



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013

NEWSLETTER NO. 210
Page 1297

R.A.F. FERRY COMMAND--By Jerome C. Jarnick

As early as 1938 Britain recognized a need for aircraft to meet the challenges of the future. American industrialists were eager to fill this demand, but peacetime rules prevented the planes from being flown to England. They were flown to North Dakota, transported across the border, disassembled and then carried by rail to Montreal where they loaded on ships bound for England and reassembled there.

This was a complicated, time-consuming process. Winston Churchill charged Lord Beaverbrook to find a better solution. That solution was a covert operation flying the planes from Canada across the North Atlantic (a risky undertaking at that time) using highly-skilled, highly-paid American civilian pilots.

The original Atlantic Ferry Organization (ATFERO) became the RAF Ferry Command on July 20, 1941. The crews flew from Dorval, Quebec, refueled at Gander, Newfoundland, and then to Prestwick, England, selecting the route they deemed best for the current weather conditions.

The usual round-trip from Dorval to Prestwick took about fourteen days. The Mont Royal Hotel in Montreal became the unofficial headquarters for the airmen.

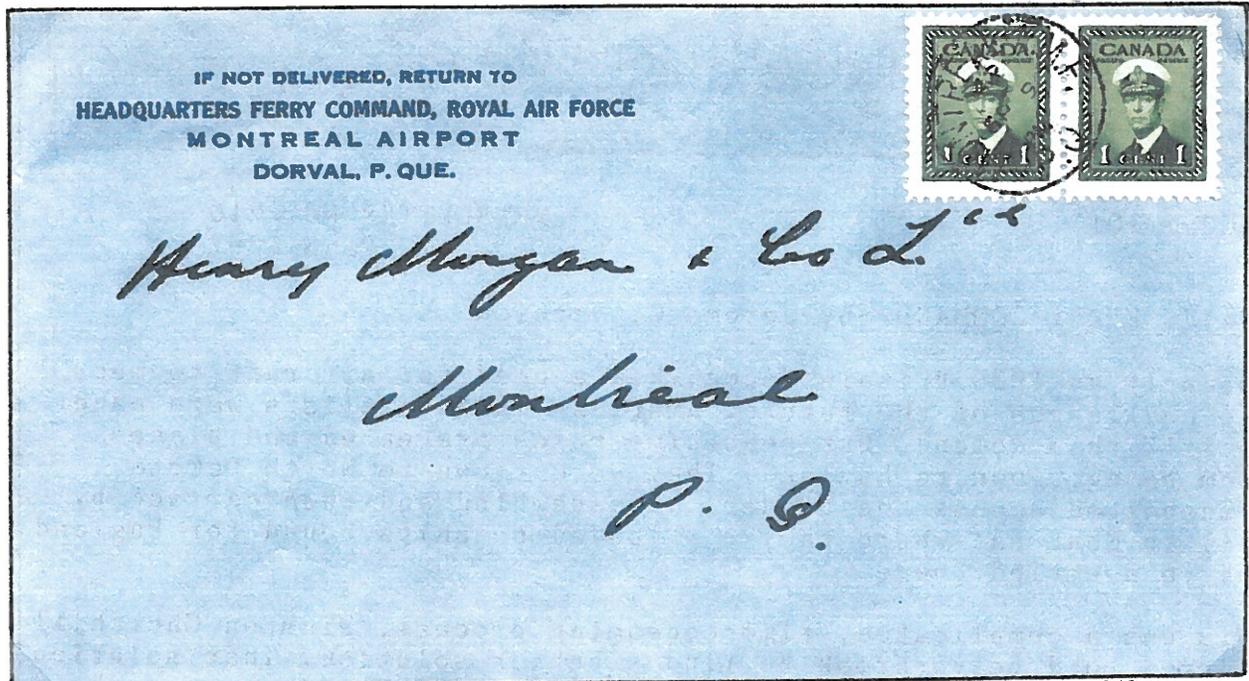
After the United States entered the war following Pearl Harbor, the RAF began training their pilots for this duty. During the existence of the Ferry Command it was commanded by Chief Air Marshal Sir Frederick Bowhill who [also] became the first commander of the successor command [entitled] Transport Command, when it

