



העמותה להנצחת חיל הקשר והתקשוב
ת.ד. 7289 יהוד-מונסון, מיקוד 56214; פקס' 03 536 3470; טל' 03 536 4622

נובמבר 2018

דואר חיילים בריטי במאורעות תרצ"ו

המרד הערבי הגדול, שביישוב בארץ כונה בשם מאורעות תרצ"ו – תרצ"ט, פרץ באפריל 1936 והתבטא בין היתר בפעולות טרור אלימות כנגד השלטון הבריטי בפלשתינה(א"י).

ב־2 בספטמבר 1936 החליטה ממשלת בריטניה לדכא את המרד ביד קשה, ושלחה לארץ כוחות צבא נוספים, וב־8 בספטמבר הכריזה על משטר צבאי בארץ.

ריכוז כוחות הצבא הבריטי בארץ חייב טיפול בשירות דואר החיילים, שהיה הקשר היחידי בין החיילים למשפחותיהם והייתה לו חשיבות מיוחדת למורל הצבא. תפקוד המערכות האזרחיות בארץ, כולל מחלקת הדואר והמברקה, נפגע עקב השביתה הכללית שהוכרזה כחלק מהמרד הערבי, והצבא הבריטי נדרש להפעיל מערך דואר חיילים עצמאי.

בספטמבר 1936 גייס חיל ההנדסה המלכותי (Royal Engineers) יחידת דואר מילואים של 70 איש (3 קצינים, 67 בעלי דרגות אחרות),¹ כדי להקים לכוחות הבריטיים בפלשתינה(א"י) שירותי דואר. פקודת הגיוס ניתנה ב־4 בספטמבר, והיחידה הפליגה לפלשתינה(א"י) ב־12 בספטמבר 1936 והגיעה לחיפה ב־23 בספטמבר.

היחידה, בפקודו של מייג'ור אוונס, נפרסה במרכזים בירושלים, סרפנד (צריפין), וחיפה ופתחה סניפי דואר חיילים בעפולה, צמח, טול כרם, יפו, בית לחם ורמאללה, ובנובמבר נפתח סניף נוסף בשכם. עם התייצבות פריסת הצבא הבריטי בארץ הועברה האחריות לשירות למחלקת הדואר והמברקה האזרחית, ויחידת הדואר הצבאי הפליגה חזרה לאנגליה ב־23 בינואר 1937.

לוט אסופת מסמכים המציגה את פעילות היחידה, כולל גיוסה וצידוד בבריטניה, הפלגתה ארצה, פעילותה באספקת שירותי דואר החיילים והפלגתה חזרה לבריטניה. מסמכים אלה הם תיאור מעניין וייחודי של פעילות דואר חיילים במערכה צבאית, ויש בהם עניין מיוחד לוותיקי החיל.

המקור למסמכים אלה: תיק (Files No.1, 3, 5 & 7) POST 33/5165 בארכיון הדואר הבריטי בלונדון. אנו מודים לארכיון הדואר הבריטי על סיועו.

דניאל רוזן, אל"ם (דימ').

¹ שירותי דואר וקשר פעלו אז במסגרת חיל ההנדסה המלכותי. חיל הקשר המלכותי (Royal Corps of Signals) הוקם בשנת 1920, אך לא עסק בשירותי דואר חיילים.

רשימת המסמכים המצורפים

1. גיוס והצטיידות:

- 1.1. דו"ח רס"ר קורי, 25 ספטמבר 1936
- 1.2. מכתב קולונל סטרודי, ראש שירותי דואר החיילים, 6 אוקטובר 1936

2. פעילות בפלשתינה(א"י):

- 2.1. דו"ח מיג'ור אוונס, מפקד היחידה
- 2.2. פקודת יום
- 2.3. מכתב גנרל דיל, 5 אפריל 1937
- 2.4. מפת פעילות

Attached Documents

1. Mobilization:

- 1.1. Report of Regimental Sergeant Major Curry, 25 Sept 1936
- 1.2. Colonel B.V. Sturdee, Director of Army Postal Service, letter to Major Roberts, 6 Oct 1936

2. Activity in Palestine:

- 2.1. Report of Major Evans
- 2.2. Special Order of the Day
- 2.3. Letter of Lieutenant General Dill, 5 April 1937
- 2.4. Activity Map

1. Mobilization

1.1. Report of Regimental Sergeant Major Curry, 25 Sept 1936

The Director of Army Postal Services,

I beg to submit the attached report by Regimental Sergeant Major Curry of the Home Depot on the raising of two Divisional Postal Units and One Corps Headquarter Postal Unit for service in Palestine.

Preliminary warning of the probable necessity for these Units was given me by Col. Stokes of the War Office on the afternoon of Thursday the 4th instant. Confirmation was forthcoming the next morning together with a request that the Units should be medically inspected, attested, equipped and assembled by the following Tuesday. Three officers and sixty-seven other ranks had to be raised, therefore, on a volunteer basis in four days.

The Sergeant Major's report details the work which was necessary at the Home Depot, and I should like to draw your attention to the good work done by this officer and his assistants - Sergeants Reading and Parry. All these officers were unstinting in their response to the demands made on them, and each demonstrated his ability to carry out instructions with the minimum of guidance. Any credit for the fact that the required personnel was raised in time must be largely attributed to them.

I should like also to refer to the unfailing co-operation of the War Office, the Treasury and Major Davidson, Assistant Controller, Mount Pleasant. The short time available made it necessary to conduct all negotiations by telephone, and at all times I found a ready appreciation of the position and an anxiety to assist.

W. H. W. W. W.

Officer Commanding Home Depot.

30 September, 1936.

Report to Officer Commanding Home Depot, R.E.P.S., on the raising of a R.E. Postal Section Contingent for service with the Palestine Force.

25th September, 1936.

Sir,

1. I have the honour to submit the following report on the raising of a force of 3 officers and 67 other ranks of the R.E. Postal Section, Palestine Force.

2. Instruction to call up R.E.P.S. personnel. At 10.40 a.m. on Friday, 4th September, 1936, you telephoned instructions to the Home Depot to obtain 67 volunteers (other ranks) to serve with the R.E. Postal Section in Palestine. These volunteers were to be assembled, fully clothed and accoutred, with postal stores and field equipment, by Tuesday, 8th September.

3. Action taken. Telegrams were sent to the whole of the reservists of the R.E. Postal Section and also to applicants on the waiting list for admission to the R.E.P.S. asking if they were prepared to volunteer for service in Palestine. A total of 397 telegrams were despatched, and the number of eligible candidates with the necessary military qualifications who accepted service was 131. In addition, 47 other applicants without previous military experience offered their services. To each eligible volunteer who could not be included in the draft which left U.K. for Palestine on 12th September, a letter was sent in the terms set out in "A" attached.

A total of 241 telegrams were received in the Home Depot in 3 days. Applications by letter totalled 53; all of which were replied to.

4. Indents for Stores. At 2.45 p.m. on 4th September the preparation of indents was commenced, and as the various sections were completed they were despatched by special messenger to the D.A.D.O.S., London District, for examination. The final indents were completed at 11.30 p.m. on this date, and were delivered by hand at H.Q., London District, at 8.0 a.m. on 5th September. It was

necessary



necessary to prepare 29 indents in quintuplicate for this service, and when it is remembered that a large number of items have to be requisitioned in sizes, for instance, boots 24 sizes and jackets and trousers 15 sizes, I think it will be agreed that this called for great concentration and speedy working.

The stores containing clothing and equipment weighing 5 tons were received from Didcot at 2.0 a.m. on Sunday, 6th September. These stores were contained in 70 cases, and were transferred to the 1st Floor, Inland Section, by the Home Depot staff (4 men) in 1½ hours. Field stores arrived at intervals up to Thursday, 10th September, from Woolwich, Weedon, Tower of London, Hyde Park Magazine and Didcot.

5. Enlistments. Railway warrants for the accepted candidates were despatched on Saturday, 5th September, together with instructions for (a) London men to report at the Home Depot at 9.0 a.m. on 7th September and (b) Provincial men to report at 9.0 a.m. on 8th September. The calling up of provincial men was put back till the 8th September for the following reasons.

- (i) To enable them to enjoy better travelling facilities on Monday as opposed to the limited train services on Sunday.
- (ii) To avoid placing too much work on the medical and recruiting officers at the Central London Recruiting Depot, Whitehall, on one day.

Attestation papers and other relative documents in connexion with the enlistment of the 67 other ranks were completed and forwarded to the Officer i/c R.E. Records well within the time laid down in army regulations.

6. Issue of Clothing, Arms and Accoutrements. This commenced at 4.20 p.m. on Monday, 7th September, and by 9.20 p.m. 33 men had been equipped with 54 separate items of clothing and 22 items of personal equipment. They had also signed the necessary forms of agreement, and completed papers regarding allotment of civil pay.

The remaining 34 other ranks were similarly dealt with on Tuesday, 8th September.

As



As my duties held me very close to the Orderly Room, I was pleased to receive a visit from an ex-officer who volunteered the statement that he had never witnessed a better organised piece of work than that carried out in the Q.M. stores. He was particularly impressed by the fact that the issue of clothing and equipment occupied only $8\frac{1}{2}$ minutes per recruit. The work was carried out by Sergeants Reading and Parry and a civilian Porter named Botten. The number of vouchers advising the stores was 57 requiring 171 signatures, to which must be added 43 further signatures on carriers' notes.

