

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN ITALY AND GREAT BRITAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

ONCE UPON A TIME A "BROTHERHOOD IN ARMS"

The impact of the Great War (WWI) was profound. The dire economic consequences of the long war affected all countries, in particular those with younger or less experienced democracies. With the release from the army, masses of youth found themselves struggling to find a job. The modernization brought about by technological progress linked to military purposes added to the expectations of the masses, and contributed to the general unrest. In three major European countries (Russia, Germany and Italy) dictatorship developed as a consequence. The advent of fascism profoundly affected Italy's international network of friendship and alliances.

After the end of WWI the "brotherhood in arms" of Italy and Great Britain began to fade. The aggressive nature of the fascist ideology brought Italy close to Nazi Germany, and the years of WWII represent the low point of the interaction between Italy and Britain.

The objective of the seven sections of this exhibit is to provide a comprehensive overview of the communications between the two countries around and during WWII.

Section One: Deterioration of the friendship between Italy and Great Britain;

Section Two: Postal services up to Italy's declaration of war;

Section Three: Exchange of mail during the time when Italy and GB were at war with each other;

Section Four: Mail to and from the prisoners of war/ internees;

Section Five: British related mail & Emergency Mail in occupied Italy; mass communication media;

Section Six: Mail to and from British soldiers in occupied Italy;

Section Seven: Restoration of the postal services after war's end.

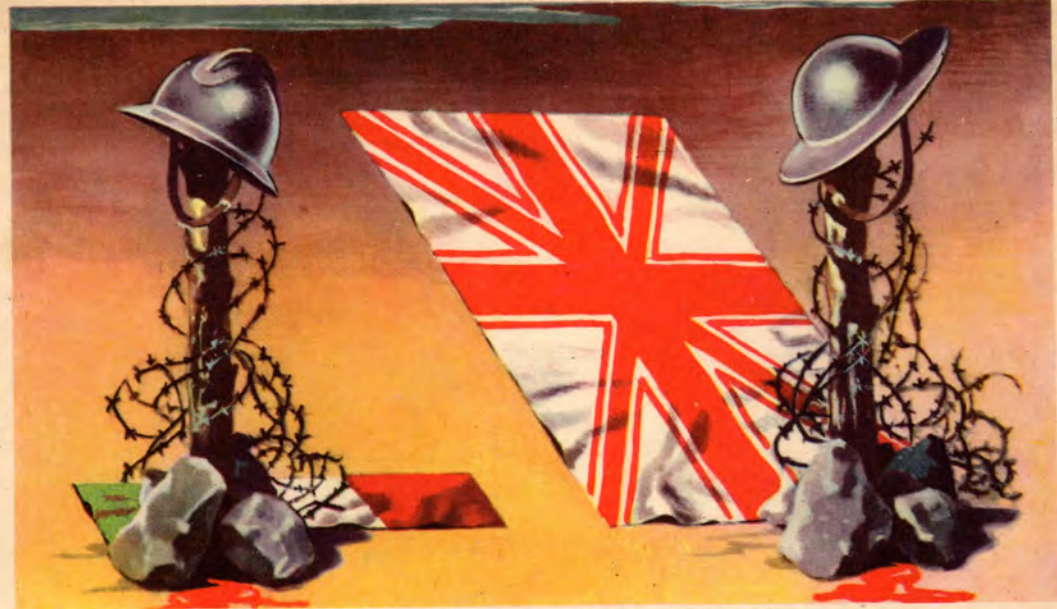


A fascist propaganda postcard with the caption "*C'era una volta*" (Once upon a time) referring to the leadership role of Great Britain as an issue of the past and as a fairy tale of very little credibility

SECTION ONE FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES

At the end of WWI the Treaty of Versailles imposed conditions on the losers which were clearly excessive, planting the seed for future problems. Germany was the country that paid the highest price. Italy, in spite of being among the victors, did not get what they had hoped; this created a discontent that the fascist party exploited to manipulate public opinion. These postcards compare what Italy and GB got in terms of colonial territories.

"The
Treason of
Versailles"



IL TRADIMENTO DI VERSAGLIA

Per ogni Caduto nella passata guerra mondiale:

L'ITALIA ebbe a Versaglia un quarto di **L'INGHILTERRA** ebbe, invece, due chilometri quadrato di poveri territori coloniali. lometri quadrati di ricchi territori coloniali.



LE COLONIE INGLES E LE NOSTRE

Per l'ingiustizia di Versaglia:

OGNI ITALIANO non dispose che di 79 metri quadrati di povere terre e di deserto.

OGNI INGLESE dispose invece di ben 740 metri quadrati di ricchi territori.

"The
British
Colonies
vs Ours"

SECTION ONE
FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES

As the fascist regime got closer to Nazi Germany, the propaganda machine became very active with the undermining of the public image of Great Britain (although ignoring the difference between England and Scotland, as shown below).



"The English Fleet"

The propaganda machine of the fascist regime targeted areas of clear superiority of Britain, one of them being the military power and especially that of the Royal Navy



"England's Collaborators"

One other target being the vast British Empire and the diverse nature of Britain's allies and friends. Racism was a common theme to both German and Italian propaganda

SECTION ONE
FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES

The fascist regime promoted a total metamorphosis of the image of the British in the eyes of the Italian people, and in only two decades it made of Britain the root of all evil and of the Germans the new brothers in arms



La Lega Italo-Britannica, in nome del popolo inglese, invia saluti fraterni ai valorosi soldati italiani combattenti sulle Alpi, sull' Isonzo e sul Carso.

1941: Only 23 years later, now at war with each other, Italy and Britain are represented quite differently. The brotherhood in arms now binds fascist Italy and nazi Germany, as confirmed on the stamp below, issued by Germany in 1941

1918: In this postcard issued by the Lega Italo-Britannica the head of the two allied armies, Generals Sir Douglas Haig of GB and Luigi Cadorna of Italy exchange a friendly handshake while the Tommies and the Alpini rejoice in what the Prince of Wales had defined "A brotherhood in arms"



SECTION ONE
FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES



The Regia Aeronautica (the Italian Royal Air Force) had a limited role in the bombing blitzes of Britain. In fact only 5% of the aircraft used for that purpose were Italian, mostly older planes. In spite of that the role of Italy and the air warfare in general were abundantly stressed by the fascist regime propaganda. Above: Luftwaffe an Regia Aeronautica planes diving on British targets. To the right: "Hourly, daily, weekly bombs over England"

A significant part of the war was fought in the air. After losing the Battle of Britain in September 1940, the German Luftwaffe adopted a blitz strategy with air raids, most of them focused on the city of London. Later in the war the Luftwaffe started to use the V1 flying bomb (V is for 'vergeltung' ie. vengeance). This was the first air weapon with a jet engine ('the buzz bomb'); it was used for the first time on 13/6/1944



SECTION ONE
FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES



The Brodie helmet of the British troops (aka the 'Tommy helmet', the 'tin hat' or – for the Germans – the 'salatschussel' i.e. the salad bowl) became one with the image of the enemy. "Tacete, il Nemico vi Ascolta" ("Quiet, the enemy is listening") says the postcard on the left while the one below depicts an helmet on the head of Sir Winston Churchill, with a vulgar play of words in the caption ("il Pezzo N 1 del Gabinetto Inglese" The N 1 piece of the English Cabinet – in Italian Gabinetto is also the word for toilet). Both cards are official issues released to the Italian army



SECTION ONE
FROM FRIENDS TO ENEMIES

N. 104 -

Ditta O. A. C. A. R.
FIRENZE - Via G. B. Lulli, 9

7/8

benuta Poggio Vitoli

Sig. Pastucci Giuseppe - Carrignano (Firenze)
per quanto appresso:

DARE

Sp. p. n. 25	Crestole	252.50.
Sp. p. n. 25	Purofor	277.50
		50
		590.00
		11.80
Totale Lire		601.80



PAGATO
[Signature]

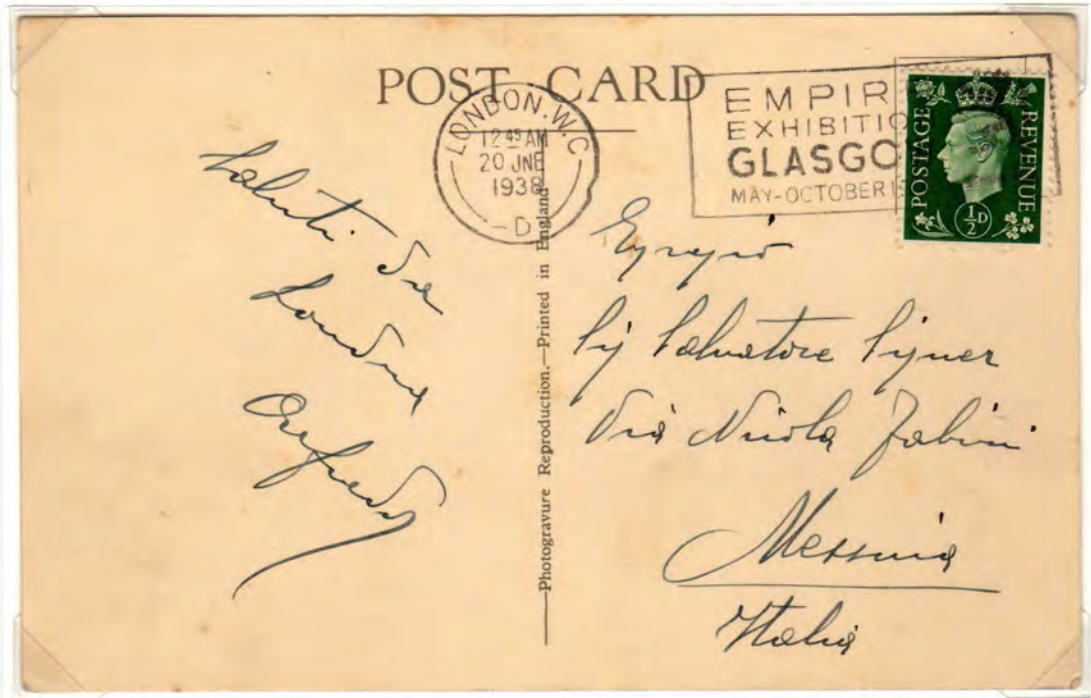
messaggio perovvi. (Stramaledica - May God curse the English)
God, vervloek de engelsen

Cartoleria Pistoja - Firenze - Mod. 115

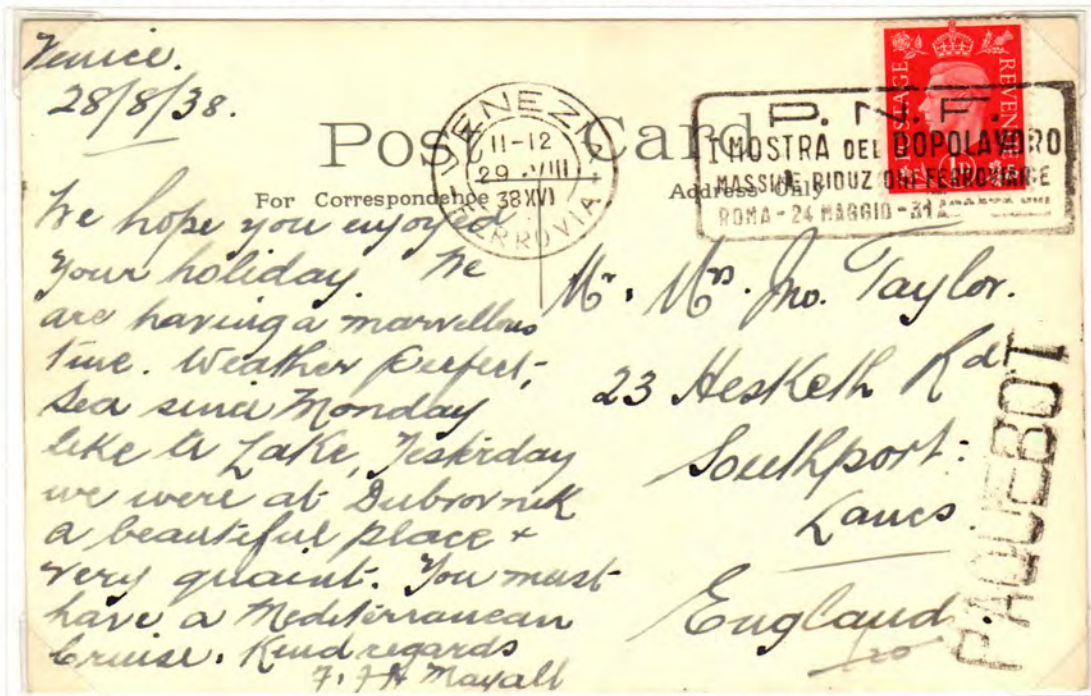
"Dio stramaledica gli Inglesi": "May God curse the English a thousand times" with the fascist symbol canceling revenue stamps on a 1942 invoice for goods

SECTION TWO
THE POST BEFORE JUNE 10th, 1940
GB TO ITALY – PRINTED PAPERS AND POSTCARD RATE

The British postage rates did not change frequently, and in the thirties they were still the same as those originally established by the UPU in 1875



The printed papers rate was 1/2d; the rate applied to postcards with no more than 5 words



The postcard rate was 1d for countries of the British Empire. In this case the postcard was mailed from Italy but en-route on a British vessel to GB and was therefore charged at the British Empire rate

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY - POSTCARD RATE

Postcard rate to a non-British Empire country was 1 ½ d from 13 June 1921 to 30 Apr 1940



The cds struck upon arrival allows to calculate the time in transit (26 to 28 November 1937)



The 1 ½ d postcard rate was not sufficient to pay for letters, hence the tax of 1 lira levied on this 1937 letter

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY – LETTER RATE

The letter rate to a non British Empire country was 2 ½ d from July 1st 1875 through April 30th 1940.



Notice on this single rate cover the defacing of the image of the King (was it the addressee?)



Letters addressed to an Italian Post Office were sometimes charged the sum of 25 cents

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 GB TO ITALY – LETTER RATE

The domestic rate of 1 ½ d (from 3/12/1918 to 30/4/1940) was not sufficient for international mail.



This letter from Stoke on Trent was correctly franked with the 1 ½ d domestic rate; it was then forwarded from London to Florence where it was taxed 75 cents



When domestic letters were forwarded internationally to multiple countries they were taxed multiple times (in this case 1.40 Francs in France and 75 cents in Italy)

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY

After the start of the war in 1939, US lines took the passenger liner SS Washington off its habitual Hamburg-New York route and moved it to the Naples-Genoa-New York line, taking advantage of Italy's official 'neutrality'



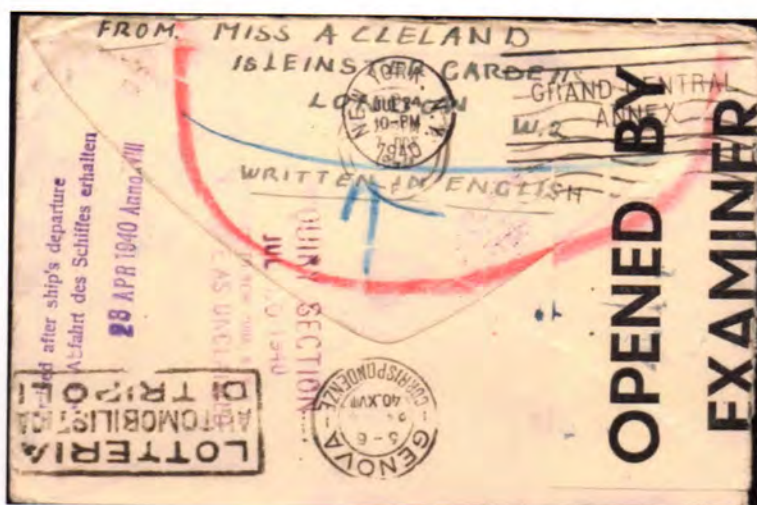
The United States Lines SS Washington

During the few months that preceded Italy's declaration of war the ship carried to the US many people eager to leave Europe who also wanted to reduce the risk of a bad encounter at sea with German U-boats. This letter was not franked sufficiently for international transportation, thus a 1 Lira tax was applied

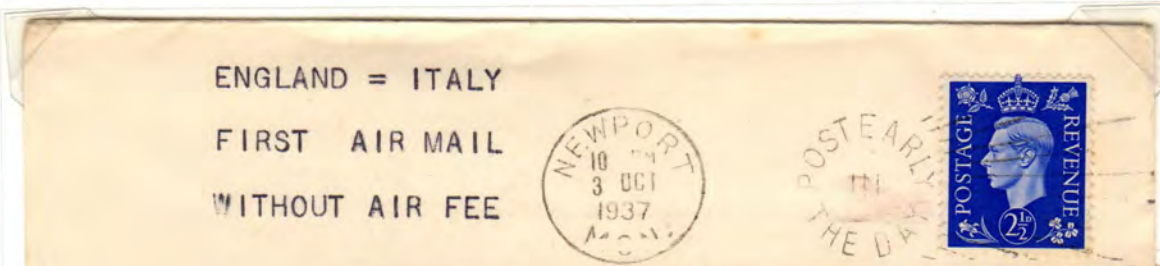


SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY

Genoa was the port used by many of the people fleeing Europe. This letter – franked with the correct letter rate of 2 ½ d - was mailed on April 15th 1940 to a person traveling to the USA. The letter reached Genoa after the ship had sailed on April 20th, but in spite of the stamp “Al Mittente/ Return to Sender” on the front it was forwarded to NY, as requested by the writer. This letter must have left Italy for the US before June 10th 1940 - the day of Italy’s declaration of war to GB - otherwise it would have been seized by the authorities. It was in NY from July to September 1940 and apparently it did not reach the addressee. A civilian label (“Opened By Examiner 2901”) shown on the back (reduced image) confirms that it was censored.



SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY – AIRMAIL RATE



The airmail rate for PCs of 2 ½ d (middle) was extended to letters in 1937 (top). This rate however was not applicable in March 1940 when the letter here on the left was mailed to Milan. (See the L 2.5 tax and - on the reduced back insert - the boxed "Insufficiently paid for transport by air mail")

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
GB TO ITALY – REGISTRATION RATE

The British registration rate was 3 d since August 1921



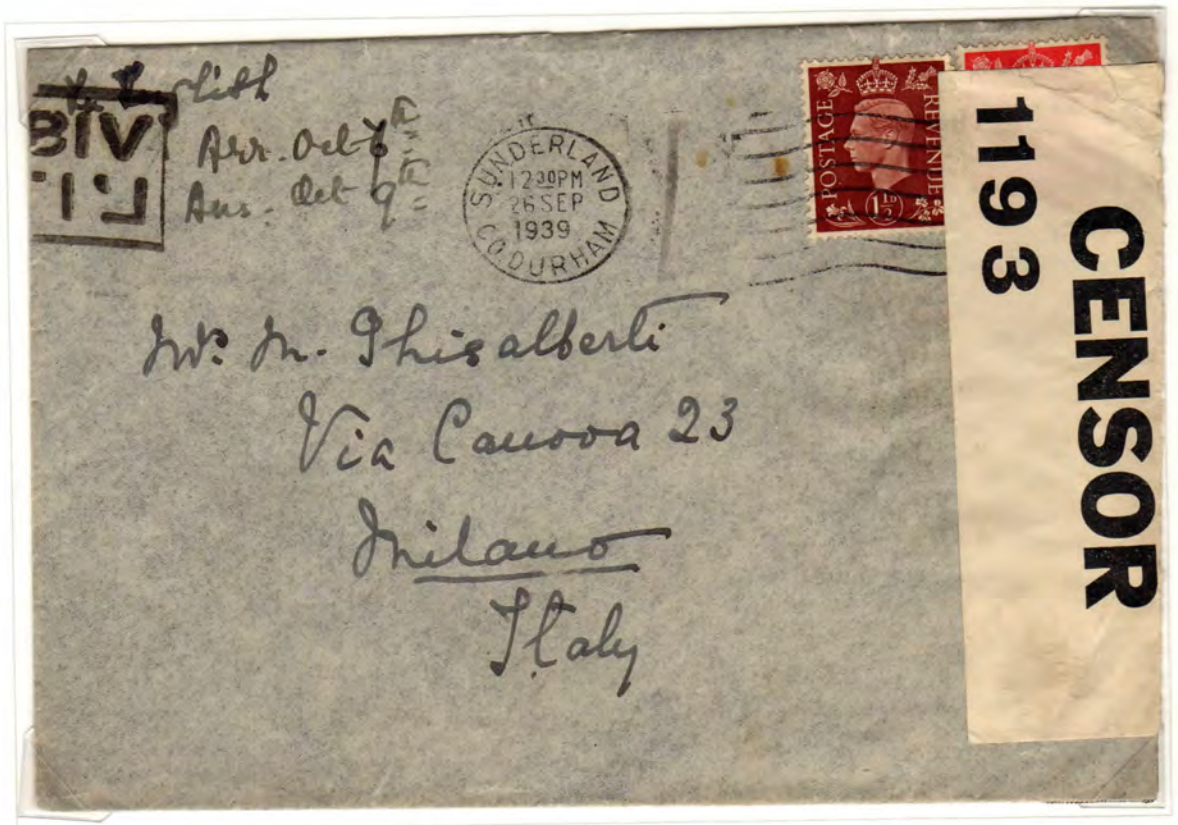
Two single rate registered letters correctly franked 5 ½ d (2 ½ d letter + 3 d registration). The top one was "Released by Censor" with a War Office Permit label in substitution of the more traditional censor label. It was used on all correspondence from the BPA. On the bottom one the registration was voided in London (see manuscript note) since the delivery could not be verified



SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 GB TO ITALY – PRE-WAR CENSORSHIP



Censorship started immediately at the outbreak of the war with Germany (Sep 1st 1939). This postcard mailed on Dec 11th 1939, franked with the correct rate of 1 ½ d bears an octagonal civilian censorship mark (Dayes # GBC 3). It comments favorably on Italy's 'neutrality' ascribing it to Mussolini's wisdom



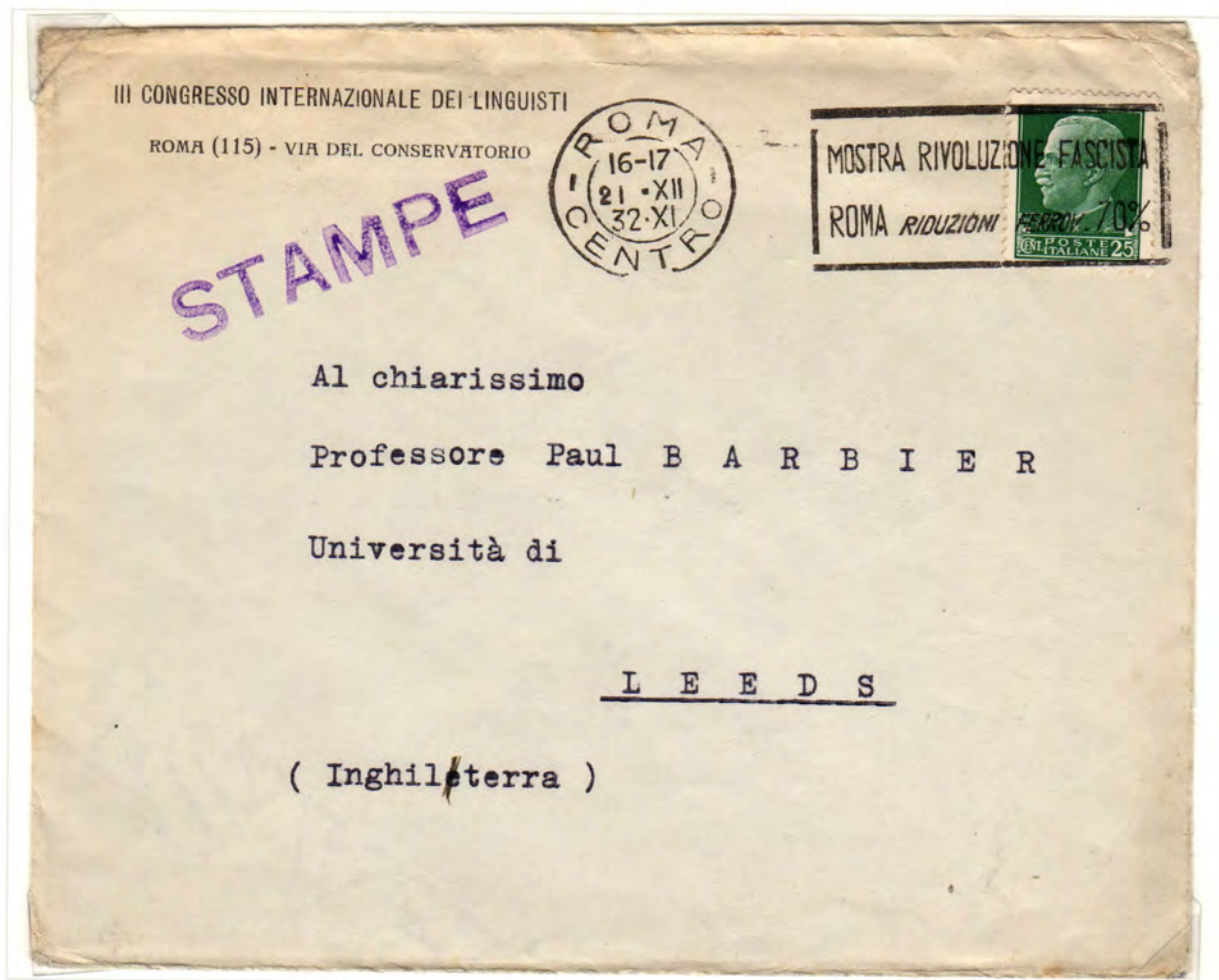
This letter mailed on September 26th 1939 was franked with the correct 2 ½ d rate. The long time it took (11 days) en-route to Milan was likely due to additional procedures related to the censorship, confirmed by the standard censor label

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
ITALY TO GB – PRINTED PAPERS RATE

The printed matter rate was 25 c from 1/1/1926 through 30/3/1945



Business cards could be sent as printed papers but the envelope had to be left unsealed



“STAMPE” is the Italian word for Printed Papers

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – PRINTED PAPERS RATE

The printed papers rate increased by 25 c for each additional 20 grams. Below is a double (50 c) rate



STAMPE

Egregio Signor

H. G. Tiff
60 Alderney St.
London S.W.



iera di ritornare il
 al mittente qualora il
 reperibile.

Fifty cents was also the correct domestic letter rate. The international letter rate was 1.25 Lira, hence the tax of 1 1/2 d on this letter redirected from a domestic Italian address to a GB one

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – POSTCARD RATE

Postcards with just the sender's signature were charged at the printed papers rate of 25 cents



This postcard met the criteria for printed papers rate



This one did not and was therefore taxed 2d

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – POSTCARD RATE

The international postcard rate was 75 cents (below)



The fascist regime, looking for historical credibility, issued a large number of commemorative sets. They had limited validity and once expired the franking was taxed for the deficient postage. Two expired 30c stamps from the set celebrating the 700th anniversary of the birth of St. Anthony.

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY & GB – RATE RECIPROCITY

This page illustrates the reciprocity between the domestic and international postal rates existing at the time in Britain and in Italy



Above is a postcard mailed from Italy to GB with the correct franking of 75 cents. When the card was forwarded to another address in Britain the correct domestic British postcard rate of 1d was added



Here is a postcard mailed from GB to Italy with the correct franking of 1 ½ d. When the card was forwarded to another address in Italy the correct domestic Italian postcard rate of 20 cents was added

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – LETTER RATE

The letter rate for international correspondence was 1.25 Lira since January 1st 1926



After the first 20 grams the rate went up by 75 cents per each additional 20 grams. Underpaid letters were taxed each time they were redirected. This letter from Como to England was taxed 5d each of the 3 times it was redirected, for a total of 15d.

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – EXPRESS RATE

The express fee on international mail had been raised to 2.5 Lira as of Jan 1926. The availability of the L 1.25 express stamp created the possibility of mis-franking.

The franking on the top letter was insufficient for express delivery, hence the stamp "Express Fee Partly Paid/ Charge of 5D to be collected on delivery". The lower cover has sufficient franking and it was therefore stamped "Express Fee Paid".

The top cover shows early evidence (September 14th 1939) of civilian censorship



SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – AIRMAIL RATE

The airmail rate had increased on 1st December 1936, going up to 1 Lira plus the basic rate.

The letter on the right was carried by airmail in 1938 and it bears the correct rate of L 2,25 (1.25 Lira basic rate plus 1 Lira airmail)



This letter, mailed in March 1940, bears an airmail label, but the franking is just 5 cents above the basic rate. On 3/9/1939 the air service to GB had been suspended with the outbreak of the war



SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – REGISTRATION RATE

The registration rate had increased as of 31 March 1935 to 1.50 Lira



On this page are two examples of registered letters, a single port (2.75 L) and a double one (4.0 L). The latter – dated only few weeks before the war – shows signs of British censorship

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – PRE-WAR CENSORSHIP

The attack of Germany on Poland at 4 AM on September 1st 1939 marked the beginning of WWII. Italy at first chose to be 'non belligerent'. Therefore the exchange of mail between Italy and GB did not stop, but it was immediately subject to censorship.

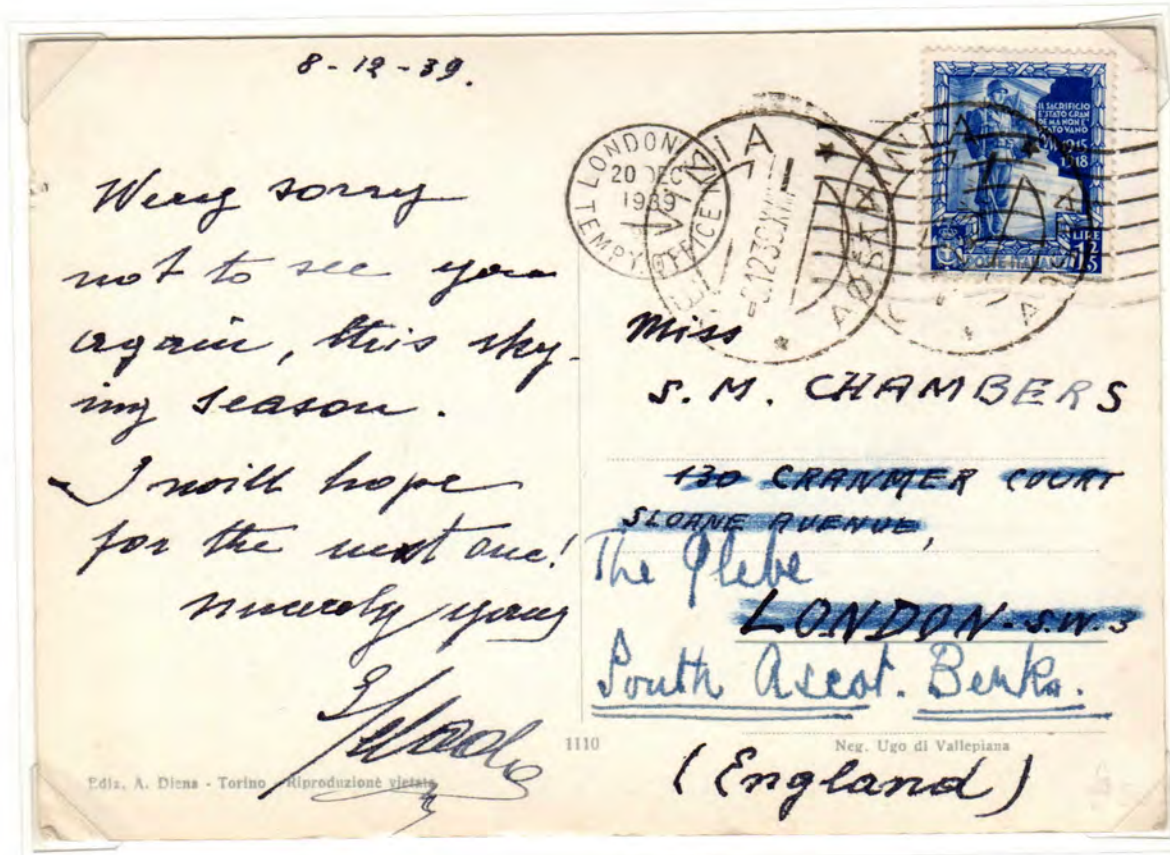
This card - written in Aden on board the Italian liner "Giulio Cesare" - took three weeks to reach Brighton where it was forwarded on September 1st the first day of WWII. This is one of the last pieces of mail not to be subject to censorship



British censorship was established immediately. This postcard shows an early (October 1939) example of a "released by censor" mark

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – PRE-WAR CENSORSHIP

After the outbreak of war and before Italy joined it, the mail from Italy to GB continued to travel through France, and in some cases the censorship was carried out by the French military authority (OUVERT PAR L'AUTORITE' MILITAIRE on a blank label)



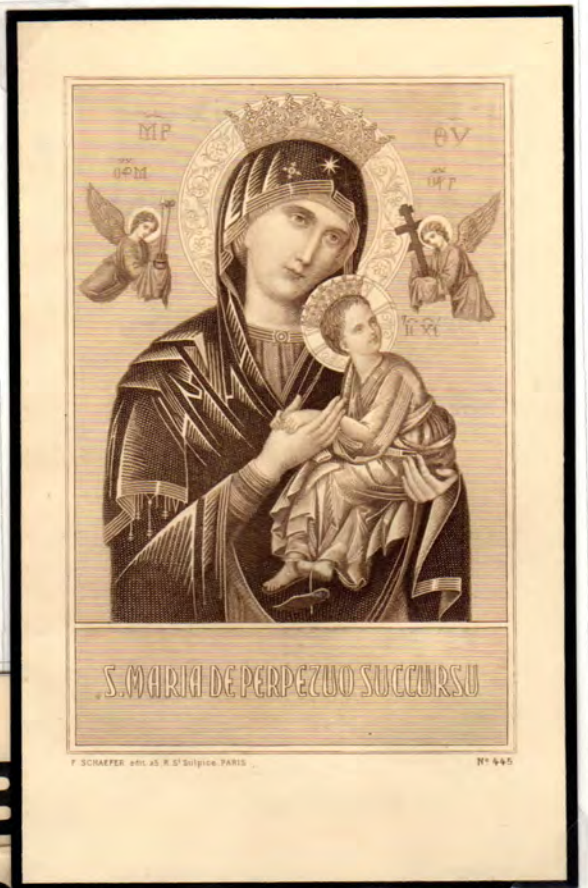
This pictorial postcard was franked with the letter rate (L 1.25) probably due to a sender's mistake. It escaped all censorship, taking eleven days from Cervinia to London

SECTION 2: THE POST BEFORE JUNE 1940
 ITALY TO GB – PRE-WAR CENSORSHIP

P.C. 9.

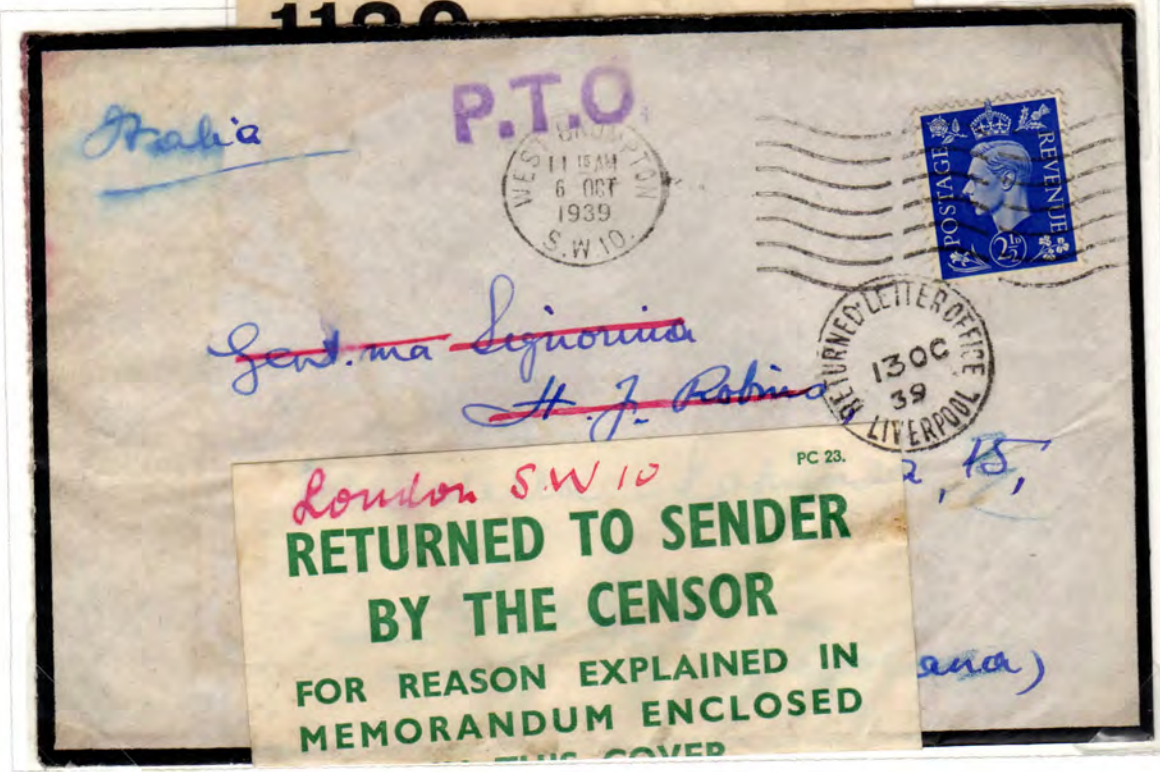
POSTAL CENSORSHIP.

