

Canada's C-Force in Hong Kong and its Forerunners – From a Social Philately Approach 1941-1945

Mission

As a Display Exhibit, the postal history of Canada's C-Force in Hong Kong (HK) and the postal history of its forerunner for the Winnipeg Grenadiers (WG) as Y-Force in Jamaica, are shown, from a Social Philately approach.

Introduction

- Canada sent 2 battalions in defence of Hong Kong (HK) in Oct. 1941;
- Winnipeg Grenadiers (WG) and Royal Rifles of Canada (RRC) comprising of 1975 men and 2 nurses; including a small contingent of various HQ staff;
- WG, as a militia unit, served garrison duty in Jamaica from June 1940 to Sept 1941 replacing British Forces who were called back to defend the British Isles;
- Shortly upon return to Winnipeg in Sept. 1941, WG were then recalled, then put on active duty and shipped in Oct 1941 as C-Force to HK;
- This exhibit shows the postal history of WG as forerunners to C-Force (Y-Force in Jamaica), C-Force in HK, as POWs in HK camps and repatriation after WWII, together with postal history items that their relatives sent from Canada or received from the Canadian government;

Historical Timeline

- 1940.05.27 WG as Y-Force departed for Jamaica from Winnipeg;
- 1940.06.20 WG arrived in Kingston, Jamaica;
- 1941.09.13 WG departed Kingston, Jamaica;
- 1941.09.23 WG arrived back in Winnipeg;
- 1941.10.23 RCC departed Valcartier;
- 1941.10.25 WG departed Winnipeg;
- 1941.10.27 C-Force sailed from Vancouver on TSS Awatea & HMCS Price Robert (150 men only);
- 1941.11.02 arrived then departed Honolulu;
- 1941.11.15 arrived then departed Manila;
- 1941.11.16 10AM arrived in HK;
- 1941.12.08 8AM Japanese started attacking, start of Battle of HK, 1st Canadian casualties of WWII;
- 1941.12.11 by noon, lost Kowloon peninsula, all troops retreated to HK island;
- 1941.12.19 Japanese landed on HK island the night before and attack early morning;
- (same day) death of C-Force Commander Brigadier Lawson, also Major Gresham & CSM Osborn (in 1946 was promulgated the 1st Victoria Cross of WWII, only from Pacific Arena);
- 1941.12.25 capitulation of HK; 290 C-Force members die in battle with 493 wounded;
- 1942.09.26 closing of North Point Camp, most Canadian POWs were then in Sham Shui Po Camp;
- 1943.01.19 Tatsuta Maru brought 1st group of Canadian POWs to Japan (663 POWs);
- 1943.08.15 Manryu Maru brought 2nd group of Canadian POWs to Japan (376 POWs);
- 1943.09.23 2 Canadian nurses that served with C-Force departed HK on 2nd Gripsholm exchange together with 22 other Canadian civilians from HK;
- 1943.12.15 Toyama Maru brought 3rd group of Canadian POWs to Japan (98 POWs);
- 1944.04.29 Naura Maru brought last group of Canadian POWs to Japan (47 POWs)(136 Canadian POWs were to die in Japan Camps);
- 1945.08.15 Japan surrendered;
- 1945.08.16 Japanese forces everywhere laid down their arms in respond to Imperial Rescript from the day before;
- (Same day) Union Jack raised over Sham Shui Po Camp, British officers took over camp control;
- 1945.08.18 4PM US Air force dropped "Notice to Allied POW & Civilians" bilingual flyers into Sham Shui Po Camp (Dowling Correspondence);
- 1945.08.30 Rear Admiral Cecil Harcourt arrived the day earlier on HMS *Indomitable* was transferred to HMS *Swiftsure* to establish a British Military Administration in HK;
- Of the 1975 C-Force members that went to HK, 557 did not returned after the war;

Philatelic Timeline (those established by exhibitor's research are in **RED**)

- 1941.10.27 & beyond, no Canadian mail reached HK before invasion to C-Force members (Breakey Correspondence);
- 1941.11.02 3 bags of mail/150lbs at Honolulu c/o US Army PO (Clarke in Webb);
- 1941.11.19 HMCS Price Robert departed HK taking a bag of mail/92lbs (Clarke in Webb);
- 1941.11.20 earliest mail sent by C-Force in HK;
- 1941.11.22 no parcel post service set up yet for C-Force (C.E. Smith Correspondence);
- 1941.11.29 last C-Force surface mail departed HK on eastbound transport (later mail was Detained in HK);
- 1941.11.29 last C-Force airmail departed HK (later mail was Detained in HK);
- 1942.04.15 Dept. of National Defence form-letter informing families how to send letters (Tett);
- 1942.05/06 1st time Canadian POWs were given one PS card each to write home (Tett; Greenhouse);
- 1942.07.10 about ¼ of POW a second mailing, then no mailing for next 9 months (Greenhouse);
- 1942.08.25 1st POW mail received in New York from 1st MS Gripsholm exchange, 650 items (Clarke);
- 1942.10.31 Dept. of National Defence form-letter informing families 2nd Gripsholm exchange on hold carrying parcels/letters already full (Lester Correspondence);
- (2nd Gripsholm exchange/sailing was delayed until Aug/Sept 1943, parcels were off-loaded, chocolates were donated to NY area hospitals);
- 1943.08.23 2nd batch of incoming mail from both POW & civilians, 46 items only (Clarke);
- 1945.08.28 last day of Japanese control of PO in HK;
- 1945.09.05 British reopened PO in HK & Kowloon;
- 3 years 8 months in captivity, POW received 3 letters was "fair average" (Endacott/Greenhouse);