7. Post Office stores. A scale of postal stores (Stationery, forms, date stamps, sealing presses, etc.) was drawn up on Sunday, 6th September, and taken by hand to the Post Office Stores Department at 9.30 a.m. on 7th September. Arrangements were made for these stores to be packed and labelled for direct despatch to H.T. "Dorsetshire", Southampton. The stores for each of the 3 postal units were packed and advised separately, so that at the port of disembarkation (Haifa) there would be no difficulty in determining to which postal unit the various packages were proper. 64 packages of postal stores weighing $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons were delivered at Southampton Docks on Thursday, 10th September. Any credit due for this splendid achievement must be given to Mr. E.W. Ingram, Post Office Stores Department, who once again proved himself a great friend of the R.E.P.S.

8. Postal Stocks. A table showing the initial supply of postal orders, postage stamps, etc. required was drawn up on 7th September and, after approval by Major Evans, was sent forward to the A.G.D. for issue to the Home Depot not later than 9th September. The value of the initial stock was £8083. 15. 0, and this reached the Home Depot in 18 registered covers which were packed in stationery boxes and then enclosed in mail bags which were specially sealed to denote the contents.

9.

9. Accommodation, etc. Arrangements were made through the D.A.A. & Q.M.G., London District, for all other ranks to be accommodated and rationed by the 1st Bn. Welsh Guards, Wellington Barracks. These arrangements worked satisfactorily, in which connexion I would bring to your notice the splendid co-operation of the Q.M.S. of the Welsh Guards whose unfailing courtesy and helpfulness were outstanding. The happy relationship between the Regular Army and the R.E.P.S. has been worthily maintained, and the conduct of the 67 other ranks during their stay at Wellington Barracks was beyond reproach.

10. Telephone enquiries. It is estimated that from the 4th to 11th September I was engaged on the telephone for 56 hours, and on 7th September I received 11 trunk calls in succession which caused me to retain the receiver for 1 hour 20 minutes. The switchboard operators (male) at Mount Pleasant gave the utmost assistance during this heavy pressure.

11. Stores by Road. The War Equipment Table (A.F.G.1098-651) of the R.E.P.S. was modified by the War Office at 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 8th September, and as the stores which were to be supplied had to be at Southampton not later than 5.0 p.m. on 10th September arrangements were made by telephone with the C.O.O. Didcot, for these equipments weighing 3 tons to be sent by road direct to Southampton. It has been learned that these stores were actually placed on board H.T. "Dorsetshire" at 3.0 p.m. on 10th September.

12. Identity Discs. The marking of identity discs (green and red) for the 28 new entrants to the R.E.P.S. necessitated the punching of 1120 separate ^{discs.} Discs for R.E.P.S. reservists were already held with their pay books.

13. Inspection by the Assistant Director General. At 11.0 am. on Thursday, 10th September, the 3 officers and 67 other ranks paraded for inspection by T.H. Boyd, Esq., Assistant Director General who read a message from the Director General. This pleasing gesture

gesture was greatly appreciated by all ranks.

14. Stores to Wellington Barracks. At 7.40 p.m. on Friday, 11th September 20 bags of postal stock and stores for use on the voyage were transferred to Wellington Barracks. These bags were placed under lock and key in the Guard Room of the 1st Bn. Welsh Guards. Sergeant Reading was in charge of the transfer of these stores, and on arrival at Wellington Barracks he satisfied himself by examination that all items of kit belonging to the 67 R.E.P.S. other ranks assembled there were properly marked in accordance with army regulations.

15. Return of Stores to Ordnance. Stores surplus to requirements which were issued on a basis of 10 per cent for fitting purposes are being returned to various Ordnance Depots, by the same process, in the reverse direction, as was necessary in obtaining the full issue of stores.

16. Ledgers - Stores. To enable Major Evans to account for the stores transferred to his charge, 3 ledgers have been prepared in the Home Depot and forwarded to Palestine by letter post. This action was taken as it was known that none of the N.C.O.s with Major Evans have had experience of this form of accounting for army stores. The preparation of these ledgers occupied 2 days.

17. General Observation. (a) The experience gained in the raising of the R.E.P.S. contingent for Palestine has satisfied me that the machinery which has been ^{drawn up} ~~erected~~ in the Home Depot for general mobilization purposes is as near perfect as the human element can devise, and, personally, I have no fear for the future. After 22 years service in the Corps, I have no hesitation in saying that the mustering of 67 volunteers for duty in Palestine was the finest piece of staff work yet carried out by the R.E.P.S., and I ~~make~~ this statement in spite of such tasks as Grand

Manoeuvres,



Manoeuvres, Shanghai Defence Force, Divisional Training and the Saar Force.

(b) Among the many who rendered excellent service to the Home Depot during the pressure period, I would like to bring especially under your notice Major Davidson, Assistant Controller, D.A.D.O.S., London District, C.O.O., Didcot and the O.C., 1st Bn. Welsh Guards.

18. Home Depot Staff. It would be difficult for me to adequately describe the deep sense of gratitude that I owe to Sergeants Parry and Reading and civilian Porter Botten for the manner in which they stood up to the pressure placed upon them. Neither of these 3 men were able to enjoy a hot meal for 6 days, but not once did they complain of fatigue although, at times, it was evident they were both physically and mentally tired. On 3 consecutive days they spent 15 hours on their feet, during which time they had to handle cases of considerable weight. The zeal and organising efforts of Sergeants Parry and Reading in the Q.M. Stores were most material assets in bringing the task imposed to such a successful conclusion.

From the 4th to 13th September, the number of hours extra duty incurred in the Home Depot was 279, of which 35 hours was performed by Porter Filler in opening cases, marking clothing and equipment and preparing identity discs. This man also acted as orderly between the Orderly Room and the Q.M. Stores; an essential service owing to no telephonic communication being available and the distance between the two points. On 5 consecutive days four members of the staff performed 16 hours duty.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

S. H. Curry

Regt. Sergt. Major.

1.2. Colonel B.V. Sturdee letter to Major Roberts, 6 Oct 1936

6 October, 1936.

Dear Roberts,

Now that the tumult and the shouting has died you may like to hear a little about our recent excitement in connection with Palestine.

We had to get 3 Officers and 67 other ranks ready within four days from receiving the request from the War Office on Friday, the 4th of September, and so far as the other ranks were concerned it may be said that this was achieved. One of the Subalterns (Smith) was, I think, also fitted out by then, but Scott, who was a substitute for another Officer who, for very good reasons, had to cry off at the last moment, had only just got his uniform in time on the night before they sailed, i.e. on the evening of Friday the 11th: but as we did not get in touch with him until the evening of Monday the 7th and he was then on leave playing golf in some remote spot in the extreme north of Scotland I do not think that this was too bad.

As I was on leave at the time I am in a position to say that I think the whole thing reflects very great credit on Wolverson and the staff of the Home Depot; and, incidentally, since Curry was also on leave for the first twentyfour hours it shows, and he himself admits, that his mantle will fall on good shoulders when he leaves the Reserve. To realise how good was the work of all concerned one has to remember that 4 days is the period allowed for mobilising Reservists who are compelled to report immediately and have their railway

warrants

Major W.R. Roberts.

warrants in their possession. In our case it was necessary first of all to send out telegrams in order to find out whether men were prepared to enlist, which meant the loss of at least a day.

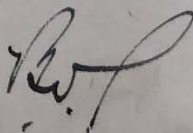
By the way, I am sure you will appreciate that the fact that you were just taking over the Western District ruled you out as a candidate for the command; and I am sure you will agree that the Director General was right in deciding that it was a heaven sent opportunity to give Evans some experience.

I saw the detachment off at Waterloo on the 12th of September and am bound to say that they looked very well marching into the station yard and on to the platform. 39 out of the 67 were in the Reserve and the remainder were on the waiting list with the exception of 7 London men who were eligible for the R.A.(P.S.) and who, in view of the urgency of the matter were accepted; although as a matter of fact, had we had more time, we could have got more from the Reserve and the whole lot without going beyond the waiting list.

Evans was very pleased with his Subalterns and I think they ought to be a very happy party.

I think it is high time we met and had a talk about the R.A.(P.S.); but I do not think that I should be justified in asking you to come up on purpose. Is there any chance of your coming to Headquarters in the near future? If not, could you come up early on Friday the 23rd and have lunch with me here so that we could have a talk afterwards? I question whether the dinner itself will provide a suitable atmosphere or opportunity for serious discussion.

Yours



2. Activity in Palestine

2.1. Report of Major Evans

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Report on the activities of the unit of the Royal Engineers (Postal Section) attached to the Palestine Emergency Force during its period of service 8 September 1936 to 4 February 1937.

At 0730 hours on September 12th, 1936 two officers (2/Lts. W.Scott and C.R.Smith) and 67 other ranks comprising the Army Postal Section under my command paraded at Wellington Barracks prior to marching to Waterloo Station for entrainment. A baggage party was detached and proceeded to the station in motor transport provided for the purpose.