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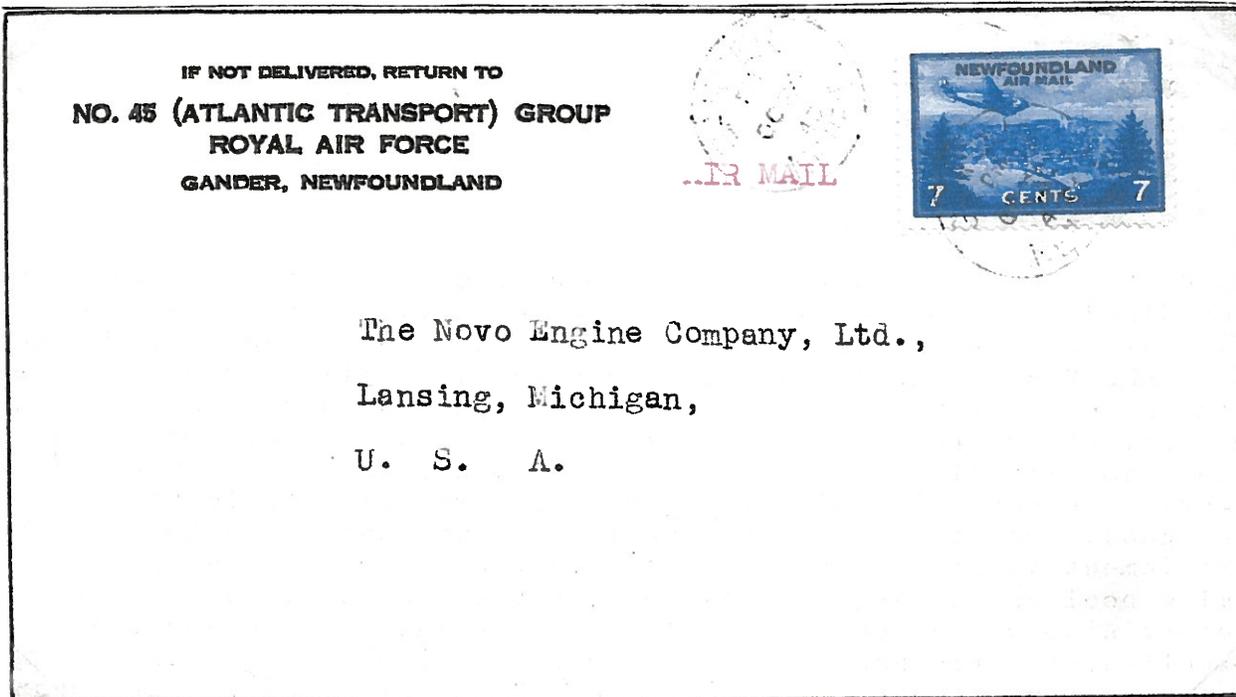
was formed on March 25, 1943. At that time Ferry Command became No. 45 Group and retained responsibility for Atlantic aircraft ferry operations.



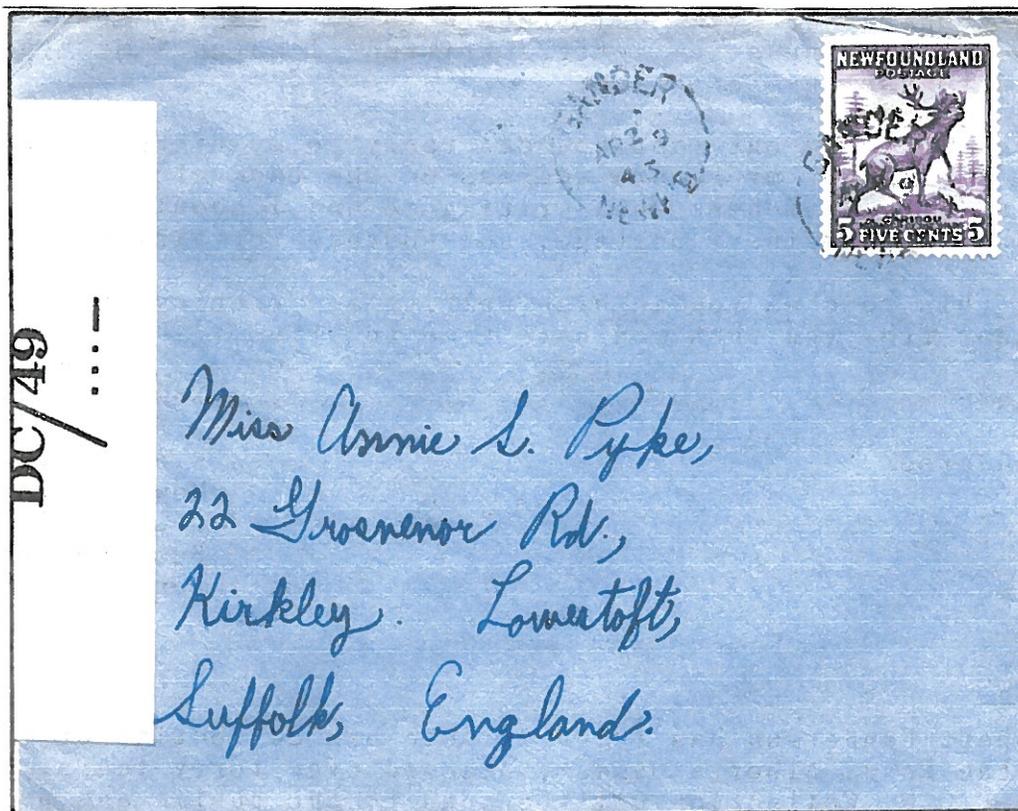
Local cover from the RAF Ferry Command at Dorval. Postmarked Montreal A.M.F. on September 29, 1942.