Cap-badges of members' units shown in this exhibit



Winnipeg Grenadiers WG



Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps RCAMC



Royal Canadian Army Chaplain Corps RCChC



Royal Canadian Corps of Signals RCCS



Royal Rifles of Canada RRC

Rarity/Importance
Dark purple matting used to indicate important or rare items

Original research shown by magnifier

			Plan
Chapter 1	Sub-chapters	Frame	Postal History of C-Force & its Forerunners
	1.1	1	Forerunner: As Y-Force in Jamaica WG
	1.2	1	enroute to HK
	1.3	1	arrival in HK
	1.4	1/2	Detained in HK
	1.5	2	Returned mail
	1.6	2	POW mail from HK
	1.7	2	Mail to POW received in HK (& Japan)
Chapter 2			Individual Correspondence
	2.1	2	Gresham Correspondence (WG)
	2.2	3	Twist Correspondence (WG)
	2.3	3	C. E. Smith Correspondence (WG)
	2.4	3/4	Lester Correspondence (RRC)
	2.5	4	Benton Correspondence (WG)
	2.6	4	Dowling Correspondence (RCCS)
		4	Epilogue

		Contents
2.1	2	Y-Force covers (from Jamaica) showing 6 different censors
2.2	3	Y-Force covers, letters to Ian Morgan at Department of National Defence
2.3	3	Letter from HK, WG Commemorative Book, Winnipeg newspaper cutting by family 1939-41
2.4	3/4	RRC & Department of National Defence covers/letters to POW family, cover from POW upon return
2.5	4	POW PS cards from HK, Casualty List, dozen photos
2.6	4	Covers with letters to POW Camp in HK, LPW airletters, Notice to Allied POW, Welcome Card (Winnipeg), Notebook

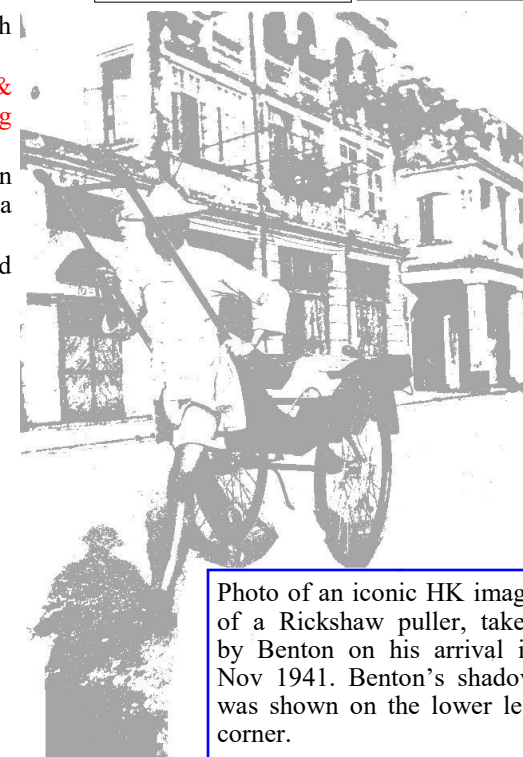


Photo of an iconic HK image of a Rickshaw puller, taken by Benton on his arrival in Nov 1941. Benton's shadow was shown on the lower left corner.

1.1.1 Forerunners : WG as Y-Force in Jamaica

- WG arrived in Kingston, Jamaica on Jun 20, 1940 & departed Sep 13, 1941;
- Exhibitor research shown there were 3 different periods of censorship procedures:
- **Period 1:** ERD (earliest recorded date): 1940 Jul 6 (cover in exhibit);
- LRD (latest recorded date): last days of July 1940;
- Important features: 1) no sender's name & rank were needed on cover; 2) oval censor marking signed by censor or by signature hand-stamp;
- **Period 2:** ERD: 1940 Aug 5 (in exhibit); LRD: 1940 Dec 23 (in exhibit);
- Important features: 1) sender name & rank were required on cover; 2) oval censor marking signed by censor or by signature hand-stamp;
- **Period 3:** ERD: Jan 1941; LRD: 1941 Sep 2 (in exhibit);
- Important features: 1) sender's name and rank were required on cover; 2) censored by circular generic censor marking "Military Censor Y Force no.4";

Photo Credits: Images of most WG members were from WG Commemorative Book (exhibitor owns a copy from C.E. Smith Correspondence); Y-Force newspaper clippings (exhibitor owns, from Smith Correspondence.); photos from Benton Correspondence; Others are from website of Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (exhibitor is a member);