At 0830 hours the train left and the unit, after changing trains at Basingstoke, reached the quayside at Southampton shortly after 1100 hours.

The preliminaries to the embarkation of the troops themselves consisted of

- (a) the reporting by the O.C. to the Embarkation Staff Officer and the production of A.F.143 (certificate of inoculation and vaccination) and a nominal roll
- (b) the stowage of arms in the armoury
- (c) the stowage of black kit bags (kit not wanted on voyage)

As regards (a) strict compliance with the regulations was not possible as neither of the forms had been supplied by Depot.

As regards (c) the stowage of both black and white kit bags (the latter were supposed to contain kit required on the voyage) in the luggage van of the troop trains led to difficulties at the quayside as the embarkation staff cleared most of the contents of the van into the hold of the

HQ(G)228/37.

the ship without consulting anyone and for some time ten white kit bags were stowed where their owners could not get at them. During the first 24 hours of the voyage eight of these bags were recovered but the remaining two did not reappear until the ship was discharged at Haifa. On future occasions it should be arranged for each man to be told what kit to put in each bag and for him to be instructed to retain custody of his 'wanted' kit bag.

At 1430 hours the DORSETSHIRE sailed and it became necessary to make arrangements for the safe custody of the Postal stocks which up till then had been under guard by members of the Unit. It appeared after enquiry that as the appropriate Ships Officer had not been informed prior to the actual lading of the ship of the need for making provision of locked accommodation for these stocks he had not set any aside. After considerable discussion the Ship's Adjutant agreed to allot a detention cell for the purpose - not perhaps the best arrangement but the best which could be devised in the circumstances. It would have been useful to have had a few lead seals and a sealing press handy to supplement the padlock provided.

During the afternoon of the first day all troops were allotted boat stations, after which we were free to settle into our quarters.

The next few days were spent in accustoming ourselves to the routine laid down by the Captain and O.C. Troops. A not very onerous programme of duties was arranged and the officers and the C.S.M. were free to go as far as possible into details concerning the conduct of the unit when it landed.

On the 17th September it was decided to commence breaking up the Postal Stocks in order that Postal business

business might be carried out on board and by the three units immediately on landing. The bad conditions under which this work had to be performed made one wish that it had been carried out at Depot prior to embarkation. Indeed on looking back it is a matter for wonderment that it was not. On this date all ranks of the Unit were inoculated with T.A.B. (anti-typhoid), an operation which resulted the following day in nine other ranks being admitted to hospital.

On the 19th September a Post Office was opened on board for the periods 1200-1300 and 1700-1800, an arrangement which was repeated daily until disembarkation and which was popular with the troops. The F.P.O. closed down at 1800 on the 22nd September, that is the day before the ship was due at Haifa. By this date those who had become casualties following inoculation were fit again.

These remarks concerning life aboard would not be complete without a reference to the units behaviour. There were two regular battalions and two Royal Engineer Companies aboard and it was pleasing to hear from the officers of each so many complimentary remarks concerning the soldierly conduct of a volunteer unit. In their what may be termed social life the unit earned equally high praise inasmuch as they were responsible for the bulk of the organised concerts at which they gained applause that would have gladdened the heart of a prima donna!

At 0700 hours on the 23rd September H.M.T. Dorsetshire anchored off HAIFA. The Laurentic had overtaken her during the 22nd and was then at her quay. It was announced that she would have completed discharging her cargo by 1500 hours and that the Dorsetshire would

enter

enter her berth at 1600 hours. The Embarkation Staff came off at 1000 hours and at 1130 returned to shore conveying the O.C., C.S.M. Darby, Sgt. Tomlin and Sapper Brett and the mails posted on board.

The O.C. spent the day with Mr. Grant, Assistant Director of Postal Services for the Northern area and endeavoured to find out as much as possible of the civil postal service and to what extent the Army Postal Service could be welded on to it. Mr. Grant proved most helpful in the provision of information but he was not of course in a position to agree to any definite arrangements. The opportunity was taken of telephoning the Acting Postmaster General in Jerusalem and reporting for duty as it were.

The disembarkation of the Dorsetshire complement did not however proceed as planned. The Laurentic carried the whole of the Administrative Staffs of the 1st and 5th Divisions and their disembarkation should have been a model. But at 1600 hours, when she should have been clear, it was discovered that a hold had been left uncleared which contained 60 tons of baggage and a few motor cars. The effect of this was that the Dorsetshire entered her berth and dropped her gangway at 2030 hours.

Disembarkation proceeded throughout the night and at the cost of a night's sleep the military complement proceeded to its several destinations at the scheduled hours.

Fortunately the H.Q. and 1st Division Postal units were not due to leave until 0700 hours (the 5th Division unit remained at HAIFA) for their baggage was the last to be cleared from the ship. Even so the mere clearance did not end the matter for the bulk despatch of Postal Stocks was repeated in respect of certain vital items of camp equipment

equipment so that such articles as blankets, waterproof sheets, sorting fittings and officers' camp equipment had actually to be found and then divided on the quayside.

The H.Q. Unit detrained at LYDDA JUNCTION at 1000 hours leaving the 1st Division Unit to proceed to JERUSALEM. In due course the H.Q. Unit was transferred in motor transport to SARAFAND, an encampment covering many acres some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from LYDDA JUNCTION. The unit was attached to 49 Company R.A.S.C. for messing and after a meal the work of pitching camp was proceeded with.

During the day 1st and 5th Division units settled into quarters. The former were allotted a room in the King David Hotel, the Corps Headquarters, as a Post Office and the men were quartered under canvas some 400 yards away at Olive Grove Camp. They found a large mail from England awaiting them and at once proceeded to divide it up for distribution. Experience shewed that whilst Jerusalem is fairly centrally situated in regard to Palestine it is off the map as regards communications and it became necessary to advise London to vouch its military mails to LYDDA JUNCTION, the 'Crewe' of Palestine. But the effect of this wire could not of course be felt for nine days and the 1st Division unit had to act as Base for that period. Nevertheless it carried out the work very creditably considering the inexperience of the majority of the staff and the rather restricted area in which they had to work.

The 5th Division were in rather better case as not only had they more commodious quarters but they had to deal only with correspondence for the 5th Division.

On the 25th September I left the Base in charge of C.S.M. Darby and proceeded to Jerusalem. At LYDDA I was instructed

instructed to report to the Brigadier in charge of Administration (Brigadier R.M. Wootten) who was on his way from Corps Headquarters to Cairo. With the Brigadier was the Camp Commandant British Troops in Egypt, Lt.Col. F.M.A. Morris. Col. Morris, it appeared, had run an Army Postal Service for the Egyptian Emergency Force and the Brigadier had sent for him to give me some hints which might prove useful to me in organising my own service. Col. Morris proceeded with me to Jerusalem - he had other work to do here in connexion with organising the Corps H.Q. Central Registry - and the long discussion we had I found to be of very great value. It was most interesting to learn from him how he had built up his service, largely on the trial and error system, and how closely the results he achieved by that means approximated to our own system which is the result of years of experience in many campaigns.

On reaching Jerusalem my first task was to get into touch with the various people who would be useful to me and I was very cordially received. I experienced no difficulty at all in getting the Army Postal service placed on the map.

The following day, September 26th was spent almost entirely in conferences with the 'Q' staff and with the Acting P.M.G. of Palestine to whom I bore a letter of introduction from Col. Kempe. From the Civil Administration I received every help and from them I learned of all the matters which would have to receive attention if the Army Postal Service was to function successfully in relation to their own.

During this period the Units had of course functioned only as distributors of inward mails. It was impossible to open Field Post Offices for the conduct of normal business until the general arrangements under which that

business

business should be conducted had been approved by the D.A. and Q.M.G. But by this date sufficient information had been acquired to permit me to proceed with the drafting of the Postal Administrative instructions after which I prepared such organising instructions for the Divisional Units as seemed to be necessary.

On the 29th September the Brigadier returned from Cairo and in the evening I attended a conference at which my draft orders were discussed and subsequently approved.

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My O.Cs Division units were by this time in possession of the draft order and my supplemental instructions so having secured the Brigadier's approval I wired them to commence full Postal business the following day. But I had not reckoned with the Treasurer to the Palestine Government who on the 30th September raised objections to the use of British Postage stamps on the ground of the loss it would entail to his revenue. This entailed wiring to my O.Cs to the effect that F.P.Os for postal business were not to be set up and the rest of the day was spent in a wrangle between the Military Financial Adviser and the Government Treasurer. The production of the copy of correspondence provided by O.C. Home Depot concerning rates of postage etc. and the assurance that the Army Postal Service would handle its mail itself settled the matter and I was able to instruct Divisions to commence business on October 1st.

It should perhaps be remarked at this juncture that from the time of my arrival at Corps Headquarters until the 30th September I was single-handed as it was quite impossible to withdraw my C.S.M. until he had put the base office in order. Postally of course the base office did

not

not require much attention but the quantities of stores which came to hand necessitated a responsible officer being on the spot to deal with them. But I propose to deal with the stores side of the affair in a later section of this report.

