



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2009

NEWSLETTER NO. 188

Page 1015

NO.2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION, C.E.F.--By Colin Pomfret

No.2 Construction Battalion, the only black battalion in Canadian military history, was authorised July 5, 1916 with its headquarters at Pictou, Nova Scotia. It was under the command of Lt.Col. D.H. Sutherland. On September 9, the headquarters were relocated to Truro, Nova Scotia.

Y.M.C.A.
WITH HIS MAJESTY'S
CANADIAN FORCES
ON ACTIVE SERVICE
FOR GOD, FOR KING, AND FOR COUNTRY

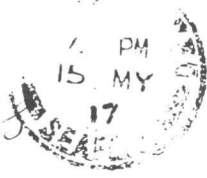


Mr. Harry Earhart

Seven Street

Truro N.S.

- Canada.



On March 28, the Battalion embarked from Pier 2 at Halifax aboard the Southland with a strength of 19 officers and 605

[Cont'd.]

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

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

Page 1016

other ranks. In May 1917 the battalion's status was changed to a company. In France the company was attached to the Forestry Corps at La Joux in the Juaras.

The cover was posted by Lt. I.L. Barnhill at Chyngton Camp, B.O. Seaford, on May 15, 1917 and was addressed to his father in Truro, N.S.

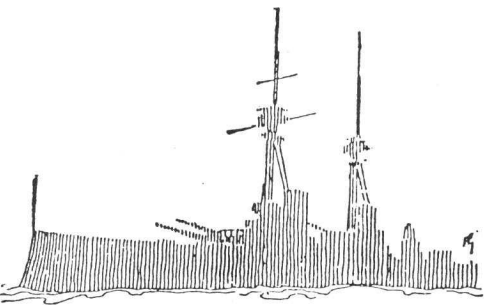
PAY FOR \$1.10+ A DAY, THE R.N.C.V.R.!-- By Ken Ellison

[Ken sent in the recruitment ad below from the Vernon News from March 1917. The R.N.C.V.R. was established in May 1914 and was later abolished in January 1923 when the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (R.C.N.V.R.) was initiated.Ed.]

Thursday, March 29, 1917.



**Help the
NAVY
Win the War—**



**It needs more men. Get overseas at once by joining the
overseas division of**

The Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve

and serve in the victorious fleet. Experience not necessary.
Canadians on joining are sent to England at once for training.

PAY \$1.10 a day and upwards—Free Kit—
Separation allowance as in C. E. F.

Candidates must be sons of natural born British
subjects—Ages 18 to 38.

*Experienced men from 18 to 45 may enlist for service in
the Canadian Naval Patrols to guard Canadian Coasts.*

Apply to the nearest Naval Recruiting Station
or to the Naval Recruiting Secretary, Ottawa.

A2-3-17

TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE COINCIDENCE--By Mike Street

"I particularly enjoyed my friend Kim Dodwell's article 'A Reminder of a Bitter Normandy Battle' [NL#187 (Nov.2008), pp.1008-1010], related to the Tilly-la-Campagne operations in 1944. I have a personal connection to the story. My father's regiment, the 17th Duke of York's Royal Canadian Hussars (from Montreal) was doing reconnaissance as part of the battle. My father was wounded on August 1 at the village of Four, just 3km from Tilly-la-Campagne. After life-saving surgery

[Cont'd.]

and initial recovery in a field hospital in France, he was transferred to the 23rd Canadian General Hospital in England and came home on the hospital ship Letitia; arriving at Halifax, Nova Scotia on December 8, 1944." [Members will recall Mike's interesting sub-missions related to the Letitia and his father's AFAL's and Casualty Cards in NL#154 (March 2002), pp.616-617, and NL#155 (May 2002), pp.624-626. Thanks Mike!Ed.]

CAMP HUGHES' RENEWAL--By Darcy Hickson

"In the run-up to Remembrance Day 2008, the 'Friends of Camp Hughes' held a special open house in the Carberry (Manitoba) Legion, inviting members and the general public to display and view items of interest regarding Camp Hughes. There were some wonderful displays, many of which were centred around the postcards that we long to collect. The military postal aspect of the camp was a mystery to all who had displays there....The 'Friends' hope to have the old site and training area declared a national historic site, complete with an interpretive centre etc. Apparently, the trench work that is left are the only training trenches from the Great War that have survived the sands of time in North America. The trench areas have reverted to cow pastures, so time is running out on being able to salvage the area for proper preservation.

