



# Canadian Military Mail Study Group

## NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2004

NEWSLETTER NO. 164

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P.O. BOX 9000: THE CANADIAN MERCHANT SEAMAN'S POST OFFICE--  
By Colin Pomfret

In July 1943 the Naval Control Service created a mail forwarding service for Canadian merchant seamen. Known as "Box 9000" this organization, under the Naval Control Service Officer, Montreal, forwarded mail to intercept ships all over the world. Another office was later opened in Vancouver. The Montreal office handled, on the average, 35,000 letters, 600 parcels, and 150 telegrams per month (Tucker, The Naval Service of Canada, Vol.II, p.380,fn. 34).

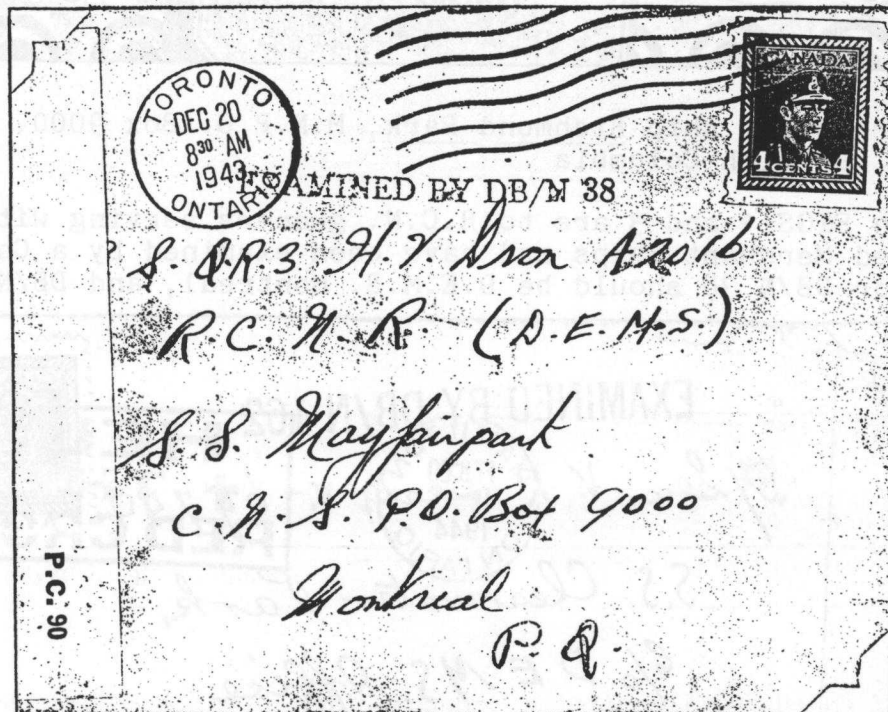


FIG. 1 A cover addressed to S.S. Mayfairpark, C.N.S. P.O. Box 9000, Montreal, Quebec

[Cont'd.]

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CHAIRMAN/TREAS.: C.D. SAYLES, 25 HOWARD BLVD., WATERDOWN, ON LOR 2H4  
(saylesd@ae1.ca)

EDITOR: D. MARIO, POST OFFICE BOX 342, SASKATOON, SK S7K 3L3

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Illustrated are examples of mail to Box 9000, Montreal (FIG.1), and to Box 9000, Vancouver (FIG.2).



FIG.2 A cover to the ship Richmond Park, M.N.P.O. Box 9000, Vancouver, British Columbia

The covers in FIGS.1 and 3 are to R.C.N. gunners serving with Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships and have been examined by a Canadian naval censor. Censor DB/N 38 should be D.E.M.S. Montreal, and DB/N 162 D.E.M.S. Vancouver.

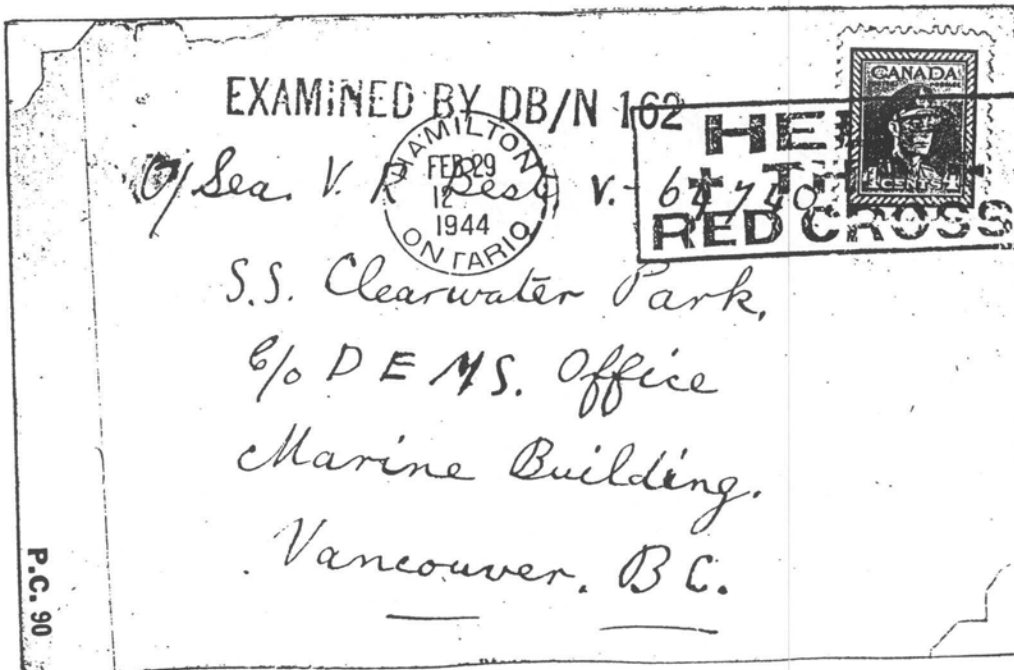


FIG.3 To the S.S. Clearwater Park, c/o D.E.M.S. Office, Marine Bldg., Vancouver, B.C.

[Cont'd.]

For examples of covers with return addresses of Box 9000, see FIGS.4 and 5. The cover in FIG.4 appears to be from a Canadian D.E.M.S. gunner. The cover in FIG.5 has part of the return address "blacked out", but upon closer examination reads "St.John, N.B., Canada" [Cropped to fit.Ed.]