On October 1st the unit as a whole may be said to have commenced to function fully. Also on this day I was able to bring my C.S.M. Cpl. Allen and Sapper Harvey from base into Jerusalem to start my own office going, especially as it was desirable for me to visit the 5th Division unit and to see the Customs and Railway people which are stationed at Haifa.

Accordingly on 2nd October I proceeded to Haifa, calling at the base office at Sarafand on the way. I found that office in excellent order and working well and I felt that in leaving my C.S.M. behind there I had been fully justified.

If up to this point I seem to have omitted any reference to the 1st Division unit it is because, being located in Jerusalem it was more or less under my own eye and I was able to clear up the several little difficulties as they arose.

The 5th Division unit was found to be the most comfortably situated of the three and was functioning very well considering the fact that at the time of my visit the Military Administrative Staff had not settled down.

X My visit to the Directorate of the Palestine Railways had for its object the settlement of the procedure to be adopted by the Army Postal Service in so far as its use of the railway for the conveyance of mails was concerned. For the first few days our outward mails had been passed to the civil post office for disposal but it soon became apparent that

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that it would be desirable from all points of view to control the transit of our own mails. The system of rail conveyance of mails in Palestine is however very different from that to which we are accustomed at home, at any rate so far as the Inland Service is concerned. In Palestine the mails have to be way-billed for their various destinations. The way bills are made out in triplicate, one copy being retained by the post office and the other two handed to the train conductor who uses one of his copies to obtain a discharge at the point of disembarking the mails. The third copy is passed to the Directorate for the assessment of the charge. After discussion I arranged with the railway authorities to follow the practice of the civil post office. I did not concern myself of course with the charge for conveyance. That will be a matter for settlement at some later stage. But I shall have complete records of all mails conveyed and shall thus be in a position to certify the claim when it is made.

X I visited the Director of Customs at his request. He wanted to know what were my arrangements for dealing with incoming parcel mails and whilst he was obviously of the opinion that parcels for members of the Palestine Force should be admitted free he has no discretion in the matter and must carry out the wishes of the Treasurer, who, it will be remembered is already incensed at the loss of postal revenue due to the sale in Palestine of British Postage stamps. It seemed foolish not to co-operate with the Customs people and I agreed to arrange that all incoming parcels should be concentrated at the base office where they could be examined by a Customs Officer from Jaffa. It was with the idea of proving how farcical this examination

examination would be that I advised the home authorities to suggest to the public that as tobacco is so heavily dutiable in Palestine it would involve the addressees of parcels containing this commodity in unwarrantable expense. This course however appears to have been undesirable and the soldier who gets a parcel containing 500 cigarettes has to pay about 10/- for an article which he could have purchased at the same, or slightly lower price as in England. Only the newcomers are hit in this way. The units who have been in the country for some months are aware of the fact that tobacco is dutiable and their friends have been warned accordingly.

Part of 4th October was spent in trying to convince the Staff Captain (Q) of 5th Division that the O.C. Postal Unit was the proper person to decide how he should dispose of his unit (I did not mention to him that this was more especially desirable when the Staff Captain (Q) did not know the first thing about Army Postal Services!). The O.C. 5th Division P.U. had prepared the ground so well however that it was not a difficult task to turn the scales in his favour.

During the week-end I was at Haifa the system of supplies throughout the Corps had been reduced to some semblance of order and I was able, before leaving there, to discuss with the O.C. Postal Unit the lines he should follow in establishing additional Field Post Offices in his area.

On my return to Jerusalem on the 5th October I was able to discuss with the O.C. 1st Division Postal Unit the general lines on which he should proceed.

During my absence C.S.M. Darby had not been idle and I returned to an office in full working order. It was

clearly

clearly apparent however that it could function efficiently only with efficient staff and the addition of one to look after the accounts. Sapper Harvey, who had been recommended as a first class writing clerk proved to be slow and, what was worse, not a typist. It was accordingly arranged to substitute him by Sapper Stoddart who has more than justified his selection.

For the accounting side it was necessary, in view of the large and valuable stock carried to employ a senior N.C.O. and my choice fell on Sergt. Tomlin. In the ordinary way I could not have spared this N.C.O. but the disposal of the Palestine Force is not that common to a Corps on active service. There is no 'front' and not more than one good N.C.O. is required to run the base office. The stores question is the only one which has caused me any anxiety. I refer of course to military stores. These have reached the unit from Home Depot, Didcot and Abbassia. Some have been addressed to the Camp Commandant H.Q. Palestine Force, some to the O.C. Postal Section whilst others have been sent to the O.Cs of the Divisional units. Had these stores been confined to articles mentioned in A.F G1098 all would have been well but someone has decided that we are a self supporting unit and one that does not split up with the result that we have been flooded out with Aldershot ovens, Soyer stoves, camp kettles and all the paraphernalia which could be used with effect only by a fully trained Sergeant Cook. Up to the present time Cpl. Allen who very fortunately for us, has had training during the war as a Quartermaster Sergeant, has devoted his waking hours to disentangling this shocking business and we have reached the point at which we have accounted for every single item vouched to us and know where it is to be found amongst the three points at which

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the stores are dumped! We have had no instructions as to whether we are regarded as a self accounting unit. The complete lack of the necessary accounting forms leads us to infer we are not. On the other hand the apparent reluctance of Camp Commandants and Ordnance to relieve us of our surplus and totally unnecessary equipment leads us to suppose that somewhere someone expects us to take them on our charge. It is perhaps worthy of mention that this unit is by no means alone in this difficulty. In point of fact we seem to be the only people who have any idea not only of what we should have but of what we have got. But this question of equipment must be thoroughly thrashed out with the powers that be as soon as we return home. A repetition of such chaos in a real emergency would be fatal.

The pay question too has presented its difficulties. We are not in receipt of Army pay and the usual procedure governing this does not apply. After some discussion with the Command Paymaster I have devised a scheme which has met with his approval. Briefly it is this. I hold an imprest account with the Command Paymaster out of which I pay the special allowances to the men and all officers allowances, the receipt of these is signed for by the payees and I account for the difference between what I have drawn and the balance in hand by the production of vouchers. In respect of pay we are definitely a self accounting unit and although we have not yet rendered our first account I do not foresee any serious difficulties. The C.S.M. and I control the pay business: Sergt. Tomlin being responsible for the Postal Accounts and the main stock.

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The foregoing report which has taken on the appearance of a diary need not do so henceforth as by the 11th October the Army Postal Service was working smoothly and efficiently. By this date too the following F.P.Os had been set up in addition to those at Sarafand (F.P.O.26) Jerusalem (F.P.O.16 and 20) Haifa (F.P.O.25)

Affule (F.P.O.23)
Samakh (F.P.O.24)
Tulkarm (F.P.O.22)
which are railhead F.P.Os
Jaffa (F.P.O.17)
a Brigade F.P.O.

Bethlehem) (F.P.O.18) a 'phantom' serving these
Ramallah) places on alternate days.

It is in contemplation to remove the base post office to Lydda Junction itself in which event it will be necessary to leave a F.P.O. at Sarafand. There is a possibility too that Nablus will become a railhead in the course of a few weeks in which case a F.P.O. will be established there.

As I have stated above the disposition of the Force follows no known precedent and it is quite out of the question to dispose of the Postal Unit on the recognised lines of Corps H.Q. Division Headquarters and Brigade Headquarters. If one were so misguided as to do so at least 50 per cent more force would be required to achieve 50 per cent less output.

As it is, owing to the presence of a civil postal organisation, the F.P.Os do not do as much business as they should and troops in isolated stations rather than trust a representative to obtain supplies of British stamps and postal orders use the civil offices freely. I have endeavoured to counteract this as far as possible by

arranging

arranging with the N.A.A.F.I. to sell British Postage stamps and I have no doubt that this policy of infiltration will eventually result in a much greater use of the Army Postal Service for outward mail.

As regards inward mails of course the civil post office cannot compete with ours, at any rate outside the two main towns of Jerusalem and Haifa. Indeed if only Foreign Section could be persuaded to make up unit bags more freely we could offer an incomparable service. The number of miscellaneous packet bags reaching us is embarrassing. Only the other evening the English mail reaching Jerusalem when divided up provided full bags for no less than seven units. When I explain that now that the new train services have been introduced the failure to make up unit bags for that portion of the 5th Division stationed out of Haifa results in as much as 24 hours delay perhaps the extreme need for properly divided mail can be appreciated.

The use of the Air Mail service has been much greater even than was anticipated. Quite sufficient matter is posted to warrant direct mails from the three main F.P.Os but the bags are passed to the civil post office for transit as it has special road services which enable the latest possible time of posting to be afforded. This arrangement involves the use of a form new to the R.E.P.S. an A.V. 2 and a supply has had to be requisitioned. Another effect is on the sale of 3d. stamps. This denomination soon shewed signs of depletion and an urgent requisition had soon to be placed.

On the 25th October I learned at a "Q" Conference which I was instructed to attend that a considerable reduction in the strength of the Emergency Force was in contemplation.

contemplation. It appeared that a reduction to 15 battalions was the immediate objective, and a further reduction leaving only eight battalions was to be arrived at and to take effect some time in 1937. In short, it was proposed to withdraw the 5th Division.