Picture postcards addressed to Foreign Countries are stopped by the Censor. The term "picture postcards" includes cards bearing illustrations of localities or works, card photographs of persons or places, illustrated Christmas cards, illustrated sample cards, and every kind of card which bears a pictorial illustration.



A pink label from Censor #1120 explains why this letter was returned to the sender

**OPENED BY
 CENSOR
 1120**



October 1939: The image of Holy Mary of Perpetual Help on this mourning card qualified as 'picture postcard' and as such it belonged to a category of documents to be stopped by the censor

SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR JUNE 1940 TO SEPTEMBER 1943

In June 1940 the pressure from Germany and the belief that war had practically been won by the Nazis and that it was about to end pushed Italy out of its 'non belligerent' status.

The 50th Anniversary World War II Commemorative Covers

ITALY DECLARES WAR ON FRANCE AND BRITAIN

On June 10, 1940, Italian Premier Benito Mussolini made a passionate speech from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, announcing that Italy would be at war with Britain and France with effect from the 11th. As a prelude to the formal announcement, Rome was the scene of intense activity. Numerous troops were marching in the streets and members of the Fascist party were ordering shopkeepers along the Corso Umberto and other main avenues to close their stores by 5.00 pm.

Awaiting Mussolini's historic message were 100,000 enthusiastic Italians, all crowded into the huge open square – Piazza Venezia. At 6.00 in the evening, Mussolini, dressed in his Blackshirt militia uniform announced that a declaration of war had been given to the Allies' ambassadors. The pronouncement was met by tremendous cheers and he continued to air the grievances of the Italian nation, express support

for Nazi Germany and urge Italy to fight for victory.

Il Duce's emotion-filled words evoked a tremendous response from the excited mass of people. However, the Allies reacted with indignation and scorn. Churchill described Italy's action as one of "cowardice." President Roosevelt commented, "...the hand that held the dagger has stuck it into the back of its neighbours." Italy's entry into the War now meant a spread of the conflict to the Mediterranean, North Africa, Suez and the Balkans.

This Cover was postmarked in Rome on June 11, 1990, the 50th anniversary of the beginning of war between Italy and France and Britain.

The mint stamp encapsulated in this Cover was issued by Italy on April 24, 1965 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Italian resistance movement during World War II

ITALY DECLARES WAR ON FRANCE AND BRITAIN

June 10, 1940 • Rome, Italy

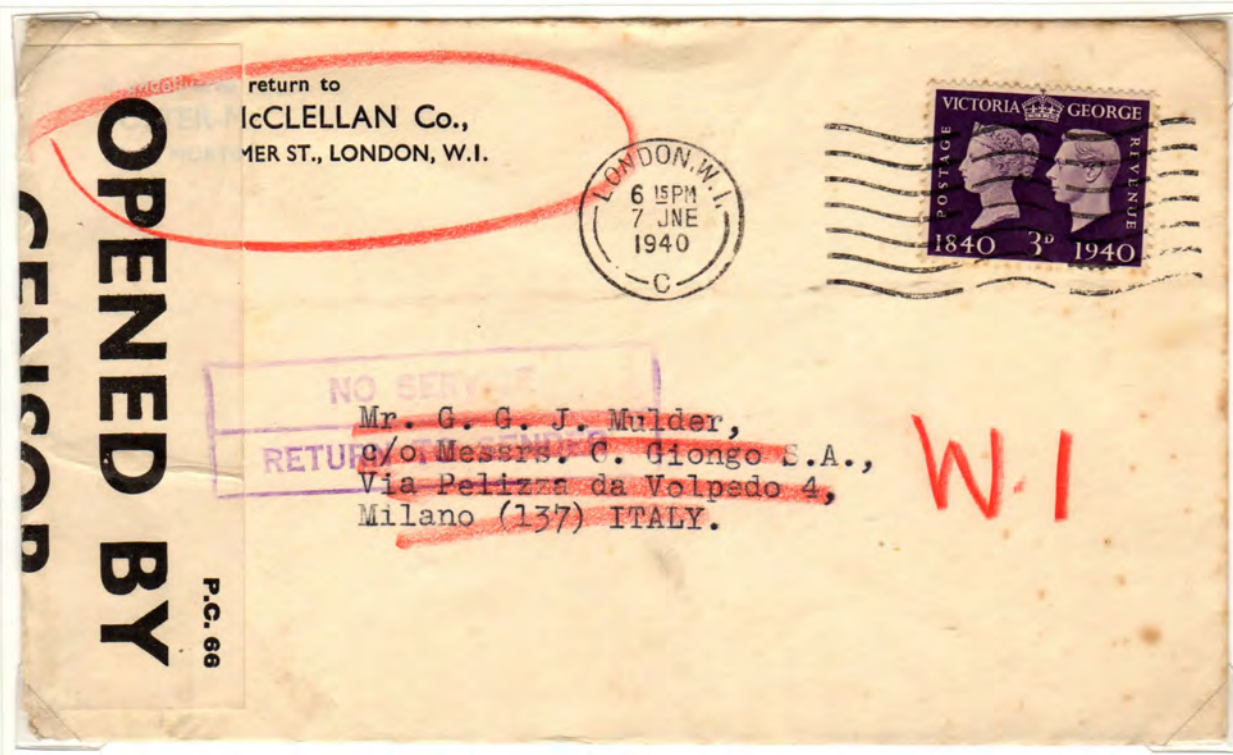


50th Anniversary of World War II
Commemorative Covers

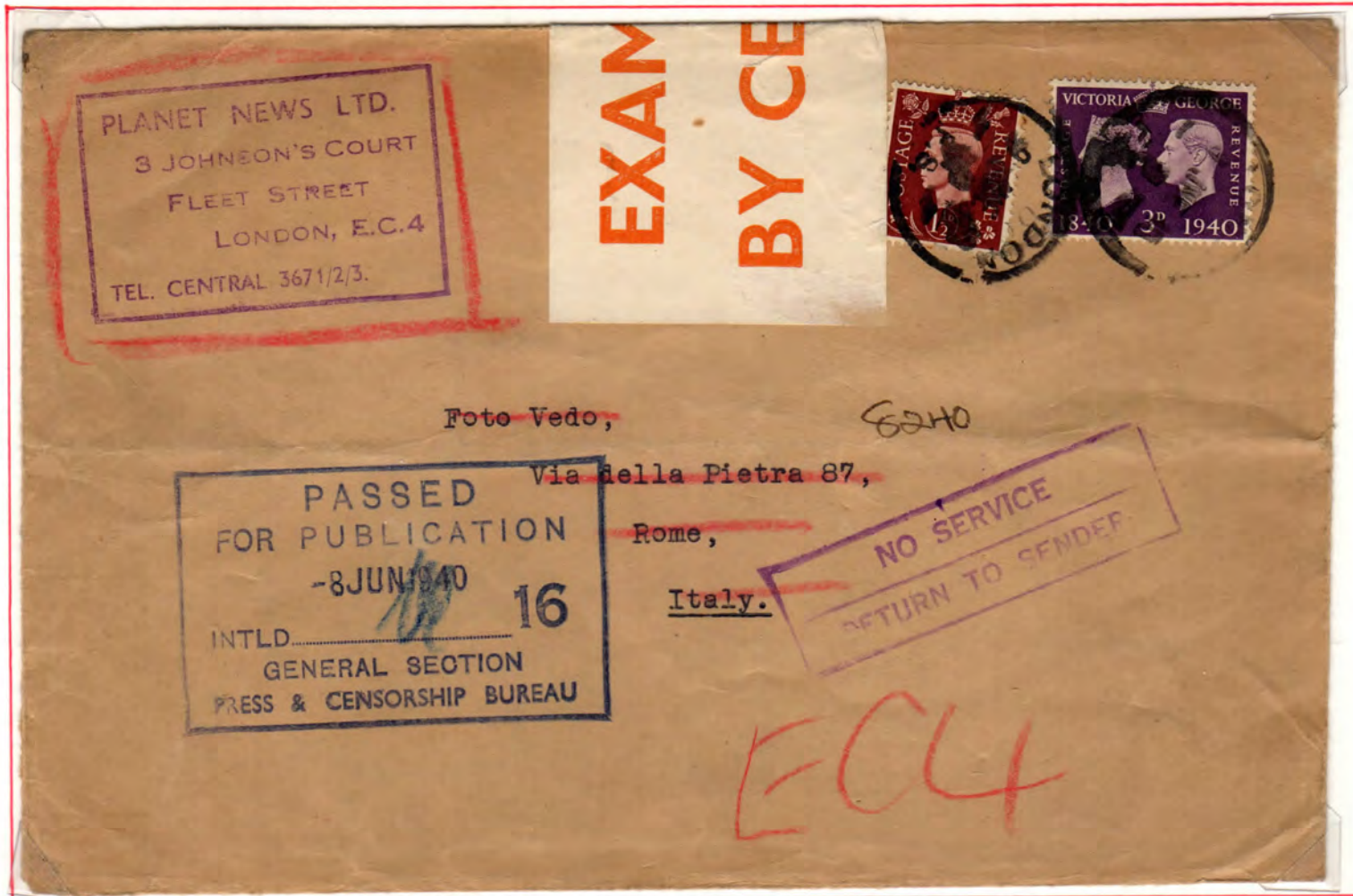
SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR

GB TO ITALY

Service to Italy was suspended upon declaration of war on June 10th and mail posted as early as June 7th (top) or 9th (bottom) was returned to the sender, suggesting a couple of days of possible detention



Note the new rates that had been introduced on May 1st 1940: 3d for single rate and 4 ½ for double rate



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
GB TO ITALY

This cover was mailed on June 9th, the day before the declaration of war. In spite of the ½ d deficient postage (old rate of 2 ½ d) no tax was charged as the cover could not be delivered to the addressee (The British Consulate in Naples). Of note also the fact that in spite of being returned to the sender the mail was still being censored



The franking on this cover is the correct new rate of 3d. It was posted on May 18th 1940, more than one full week after the declaration of war; it is surprising that the sender had not taken that into consideration



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
ITALY TO GB



This letter was posted in Milan on June 6th 1940 and franked with the regular L 1.25 letter rate as the red meter mark attests. It was routed to GB through France, as customary. The cover was caught by the outbreak of the war in France (to which Italy also declared war on June 10th) and it could not be exchanged with the British mail. The cover also bears a French 'Retour a l'envoyeur' (return to sender) and a straight line "INADMIS"(sible). A boxed "Detained in France due to German Occupation" is of unclear origin (the stamp is in English).

SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
ITALY TO GB



Taking advantage of Portugal's neutrality Thomas Cook set up an undercover address in Lisbon (PO Box 506) through which covers from Italy could be forwarded to GB. Both covers shown here have censor labels.

The bottom one mailed on 20/10/40 was received in Lisbon on 26/10 and forwarded to London, where a 2½ d stamp (with a TCS perfin) was applied over the Italian franking on 5/11. Note the oval Thos Cook date stamp "ENEMY MAIL/ 5 NOV 1940"



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
ITALY TO GB

The mail to the 506 PO Box 'undercover' address of Thos Cook' could be forwarded without applying GB stamps like here on the right, where the only stamp is the 1,25 lira from the 1941 war time issue on the German-Italian brotherhood



This regular rate of L 1.25 mailed on 9 April 1942 did not make it to Lisbon. The purple boxed stamp says "Returned to sender because posted directly in the mail boxes" repeated on the back under the censor's label. However the black ink mark says "To sender/ Service Suspended"



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
ITALY TO GB

War time Communications between Italy and British interests used other Portuguese addresses that were not quite as 'undercover' as Thos Cook's. To the right is a 1941 letter from Florence and directed to the British Consul in Lisbon. Note the lack of evidence of any censorship



This postcard, franked with the regular rate of 75 cents was mailed in December 1940 to another Portuguese non Thos Cook address. From there the card was forwarded to London, and it was censored in transit



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
ITALY TO GB



However, an airmail route via Rome-Lisbon for prisoners of war was still active in 1942 (on top) and in July 1944 (below).



SECTION 3: THE POST DURING THE WAR
GB TO ITALY



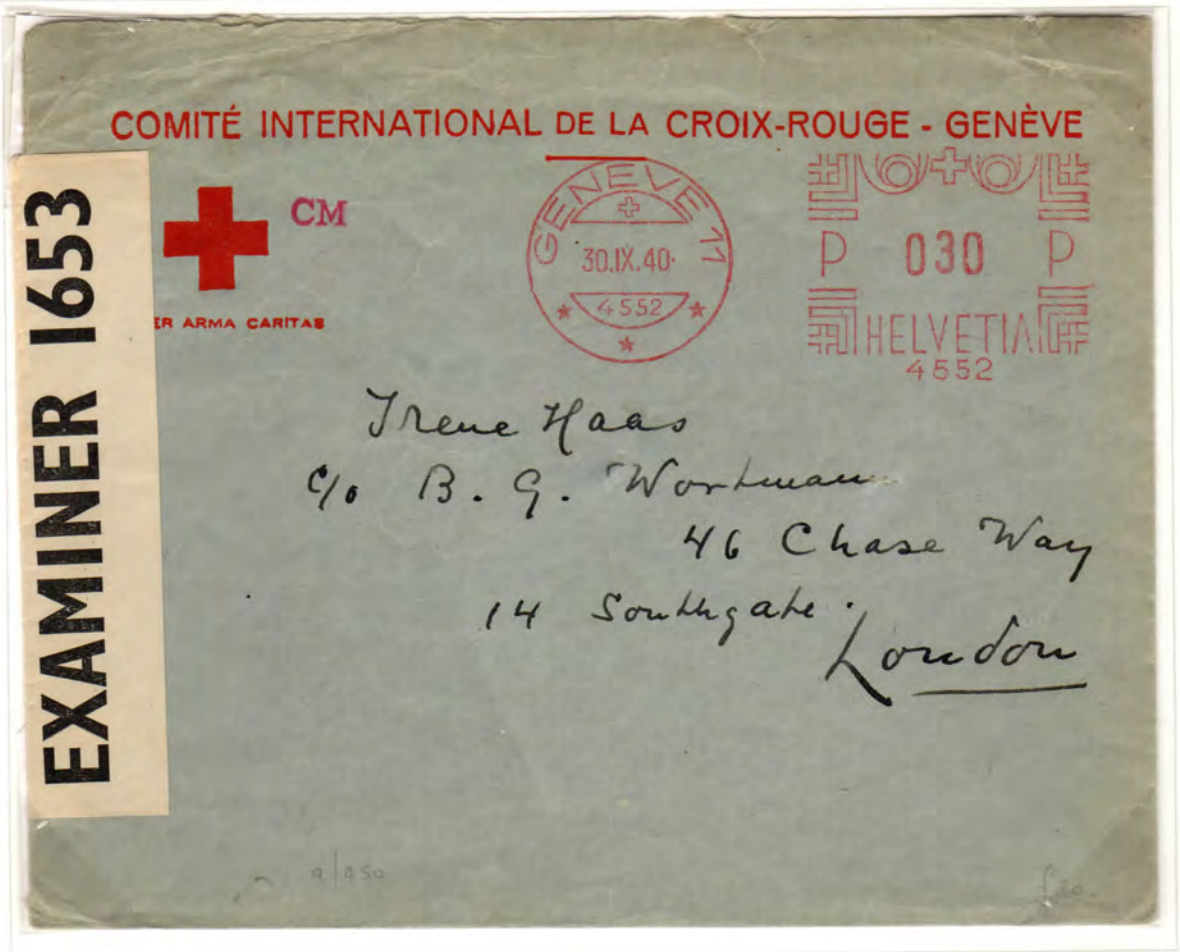
These letters were posted in August and September of 1940. Both were franked with 5d and sent by airmail to Zurich, Switzerland. Both show on both sides a circular "Commissione Provinciale di Censura – Roma" stamp of Italian origin. Switzerland always maintained neutrality and acted as a forwarding country for countries at war (See Section 4). The bottom cover has evidence of transit through Geneva two months after being posted, and it also shows a handwritten endorsement in German ('freundl. Grusse') possibly from a forwarder in Zurich. While both probably traveled through Lisbon, it is not clear whether they ended up in the wrong bag and went through Rome before reaching their destination in Switzerland (more probable), or went through Switzerland to be then forwarded to a final destination in Italy. A couple similar covers are reported; they are all from August/September 1940

**SECTION 4: PRISONER MAIL
BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY**

The Red Cross International Office in Geneva, Switzerland, acted as clearinghouse for the information on the POWs whereabouts. Requests were received from all countries. This one was from a Polish soldier fighting with the British forces in Italy



This is an example of a response from Geneva's International Red Cross Office to an inquiry from GB. It is a standard Geneva Red Cross envelope with a London Censor label. 'CM' identifies Civilian Mail.



SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

This leaflet issued by the British Postal Authority gives clear and precise instructions on how to address the inquiries from GB to the Geneva Red Cross and what were the postage rates

This letter to a British POW in Italy (see hand endorsement "Italie" in French at the top) is addressed following precisely the instructions provided by the British Authority (5d airmail rate)

140

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REPLY

To answer this message:-

a) You may write on the back of the form itself. Place it in an envelope, addressed to

Comité international de la Croix-Rouge
Palais du Conseil Général,
Geneva, Switzerland.

Mark your envelope clearly, on the front, "Red Cross Postal Message Scheme", and post it 2½d stamp)

or

b) Should you wish to keep this form, you may go to a Citizens' Advice Bureau and have your reply copied on to another Red Cross form. This will cost 7d.

The addresses of Bureaux in London are known at the Town Halls; in the country at the post offices.

AIR MAIL

Italie

PRISONERS OF WAR POST.
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST.