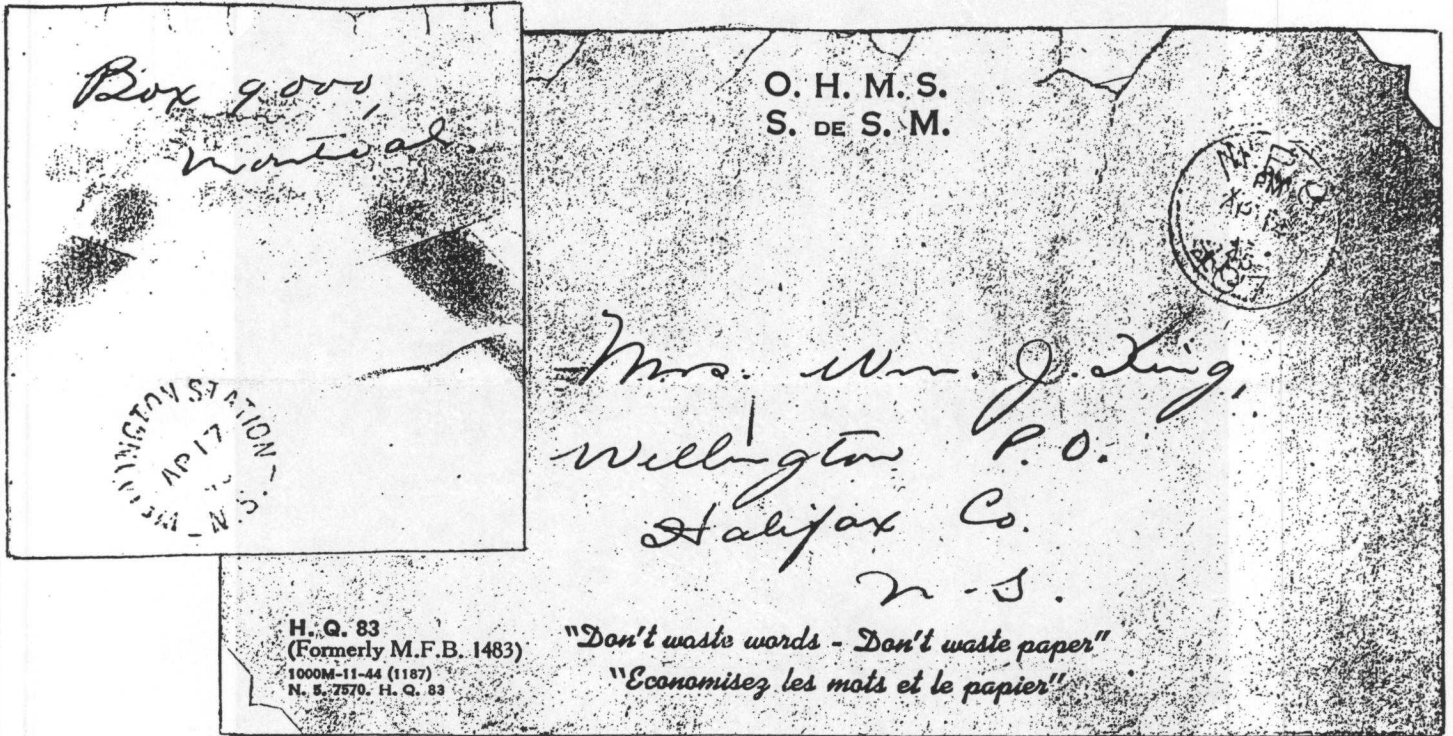


FIG.4 Posted at the R.C.N. Post Office NPO 407 on April 14, 1945 (HMCS Hochelaga, Montreal, Quebec). Note the return address of "Box 9000, Montreal".

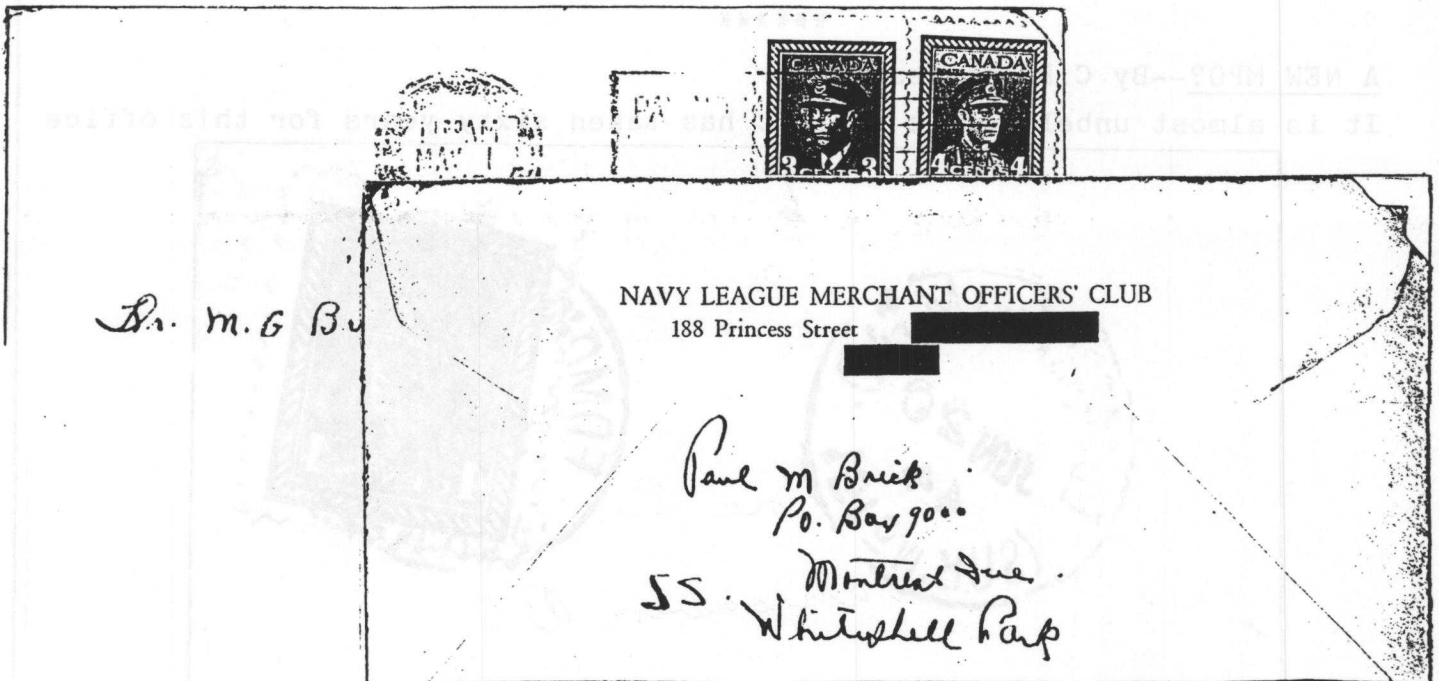


FIG.5 A cover posted May 1, 1945 from Paul M. Brick, S.S. Whiteshell Park.

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The cover which follows in FIG.6 has a return address of "S.S. Alder Park, c/o Canadian Pacific Steam Ships" and may be P.O. Box 9000, Montreal.