With this information in mind I was instructed to determine what R.E.P.S. personnel could be dispensed with and, after consideration, I suggested that I could release 1 officer and 21 other ranks. This staff, as it happened, formed a Divisional unit, but the figure arrived at was quite accidental, as the peculiar distribution of troops in Palestine did not permit of the distribution of postal personnel on a strictly Divisional basis.

My proposals were accepted; and it was gleaned from various sources that my first draft for the U.K. would leave towards the end of December.

On 10th November I received a communication from London which caused me some misgiving. Briefly it was that Christmas parcel mails would be sent as far as Lydda through the Military Forwarding Organisation and would contain certain dutiable articles such as tobacco. The intention, as I understood it to be, was that at Lydda these parcels would be transferred to the Army Postal Service which would deliver them without first passing them through Customs. I should have experienced considerable hesitation in carrying out such a proposal, even if no other considerations were involved; but, having regard to the fact that these contraband mails would also have to pass through Egypt, labelled, it was suggested, "Military Stores", it seemed a doubly undesirable proceeding. The discussions which were held between the Brigadier i/c Administration, Director of Transportation, Camp Commandant, Cairo,

Cairo, and myself have already been fully reported, and I was glad to note that ultimately my suggestion that either the British Post Office or the War Office should bear the overseas cost of the Christmas parcel mails was adopted.

On the 18th November a hitherto unused narrow gauge railway line between Affula and Nablus was opened, and as supplies to the troops in Nablus were to be sent down by this line from Haifa, instead of via the main line to Tulkarm, I decided to open a F.P.O. at Nablus. I kept the F.P.O. at Tulkarm going, as it served other troops that called at the Station for supplies. This office was also a useful depot for the posted correspondence which was conveyed there twice daily by road from Nablus.

By the 20th November it had been definitely decided to release the first draft of R.E.P.S. personnel on 21st December, and the usual warning notices were issued.

But on the 23rd of that month I was requested to state what were my proposals as regards the retention of the Army Postal Services in the event of the Palestine Garrison settling down under semi-permanent conditions. It was obvious, of course, that once the troops settled into garrison quarters - no matter where those quarters were situated - the civil post office could cope with the situation, and I reported on those lines. My report that the Army Post Office should be withdrawn in its entirety was accepted, and on the 1st December I was instructed to prepare my plans for evacuation; the date of embarkation being given as January 2nd, 1937.

This date was a little inconvenient, arising, as it did, immediately after Christmas, but as the majority of the troops which were due to return to the U.K. would have left by Christmas the position was not so difficult as it might have

have been. However, a programme of closing down was prepared, which had as its main objective the provision of the cheaper postage rates afforded by the use of British Postage stamps for as long as possible - a programme which was approved and published in General Orders.

Soon after this, however, word was received that the Postal Unit would not be embarked until mid-January, though as many officers as could be spared were to be sent away on 21st December. This alteration by more than a fortnight of the date of departure necessitated a complete revision of the arrangements for closing down. I found, however, that I could spare the O.C. 5th Division Postal Unit, and he left Palestine on 21st December.

By this time it was too late to cancel the instructions previously given to London to divert military mails to the Civil Post Office, so I decided to let those arrangements stand and to carry on the Field Post Offices merely for the purpose of selling stamps and postal orders and collecting correspondence for despatch. By this time troop movements had almost ceased, and the Force was concentrated near or in Jerusalem, Sarafand and Haifa, so that it became possible to close down all F.P.Os except those at the places named.

Such personnel as were required were detailed to attend at the civil post offices at Jerusalem, Ramle (the appropriate civil office for Sarafand) and Haifa to assist in the sorting of inward military mails - assistance which was greatly appreciated by the civil administration.

On the 22nd December advice was received that the unit would embark on the H.T. "NEURALIA" on 21st January (subsequently altered to 23rd January on account of a mechanical

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mechanical defect in the ship), and from that time until the date of embarkation my H.Q. was fully occupied in making preparations for departure.

The scattered nature of the units added to the work of preparation, and the additional work arising out of the transfer of my Headquarters office to other quarters in Jerusalem did not assist, but at 0930 hours on 23rd January the Jerusalem detachment entrained at Jerusalem and was joined by the Sarafand detachment at Lydda. The Haifa detachment being at the port of departure had embarked at 1100 hours, and by 1530 hours the whole unit was aboard H.T. "NEURALIA" which left port at 1640 hours.

The foregoing is a digest of facts and occurrences which have been shewn in my War Diary, and it is now necessary to discuss in detail the various aspects of the work and organisation of the Army Post Office in Palestine, with a view to ascertaining to what extent its experiences can be regarded as having a bearing on its activities when next it is called out for service. It is feared that owing to the rather peculiar circumstances in which the Emergency Force operated, the lessons learned cannot have the value they might. For example, there has been no opportunity of trying out the "double echelon" system of supplies - about which quite a lot had been heard during 1936 - in relation to the postal system. Again, the military forces were at no time deployed on a battle front, and the chain of communication bore no similarity to that met with in a force so deployed. Nevertheless, the principle of "mails with supplies" held good and was followed wherever a direct and independent postal system was impracticable.

The several aspects of the work are dealt with in the memoranda which follow.

Mr. Weeber
4 Tuesday

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MEMORANDUM.

Disposal of inward and outward mails.

GENERAL.

In order to appreciate the system adopted for the disposal of inward and outward mails the map at Appendix 1 must first be studied.

It will be seen that Palestine is served for railway purposes by one main line running the length of the seaboard. The railway runs from Kantara East (the Egyptian terminal and the point at which there are connexions to Port Said, Cairo and other stations on the Egyptian State Railway system) via Rafa - the southern Palestine frontier station to Haifa, the Palestine terminal.

From this main line there are branches

- (1) At Lydda (a) to Jaffa.
 (b) to Jerusalem.
- (2) At Tulkarm to Nablus.
- (3) At Haifa to Samakh.

On the Haifa-Samakh branch there is at Affula a narrow gauge branch line to Nablus, but this line was open for only a few weeks in November and December, 1936, when it was operated by Railway troops. One service from Kantara to Haifa and one from Haifa to Kantara is run daily with suitable connexions for and from Jaffa and Jerusalem. There are, in addition, inter-Palestine services. Appendices 2 and 3 are railway time-tables in operation during the period the Army Post Office served in Palestine.

DISPOSITION
OF TROOPS.

Broadly speaking, the troops composing the Emergency Force were concentrated at three points: Jerusalem, Sarafand and Haifa - the Corps H.Q. and 1st Division H.Q. being at Jerusalem and 5th Division H.Q. at Haifa.

SUPPLY

PLY
SPOTS.

The main R.A.S.C. Supply Depots were situated in Jerusalem, Sarafand and Haifa, and it was at these places that Field Post Offices were first set up. Later on, as and when Detail Issue Depots were established at Tulkarm, Affula and Samakh, Field Post Offices were opened at those points without delay. When the Affula-Nablus line was opened a railhead Field Post Office was established at the latter town, though it ultimately transpired that a better service could be secured by a road service between Nablus and Tulkarm and, fortunately, transport was available for the purpose. The map at Appendix shews how close the relationship was between the supply and postal systems.

INWARD MAIIS
(LETTERS)
(a) Source.

As might be expected, the bulk of the mail received for the troops originated in the United Kingdom. The sea-borne mails reached Palestine on Mondays at Haifa, and on Thursdays and Fridays via Port Said (for some weeks a fourth mail was received via the Polish boat service). Parcels mails arrived in Palestine once weekly on Thursdays via Port Said.

A not inconsiderable quantity of mails originated in Egypt, and the Camp Commandant, Cairo, who is responsible, amongst other things, for the military postal service in Egypt, made up direct mails from Cairo, Port Said and Moascar for my Corps and Divisional Post Offices. These mails which, though private, emanated from military sources were carried as far as Lydda and Jerusalem by the couriers who conveyed secret military correspondence and no postage was prepaid. This concession, which was approved by the appropriate military authorities, was
extremely

extremely valuable to the families of British Troops in Egypt temporarily on service in Palestine, as the normal rate of postage ex. Egypt for Palestine is 5 PT (nearly 1/3d).

INWARD MAILS
(b) Distribution.

Immediately on arrival in Jerusalem on 25th September, I got in touch with the "Q" staff of Corps H.Q. and secured a copy of the current Order of Battle. Code names were allotted by me to each unit and a location list prepared for transmission to Home Depot (Egypt was brought within the system at a later date). At the outset the units were located on the three F.P.O.s at Jerusalem, Sarafand and Haifa - the main R.A.S.C. supply centres - but as it had been arranged in London beforehand to send all military mail to Jerusalem these locations did not become effective for eight or nine days. It was immediately apparent that Lydda (the railway station for Sarafand) was the most appropriate distribution centre for Palestine, and throughout the campaign the F.P.O. there performed the function of an Advanced Base Office. (On Mondays, when the English mail arrived at Haifa, the F.P.O. there performed the main distribution work).

As soon, therefore, as the locations lists were worked to in London, the mails reaching Lydda were for either Jerusalem, Haifa or Sarafand, and they were distributed by my F.P.O. staff accordingly. Later on, when units left the main supply areas for more remote places served by Detail Issue Depots, or changed over from one supply area to another, a certain amount of time was lost on account of the failure on the part of London to make up unit bags. Much correspondence and many cables on

this

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this subject passed between me and the Director, Army Postal Services, and I mention the difficulty here only to place it on permanent record.