The 'Friends' group have a permanent display of Camp Hughes' artifacts at the Carberry Library, including the 1916 Commandant's Report, which outlines the activities of the Camp for the year. There is a very good summary of the post office included in the report, complete with the name of the postmaster, the approximate numbers of regular and registered mail processed (a staggering total number), and details on the construction of the addition to the post office in 1916...". [Darcy, a specialist on Camp Hughes/Sewell, hopes to contribute to the "Friends" open house this year and has sent information to the organizers related to the postal affairs of the Camp. Thanks Darcy!Ed.]

MILITARY NEWS FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Members will have received their Canadian Philately-An Outline by John Burnett, Gray Scrimgeour, and Vic Willson. John and Vic are group members. The "Military Mail/War-Related" section was well done and gives readers a brief outline of our specialized area. Topics (#516, Vol.65, No.3) included an interesting "Matters Military". Remember to send the Editorial Committee material for the column to keep it going (and this Editor too!). The Northerner (P.H.S.C.), and Editor Gray Scrimgeour, continues its listing of U.S. APO's mailed from Northern Canada. Contact: gray@scrimgeour.ca or #570-188 Douglas St., Victoria, BC V8V 2P1.

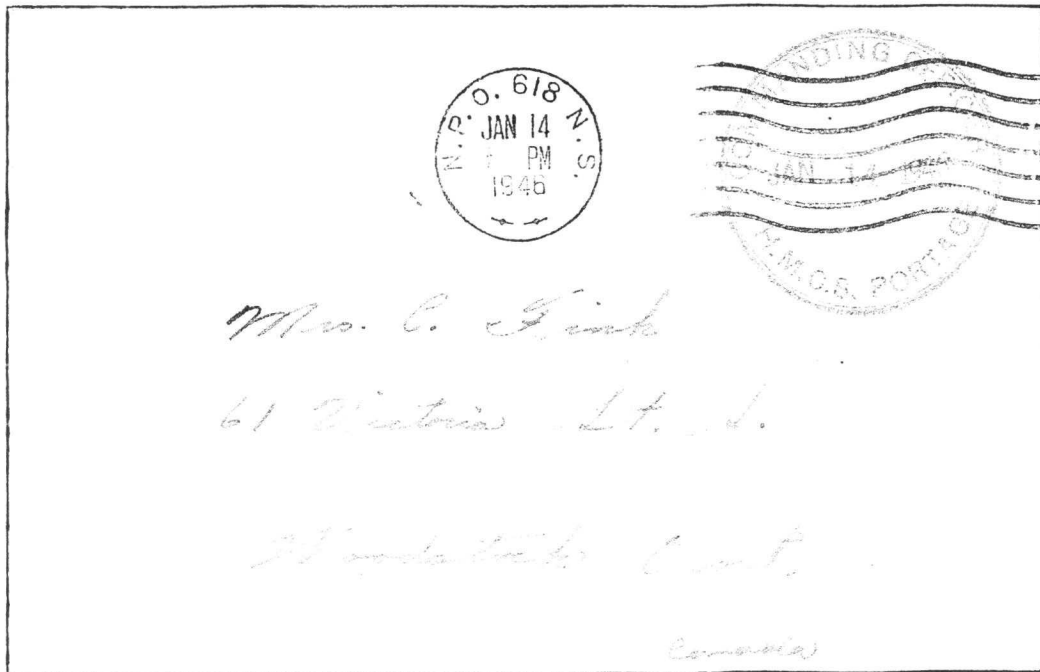
REMINDER: HAVE YOU SENT YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES IN?

CANADIAN MEMBERS: \$20 CDN.; INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS: \$20 USD.

Page 1018

H.M.C.S. PORTAGE, 1946

H.M.C.S. Portage was one of twelve original Algerine class mine-



sweepers built at Port Arthur. They were better-suited for duty as convoy escorts than those in the Bangor class (p.76), but had no sweeping gear fitted. Portage was commissioned October 22, 1943 with Pendant Number J331 (wartime; #169 from 1949 onwards). She had one 4" gun, four 20mm machine guns, and Hedgehogs. Displacement was 990 tons, and her dimensions were 225'x36'x10'. Portage's top speed was sixteen knots. She had a crew of six officers and ninety-nine other ranks. Portage trained reservists on the Great Lakes after the war. She was paid off on September 26, 1958.