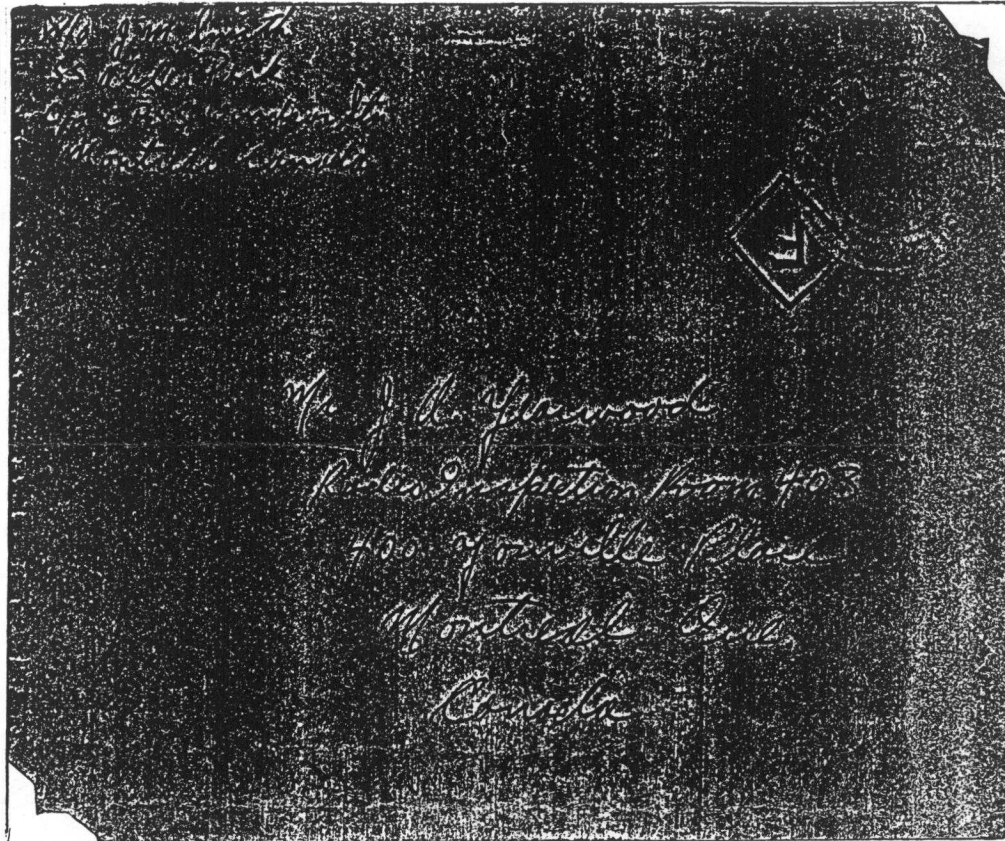
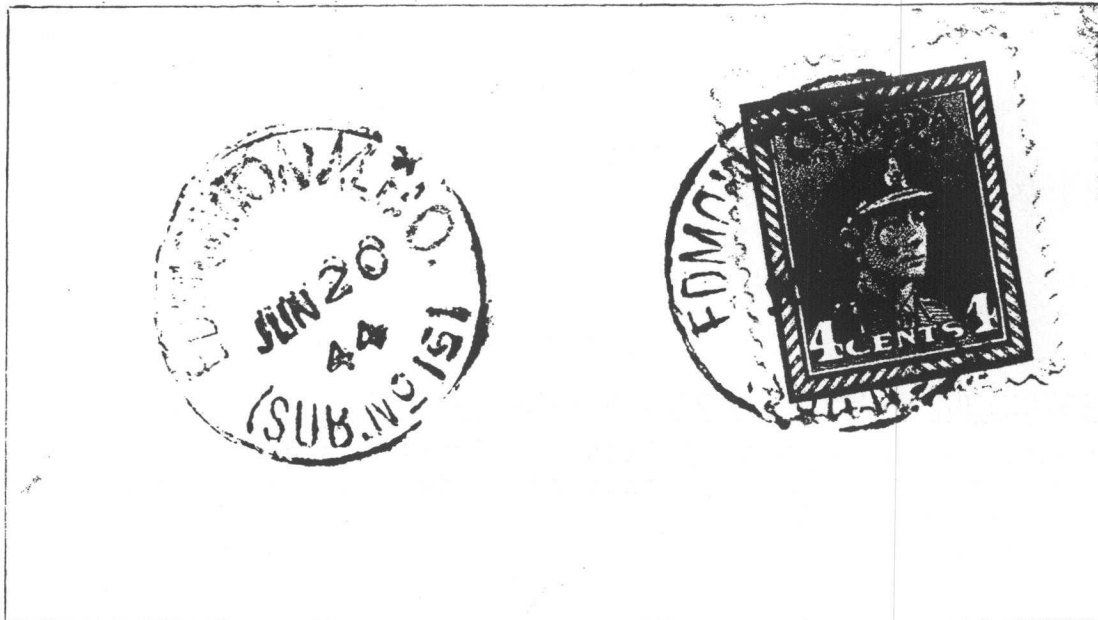


FIG.6 The above, with FPO 189 dated June 21, 1945, was sent from a Canadian Wireless Officer at Port Said, Egypt.

