

Chapter 12

The Mediterranean Area

1940–1945

After the fall of France, the Mediterranean area became the stage for a series of campaigns lasting through to 1945. In the first two years of that period, Canadian participation in the area was limited to a tunnelling company of Royal Canadian Engineers at Gibraltar and a small number of sailors and airmen who served in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. From June 1942, however, units, groups, formations, and detachments began to have a part in the actual campaigns as outlined briefly in the following paragraphs.

The Desert Campaign

The RCAF's 417 Fighter Squadron had the honour of being the sole Canadian unit to share in this Middle East campaign. Departing from the UK, the Squadron travelled by ship around Africa to Egypt, where it arrived early in June 1942. From the base at RAF station Abu Suweir, its planes carried out patrols over the Nile Delta, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Cyprus. Following the battle of El Alamein, the Squadron helped the Desert Air Force to support the advance of the Eighth Army through Libya, Cyrenaica, and Tripolitania to Tunisia. In February 1943, it was operating from Castel Benito airfield outside Tripoli; by mid-April 1943, its planes were taking off from fields around Sousse and after the campaign ended on 10 May, it was transferred to Malta to prepare for the invasion of Sicily.

French North Africa

As the Eighth Army pursued the enemy westwards from El Alamein, American and British forces approached the shores of Morocco and Algeria. After landing at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers on 8 November 1942, the Allies pushed rapidly eastwards towards Tunisia in the hope of catching the enemy in a great pincer movement. Determined opposition, however, slowed the advancing forces and it was not until 10 May 1943 that the enemy's surrender at Cape Bon brought the campaign to a close.

The Navy had the principal Canadian role in this campaign. A number of its corvettes were used to escort troop and supply convoys between the UK, Gibraltar, and Algeria, and some of its assault landing craft carried units of the British North Africa Force (BNAF) on to the beaches. Aside from the foregoing, the only other Canadian participation in the area was a small group

of army officers and NCOs who were attached to British units during the first three months of 1943 for the purpose of gaining battle experience.

Sicily

Even before the final battles took place in North Africa, the US Seventh and British Eighth Armies had begun preparations for the invasion of Sicily. Those preparations involved the Canadian Forces, for they were to have a more significant part in this campaign.

The 1st Division and 1st Army Tank Brigade were to be included within the Eighth Army and have a part in the actual invasion. In the spring of 1943, both formations were situated in the south of England. From there, they proceeded to the Combined Operations Training area around Inverary to carry out several weeks of training in assault landings. About the same time but far away in the Suez Canal zone, flotillas of RCN landing craft (55th, 61st, 80th, and 81st) were being used to provide similar training for British units of the Eighth Army. At Malta, 417 Fighter Squadron was busy helping to keep the Luftwaffe out of the skies over the Central Mediterranean, and three more RCAF squadrons (Nos. 420, 424, and 425) arrived at Sousse in June to commence four months of bombing targets in Sicily, in Sardinia, and in mainland Italy.

On 19 and 28 June 1943, in slow and fast convoys, the 1st Division and 1st Army Tank Brigade departed from the Clyde ports for an assembly area south of Malta, where they were to join the Eighth Army's invasion force. On 1 July, a third convoy carrying administrative units departed for Philippeville, Algeria, where the Canadian base was to be temporarily located under command of BNAF. These latter units, however, were not to land until after the invasion had become an accomplished fact, and one of the reinforcement battalions was then to continue on to Sicily.

In the early hours of 10 July 1943, American, British, and Canadian troops made their assault on Sicily. The 1st Division and 1st Army Tank Brigade landed at the southeast corner of the Island near Pachino, from where they advanced inland towards Mount Etna. The RCN flotillas landed their British units near Syracuse and then remained in the vicinity, ferrying supplies ashore until the harbour facilities had been repaired. 417 Fighter Squadron supported the advancing troops from Malta until 15 July, when its planes moved to a captured airfield at Pachino.

The brief campaign ended on 17 August 1943, when American troops entered Messina only to find that the enemy forces had vacated the Island.

Accordingly, the Allies at once set about their preparations for an assault on the Italian mainland, which lay just a few miles across the Strait of Messina.

Italy

On 3 September 1943, the Canadian 1st Division and the British 5th Division, both supported by units of the 1st Army Tank Brigade (now redesignated 1st Armoured Brigade) landed near Reggio on the toe of Italy. Six days later and farther up the west coast, the US Fifth Army together with formations of the British Eighth Army crossed over the beaches at Salerno. Thus, after an absence of more than three years, the Western Allies had returned to Continental Europe.

Aside from its strategic and tactical value, the crossing of the Strait of Messina was an important event in the history of the Canadian Forces, for it marked the first occasion on which elements of the Army, Navy, and RCAF had literally fought together in the same battle. Troops and vehicles of the 1st Division were carried across the Strait in landing craft manned by sailors of the RCN, while overhead pilots of 417 Fighter Squadron kept the sky clear of enemy aircraft. For the Division and the Squadron, the campaign was to last another year and a half but the RCN flotillas soon returned to the UK to prepare for their next assignment—the invasion of Normandy.

While the 1st Division and 1st Armoured Brigade were advancing generally along or near the Adriatic Coast towards Foggia and Ortona, the decision was made to bring Canadian participation in the Central Mediterranean Force (CMF) up to the level of a corps. Accordingly, the 5th Armoured Division, HQ 1 Corps, and 1 Corps Troops with various ancillary groups departed from Clydeside on 27 October 1943 for Italy. Twelve days later, the 5th Division and some administrative units disembarked at Naples as the remainder of the contingent went to Sicily, where accommodation was found on the Catania Plain and around Taormina. After inheriting well-used tanks and vehicles from Eighth Army sources, the 5th Division moved inland to Altamura to prepare for the spring offensive. Naples and its suburb Avellino then became the main Canadian base in Italy, and to it came the administrative units from Philippeville and Sicily as well as those recently arrived from the UK. A few of these units, of course, went out to points along the lines of communication.

Early in January 1944, HQ 1 Corps also moved to Altamura and shortly afterwards the whole of 1 Corps was assembled on the mainland. During the next 14 months, it advanced northwards, crossing and recrossing the Italian peninsula. Its formations and units took part in several major battles and in

many smaller engagements, separately or in combination with other Allied groups. Finally, in the first week of February 1945, it was on the Lombard Plain northwest of Rimini and Ravenna, and it was there that the news broke that the Corps was to be transferred to NW Europe to rejoin the First Canadian Army.