The cover bears a machine cancellation from the Halifax Fleet Mail Office (until February 7, 1946). It also has a double-ring 37mm Commanding Officer marking in blue.

Reference

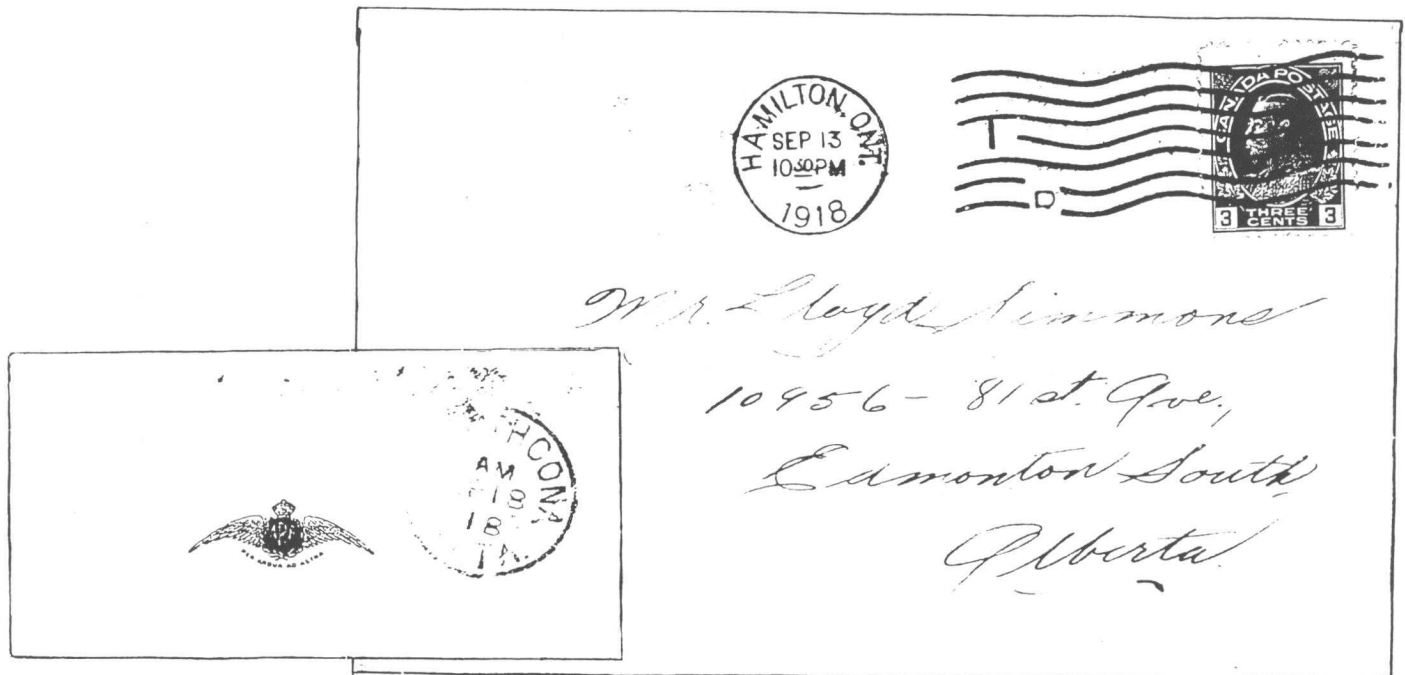
Macpherson, K.R. Canada's Fighting Ships. Toronto: Samuel Stevens, Hakkert & Co., 1975.

1918 R.A.F. ARMAMENT SCHOOL, HAMILTON--By Colin Pomfret

The following cover was sent from the Armament School which originally formed a section of the Cadet Wing at Long Branch but soon proved too small. A move to Hamilton was considered and Canadian Westinghouse offered the use of a large factory and adjacent grounds.

Shortly after the Hamilton Golf and Country Club gave permission to use their nine-hole golf course which adjoined the factory.

[Cont'd.]



NEUTRAL CENSORSHIP, SECOND WORLD WAR

Ms. Susan Hickey, daughter of our former member and naval expert the late Wilf Whitehouse, sent along some of his miscellaneous papers and the following slip of paper was found among them. No cover accompanied the censor's "slip", so the date is unknown.