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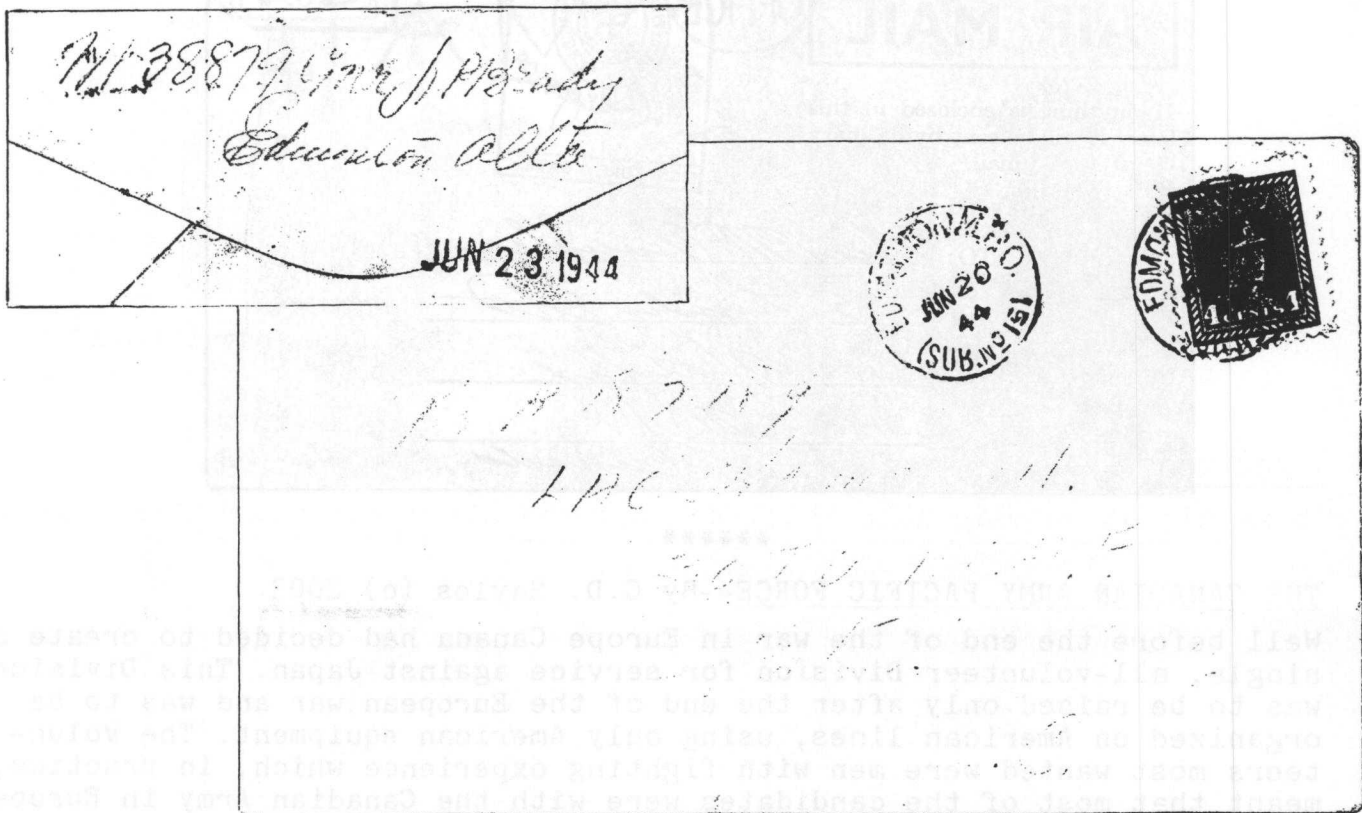
A NEW MPO?--By C.D. Sayles

It is almost unbelievable that it has taken sixty years for this office



[Cont'd.]

to possibly appear but here it is. It is very unusual in that it lacks the MPO number which all MPO daters of this period have, and substitutes "(SUB.N<sup>o</sup> 15)". The return address is a gunner so I presume that this office served an army installation. It doesn't seem possible that the Edmonton MPO had fifteen sub-post offices, so I presume this was an MPO and also Sub.15 of the Edmonton civil post office? Can anyone relate the area served by Edmonton (civil) Sub. P.O. to an army installation? [I too found it a bit unusual so I contacted one of the leading experts on Alberta post offices and cancellations, Dr. Keith R. Spencer ("Everything Alberta") who was very interested and lent us his expertise in the above. Keith kindly asked around but nobody knew of any army relationship with the sub-post office. He even travelled to the spot in question! Upon re-examination, and contact with one of our members, W.G. Robinson, both Keith and Bill are very suspicious and suspect that it has been "fiddled" with. Note the "MPO" which may have been re-worked out of "ALTA.". Given the above, this item should perhaps be placed in the "questionable" category. Can any other members comment? Thanks are extended to both Keith and Bill for their taking the time to assist us. Ed.]



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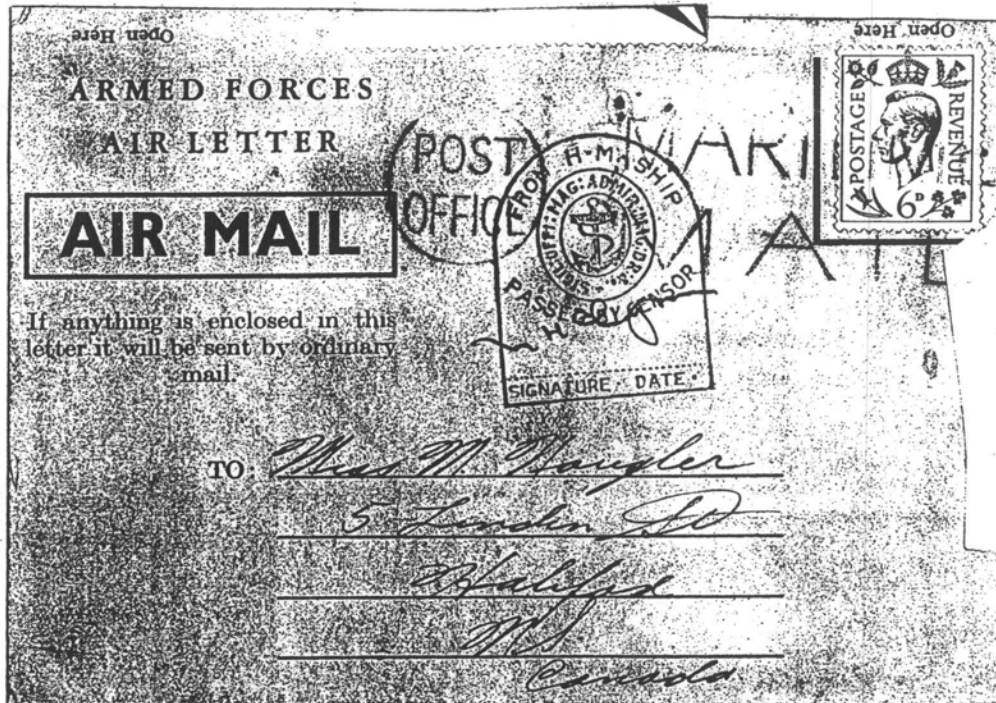
COMMISSIONING OF HMCS ALGONQUIN (EX-VALENTINE)--By Wilf Whitehouse

The commissioning of a ship into the Royal Canadian Navy in wartime was short and to the point; and that of Algonquin was to be no different. The ship had been built for the Royal Navy by John Brown and Co., Clydebank, Scotland. She was a "V" class fleet destroyer and had been purchased by Canada upon her completion.

At Glasgow on February 17, 1944, the ship's company assembled on deck,  
[Cont'd.]

came to attention on command of the First Lieutenant, then the order "ship's company, off caps". The Padre would come forward with prayers for the protection of the ship and all who sailed in her. Caps were then replaced and all turned aft to face the ensign staff and the White Ensign was hoisted for the first time. The ship was now commissioned H.M.C.S. Algonquin (R-17). Satisfying the long-standing naval tradition, the Captain then delivered his commissioning speech.

The A.F.A.L. below illustrates the commissioning day letter dated February 17, 1944. Note the use of the Royal Navy's "tombstone-type" censor marking which was supplied with the ship. A R.C.N. type did not arrive for use until December 1944.