As has been stated above, the Headquarters of the various units were more or less concentrated on the Divisional Headquarters and the distribution of mails took place in the orthodox manner through the post orderlies who called at the Field Post Offices. In the majority of instances these orderlies worked independently of the supply system - an arrangement rendered necessary on account of the mails arriving after the time of drawing supplies. Fortunately all units seemed to be provided with abundant transport.

Those few units which were stationed at some distance from a main supply depot did not, for reasons which are described below, conform to the normal scheme for obtaining supplies, and their circumstances were sufficiently removed from the normal to provide a mail distribution problem which has not, it is believed, been met with hitherto.

It must be borne in mind that from the commencement of the campaign up to the time when the Arab leaders called off the strike and their guerilla warfare, it was unsafe for military motor transport to proceed without protection on any road; particularly those in the north. The danger was less during the hours of daylight, but nevertheless, it was the rule for such transport to be accompanied by armed escorts conveyed in armoured cars, or in vehicles specially equipped for defensive purposes. It is obvious that convoys of vehicles requiring escort
had

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had to be restricted as to numbers, and this arrangement negatived the adoption of the "unit lorry" system which would normally be employed in war. Unit representatives were certainly stationed at the R.A.S.C. supply depot, but it did not follow that they travelled in the convoy and indeed the normal practice was for one man to be responsible for the supplies of several units which he handed over at prearranged points on the route. The commanders of the units affected evinced considerable reluctance to detailing their post corporals to travel with the convoys - not unreasonably, in view of the need for keeping the number of troops so travelling as low as possible - and I was faced, therefore, with the problem of disposing of the mail for units served in the manner described through the medium of a third party as it were.

In the end I decided to send R.E.P.S. staff out with the convoys, so as to ensure a direct transfer of mail from the Army Post Office to the unit H.Q., and this arrangement of a road travelling Post Office worked very well for the short time it was in existence. Within a few weeks of its inception, Detail Issue Depots were established at Affula and Samakh, at which stations F.P.O.s were set up and from which mails were distributed to post orderlies from the several units served.

AIR MAIL.

Air mail for the force in Palestine reached the country in one of three ways.

- (1) From Alexandria and thence via the Kantara-Haifa T.P.O.
- (2) From Gaza by road to Jaffa.
- (3) From Lydda Airport and thence Ramleh Civil P.O.

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In each case this type of mail (even when direct vouching between London and the Army Post Office took place) was received through the Civil Post Office, but no delay was suffered on that account. Indeed, owing to the existence of a civil road contract service between Gaza and Jaffa, the army enjoyed a facility which would not otherwise have been afforded.

PARCELS.

Parcels reached Palestine via Port Said and Kantara. I approached the Director of Customs in Palestine with a view to securing the exemption of army parcel mails from customs examination. The Director was very sympathetic and explained that so far as he was concerned, whilst he must insist on examining parcels arriving in army mails, he would not propose to levy duty on any articles other than tobacco and alcohol. He explained that he had adopted this policy in regard to parcels for troops prior to the arrival of the Army Postal Section. I sensed that to secure complete exemption would mean a long drawn out wrangle with the Palestine Treasury, and it seemed to me that, having regard to the fact that tobacco could be purchased in Palestine at rates equal to or below those obtaining in England, the easier method would be to advise persons in England that parcels containing the two articles specified would be liable to duty. This suggestion was duly submitted to the Director, Army Postal Services, but was not adopted on grounds of policy. Nevertheless, the arrangements made in Palestine for the customs examination worked very smoothly indeed. All parcel mails were concentrated at my Post Office at Sarafand, where a Customs Officer was in readiness. The mails

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mails arrived off the first train from Kantara and were examined and disposed of by the next trains to leave Lydda some four hours later. In the vast majority of cases no delay in delivery was occasioned by this arrangement. Addressees of parcels on which charges had been raised were advised on a special form devised for the purpose, and in only very few cases were the dues refused. It should be mentioned, as an example of how far the Director of Customs was prepared to relax his regulations, that no packets were examined. A file containing correspondence passing between the Director of Customs and myself, ~~copies of the military forms used, and a statement showing the charges raised~~ will be found at Appendix 4.

OUTWARD MAILS. The Army Postal Service accepted letters for despatch
General by ordinary and air mails and packets and parcels. The rates charges for letters and packets were British Inland rates for addresses in the United Kingdom and the British Empire, and Palestinian rates for air mail sent by K.L.M. and parcels.

Generally speaking, the British rate gave the troops a financial advantage. Palestinian letter rate to the U.K. is 8 mils. Three-halfpenny British postage stamps were sold at 7 mils each, but for four the equivalent was 25 mils ($6d = \frac{1}{40}$ of £1 or 1,000 mils). Thus on every four letters sent home a man could save 7 mils or $1\frac{1}{2}d$. At first there was a tendency for the troops to use the Palestine Civil Post Office for despatching purposes (the principal reason being that frequently a civil post office was nearer at hand than a military one - particularly where troops were on detachment) but it did not take them long to appreciate the advantage to be gained by the use

of

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of British stamps, and within a short time the Army Post Office received most of the military postings.

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The Air Mail services were greatly in demand, particularly during the first six weeks or so when they offered a very real acceleration. With the onset of winter, however, complaints that letters sent by Imperial Airways took just as long as those despatched by surface transport were frequent, and a noticeable drop in outward air mail traffic was manifested. K.L.M., judging from the infrequent unfavourable comments seemed to maintain a much more reliable service and was much used, though mainly by officers on account of the higher rate of postage called for.

DISPOSAL.

The two outlets for mails for the United Kingdom and Europe were Port Said and Haifa. The latter port was used by the Lloyd-Trestino packet which sailed each Wednesday. This was an excellent service and, apart from being the most rapid, provided a relatively late hour of posting (mid-day in Jerusalem and 8.0 p.m. in Haifa). For the convenience of way-billing, mails for this route, although enclosed in Army bags, were included in the Palestine Civil Post Office despatches.

Mails for the United Kingdom were sent via Kantara and Port Said on Sundays, Tuesdays (until the cessation of the service) and Fridays.

Postings were concentrated on the Field Post Offices at Jerusalem (F.P.O.16), Sarafand and Haifa, where direct despatches were made up. Correspondence for places which would benefit by being sent through the Palestine Civil Post Office was handed over to that Administration who supplied me with Circulation lists.

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In the section dealing with Inward Mails I make reference to the fact that military facilities in Egypt were granted the privilege of free postage to their soldier correspondents in Palestine. I was urged to afford a similar facility in the reverse direction, but I could not see my way clear to doing more than allowing Imperial rates of postage on correspondence addressed to a military address. Such correspondence was it is true handled by military authorities throughout (the Egyptian couriers conveyed the mails from Jerusalem to Cairo for distribution through the military postal system there) but although I was due to bear the charge of railway transit only on mails between Haifa and Lydda I could not very well charge postage on letters originating in the North of Palestine whilst allowing free postage on those posted in Jerusalem and Sarafand. I discussed the matter with the A.A. & Q.M.G. and he agreed that if Imperial rates were charged this was the most that could be allowed.

The arrangement worked very well on the whole, but at first there was some difficulty experienced in identifying the military addresses in Egypt and correspondence for private addresses bearing the rate for military addresses was frequently encountered. This correspondence had of course to be transferred to the Palestine Civil Post Office when it was treated as unpaid and taxed accordingly.

When posters eventually learned the difference in rate for military and civil Egyptian addresses, they continued to use British Postage stamps for the latter, and I was advised by the Camp Commandant, Cairo, that the Egyptian Postal Administration took exception to accepting

British

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British Postage Stamps on correspondence passed to them for delivery. However, through the good offices of Colonel Morris, the Camp Commandant in question, on the one hand, and G.H. Webster, Esq., Deputy P.M.G. of Palestine on the other, the Egyptian administration kindly agreed to waive their objection.

Air Mail was disposed of mainly through the civil Post Office where a record of its weight was kept for accounting purposes at a later stage. On occasions sufficient air mail to justify a direct bag from Sarafand was despatched to Gaza, where it was put in the aeroplane by the local civil postmaster.

Parcel mails were made up once a week as soon as the numbers posted and for redirection to U.K. warranted despatches. Outgoing parcels were subject to Palestine Customs examination (for antiquities) and postings were, therefore, concentrated on the Sarafand office.

All such mails were despatched via Kantara and Port Said, and were therefore transited through Egypt. Until Egypt passed an account - late in November - for these transit charges I was quite ignorant of my obligations in this respect. I did not appreciate that the Egyptian Administration expected a copy of the bill showing in detail the weight of the contents of parcel despatches, and this failure has led to delay in settling the account. It is unfortunate that some brief instructions on the point were not given me prior to departure from England, and no doubt this omission will be rectified when next a unit is sent overseas to carry out military postal services in circumstances where a foreign postal administration is likely

likely to be involved.

