

THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS MUSEUM

MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTION NO 6 MILITARY POSTAL & COURIER SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

Introduction

1 In 1876, a joint Committee of the Army and the General Post Office (GPO) formed to examine military postal services. The Committee led to the formation of an Army Post Office Corps (APOC), established by Royal Warrant in 1882. By 1913, the APOC had been embodied in RE Reserve Forces as the RE (Postal Section). Thus, from that date the Royal Engineers were responsible for the distribution of mail to and from the Army, later also the RAF and RN, outside the United Kingdom, until the task was transferred to the RLC in 1993. Accordingly, the RE Museum, together with the associated RE Library, provides a depository in which artifacts of military postal and courier history may be preserved in perpetuity for the benefit of the public.

Aim

2 The aim of this instruction is to establish a means by which the postal and other associated services operated by the Royal Engineers may be represented appropriately in the RE Museum.

Military Postal and Courier Services

3. Military postal services were originally established for communication between the monarch and field commanders. The earliest recorded military mails to the British Army overseas were carried and delivered, largely by the GPO, with separate arrangements made for each campaign. However, mail to and from individual soldiers overseas has been part of military postal services for a very long time. Forces concessionary rates were introduced in 1795; the first Army Postmaster was appointed in 1799. Within the UK, mail was collected and distributed by the GPO.

4. Increased literacy and greater attention to the welfare of servicemen, particularly during Queen Victoria's reign, enhanced the need for the provision of mail services between servicemen and their families. The Army recognised that mail to and from home was important in maintaining the morale of servicemen, the more so the worse the circumstances in which servicemen found themselves and the further and longer they were away from their homes and families. As mail services became embedded in the Army, the range of facilities offered expanded to include secure courier services for classified, official and diplomatic mails.

5. Moreover, as the range of non-postal services provided by the GPO in the UK expanded, many were provided overseas to servicemen and their families by RE military postal services. Indeed on occasions, the military postal service introduced facilities that were later offered by the GPO in the UK to others.

6. Accordingly, the primary means for the display in the RE Museum of RE Postal and Courier Services activities overseas will be to establish in relevant Museum galleries & tableaux elements to illustrate how the serviceman's mail operated at that time. Displays may also illustrate mail delivery to the other Services and contributions from other organisations and Corps. A secondary objective will be the development of a specific display to illustrate the essence of the RE Military Postal and Courier Services, possibly of aspects of the work of the UK Home Postal Depot.

Composition of the Sub-Committee

7. FoREM's Military Postal & Courier Services Sub-Committee will consist of:

- A Chairman.
- The Curator of the RE Museum or his representative.
- A Secretary.
- Two further members may be co-opted by the Chairman.

8. The Chairman of the FoREM Military Postal and Courier Services Sub-Committee will be, ex officio, a member of FoREM's Executive Committee; if he is unable to attend Executive Committee meetings, he may nominate a deputy. The Sub-committee will meet as required by the Chairman.

The Operation of the Sub-Committee

9. The FoREM Military Postal & Courier Services Sub-Committee will:

- In conjunction with the Curator of the RE Museum, establish subjects suitable for displays in the RE Museum to illustrate the historic activities of the military postal services, in particular of RE (Postal Section), RE (Postal & Courier Communications) and the RE (Postal and Courier Services).
- Undertake the research needed to define the detail relevant to each display.
- Help raise the money to pay for displays.
- Help collect and acquire memorabilia and artifacts appropriate to planned displays.
- Liaise on behalf of FoREM with other relevant postal organisations including, inter alia, the GPO, the Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency (DPCSA) and the Forces Postal History Society.
- Encourage visitors to go to the Museum to see the displays.

Fund Raising and Property

10. Funds collected by FoREM's Military Postal Services Sub-Committee shall be held as a sub-fund of the FoREM account, itself part of the RE Museum account of the Institution of Royal Engineers.

11. In order that the Sub-Committee may take advantage of the charitable and VAT status of the RE Museum, purchases made by the Sub-Committee shall be in the name of the RE Museum; items so purchased will be the property of the RE Museum.