7520943. PTE H.W. KNIGHT.
BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR.
% AGENCE CENTRALE,
DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA
CROIX ROUGE
PALAIS DU CONSEIL-GENERAL
GENEVA. SWITZERLAND.

EXAMINER 4009



GUILDFORD
11 AUG
1945
SURREY

O.StB.

PW/144^A/42.

WAR ORGANISATION
of the

BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY and ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM



PRISONERS OF WAR DEPARTMENT.



Chairman:

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR RICHARD HOWARD-VYSE, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

Deputy Chairman:

J. M. EDDY, C.B.E.

Directors:

LT.-COL. M. W. BROWN, O.B.E.

MISS E. M. THORNTON, O.B.E.

General Manager of Packing Centres:
THE LORD REVELSTOKE

TELEPHONE No.:
ABBEY 5841

When replying please
quote reference:-

A/M 82608

ST. JAMES'S PALACE,
LONDON, S.W.1

14th November, 1942.

Pte. S.CATTERALL

Dear Mrs. Catterall,

We are very glad that your your husband's
camp address is now known. Letters and parcels
should now be addressed to him as follows:-

PRISONERS OF WAR POST.
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE.

4467846 Pte. S.Catterall,

British Prisoner of War,
Campo P.G., 60, 2nd. Sector,
Posta Militare, 3200,
Italy.

We hope that our leaflets will give you all
the information you
be glad to help you

SECTION 4a:
PRISONER MAIL
TO GB PRISONERS IN
ITALY

The British Red Cross
was also involved in
the communications
with the POWs. To the
left is a letter to a
Private from the
British Red Cross
Society and Order of
St. John of Jerusalem
dated November 1942
with instructions on
how correspondence
should be addressed

Below is a franchise
airmail letter where
those instructions are
followed precisely



EXAMINER 6664

53

**SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY**

P.S. We very much regret that the mails from a few of the camps in Italy have been for the last few months, irregular and limited in quantity; and in some cases letters have been received by friends of prisoners, but not by their next-of-kin.

The situation is being closely watched by the Government Departments concerned. All possible steps are being and will be taken to obtain improvements in the delivery of mails in both directions.

It is requested that this communication be treated as confidential in order to avoid the possibility of prejudicing any further official negotiations which may be necessary.

P. L. THORNTON
Director.

Here is an image of the back of the message presented on the previous page. It mentions problems with the communications with Italian camps, and the fact that the Government Departments are closely watching and working at improving the delivery of mails in both directions

As a proof to the point above, these letters were mailed around the date of the memo above, and they took between 2 ½ (below) and six months (right) to reach their destination in Italy (5d airmail rate)



SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

The mail to British POWs was routed to the Central Office of the Italian Red Cross. The office ("Ufficio Prigionieri") was located in Rome, and it was in charge of enquiries and connected services ("Ricerche e Servizi Connessi") as the red stamp on the letter on the right shows

The Rome office in Via Puglie would locate the prisoner and forward the correspondence to its addressee (See below)



SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

Three letters to GB POWs using 2 ½ d POW Post stationery forms. While the top one reached its addressee in Italy, the middle and the bottom one had to be forwarded to Germany, where the addressee had been transferred ("Trasferito in Germania il 21/7/43" ms on the bottom item) and bear evidence of British and German censorship. In the case of the bottom letter the addressee was not located and the letter was sent back ("Zuruck/Retour")




The back of the letter at the bottom shows the the hard time this one also had in finding its way back to the sender. Mailed on 21 April, the last cds on it is for 25 November

SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

Reasons for delays or failure in the delivery of the mail were multiple.

While for the letter on the top they were not specified ("Returned from the Continent in Undelivered Mail"), the one on the bottom bears a clear and detailed explanation ("This Letter Formed Part of /Undelivered Mails Which Fell/ Into the Hands of the Allied/ Forces Advancing in Italy/ It is Undeliverable as Addressed/ And it is Therefore Returned to You")

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE



AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

RANK & NAME: Lieut. Colonel M. R. Sinclair.
(SURNAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) British Prisoner of War

PRISONER OF WAR No.:
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

PASSED
P.W. 3255

CAMP NAME & No.: CONCENTRAMENTO - p.g.n. 29.
(INCLUDING SUBSIDIARY NUMBERING OR LETTERING IF ANY—E.G. WORKING CAMP) P.M. 3200.

COUNTRY: ITALIA.


PRISONER IN GERMAN HANDS THE PRISONER OF WAR NO. BY SHOWN. IT MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH HIS BR...

THIS LETTER FORMED PART OF UNDELIVERED MAIL WHICH FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE ALLIED FORCES ADVANCING IN ITALY. IT IS UNDELIVERABLE AS ADDRESSED AND IS THEREFORE RETURNED TO YOU.

RETURNED FROM CONTINENT IN UNDELIVERED MAILS

PRISONER IN GERMAN HANDS THE PRISONER OF WAR NO. BY SHOWN. IT MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH HIS BR...

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE



AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

Camps 73
pm 3200

12 15 PM
22 FEB
1943
MIDDY

RANK & NAME: 4928289 TROOPER L. J. WHITE
(SURNAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) British Prisoner of War

PRISONER OF WAR No.:
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

PASSED
P.W. 7719

CAMP NAME & No.: ~~OSPEDALE MILITARE~~
(INCLUDING SUBSIDIARY NUMBERING OR LETTERING IF ANY—E.G. WORKING CAMP) ~~CASERTA~~

COUNTRY: ~~NAPOLI~~ ITALIA.

SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
TO BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

In some cases when the address of the POW was known to the sender, the correspondence was addressed directly, bypassing the Red Cross. This letter, franked with 5d was mailed in Port Stewart (Co. Derry, Ireland) on 22 October 1941 and arrived at the POW Concentration Camp of Rezzanella on 13 Dec 1941 (5d letter airmail rate, transit time = 51 days)



This card, franked with 3d, was mailed on 16 August 1942 and it was delivered with the intermediation of the Italian Red Cross. It bears on the back an Italian arrivals date stamp for 29 September (transit time of 41 days)



SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
FROM BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

Woyli

Mod. 3

N.

Message



Demande de la Croix-Rouge Italienne
au
COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE
GENÈVE (Suisse)

RICHIEDENTE - DEMANDEUR - ENQUIRER

Cognome - Nom - Name *MASON*

Nome - Prénom - Christian name *ERNEST 5122727*

Indirizzo - Adresse - Address *Ufficio notary prigionieri
Municipio*

Stato - Pays - Country *Montecatini Terme -
(Italia)*

Testo da trasmettere - Message à transmettre - Message
(Non più di 25 parole - solo notizie familiari) — (25 mots au maximum - nouvelles de caractère
strictement personnel et familial) — (Not over 25 words - family news of strictly personal character).

*My Darling Wife,
Hope your well darling
and dont worry going on alright, remember
me to them all at home.
Your Loving Husband
Ernie.*

Data - Date *8.6.44*

DESTINATARIO - DESTINATAIRE - ADDRESSEE

Cognome - Nom - Name *MRS. F. MASON*

Nome - Prénom - Christian name *ETHEL*

Indirizzo - Adresse - Address *19. NEW RD. CODNOR PARK
IRONVILLE. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE*

Stato - Pays - Country *ENGLAND.*

RISPONDERE A TERGO
Si prega di scrivere leggibilmente

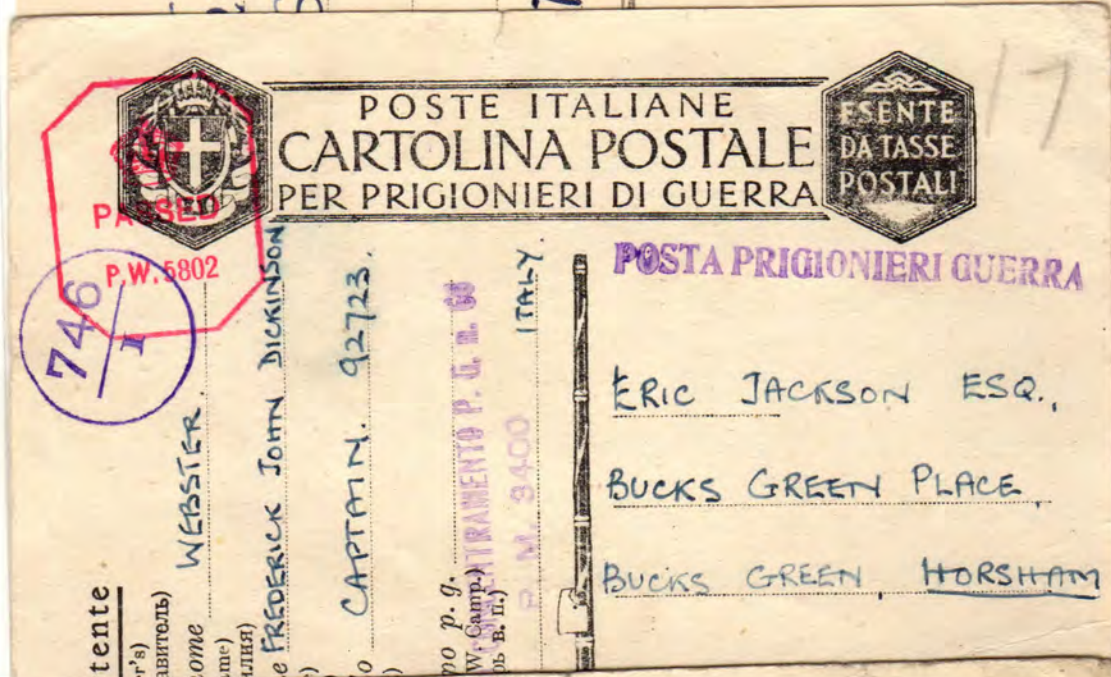
REPONSE AU VERSO
Prière d'écrire lisiblement

REPLY OVERLEAF
Please write clearly

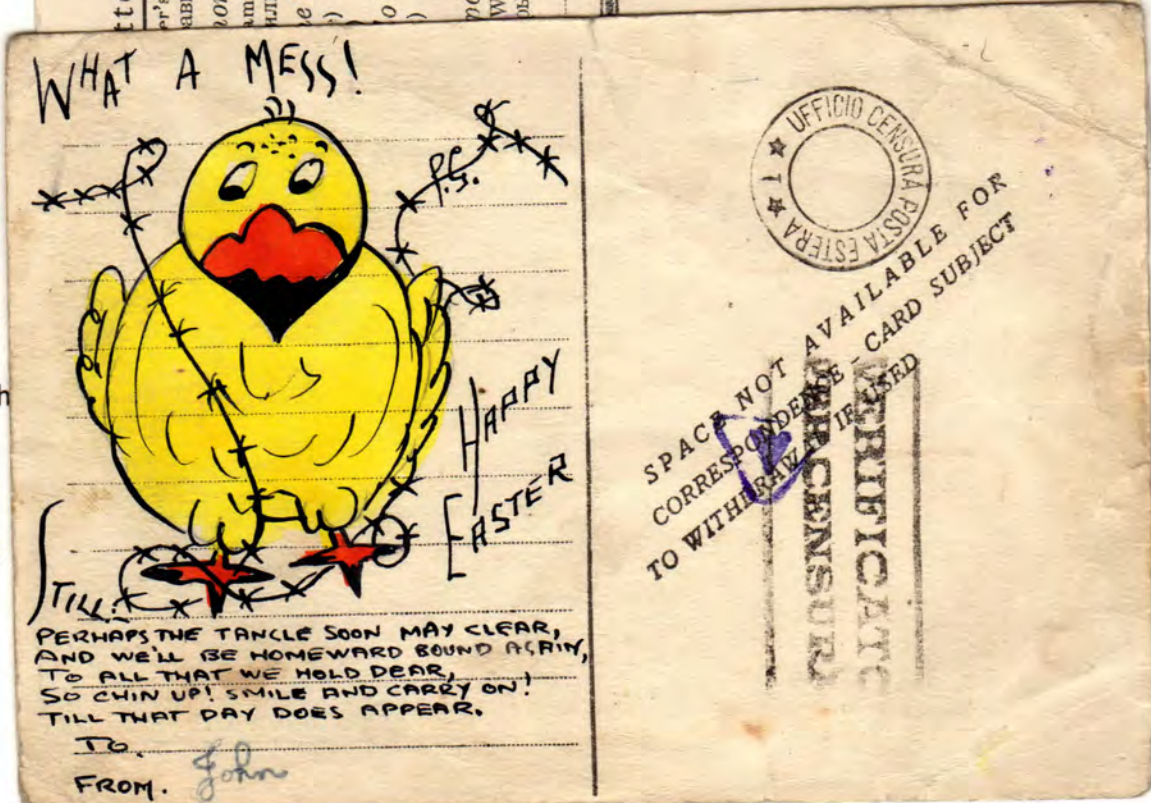
This form carried information from a GB POW in Italy (Montecatini Terme) to his wife. It was forwarded to the International Red Cross in Geneva with the intermediation of the Italian Red Cross

SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
FROM BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

Italy provided POWs specific stationery items that were exempt from postage ("Esente da Tasse Postali"). The stamps "Posta Prigionieri di Guerra" and the ID of the Concentration Camp seen on the card here on the right were not used frequently. The cards were delivered through the Red Cross and could travel by air mail (top card)

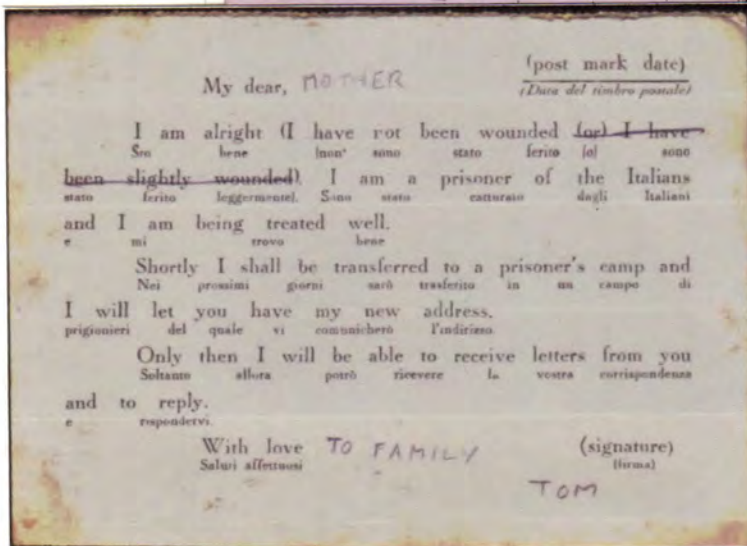


Only a limited section of the forms could be used for the message, which could be in words or – as shown here – also in images



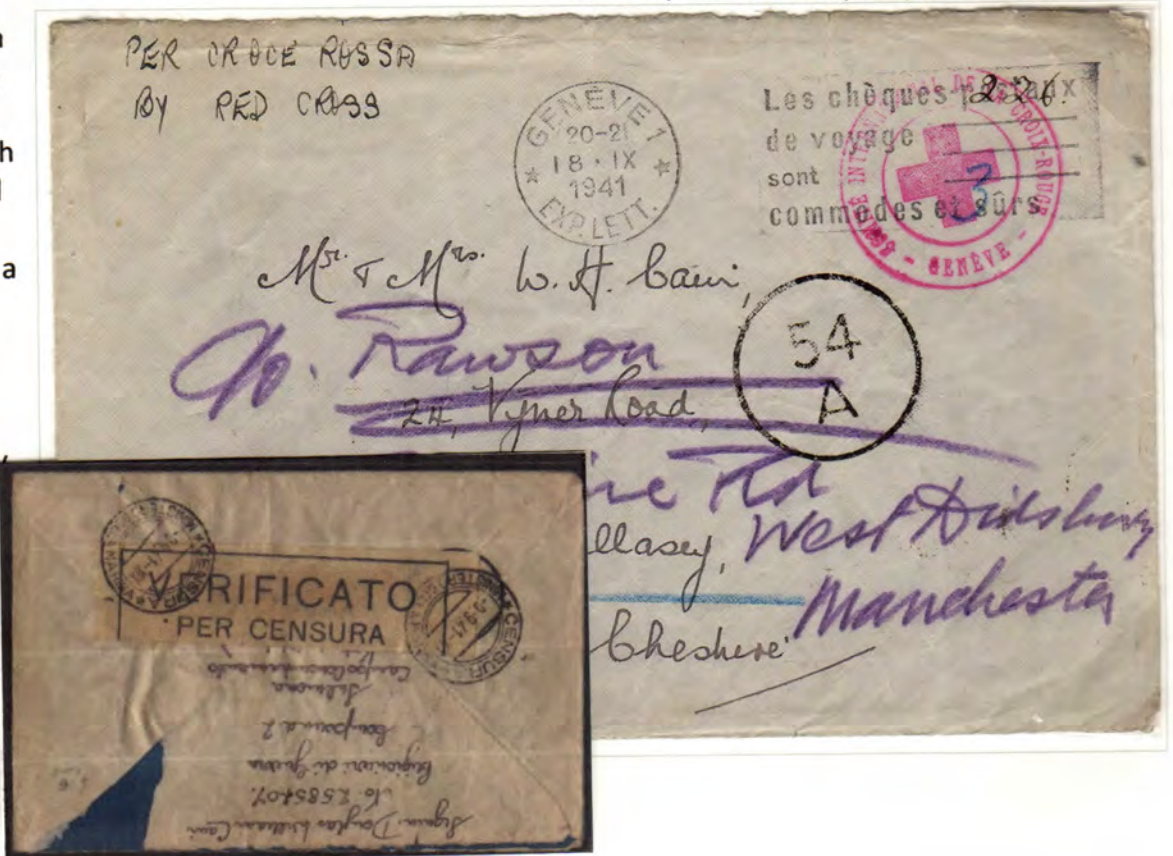
SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
FROM BRITISH PRISONERS IN ITALY

British soldiers, upon being made prisoners, were given a special postcard in franchise announcing their capture. It was routed through the International Red Cross in Geneva



The back of the card carried a preprinted message, which facilitated the censorship process. Notice the standard mail cds for Geneva, Switzerland (2 September 1942)



This letter from a POW in Sulmona was also delivered through the International Red Cross in Geneva. It bears a "Geneve Exp. Lett." cds for 18/IX/1941 on the front and evidence of Navy censorship: 54 A naval censor stamp (front) and "Censura Ministero della Marina" (back)



SECTION 4a: PRISONER MAIL
FRANCHISE LETTER SHEETS – GB AND ITALY

POWs were also provided letter sheets, also in franchise.