In addition to the functions described above the Army Post Office provided of course for the internal military postal arrangements in Palestine. A fairly comprehensive D.R.L.S. system was established by the Royal Corps of Signals prior to the arrival of the Postal Section, and as the civil cross-post arrangements left something to be desired in the matter of speed the D.R.L.S. service was becoming overloaded. I had several discussions with the Chief Signal Officer on the subject and was able to convince him that in some instances the Army Postal communications provided as rapid a means of disposal of correspondence as his own. Units were, however, wedded to the D.R.L.S. system, and it took more than one special instruction by the Chief Signal Officer to induce them to use his service only for urgent matter. This would seem to contradict my remark above that in some cases my service was as expeditious but the following is one of several examples. A D.R.L.S. lorry left Jerusalem daily at 0900 hours and called at Nablus, Jenin and Nazareth en route to Haifa which was reached at 1800 hours. But the Army Post Office could accept correspondence in Jerusalem up to 1200 hours for delivery the same day in Haifa. It was arranged therefore for me to provide the C.S.O. with information concerning my inter-F.P.O. services so that the Signal Officer could exercise some discrimination in regard to the matter which would benefit if sent by D.R.L.S.

Broadly speaking, the Army Post Office could guarantee same day delivery of all correspondence for Palestine posted up to midday at any of the large F.P.O.s and addressed to units in or near Jerusalem, Sarafand or Haifa.

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MEMORANDUM

CONVEYANCE OF ARMY POST OFFICE MAILS OVER
PALESTINE RAILWAY SYSTEM.

It did not take very long to come to the conclusion that if the Army Postal Service in Palestine was to operate efficiently considerable use would have to be made of the railway system. Poor though the service afforded by the railway was it was better than anything which could be done by road transport particularly as between the principal military centres Jerusalem and Haifa. Moreover, it was safer.

An early opportunity was taken therefore of discussing with the General Manager of the Palestine Railways the basis of charge and the machinery for maintaining the records necessary for the compilations of the charges.

I attempted to get him to agree to a flat rate per bag of mail but he insisted that normal railway baggage rates must apply though he eventually agreed to concede a 25% rebate exemption from registration and portorage charges (railway porters are not railway employees but are provided under contract).

In order to arrive at the charge proper to be made each despatch had to be way billed. The way bill was designed so as to furnish the following information:-

- (1) Name of station of despatch
- (2) " " " " destination
- (3) Weight in kilos of consignment (the bags for the same destination were weighed together).

In addition, spaces were provided for the signatures of the train conductor and of the officer receiving the mail at its destination.

Three

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Three way bills were prepared in respect of each consignment, one being retained by the despatching officer and two by the railway Coy.

The way bills provided for by Depot were of no use for the purpose (they were not designed for this contingency nor could they be modified to meet it) and it was necessary to have special ones printed.

The accounts were presented monthly and after check in my office were passed to the Command Paymaster for payment.

Although the system seemed rather cumbrous at first it worked extremely well and no mail was lost.

Copies of correspondence with the Palestine Railway and accounts are filed as Appendix. 5

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MEMORANDUM

TRANSPORT FOR ARMY POSTAL SERVICES.

At a conference held at the War Office early in 1936 to discuss the needs of the Army Postal Service it was, I understood, agreed that a Divisional Unit should be provided with a large lorry to work between railhead and "breaking bulk point" and a smaller vehicle which would be used for delivery of registered mail as far as Brigade Headquarters and for cross-post services. Each officer was to be provided with a small car. My impression was that these vehicles would be driven by R.E.P.S. personnel and this seemed to be confirmed when my complement for the Palestine emergency included two drivers per division and three batman-drivers - one for each officer.

On arrival at Corps H.Q. I was sent for by the A.D. of S. & T. and found that he was much puzzled by the fact that I had brought out drivers with me. He pointed out that if the R.A.S.C. had to provide the vehicles - as apparently they had - it followed automatically that the vehicles would be driven by R.A.S.C. personnel. If on the other hand it was the intention that the R.E.P.S. personnel should perform the driving duties then the vehicles would be provided from Ordnance. As however I had never been advised of the result of the War Office conference I was not in a position to argue the point and any inclinations I might have had to do so were suppressed when I learned that before leaving England the A.D. of S. & T. had discussed the matter with his brother who had presided at the War Office conference already mentioned!

The procedure followed therefore was to requisition
transport

transport from the appropriate R.A.S.C. Company, an arrangement which worked very satisfactorily indeed. The mail lorries were on a 'permanent detail' basis - in other words the Postal Section had lorries assigned to it as a standing arrangement. Neither the lorry nor the driver was the same day by day, but the important requirement namely for one lorry and one driver was not on any occasion unsatisfied. Each officer was allocated an Austin 7 two-seater which could be obtained almost on demand. Here again no one particular vehicle was allocated. But there was such a shortage of drivers that the R.A.S.C. were very glad to co-opt our 'batman-drivers' for these vehicles!

My own view of the problem is that the R.E.P.S. should rid itself of the obligation to drive and maintain its transport, if indeed it has ever been the intention that it should accept the responsibility. All that is required to be understood is that the Divisional R.A.S.C. Company should carry on its establishment a sufficiency of transport and drivers to cover R.E.P.S. requirements.

I think that the question should again be raised with the War Office with a view to getting some definite pronouncement of policy.

I agree that the conditions as we found them in Palestine are not likely to be encountered in War and I hesitate to draw any conclusions as regards the adequacy or otherwise of the transport provision. We had no experience for instance of the transport problems involved in a move of a Brigade H.Q. from one place to another. Only two out of the eleven F.P.O's. were
attached

attached at any time to a Brigade and in neither case did a move take place. In war I have no doubt that Brigade F.P.O's would have to be established and I should be interested to know who exactly it is intended should be responsible for its transport. It is remembered that in the 1935 manoeuvres there was no uniformity of treatment and it may be that the question is still under consideration.

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MEMORANDUM

SORTING OFFICE FITTINGS.

Letter Fitting

The up-to-date collapsible letter sorting fitting was an unqualified success. Although comparatively flimsy it proved sufficiently rigid to stand up to protracted use.

I have only one criticism to offer and that concerns the labelling arrangements. The fillets which are provided not only add to the weight of the fitting but are not a satisfactory basis for gummed paper labels - as has already been found in civil stationary offices. I think that it would make for improvement if the labelling were carried out on white tape and I recommend that a trial be made at the first convenient opportunity of this suggestion. A roll of $\frac{3}{4}$ " white tape would be inexpensive to provide and easy to carry.

Drop bag fitting

Owing probably to the failure on the part of Foreign Section to make up unit bags the need for drop bag fittings acquired greater importance than would have been the case had unit bags arrived in Palestine in reasonable numbers.

As it was it became necessary from the very commencement to improvise some form of fitting on which to suspend bags for the sorting of all matter other than small letters.

The Unit had the good fortune to proceed abroad with the 12th and 26th Field Companies and owing no doubt to the friendly relations established between the officers and men no difficulty was experienced at Jerusalem or Sarafand in getting

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getting drop bag fittings made by the Field Companies. At Haifa however the local Field Company either could not or would not do anything to assist and very makeshift arrangements had to be improvised. Had the campaign lasted longer I should have taken steps to force the Field Company to co-operate but as most of the troops were on the point of leaving Palestine by the time the local O.C. Postal Unit had expended all his efforts in this direction I did not pursue the matter.

Although the fittings we did obtain were excellent for garrison F.P.Os. they would have been too bulky to transport easily.

It may be worth while considering the construction of a portable drop bag frame on the lines of the accompanying sketch.

Tables.

Three types of table were used in the Postal Service in Palestine: 6" Barrack and 4" Barrack Tables with iron leg-sets and a 4" Telegraph table. I was much impressed with the last. It is a convenient size, is sturdy and transports easily. I formed the opinion that it would be an advantage to have this type adopted as the standard table unit for all but the largest - and more stationary - offices. The establishment suggested is 7 per Divisional Unit. It would be of considerable advantage, were this suggestion adopted, to standardise a rubber mat inset say 18" x 18" for stamping purposes.

Office equipment.

Ink, not drink, is now said to be the curse of the Army and my short experience with the Palestine Emergency Force certainly leads me to that conclusion.

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I did all in my power to limit the number of instructions issued to my F.P.Os. but even so the amount of duplicating work involved was far greater than I would have imagined.

Fortunately I had been provided with a Fordigraph duplicator - a rotary, surface printing machine - and this machine proved invaluable. For several weeks it could not be brought into use as a supply of the necessary special paper did not accompany the machine and I had to borrow an Ellam flat duplicator. In some ways I am glad this opportunity was presented of testing out the two types. Of the infinite superiority of the rotary duplicator I am quite convinced and I strongly recommend that it be regarded as standard to a D.A.D.A.P.S. office.

A typewriter was of course provided for my office and so convinced am I of the absolute need of a typewriting machine at every H.Q. in a unit that I recommend that one, preferably of the portable type, be supplied for each Divisional Unit. I certainly found my own portable machine of great value during the 1935 manoeuvres and O.C. 1st Division Postal Unit (2/Lt. W. Scott) evidently found he couldn't get on without one for he purchased a portable machine. I am certain I gained just as much out of the transaction as he did.

Ink.