A few days later, the exodus got under way as advance parties emplaned for their flight to the new theatre. The balance of the Corps trekked by road to Livorno and Naples, thence went by ship to Marseilles, and again by road to assembly areas in Belgium, Germany, and Holland. The last brigade embarked at Livorno on 7 March but another six weeks were to pass before the last of the administrative units left Naples. Thereafter, only rear parties and 417 Fighter Squadron remained in Italy, and the latter did so until it was disbanded at Treviso on 1 July 1945 after three years of service in the Mediterranean area.

Before leaving this campaign, I must mention another group of Canadians whose participation was with the US Forces. Several hundred of these Canadians comprised what was known, for administrative purposes, as the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion. They formed part of the Joint Canadian-American Special Service Force that fought within the US Fifth Army. Arriving at Naples in mid-November 1943, that Force took an active part in the Fifth Army's attacks on Cassino, Anzio, and Rome. It was then withdrawn to prepare for a role in the invasion of Southern France.

Southern France

The invasion of Southern France was primarily a Franco-American affair but it did involve some Canadian participation. On 15 August 1944, the Joint Canadian-American Special Service Force made a successful landing on the islands of Levant and Port Clos not far from Toulon. Then, crossing to the mainland near Cannes, the Force advanced eastwards along the Riviera coast to the Italian border, where it arrived towards the end of November. Shortly afterwards, the Force was disbanded and its Canadian members returned to Naples to be reabsorbed into the Canadian Army (Overseas).

Also taking part in this minor campaign were the RCN landing ships *H.M.C.S. Prince David* and *H.M.C.S. Prince Henry*. The former carried French commando troops to their assembly area for the assault near Marseilles, while the latter transported the Special Service Force from Sardinia. Subsequently, both ships had similar roles in connection with the landing of British troops on some of the Greek Islands.

Postal Services

The Canadian Postal Services entered the Mediterranean area on—or very shortly after—11 July 1943, when FPOs of the 1st Division and 1st Army Tank Brigade ended their “in transit” status and reopened for business near Pachino, Sicily. Prior to that event, the British postal services had dealt with the mail of Canadians serving at Gibraltar, in the Middle East, Tunisia, and French North Africa. In fact, they continued to do so right up to the War’s end for their FMOs and dockyard POs handled most of the RCN mail, and their BAPOs looked after much of the Army and RCAF mail.

In addition to the above FPOs, the Canadian Postal Corps opened a static FPO (SC-415) about the same time at Philippeville, Algeria to serve the several army reinforcement and medical units that were located at that point. Further to the east, at Cairo, the RCAF Postal Service supplied a Canadian section in 4 BAPO to assist in handling mail for the increasing number of Canadian airmen in the Middle East, East Africa, and beyond. With these initial facilities, the Canadian Postal Services extended their organization from the UK to the Mediterranean area without any significant change in policy, procedure, or equipment. And during the months to come those facilities were enlarged by the opening of even more FPOs and other offices.

In the first week of August 1943, FPO SC-415 moved to Sicily in order to serve No. 1 Reinforcement Battalion and other groups of Canadians who were to remain on the Island after the 1st Division and 1st Army Tank Brigade crossed to the Italian mainland. The administrative units left in Philippeville then delivered their mail to British postal facilities, from where it was duly forwarded to 5 BAPO in Algiers. There, another RCAF section was soon to be placed, for 5 BAPO was to be the principal collecting office for mail from RAF and RCAF units in French North Africa, Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy, and from army units in Algeria. Also, it was a transfer point for the developing RAF airlift of mail cargo.

Less than two months after opening in Sicily, the FPOs of 1st Division and 1st Armoured Brigade transferred their operations to the mainland of Italy near Reggio. From there, they moved forward from one location to another in step with their respective formations until they reached the vicinity of Ortona in late December 1943. In the meantime, about a month earlier, FPOs of the 5th Armoured Division had reopened at Naples and Altamura, while those of HQ 1 Corps and 1 Corps Troops had done likewise near Taormina and Catania in Sicily. But they too moved to Altamura after the New Year. From that district and from many other points during the next 14 months,

all these mobile FPOs provided normal postal services for the troops as the Corps fought its way northwards towards Cassino, Rome, Florence, Rimini, and Ravenna. Then as the transfer of the Corps to Northwest Europe got under way in mid-February 1945, the FPOs returned to “in transit” status. One of them did so with a new designation, because FPO BTC-1 had become FPO CA-1 in March 1944 in keeping with 1st Army Tank Brigade change to 1st Armoured Brigade. An August 1944 cover from FPO CA-1 is shown in Figure 12.1.

