

British Troops in Greece after World War II (1944-1952)¹

Marc Parren

Introduction

Greece was occupied by the Axis Powers since April 1941 after Nazi Germany invaded Greece to assist its ally Italy, which had been at war with Allied Greece since October 1940. Following the conquest of Crete, all of Greece was occupied by June 1941. The occupation of the mainland lasted until Germany and its ally Bulgaria were forced to withdraw under Allied pressure in early October 1944 (Fig. 1). However, German garrisons remained in control of Crete and some other Aegean islands until after the end of World War II, surrendering these islands in May 1945.



Figure 1. Map of the 1941-1944 Axis occupation of Greece. Depicted are the three occupation zones, the Italian zone was taken over by the Germans in September 1943. By C Plakidas - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3742461>

The Allies liberation of Greece commenced in Autumn 1944 with the mainland just off the southern Peloponnesian coast on Kythera island. Here the seaborne British 9th Commando Force put first foot ashore on the 16th September 1944 forming part of Operation Manna. This was followed by a British paratroop drop over Araxos airfield, located near Patras, on the 23rd September 1944. By the beginning of October, a considerable British and Greek military presence had been established. Allied troops were taken from the Eight Army and in early October 1944 X Corps landed in the Peloponnese. The Germans evacuated Patras in the evening of 3rd October and so it became the first Greek town liberated on the Peloponnese. When the Germans withdrew from the Patras area, Araxos airfield could be used as an important staging post for air operations. However, the main

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British forces arrived in mid-October 1944 in the wake of the retreating Germans in order to secure Greece for the West, as agreed between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow earlier that month.

The Germans evacuated Athens on 12th October 1944. The 4th Parachute Battalion some 1,900 men strong, landed on 12th October on Megara airfield, located 45 km west from Athens. British troops occupied the city two days later, followed by the Greek government on the 18th October. The British and Free Greek navies transported the British III Corps and Greek troops, as well as the Greek government in exile, to Athens. Lieutenant General Ronald Scobie of the British Armed Forces was on board and assumed his role as the Allied High Commander in Greece. His primary mission was to maintain order now that the Germans had gone. It was to prove a much more difficult task than anyone could possibly have imagined. Saloniki, the last of the German escape ports, fell to British troops on 30th October 1944. Next we see the Greek Third Mountain Brigade, nearly 2,800 men strong, arriving in Athens on 9th November 1944 from the Italian front, coupled with a British force of around 8,000 men consisting of 23 Armoured Brigade and part of 2nd Parachute Brigade (van der Bijl 2013). These first formations were followed by 4th Indian Division and by 139 Brigade of 46th Division with the remainder of the division following them later; 4th British Infantry Division was also despatched. Tactical HQ X Corps was deployed to act as Headquarters British Forces in Greece. X Corps would leave Greece again in March 1945.

The 4th Indian Division saw the following operations, 7th Indian Infantry Brigade went to Macedonia arriving there on 12th November 1944, while 5th Indian Infantry Brigade went to Athens landing there on 17th November, whom succeeded in clearing and reopening communications between the port of Piraeus and Athens. The 11th Indian Infantry Brigade went to the Peloponnese also arriving on 17th November, while the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade moved to Patras on 22nd November. After further successful counter-insurgency operations in the southern areas the Indian troops handed over control to Greek government forces and were withdrawn in mid-January 1945. In March 1945, the 4th Indian Division concentrated in northern Greece. In January 1946, its job done, the division sailed from Greece bound for India and home.

There were, however, very few heavy weapons and no tanks in Greece. As from October 1944 RAF and SAAF (South African Air Force) were free to run low-level intruder sorties to Greece from southern Italy. They attacked shipping, rolling stock and military targets with relative impunity. RAF intruder squadrons based in Egypt continued to fly long range missions to the Dodecanese islands and Crete, causing havoc to shipping and ground targets, including German gun positions along the heavily fortified Cretan coast. There were two squadrons in the RAF (Nos. 335 and 336) manned by Greek pilots. They flew the latest Supermarine Spitfires and were based in Biferno, Italy in 1944. While Squadron 336 flew attack missions over the Balkans, Squadron 335 was part of the liberation of Greece. Members of Squadron 335 landed at Araxos airfield, located near Patras, on the 8th October 1944. By the 11th October, some of Squadron 335 along with elements of Squadron 32 had billeted at Araxos. They began carrying out regional missions such as shipping sweeps of the Corinth Canal. At the end of October 1944 Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Squadron 459 based in Berka, Libya ran bombing runs and continued operating in the Greek theatre until February 1945 when it was recalled to the U.K. On 17th November two RAF squadrons and a Greek squadron flew into Kalamaki, the main airfield, some 7 km south of Athens that became the centre of RAF activity as home for No. 337 Wing RAF. The airfield was renamed Hassani on 1st December 1944. British fighter squadrons were withdrawn by Summer 1945. However, Hassani continued to be a hub of RAF operations with the arrival of No. 252 Wing, until the creation of the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) at the end of 1946 (Delaporta 2003).

The immediate prelude to the civil war took place in Athens, on 3rd December 1944, less than two months after the Germans had retreated from the area. After an order to disarm, leftist parties resigned from the government and called for resistance. A riot (the Dekemvriana) erupted; and Greek government gendarmes, with British forces standing in the background, opened fire on a leftist rally, killing 28 demonstrators and injuring 148. The resulting clashes would last for over one month and in which RAF Spitfires and Beaufighters were strafing leftist strongholds. Reinforcements arrived in the form of elements of the 4th Indian Division and Greek army units that had left the Italian front for Greece on 12th December 1944, arriving a day later. Control of Athens and the principal ports of Piraeus, Salonika, Patras, Preveza, Volos and Kavalla were then in the hands of the British and the Greek government forces, but the countryside was mainly controlled by the communist resistance (EAM/ELAS). With all these reinforcements about 75,000 British and Indian troops were serving in Greece at the time. When both sides agreed to an unconditional ceasefire on 15th January 1945, and especially after the Treaty of Varkiza on 12th February 1945 when EAM promised to lay down its weapons, the civil strife was over, although the right wing pursued the left. Next, most of the British troops returned to Italy, leaving the 4th Infantry Division split between Athens and Salonika, supported by a Military Mission provided by III Corps (van der Bijl 2013).

Syros, in the Cyclades fell on 13th October and was followed by Naxos and Lemnos on 15th October, and Santorini (at the base of the Cyclades) on 18th October. Most of the German troops had withdrawn from Greece by retreating to the Balkans by the 4th November 1944. The liberation of the Dodecanese Islands started on the 29th October 1944 with the occupation of Scarpanto (between Rhodes and Crete) and especially when the main force moved to Symi in December 1944 (Kaye 2010). On 8th May 1945, the surrender of all Germans took place on Symi (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Poster celebrating the first anniversary of the Allied liberation of the Dodecanese islands from the occupying Nazi German forces - Dodecanese Liberation Day 9 May 1946 - featuring crowds of happy people smiling at soldiers in uniform to welcome the troops with the flags of the Allies flying in the background. Text in both Greek and Turkish languages.

The Treaty of Peace with Italy (one of the Paris Peace Treaties) was signed on 10th February 1947 between Italy and the victorious powers of World War II, formally ending hostilities. Next the Dodecanese Islands were transferred from British to Greek administration on 31st March 1947 and became part of Greece on 7th March 1948.

Left-wing persecution lasted through 1945 and much of 1946, and was a critical element in the radicalization and polarization of the political climate in the country. Parliamentary elections were held in Greece on 31st March 1946 that resulted in a government of national unity formed by conservative and centre-liberal forces. The elections were marked by the boycott of the Greek Communist Party claiming in protest against the unfolding, state-tolerated leftist persecution. The night before the elections, members of ELAS attacked a police station in Litchoro. This event is considered the beginning of the three years' civil war that would last until October 1949.

British Military Mission to Greece

By 1945 there were numerous British and Allied military formations in Greece, and by early January 1945 the British Liaison Unit was also recognised as a British Military Mission to Greece (BMM (G)). It comprised of about 300 officers and 1,000 other ranks, at first under the command of Brigadier Firth and then Major-General Smallwood. The Mission was named by Prime Minister Churchill to offer 'advice and assistance' on the organisation, supply and training of the Greek National Army on modern lines, and played its part in enabling the campaign against the communist resistance to be brought to a successful conclusion. The British Government

announced that, as of 31st March 1947, it would no longer provide military and economic assistance to the Greek Government in its civil war against the Greek Communist Party. The same happened with British assistance to Turkey that also were combatting communism. The financial burden was too much as Great Britain was facing its own economic problems. President Truman agreed to take over the responsibility for both Greece and Turkey at the time, and so the 'Truman Doctrine' was born. So in 1948 Britain withdraws most military support to Greece; while the United States steps in to shore up the government fight against the communists. However, at the time the British Cabinet agreed to allow some British soldiers to renew their activities up until 1950. By the spring of 1947 the communist forces controlled much of the Greek rural areas but had yet to achieve significant support in the cities. By 1948, this area had been reduced to rural Greek Macedonia and Epirus. In 1948, some 183 British officers and 731 other ranks formed part of the BMM (G). The end of the civil war in October 1949 brought the victory of the national forces and credits to the British share. Following the end of the civil war, the British Military Mission had decided to reduce its presence in Greece. The last battalion that remained in Greece departed from Salonika after the end of the civil war in February 1950.

