

THE POSTHORN

Addition 22

October 2008



90th Anniversary of the end of World War 1 The Post Office in 1914

In 1914, the Post Office employed over 250,000 people. This made it the largest single employer in Britain. The Post Office was at this time a government department: the General Post Office (GPO). The GPO handled a yearly total of 5.9 billion items of post. It was also responsible for the nation's telegraph & telephone systems, savings bank and all branch post offices.

The Outbreak of World War 1

GPO leaders played an active part in the recruitment of soldiers. Every male employee was sent a letter urging him to enlist. 'Your country needs you' was displayed on many Post Office vans and men began to sign up to the Post Offices' very own battalion the 'Post Office Rifles'.

The Army Postal Service

The Army Postal Service (APS) was separate to the GPO. It had become part of the Royal Engineers in 1913 bringing it under the control of the Armed Forces. It was commonly known as the Royal Engineers Postal Section (REPS). In 1914, the plan was to provide a military mail service. Ten officers and 290 men of other rank went with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to establish postal communications. An advanced base Post Office was set up at Le Havre on 17 August 1914, thirteen days after the outbreak of war. The volumes of mail handled by the APS were huge during the First World War. In 1917, the number of mailbags travelling across the channel to the armies in France was over 19,000 per day. It is estimated that between March 1916 and August 1917, 8.5 million bags of mail were handled in France. This was a daily average of 15,420.

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The Post Office Rifles

Separate to the work of the APS was an infantry force comprised entirely of Post Office employees. This was known as the Post Office Rifles (POR). Over 12,000 men joined the colours with this regiment and 1,800 of these died, with 4,500 wounded.

Sgt Alfred Knight and Mayor of Birmingham



The men of the POR are commonly held to have fought with distinction throughout the war. POR suffered heavy casualties at the Somme and Passchendaele. 145 men were awarded for gallantry and one man, Sgt Alfred Knight, received the Victoria Cross. By March 1915 voluntary enlistment had risen to 35,000 postal employees. With the introduction of conscription in January 1916, this figure increased to 54,000. By the end of the war the Post Office had released 73,000 men to fight in all aspects of the Armed Forces.

Censorship



The Post Office assisted the War Office with an operation put in place to censor the majority of

mails and telegrams between Britain and abroad. By 1918, the War Office employed 4,861 staff who examined nearly 100 tonnes of mail per week. The everyday effect of this operation for those who lived in Britain was often inconvenience. Letters were often delayed, returned or interfered with and stamped 'passed by censor'. However, through censorship, valuable information about the enemy was obtained. This therefore hindered the enemy war efforts to some extent.

Mail for the troops



Officers in particular, were quite accustomed to receiving regularly large hampers from home, or major department stores, as well as whole cases of spirits and wine. One officer, Philip Gosse sent off to Harrods for two mole traps and received them, at the front, within a week. On the whole the mail arrived remarkably quickly, letter usually took no more than two to three days and very few letters failed to reach their destination. Even during the chaotic retreat of March 1918 only three bags of mail were lost. The armies fully realised the immense importance of the post and every effort was made to get it to the men as soon as possible.



They did not have to wait until they were in reserve or resting to receive a backlog of letters, but received them daily, even when in the front line. A company's sack of letters and parcels was brought up with the ration party. As long as the food and drink could get through so did the mail. This was the high spot of the daily grind as parcels were opened and shared out, letters read and often passed to the few unfortunates who had received no mail. Many of the men at the front were only technically literate and had no experiences of translating feelings into words.



Parcels to Prisoners of War and armies overseas

Over 5 million parcels were sent to Britain for German Prisoner of War (POWs). 20 million parcels were sent to British POWs under German control. All of these were handled by the civil Post Office in Britain. The Post Office was also responsible for mail distribution to the British and Colonial armies fighting elsewhere in the world.



This proved difficult. The use of ships to carry this mail was becoming increasingly dangerous due to the submarine threat with a total of 143 ships were attacked or lost through enemy actions. The most notorious of these attacks was the sinking of the S.S. Lusitania on the 7 May 1915. By the end of the war over 18 million letters had been lost in this way.