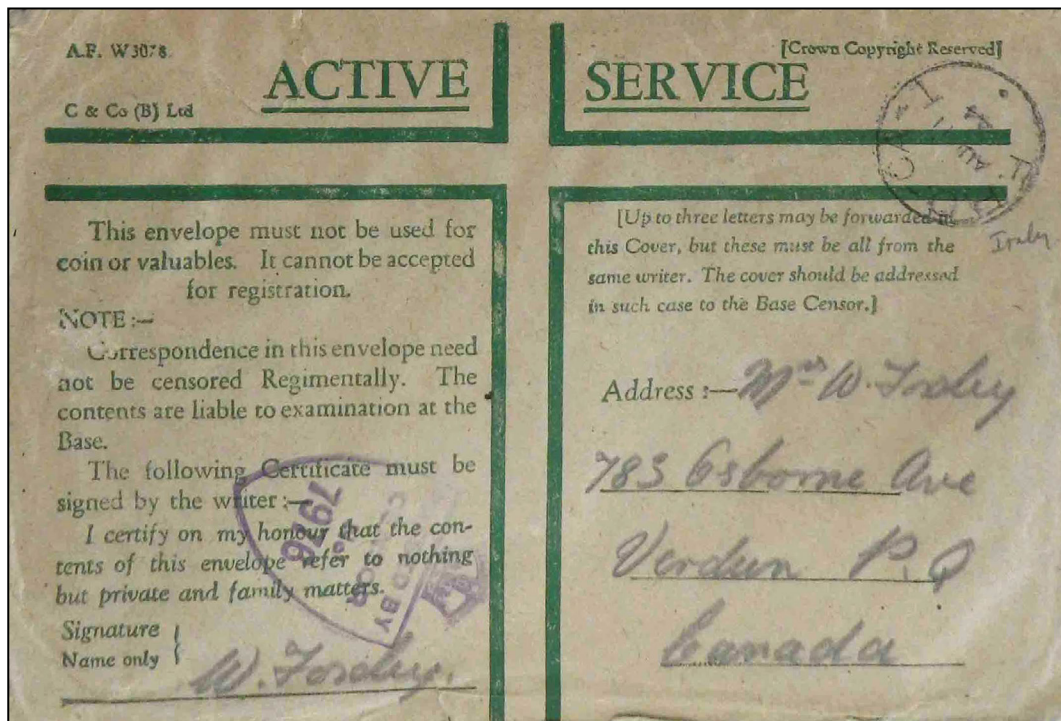


Figure 12.1. Honour Envelope (self censored by the writer) bearing the Canadian postmark FPO CA-1, dated 11 August 1944 and addressed to Verdun, P.Q. The 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade was located in the Arrezzo area of Northern Italy at this time. The envelope probably travelled to Canada by air post free on a MAILCAN flight.

The development of the Canadian base area near Naples required postal facilities. At first these were supplied by a Canadian section (army) at 15 BAPO, but early in December 1943 FPO SC-415 moved up from Sicily and reopened at Avellino, where the main reinforcement depot was situated. In the following spring, FPOs SC-410, 411, 412, 413, and 414 were added to the Base area including Pomigliano airfield (SC-412). Another section went to 6 BAPO. Then, on 1 May 1944, 2 Canadian Base PO with its postal tracing section and detachment from No. 2 Canadian Tobacco Depot opened in Naples.

After approximately one year of operation, these static offices also closed their doors, for the administrative units disbanded or followed the 1st Corps to NW Europe. Thereafter, mail for the few remaining Canadians in the area was processed through British postal services.

The routes by which mail travelled to the UK and to Canada reflected the changing circumstances of the War. After the fall of France, enemy superiority in the air over the Central Mediterranean effectively closed the normal routes to the Middle East and mail had to be sent by the “Cape Route” around South Africa. Slow-moving convoys often took three months or longer to make the trip from Egypt to the UK and commercial air lines with their limited capacity and frequent delays due to weather or mechanical troubles were not much faster. For two years and more, little improvement was possible except to increase the volume of mail that could go by air, an achievement made possible by the introduction of air mail letter cards (AFALs) and airgraphs at concessional rates. Towards the end of 1942, when the tide began to change and transport aircraft began to be available in increasing numbers, the RAF started to air-lift some mail cargo. From the Middle East and SE Asia, its planes carried mail via the new mid-Africa route: Nairobi–Stanleyville–Lagos, to Gibraltar and to the UK. In the summer of 1943, the Mediterranean routes were reopened and the air-lift included Catania, and later Foggia and Naples. Since Canadian mail was directed through the BAPOs, it naturally received some benefit from this air-lift.

Then, in the closing weeks of 1943, the RCAF MAILCAN service began to assume responsibility for transporting letter mail between the Canadian Forces in the UK and the Central Mediterranean area and Canada. In preparation for this new routing, the RCAF Postal Service placed CFP detachments at Gibraltar and Naples (Pomigliano airfield) in order to ensure the proper handling, billing, and recording of despatches at these transfer points. At Algiers, the functions were performed by the RCAF section with 5 BAPO. The detachments also opened FPOs to deal with mail from local and transient Canadian personnel. On 28 December 1943, the first Flying Fortress laden with mail from Canada and the UK reached Catania, having been diverted there by reason of adverse weather in the Naples area. Following a period of growing pains and prolonged poor weather, the MAILCAN planes of 168 Squadron operated a five-day schedule in and out of Naples, with the result that letters from troops in the front lines began to arrive at their destinations in Canada in less than two weeks.

In conjunction with this schedule, the Squadron introduced a shuttle system using two-engine Dakota aircraft for the Mediterranean leg of the MAILCAN service. At Naples, the CFP detachment loaded the planes with despatches received from BAPOs, including those brought from RCAF personnel in SE Asia and the Middle East, and from 2 CBPO (2 Canadian Base Post Office). At Algiers, the RCAF section with 5 BAPO added more despatches, then the planes went on to Gibraltar. Here, the CFP detachment transferred the cargo to four-engine planes (Flying Fortresses or Liberators) that flew the Atlantic legs to Canada via the Azores and Gander, and to Northolt in the UK. About 1 November 1944, a further change in routing took place. Rabat in Morocco became the eastern terminus for the trans-Atlantic leg and CFP-Gibraltar was relocated accordingly. New shuttle routes went from Rabat to Naples and from Rabat to Marseilles, while a third one operated from Marseille to Northolt (later, Biggin Hill). As a result of this change, another CFP detachment assumed the transfer tasks at Marseilles and the RCAF section with 5 BAPO moved to Naples, where it joined 15 BAPO.

The departure of 1 Corps from Italy obviated any further requirement for the MAILCAN service in the Mediterranean so the shuttle route to Naples was cancelled and the RCAF Postal Service withdrew its CFP detachments and sections on or about 15 April 1945.

One further routing, apparently having some degree of official recognition, was the occasional use of American Force's air mail service for getting letters back to Canada. Provided the letters carried the correct amount of US postage (6¢), the US Army Postal Service accepted their transfer from British and Canadian postal facilities for inclusion in despatches for the USA. US postage stamps, postal stationery, and "V-MAIL" air letter forms, of course, were easily obtainable as Canadian and American troops often served in the same areas in Algeria, Sicily, and Italy. Naturally, this routing was normal for the members of the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion. Figure 12.2 (next page) is an example of mail carried by the US service.

To complete these brief notes on the routing of outgoing mail, a few words are necessary regarding the handling of letters written by troops of 1 Corps as they made their way from Italy to NW Europe. A staging camp had been set up at Istres—just outside the city of Marseilles—and there the Canadian Postal Corps placed CAP-Istres to deal with in-transit mail. From about 15 February to 1 May 1945, the detachment operated FPO SC-775 for the purpose of collecting and processing such mail, then delivering the despatches to CFP-Marseilles for onward despatch by MAILCAN service.