The post-civil war objectives of the British Military Mission in Greece had been set out on 13 June 1950. Their task involved the creation of self-sufficient armed forces, which in future, would be able to operate without constant guidance from British and American military advisers. For the British this transformation was to come about as much through professionalisation as it was through re-equipment. The British set up Basic Training Centres all over the country, Training Establishments in Staff College, Specialist Training Centres, Army Schools, Corps Schools. These centres functioned under joint British and Greek command. The training centres replaced the old method of training whereby conscripts were called up directly into units. The British also introduced a more formal system for officer selection and promotion to replace the haphazard patronage system that had operated up until then. The aim was that from the 1950s onwards the majority of officers to be academy graduates. Greece inclusion into NATO resulted in the British decision to withdraw its Air, Army and Police missions in 1952.

The British Naval Mission, however, proved an exception. Britain intended to remain a significant naval power in the Mediterranean. Showing the flag in the Mediterranean was the symbol of British naval power. In the purely Greek context they took a close and continuing interest in naval communications between Cyprus and the Greek mainland. The British Naval Mission was to continue to assist in the defence of the Middle East and fight alongside the British Mediterranean Fleet despite the presence of the United States Sixth Fleet in the Aegean and the Mediterranean basin. The British Naval Mission only came to end on 15th October 1955, when it was decided that its head Admiral Selby would not be replaced.

Postal implications

For such an elaborate military operation liberating Greece at the end of 1944 until the British left in the early 1950s, involving up to 75,000 troops at its peak, it is remarkable to see so few related covers. I made an inventory of known covers in the possession of several collectors and it reaches to just over 130 covers. It is also difficult to allocate a FPO postmark to a certain unit over time. The best information on this is provided by Robert Gould and Edward Proud (1982) in their History of British Army Postal Service Volume III. 1927-1963. In Table 1, I present the use of British Field Post Offices in Greece between October 1944 and May 1952. Based on Gould & Proud (1982), Jagger (1964), Quin (1985), Kanxidis (2011), Ransom (2020) I state earliest or latest date of use according to the literature while in bold I state the earliest or latest date of use as from the over 130 covers at hand. I also add the source of all these in a footnote. For the Indian Field Post Offices in Greece between November 1944 and March 1947 the standard work is by the hand of Edward Proud (1986) in his History of the Indian Army Postal Service Volume III. 1931 – 14 August 1947.

Army

As soon as the first landings took place in September 1944, Jagger (1964) states that FPO 730 came into use to serve the Allied Military Liaison in Greece. Its location is unknown but Gould and Proud (1982) state Salerno, Italy from October 1943 to February 1946. I possess a cover used in October 1944 closed with a re-sealing label and an air letter written on 9th November wherein the artillery man describes watching an Italian film both cancelled with FPO 730. So it appears they were still located in Italy. So until covers clearly linking this FPO to Greece appear its location at this time in late 1944 is still questionable.

The 23rd Armoured Brigade, a second line Territorial Army formation, was withdrawn from Italy in late May 1944 and returned to Egypt. In August 1944, the brigade was renamed Force 140, later Arkforce after its commander, Brigadier Arkwright, and was dismounted from its tanks. Arkforce arrived at Piraeus on 12th October 1944 and saw action during the Dekemvriana. Arkforce was disbanded on 8th January 1945 and 23rd Armoured Brigade regained its designation, and had its tanks restored by the end of January. It remained in Greece beyond VE Day

until the end of World War II. The Brigade used the FPO 708 datestamp, which has been seen used, between 4th November 1944 and 9th February 1946 (Fig. 3).

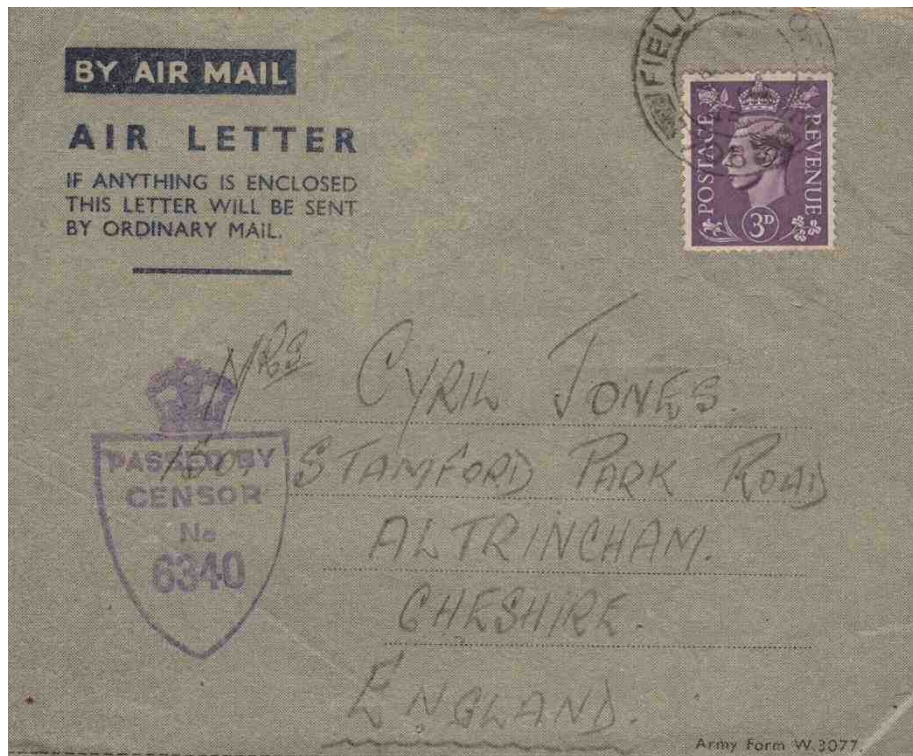


Figure 3. Air Letter despatched 3 January 1945 from FPO 708 by a member of the 1238 Field Co., Royal Engineers with shield censor handstamp 6340. This was the only RE unit as part of III Corps. Collection of Joost Meijer.

The 4th Infantry Division, was to be transferred from Italy and prepared to move to Greece. The division left for Greece on 12th December 1944, arriving a day later. It came under command of III Corps on arrival, and it was heavily involved in the Greek Civil War, and was used to secure the city of Athens. The division remained in Greece until it was disbanded there in March 1947. The Division used the FPO 250, FPO 264, FPO 265, FPO 266 and FPO 267 so far seen used by the division between December 1944 and December 1946 (see Table 1). Their exact locations are unknown. As from March 1945, FPO 137 was in use by the Division until March 1947 by units based in Salonika.

The 46th Infantry Division, a second line Territorial Army formation, was withdrawn from Italy and was hurriedly transferred to Greece on 14th January 1945 to fight in the Greek civil war. It took nearly eight weeks for the entire division to cross the Ionian Sea to Greece because of lack of ships. Apart from 139 Brigade in Patras there were no British troops in the Peloponnese so the division started to move south. By the end of January the division headquarters moved to Loutraki and next occupied northern Peloponnese, while the occupation of the southern half began on 2nd March. At the same time troops moved north across the Gulf of Corinth and the western islands such as Zakynthos. By mid-March they moved into Epirus bordering Albania. On 25th March, Greek Independence Day, there were great celebrations throughout Greece. The handing over of responsibilities to the Greeks started in earnest towards the end of the month. Outlying detachments were drawn in, and the division prepared to move back to Italy. It finally returned to Italy on 7th April 1945 after handing over commitments to 23rd Armoured Brigade (Anon. 1945). The Division had taken the following FPO datestamps along and were in use for this brief period: FPO 284, FPO 285, FPO 286, FPO 287, FPO 288 and FPO 525. However, no covers have been recorded so far as for FPO 284, FPO 285 and FPO 525 to confirm their use in Greece. For FPO 287 we have a letter at hand that originates from the Peloponnese and most likely from Kalamata (Fig. 4) and confirms its use in Greece.