1943 view of the ramp at Dorval Airport showing planes being readied for shipment to England.



Airmail cover from No. 45 Group postmarked Gander, Newfoundland October 24, 1945 to the United States.



April 29, 1943 letter from a RAF Radio Operator at Gander to a young lady in England.

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[The following was contained in the preceding cover.Ed.]:

"April 27/43
R.A.F.F.C. (Signals)
Newfoundland

Dear Miss Pyke:

No doubt you will be surprised to receive a letter from me here in Newfoundland. I came here about the 16th of April leaving Montreal on the 14. We, six of us, all came by Trans-Canada Air-Lines but will go back by the R.A.F. Ferry service in a bomber. I will be stationed here for the next six months and will then be entitled to 2 weeks leave which I am looking forward to. I was back home for a week from April 3rd to 11, so that was darn nice to have before coming here for six months. Things are very nice here. The sleeping quarters very comfortable and the meals pretty good. Once in a while they are off, but that is to be expected. Entertainment is also pretty good considering. There is an excellent swimming pool and a large gymnasium. I haven't used either but will do so later. Also we can bowl every Tuesday morning and the Americans have an excellent theatre house where is shown or screened all the late shows. I was there last night and saw "Air Force"--a very good picture about the history of a Flying Fortress in the Pacific.

There is also quite a few places we can go for a tramp in the woods and get a good sun tan, which I prepare to do this summer. Today is my day off so am getting a few letters written. I haven't my typewriter with me so have to use the pen & ink.

I have just found out that you can reply to me by Ferry Command (air service). I will put my return address on the back of this letter and you use it while I am here when writing me and I should get it very much sooner. Just use ordinary postage, not postage for airmail.

Hoping this reaches you in high spirits and keeping well. I will be glad to hear from you when you have time to write.

Very Sincerely,
Francis Anderson

New Address:
J.F. Anderson, R/O
R.A.F.F.C. (Signals)
Newfoundland
C.L.O. (F)
Bush House
London, W.C.2

IN THE NEWS

Member Robert Henderson has recently sold his collection of P.O.W. artifacts to the Royal Alberta Museum. Amassed over forty years, the Robert Henderson P.O.W. Collection will be open to the public and parts of it will be available online. ("Artifacts Detail Life for German PoWs in Alberta," The Saskatoon StarPhoenix, May 3, 2013, p. C11);

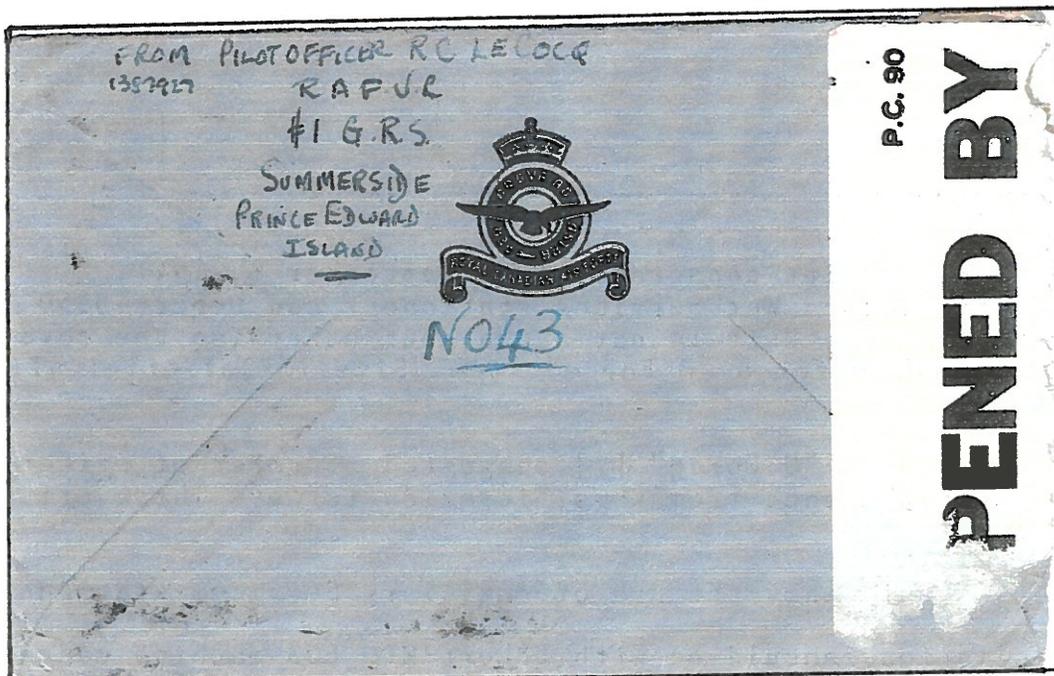
Collector and author Andrew Carroll has donated a collection of some