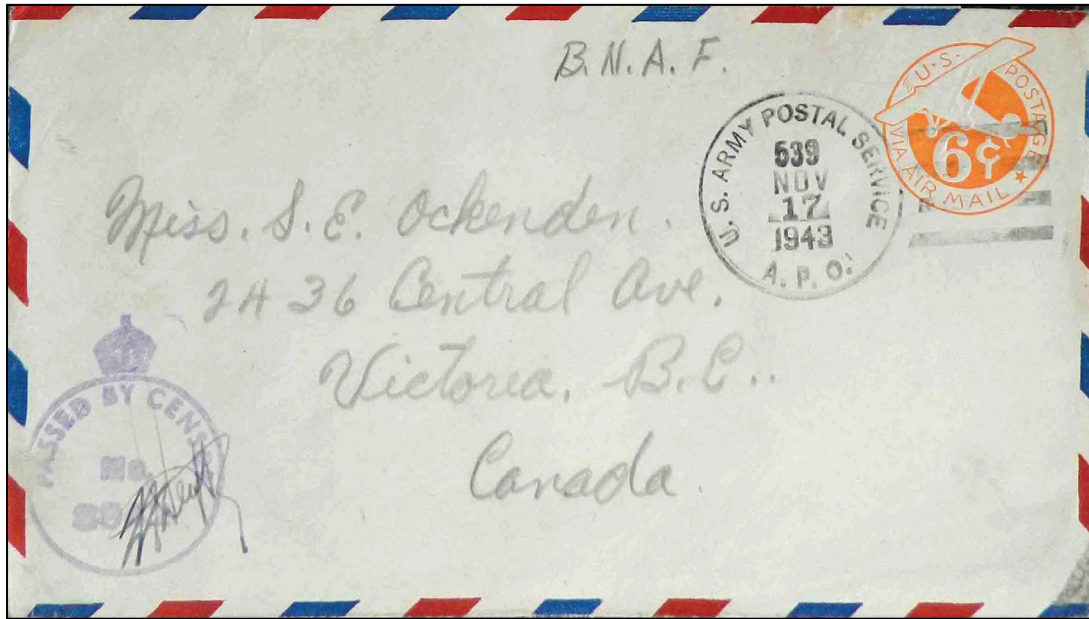


Figure 12.2. Air mail posted 17 November 1943 at US Field PO 539 at Constantine, Algeria with franking of 6¢ for air mail to the USA via the American military mail service, then to Victoria, B.C. by surface mail. 'B.N.A.F.' means British North Africa Force. The censor mark is a British type. The sender's military serial number on the reverse indicates that he was a Canadian soldier.

As for incoming mail, the bulk of it generally followed the same routings but in reverse directions. The forms of address, however, provide some interesting aspects. That for most naval mail was the usual—name of ship plus "c/o GPO, London", but for some RCN units such as those serving in Egyptian waters, it was "c/o P.O. Box 1000, Toronto, Ont." presumably because the mail concerned was transmitted via American postal facilities. For RCAF personnel serving in or with the RAF, the address was normally "RCAF Overseas", with or without a specific unit being shown. Mail so addressed went first to the COPD, then was directed to an appropriate BAPO, which in turn redirected it to the latest known location of the persons applicable. An example is shown in Figure 12.3. For army personnel, the standard form was in general use: unit plus "Canadian Active Service Force" (CASF) or "Canadian Army Overseas" (CAO). After the invasion of Sicily, the terms "British North Africa Force" (B.N.A.F.) or "Central Mediterranean Force" (CMF) were added as required. Thus, the Base PO in Ottawa was able to quickly separate mail according to the several theatres, and in their turn, the COPD and CFP-Gibraltar (later CFP-Rabat) could do the same.

Redirection of mail, as usual, was an ever present task for the Postal Services. In the early years of the Mediterranean period, when much of the



Figure 12.3. For Canadian airmen serving abroad, the address was typically RCAF OVERSEAS without the unit shown. This Armed Forces Air Letter (AFAL) posted at Haney, B.C. on 2 October 1944 was redirected at the Canadian Overseas Postal Depot (COPD) Directory Service (backstamp) in London on 19 January 1945. This shows the difficulty of forwarding. Subsequently, the letter was forwarded by air, likely by MAILCAN, across the Mediterranean to Cairo, and from there to India, arriving 8 days later at Bombay.

mail went by surface means, a letter requiring redirection might take up to a year or even longer to reach its addressee, or to be returned in some cases to the sender. The problem was most acute with the RCAF, for the rapidity with which airmen could be moved from one location to another by plane was considerably greater than that by which mail could move by surface means. Hence, one of the first steps taken by the RCAF Postal Service after it entered the Mediterranean area was to have the RCAF sections at Cairo, Algiers, and Naples maintain card index systems for all Canadian airmen within their respective spheres of responsibility. All incoming mail was immediately checked against the latest detail shown on the cards so that any necessary redirection took place at once, thereby avoiding delays. The Canadian Postal Corps also had a directory service but it was conducted in a different manner. Incoming army mail, of course, arrived in bags labelled for specific units, so redirection started with unit mail orderlies. They returned any undelivered

items to the FPOs for forwarding to the records section at GHQ 1st Echelon. While that office was located in Algiers, some delay was inevitable, but when it moved to Naples in November 1943 the situation improved. Still further improvement followed when 2 CBPO opened its postal directory service on 1 May 1944. Postal redirection cards were available to all personnel in the area and if they were used as intended, they reduced the amount of redirection to a minimum.

Ordinary letters and postcards, when transmitted by surface means, were entitled to be sent postage free to addresses in Canada and the UK. After the MAILCAN service started, all such mail was carried by air without charge (see Figure 12.4). In accordance with normal procedure, all free mail required an endorsement on the face of the covers. In this regard, troops serving in the Middle East, the Western Desert, and, to some extent in Sicily and Italy, used the standard British term "On Active Service". Those serving under command of the British North Africa Force used "B.N.A.F." The Tunnellers in Gibraltar placed "C.A.S.F." on their envelopes and finally, the terms "CAO-CMF" or "CA-CMF" began to appear after the 1st Division landed in Sicily. While