In communicating with a neutral country officers and men serving in H.M. Ships are not permitted to use any address, other than the one stated below:-

c/o Chief Postal Censor, London,
or the private home address,
or that of a friend.

The Chief Postal Censor, London will, if the writer's address is notified to him, undertake to forward a reply when received.

J. M. Preston Thomas

Commander. R.N.

The paper has an ink manuscript message on the reverse which states:
 "This came in your last letter placed by the Censors in Canada., E.B."

Page 1020

5TH BATTALION, C.E.F. 1919 LETTER OF THANKS

The 5th Canadian Infantry Battalion, 2nd Canadian Brigade, was a Western Canadian battalion and was primarily raised in that part of Canada and organized at Camp Valcartier until October 1914. Lt. Col. G.S. Tuxford was the original Commanding Officer. The 5th sailed on October 3, 1914 with the First Contingent, with 45 Officers and 1,095 Other Ranks, disembarking on October 20, 1914 at Plymouth, England.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE 23rd April, 1919.

REGINA

To the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of
the 5th Battalion, C. E. F.

On behalf of the people of Saskatchewan I desire to extend to you the heartiest of welcomes on your return from your long period of service overseas.

No words can describe the anxious solicitude with which we have watched and followed your career from the moment that you landed in France; nor the pride and satisfaction we have felt in the glorious reputation you have established for yourselves.

From the heroic stand made by you at the second battle of Ypres down to the moment of the signing of the armistice you have acquitted yourselves like heroes, and have proved that the citizen soldiers of Canada can hold their own with the oldest and proudest armies of the world. In such a terrible and long drawn out struggle it is inevitable that you should have sustained fearful losses, and to the memory of those gallant men who have given their lives for their country we pay a proud and affectionate tribute.

To you who return to our midst we tender the thanks of a grateful country. You have not failed in the first duty of a citizen to bear arms in defence of his country and of those whom he holds dear. May the satisfaction of this duty well and faithfully done always remain with you, and may your future be full of success and happiness.

R. S. Lake

Lieut. Governor.

[Cont'd.]

The Battalion's members came from a variety of other units including 30, 31, British Columbia Horse; 35 Cental Alberta Horse; 16, 27, 29 Saskatchewan Light Horse; 12 Manitoba Dragoons; and the Corps of Guides. Colin Campbell previously recorded a 1917-1918 Christmas card from a member of the 5th Western Cavalry (the 5th, as he pointed out, was an infantry battalion). He noted that the regiment's service is detailed in the regimental history of the XII Manitoba Dragoons. It served in France and Flanders from February 1915 until the end of the war. The battalion was disbanded at Regina, Saskatchewan on April 24, 1919 (one day after the letter was dated).

According to Wikipedia, Richard Stuart Lake (July 10, 1860-April 23, 1950) was a "long serving territorial, provincial, and federal level politiiican". He was born in Preston, Lancashire, England and was later elected to the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories for the Grenfell District in the 1898 N.W.T. general election. In 1904 he was elected as an M.P., re-elected in 1908, and was defeated in the 1911 federal election.

After his defeat, he worked for the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission and held that job until his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan on October 18, 1915. Lake served for six years until February 17, 1921, and was offered an extension but he refused.

He moved to Victoria, B.C. after public life, and died on April 23, 1950. Lake was aboard the S.S. Athenia when it was torpedoed on September 3, 1939 and survived!



The Hon. Richard Stuart Lake

References

Campbell, J.C. "Season's Greetings From The Western Cavalry". NL#108 (Dec.1992), p.75.

Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Stuart_Lake

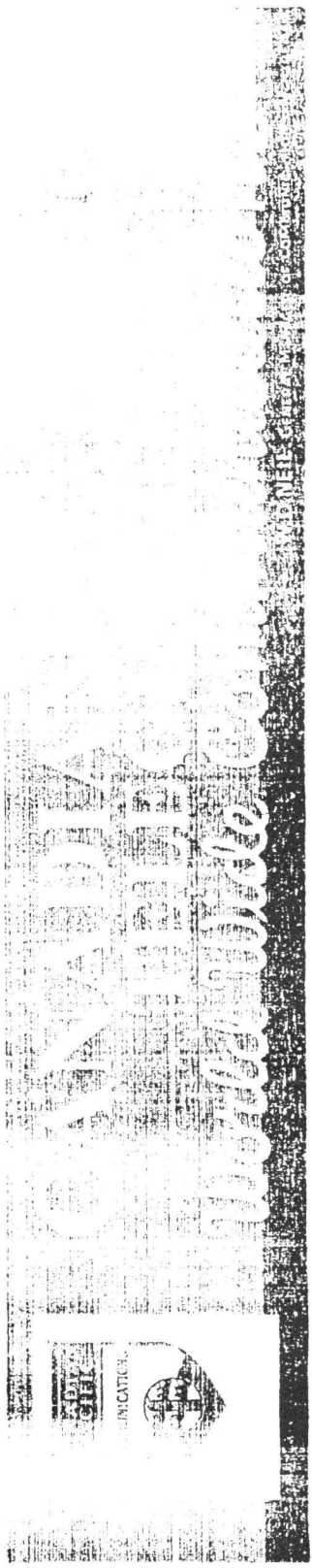
TELEGRAPH CENSORSHIP--A QUERY--By Kim Dodwell

[Although this subject may be best dealt with by one of our sister organizations, can any member add to the following?Ed.]

Following is a copy of one of three telegrams from the Jack Lovell correspondence. I bought this fragmented correspondence of telegrams and returned letters which had been sent to Jack by his mother and returned to her after his death in action in September 1944.

The first telegram I have is dated July 13, 1940 from Camp Borden, Ontario on the eve of his regiment, the Essex Scottish, departing for England. The second was sent just after his return from the Dieppe Raid (August 19, 1942), confirming that he was well and all was ok.

[Cont'd.]



nd d efm IMP

TELEPHONE 257

Great Britain

Mrs Jean Lovell,
Strathroy,

Airgraph letter received many thanks Am fit and well. warmest love
and kisses.

Lovell Jack.

Aug 14-44

The third, shown above, was sent shortly after the big "Operation Totalize" in Normandy, starting August 8, 1944, in which Jack's regiment was involved. This was an exciting operation, involving novel battle techniques, and was the brainchild of Lt. Gen. Guy Simonds. It would have attracted press coverage and it seems possible that Jack sent the telegram to reassure his mother, knowing that when the newspapers came out she would worry. How justified her worries were is confirmed by the markings on her returned letters. They show Jack as having been wounded on August 24 (a day when his regiment badly suffered in the hard fighting in the Forêt de la Londe), hospitalized briefly, released back to his regiment, and then mortally wounded in the fighting around Antwerp on September 20.

The second and third telegrams raise problems for the postal historian. There was much

[Cont'd.]

(though not complete) censorship of mail from participants before the Dieppe Raid, and some censorship of mail from participants after it. Was there no censorship of telegrams, and how were they sent?

I have never heard mention of a telegram service in the context of Field Post Offices, so presumably Jack's telegram must have gone through a civil telegraph office. These questions arise in an even stronger form for the third telegram. How could it have been sent while Jack was heavily involved in the fighting in France?

From Mrs. Lovell's letters it may be surmised that Jack may have been batman (officer's servant) to Major Donald Mackenzie of the Essex's H.Q. Company, and he may have had a slightly better chance of making contact with visitors to the battalion's positions (such as war correspondents, auxiliary service personnel, or chaplains), than would a rifle company rifleman in the bottom of a slit trench. Perhaps Jack found ways and means of getting a telegram sent home from England while he was in France, but I would welcome suggestions from anyone with a better idea. [Some form of censorship must have been in place. Colin Pomfret previously sent in an example from Vancouver to the F.M.O. in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1943. That shield censor marking was a rare domestic use. See NL#158 (Jan.2003), p.659. Can our members shed light on "battlefield" telegrams and their censorship?Ed.]