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THE CANADIAN ARMY PACIFIC FORCE--By C.D. Sayles (c) 2003

Well before the end of the war in Europe Canada had decided to create a single, all-volunteer Division for service against Japan. This Division was to be raised only after the end of the European war and was to be organized on American lines, using only American equipment. The volunteers most wanted were men with fighting experience which, in practice, meant that most of the candidates were with the Canadian Army in Europe when victory came in May 1945.

The Force had started assembling and training at nine camps in Canada by mid-August of 1945. The delay was caused by the need to bring the volunteers home from Europe at a time when shipping was very scarce; followed by the one months leave allowed to all volunteers before actually reporting for duty with the Force. The training camps were Barriefield, Borden, Brandon, Brockville, Debort, Petawawa, Shilo, Sussex, and Vernon.

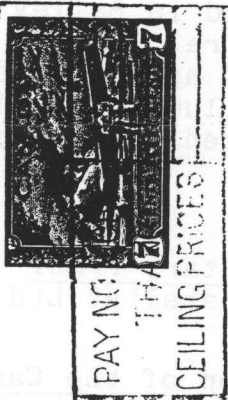
FIG.1 illustrates a letter to an instructor at Barriefield. It's the only cover I have seen with "CAPF" as part of the address. FIG.2 is a letter from a member of the CAPF to Barriefield. Note the very interesting return address.

[Cont'd.]

*Wm. P.C. Collyer,  
289 Roseberry St.  
St. James, Ont.*



FIG. 1



*H-52155  
S/Sgt. P.C. Collyer,  
C.A.P.F.  
21 C.O. & F.M.E., T.C.  
Barrifield, Ont.*

**Y AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION**

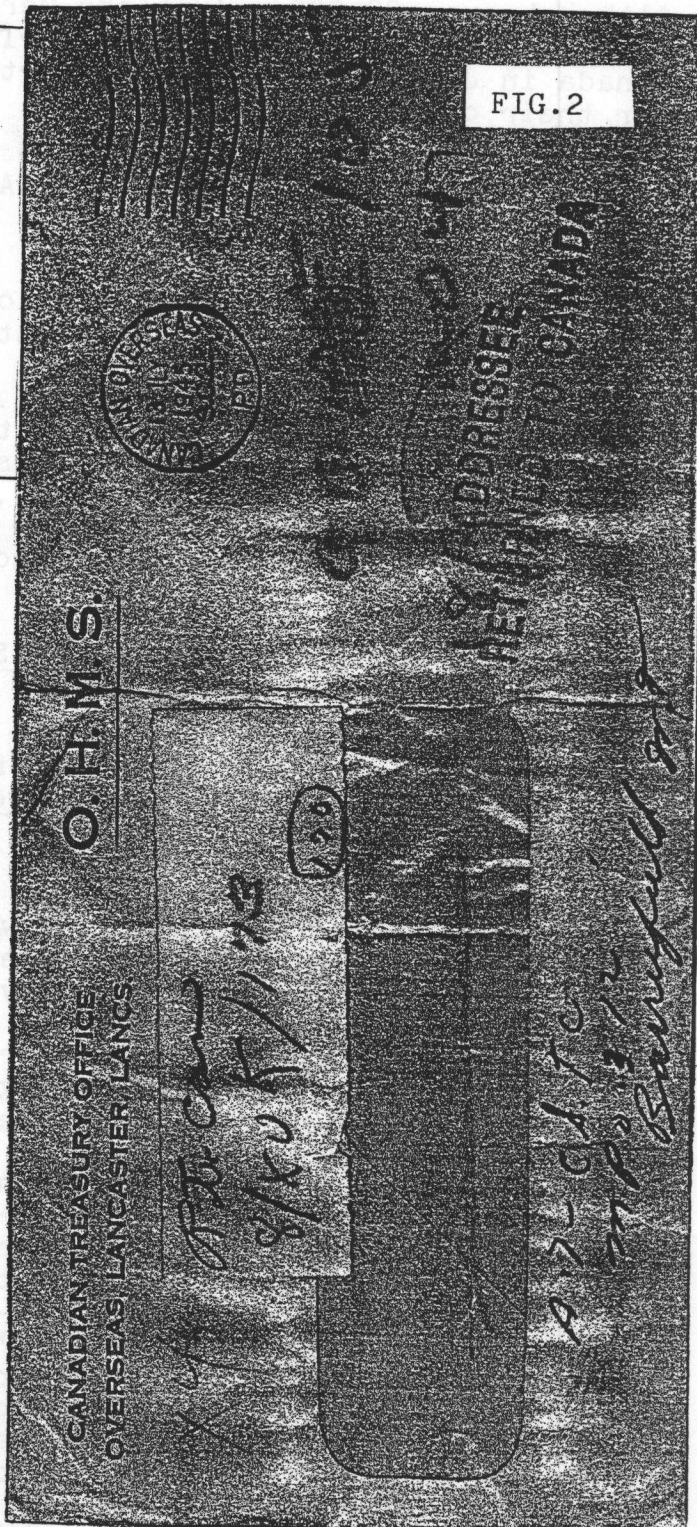


FIG. 2

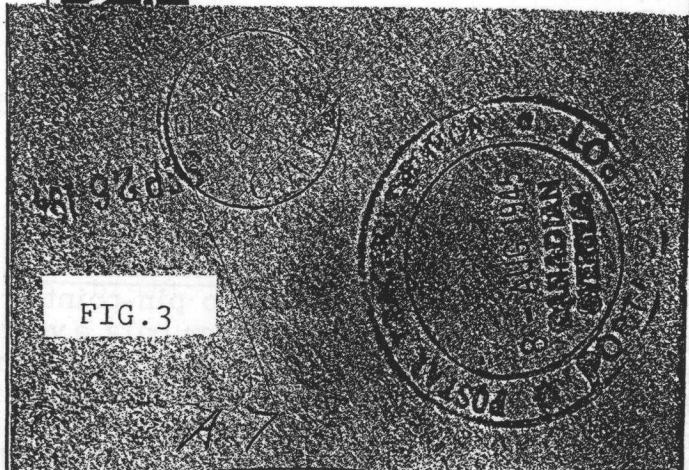


FIG. 3

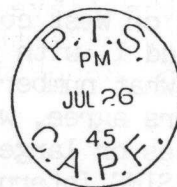


FIG. 4

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Although over 20,000 volunteers were posted to the CAPF, none served for more than a few weeks. The earliest volunteers arrived back in Canada in June 1945, and only started reporting for duty in July after their one months leave.

The end of the Pacific war came on August 14, 1945, and on September 4, 1945 the order to disband the CAPF was publicly announced. Therefore the CAPF existed for less than two months which would explain why covers are so seldom seen.