Figure 4. Air Letter despatched 23 March 1946 from FPO 287 by a member of No. 570 Company RASC, 128th Infantry Brigade, 46th Infantry Division who were responsible for Supply & Transport Services in the South Peloponnese. The Coy HQ was established in Kalamata. Collection of Richard Berry.

Dodecanese Islands

In the autumn of 1943, the islands of Kos, Leros and Samos were invaded by Allied forces but the German reaction to these attacks was to throw in large forces so that by November 1943 all three islands were once more in enemy hands. Castellorizzo was invaded at the same time and remained firm under British control throughout the rest of the war. The liberation of the other Dodecanese Islands started in August 1944 with the creation of Force 281, consisting mostly of Indian troops. Next in October 1944 one company of the Gwalior Infantry landed on Karphatos. The War Diary makes clear that there was no intention to send a Field Post Office at that time for such a small number of troops. However, the War Diary of 14th April 1945 records the intention to employ 2 Indian FPO staff on Karphatos. So the Indian FPO R10 must have started operating after this date. The earliest record seen is 2nd May 1945, so the opening of that FPO was most likely in between these two dates (Phil Kaye pers. comm.). Proud (1986) mentions as latest date 27th June 1945.

From mid-December the joint Indian and British forces, numbering over 4,300 men, advanced along to Symi. From December 1944 we see that the HQ Dodecanese installed itself at Symi with an Indian FPO which operated jointly with a British element so we see the use of Indian FPO 90 (Fig. 5) and British FPO 375 before they moved on to Rhodes on 10th May 1945 (Kaye 2010).



Figure 5. Preprinted cover of the Jewish Community Rhodes despatched 16 April 1946 from Indian FPO 90 at HQ Dodecanese Rhodes sent by a Jewish Palestinian soldier serving with the Royal Engineers at the Port of Rhodes to Jerusalem. Just 300 members of the ancient Jewish community of Rhodes were present at the time since 1,700 of them were rounded up by the Gestapo in July 1944, and deported to the death camps.

FPO 375 was seen in use at Rhodes until November 1946 (Fig. 6).

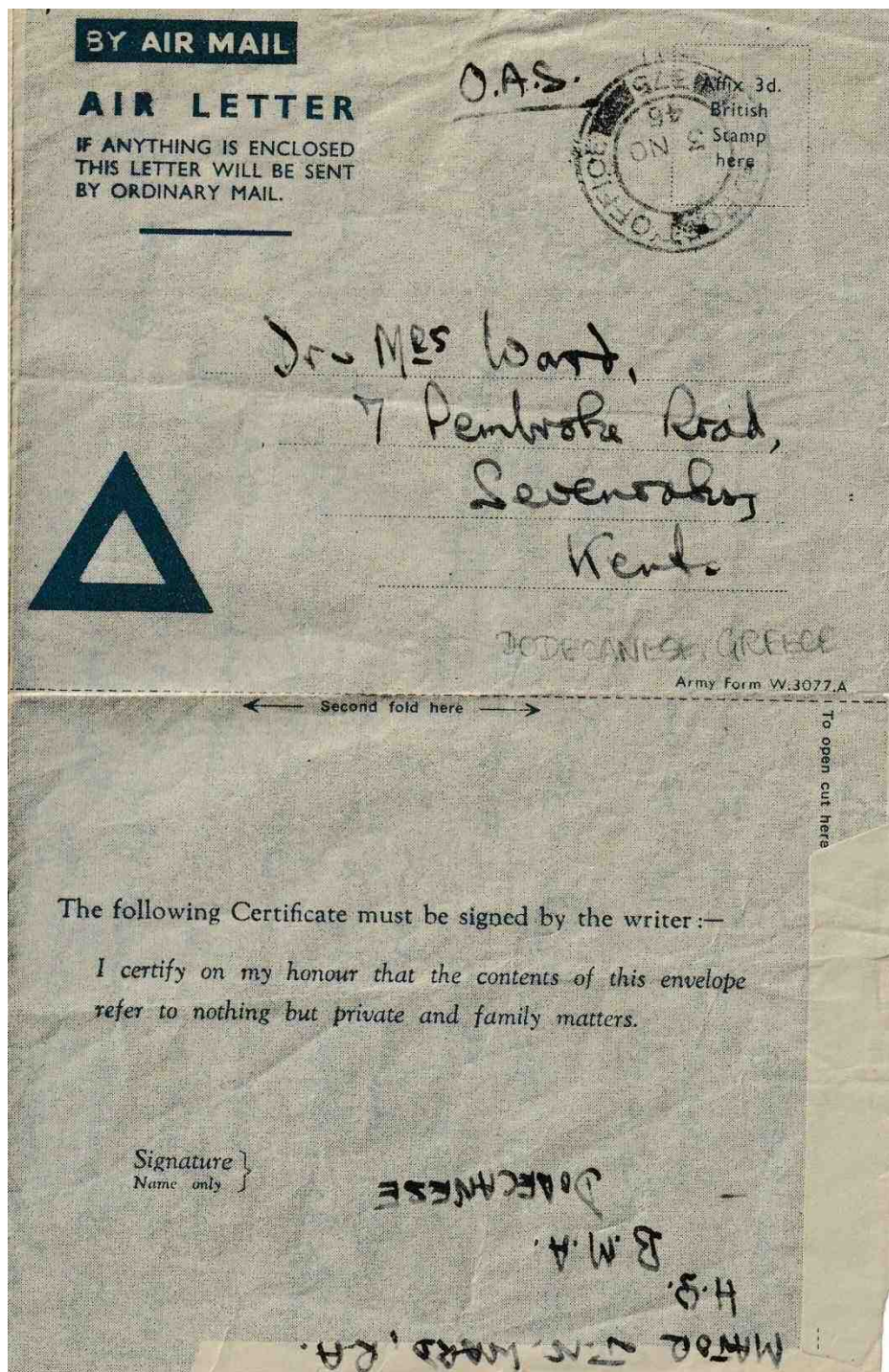


Figure 6. Air Letter despatched 3 November 1945 from FPO 375 by Major John Ward, Quartermaster Royal Artillery to the BMA in Rhodes. Collection of Phil Kaye.

Gould and Proud (1982) report that APO S.231 is the earliest operational APO, present in Karpathos (Scarpanto) in the Dodecanese in the southeastern Aegean Sea. They also suggested that as from August 1944 they used FPO 532 until December 1944, when the APO shifted to Symi also in the Dodecanese where they continued to use FPO 532 until January 1946. This information should be considered incorrect as this was not recorded in the War Diary of 281 Force so APO S.231 with FPO 532 was never used in the Dodecanese (Phil Kaye pers. comm.).

There is also no evidence that FPO 781 operated from May to August 1945 on Rhodes unlike what Kanxidis (2011) states.

The Dodecanese Islands were finally transferred from British to Greek administration on 31st March 1947 and became part of Greece on 7th March 1948, which saw the use of overprinted Greek stamps with Σ.Δ.Δ. (Dodecanese Military Occupation) in use until November that year (McEwen 2020).

Chios

Gould and Proud (1982) state that APO S.436 was present on Chios, a large island that lies on the northeastern side of the Aegean Sea, close to the Turkish coast. As early as October 1944 they introduced FPO 727 (until June 1945). However, no covers have been recorded to confirm this.

Peloponnese Peninsula

Gould and Proud (1982) state that APO S.430 was present in Patras, a harbour city at the north of the Peloponnese peninsula, from October 1944 with FPO 400 (until May 1945). Almost in parallel we see APO S.431 operate in Patras from November 1944 with FPO 514 (until June 1945). They could have served 139th Brigade while being posted over there.

APO S.432 resumed its activities in Greece in November 1944 at the same time as APO S.433 in Athens. However, it served FPO 732 at Kalamai, a harbour city at the south of the Peloponnese peninsula, for just two months until January 1945. In addition, Gould & Proud do not mention the use of FPO in relation to Greece. We have an official cover at hand that confirms its use in Greece (Fig. 7).

