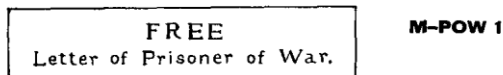


# THE PRISONER-OF-WAR AND INTERNMENT CAMPS IN JAMAICA DURING THE TWO WORLD WARS

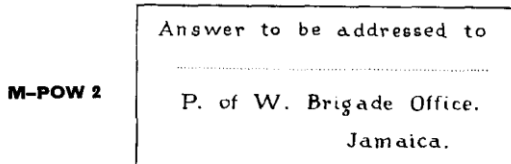
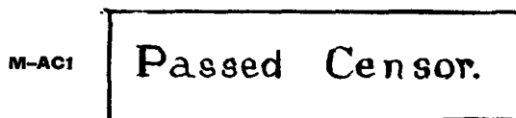
By Thomas Foster

## The P.O.W. Camp at Up Park Camp: 1914-1918

This camp was formed as a brigade unit and located within the main Up Park Camp in Lower St. Andrew, on the outskirts of Kingston. The brigade catered for civilian internees and prisoners-of-war, the latter being the crews of merchant ships (most of them naval reservists) and naval units that had been detained in port or captured at sea by the Royal Navy. The camp was not used for the internment of Central Powers army personnel from the European theatre of war.



(Reduced to half linear)



(Reduced to half linear)

Regulations for sending mail from the camp appear to have been as follows:-

1. Postage on all letters was free and mail was usually hand-stamped on the obverse at the brigade office with type M-POW1 in violet ink (October 10th, 1914, to May 26th, 1915). This hand-struck mark was also the authorisation for free postage.

2. All correspondence, whether for overseas or within the island, was censored at brigade and hand-stamped with type M-AC1 in violet ink (October 10th to May 26th, 1915). These letters bear the initials of the censoring officer.

Letters for overseas destinations were also subject to postal censorship and were, therefore, additionally hand-stamped with type M-PC1 in black ink (March 29th to May 1915), usually superimposed on M-POW1. This postal censor marking was almost certainly applied on arrival in the United Kingdom.

Letters from the brigade staff were censored as well as those from the internees.

3. The name of the internee and the camp had to be placed on the reverse of the letter in the following form:—

Prisoner of War Carl Schmidt,  
Kingston, Jamaica,  
Brigade Office,  
Up Park Camp.

Envelopes supplied to internees were often hand-stamped on the reverse before distribution with type M-POW2 in violet ink (October 10th, 1914, to May 26th, 1915), leaving the sender to insert his name in the space provided. Examples exist where the name has been omitted.



KINGSTON  
NOV 16-14  
7-30 AM  
JAMAICA

KAMD 1

KAMC 1  
(Reduced to half linear)

4. All letters were handed into the brigade office and after being processed as above, were posted at the Cross Roads Post Office situated on the outskirts of the camp, where they received a strike of the type DC2a date-stamp of that office. On arrival at the Kingston G.P.O., letters were passed through the automatic cancelling machine and carry impressions of types KAMD1 and KAMC1. The author has no record of any P.O.W. or internees' mail from this camp dated later than May 1915 and it is possible that the unit may have disbanded after that date and the internees have been sent to the United Kingdom.

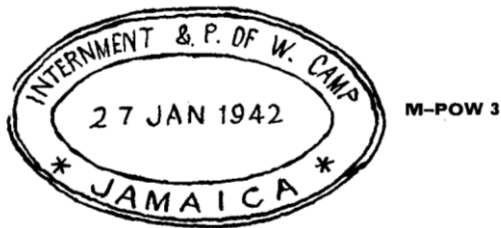
## The P.O.W. and Civilian Internment Camp at Up Park Camp: 1939-1945

The camp was established at the north-east end of the main military complex which housed the Canadian infantry garrison\*<sup>1</sup> and certain British corps troops, approximately in the area now occupied by the National Stadium where the Commonwealth Games of 1966 were held.

Originally, both classes of internees were housed together. The civilians were largely German planters and not ardent Nazis, having been rounded up and deported from Africa where they had been born and spent their lives. On the other hand, the prisoners-of-war were principally U-boat crews and most ardent Nazis.

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<sup>1</sup> After May 27th, 1940. See STAMP COLLECTING article of October 22nd, 1965, amended and r.published in the Bulletin of the British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group for May 1967, both articles dealing with mail sent from this garrison camp.



Attempts by the latter to spread their enthusiasm amongst the civilians caused a lot of friction, so the camp was divided into civilian and P.O.W. accommodation. Later, the P.O.W. quarters were again divided, as some of its inhabitants were merchant seamen and older men who were not such fanatical Nazis.