Whilst red ink powder produces a satisfactory writing medium, black ink powder is hopeless. Any advantage it may possess in the way of portability it loses a hundred fold in the wretched results it achieves. It should be possible to prepare a container susceptible of rough usage to carry the type of liquid ink now standard in the British Post Office.

MEMORANDUM

THE SELF-CONTAINED UNIT.

Whilst my Postal Section may be said to have been extremely well provided with camp equipment and furniture the work involved in keeping account of it seemed to be out of all proportion to the advantages to be gained from being a self-accounting unit.

We were supplied with everything from a complete camp cooking outfit up to a large marquee and had we remained a homogeneous unit and had we had a Quartermaster Sergeant and a trained cook no doubt we could have carried on successfully enough.

But the fact remains that in war the Divisional unit is split up into quite small bodies and save in exceptional circumstances these bodies would be unable to fend for themselves in the matter of cooking even if their normal postal duties permitted of this being done. Of course, in the case of Base - or Army - formations the position would be much easier.

Army Form G.1098 lays down in detail the camp furniture and equipment appropriate to the normal Postal Section formations. This form should, I submit, be regarded merely as an indication of the articles which the O.C. of a unit is entitled to draw and not as the inventory of an issue to be made whether or not all of it is needed.

There are very few units in the Regular Army which are as a normal arrangement split up into so many small sub-divisions from the moment of entering a field of operations and I consider it unfortunate that an attempt has been made to weld on to a rather individualistic unit

like

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like the R.E.P.S. a system which although satisfactory so far as the Army is generally concerned, is so cumbersome.

The alternative is in my opinion, to regard the Divisional Unit (not the whole of the Section which may be in any field of operation) as the self-contained unit for accounting purposes and to send each such unit abroad with the equipment proper to it and an N.C.O. with sufficient training to maintain the records.

I do not feel competent to do more than make these general criticisms and suggestions without more detailed knowledge of what precisely the military authorities wish us to do in the matter, but I should welcome a meeting with some authority with a view to arriving at some agreed method whereby the Postal Section could carry out their ideas without introducing the cumbersome machinery which, judging from my first experience, seems to be involved.

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MEMORANDUM

STORES - POSTAL AND ARMY

ACCOUNTS - POSTAL.

A brief memorandum prepared by C.S.M. Darby on Accounts is at Appendix 6 .

I do not propose to go into this subject in detail in writing. Experience gained in the Palestine Expedition leads me to think that this subject needs very careful investigation, and I should welcome the formation of a small Committee to settle not only the scale of stores, but the method of their issue.

The Committee should, I suggest, include R.S.M. Curry, C.S.M. Darby and Sergeant Allen.

MEMORANDUM

EMBARKATION OF A UNIT PROCEEDING OVERSEAS
AND ROUTINE ABOARDHIP.

The following notes have been prepared as a result of experience gained in conducting a Postal Section to Palestine. They will prove useful for any voyage of three or more days though in some small details some modifications may be anticipated.

Depot to
Ships side.

Heavy baggage is sent forward a day or two ahead and this does not have to be carried about until the port of disembarkation is reached. The unit leaves Depot with two kit bags per man - one containing immediate necessities and the other spare clothing, etc. It also takes with it valuable stocks and such articles as sealing presses. The O.C. on reaching the port of embarkation should, after detrainning his men and their kits and stocks, immediately report to the Embarkation Staff Officer (E.S.O.)

The E.S.O. will call for various forms with which Depot will have provided him and then give instructions as to how he wants the troops to proceed. Usually the O.C. draft will be handed Mess Rolls containing the names - generally in alphabetical order - of the men divided up into various messes. The men are then formed up in accordance with these mess rolls and a considerable amount of chat will take place because A is not in the same mess (normally a 'mess' is 12 or 14 men) as Z. But affinities can sort themselves out when aboard - not before.

The next step is usually to pass the rifles to the armoury (they should have had a label attached shewing the number of the weapon and the number, rank and name of its owner before leaving Depot).

In

In the meantime the universal kit bags (the ones containing spares) will have been stacked and conveyed to the appropriate hold by embarkation staff provided for the purpose.

Valuable stocks will of course be retained in the custody of the unit until transferred to a place of safety in the ship. (the exact spot can be ascertained from the Ships Troops Officer who should have already been advised that such accommodation is required).

All these formalities having been gone through the draft is ready to proceed aboard and the order for this move will be issued by the Embarkation Staff in due course.

On board.

Very shortly after the ship sails all ranks are allotted boat stations and draw and don life belts. Ships staff then inspect the fastening of the life belts and correct bad tying. When this has been done the 'Dismiss' is sounded and all ranks proceed to settle down - the 'other ranks' drawing hammocks and mess gear.

On board the Captain of the ship is, of course, the supreme head and in a 'trooper' his chief liaison with the military personnel is through a member of his own staff styled the "Troop Officer". The military personnel are, through their own O.C. (or Draft Conducting Officer) under the orders of O.C. Troops - usually the senior executive military officer on board. O.C. Troops is assisted by a Ships Adjutant - also a travelling officer - a Ships Sergeant Major (normally a Warrant Officer Cl.I. permanently appointed to the ship) and orderly Room Staff.

Regulations for the conduct of the troops on board are contained in Ships Standing Orders and the daily Ships Routine Orders and all ranks are expected to read these.

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The military personnel provide all fatigues and guards and the O.C. of each unit on board is instructed to detail personnel for these duties as required. It is important to note that R.E.P.S. personnel are not exempt from any guards or fatigues.

Life on board ship is easy and after "Captains Rounds" troops, excepting those on fatigues, are free to do as they please. "Captains Rounds" usually takes place at 1000 hours. At 0945 all troops, except those detailed to remain below (mess orderlies) parade at their boat stations in fatigue dress. Prior to this parade they have stowed hammocks, breakfasted, cleaned messes and stowed kit. At 1000 hours the Captain accompanied by the Troop Officer, O.C. Troops, Ships Adjutant and Ships Sergeant Major and bugler makes a complete tour of his ship - his progress being indicated from time to time by one G. on the bugle. As he approaches each unit the O.C. is expected to bring it to Attention and to salute the Captain. When the Captain leaves the unit it is stood easy.

Once a week the 'Alarm' is rung at "Captains Rounds" and troops must then parade in their life belts.

The following are a few 'hints' which may prove of value

All ranks: Smoking is not allowed between decks.
Lighted cigarette ends must not be thrown over the side.
Boots or shoes with hob-nails must not be worn.
Sea-sickness is not a state of health to be reported to the M.O. save in extreme cases.
Officers.

Officers:

Spurs are not worn on board.

Captains Rounds parade may be taken in slacks.

Plain clothes are worn after 1300 hours.

'Blues' or dinner jackets are worn at dinner.

Shorts and gym vests are desirable for
physical training.

2.2. Special Order of the Day

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY.

The following is an extract from a letter received by the Army Council from Lieutenant-General J.G. Dill, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., the General Officer commanding the British troops in Palestine and Transjordan.

"The work of the Section was of a high standard throughout. The men were collected together at short notice from civilian life and sent out to Palestine to organize and operate a postal service for the troops at a time when the strength of the forces was undergoing a large increase.

Although formations etc., were not continually on the move, the problem presented by a number of units scattered over a wide area was not an easy one. The Postal Section very soon adapted itself to prevailing conditions, and in a very short time had produced an efficient service.

The members of the unit were noticeably of a very fine type. They were cheerful, willing and popular, working long hours when necessary without complaint. I consider that the prompt delivery of mail contributed largely to the contentment of the troops."

I am quite sure that such a tribute would not have been paid unless it had been earned; and I consider that all ranks of the Palestine Postal Unit may well be proud to have earned it.

B.G.D.

2.3. Letter of Lieutenant General Dill, 5 April 1937

37315

Subject:- Royal Engineers Postal Section.

From :- The General Officer Commanding,
British Forces in Palestine & Transjordan.

To :- The Under Secretary of State,
The War Office, London, S.W.1.

CR/PAL/3232/A. Jerusalem.
5th April, 1937.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to your letter No. 27/Engrs./8562 (A.G.7.) dated 24th March, 1937, and to state that I entirely agree to a letter of thanks being sent to the Secretary, The General Post Office, for the loan of Postal personnel during the Emergency in Palestine.

The work of the Section was of a high standard throughout. The men were collected together at short notice from civilian life and sent out to Palestine to organize and operate a postal service for the troops at a time when the strength of the forces was undergoing a large increase.

Although formations etc., were not continually on the move, the problem presented by a number of units scattered over a wide area was not an easy one. The Postal Section very soon adapted itself to prevailing conditions, and in a very short time had produced an efficient service.

The members of the unit were noticeably of a very fine type. They were cheerful, willing and popular, working long hours when necessary without complaint. I consider that the prompt delivery of mail contributed largely to the contentment of the troops.

Major Evans, who commanded the unit is deserving of special mention. By his keenness, hard work and competent handling of the various difficulties that arose, he maintained a smooth running organization which satisfied everyone.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

(SGD.) J.G. DILL. Lieutenant-General,
General Officer Commanding,
British Forces in Palestine & Transjordan.

On the 17th Feb: I brought to the notice of the Q.M.G. in a D/O letter the really good work done by the Army Postal Section.

2.4. Activity Map