NEW L.R.D., LONDON CAMP 1928--By Colin Pomfret

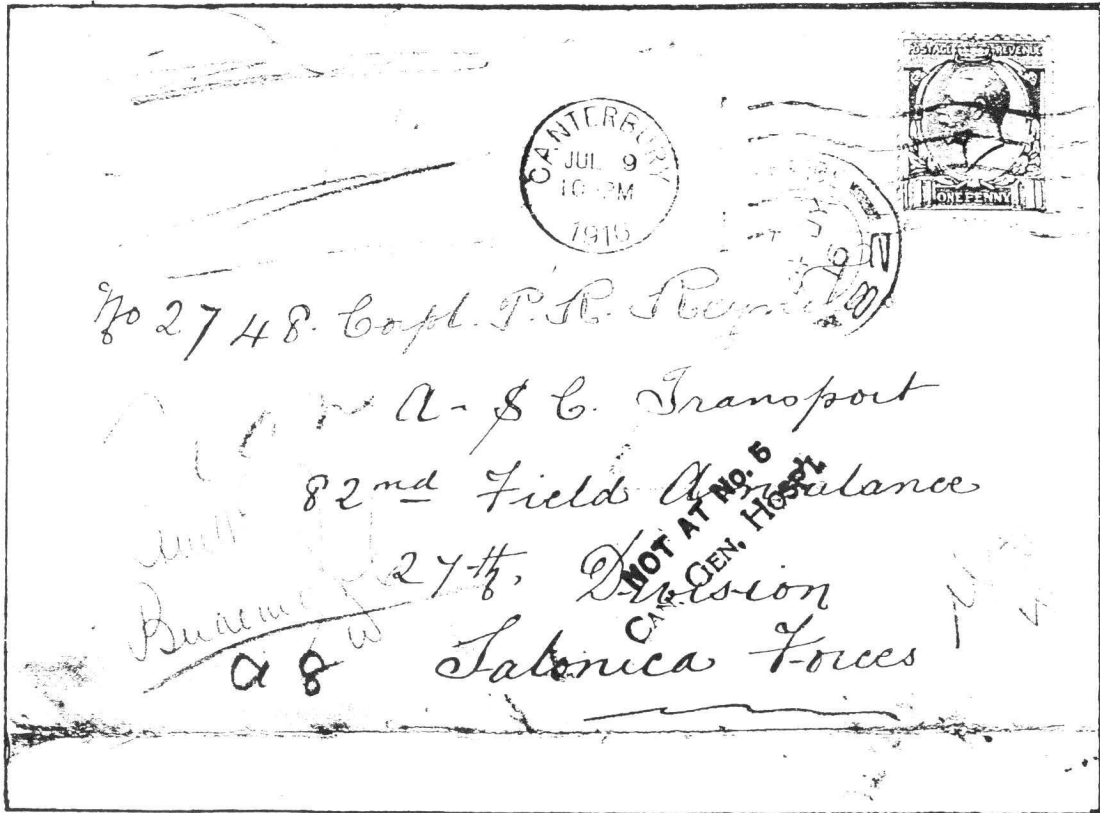
This strike from F.P.O./CANADA MILITIA/PM/JUL 5/28/LONDON CAMP.ONT. (Hammer B) is the latest recorded date.



Page 1024

NOT AT NO.5/CAN. GEN. HOSP'L-1916 CACHET

This re-directed cover front (ex. Firebrace) eventually arrived at the No.5 Canadian General Hospital, Salonika (from Dec.14, 1915-Aug.16, 1917). Corp. Reynolds was not at the hospital and the seldom-seen cachet was struck in mauve (Firebrace CAH 31). The cover was then directed to the hospital ship Braemar Castle.

