MAIL FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA 1939 - 1945*. A CANADIAN MILITARY POSTAL HISTORY ANTHOLOGY. Pub. 1991 Robt. A. Lee Philatelists Ltd.
- 2: *ibid*
- 3: John Frith: Unpublished communications
- 4: T.W.Melnyk, *CANADIAN FLYING OPERATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA 1941 - 1945*. Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Occasional Paper Number One: Ministry of Supply and Services, Canada 1973.

### CANADIAN MILITARY HOSPITAL SHIPS



HMHS LETITIA at Liverpool, England during WWII.  
 9 voyages, about 6,000 patients carried, accommodation 700 patients



Postcard mailed from HMHS LETITIA on October 16, 1945 at Pearl Harbour while repatriating Allied prisoners of war. Note: forwarded three times.

#2 CANADIAN HOSPITAL SHIP LETITIA

The former Donaldson Line steamship LETITIA was converted from a troop transport to become the second hospital ship considered to be in Canadian service in WWII. Her indentation number was 66. The indentation number was clearly lettered on all Allied hospital ships, usually on both the bow and the stern.

The LETITIA made its first voyage as a hospital ship in November 1944 evacuating 745 casualties. On her second voyage she took part in exchange of prisoners of war, taking 546 Germans from New York to Marseilles and repatriating 718 allied prisoners to the United Kingdom. The LETITIA continued carrying casualties after the conclusion of the war. In all she made nine trips across the Atlantic. After which the LETITIA was transferred to the Pacific where she saw service repatriating prisoners.

The LETITIA was reported to be one of the most modern hospital ships afloat, capable of carrying approximately 700 casualties. She was equipped with two operating rooms, an x-ray department and all other equipment found in any large modern hospital.

As for the history of the LETITIA, she was launched 14 Oct 1924 as a Donaldson passenger ship for service in the north Atlantic. She was 13,876 gross tons, 538 feet in length with a service speed of 15 knots. There was accommodation for 516 cabin class and 1,023 third class. In 1939 the LETITIA became a troopship which lasted until she became a hospital ship in 1944. In 1946 she was sold to the British Ministry of Transport and renamed EMPIRE BRENT. After a refitting in 1951 as an Australian immigration ship she was renamed CAPTAIN COOK. On 29 APR 1960 the ship arrived at Inverkeithing for scrapping.

PS. This ship is not to be confused with the WWI hospital ship LETITIA which was originally built for the Anchor-Donaldson line and mentioned in Newsletter #68, May 1986, page 457. This ship was lost prior to the construction of the WWII LETITIA.

Bibliography:

Official History of the Canadian Medical Services 1939-1945 (1956)  
W. R. Feasby

Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains (1975)  
John H. Plumridge

Transatlantic Liners 1945-1980 (1981)  
William H. Miller

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Colin Campbell has discovered a reference book new to him. Titled THE CANADIAN MILITIA (From 1855-An Historical Summary) by David A. Morris, CD, QOR (1983) Published by Boston Mills Press, 98 Main Street, Erin, ON N0B 1T0. Have phoned Boston Press and they have nil copies in stock. A very useful book so hit the old book stores.

Dr. Brian Plain suggests that military mail collectors and members of the study group put together a list of reference books in their own collections up to and including World War One. Send to Newsletter editor who will include the listings so that members may know where information is to be found. Members helping members in writing up articles for future Newsletters. Submit pros and cons if you wish.