This one, from a British POW, was sent sealed therefore opened for censorship and resealed. The writer, an MD, mentions an ample diet of macaroni but also the fact that the mail is very restricted and only rarely can he write letters

 **EXAMINER 7914** 

AI CAPTAIN R. H. JACKSON,
22, DORVILLE ROAD,
LEE, LONDON, SE. 12.
INGHILTERRA.

(5100164) ROMA, 1942-XX - Int. Polig. Stato - G. O.

MITTENTE: *Casato, nome e grado* WEBSTER

SENDER: *Surname, name and rank* FREDERICK JOHN DICKINSON.

EXPÉDITEUR: *Prénom, nom et grade* CAPTAIN 92723.

*eto su questa facciata
rite on this side.
pas sur ce côté.*

Campo CONCENTRAMENTO P. G. n. 60
P. M. 8400 ITALY.

This is an example of the equivalent franchise letter sheet available to Italian POWs in GB. The letter was sent unsealed hence no "Opened by Examiner" label

 *P. O. W. CAMP* **CORRISPONDENZA PRIGIONIERI**

PRISONER/OF WAR POST. *01/C.5*
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE. DI GUERRA DIRETTA A LORO
KRIEGSFANGENNENPOST.

TO
A
AN

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI, ALTA ITALIA
A ROMA FERROVIA" PER LA SIGNORA
CARELLA NINI PONTEVICO
BETTEGNO (CIA) BRESCIA
ITALIA



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
 ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

The International Red Cross in Geneva handled the requests concerning the communication with prisoners in British hands coming from all parts of Italy.

This registered letter mailed in Spilimbergo (Pordenone) on August 27th 1941 took only three days to reach Geneva through Milan (See back). At that time there were 11 trains a day from Italy to Switzerland. Franked with an excess of 5 cents (L 1.25 for the letter + L 1.5 for registration, total L 2.75 vs an actual franking of L 2,8)

October 1944 from the Molfetta (Bari) Italian Red Cross office in free Italy, with British and American censorship (0033=Rome). Notice the PM (Posta Militare) overprint and the new single rate of L 2.5 that was introduced on 1/9/1944



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
 ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

In June 1944 Lucca, was part of RSI, under German control (See German censorship numerals 4172 and 17). RSI overprinted stamps for L 1.75 ie. just the registration fee. The letter postage was not paid, and in spite of the 'A' label (Assicurata) the letter was not Insured. 'A' labels were used because of a shortage of 'R' labels (Handwritten R on the label).

After the Armistice of September 8th, 1943, all correspondence from the RSI (**Repubblica Sociale Italiana**) under German control underwent censorship in Munich, Germany



A 1944 request to the RC in Geneva about an Italian POW in GB listed as sender on the back, while the request was made by a relative in the province of Lucca then part of the RSI. The unfranked letter was taxed correctly (60c), probably never collected because of the RC nature.

SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

The Italian Red Cross played a significant role in the communication with Italian prisoners in British hands.

This instruction leaflet from the RC Central Office in Rome gives directions on how to properly address the correspondence to prisoners, including special instructions and fees for air mail correspondence

This letter is an example of someone precisely following the instructions given above

Mod. 13



CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA

UFFICIO PRIGIONIERI RICERCHE E SERVIZI CONNESSI
(Decreto del DUCE del 23 luglio 1940-XVIII)
ROMA - VIA PUGLIE, 6 - TEL. 41.530 - Telegr.: CROCEROSSA ROMA

NORME PER CORRISPONDERE CON I PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA

Si può corrispondere con i prigionieri di guerra anche senza conoscere l'indirizzo del campo di concentramento, ma bisogna attenersi alle norme seguenti:

Le corrispondenze (lettere o cartoline) possono essere inviate direttamente, *imbucandole in qualsiasi cassetta postale*, e non devono essere affrancate. Le lettere devono essere scritte su carta leggera, incluse in busta pure leggera e non foderata. In cima alla busta si deve scrivere: «**POSTA DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA**» e, sotto tale dicitura, dovranno essere scritti chiaramente il grado, il cognome, il nome, nonché il numero del prigioniero ed il nome del campo di concentramento (se noti) ed il paese dove il militare trovasi internato.

Esempio : «**POSTA DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA**»
al soldato **ROSSI Giovanni** - N. 35789
Prigioniero di Guerra in **EGITTO**,
oppure in **INDIA**, oppure in **PALESTINA**, ecc.

Non conoscendo, invece, nemmeno il paese in cui trovasi il prigioniero,

**PER VIA AEREA
PAR AVION**

Posta dei Prigionieri di Guerra

1 OK

Soldato
CAPALDO CARLO - N° 22754
Italian Prisoner of War Camp N° 7

**TRANSFERRED
TO / CAMP**

G R E A T B R I T A I N

P.C. 90

SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN



CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
COMITATO PROVINCIALE

Firenze, li 31/8 1944
Lungarno Soderini 11 - Telef. 20-270

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
UFFICIO NOTIZIE e RICHIESTE
in Piazza San Provasio - FIRENZE

CERTIFICATO

CONFERMIAMO LA PRIGIONIA DI GUERRA IN INGHILTERRA

DEL MARINAIO

ROSSI RENATO DI N.N. DA FIRENZE

N 66078 A R. M. CAMP 53

COME DA CORRISPONDENZA ORIGINALE DEL PRIGIONIERO
TRASMESSA IN VISIONE A QUESTO UFFICIO E DATATA 2/8/43

SI RILASCIA TALE DICHIARAZIONE PER TUTTI GLI USI
CONSENTITI DALLE LEGGI E REGOLAMENTI IN VIGORE.

LA CAPO UFFICI O

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
UFFICIO NOTIZIE e RICHIESTE
in Piazza San Provasio - FIRENZE

21/9/44
Provasio


55h3

The search for the location of prisoners was mainly carried out by the Central RC Office in Rome, but it could also be handled by Provincial offices

This 1944 document was issued by the Provincial Office of the Red Cross in Florence. It confirms the location of an Italian sailor as a prisoner in Camp 53, in England

SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

Two franchise postcards to the same POW in GB showing that prisoners were moved around camps (Camp 175 – Flaxley Green/Staffs -in September 1945, camp 113- Holm Park/Scotland - in December of the same year)


CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
 POSTA DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA
 PRISONERS OF WAR
 PASSED
 P.W. 1834
 IN FRANCHIGIA

Comitato Prov. di Bergamo

Mittente (Sender) *Righi*
 Cognome *Guerrino*
 Nome
 Indirizzo *Via Molinaccio 2 Cesena (Forli)*

Cognome e Nome (Full name) *BALBI RAOUL*
 Grado (Rank) *Soldato art.*
 Matricola (Prisoner's N.) *118731*
 Campo (Camp) *175*
 Italian Prisoner of War
113
Great Britain
 STAMPERIA 1693-45

Only the top one bears evidence of censorship. They provide information on the time in transit: one month for the bottom one, two months for the top one, probably explained by the fact that the top one had to be redirected from Camp 175 to Camp 113

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
 POSTA DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA
 PRISONERS OF WAR POST
 IN FRANCHIGIA

Comitato Prov. di Bergamo

Mittente (Sender) *Valacchi*
 Cognome *Ester*
 Nome
 Indirizzo *Bergamo Via Mesone 9*

Cognome e Nome (Full name) *BALBI Raoul*
 Grado (Rank)
 Matricola (Prisoner's N.) *118731*
 Campo (Camp) *113*
 Italian Prisoner of War
Great Britain
 STAMPERIA 1693-45

SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

Communication with Italian POWs in GB was in some cases handled by the United States Army Prisoners of War Information Bureau (US PWIB). Standard postage rates applied



Both these letters, mailed in 1943 are franked with the correct 2.75 Lira airmail rate. They bear evidence of 3 censorships (I, US and GB). However only the top one also bears a red "Servizio Prigionieri di Guerra" in red



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

This letter was directed through the US PWIB by airmail at a 2.5 Lira rate. According to the manuscript endorsement, it went through Sofia and Baghdad, but that isn't confirmed by any postal evidence



This letter was directed through the US PWIB, but not by airmail. It is franked 1.5 Lira while the regular rate was 1.25 Lira (or 2.0 L for a double rate). Both letters on this page bear evidence of 3 separate censorships (I, US and GB)



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

On September 8th 1943 Italy signed an armistice with the Allied Forces, and it effectively found itself at war with Germany.

Rome – where this letter was sent from - was under German control at the time that this letter was mailed, and the stamp of the Wehrmacht is a proof of the transition from Italian to German censorship



On the contrary, this letter was sent in March 1945 from a town in a section of the country that had already been liberated, hence it was not subject to German censorship

Both letters are on airmail stationery but neither shows evidence of additional payment



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
THE ROLE OF THE VATICAN MEDIA



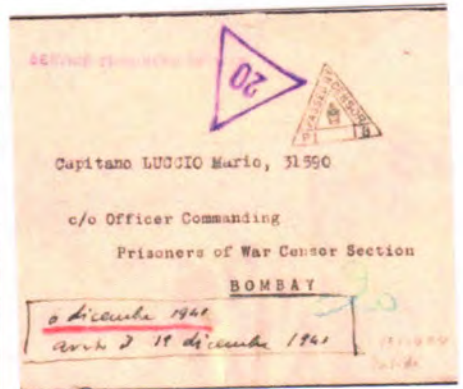
VATICAN
PRISONERS OF WAR INFORMATION BUREAU

APOSTOLIC DELEGATION OF THE EAST INDIES
17. PALACE ROAD—BANGALORE

6 Dicembre '41

Il Delegato Apostolico, Mgr. Leone P. Kierkels, ha il piacere di comunicarvi il messaggio qui appresso, ricevuto recentemente a mezzo della Radio Vaticana ed al quale siete pregato di rispondere, sia direttamente sia per il tramite della Delegazione Apostolica (17 Palace Road, Bangaloro) a mezzo di lettera o cartolina regolarmente permessa.

Noi bene; attendo notizie recenti;
ti è nato quarto nipotino. Titina.



The Vatican assisted both sides with the communication. Through powerful radio stations in different countries the Prisoners of War Information Bureau of the Vatican broadcasted messages received in hard copy (left and above) and entire lists of names of prisoners with the camps of their detention. In the UK another instrument of the Vatican, The Catholic Times followed up by sending the relatives a confirmation card in case they had missed the broadcast (below)

P. O. W.

Cognome

Nome

Grado

No.

Catholic Times

33, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C.2

Telegrams: Catholicus, London.
Telephone: Holborn 3644 5.

The following name was included in a list of British prisoners
of war broadcast to-day by VATICAN RADIO:

Pte Giles Harry, 14208691

Camp *66* P.M. *3400* Italy.



(Back of card at right,
dated 11 May 43)

SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
TO ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

This is an example of an actual express message sent from home to an Italian POW in Britain through the International Red Cross in Geneva.

This type of message was reserved for communicating with prisoners that had not been in contact with their correspondents for over three months

AU COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE - GENEVE
MESSAGE EXPRESS
 Urgent
 Eilt
 Urgente

Reserved for prisoners of war or civilian internees and their families without news for over three months.
 Ausschliesslich für Kriegsgefangene oder Zivilinternierte und deren Familien bestimmt, die seit mehr als drei Monaten ohne direkte Nachrichten sind.
 Riservato ai prigionieri di guerra od agli internati civili e loro famiglie privi di notizie da oltre tre mesi.

SENDER Name and Christian name in full *
 ABSENDER Name und Vorname (voll ausgeschreiben) *
 MITTENTE Cognome e nome (scritto in completo) *

Parentin Anita
 Mieste P. Vico N. 7

RECEIVER Name and Christian name in full *
 EMPFAENGER Name und Vorname (voll ausgeschrieben) *
 DESTINATARIO Cognome e nome (scritto in completo) *

S. ten. med. Parentin Adelaide

Address
 Anschrift
 Indirizzo
 NA/T 37372 P.O.W. 138
 Great Britain

* For prisoners state rank, POW number and Camp.
 * For civilian internees state internee number and Camp.
 * Bei Gefangenen stets Angabe des Grades, der Nummer, sowie des Lagers.
 * Bei Zivilinternierte stets Angabe der Nummer und Name des Lagers.
 * Per i prigionieri indicare il grado, il numero del prigioniero di guerra ed il Campo.
 * Per gli internati civili indicare il numero dell'internato ed il Campo.

Message on back! Mitteilung umseitig! Messaggio a tergo!

The message bears evidence of Italian censorship only, and it has a reply section attached (not shown). It states that postage was free unless sent by airmail

ALL COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE WRITTEN CLEARLY AND ON THE LINES.
 Bitte deutlich und auf der Linie schreiben.
 NACHRICHT
 Ausschliesslich Familiennachrichten
 Bitte deutlich und auf der Linie schreiben.
 MESSAGGIO
 Ogni comunicazione dev'essere soltanto di carattere strettamente familiare.
 Si prega di scrivere chiaramente sulle linee.

4097
 VERIFICATO
 CENSURA

Tutti benissimo ricevuto tua notizie 26.5.45.
 Mobili libri tutta la roba solva. Mamma bellissimo. Ritorno oggi da Pola. L' situazione calma e di fiducia attesa. Michelotti bene amica. Ollina Jeffino ti saluta. Buoni tuoi oscuri. Anita

Date
 Datum
 Data 27-7-45

Signature
 Unterschrift
 Firma Anita Parentin

Postage free unless sent by Air Mail.
 Portofrei - Bei Luftpostbeförderung muss die Luftpostgebühr bezahlt werden.
 Spedizione gratis a meno che sia fatta per posta aerea.

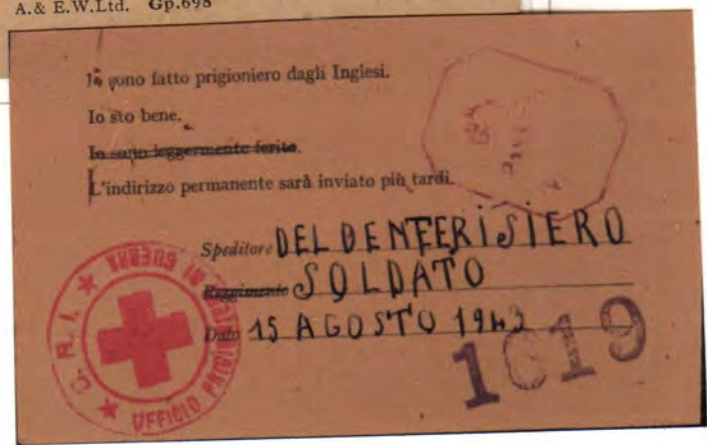
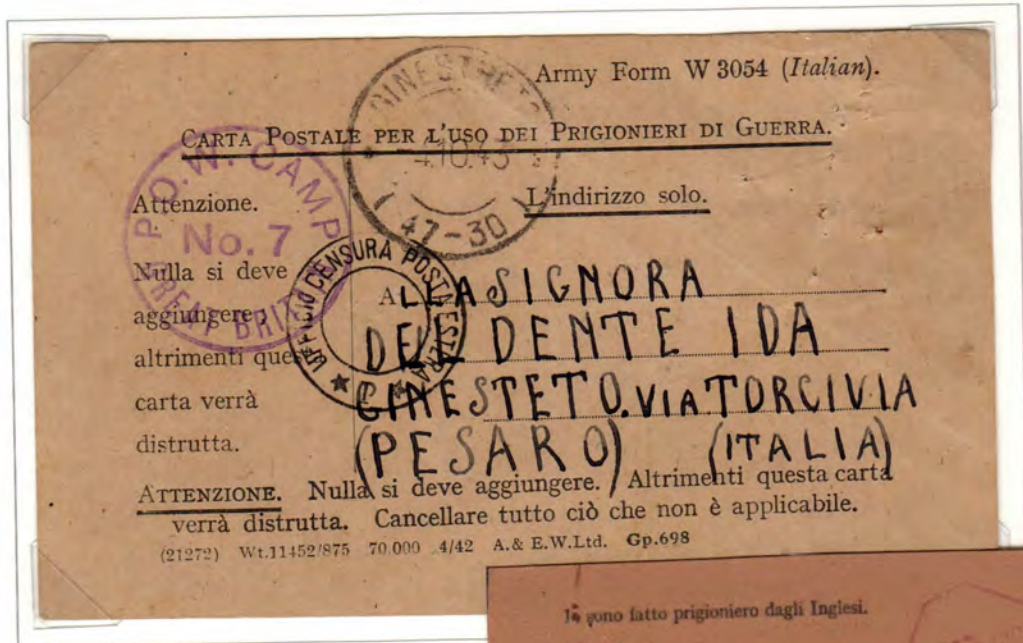


SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
FROM ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

Two different versions of Army form W 3054 with prefilled messages. The prisoner had to erase those that did not apply. In spite of this the mail was still subject to censorship at both ends (Boxed British censor mark and double ring Italian "Ufficio Censura Posta Estera")



Both cards are from 1943 (June and August). They both bear a circular stamp of the Italian Red Cross Office for War Prisoners in Rome, which was responsible for the forwarding. The arrival cds on the bottom one shows a transit time of almost two months (15 August to 4 October 1943)



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
FROM ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN

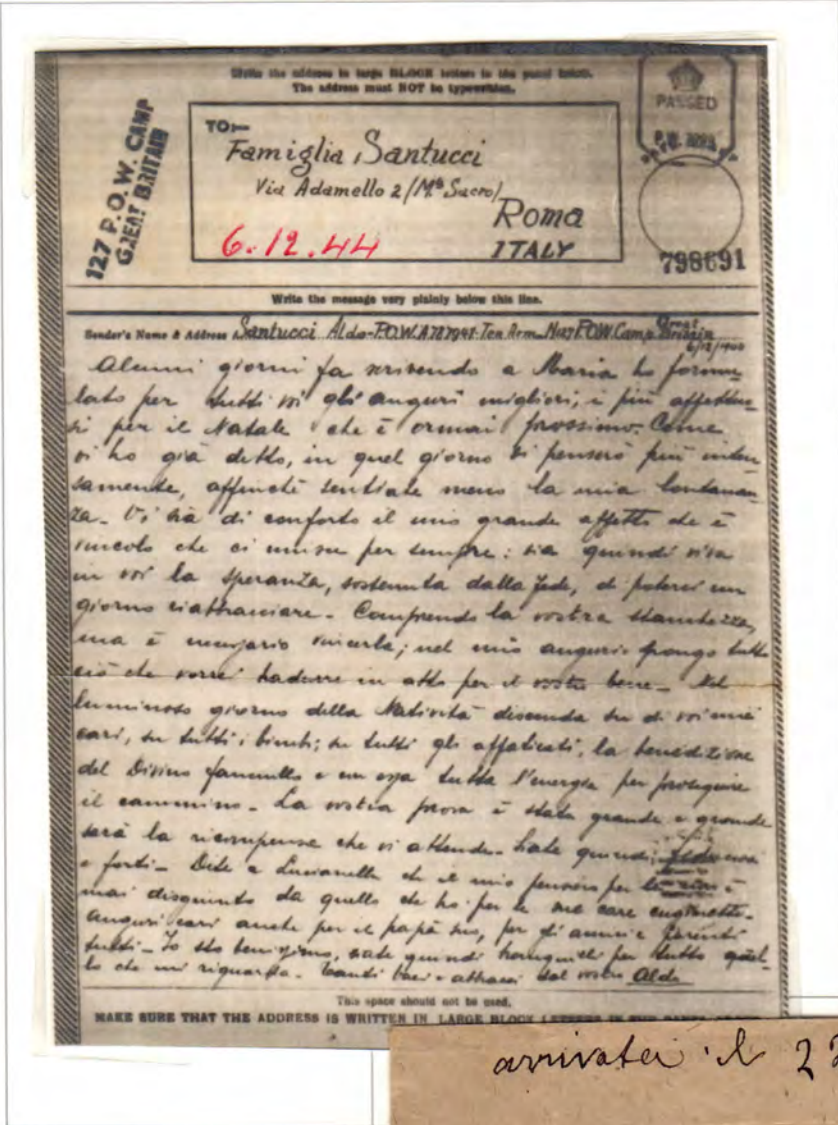
Airmail was not in franchise. While the standard letter rate had increased to 3d as of May 1940, the airmail rate for POW correspondence was still 2½d for cards (at right) and 5d for letters (below). The card at right was mailed after the end of the war. Notice the much shorter transit time (10 days) and the new red wavy lines censor mark suggesting a more cursory procedure and the use of a mechanical cancellation



Italian POWs were organized in Working Companies, which lasted until after the end of the war. This 1946 letter bears a blue circular stamp "Italian Working Company/ Great Britain"



SECTION 4b: PRISONER MAIL
FROM ITALIAN PRISONERS IN BRITAIN



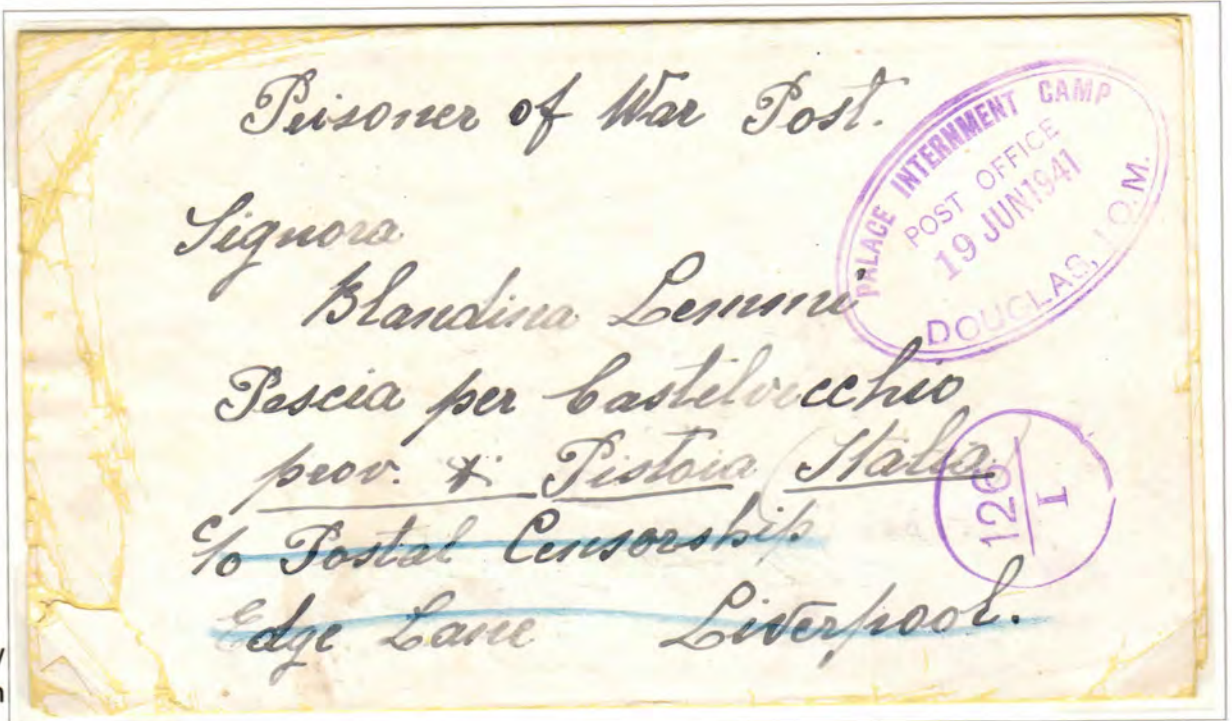
Airgraphs in WW2 were used for the first time (1941) between GB and Egypt. Italy was one of the last countries to which the service was made available (1944). The service - which proved extremely popular - was primarily dedicated to the use of British soldiers, but in some cases it was made available to Italian POW correspondence from GB to Italy. In these cases it contributed to speeding up the delivery process. The airgraph on the left, bearing Christmas wishes, was sent by an Italian POW on December 6th 1944 and it was received - as shown by the manuscript note on the envelope - on December 22nd in Rome. The fact that Italy and GB were not at war with each other anymore certainly helped to speed up the mail.



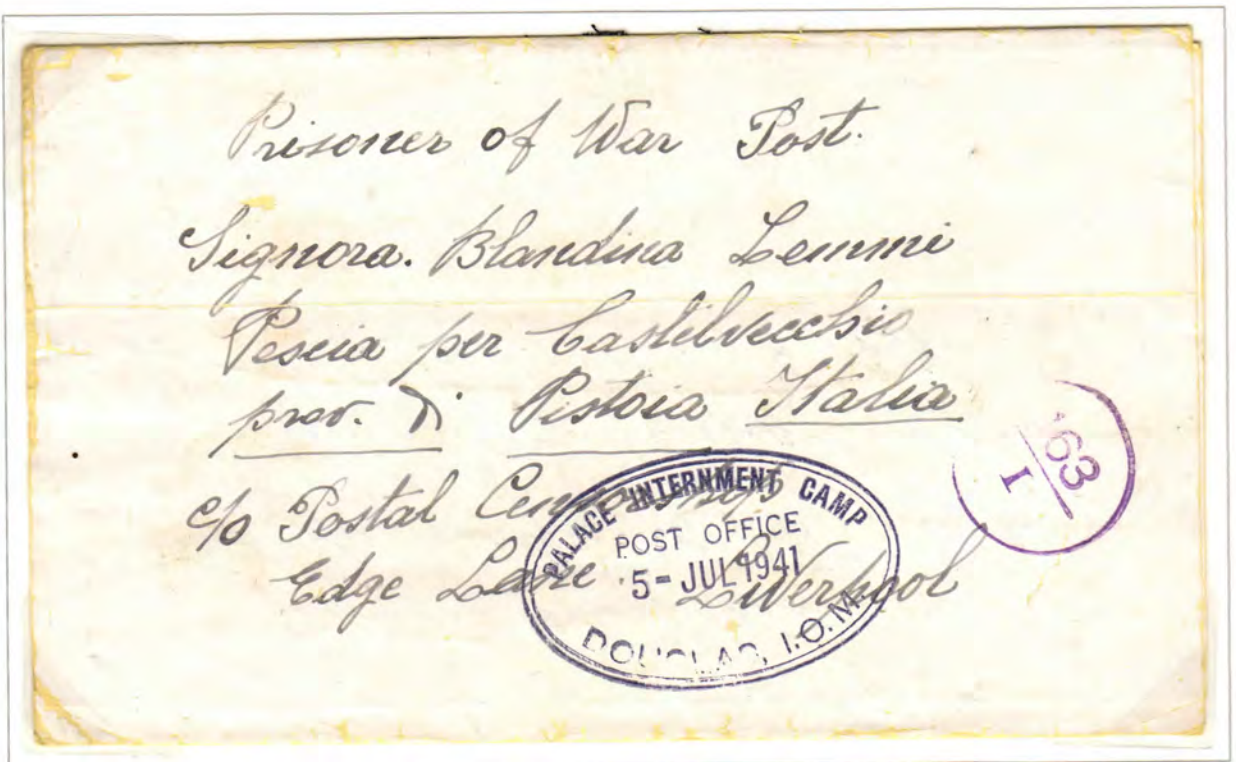
SECTION 4c: CIVILIAN INTERNEES MAIL
BRITISH CAMPS

The day after Italy declared war on GB, 1900 Italians living in Great Britain were arrested and detained in internment camps. Many of them ended up in the camp at Onchan, in the Isle of Man.

All letters from Onchan went through the Edge Lane Postal Censorship facility in Liverpool. Only 2 letters were allowed per week per internee; censorship took 3 weeks. They were sent in franchise



These two letters were mailed from a husband to his wife in Tuscany, and her handwritten note says that they were both received on August 23rd 1941 proving that letters were batched



SECTION 4c: CIVILIAN INTERNEES MAIL
BRITISH CAMPS

Internees were considered and treated as POWs. As such, their correspondence was in franchise. The back shows two censor labels, one British and one Italian, and the arrival cds for 28/10/41, (46 days in transit)



Correspondence to the Internment Camps not identified as POW was treated as normal mail. This letter was posted in Sicily in November 1944 to an Isle of Man address, most likely a war internee and it took more than two months to reach its original destination before being forwarded to Liverpool. Notice that the standard letter rate had doubled (as of September 1st, 1944) to 2.5 Lira



SECTION 4c: CIVILIAN INTERNEES MAIL
BRITISH CAMPS



This letter was mailed in Cristobal (Panama Canal Zone) but was carried on the MN Orazio, one of the liners of the Navigazione Generale Italiana on the South American routes. It therefore was franked with Italian stamps and at the correct L 1.25 rate for international correspondence. It is addressed to one of the ~ 4000 internees of the Kitchener camp, a former army camp near Sandwich set up by the German Jewry. The scope of the camp was to house single Jewish men who had been released from the concentration camps and expelled from Germany and Austria as part of the 1939 November Pogrom that followed the infamous Kristallnacht, just ten days before this letter was mailed. The proviso in fact was that these men would leave Germany immediately, without their families. Of interest is the lack of censorship in spite of the "Italian" nature of this correspondence.

**SECTION 4c: CIVILIAN INTERNEES MAIL
ITALIAN CAMPS**

An internment camp for Jews and for potential enemies – including a few Englishmen – was set up in the town of Campagna, near Salerno. The camp was small, with about two hundred internees. It was active from 16 June 1940 to 8 September 1943 (Armistice day), when the locals freed the internees to avoid their capture by the Germans.

The top letter, dated 16 July 1942, is on a 2 ½ d stationery form for correspondence to POWs and it bears a red British censor mark but no label, as it was mailed unsealed



The bottom one, dated 24 March 1943, identifies the item as "Prisoner of War Post/ Internato Civile di Guerra". Franked with a 5 d airmail rate, it was posted sealed and thus it was opened by the censor

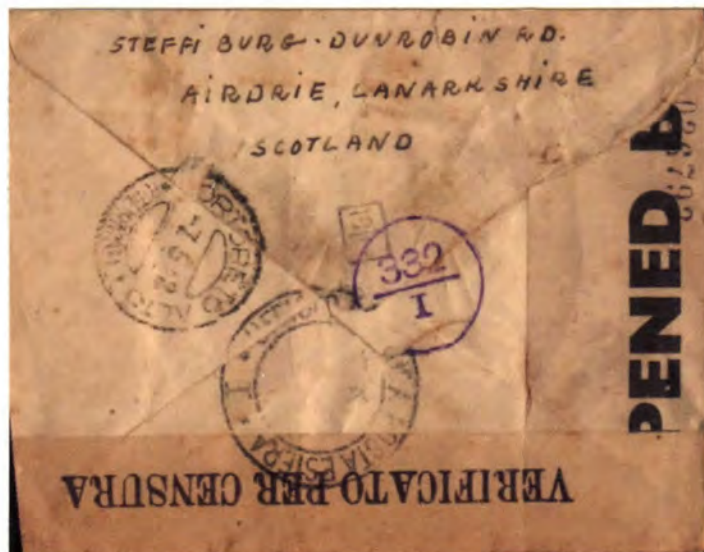


SECTION 4c: CIVILIAN INTERNEES MAIL
ITALIAN CAMPS

The internment camp of Tortoreto was active from July 1940 through September 1943. It was even smaller than the one in Campagna, with a total of only 110 internees.



This letter was mailed in Airdrie (Lanarkshire, Scotland) at 3:45 PM on 27 March 1942 and it was received in Tortoreto on 7 May, being 'only' 40 days in transit. An airmail label was applied and canceled mechanically which then either fell off in transit or was removed – possibly during the complex censorship operations. A 5d stamp paid the correct airmail rate (Notice the matching day and time of the manual and mechanical cancellations)



SECTION 5: OCCUPIED BRITAIN & EMERGENCY MAIL

Channel Islands were the only British territory ever occupied by the Axis



In June 1940 Germany occupied the Channel Islands easily as the British had decided not to fight. German forces controlled the islands until 1944. In 1943 Jersey issued a set of stamps which was used for internal mail, or occasionally on international mail (top two covers). Although Italy did not participate in the military occupation a few covers are known addressed to an Italian worker in the hotel industry in Jersey, and they all refer to "Jersey Kanal Inseln – Territorio Occupato Tedesco" (bottom)

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

The occupation forces in Sicily issued an emergency series (5 C to 10 L) used mostly for domestic use



*A. P. Ecc. Winston Churchill.
Downing Street 10*

There was confusion on current rates. Middle: an underpaid letter @ 60 c but delivered and forwarded with no tax. Bottom: to Sir Winston Churchill franked with the Italian domestic rate of 50 c, also not taxed.

Londra

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL



The correct rate for the UK was L 1.25 for single weight (top two covers) and L 2.50 for double (right). Most of the few existing foreign letters are addressed to the US

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

The top letter was mailed from **Naples** to GB shortly after the city freed itself from the German forces at the end of September 1943. The 3d would have sufficed for the military mail rate but the cover was sent through regular mail; It is not clear why it bears two 5 cent Italian stamps



Rome was freed by the allied forces on June 4th 1944. The chaotic months that ensued are reflected in some unusual occurrences in the postal system. The letter here on the left was mailed from Rome within the city through regular mail. A KGVI 3d stamp was most unusually accepted for local postage

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL



On this airgraph the writer provides extensive information on the emergency mail in the city of Naples shortly after its liberation. It mentions the overprinting of three values of the Italian ordinary stamps, and it provides details of the load that the mail represented in the city. It also mentions a plan for extending the service to the territory around the city. Above is a letter franked with two copies of the mentioned overprinted 20 cent stamp, a copy of the un-overprinted 5 cents stamp and one copy of the 5 cent parcel stamp making up the correct domestic rate (50 c)

MESSRS. FRANCIS J. FIELD
PHILATELIC DEALERS
SUTTON COLDFIELD
N^o BIRMINGHAM - ENGLAND

6898

Write the message very plainly below this line

Sender's Address 1598815 4/04M STOJEL A.J. Date 2-1-44
C/R33/45 LAA REGT., RA - C.M.F.

SIRS
Extract from Times newspaper - "Union Jack" dtd
22-12-43 entitled "POSTAL SERVICE IN NAPLES" -

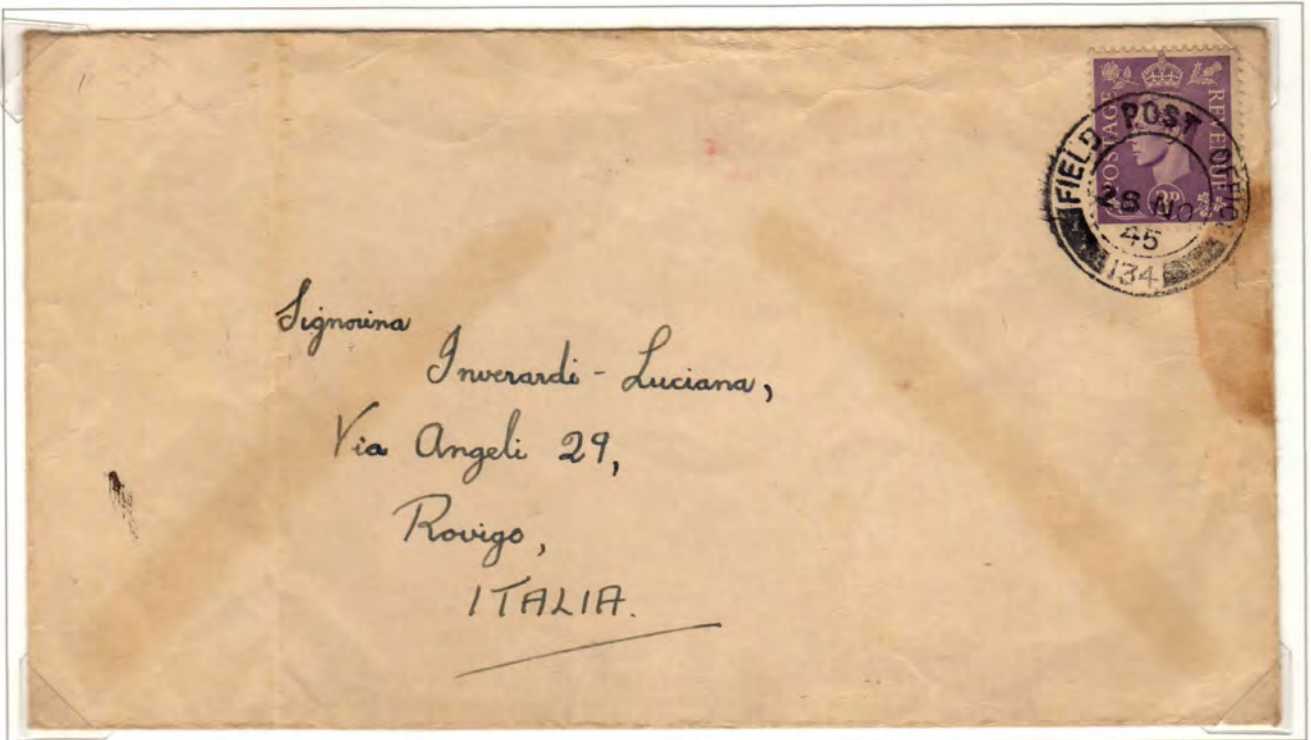
- Until present plans are further developed, the civilian mail service in NAPLES is confined to the city limits. Later, deliveries will be extended to the rural areas and other types of mail will be acceptable.
- 3 trucks are available to pick up the postcards and envelopes throughout the city, and a force of 300 carriers deliver the mail. All mail is censured by military authorities before delivery.
- The civilian office force includes 1900 persons and is directed for A.M.G. by Major H. Mead Rogers.
- It has handled approximately 50,000 pieces of mail since the Naples Post Office was re-opened under A.M.G. supervision on Dec. 10th.
- The supply of stamps was insufficient for distribution by the Naples and Salerno Post Offices, which are the only two now operating on the mainland, and Italian stamps were used after being overprinted with a special ink to make imitation impossible. The overprinting reads "Governo Militare Alleato" (Allied Military Govt), and this prevents a black market of Italian stamps which were stolen from the Post Office when the Germans evacuated Naples.
- Stamps now in use are the red 20 cent, with a portrait of Caesar; the blue 35 cent, with an allegorical figure of Italia; and the purple 50 cent, portraying King Victor Emmanuel.