One part of CAPF lasted a little longer: the Postal Tracing Section. FIG.3 shows a September 25, 1945 strike of the PTS dater. I believe this is the first report of actual usage of this marking, which is illustrated in Hughes Proof Strikes\*. It is also illustrated in Bailey & Toop as M9-46 [FIG.4], and stated to be unreported. No more. If the proofing date is July 26, 1945 this marking had a life of approximately three months and, except in August, I would expect the volume of mail requiring tracing was small. It is no surprise it has taken fifty-eight years for an example to surface and be reported.

#### REFERENCES:

- \*1. Hughes, J. Paul, Ed. Proof Strikes of Canada: Military Proof Strikes of Canada, XXVI. Kelowna: R.A. Lee Philatelist Ltd., 1993.
2. Stacey, Col. C.P. CMHQ Report 177. The Repatriation of the Canadian Military Forces Overseas, 1945-1947.

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#### MEMBERS' UPDATES & RESPONSES

It was nice to hear from Bill Robinson who kindly sent along the following comments: "Just received Newsletter No.163...I have a few comments on some of the items as follows: 1) AFAL's--The London PUC & Railway card is addressed to a Private in the 6 Cdn. Infantry Brigade Workshop, RCOG; part of the 2nd Cdn.Div. Note the 'A' regimental number which indicates he is a local boy (from Military District No.1), with HQ at London. The second one is from the Royal Cdn. Engineers who built Bailey Bridges (as shown). The RCEME repair vehicles, weapons, and equipment. They were formed from units of the Engineering Branch of the Ordnance Corps in 1944. I have no knowledge of the 98 in circle. It may have been applied by a censor, or be an accounting mark of some kind. 2) CDN. REGIMENTAL NUMBERS--As mentioned above, the army numbers were allotted to units in blocks, with prefixes for each Military District such as the 'A' above for MD#1. The others are 'B'-MD#2 with HQ at Toronto; 'C'-MD#3, Kingston; 'D'-MD#4, Montreal; 'E'-MD#5, Quebec; 'F'-MD#6, Halifax; 'G'-MD#7, Fredericton; 'H'-MD#10, Winnipeg; 'K'-MD#11, Victoria; 'L'-MD#12, Regina; and 'M'-MD#13, Calgary. There were no numbers for army officers during the Second World War, but later 'Z' with the MD prefix denoted a regular officer, and 'T', a reserve officer. Regular force Or's used the 'Z' without any District letter. My number in 1947 was TK10336--which was part of a block allotted to the reserve RCE Officers in British Columbia. This lasted until about 1967 when SIN [Social Insurance Numbers] were used for all ranks. The RCAF used 'C' for Regular officers, 'J' for wartime officers, and 'R' for OR's. Naval officers had no numbers, and OR's had their own system. After the war letters indicated whether the sailor was based on the East or West coast. 3) CANADIAN SECOND WORLD WAR NAVAL CENSOR MARKINGS--Wilf Whitehouse and I, with the help from a few others, have attempted to pin-point which ships used what numbers. There are so many variables, we can confirm only a very few. If the members agree, we can look over the list and give you a few which are firm (mostly shore bases or large ships). 4) GREAT WAR INTERNMENT DATES--I have the same date on a KAPUSKASING Internment station marking. This should definitely be listed. MORRISEY--I have September 25, 1916. LETHBRIDGE--I can report May 15, 1915, and VERNON--April 29, 1915." [Thanks Bill. More comments follow in the Editor's remarks.]



GREAT WAR RATES/CITY CANCELS--By Victor Willson

**Postage Rates and City Cancels for Soldiers  
Mail from the Great War,  
September 1914 - July 27, 1917**

**Victor L. Willson**

When Canadian soldiers were sent to England and then to France beginning in the fall of 1914, they were required to pay British Empire rates from England, and UPU rates from France. This was because the British, in their arrogance, considered the Canadians to be at home in England; France and Canada did not have an exchange agreement for soldiers' mail, so that UPU rates were in force there [1].

Early on one sees Canadian soldiers' mail from the English camps franked with British stamps, while letter mail from France is less common, but still seen with French frankings. The Canadian government decided to solve the problem by allowing soldiers to send their letters without postage, according to UPU rules this would be assessed as unpaid mail. Since the receiving country could deal with it as it saw fit, the UPU did not care how Canada chose to handle the incoming letters. Rather than charge the recipient double the deficiency, the Canadian Post Office chose to stamp the letters and cards itself. This study shows that the Post Office abided by its own postage rates concerning drop letters, forward letters, and post cards, both before and after the addition of the War Tax on April 15, 1915.

Thus, at least six basic letter rates are possible for the typical soldiers' mail received from England and France: drop letter, forward letter, and post card before and after imposition of the War Tax. One might also include Rural Mail Delivery as a variant on the drop letter. While the drop letter was intended to be a rate for a letter posted in the post office district to an address in the same district, and the soldier's letter from France was hardly within the district, the post office generally tended to treat the letter as an item entering the mail stream at a particular city; if it stayed within the city, it was a drop letter. Incidentally, I have found nothing related to early dates for use of these procedure. My earliest covers date to January, 1915.

The procedure used by the Canadian Post Office to handle incoming soldiers' mail was to sort it for bulk processing at major cities:

Halifax	Hamilton	Kingston	London	Montreal	Ottawa
St. John	Toronto	Vancouver	Victoria	Winnipeg	

At the processing site a stamp appropriate (apparently) for the required rate was affixed and cancelled with the first class dater. All of these cities except Kingston have been recorded by me for some of the three rates of mail, although not both before and after imposition of the War Tax, except for Toronto. Pre-War Tax rates appear to be quite scarce, and may be rare or unknown from some cities. That Kingston has not been yet seen may indicate that it was not used, and that Toronto was the processor, since I have seen mail destined for Kingston cancelled with Toronto dater.

Steinhart [1] also indicates that RPOs were processing sites. This is shown to be true, but incomplete. RPO postmarks are quite unusual and apparently rare on such mail. I have no examples in my accumulation of the rates. Instead, the postmarks associated with such

activity seem to be the city nearest the destination on the rail line. Only five such cities have been observed by me to date:

- Charlottetown
- Kamloops
- Quebec
- Regina
- Revelstoke

In the collection is a cover sent to Charlottetown with a St. John postmark that is earlier than any of the Charlottetown postmark dates. This suggests that the later covers may have gone to St. John but were sent on, with or without stamps, without St. John postmark.

Also related to this subject is the application of censorship in the various receiving cities. Throughout the collection are 1917 covers with censor tape applied in Canada, even though the letters were already censored in France or England and have battalion or regimental censor marks. Since civil censors were only located in certain towns, this makes yet another substudy of this topic.

The earliest date that I have recorded from any city is Jan. 22, 1915, on a cover postmarked at Winnipeg; the latest is July 24, 1917, at Quebec. I have one cover postmarked at the two of the cities, Montreal and St. John, NB; the cover was addressed to St. John, but the stamp was applied at Montreal. This cover is an anomaly, and it is not likely the procedure was common practice. This is particularly so since the cover in question is from a prisoner of war, and such items may have been routinely sent to Montreal first for processing as a POW emission. The latter is just speculation.