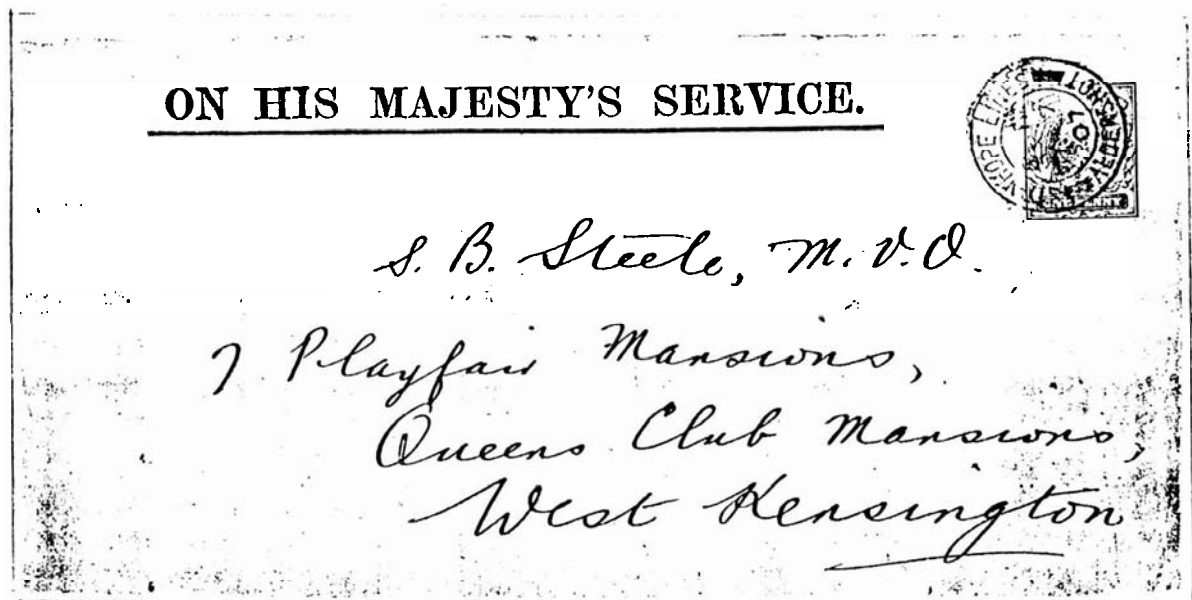
SAMUEL BENFIELD STEELE  
1849 - 1919

J.C. CAMPBELL

Sam was born near Orillia, Ontario. He took part in the first Riel Rebellion, then joined the newly formed North-West Mounted Police. The first three to sign the role on November 3, 1873, in the order given, were A.H. Griesbach, P.R. Neale and S.B. Steele. Steele witnessed Griesbach's signature, and the latter witnessed the others. In 1885 Steele served in the second Riel Rebellion and in 1898 he was placed in charge of the N.W.M.P. in the Yukon Territory and British Columbia. The Klondike gold rush was on.

Very close to the start of the Boer War, Colonel Steele was given command of a corps of mounted rifles for Lord Strathcona and at the end of that conflict he remained in South Africa with the South African Constabulary, returning to Canada via England in 1907. The cover shown below was received by him shortly before his departure. Note the double ring STANHOPE LINES, ALDERSHOT cancel, dated MY 7 07. The initials M.V.O. stand for Member of the Victorian Order, received by him in February 1901.

On his return to Canada, Steele was given command of Military District #13 with headquarters at Calgary. He died in 1919 at Putney, England.



References:

1. Col. S.B. Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, (1915)
2. J.P. Turner, *The North-West Mounted Police*, (1950)



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*Camp Borden*

*25/10/18*

*Dear Mother,*

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS - CANADA 1918

It was not until 1917 that the Royal Flying Corps created its own establishment in Canada when young men were recruited for flying training at Camp Borden, North Toronto, Deseronto and at other fields.

When the United States entered the war in 1917, a reciprocal agreement was made, under which ten American squadrons trained in Canada during the summer, while Texas airfields were provided for RFC winter training.

The above 'sets the stage' for this letter of 25 November 1918 which was written by a pilot in training at Camp Borden from which excerpts have been taken. It was written to his mother in Victoria, British Columbia on RFC stationery and the cover has a decipherable Camp Borden Militia cancellation not good enough to copy here!

"Dear Mother,

I don't remember having told you about my flying so I'll just do so now. I started Tuesday a week ago and I like it first rate too. My instructor is a very fine officer and it is very interesting all the way through. The weather of course is not quite so suitable now as it was two months ago. There being a good many cloudy days when we don't fly. But when we do it is just fine. It reminds me very much of going out in my launch some times and at other times it is more like going off in a car. It is just about as easy once we get used to it, only there aren't any telephone poles to run into.

I have been in the air now at least a dozen times and it is just great to look at the earth from three or four thousand feet in the air. On a beautiful day we can see for miles around. To fly from one town to another does not take long. We find our way by maps and compass. When I get farther on in my training I'll be taking photographs of the different places from the air. ...There is quite a lot to it that I could not write about but I can tell you some day soon I expect. I am (hoping to) get my flying over in this camp if I can. I mean if I can finish before the cold weather sets in. There are rumors of our going South (to Texas) but we don't know definitely yet.

...Does the army allowance and my assigned pay still come along alright. I get from 15.00 to 25.00 a week at this camp and pay seven dollars a week for board..."

Hopefully this adds a bit of an insight into life in the Royal Flying Corps -Canada in 1918. Whether Tom, the writers name, finished training is not known as the Great War ended some two weeks later.