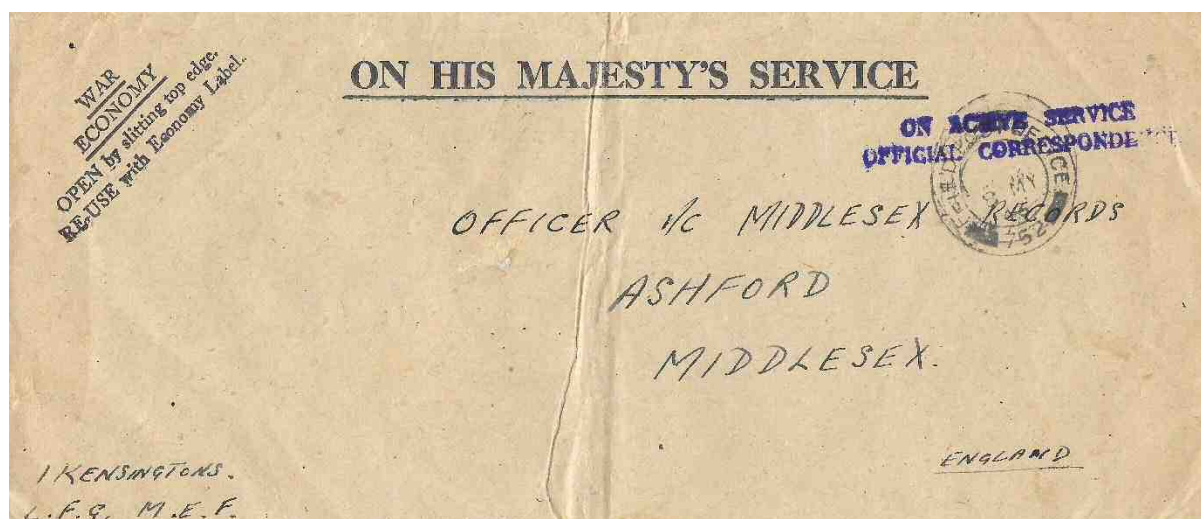


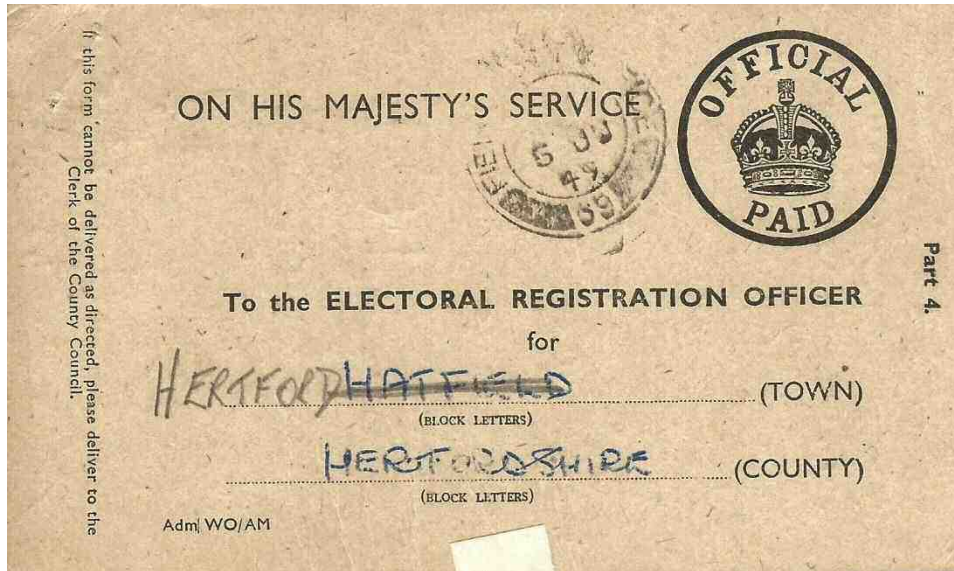
Figure 7. O.H.M.S. cover despatched 8 May 1946 from FPO 752 by military with the Land Forces Greece (L.F.G.) and purple 'ON ACTIVE SERVICE/OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE' handstamp. Collection of Richard Berry.

Athens

APO S.433 was opened by 22 Line of Communications Postal Unit (L of C P.U.) at 12 Apollonos Ave., Faliro a harbour area in Athens as from 1 November 1944. Although it may have moved into different premises a few days later when it commenced full operation as concentration office for Greece (Alistair Kennedy pers. comm.). Initially it used FPO 776 (until April 1947), FPO 782 (until March 1945) and FPO 783 (until September 1948). Gould and Proud (1982) report that FPO 783 moved to Rhodes, Dodecanese between July 1946 and April 1947 which is most unlikely as during this period until September 1948 covers are seen originating from the Dodecanese that are postmarked FPO 783 but were bagged and taken to Athens for further handling including cancellation. There were very few British troops left in the Dodecanese in 1947 to merit a move from Athens to Rhodes of the FPO 783 postmark. As Alistair Kennedy noted, Athens served as a concentration office for Greece, so no need existed to move it later on to Rhodes as the British presence in Athens continued until 1952 (Phil Kaye pers. comm.).

Next, Gould and Proud (1982) report that as from March 1946 FPO 573 (until June 1949) was introduced by 22 L of C P.U. of APO S.443 in Athens. However, no covers have been recorded so far for FPO 573 to confirm its

use in Greece. Gould and Proud (1982) report that FPO 454 was brought into use for just over one year between August 1947 and September 1948, but so far no covers have been seen for this period. In July 1948 FPO 654 (until March 1950) came into use after first having reported to have served APO S.431 in Prevesa. The presence of this FPO in Prevesa is still to be confirmed. APO S.433 also held FPO 708 in September 1948 (Gould & Proud 1982) that had served the 23rd Armoured Brigade (November 1944 – August 1945). No covers have been seen of this FPO in 1948 so its use at the time is still to be confirmed. Next we see the use of FPO 69 from March 1949 until January 1950 in Piraeus (see Fig. 8).



48/4
6. D/B/A

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (ARMED FORCES)
TO BE COMPLETED BY DECLARANT.

Part I. F/Vote/33

Surname (Block Letters)

Forenames **HENRY**

Service **13 YEAR** Corps or Regiment **RAMC**

Rank or Rating **S/SGT** Service Number **4263441**

Present Service address **21 FIELD SANITARY SECTION**
ALEXANDER CAMP B.F. IN GREECE

National Registration No. before joining, if known.....

I HEREBY DECLARE that I am a British subject or citizen of Eire

*over 21 years of age
*under 21 years of age

Day	Month	Year
:	:	:

(if under 21) born on

and reside, or but for my service would reside in the United Kingdom at **PARK STREET,**
(full postal address)
HATFIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE

I HEREBY CANCEL any previous declaration made by me.

Signed **[Signature]** Date **16.5.49**

Signature and Rank of attesting officer:
[Signature]

*Delete whichever is inapplicable.

Figure 8. Electoral registration card despatched 05 June 1949 from FPO 69 based in Piraeus by a Sergeant of the 21 Field Sanitary Section, Alexander Camp, RAMC, British Forces in Greece.

When APO S.433 in Piraeus and FPO B.10 in Salonika closed in January 1950 all mail was next handled by APO S.433 in Athens (BMM). Here the FPO 514 datestamp came into use, superseding FPO 782. That includes mail posted by members of the British Consulate General in Salonika (see Fig. 9).



Figure 9. Cover despatched 1 September 1951 from FPO 514 based in Athens by a member of the British Naval Mission in Greece.

The APO served the HQ British Military Mission and closed on 13th May 1952. In March 1945 the use of the FPO 782 handstamp shifted from APO S.433 to APO S.431 in Athens until December 1949. The returned air letter addressed to a soldier serving with the RASC at Headquarters Land Forces Greece handled by FPO 782 and the Headquarters 3 Corps confirms the central role of Athens for handling forces mail (Fig. 10).

Salonika area

Gould and Proud (1982) report that APO S.435 was present in Kavala, a harbour city some 120 km east of Salonika, from November 1944 with FPO 778 until at least December 1944. In April 1945 they state that FPO 778 (until May 1945) appears in Volos, a coastal port city located about midway between Salonika and Athens. However, it is not known when exactly they moved from Kavala to Volos. I have not been able to record any covers with this FPO so hopefully they will appear over time and they will be able to tell us more.

Gould & Proud (1982) report that APO S.434 was present in Salonika for November 1944 to January 1950 with FPO 777 (see Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Domestic air mail cover franked 350 Drachma plus charity stamp, despatched 10 July 1947 Constitution Square Athens, Air Mail to a Captain of the 34 Coy, RASC at Salonika with backstamp 11 July 1947 Salonika, Arrival Airmail of the same day in Salonika and FPO 777.

In April 1948 the FPO was renamed to FPO B.10, but kept on using FPO 777, mainly for diplomatic mail. Next to this FPO, FPO 137 was in use from March 1945 until at least March 1947. After the evacuation of Palestine in 1948 the remaining Brigade of 4th Infantry Division became 2 Brigade (FPO B2). The last British troops left Salonika in February 1950.