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90,000 wartime letters from the Revolutionary War to modern-day conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan which will be housed in a new Center for American War Letters opening this fall at Chapman University in southern California. ("War Letter Collection Speaks in Intimate Voices," The Saskatoon StarPhoenix, July 4, 2013, p. C10).

NO. 1 GENERAL RECONNAISSANCE SCHOOL, SUMMERSIDE, P.E.I.

This October 1942 dated cover curiously precedes the listed opening date



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of December 23, 1942 for the school (23/12/42-22/01/46; Bailey and Toop, Canadian Military Postal Markings, 1881-1995, Vol. I. Ed. W.J. Bailey. Waterford, MI: C.G. Firby Publications, 1996, p. 230 & Sayles, The BNAPS Catalogue of Canadian Military Mail Markings, Vol. II. Ed. C.D. Sayles. BNAPS, 2011, p. 107). However, presumably staff, personnel, and students were assembled at Summerside prior to MPO 610's opening; hence the use of the civilian postal service. MPO 610 was later renamed RCAF Summerside on November 10, 1952.

"Q FORCE": SOME ADDITIONAL COVERS--By Paul Binney

The cover illustration and review of "Q Force" by Jerome C. Jarnick in the recent Study Group Newsletter [1] prompted a search through my collection of Debert material. I lived in Truro, Nova Scotia for many years and started my military postal history collection with covers from the nearby base at Debert. In all of my collection I could not find any covers from Debert that were subject to military censorship other than those covered by the period of "Q Force". Some mail from the camp was, of course, subject to civilian censorship; usually in Moncton. Examples of this civilian censorship are noted throughout the war, mainly on mail to the United States.

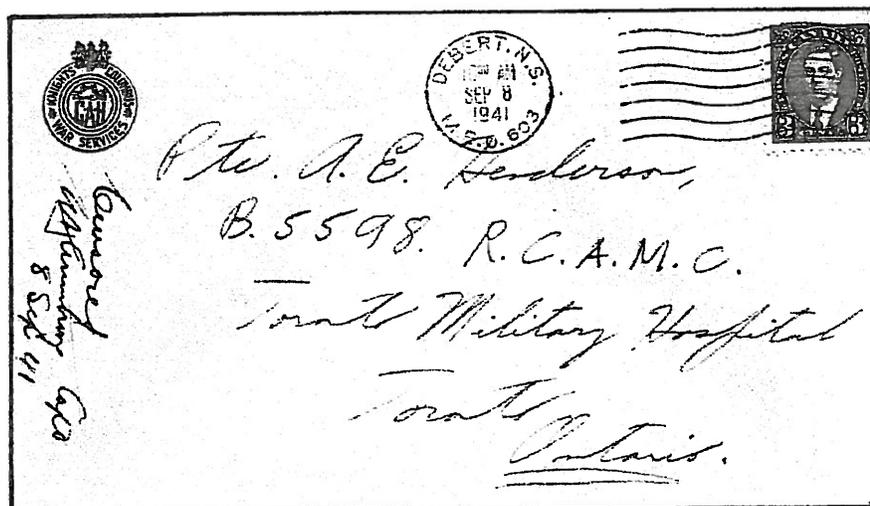


FIG.1: Manuscript censorship from September 8, 1941.

Knights of Columbus War Services stationery and Debert D850 machine cancellation. Unit is not shown, but otherwise the cover meets all criteria for a "Q Force" item. Size 75% of original.

The first article on "Q Force" [2] suggested a number of criteria to discriminate correspondence from this "invasion force". These criteria included:

1. Covers should show the use of Auxiliary Services stationery;
2. Cancellations should be with Debert MPO 603 machine cancellation;

[Cont'd.]

3. Dates between August 21, 1941 and February 2, 1942;
4. Censor mark should be manuscript or rubber stamp plus manuscript.

I would suggest that the criteria are somewhat restrictive as I have a number of covers that do not have all of these indicators but fall within the correct time period. In addition, I will illustrate a cover that appears to have been mailed in Truro to circumvent the censorship either on purpose or inadvertently. Military mail markings are identified by numbers from Sayles [3]. Civilian censorship locations are from Burrows [4].