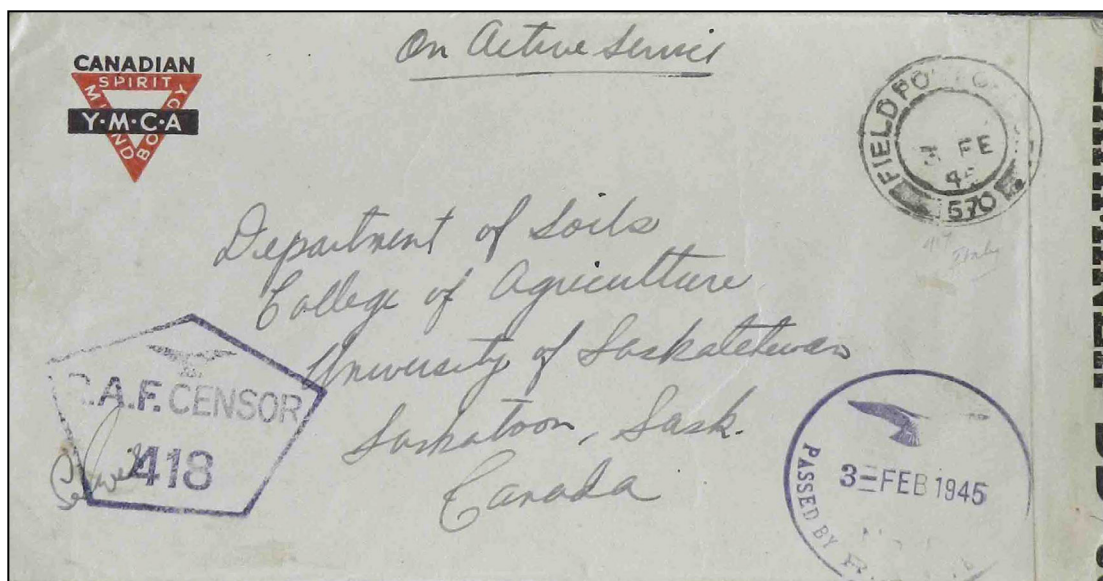


Figure 12.4. Free surface mail to Saskatoon with ON ACTIVE SERVICE in manuscript and requisite censor mark(s). The sender (from the return address on the reverse) was an RCAF airman. The RAF censor No. 418 Type R15 is unidentified. The RAF circular censor No. 8 (faint) Type R20 was applied in Malta and dated 3 February 1945. The BFPO 570 datestamp (same day) was allocated to Naples, from which this letter (paid at the surface-letter rate) was likely flown to Canada by RCAF No. 168 Squadron (MAILCAN), typical service at this late stage of the war.

routine orders may have been specific about the use of these several endorsements, enforcement seems to have been nonexistent, because covers may be seen without any endorsement at all. After all, the postmark of an FPO together with a censor mark was ample proof of the letter's source and its entitlement to free delivery.

Registered and air-mail letters, as usual, required prepayment with British postage stamps, or if sent from Egypt, Malta, or Gibraltar, with local postage stamps at prevailing rates. British type "air mail letter cards" or AMLCs [also called "armed forces air letters" or AFALs] and "air letters" were available in the area and the postal rate, as printed on the forms, was 3d. Although these forms and the concessional rate were intended for use by British troops corresponding to persons in the UK, Canadian troops naturally adopted them for correspondence to Canada. As previously noted, postal authorities in Canada apparently accepted them without charging any postage due. Canadian-type air letter forms do not appear to have been available in Italy until after the 3d rate was officially accepted in March 1944. Nor was the special POSTAGE FREE - XMAS 1944 form available; instead, the Naples detachment of No. 1 Printing and Stationery Unit printed a Christmas design on the ordinary forms (see Appendix C) but the latter were not entitled to the free rate.

The field postcard seems to have made its first appearance in Canadian FPOs immediately following the invasion of Sicily. There is little evidence, however, to show that it ever gained the popularity it had in the First World War. Obviously, the time factor involved in their delivery by surface means as opposed to that for air letters and airgraphs negated their use once air mail service became established.

Postal markings applicable to Canadian postal facilities in the Mediterranean area are generally the same as those illustrated in Plate 11. The markings of unit mail room, orderly room, and office stamps, however, will not be seen on covers from the area, for the practice of adding such markings on outgoing mail was confined to the UK and North America. Accordingly, the only markings other than normal postal types are those connected with censorship, and these are shown in Chapter 23.

Table 12.1 lists the Canadian Postal Corps FPOs that operated in the Mediterranean and the United Kingdom areas. The first part of this table lists the Army facilities, and the second part lists the RCAF facilities.

Table 12.1
Canadian Postal Facilities in the Mediterranean Area 1943–1945
and the United Kingdom 1940–1947
Part 1, Army

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
			Canadian Postal	Corps
BTC-1	11.01	34 338	11 Jul 43-15 Mar 44 Ditto	1 st Army Tank Bde (Redesignated FPO CA-1)
	11.02	1	Ditto	
C-1	11.01	310	11 Jul 43 - Mar 45	1 st Inf Bde
C-2	11.01	311	11 Jul 43 - Mar 45	2 nd Inf Bde
C-3	11.01	312	11 Jul 43 - Mar 45	3 rd Inf Bde
C-11	11.01	509	Jan 44 - Apr 44	11 th Inf Bde
		523	Nov 43 - Jan 44 Apr 44 - Feb 45	
C-12	11.01	177	Jul 44 - Feb 45	12 th Inf Bde
CA-1	11.01	34 338	15 Mar 44 - Feb 45 Ditto	1 st Armd Bde (Formerly FPO BTC-1)
	11.03	–	Ditto	
CA-5	11.01	509	Apr 44 - Feb 45	5 th Armd Bde
		524	Nov 43 - Apr 44	
DC-1	11.01	314	11 Jul 43 - Mar 45	HQ 1 st Inf Div
	11.02	1	Ditto	
DCA-5	11.01	522	Nov 43 - Feb 45	HQ 5 th Armd Div
	11.02	1	Ditto	
HC-1	11.01	452	Nov 43 - Feb 45	HQ 1 Corps
	11.02	1	Ditto	
HCA-1	11.01	253	Aug 44 - Feb 45	HQ 1 Corps See Note 2
TC-1	11.01	313	11 Jul 43 - Mar 45	Ration point. 1 st Inf Div See Note 3
	11.02	1	Ditto	
TCA-5	11.01	509	Nov 43 - Jan 44	Ration point, 5 th Armd Div
		523	Jan 44 - Apr 44	
		524	Apr 44 - Feb 45	
THC-1	11.01	453 636	Nov 43 - Feb 45 Ditto	Ration point, 1 Corps Troops
	11.02	1	Ditto	
CA-3	11.01	625	Sep 42 - Jan 44	3 rd Armd Bde (Redesignated FPO C-10)