North-western Greece

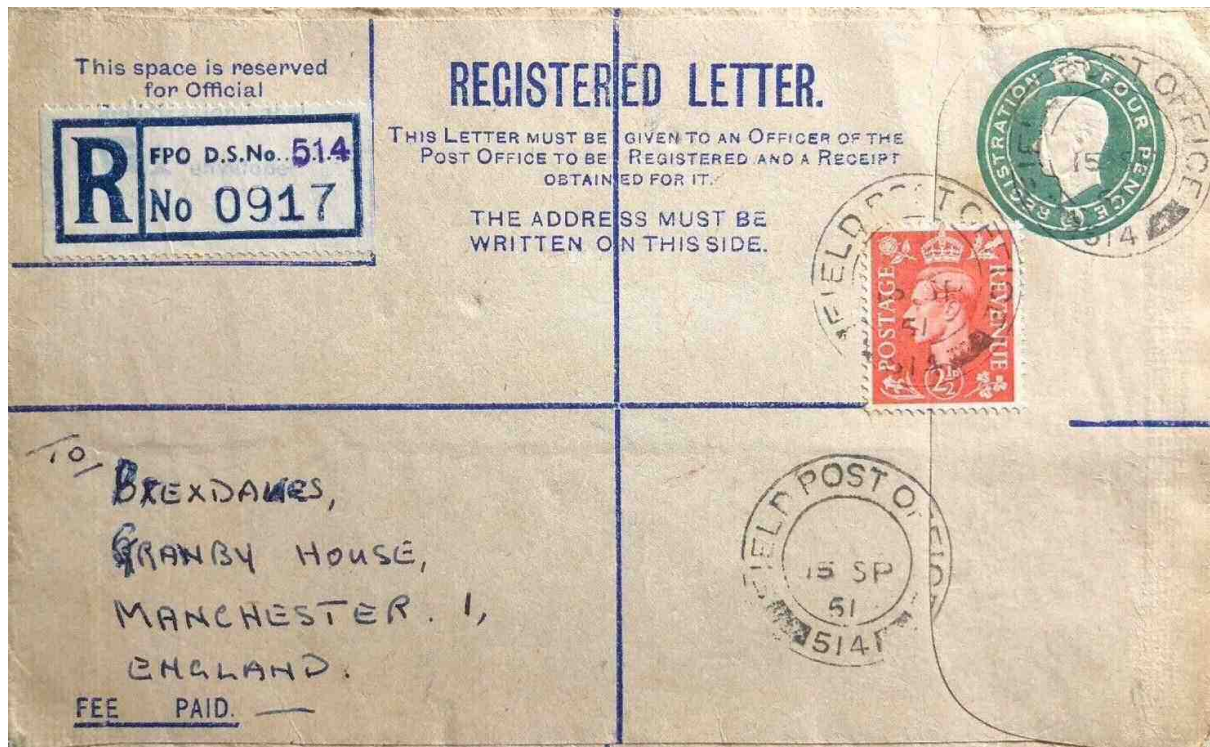
Gould and Proud (1982) report that the FPO 514 handstamp, previously used in Patras (Peloponnese), can be seen used in Prevesa as from April 1946 while Kanxidis (2011) extends it up to January 1950. However, no covers have been seen so far to confirm this. The same can be said as for FPO 654 in which Gould and Proud (1982) report that it was introduced by APO S.431 at the same time and Kanxidis (2011) extends the date until June 1948 at Prevesa. However, I have not been able to record any covers with this FPO over this period of time.

Cyclades

APO S.437 has been reported to be present in Siros in the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea. Gould and Proud (1982) report as from June 1945 they used FPO 654, while Kanxidis (2011) extends this until March 1946. However, no covers are at hand with this FPO over this period of time to confirm this. Afterwards all mail was directed to Athens as a May 1946 unfranked air letter by a forces member on Syra (Siros) with the UN Relief & Rehabilitation Administration shows that it was cancelled by FPO 782 (Athens).

RAF

The earliest postal items related to the RAF are those reported by Nick Colley (2011). He showed an air letter by someone of 30 Wing Section, G Coy., Air formation Signals with FPO 139 dated 30th October 1944 and RAF unit censor R15/359. This FPO was based as far as we know at Piraeus. Joost Meijer has a letter send from a RAF officer from Greece to a colleague in England, marked with FPO 776 (Athens) dated 5th December 1944 and RAF unit censor R20/29 plus a censorship strip. Nick Colley also showed an airgraph written 7th January 1945 by someone of 107 Staging Post located at Hassani. Furthermore Joost Meijer is in de possession of a registered letter dated 8th March 1948, FPO 654 (Athens), send by someone from RAF Hassani to British Airways in London. The most recent item seen is a registered cover sent by a Flight sergeant of the RAF Mission to Greece with FPO 514 (Athens) dated 15th September 1951 (Fig. 12).



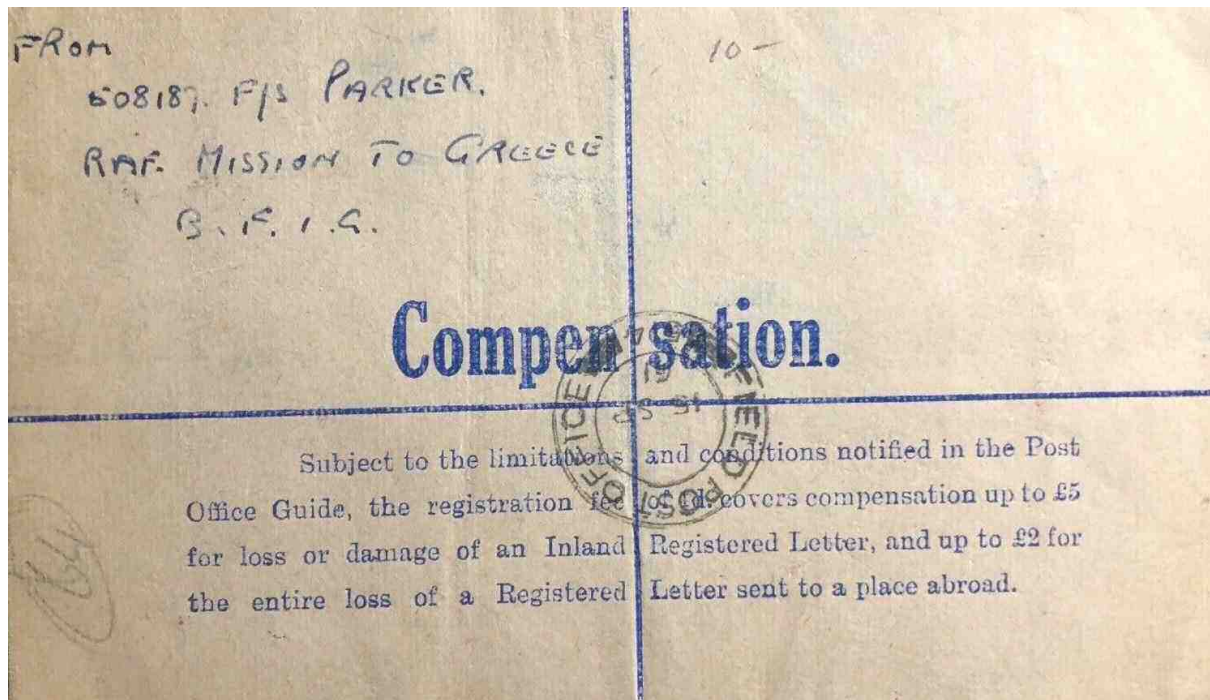


Figure 12. Registered cover despatched 15 September 1951 from FPO 514 based in Athens by a member of the RAF Mission to Greece.

Navy

A couple of items related to the Navy have been seen so far. However, none of the Royal Navy task force, comprising three aircraft carriers, two cruisers and five destroyers, forming part of Operation Manna that entered the Aegean on the 1st October 1944. They were clearing the Aegean and its islands as they worked their way north. The earliest one at hand is a cover posted through the British FPO system by US Navy chief hospital corpsman (HMC) Dale W Noyer of the US Navy Group American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG), 4 West Churchill St, Athens, Greece that shows the FPO 782 dated 13 April 1948 (Fig. 13).