FIG. 2: Manuscript censorship from Debert on September 24, 1941. Cover is a regular envelope with Air Mail sticker. Correspondence was further censored by a civilian Examiner C138 (Moncton, N.B.). Size 75% of original.



FIG. 3: Manuscript censorship from Debert on October 10, 1941. YMCA stationery was used but the cancellation was by a single circle Debert D845 marking. No unit designation or return address appear on the cover. Size 75% of original.

[Cont'd.]

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A further cover in my collection (#17 in the numbering) of the Hotchkiss correspondence was mailed on January 17, 1942 and shows no evidence of censorship. Was censorship ended shortly after December 22 when the Free French took control of St. Pierre et Miquelon and before the official end of "Q Force"?

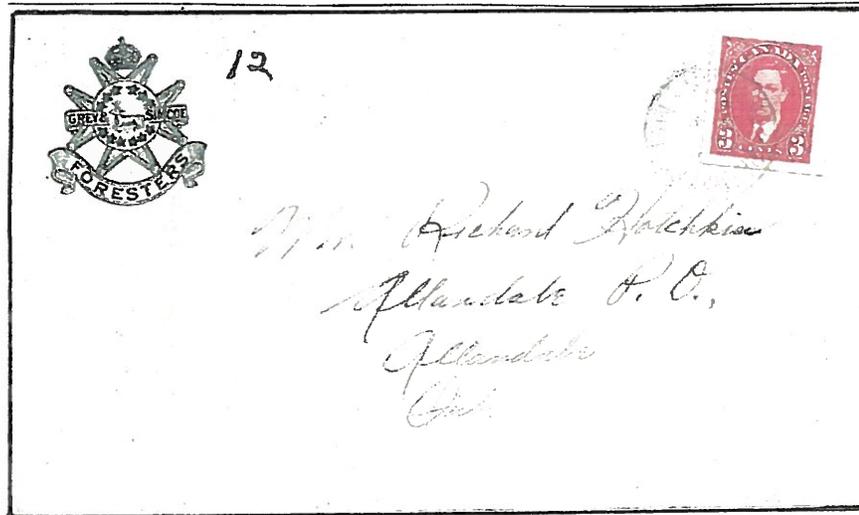


FIG. 4: One of a number of pieces from the Hotchkiss correspondence (#12). The writer, Pte. Crawford served with the Grey & Simcoe Foresters and based on other censored correspondence, was part of "Q Force". This cover, free of censorship, was mailed at the Truro Railway Station on October 12, 1941. A deliberate attempt to avoid the censor, or was Crawford just in transit and had written a letter while on the train (previously he had served the defence force at Mulgrave, Nova Scotia)? Size 75% of original.



FIGS. 5 & 6: Cover with rubber stamp censor marking from Pte. Crawford of the Grey & Simcoe Foresters. This cover bears all the identifying features of a "Q Force" cover, including appropriate stationery, censor mark, machine cancel, and unit identification. Size 75% of original.

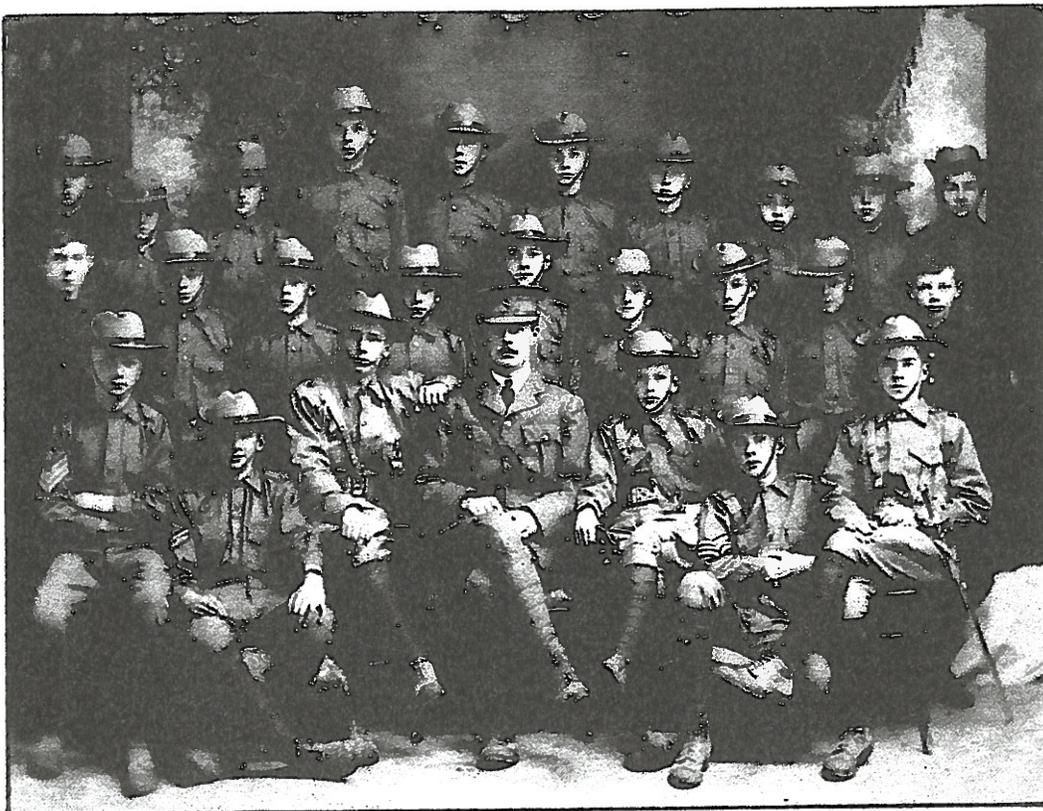
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As Jerome C. Jarnick points out, no definitive evidence exists that any of this material is from "Q Force" personnel. The very act of censorship would remove any reference to this unit. However, all of this material is from the appropriate time period and most likely derives directly from "Q Force" soldiers or other support personnel on the base that may have been involved in training or supplying the unit.