Table 12.1 Part 1 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
CA-4	11.01	626	Sep 42 - Jul 44	4 th Armd Bde
CA-5	11.01	524	Nov 41 - Oct 43	5 th Armd Bde
DC-1	11.01	314	27 Jun 40 - Jun 43	HQ 1 st Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Jun 43	
DC-2	11.01	432	Aug 40 - Jul 44	HQ 2 nd Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Jul 44	
DC-3	11.01	483	Aug 41 - 5 Jun 44	HQ 3 rd Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - 5 Jun 44	
DCA-4	11.01	490	Sep 42 - Jul 44	HQ 4 th Armd Div
		622	Sep 42 - Jul 44	
	11.02	623	Sep 42 - Nov 43	
		1	Jan 44 - Jul 44	
DCA-5	11.01	522	Nov 41 - Oct 43	HQ 5 th Armd Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Oct 43	
HC-1	11.01	452	Nov 40 - Oct 43	HQ Cdn Corps/HQ 1 Corps
		454	Dec 40 - Oct 43	
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Oct 43	
HC-2	11.01	640	Jan 43 - Jul 44	HQ 2 Corps
	11.02	861	Ditto	
		1	Ditto	
TAC-1	11.01	586	6 Apr 42 - Jul 43	Ration point, First Cdn Army Troops See Note 3
		587	Ditto	
TC-1	11.01	313	27 Jun 40 - Jun 42	Ration point, 1 st Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Jun 43	
TC-2	11.01	433	Aug 40 - Jul 44	Ration point, 2 nd Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - Jul 44	
TC-3	11.01	484	Aug 41 - 5 Jun 44	Ration point, 3 rd Inf Div
	11.02	1	11 Jun 42 - 5 Jun 44	
DCA-4	11.01	624	Sep 42 - Jul 44	Ration point, 4 th Armd Div
DCA-5	11.01	509	Nov 41 - Oct 43	Ration point, 5 th Armd Div
THC-1	11.01	453	Dec 40 - Oct 43	Ration point, 1 Corps Troops
		454	- Apr 42	
	11.02	636	Dec 40 - Oct 43	
		1	11 Jun 42 - Oct 43	

Table 12.1 Part 1 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
THC-2	11.01 11.01 11.02	441 641 1	Jan 43 - Jul 44 Jan 43 - Jul 44 Mar 43 - Jul 44	Ration point, 2 Corps Troops
SC-1	11.01 11.02 11.20	200 322 471 1 & 2	Jul 40 - Feb 47 Jul 40 - Dec 44 Jul 40 - Dec 44 11 Jun 42 - Feb 47 Nov 40 - Feb 47	HQ CPC - London/Acton
SC-2	11.01 11.02 11.20 11.23	130 131 471 479 480 630 650 1,2,3,4, 5, & 6	Jul 40 - Feb 47 Jul 40 - Feb 47 Dec 44 - Feb 47 Jul 41 - Feb 47 Jul 40 - Feb 47 Oct 42 - Feb 47 Oct 42 - Feb 47 11 Jun 42 - Feb 47 Feb 47 44 - Feb 47	Cdn Section, Home Postal Dept. Overseas Base Post Office (No. 1) at Bournemouth and Manchester; Cdn Overseas Postal Depot at Manchester and London.
SC-3	11.01 11.02	320 1,2, & 3	Jul 40 - 15 Feb 46 11 Jun 42 - 15 Feb 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, Bordon, Hants. Note 4
SC-4	11.01 11.02	248 1 & 2	Jul 40 - 15 Feb 46 11 Jun 42 - 15 Feb 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, No. 4 Repatriation Depot Witley, Surrey
SC-5	11.01 11.02	247 1 & 2	Jul 40 - 15 Feb 46 11 Jun 42 - 15 Feb 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, No. 1 Repatriation Depot Aldershot, Hants.
SC-6	11.01 11.02	321 1 & 2	Jul 40 - 15 Feb 46 11 Jun 42 - 15 Feb 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, Aldershot, Malton, and Horsham
SC-7	11.01 11.02	465 826 849 1 & 2	Jul 40 - Jan 47 - Apr 44 - Jul 45 11 Jun 42 - Jan 47	CMHQ, London
SC-8	11.01	853	- 16 Aug 45	Cdn Reinforcement Units. Leeds - Burgess Hill, Sussex See Note 4

Table 12.1 Part 1 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
SC-9	11.01	115	Feb 41 - Apr 44	Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Tank units, Colchester, Essex
SC-10	11.01 11.02	119 1 & 2	Jul 40 - Dec 46 11 Jun 42 - Feb 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, Farnham, Surrey – Cdn Section, GHQ 2 nd Echelon. Redesignated SC-30
SC-11	11.01 11.02 11.20 11.21	4 119 454 610 621 679 680 826 849 1,2 & 3	Jul 40 - Feb 46 Dec 44 - Jul 44 Apr 44 - Feb 46 Dec 44 - Aug 45 Dec 44 - Aug 45 Jul 45 - Jul 45 - 11 Jun 42 - Feb 46	Cdn Base Depot – Cdn Reinforcement Units, Farnborough, Hants.
SC-12	11.01 11.02	496 1 & 2	Jul 40 - Mar 46 11 Jun 42 - Mar 46	Cdn Reinforcement Units, Cove, Hants. – No. 3 Repatriation Depot
SC-13	11.01	527	Nov 41 - Mar 44	A.A. and A.T. units, Colchester, Essex
SC-14	11.01	539	Jul 41 - Jun 44	RCAF Personnel Reception Centre, Bournemouth (Redesignated FPO SC-65)
SC-15	11.01	548 610 852	Mar 42 - May 43 Aug 45 Sep 44	RCAF Personnel Reception Centre, Hastings – No. 2 Repatriation Depot, Blackdown, Surrey
SC-16	11.01	548	May 43 - Nov 43	CAP Glasgow, for departure of Cdn troops to Italy
SC-17	11.01	586 621	Sep 43 - Nov 43 Jan 44 - Dec 44	1 Corps Increment Cdn Reinforcement Units, Retford, Notts – No. 9 Repatriation Depot