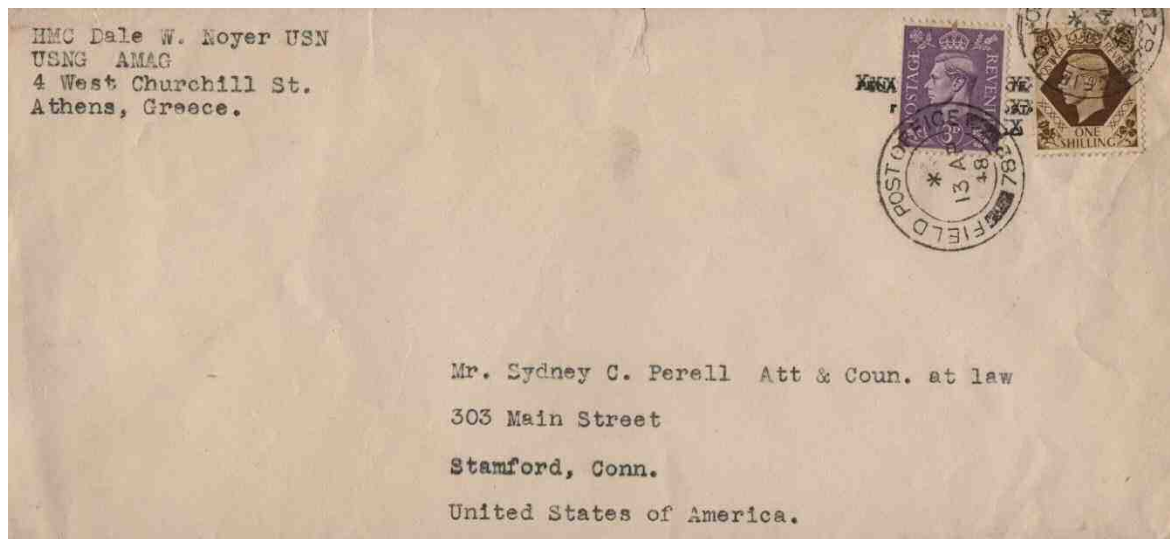


Figure 13. Cover despatched 13 April 1948 from FPO 782 by US Navy chief hospital corpsman (HMC) Dale W Noyer of the US Navy Group American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG), 4 West Churchill St, Athens, Greece to the USA. Collection of Joost Meijer.

In addition, a letter and a viewcard have been seen sent by members of the British Naval Mission to Greece with FPO 514 dated 1st September 1950 and 30th March 1951. Kanxidis (2012) reports that the British Fleet Mail Office 12 datestamp was used in Athens between January 1950 and end May 1950, while Anon. (1965) tells us that the British Fleet Mail Office 12 datestamp was used in Athens up to May 1952. Any postally used covers have to proof the actual use of this datestamp in Athens.

Indian Army

In November 1944, the 4th Indian Division was shipped from Italy to Greece to help stabilise the country after the German withdrawal (Stevens 1948). The headquarters with IFPO 17 and the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade with IFPO 13 were based in Salonika, while the 11th Indian Infantry Brigade arrived first in Patras in the Peloponnese (van der Bijl 2013). A third Indian Infantry Brigade, the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade with IFPO 24, was sent to Piraeus (the port for Athens) and next moved north to Salonika, while passing some time at Volos. The 4th Indian Division remained in Greece until it was disbanded there in March 1947. However, most units already returned home during February 1946. For the Indian army we can see the use of ordinary FPO numbers, but also so-called R-numbers. These latter appeared in the Middle East Force in September 1941, and were apparently introduced to supplement the ordinary FPOs. The R is believed to represent Reserve (de Burca 1956).

IFPO 13 arrived at Salonika on 28 November 1944 where it stayed until 5 April 1945 and moved the next day to Kavalla until 14 January 1946. It left Salonika on 18 February 1946 for Bombay. IFPO 17 left Taranto, Italy on 14 November 1944 arriving in Athens on 18 November 1944. It started operations in Piraeus on 23 November 1944 until 15 December 1945 (see Fig. 14).

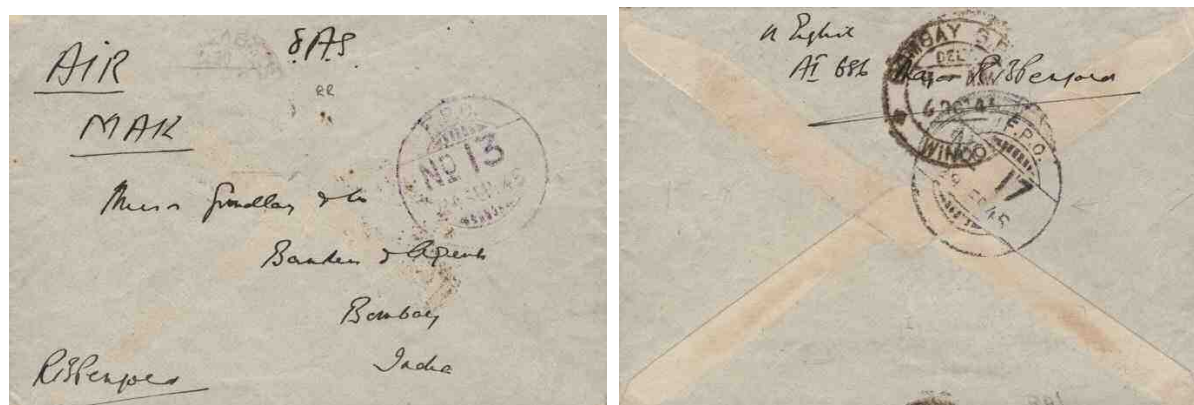


Figure 14. Cover despatched 24 September 1945 from Indian FPO 13 at Kavalla, passing on 29 September 1945 Indian FPO 17 at Piraeus and finally arriving in Bombay 4 October 1945. Collection of Joost Meijer.

It left Salonika on 18 February 1946 for Bombay. IFPO 24 left Taranto, Italy on 25 February 1945 arriving in Athens on 1 March 1945. On 7 March 1945 it operated at Volos, 24 March 1945 at Salonika and on 5 April 1945 at Verroia until 27 December 1945. It left Salonika on 18 February 1946 for Bombay. IFPO 86 left Taranto, Italy on 21 November 1944 arriving in Patras on 25 November 1945, while the same day they embarked for Salonika arriving there two days later. On 28 December 1944 it started operations in Salonika until 4 January 1946 (see Fig. 15). It left Salonika on 18 February 1946 for Bombay (Proud 1986).

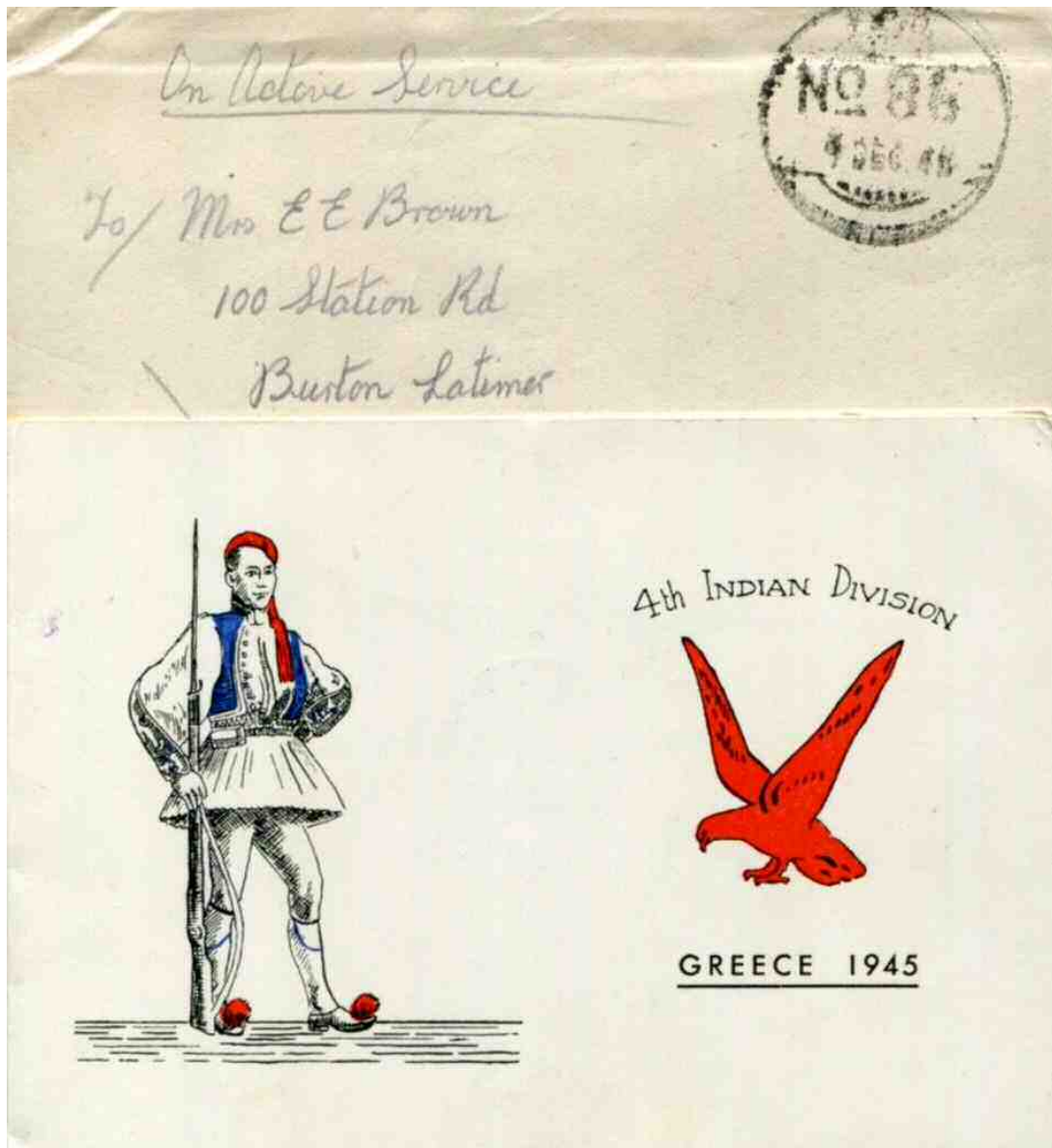


Figure 15. Cover despatched 4 December 1945 from Indian FPO 86 at Salonika holding a Christmas card of the Lovat Scouts, a British Army Scottish Highland yeomanry regiment, forming part of the 4th Indian Division in Greece at the time.