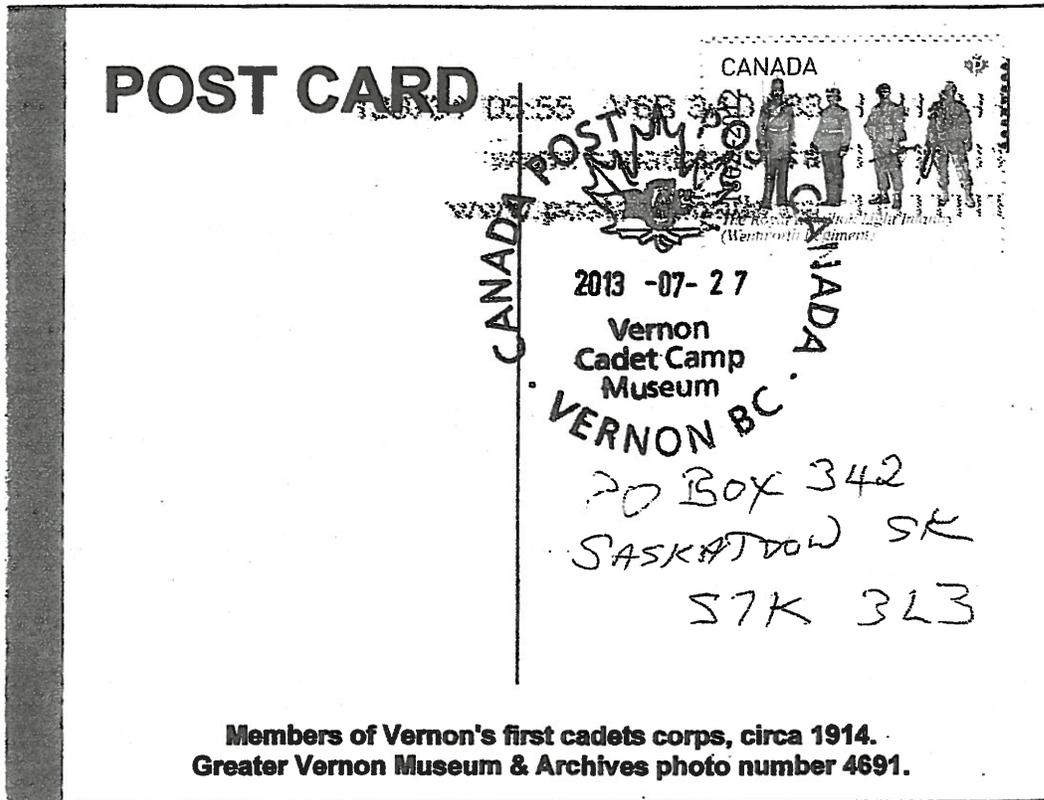
- [1] Jarnick, Jerome C. "Revisiting 'Q' Force," Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter No. 207 (Jan., 2013), pp. 1264-1265.
- [2] Plain, Brian C. "Force 'Q': 1942-1943," CMMMSG Newsletter No. 68 (May 1986), pp. 460-463.
- [3] Sayles, C.D. Ed. The BNAPS Catalogue of Canadian Military Mail Markings, Vol. II: The World War II Era, 1936-1945. BNAPS Ltd., April 2011, pp. 277-278, passim.
- [4] Burrows, Peter C. Ed. British Empire Civil Censorship Devices, WWII, Section 7: Canada & Newfoundland. Civil Censorship Study Group, 2010, passim.