Regents Park Depot



From the end of 1914, mail bound for the Western Front was sorted at the London home depot. This covered 5 acres of Regents Park and was mostly staffed by the 2,500 women who worked there. Between 1914 and 1918, 2 billion letters and 114 million parcels had been sorted and dispatched. There were also regional distribution centres in the main post offices in Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Bristol and Glasgow. By the end of the war, due to the increased threat of Zeppelin air raids to London. Post Office engineers had established an efficient air raid warning system. That successfully connected a secondary telephone service between home defence posts

(anti-aircraft gun, searchlight and observation) to Headquarter Offices.



Other work by the GPO

The Post Office took responsibility for sending out recruitment and later conscription papers. They were also responsible for ensuring that wives of the men who went to fight received a separation allowance. During the year 1915-1916 £80 million had been paid. They also encouraged the nation to increase its purchase of war bonds.

Telegraphs

Civil Post Office engineers were also responsible for maintaining the underwater telegraphic cables. Trenches. This equipment played a hugely important role in wartime communications on the front, at sea and at home. They focused their attention on designing telephone and electrical equipment for use in the front line and headquarter areas.



Photos courtesy Mr. Jon R. Burford-Baynes, Alan Davies & Post Office Museum.



Update on the REA Website

The website is about to be changed as Simon Cuerdon is taking over as the Webmaster. This means that for once I will have access to the site and that photos and items sent to me can now be put on the WebPages.



Last Post

Over the year the following members are no longer with us and have moved to a higher association.

Douglas Cooper Elizabeth Keightley

Harry Kirk Robert Lindsay

Don Lord Ronald Macdonald



Lost & Found

Members who have lost contact with the branch and those that are three years behind in their subscriptions:

Pete Bartle – Ian Bevan – John Bint – Carol Boswell – Berry Breen – Roy Biggs – Bob Christie – Pete Clifton – Nick Clifton – Pauline Coombs – Paul Cowell – Dennis Daley – Ray Daniel – Kim Drage – Alan Edwards – Simon Fenwick – Stevie Ford – Mark Gibbon – Pete Golightly – Norman Grundy – Daphne Geninazza – Les Hadley – Douglas Hankinson – John Hollywood – William Johnstone – Alan Keary – Derek Kennedy - Dougall Kerr – Alec Lennine – Dick Mackenzie – Jan Ozog – Jenni Pizzuto - David Prouse – Tony Senior - Steve Smith – Dave Vickery – Mick Walker - Jimmy Ward – Ian Ward - Mick Ward – Scouse Williams.

Welcome to new branch member:

Branda Daley- Bob Moonie – Marie Monaghan -

Ken Trevor.

Committee Members

President:

Col. (Retired) Peter Wescott RE

Chairman:

Maj. (Retired) Brian Felks RE

Treasurer:

Maj. (Retired) Chris Connoughton RE

Secretary:

Larry Peacock

Committee Members

Mr Ray Fenn

Mr Mick Atkinson

Mr Pte Braithwaite

Secretary details

Larry Peacock

31 Pennine Crescent

REDCAR

TS10 4 AE

Telephone:

01642-476380

E mail

lwepeacock@hotmail.co.uk

Membership Eligibility

If you have served in the RE (PS) or (PCC) or (PCS) you are eligible to join the PCS Branch of the REA. If you served in the ATS or WRAC and were trained as a Postal & Courier Operator you are entitled to join the PCS Branch as an Associate member. Subscriptions £5 per year. Please make cheques payable to:

PCS Branch

Menu Details For the meal

Platter of Sweet Melon with Wild Berries

Soaked in Cointreau

Roast Loin of Pork with Apple Sauce

And Red Wine Jus

Profiteroles with Chocolate Sauce

Members October 2008

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Brian	ANDERSON
James	ANDREWS
William	APPLEYARD
Peter	ASKEW
Michael	ATKINSON
Mark	ATWELL
John	BAILEY
Ralph	BAKER
Terence	BAKEWELL
Martyn	BARRETT
Douglas	BAXTER
Joseph	BEEDLES
Melvyn	BELLAMY
Christopher	BENNETT
William	BENNETT
Lawrence	BENNETT
Denis	BERTIE
Peter	BILLINGTON
Lesley	BILLINGTON
Kevin	BINGHAM
David	BINNINGTON
Gordon	BIRCH
Reg	BLACK
David	BLANE
John	BLEASDALE
Gary	BOSHER
John	BOWMAN
James	BRADSHAW
Peter	BRAITHWAITE
George	BRETT
Eric	BRICE
David	BRIGNULL