Table 12.1 Part 1 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
SC-18	11.01	610 623	Jun 44 - Dec 44	13th Inf Training Bde, Leyburn, Yorks – No. 10 Repatriation Depot, Bookham, Surrey
SC-19	11.01	416		See Note 5
SC-20	11.01	417	- Aug 44	See Note 5
SC-21 to SC-24				Not opened
SC-25	11.01	821	Apr 44 - Jul 45	No. 8 & 4 General Hospitals, Aldershot
SC-26	11.01	822	Apr 44 - Jul 45	No. 2 & 22 General Hospitals, Bramshott
SC-27	11.01	823	Apr 44 -	No. 17 General Hospital, Pinewood, Crowthorne
SC-28	11.01	824	Apr 44 -	No. 7 & 11 General Hospitals, Taplow, Bucks
SC-29	11.01	679 825	Jul 45 - Apr 44 -	No. 1 Neurological Hospital – No. 11 Repatriation Depot, Basingstoke, Hants
SC-30	11.01	700 826	Jul 45 - Dec 45 Apr 44 - Mar 45	No. 1 Special Hospital, Hellingly – No. 8 Repat- riaton Depot, Aldershot
SC-31	11.01	237	Apr 44 - Jul 45	No. 12 & 24 General Hospitals, Horley, Surrey
SC-32	11.01	238	Apr 44 - Sep 45	No. 9 General Hospital, Horsham, Sussex
SC-33	11.01	239	Apr 44 - Jul 45	No. 13 General Hospital, Cuckfield, Sussex – No. 5 Repatriation Depot, Aldershot
SC-34	11.01	827	Apr 44 - Jul 45	No. 16 & 19 General Hospitals, Marston Green, Birmingham – No. 7 Repatriation Depot, Aldershot
SC-35	11.01	828	Apr 44 -	No. 10 & 20 General Hospitals – Khaki University, Leavesden

Table 12.1 Part 1 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
SC-36	11.01	240	Apr 44 - Oct 45	Roman Way Convalescent Hospital, Colchester
SC-37	11.01	831	Apr 44 - Dec 45	No. 18 General Hospital, Cherry Tree, Colchester – No. 6 Repatriation Depot, Aldershot
SC-38 to SC-49				Not opened
1 CABPO	11.01	505 528	Feb 43 - Jul 44	Manchester
'X' Base PO	11.01	684	Mar 43 - Sep 43	Temporary BPO during major training manoeuvres
CAP Glasgow	11.01	647 648 649	May 43 - 3 Jul 45 - 27 Feb 46 - 3 Jul 45	See also FPO SC-16
CAP Southampton, Dover, Folkestone	11.01 11.07	210 527 599 No. 1 No. 2 No. 3 No. 4	Aug 44 - Feb 46	Note 6
CAP Beverley	11.01	854	- Jul 45	
CPC HQ			Feb 40 - Jan 47	London/Acton. See FPO SC-1
Canadian Home Canadian Base PO COPD	Section Depot Ov'rseas No. 1		Feb 40 - 21 Feb 47	Bournemouth – Manchester & London See FPO SC-2
COPD Det Ditto	11.01 11.01	10 492	Jul 40 - Sep 43 Jul 43 - Sep 43	RCAF Overseas HQ, London. Prestwick Airfield
No. 2 Cdn Tobacco Depot	–	–		Slough, Buckinghamshire
Postal	Tracing	Section		London
CMHQ Cdn	Records	Office		London

Table 12.1 (continued)
Part 2 RCAF Postal Service in the Mediterranean
and the United Kingdom 1943–1946

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
MC-70	11.01	298	Sep 43 - Feb 44	400 Squadron – 129 Airfield HQ
MC-71	11.01	492 498	Sep 43 - Nov 44 Sep 43 - Nov 43	401 Squadron & CFP-Prestwick
MC-72	11.01	*	Sep 43 - Feb 44	402 Squadron; * = See Note 7
MC-73	11.01	643	Sep 43 - Feb 44	403 Squadron
MC-74	11.01	666	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	404 Squadron
MC-75	11.01	678	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	405 Squadron
MC-76	11.01	669	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	406 Squadron
MC-77	11.01	674	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	407 Squadron
MC-78		*	Sep 43 -	408 Squadron
MC-79	11.01	645	Sep 43 - 13 Jul 44	409 Squadron
MC-80	11.01	664	Sep 43 - 14 Jul 44	410 Squadron
MC-81		*		411 Squadron
MC-82		*		412 Squadron
MC-83		*		413 Squadron
MC-84		*		414 Squadron
MC-85	11.01	665	Sep 43 - 23 Jul 44	415 Squadron
MC-86		*		416 Squadron
MC-87		*		417 Squadron
MC-88	11.01	391	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	418 Squadron
MC-89		*		419 Squadron
MC-90		*		420 Squadron
MC-91		*		421 Squadron
MC-92	11.01	651	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	422 Squadron
MC-93	11.01	644	Sep 43 - 28 Jul 44	423 Squadron
MC-94		*		424 Squadron
MC-95	11.01	281	Sep 43 - Feb 44	425 Squadron & 143 Airfield HQ
MC-96		*		426 Squadron
MC-97	11.01	56		427 Squadron
MC-98		*		428 Squadron

Table 12.1 Part 2 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
MC-99		*		429 Squadron
SC-50	11.01	10	Sep 43 - Mar 46	RCAF Overseas HQ - London
SC-51	11.01	667	Sep 43 - Apr 44	126 Airfield HQ, Redhill
SC-52	11.01	675	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Topcliffe
SC-53	11.01	653	Sep 43 - Feb 44	128 Airfield. Dunsfold, Surrey
SC-54	11.01	652	Sep 43 - 45	No. 6 RCAF Bomber Group HQ
SC-55		—		RCAF Station, Coleby Grange
SC-56	11.01	668	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Leeming
SC-57	11.01	672	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Dishforth
SC-58	11.01	673	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Middleton St. George
SC-59	11.01	677	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Croft
SC-60	11.01	18	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Dalton
SC-61	11.01	547	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Linton-on-Ouse
SC-62	11.01	595	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, East Moor
SC-63	11.01	598	Sep 43 - 45	RCAF Station, Skipton-on-Swale
SC-410	11.01	427 428 469	Apr 44 - Apr 45 Apr 44 - Apr 45 Apr 44 - Apr 45	Can. reinforcement units, Avellino
SC-411	11.01	639	Apr 44 - Apr 45	Cdn base units, Naples
SC-412	11.01	807	Apr 44 - Apr 45	Pomigliano Airfield, Naples
SC-413	11.01	401	Apr 44 - Apr 45	Cdn base units, Naples
SC-414	11.01	638	Apr 44 - 28 Feb 45	Cdn base units, Naples
SC-415	11.01	600	Apr 44 - Mar 45	Cdn reinforcement units, Avellino
No. 1 CRG Postal Unit	11.01	133 219 427 428 469 600	Nov 43 - Apr 44 Nov 43 - Apr 44 Nov 43 - Apr 44 Nov 43 - Apr 44 Nov 43 - Apr 44 Aug 43 - Apr 44	Served Cdn reinforcement units in Sicily and Italy