[Thanks very much Paul. Members may also wish to view Dave Hanes' "Q Force" item in CMMMSG Newsletter No. 100 (August 1991), p. 755. We seem to be shedding more light on this unusually obscure unit. Ed.]

VERNON, B.C.'S FIRST CADET CORPS, 1914



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Members of Vernon's first cadets corps, circa 1914.
Greater Vernon Museum & Archives photo number 4691.

[This wonderful photo reproduction postcard recently arrived in the mail which was a most welcome surprise. Kudos to the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives for promoting its holdings! Note the special pictorial cancellation too. A similarly-postmarked card noting the opening of the pavilion at Cave & Basin in Banff National Park was also received. Thank you to the "anonymous" sender.....Ken? Ed.]

H.M.C.S. NIOBE RE-DIRECTED CARD, 1917--By Colin Pomfret

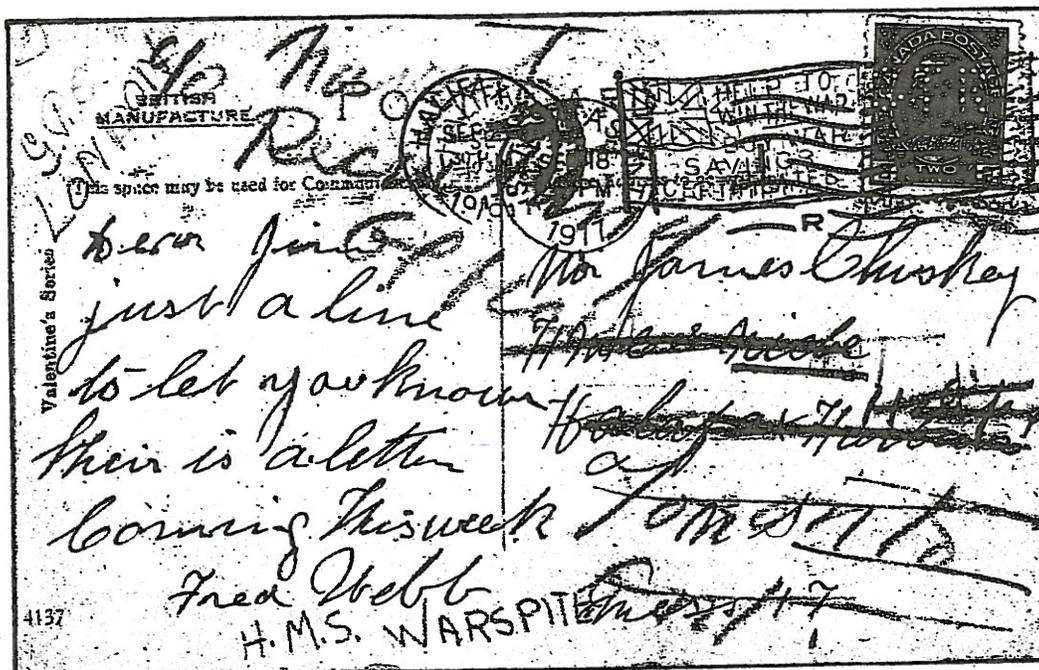
The following postcard, dated September 18, 1917, from St. Thomas, Ontario, was sent to "Mr. James Cluskey, HMCS Niobe, Halifax Harbour, N.S. Mess 17". [Note the "G.T.R./Grank Trunk Railway perfin.Ed.].

The card was cancelled by a Halifax, Nova Scotia September 23, 1917 machine marking. The card was re-directed to "c/o Naval Recruiting Officer, Toronto, Ontario".

Presumably from there [no postmark?Ed.] it was once again re-directed to "H.M.S. Warspite, G.P.O., London".

H.M.S. Warspite was a Queen Elizabeth class dreadnaught.

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SHILO MPO 1001 1950 AND KOREAN WAR CONNECTION--By Colin Pomfret

The following cover to Madame Maurice Pope at Bonn, Germany was sent from the Shilo Military Camp on April 28, 1950. Madame Pope was the wife of Lt. General Maurice Arthur Pope, head of the Canadian Military Mission to the Allied Control Council in Berlin. Pope was responsible to the Department of External Affairs and the Department of National Defence.

After the Federal Republic of Germany was established the Allied Control Council, to which the mission was accredited, no longer exercised authority in Germany. The Canadian government decided to establish a civilian mission in Bonn. Canada kept its mission in Berlin and Pope was in charge of both missions until he became ambassador to Belgium and was replaced in Bonn by Thomas Clayton Davis.

In the First World War, Lieutenant and Temporary Captain Pope served with the 4th Battalion, Canadian Engineers.