The 5th Indian Infantry Brigade started to use FPO R32 on 16 February 1945 at Volos although they had arrived there the previous month on the 16th. The FPO was operational until 6th March 1945 at Volos before it moved to Salonika where it started operating on 19th March 1945 until its closure on 18th February 1946 (Proud 1986).

When X Corps divisions were diverted from Italy, 268 Field Security Section (FSS) arrived in October under control of Security Intelligence Middle East until, in November, it moved with 290 (4th Indian Division) FSS and the Indians to Salonika, where they unearthed evidence of Soviet subversions and collusions with Greek communists (Fig. 16).

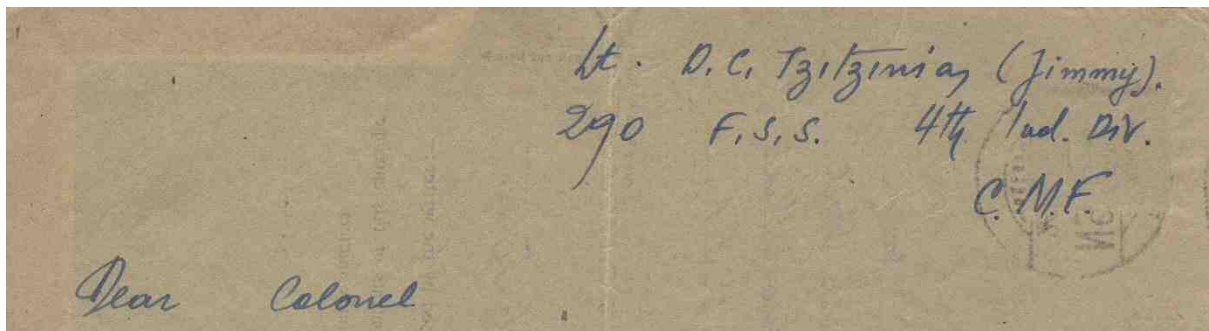
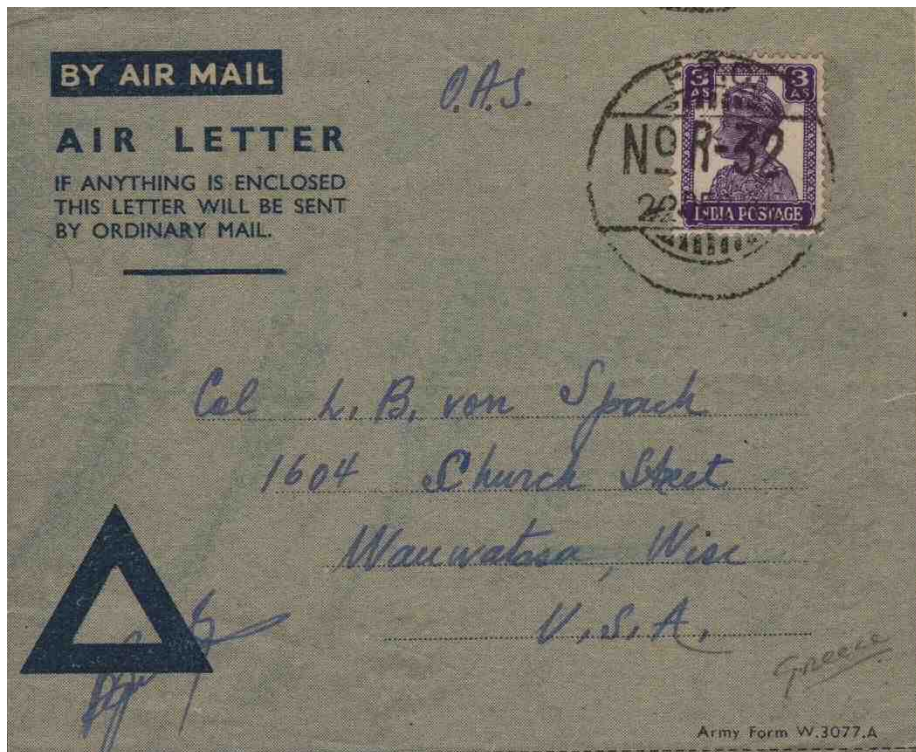


Figure 16. Air Letter despatched 22 December 1945 from FPO R32 at Salonika by Greek Lieutenant with the 290 Field Security Section of the 4th Indian Division to the USA. Collection of Joost Meijer.

A Censorship Directorate also arrived. Meanwhile 4th Infantry Division and its 5 FSS took over the Piraeus sector, and by Christmas Day had re-opened the port and road to Athens, allowing reinforcements to be landed. 31 FSS and 278 FSS arrived with 46th Infantry Division (van der Bijl 2013).

In Macedonia and Thrace the medical situation was at its worst.....the medical services undertook a health survey of northern Greece. 17th Field Ambulance (RAMC) was based in Kavalla, 26th Field Ambulance (RAMC) was based in Verroia whilst the 32nd Field Ambulance (RAMC) was based in Salonika. Likewise, 16th Indian General Hospital was based in Salonika. Detachments of 15th Field Hygiene Section, 2,3,12 & 131 Dental sections and a number of malaria control units were under (divisional) command.

Units of the 4th Indian Division served in Cyprus, Greece and later Austria as well as Palestine so one has to be careful to make sure that the cover of any of their units with FPO can really be allocated to Greece.

Discussion

Based on the literature and the covers at hand I observe the following. Although Jagger (1964) states that FPO 730 came into use to serve the Allied Military Liaison in Greece I believe that it was rather used in Salerno, Italy like Gould and Proud (1982) until proof to the contrary is shown. I am also confident that FPO 777 used only in Salonika, contrary to for example Kanxidis (2011). FPO 781 most likely operated in Athens as from December

1944, but only over there so not on Rhodes unlike what Kanxidis (2011) states for later on. However, so far no covers are seen of this FPO. By now we know that FPO 532 was never used in the Dodecanese. Also FPO 783 never moved to Rhodes, Dodecanese between July 1946 and April 1947, contrary to what Gould and Proud (1982) report. It remained in Athens as a concentration office for Greece following Alistair Kennedy.

FPOs in the 900 Series as reported in the Rundbrief 13 (1979) of the ArGe Griechenland are still to be confirmed. The same applies for FPOs 284, 285, 402, 454, 525, 567, 573, 709, 727, 778, 779, 780, 781 and the Indian FPO 211 which have most likely been used in Greece at the time but covers will have to prove this. So in case you have additional information please contact the author directly at marcparren@hotmail.com

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I like to thank the ArGe Griechenland (Greece Study Circle of Germany), Forces Postal History Society (U.K.), Hellenic Philatelic Society (Greece), Postzegelvereniging Griekenland (Greece Stamp Association of the Netherlands) and more specifically Michael Dobbs (U.K.), Richard Berry (U.K.), Philip Kaye (U.K.), Joost Meijer (The Netherlands), Laurence Spring (Surrey History Centre) and Neoklis Zafeirakopoulos (Greece) for sharing their knowledge and covers in their possession. I especially like to thank Philip Kaye for giving insight on what happened in the Dodecanese. It should be noted that much of the material at hand originates originally from the collection of the late Alistair Kennedy who documented British forces mail across the globe and kept notes to update the work of Robert Gould and Edward Proud.

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Table 1. British Field Post Offices in use in Greece between October 1944 and May 1952.

Based on Gould & Proud (1982)¹, Jagger (1964)², Quin (1985)³, Kanxidis (2011)⁴, Kaye (2010)⁵, Ransom (2020)⁶, Joost Meijer⁷, Nick Colley⁸, Richard Berry⁹, Lazaros Kanxidis¹⁰, Marc Parren¹¹, Jagger (1964)¹², Rundbrief 13 (1979)¹³, Alexandre Galinos¹⁴, Neoklis Zafeirakopoulos¹⁵, Michael Dobbs¹⁶, Phil Kaye¹⁷, Michael Petradakis¹⁸, Peter Harvey¹⁹. Figures in bold are the observed earliest and latest dates from actual covers, while the other dates are from literature.