Sincerely,
af Stojel

THIS SPACE SHOULD NOT BE USED

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

Communication between British soldiers and Italian civilians was possible through local mail or through the British Field Post Offices. At the top is an example of a letter on a British Official Mail stationery from Bari to a local address mailed just a few weeks after the liberation of the city and using as an emergency franking a parcel post stamp (correct rate of 50 C). At the bottom is a letter to an Italian address sent using the regular military mail service (FPO 134 was stationed in Trieste) using the same 3d franking that would have been sufficient to send a letter to GB



SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

When the communication occurred using the British Military Mail, in spite of the fact that the postage had been paid ("Postage Paid" wavy "Victory" stamp on the bottom letter) or that the writer was claiming the rights of Active Service (both letters) the Italian mail authority charged a tax (5 L and 2 L respectively).



SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1944-1945

The PM overprint stands for Posta Militare; it was used on stamps distributed to the military but then admitted to civilian use until May 1945



On 1/9/1944 the rates for international mail were revised; the postcard rate was unchanged (L 1.5 - top),

the single rate increased to L 2.5 (two bottom). Of notice, the bottom item is a US V-Mail form available to the military. It was mailed in Rome by a civilian just a month after the liberation of the city. It was returned to sender and it bears the labels of two different GB censors - 9937 and 3189

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

New rates were introduced on Sep. 1st, 1944. International rates were 2.5 L for a single weight, 3 L for registration (middle) and 4 L for the double rate (top)



Letters to British soldiers stationed in Italy were charged at the new domestic military rate of 50 C (left)

SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL

One possibility for the communication between British soldiers and Italians (usually girlfriends) was the Italian Mail service. On this page are examples of communication to and from an Italian lady and a British soldier showing the new correct rate of 1 Lira (reduced from the new 2 Lira rate as the mail was within the same district – in this case Naples). Note on the top item the ms “Certified Official Sanction Obtained” with signature and Chief Field Censor stamp for the Central Mediterranean Force (CMF)



SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL



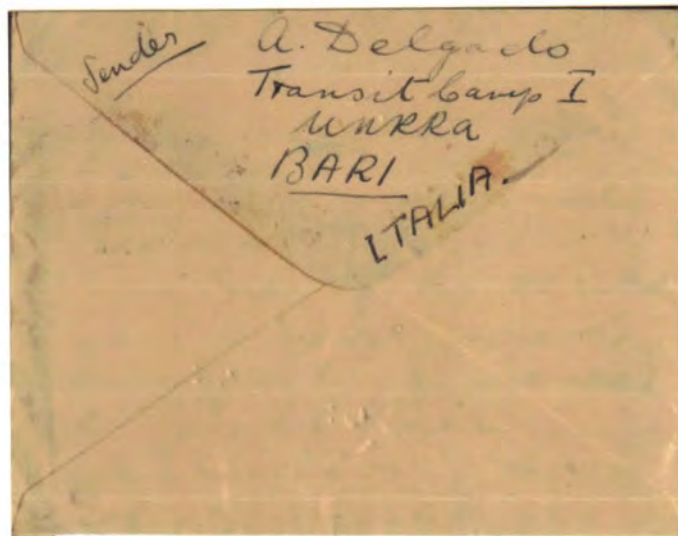
Great Britain was among the funders of the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)**, which played a major role in helping displaced persons return to their homes in 1945-46. This letter from the UNRRA Transit Camp # 1 (Bari) shows that private mail could be handled by the British FPOs (correct 3d rate).



SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL



Great Britain was among the funders of the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)**, which played a major role in helping displaced persons return to their homes in 1945-46. This letter from the UNRRA Transit Camp # 1 (Bari) shows that private mail could be handled by the British FPOs (correct 3d rate).



SECTION 5:
OCCUPIED ITALY & EMERGENCY MAIL



This card proves the resilience of the philatelic spirit in the face of war. The writer explains how he obtained this German card in a captured home. The writer's request to the censor to preserve the stamp (at the bottom on the back) was granted and the franking was accepted. The result is a 6 pf German card with the image of the German Chancellor, mailed in Italy by a British soldier, canceled by a British FPO, censored by a British censor and regularly traveled to GB. Could the fact that the color is the same as the KGVI 3d stamp have played a role?

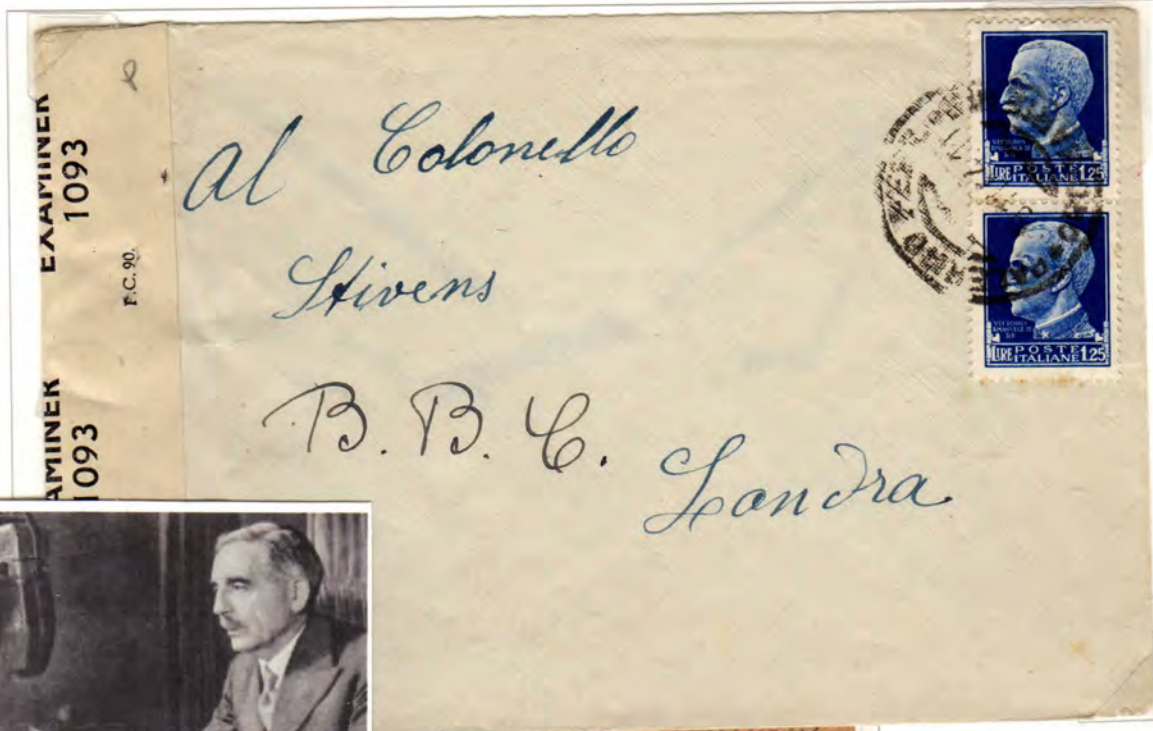
has a German postmark and I will send it on later with a few Italian stamps I got from letters in the same house. I don't know whether they will be of any value to you or not. I was sorry to hear you have been so ill recently. Give my regards to Mrs Selby and the children. I am fine and hope to be able to visit you sometime soon.

Yours
Frank

Cen 207: Please don't destroy the stamp

SECTION 5:
MASS COMMUNICATION

During the war **Radio London** broadcasted to Italy special encrypted messages to the resistance fighters, but also news and commentaries from around the world. This was done with the typically British journalistic style of BBC, so very different from the fascist rhetoric. BBC's Italian Service was marked by the charismatic personality of Colonel Harold Stevens - known in Italy as "Colonnello Buonasera".



BBC's Colonel Harold Stevens
aka "Colonnello Buonasera"

He was a British military officer who had lived in Rome, spoke perfect Italian and through his calm and reasonable comments conveyed a sense of serenity and hope in the future. In spite of the fact that listening to Radio Londra was a crime in fascist Italy, Colonel Stevens had a large audience, and he even received mail from them once the country was liberated, as shown by this 1944 letter to him from Palermo (Sicily), bearing no sign of Italian censorship.



A very different type of communication was direct messaging to the population through leaflets like this one, dropped by the Royal Air Force on military targets before air raids. They encouraged locals to evacuate the premises before the announced 'tempest of bombs'.

SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY

The first British troops set foot on Italian soil on July 10th, 1943. They were the soldiers of the 8th Army under the command of General Montgomery as part of "Operation HUSKY". This was the code name of the Allied invasion of Sicily and it was carried out with the support of a naval contingent that included HMS Ship "Guardian". The letter below was mailed from GB to the ship's paymaster c/o the GPO in London. This explains the 1/3 franking, ie. the rate for airmail correspondence to HMS ships regardless of their location (Sicily in this case). Notice the short time in transit.



HMS Guardian – Operation HUSKY



SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY

These two 'early' (Aug and Sep '43) airmail letters are also from Operation HUSKY (Invasion of Sicily). They show that stamps from other countries of the British Empire



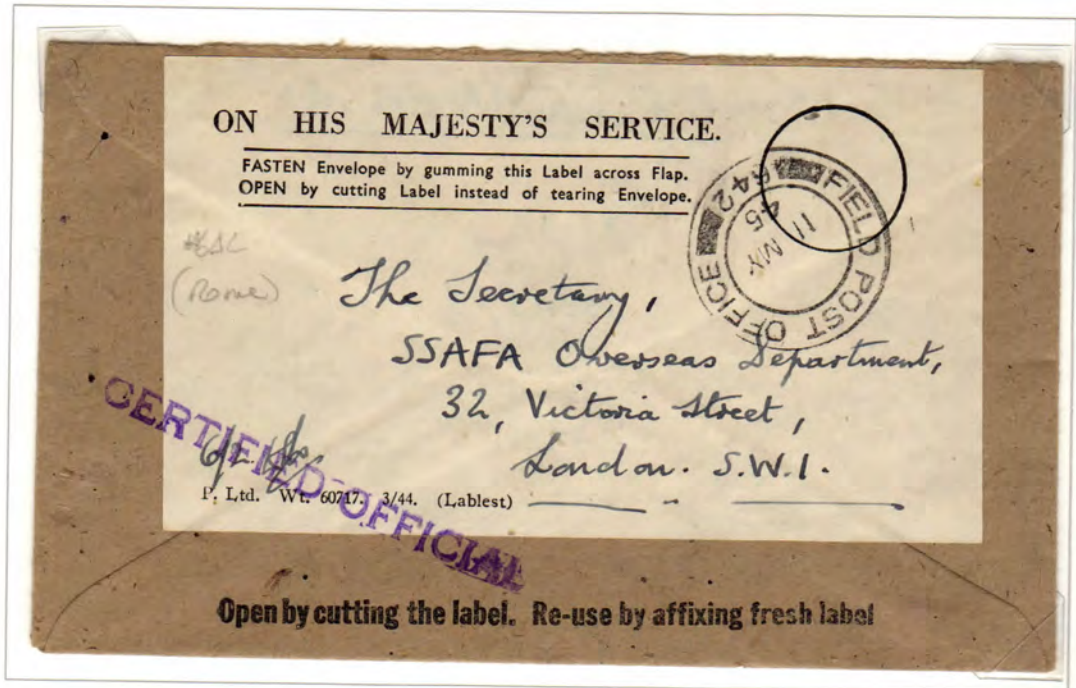
(New Zealand and South Africa in this case) were also accepted as payment for the 3d airmail rate to GB. (FPO # 292 - top - was operating in Syracuse ; # FPO - 722 - bottom - in Catania)



SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY



All official mail was in franchise. Both FPOs 36 and 642 were based in Rome.



SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY

Air letter forms were widely available to the forces



Airmail was not in franchise, the rate being 3d



SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY

An example of a "Lightweight Air Letter" which was charged at 6d as the stationery shows



This letter is in franchise but not because it is from a soldier waiting to board a Hospital ship to go home. Rather, in 1945 a free forces airmail was introduced, eliminating the need to frank airmails home with 3d



SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY

Presented on this page are another two less common rates. "Forces Letters" were charged a lower rate of 1 ½ d (right). This rate was introduced in February 1945. Below is an early (1/1944) stationery card from FPO 629 (Nola, Italy) that was charged 2d. This rate in theory was applicable only to mail posted in the UK.



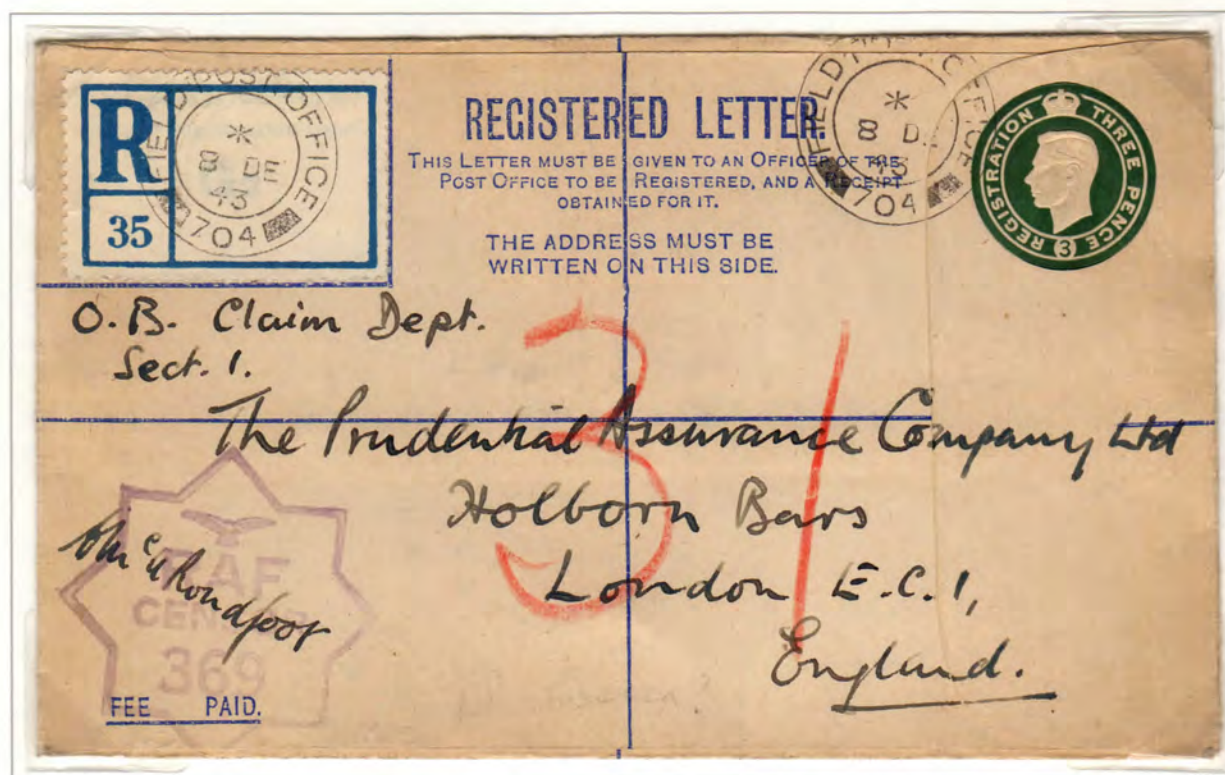
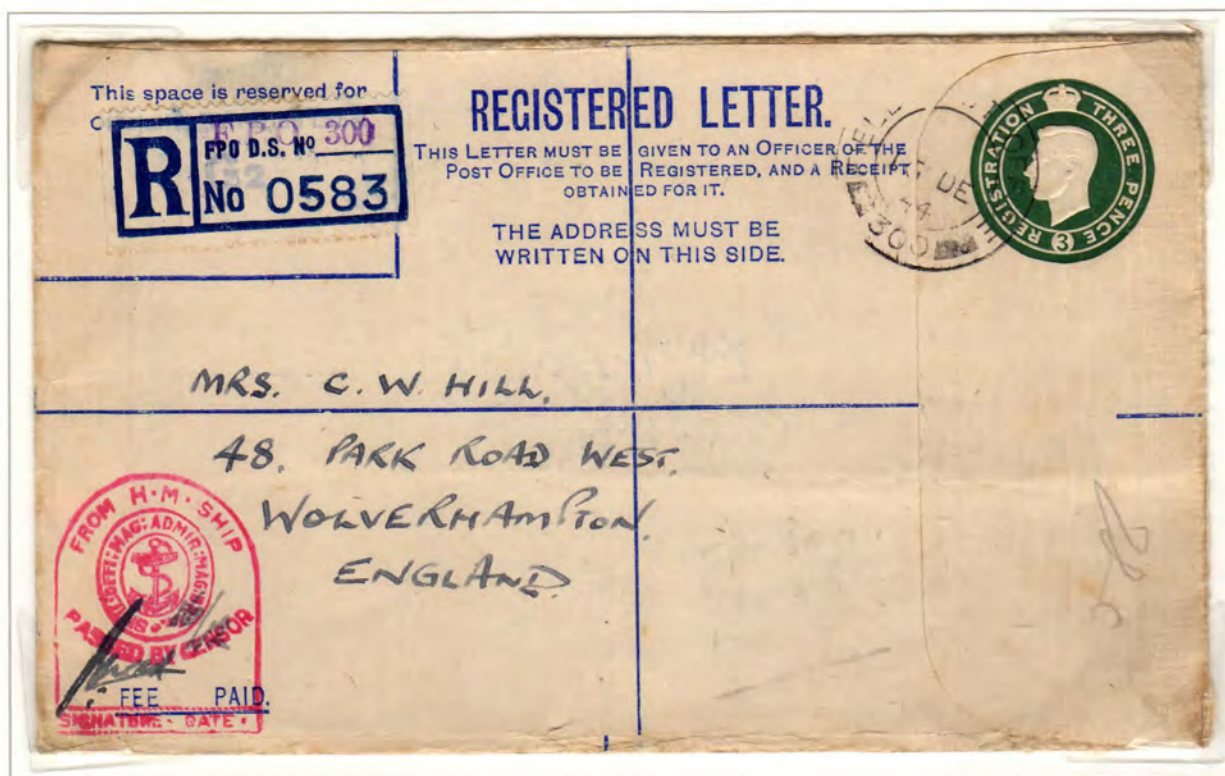
SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY



Registration was available, at a rate of 3d. The rate increased with the weight of the letter. Here are 2 registered letters, one being a single rate of 3d (top), the other a multiple rate at 13 d (bottom) from a FPO serving the Polish forces fighting with the Allies in Italy (note no censor mark).