On May 1, 1928 Pope, now a major, was named to the position of General Staff officer of Military District No. 5 (Quebec).

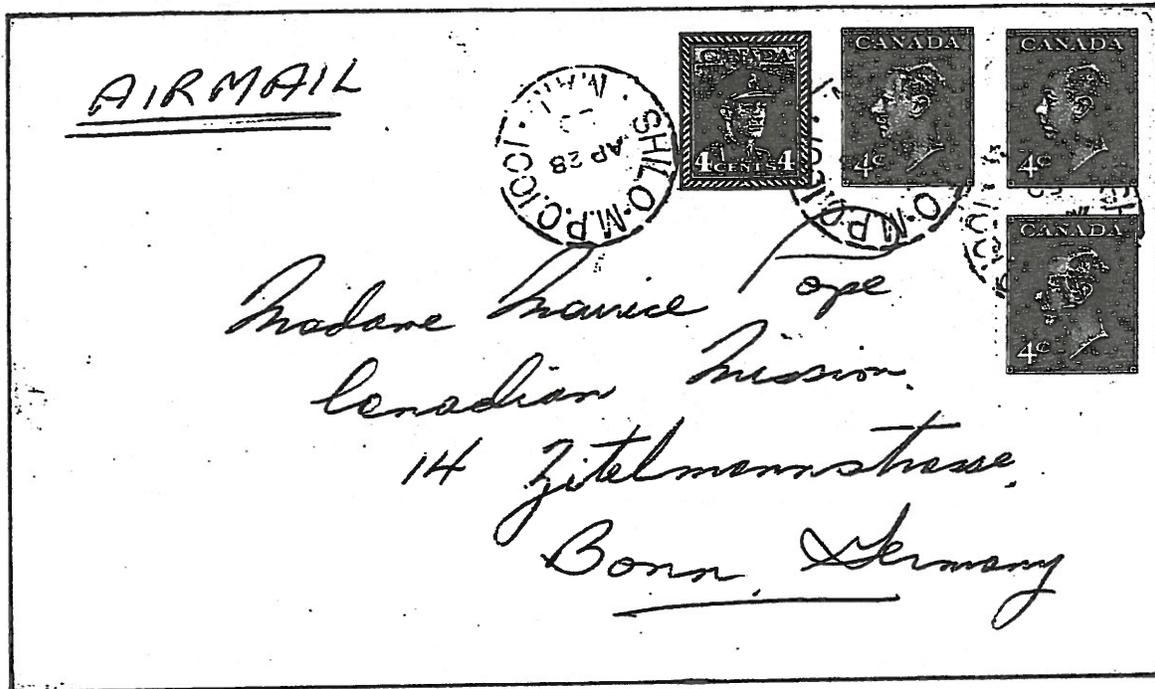
Another Pope, Lt. Colonel E.W., was also on Staff serving as Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General; a position he had held since May 1, 1911.

[The Pope family's military heritage continued with the sender of the cover who, I believe, was Captain (later Major) W. Harry Pope, 1st Btn. Royal 22nd Regiment. He was a veteran of the Second World War. At the time of the cover he was training at Shilo, and was later despatched to

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Korea in mid-1952. He served a full-year's tour there and then another six months in the 3rd Btn. He was awarded one of thirty-three Military Crosses for bravery. A very brief notation of Pope's activities in the Korean War can be found in Ted Barris' Deadlock Korea: Canadians at War, 1950-1953. Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1999, pp. 241-242. Ed.]



BNAPEX 2013 CMSG MEETING

Our Chairman Henk Burgers will chair our Study Group meeting on Friday, August 30, from 1200-1300 (12:00 Noon-1:00PM) at the Rodd Royalty Hotel in Charlottetown, PEI. A short business meeting will be followed by his presentation related to well-known soldier/collector/dealer Henry Hechler. All are welcome to attend. Good luck if exhibiting!

SMALL ADS

Small ads from members are always welcome. Buy/Sell/Trade. Only Cdn. \$1 per insertion (or mint Cdn. postage @ face ok). Copy and payment to the Editor please.

WANTED: Camp Hughes, Sewell Camp, Camp Shilo postal history on covers and postcards. Buy, sell, trade. Contact: Darcy Hickson, R.R. #2, Box 24, Brandon, MB R7A 5Y2; (204) 725-0621; or hicksondj@mts.net (4/10)

WANTED: All covers/cards related to Great War Newfoundland; Canadian POW's IN Germany (WWI/WWII); Canadians in Gibraltar/Malta during WWII. Contact: The Editor or blueputtees@hotmail.com (4/5)

WANTED: Camp Borden MPO 208 and MPO 210--MOOD's and REGISTERED markings on postcard or cover. Contact: Dave Hanes (705) 722-6316 or dhanes@sympatico.ca (3/5)