In addition to Canadian soldiers' mail, internees in Holland and prisoners of war in German occupied areas were also afforded the same service, and examples are found with most of the cities' cancels. Canadian soldiers in the Belgian army were also given the free rate while in France. Steinhart [1] shows an example and I have several in my collection. I have one example of a card with manuscript "British Army in the Field" and MPO S.12 also given the rate at Halifax. A small sideline can be constructed from these.

The table presented below indicates, by city, dated covers in my collection showing the appropriate rate: forward letter, drop letter, or post card, before and after imposition of the War Tax. A dash (-) means that I have not recorded that rate for that city to date.

**REFERENCE**

[1] Steinhart, A.L., The Admiral Era: A Rate Study 1912-1928, Jim A. Hennok Ltd., Toronto, 1981.

[The article was taken from BNA Topics, Vol.53 (1), Whole No.466, pp. 43-45 and permission for reprinting has been granted by the author (and Study Group member) Vic Willson as well as BNA Topics Editor, David Handelman.

It is an important study and one which has not been regularly updated through BNA Topics or our publication. Even though the subject matter/area is not specifically military related; members might find it of some interest and have material available in their collections which could add significantly to the study. Group member Jim Felton has kindly sent along the following information and it is

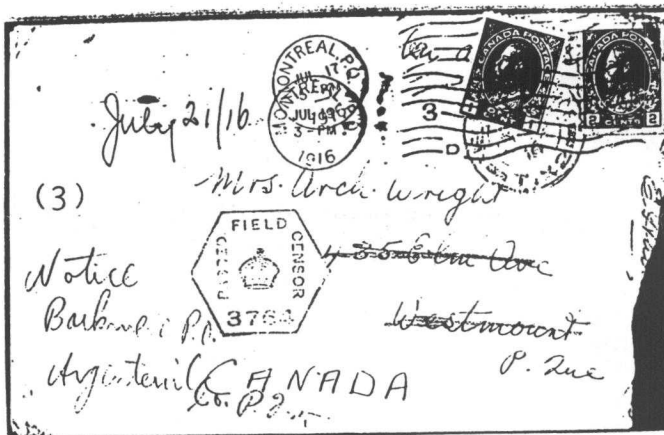
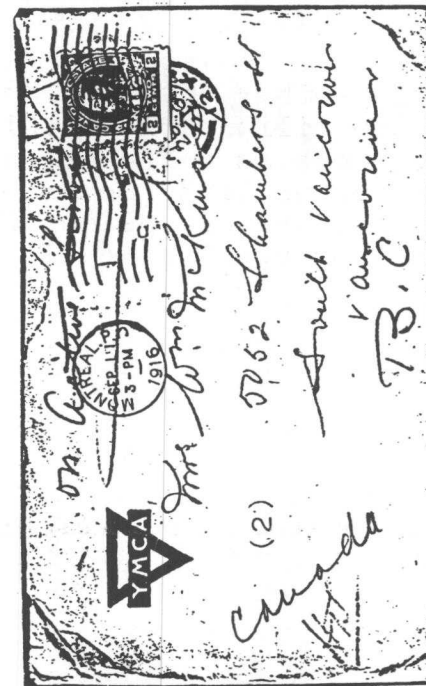
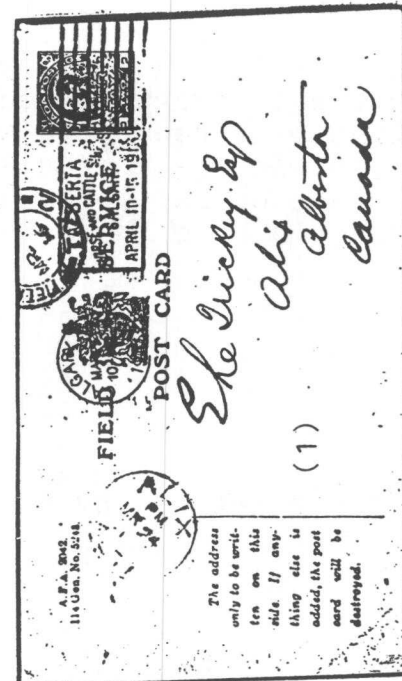
Table of Cover Dates for Rates of World War I Soldier Mail  
 Franked and Canceled at Various Canadian Cities

Official Cities	Forward Letter	Drop Letter	Post Card	Forward Letter	Drop Letter	Post Card
	Jan. 1915 - Apr. 14, 1915			Apr. 15, 1915 - July 27, 1917		
Halifax	-	-	-	10/23/15	12/18/16*	11/23/15
Hamilton	-	-	-	10/30/16	12/21/16	10/23/16
Kingston	-	-	-	-	-	-
London	-	-	-	11/12/15	10/6/16	4/15/16 2/7/16†
Montreal	-	4/14/15	-	8/3/16	5/8/16	6/17/16
Ottawa	-	-	-	7/2/17	8/20/16	10/18/16
St. John	-	-	-	8/29/16	1/31/16	6/28/15
Toronto	3/29/15	3/15/15	3/29/15	7/3/17	10/7/15	5/29/15
Vancouver	-	-	-	12/8/15	1/28/16	4/3/17
Victoria	-	-	-	4/10/17	1/3/16	4/17/17
Winnipeg	-	1/23/15	2/23/15	9/8/15	10/25/15	5/15/16

Other Cities

Charlottetown	-	-	-	-	5/24/16	-
Kamloops	-	-	-	-	6/12/16	7/14/17
Quebec	-	-	-	7/24/17	-	3/8/17
Regina	-	-	-	-	12/26/16	-
Revelstoke	-	-	-	12/3/16	-	7/3/17

\* overpaid 1¢  
 † underpaid 1¢



hoped other members will do the same.Ed.]

GREAT WAR RATES/CITY CANCELS--UPDATE--By James Felton

Vic Willson's piece in a previous Topics caused me to take a look at my stuff. I found three items perhaps of interest [illustrated above.Ed.].

Cover #1: This would be an additional posting site: Calgary, Alberta. I have a Field Service Post Card mailed from FPO T.X.2 (2 Cdn. Div. Train, initial allocation period) in March 1916 and addressed to Alix, Alberta. Two cents postage was applied and cancelled MAR 23/10-AM/1916 at Calgary, with the "Alberta Horse and Cattle Show, Calgary April 10-15 1916" slogan (Proulx

[Cont'd.]

No.150). It was received at Alix on MR 24/16.