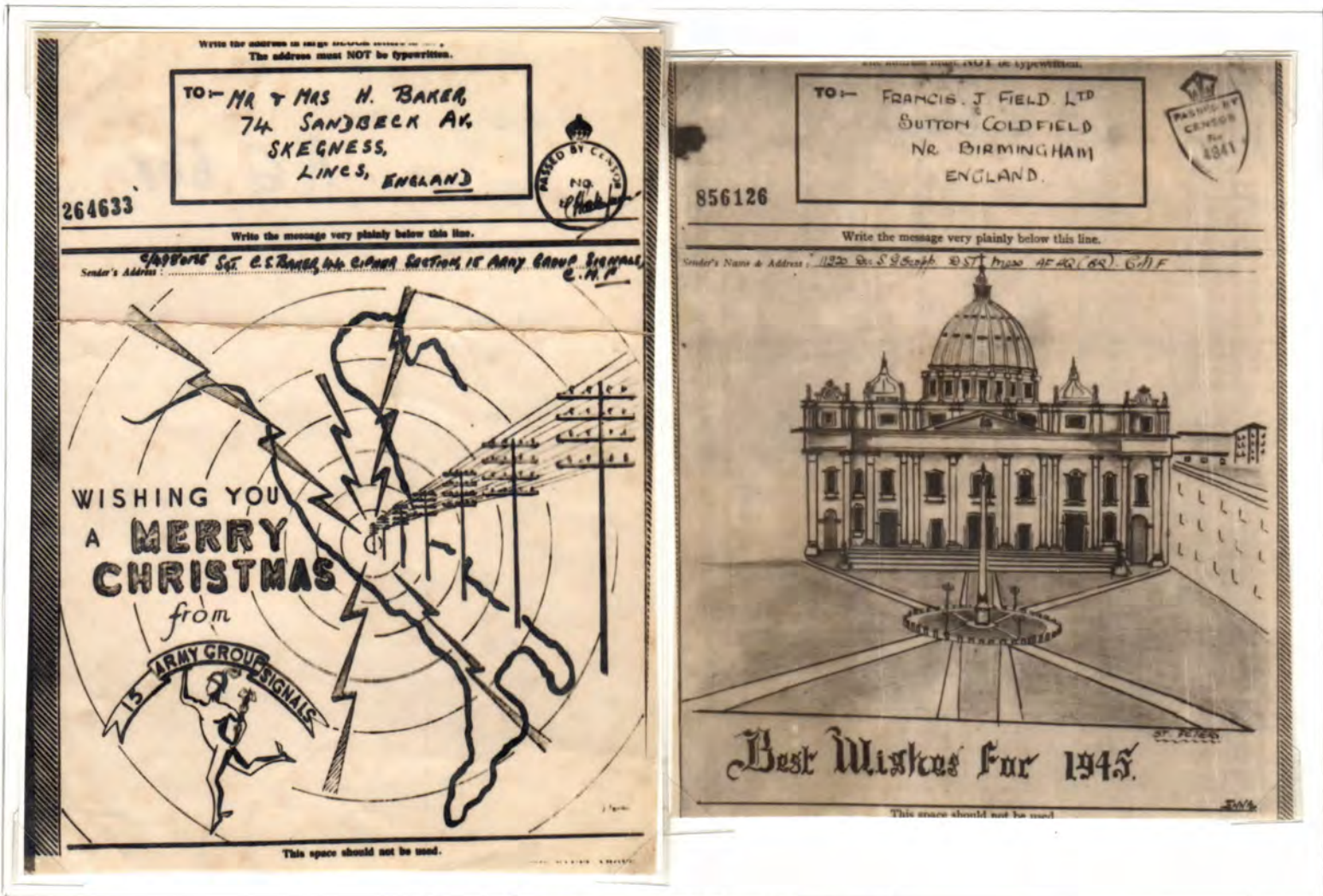


SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY



All mail was censored. Shown above are additional **types of censorship** marks: Royal Navy (top), Royal Air Force (bottom) and certified self-censorship, only available for Senior Officers (center, reduced).

SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY



Airgraphs to GB from British soldiers in Italy

THE AIRGRAPH

The airgraph had been invented in the 1930s by the Eastman Kodak Company with the objective of reducing the weight of correspondence to facilitate its transport by air.

The forms – once completed with words or images or both - were collected by the A/FPOs and forwarded to the Kodak processing plants, which were co-located with the Base APOs. There they were microfilmed (one roll would contain 1,600 forms), transported by air then printed at destination and distributed. The GPO claimed a reduction of the weight of the mail by 160 times.

Their use was not rationed and the postage was three pence (3d), ie. like air letters.

Airgraphs were used for the first time (1941) between GB and Egypt. Italy was one of the last countries to which the service was made available (1944). The service was primarily dedicated to the use of British soldiers. Usually airgraphs contained only text, but in some cases they were illustrated with images, like the two examples shown here, used to send 1944 Holidays wishes.

SECTION 6:
BRITISH SOLDIERS IN ITALY



British military presence in Italy continued well past the end of the war. The two cards at the top bear FPO cds of Rome (#750) & Genoa (#189) dated 1946.

In 1945 the area of **Trieste**, the border between the eastern and western blocks, was given special status under British military control. The same postal rates applied as for Italy, using Italian stamps overprinted AMGVG (Allied Military Gov't/ Venezia Giulia) until 1947 when Trieste was given the status of Free Territory. The city was returned to Italy in 1957.



SECTION 7
RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
1944



The months that followed the Armistice (signed on Sep 8th 1943) were chaotic - including for postage. The south had been liberated by the Allied forces while the north was still occupied by the Germans, later (September 23rd) to become the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), also known as Repubblica di Salo'. Direct postal communications with GB from the liberated parts of Italy became again possible.



This letter was mailed from the Italian Military PO # 179 of the 210th Division, which was fighting side by side with the British and Polish Armies. Of note the very high franking (in excess of L 7.40 – partly missing from the back), the now bi-lingual Italian censor mark on the back, the fascist propaganda 30c stamps also on the back and the long time it took to reach its final destination (from Jan to May 1944) after being forwarded a couple times.

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1944-1945



On 1 September 1944 the Italian letter rates for international mail were revised. While the postcard rate was left unchanged at L 1.5 (top) the single rate doubled from L 1.25 to L 2.5 (bottom). Notice the date on the letter, which was mailed in Rome less than one month after the liberation of the city (June 4th); and the fascist propaganda statement on the postcard ("Vinceremo" = We Shall Win).

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1944-1945



The Vatican offered an alternative option for international communication. Although the rates were always mirroring the Italian ones, mail often was philatelic in nature. British censorship was carried out on Vatican mail using the same criteria. Bottom is an October 1944 postcard franked with 5 L and bearing the British censor mark. Top is a March 1945 postcard franked with 16.25 L with no censorship. The correct postcard rate was L 1.75 from 1/9/1944 through 31/8/1945

SECTION 7
RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
1944-1945



The rates adopted in 1944 were in use only very shortly, i.e. until March 31st, 1945. The top item was mailed in June 1944 with the correct rate of L 2.5 from Salerno to Strathay where it was forwarded to Bicester with the GB domestic rate of 2 ½ d. ACS stands for Allied Censorship. On the bottom is a cover mailed on January 4th, 1945 showing an example of the new registered letter rate which was now 2.5 + 3 Lira for a total of L. 5.5.

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1945

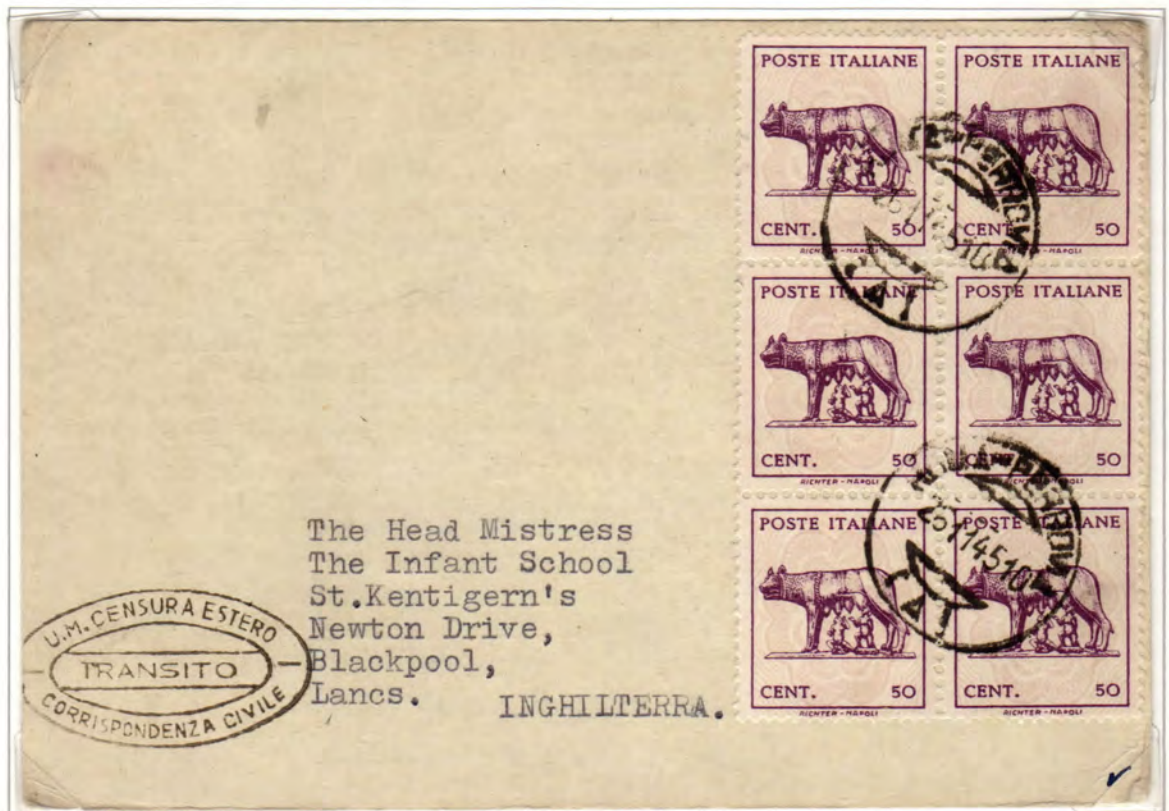


On April 1st, 1945 the letter rate doubled again to 5 L (top cover). The option of express delivery was still possible; that rate did not change until October 15th of that year, remaining what had been in use since 1/1/1926, ie. 2.5 L. (bottom cover, L 8.10, 60 C excess). Notice the long transit time on the top cover (Nov 9 to Nov 28th) and the lack of any express mail label on the bottom one.

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1945



The surcharge for transportation by airmail remained L 2.0, for a total of L 7.0



On April 1st, 1945 the postcard rate went up to L 3.0

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1945

On April 1st 1945 the registration rate went up to L 10, for a total rate of L. 15 for single ports



ACS is for Allied Censorship



Notice the military type censorship with "Examiner" label on the April cover when the war was still on (bottom) vs the less invasive censor mark (Ufficio Militare Censura Estera - Transito Corrispondenze) on the November cover (top) ie. six months after the war had ended.

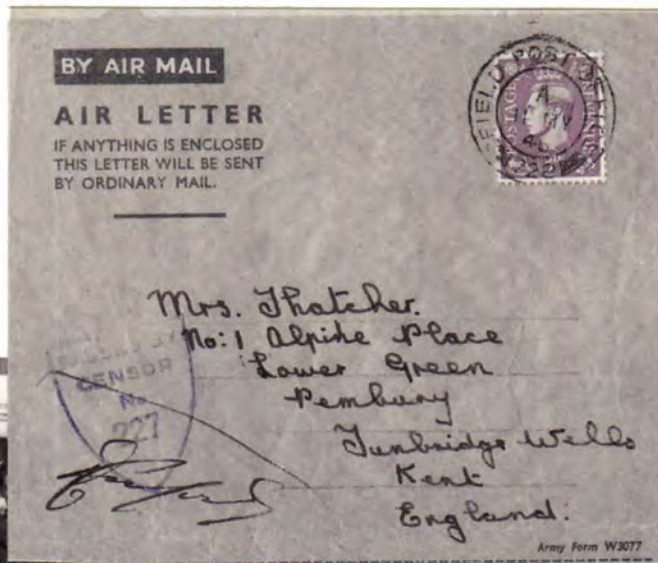
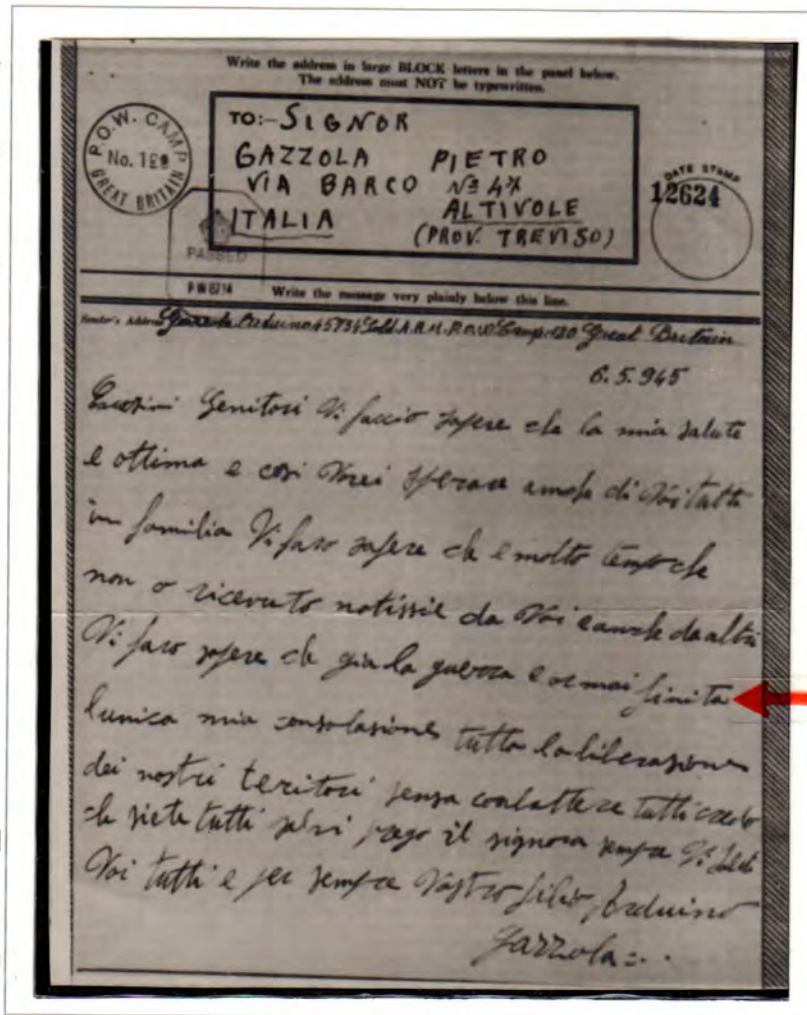
SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1945



While the rate of L 15.20 (top) is easy to interpret as a sender's excess of 20 c over the correct registered rate of L 15, the franking on the bottom cover (L 16,0) is more difficult to understand as it exceeds the registered letter rate by 1 L and it bears no evidence of registration or insurance, when the standard letter rate would have been just L 5. The PM overprint stands for Posta Militare and it was only rarely used – against regulations - on foreign mail.

SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 MAY 1945: **THE WAR IS OVER!**

May 1945 was the last month of war on the Western Front. In the airgraph here to the right an Italian prisoner in GB writes home on May 6th "Carissimi genitori....vi faccio sapere che già la guerra e' ormai finita" (Dearest parents...I inform you that at last the war is now over). Two days later, May 8th 1945, was the official V-Day, and on the air letter copied below and shown opened on the next page a British soldier celebrates it with a hand drawn image depicting Victory and his yearning to go home "very soon". The war was finally over!



SECTION 7
RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE



SECTION 7
 RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
 1945-1946



Notice here the use of the "Posta Militare" PM overprinted fascist stamps on the earlier item – when the war was still on – vs. the new (1945) issue celebrating the rebirth of Italy's democracy on the later cover. This L 15 franking on March 26th 1946 – just three months before Italy became a republic - was still sufficient to pay the registration fee, while less than a week later it would have been only enough to pay the ordinary mail rate.

The year 1946 was the first year with no war since 1939, and by then the postal service had resumed its normal course. However the significant inflation brought about by the war had a profound impact on Italian postage rates well beyond the end of the war. Major changes were introduced every year from 1944 through 1948. The next rates to those shown here (issued on April 1st, 1947) were going to be treble of what they were the year before, six times more than two years previously and over ten times greater than what they were at the outbreak of the war.

SECTION 7
RESTORATION OF THE POSTAL SERVICE
1946

British rates on the contrary were quite stable throughout the war. As 1946 – the first year of peace - comes to a close the rate for airmail is 5d and for surface mail is still 3d, which is just half a penny more than what it was at the outbreak of the war and what it had been since 1875.



At last Europe is being rebuilt in peace as represented by the dove and the other symbols on the KGVI 3d stamp. Christmas cards take the place of POW's distressed messages. At last good relations between Italy and Great Britain can - and will - flourish again.