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
David	BROWN
Elizabeth	BROWN
Anthony	BRYAN
Richard	BULLOCK
Andrew	BURNETT
Robert	BURNETT
Christine	BURTON
Mark	BURTON
William	BUTT
Donald	CALDER
Karen	CALDWELL
Stuart	CAMBRIDGE
Donald	CAMPBELL
Frank	CANN
Alexander	CARSON
Barry	CASH
Terence	CHADWICK
George	CHANDLER
Douglas	CLARK
Harry	CLARKE
George	CLEASBY
Leslie	CLYDESDALE
Gilbert	COLE
Adrian	COLLINS
Thomas	COMPSON
Christopher	CONNAUGHTON
Donald	COOPER
John	CORRIGAN
Alasdair	COWAN
Carl	COX
Stuart	CRAIG
Neil	CRAWFORD

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Audrey	CROOK
Gerald	CROSS
Andrew	CRUICKSHANK
Michael	CUMMINS
Anthony	CURTIS
Peter	CUSSONS
Christopher	CUTTING
Brenda	DALEY
Stephen	DARRAGH
Gerald	DAVEY
Alan	DAVIES
Joan	DAVIES
Lloyd	DAVIES
Ronald	DAVIES
Gerald	DAWSON
John	DEASY
Helen	DEASY
David	DIAMOND
Peter	DICKSON
Anthony	DOHERTY
John	DOUGLAS
Henry	EAGLE
Dennis	EASON
Patrick	ELLIOTT
Derek	EWAN
Brian	FELKS
Raymond	FENN
Frederick	FERGUSON
Jeremy	FIELDS
Andrew	FLOOD
David	FOULKS
Christine	FRETWELL

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Ronald	FULTON
John	GADSBY
Paul	GAFFNEY
John	GALLAND
Albert	GARRIOCK
Alistair	GEE
Daphne	GENINAZZA
Ernest	GENT
Michael	GIBERTSON
Joy	GILLESPIE
Paul	GILLILAND
Christopher	GOODWIN
Stephen	GOODWIN
Margaret	GRANT
Robert	GRAY
Patricia	GRAY
Jack	GRIFFITHS
Peter	GRIFFITHS
Arthur	GRUNDY
Trevor	HACKETT
Norman	HARMAN
Brian	HARRIS
Terrence	HART
John	HARVEY
Andrew	HAWKESWORTH
William	HAWKINS
William	HEATH
Dwight	HEDDLE
Gerald	HERNANDEZ
Simon	HEYS
Geraldine	HIGGINS
Andrew	HILL

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Stephen	HOGG
Eric	HOLMAN
Alexander	HORSBRUGH
Paul	HOWARD
Clifford	HOWES
John	HUDSON
Rita	HUDSON
Howard	HUGHES
Yvonne	HUGHES
Jacqueline	HUGHES
Roger	HUGHES
Colon	HUNTER
Nicholas	INGLEBY
Andrew	INGRAM
Peter	IVE
John	JACKETT
John	JACKSON
Edward	JENKINSON
Bernard	JENNINGS
Raymond	JENNINGS
Ronald	JESSIMAN
David	JOHNSON
Samuel	JONES
James	JOWETT
Joseph	KELLY
Reginald	KELLY
Colin	KENNEDY
Donald	KENT
Mavis	KIRK
Julian	KOSTYSZYN
Cyril	LACEY
Frederick	LATHAM

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Gerald	LAUDER
Frank	LEA
Harry	LEES
Jean	LEGG
Richard	LEGG
Herbert	LEIGHTON
Kathleen	LEIGHTON
Jane	LEIGHTON
Thomas	LEIGHTON
Brian	LEVEY
Barry	LINDEN
Robert	LINDSAY
Ian	LISTER
Kevin	LIVESEY
Darrell	LLOYD
Herbert	LOCKWOOD
Norman	LOCKWOOD
Donald	LORD
Marian	LOVERIDGE
June	LOWE
Raymond	LYALL
Edward	LYONS
Stephen	LYTHGOE
Ronald	MACDONALD
George	MADGIN
Gerald	MAGUIRE
Michael	MALLEY
Geoffrey	MANNING
Patrick	MARSHALL
Peter	MASLIN
Victor	MATTHEWS
Mary	MCCABE