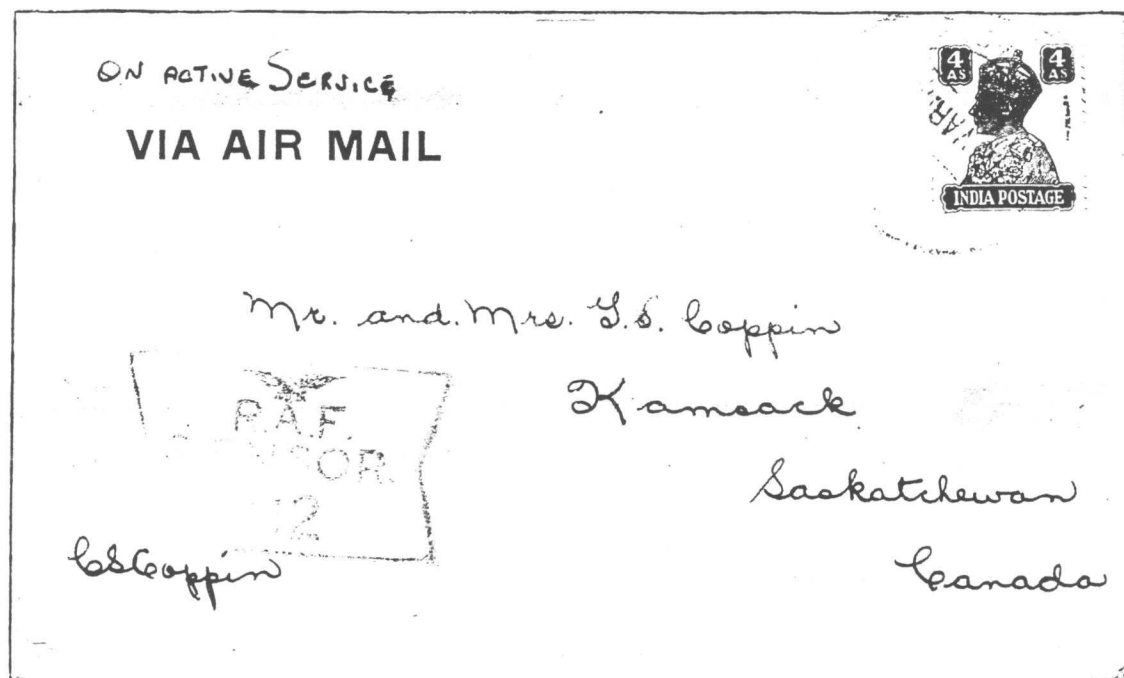


A FITTING TRIBUTE: COPPIN LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan's Geographic Names Board, under the auspices of the provincial Crown Corporation Information Services Corp., is responsible for the naming of over 3,000 northern lakes, bays, rivers, peninsulas, and islands after Saskatchewan men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country in both World Wars, the Korean War, the Canadian Merchant Navy, and Peacetime Operations. It is a fitting programme to honour the province's fallen.

F/O Clifford Somerville Coppin (J85255) was serving in India when he mailed the following cover home to his parents (dated March 18, 1945 and arrived on March 29). After the war, Flight Lieutenant Coppin served with No.124 Communications Squadron and part of his duties included ferrying lend-lease aircraft to the United States. Regrettably Clifford Coppin (born 1923), son of George and Elizabeth Coppin and husband to Amelia, was killed in a crash at Estevan, Sask. September 15, 1946.

[Cont'd.]



Coppin was one of twenty-one Canadian R.C.A.F. veterans killed aboard a Dakota C47 flying from Minot, North Dakota to Estevan. They were being flown to Estevan to fly Cornell trainers back to the U.S. One person on the ground was killed, along with all of the pilots. Five other fliers from Saskatchewan, R.A. Brandser, L.V. Kirsch, W.A. Perry, M. Thomas, and E.L. Turtle, were also killed. An official R.C.A.F. statement in the Estevan Mercury concluded that upon the airplane's second landing approach, the "...pilot apparently lost control and the aircraft crashed. A technical examination of the wreckage [had] shown that the control lock on the starboard elevator was in position and had not been removed before the flight commenced."

Coppin is buried at the Riverview Cemetery in Kamsack. His geographical memorial is Coppin Lake, situated in the province's north-west corner just north of Patterson Lake.

Reference

Barry, Bill. Age Shall Not Weary Them: Saskatchewan Remembers Its War Dead. Regina: People Places Publishing Ltd., 2005, pp. 62, 102.



Page 1026

Dear CMMSG Members:

Doug and I extend our very best wishes for the coming year. This issue is a bit late and, if not for the authors and contributors featured in the previous pages, may not have been published! I am very short of articles and now must make a plea to our members for more material as the cupboard is almost empty! There have been some exceptional members over the years who've greatly contributed and I am INDEBTED to them for their support. However, I am extending a plea to all of our members--please send in an article, a page or two, a "filler snippet", or a question or research request. You'll note the Editor has attempted to fill these pages but this cannot continue for too long (I just don't have a good deal of varied material). Failing a lack of material, we may have to look at issuing fewer issues per year (perhaps three or four instead of our usual five). I would hate to do this drastic measure but if I don't have enough material to fill these pages, we could be in trouble.

If you don't see a particular favorite topic, why not send me something? Many of us specialize but I'm sure that all members enjoy seeing material and learning about different areas of Canadian military postal history. Thank you very much in advance for your support.

F.P.O./CANADA MILITIA/PETAWAWA CAMP--By Colin Pomfret

The following cover, dated July 28, 1918, shows the 27mm Petawawa Camp large CDS. [Note the Admiral lathework--arguably quite special! Thanks Colin.Ed.]