FPO Nr.	Earliest Date	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Latest Date	Unit, Location
69	Jun 49 ^{1,4}	19 Mar 49 ⁷	09 Jan 50 ¹	05 Jun 49 ¹¹	APO S.433, Piraeus
137	10 Jun 45 ¹	23 Mar 45 ⁷	23 Feb 47 ¹	02 Mar 47 ¹¹	4 th Infantry Div., FPO T.4, Salonika
139	08 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}	30 Okt 44 ⁹	12 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}		15 BAPO, Piraeus
250	13 Dec 44 ^{1,3}	20 Mar 45 ⁸	31 Aug 45 ¹		4 th Infantry Div., FPO T.4
250	12 Apr 46 ¹		11 Jul 47 ¹		19 BAPO
264	13 Dec 44 ^{1,3}	21 Jan 45 ¹⁶	31 Jan 46 ¹		4 th Infantry Div., 19 BAPO
265	13 Dec 44 ^{1,3}		24 Okt 46 ¹	24 Okt 46 ¹⁵	4 th Infantry Div., 19 BAPO
266	22 Dec 44 ^{1,3,4}	13 Dec 44 ⁹	8 Nov 45 ¹	14 Apr 46 ⁷	4 th Infantry Div., Kavala
267	22 Dec 44 ^{1,3,4}		25 Mei 45 ¹	07 Jun 46 ⁹	4 th Infantry Div.
284	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}		07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}		46 th Infantry Div.
285	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}		07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}		46 th Infantry Div.
286	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}	09 Mar 45 ⁹	07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}		46 th Infantry Div.
287	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}	16 Mar 45 ¹⁷	07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}	23 Mar 45 ⁹	46 th Infantry Div., Peloponnesos
288	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}	06 Mar 45 ⁹	07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}		46 th Infantry Div.
375	25 Dec 44 ¹⁷	09 Apr 45 ¹⁷	09 Mei 45 ^{4,17}		14 L of C P.U., HQ Dodecanese Simi
375	11 Mei 45 ⁴	03 Nov 45 ¹⁷	22 Nov 46 ¹⁷	18 Apr 46 ¹⁸	14 L of C P.U., HQ Dodekanesos Rhodes
400	19 Dec 45 ^{1,3,4}	30 Okt 44 ⁹	29 Mei 45 ¹		APO S.430, Patras
402	16 Okt 45 ¹		01 Jul 46 ¹		Hassani, RAF station
454	12 Aug 47 ¹		Sep 48 ^{1,3,4}		APO S.433, Athens
514	25 Nov 44 ¹		01 Feb 45 ¹	01 Jun 45 ⁷	APO S.430, Patras
514	12 Apr 46 ¹		Jan 1950 ⁴		APO S.431, Prevesa
514	10 Jan 50	29 Jul 50 ¹¹	13 Mei 52 ⁶	05 Apr 52 ¹¹	APO S.433, Athens (BMM)
525	14 Jan 45 ^{1,3,4}		07 Apr 45 ^{1,3,4}		46 th Infantry Div.
567	12 Jan 46 ¹		08 Jul 49 ¹		8 L of C P.U.
573	01 Mar 46 ¹		Jun 49 ¹		APO S.443, 22 L of C P.U., Athene
654	01 Jun 45 ¹		Mar 46 ⁴		APO S.437, Siros, Cyclades
654	12 Apr 46 ¹		Feb 48 ⁴		APO S.431, Prevesa
654	Mar 48 ^{2,4,5}	08 Mar 48 ⁷	05 Jan 50 ^{1,2,13}	23 Mar 50 ¹¹	APO S.433, Athens
708	07 Nov 44 ¹	04 Nov 44 ¹¹	12 Apr 46 ¹	09 Feb 46 ¹⁹	23 Armoured Brigade
708	Sep 48 ¹				APO S.433, Athens
708	19 Jun 49 ¹				19 BAPO
709	09 Dec 44 ¹		25 Feb 45 ¹		FPO H.10
727	19 Okt 44 ^{1,3,4}		01 Jun 45 ^{1,3,4}		APO S.436, Chios
732	25 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}	11 Dec 44 ¹¹	16 Dec 44 ^{1,3,4}	10 Jan 45 ^{2,13}	APO S.432, Kalamata
732	16 Apr 45 ¹		29 Aug 45 ¹		22 L of C P.U.
752	12 Apr 46 ¹	08 Mei 46 ⁹	07 Jun 46 ¹		179 Bde, FPO B179, Patras
776	25 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}	05 Dec 44 ⁷	01 Dec 46 ^{1,3}	03 Apr 47 ¹⁸	APO S.433, Athens

777	21 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}	10 Mar 45⁷	Jan 46	11 Jul 47¹¹	APO S.434, Salonika
777	03 Apr 48 ^{4,5}	13 Apr 48⁷	15 Jan 50 ¹	16 Jan 50^{2,8,13}	FPO B.10, Salonika
778	26 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}		17 Dec 44 ^{1,3,4}		APO S.435, Kavala
778	16 Apr 45 ¹		08 Mei 45 ¹		APO S.435, Volos
779	27 Dec 44 ^{1,3,4}		29 Aug 45 ^{1,5}		22 L of C P.U.
780	Nov 44 ^{4,5}		Aug 45 ^{4,5}		22 L of C P.U.
781	27 Dec 44 ¹		Aug 45 ^{4,5}		22 L of C P.U.
782	25 Nov 44 ^{1,3,4}		Mar 45 ^{4,5}		APO S.433, Athens
782	13 Mar 45 ⁶	03 Apr 45¹¹	05 Dec 49 ¹³	21 Okt 49⁹	APO S.431, Athens ³
783	13 Nov 44 ¹	10 Nov 44¹⁵	29 Sep 48 ¹	12 Mar 48⁷	APO S.433, Athens

(B)APO = (Base) Army Post Office, L of C P.U. = Line of Communications Postal Unit

Table 2. Indian Field Post Offices in use in Greece between December 1944 and March 1947.

Based on Proud (1986)¹, Jagger (1958)², Joost Meijer³, Marc Parren⁴, Rundbrief 13 (1979)⁵, Alexandre Galinos⁶, Phil Kaye⁷, Michael Petradakis⁸, Kanxidid (2011)⁹, Sirotti (2006)¹⁰. Figures in bold are the observed earliest and latest dates from actual covers, while the other dates are from literature.

FPO No.	Earliest Date	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Latest Date	Unit, Location
R8	May 45 ¹	14 Aug 45⁸	19 Jul 46 ¹	30 Aug 45¹⁰	Leros, Dodekanesos
R10	Apr 45 ⁷	02 May 45⁸	27 Jun 45 ¹	23 Jun 45⁷	Karpathos, Dodekanesos
13	28 Nov 44 ¹		05 Apr 45 ¹		4 th Indian Div., Thessaloniki
13	06 Apr 45 ¹	16 Jul 45⁴	14 Jan 46 ¹	24 Sep 45³	4 th Indian Div., Kavalla
17	23 Nov 44 ¹	21 Jun 45³	15 Dec 45 ⁶	15 Dec 45⁴	4 th Indian Div., Piraeus
24	07 Mar 45 ¹				4 th Indian Div., Volos
24	24 Mar 45 ¹				4 th Indian Div., Thessaloniki
24	05 Apr 45 ¹	09 Apr 45⁹	27 Dec 45 ¹		4 th Indian Div., Veria
R32	18 Jan 45 ¹		06 Mar 45 ¹	Mar 45²	4 th Indian Div., Volos
R32	19 Mar 45 ¹	Jun 45³	18 Feb 46 ¹	22 Dec 45³	4 th Indian Div., Thessaloniki
86	28 Dec 44 ¹	13 Mar 45³	04 Jan 46 ¹	04 Dec 45²	4 th Indian Div., Thessaloniki
90	25 Dec 44 ⁷	09 Apr 45⁷	09 May 45 ⁷		HQ Dodekanesos Simi
90	09 May 45 ⁷	1 Sep 45¹⁰	28 Oct 46 ⁷	21 Aug 46⁷	HQ Dodekanesos Rhodes
211?	18 May 45 ¹		5 Jun 45 ¹		4 th Indian Div., Edessa
211?	6 Jun 45 ¹		30 Jul 45 ¹		4 th Indian Div., Kozani
211?	31 Jul 45 ¹		31 Oct 45 ¹		4 th Indian Div., Larissa