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
James	MCEWAN
Edward	MCFALL
John	MCGOVERN
Robert	MCKEEVER
John	MCLEOD
Archibald	MCNAB
Samuel	MCNALLY
Adam	MCQUILLAN
Charles	MEACHER
Graham	MEACHER
Raymond	MILFORD
David	MILSTEAD
Raymond	MITCHELL
Christine	MITCHELL
Marie	MONAGHAN
Robert	MOONIE
Paul	MORRIS
David	MUCKLE
Michael	MULLEY
Ronald	MURREY
Christopher	NEILL
Christopher	NELSON
John	NICHOLLS
George	NICHOLSON
Rodney	NORMAN
Peter	O GRADY
Neville	ORTON
Keith	OXER
John	PALMER
Stephen	PALMER
Steve	PATCH
Lawrence	PEACOCK

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Lennox	PERKINS
George	PICKERING
John	PICKFORD
Adrian	PROSSER
Ronald	PYNE
Edward	REARDON
Peter	REDFERN
Gary	REES
Robert	ROBINSON
Joan	ROUND
Jack	ROUS
Bryan	ROWNEY
Carmino	RUGGIERO
Geoffrey	SALMON
John	SAMUEL
Valerie	SANDERS
Howard	SCOTT
James	SEAR
Mark	SEARLE
Aidan	SHOEBRIDGE
John	SHOULDER
Ian	SILK
Richard	SILSBY
Neil	SIMS
David	SMITH
Edward	SMITH
Gordon	SMITH
Ian	SMITH
Kenneth	SMITH
Alan	STANDING
James	STEER
Paul	STODDART

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Ronald	STRATTEN
Edward	STUART
Norman	SUSSEX
Pamela	SUSSEX
Douglas	SWANSON
Clifford	SYMES
Gordon	TAIT
David	TEDDER
Ivor	THOMAS
Frederick	THOMPSON
Stephen	THOMPSON
David	THORNTON
Charles	TIMOTHY
Kenneth	TREVOR
William	TWIGG
George	URBAN
David	VAUTIER
Roy	WALKER
David	WALL
Douglas	WALTER
Gordon	WARDELL
Frances	WARDELL
Derek	WATT
Richard	WEBB
Peter	WESCOTT
Stephen	WHITE
Michael	WHITEHEAD
Dennis	WHITTALL
Barry	WILDING
Darren	WILKIE
William	WINFIELD
Edward	WOLTON

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Edward	WOOFFITT

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Frederick	WRIGHT

<i>First Name</i>	<i>SURNAME</i>
Jeremy	WRIGHT



ROYAL ENGINEERS & POSTAL COURIERS REUNION
13 – 15 MARCH 2009
Booking Form

Name:

Address:.....
.....
.....

Postcode: Tel Number:.....

Rates:

£100.00 Dinner, Bed & Breakfast x 1 night stay
£150.00 Dinner, Bed & Breakfast x 2 night stay
£170.00 Dinner, Bed & Breakfast x 3 night stay

Meal only £25.00 per head
.....

Please tick which dates you require:

- Friday 13th March 2009
- Saturday 14th March 2009
- Sunday 15th March 2009

- Please select room type:
- Double Occupancy Room
 - Twin Occupancy Room
 - Single Occupancy Room

Dietary Requirements: (Please tick if applicable)

- Vegetarian
- Gluten Free
- Celiac
- Other.....

Payment:

A £50.00 deposit per room is required when booking. The remaining balance is due 28 days prior to the arrival date.

Please debit my card for the following (Please tick)

- £50.00 per room deposit
- Full payment of £.....

Card Number Expiry Date

Signed..... Date.....

Many thanks for your booking and we look forward to welcoming you to the Village Hotel in Coventry.

Please return all accommodation bookings to Joanne Day at the address below
Or joanne.day@village-hotels.com

Welcome to more

VILLAGE Coventry Dolomite Avenue, Coventry Business Park, Coventry CV4 9GZ
TEL 02476 719000, **FAX** 02476 719100 **www.village-hotels.co.uk**

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