Cover #2: Next is a Montreal item. It is from a member of 4 Cdn. Div. 12 Bde. mailed at FPO 12.X +/-28 AU/16 during the Phase I Security period. It bears a hexagonal censor marking with a number too faint to make out. Postage of three cents was applied and cancelled at Montreal SEP 11/3-PM/1916. It was addressed to South Vancouver, B.C. Was Montreal, with its train connections, speedier in getting mail to the West coast than hauling it down to Toronto for processing? Or was it wherever the ship landed?

Cover #3: Here is an example of a forwarded drop letter. It was from a member of 1 Cdn. Div. Train during the Phase I Security period and bears the hexagonal censor #3764. This letter was posted at FPO T.X2 +/-JY 4/16 and addressed to Westmount, Quebec. It was handled as a drop letter at Montreal where two cents postage was applied and cancelled JUL 17/5-PM/1916. The cover was backstamped at Westmount, Montreal LCD (Letter Carrier Depot) on 8/JUL 18/16 and forwarded to Barkmere Post Office, Argenteuil County, P.Q. It had the additional one cent postage applied and cancelled JUL 19/3-PM/1916 at Montreal. At Barkmere it received another backstamp dated JUL 20/16 and from the docketing, it was evidently received finally on July 21, 1916.

Truthfully, I already had an appreciation for the subject Vic treated in his article, and make an effort to show as many of the exchange offices as I can. I also considered the added stamps and postmarks as an irritation--they cover up or otherwise obscure the military markings which, to the military mail collector, is more important. From his frame of reference as a "rates and routes" postal historian, Vic has shown the rest of us that the pre-July 28, 1917 mail with postage added in Canada has another dimension of information worth noting. [Thanks very much Jim for your updates. Admittedly, this has sat on your Editor's desk for some time but I hope that members will feel inspired and possibly send in other updates too. Perhaps the Admiral Issue BNAPS Study Group has done work in this area? Ed.]

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Dear CMMSG Members:

Spring will soon be here in Canada so it must be time for another issue! A great deal of thanks are extended to several members who have recently contributed updates, articles, words of encouragement, and offers of future material. It certainly helps! Congratulations are extended to many members, including Pete Gray, Henk Burgers, Bill Robinson, and several others who have been successful with their exhibits on military themes at VANPEX and other shows. Further kudos are extended to long-time member and former Newsletter Editor Ken Ellison who attained BNAPS Emeritus status as of January 1, 2004. Ken has done a great deal for our group and for BNAPS too.

NOMINAL ROLL/ADDRESS CHANGES:

R.F.(HANK) NARBONNE, BOX 102, McDONALDS CORNERS, ON KOG 1M0

E.P. YENDALL, 1110 SECORD AVE., OTTAWA, ON K1H 8E1

G.H. SAWATZKI: email address added, gunner56@rogers.com H.M. STREET: change ".net"=".org"

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO NEW MEMBERS:

MRS. M. TOOP, #321-550 WILBROD ST., OTTAWA, ON K1M 9M3 [A very good friend to our Group]

MR. G.E. (GED) TAYLOR, 38 LUMLEY RD., HORLEY, SURREY RH6 7JL, U.K. [Congratulations on his recent election as President of the CPSGB]

READERS WRITE/UPDATES:

Jerry Jarnick kindly sent some information regarding locations of recent CFPO's. [Cont'd.]

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In the last issue I asked the locations of current CFPO 5112 and 5113. Jerry quickly replied that they were in Bosnia and Afghanistan respectively. Much of the information from the Department of National Defence's website will be included in the next issue. Thanks very much Jerry!

Jon Johnson has replied to some of the questions posed by Doug Lingard (NL#162, November 2003, pp.707-709) related to Doug's nursing sister item. Jon states that #7 C.G.H. entrained at Cairo on April 10. They sailed from Alexandria on HMHS Delta on April 11. He noted that Doug's card is dated on the 13th, so perhaps it was held until after departure? He then reviewed the nominal rolls for all four hospitals in the region (#4 C.G.H., #7 C.G.H., #1 C.S.H., and #3 C.S.H.) for a "Paquette" (first or last name) and "N/S Tuekett". He found no positive results anywhere. He then checked his other nursing sister covers and he does have a "Tuekett" cover with identification related to Shephard's Hotel, Cairo dated February 16, 1916. On the back is "P.L. Tuekett, QAIMNSR". Therefore, she was a British nursing sister [or a Canadian within the British nursing organization. Thanks Jon. Isn't it wonderful when members add to the stories in these pages? Ed.]

I am sure that members would find Bill Robinson's offer of providing the locations of various Second World War Canadian naval censor markings (as noted in his remarks on p.736 previous) quite useful. When time allows, Bill (or Wilf), please send them along for future printing!

#### SMALL ADS

WANTED: Letters to/from William Maitland-Dougall in period 1910-1917. Send photocopy/price required to C.D. Sayles, 25 Howard Blvd., Waterdown, ON LOR 2H4 or email: saylesd@aecl.ca (12/18)

WANTED: Non-philatelic Canadian Korean War items. Needed are: CFPO 28 (without dash); CFPO 30 & 32 covers. Also registered covers, military Christmas cards from Korea, and "HUBBA-HUBBA" markings. Appreciate priced photocopies. S.C. Luciuk, 1542 East Heights, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3B5; (306) 374-1727 (3/3)

WANTED: Great War period ship picture postcards: Ruthenia; Monmouth; Manitou; and the Lakonia. Used or unused. J.C. Campbell, #303-1260 Raymer Ave., Kelowna, BC V1W 3S8 (1/1)

WANTED: Canada Air Letters mailed to Canadian Armed Forces personnel overseas between June 1946 and December 1952, with postage paid by adhesive stamps. Please send with price to Mike Street, 73 Hatton Dr., Ancaster, ON L9G 2H5 or email: mikestreet@hwcnc.org (1/5)

NEEDED FOR EXHIBIT: Used postcard(s) of hospital ships (white with red cross). Also nursing sister and D.N.D. Director of Records covers. Jon Johnson, 9604 Kalamalka Rd., Vernon, BC V1B 1L3 or email: jcjperfin@hotmail.com (1/5)

WANTED: Great War Newfoundland covers; homing pigeon military mail; Canadian military mascots on postcards (WWI/WWII/Korea etc.). D. Mario, Box 342, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3L3 (1/2)

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Regrettably we must inform members of the passing of study group member James (Jim) R. Goben on February 2, 2003. We extend our condolences to his wife Wini and family.

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Doug and I hope that members have a pleasant spring. Items coming up in the next issue: Members' questions; Current CFPO addresses for overseas operations; Motor Ambulance Convoys; FPO updates; Korean War rate covers and much, much more!

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Congratulations are extended to member C. Ron McGuire for his receiving the Military Collectors' Club of Canada "Merit Bar" for the Best MCCC Journal Article in 2002 (awarded at year's end at the group's annual convention). Ron's article was entitled "The Postal History of Canada's World War II Hong Kong Field Force". Well done Ron!

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