Table 12.1 Part 2 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
Cdn Sec 6 BAPO	11.01	505	Apr 44 - Dec 44	
Cdn Sec 15 BAPO	11.01	600	28 Mar 45 -	Naples
2 CBPO	11.01	427 505 638	1 May 44 - 24 Apr 45 Dec 44 - 24 Apr 45 1 Mar 45 - 24 Apr 45	Naples
Postal Tracing Sec 2 CBPO	11.01	427	1 May 44 - 24 Apr 45	
Det. from No. 2 CTD	-	-	Apr 44 - Apr 45	

Italy – RCAF Postal Service

RCAF Sec 15 BAPO	11.01	505	Oct 43 - Apr 44	Bari, Naples
RCAF Sec 2 CBPO	11.01	807	1 May 44 - 24 Apr 45	See also FPO SC-412
CFP Naples	11.01	542 806	Dec 44 - Apr 45 Feb 45 -	Transit point for RCAF MAILCAN service

Algeria – Canadian Postal Corps

No. 1 CRG Postal Unit	11.01	600	11 Jul 43 - 4 Aug 43	Cdn reinforcement units, Philippeville
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Algeria – RCAF Postal Service

RCAF Sec 5 BAPO	11.01	542	Aug 43 - Dec 44	Algiers - Handled RCAF mail for Cdn airmen serving with the RAF in BNAF and CMF.
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Egypt – RCAF Postal Service

RCAF Sec 4 BAPO	11.01	588	Aug 43 -	Cairo - Handled mail for Cdn airmen serving with RAF in the Middle East and East Africa.
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Table 12.1 Part 2 (continued)

FPO or Facility	Post Type (per Plate 11)	marks Numerical Indices	Approximate Period of Use (Note 1)	Remarks
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Southern France – Canadian Postal Corps

SC-775	–	–	Feb 45 - Apr 45	CAP-Istres (Marseilles) during transit of 1 Corps from Italy to NW Europe
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RCAF Postal Service

CFP Istres	11.01	596	Dec 44 - Apr 45	Transit point for RCAF MAILCAN service
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Gibraltar – RCAF Postal Service

CFP Gibraltar	11.01	805	Aug 43 - Dec 44	Transit point for RCAF MAILCAN service
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Morocco – RCAF Postal Service

CFP Rabat	11.01	805	Dec 44 - Mar 46	Transit point for RCAF MAILCAN service
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Notes:

1. Dates in Column 4 are based largely upon official records. When these have been incomplete, the dates shown in the *Official History of the Canadian Army* for the formation and movement of major groups have been adopted. In some cases, the dates contained in actual postmarks have been used when practical; otherwise a blank exists.
2. I presume that FPO HCA-1 was opened to serve a second but detached group of HQ 1 Corps.
3. A ration point was a location (movable) where supplies—and apparently mail—were distributed to the Front.
4. SC-8: *Bailey & Toop (1985) say Army Distribution Office – Cdn Section: Nottingham (2.5.44 – 1945).*
5. SC-19 and SC-20: *Bailey & Toop (1985) say these were spare daters held at HQ London BFPO, along with D/S 416 and D/S 417 and FPO 498 (British).*
6. Canadian Port Detachments, Canadian FPO SC-13.
7. *These selected RCAF MC# items (*) are also in Bailey & Toop, which has a lengthy listing of locations. No datestamp information is available, though.*

Suggested Reading

1. G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1939 – 1945, The Official History of the Canadian Army in World War Two*, Department of National Defence, Canada, Queen's Printer, Ottawa (1957) pp. 1–807.
2. M. Zuehlke and C.S. Daniel, "The Italian Campaign", *The Canadian Military Atlas, the Nation's Battlefield's from the French and Indian Wars to Kosovo*, Stoddart, Toronto (2001) pp. 156–163.
3. W.A.B. Douglas, R. Sarty, and M. Whitby, "Operation Husky", *A Blue Water Navy, The Official Operational History of The Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1943-1945, Volume 2, Part 2*, Vanwell Publishing, St. Catharines, Ontario and Department of National Defence, Ottawa (2007) pp. 72, 120, 126–127, 132–133, 136, 234. (RCN; invasion of Sicily).
4. W.J. Bailey and E.R. Toop, "Chapter 16 – Overseas Field Post Offices, 1941-1946", *The Canadian Military Posts, Between the Wars and World War Two, 1920 – 1946*, Proud (1985) pp. 229–326. (Includes Italy).
5. K. Ellison, "The USA-Canada First Special Service Force", *Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter*, Issue 109 (January 1993), pp. 84-85. (In Italy, November 1943 –August 1944).
6. W.G. Robinson, "RCAF in Tunis", *Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter*, Issue 139 (March 1999) pp. 399–400.
7. W.G. Robinson and R.A. Kingston, "Survey of British Field Post Offices allocated to Canadian Units in World War Two", *Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter*, Issue 31 (March 1979), pp. 165, 168–172. (Italy).
8. W. Whitehouse, "Received from HMCS Louisburg", *Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter*, Issue 93 (March 1990) p. 688. (Louisburg was lost at sea in the Mediterranean).
9. H.E. Guertin, "Part Ten - The Military Markings of Canadian Forces Mails from other Areas: Gibraltar and the Azores; Egypt and the Middle East; The Battle of Crete; North Africa; Sicily; Italy", *The Wartime Mails and Stamps of Canada, 1939–1946*, H.E. Guertin, Toronto (undated), pp. 66–70.
10. K. Dodwell, "The Canadian Army in Italy", *A Canadian Postal History Anthology*, Canadian Military Mail Study Group of the British North America Philatelic Society, Robert A. Lee, Kelowna (1991) pp. 122-129.
11. K. Dodwell, "The Canadian Army Lands in Italy", *Maple Leaves*, Whole No. 243, Vol. 23, No. 3 (June 1993) pp. 91–92.