Guards were provided at first from units in the main camp, but these duties were soon taken over by a Pioneer Corps company which had been formed from refugees housed in the Gibraltar Camp at Mona.

Although the internment camp was sub-divided into three parts, it still operated as a complete unit and the following regulations for sending mail have been observed:-

1. All postage was free and officially-printed camp postcards were often used for correspondence.
2. All mail was subject to unit censorship at the camp office, where it was hand-stamped with type M-POW3 in either red (December 21st, 1940) or violet ink (July 8th, 1941, to December 16th, 1945). The date in this hand-stamp was applied by means of a separate hand-stamped date-line, at first in large figures and letters, later in smaller units and sometimes inserted in manuscript.

**POSTAGE PAID** M-POW4

M-POW5 LETTER IN *English*

FROM..... No.....  
INTERNMENT CAMP  
JAMAICA  
M-POW6  
(Reduced to half linear)

POSTAL CENSOR  
JAMAICA M-PC2  
PASSED  
(6)

3. Letters from civilian internees exist with type M-POW4, M-POW5 and M-POW6 (all December 1st, 1941, to June 1943) struck in violet ink and applied in addition to M-POW3. These three additional hand-stamps were probably applied to envelopes prior to distribution.

All correspondence had to bear the name and camp serial number of the P.O.W. or internee.

4. All correspondence from the camp was handled through the Kingston G.P.O. and rarely bears Jamaican postal markings.

5. Mail for overseas destinations was subject to Postal Censorship at the Kingston G.P.O. The first markings used there were the type M-PC2 hand-stamps numbered

'1' to '6' and struck in violet ink (June 1941 to January 27th, 1942).

Sometime later, the Jamaican Postal Censor began using a different hand-stamp which included an authorisation of free airmail postage. It read:—' INTERNEES FREE AIR MAIL: POSTAL CENSOR 1 DEC 1941 ' and is listed as type M-PC3 but not illustrated. The author has recorded its use on camp postcards but has never seen an example and would appreciate details.



M-PC4



M-PC4a

Still later, new postal censor hand-stamps were introduced and struck in violet ink. Types M-PC4 (June 12th, 1942, to February 19th, 1945) numbered D/7, D/35 and D/39, and M-PC4a (April 13th, 1942, to June 28th, 1943) numbered D5 have been noted and other numbers may exist. These hand-stamps are usually seen on correspondence to the U.S.A., but they were applied at the Kingston G.P.O.

Letters and cards to the U.S.A. sometimes carry American censorship markings, consisting of a large single-lined circle inscribed ' U.S. CENSORSHIP ' around the top and with a five-pointed star above the words 'EXAMINED/By 159' in two lines across the centre.

6. Letters to the United Kingdom were subject to further censorship on arrival. No hand-stamps appear to have been used but the mail was opened and re-sealed by various types of gummed strip bearing a Postal Censor or Examiner's number.

Letters to Europe and Germany passed through the hands of the German Army Censor after leaving the United Kingdom and were again opened and re-sealed with gummed strip, often tied to the envelope by strikes in red ink of a circular hand-stamp having the same design as the gummed strip.

7. Letters from enemy countries addressed to inmates of the Internment Camp, Kingston, Jamaica, were often transmitted via the Red Cross in Switzerland. Letters from Italian sources are known housed in plain envelopes bearing Swiss meter frankings paying the 90 centimes postage required. These envelopes are hand-stamped 'Service italiane' and usually bear the typewritten inscriptions 'VIA AEREA' and 'posta per gli internati civili di guerra'. All letters seen bear ROMA and GENEVE Red Cross hand-stamps.

On arrival at the Kingston G.P.O., these letters were postally censored and hand-stamped with type M-PC4 numbered D/7. At the camp, the envelopes were further hand-stamped in violet ink with M-AC2 (c. late 1942) and it is possible that different examination numbers exist of this marking.

The camp was probably closed down in 1946 but the exact details are at present unknown.



(Co  
pa

MAC2

### The Women's Internment Camp: 1939-1945

The evidence presented by one letter from Jamaica to the U.S.A., where it was received on June 19th, 1941, suggests that a camp existed but its whereabouts cannot be traced and servicemen in the island at that time have no recollection of its existence.

The letter is inscribed on the reverse with a return address at the 'Women's Internment Camp' and carries a strike of the postal censor hand-stamp type M-PC2 in violet ink.

It is obvious that a camp of this nature would not be part of the men's camp and this supposition is confirmed to some extent by the absence of type M-POW3 from the letter. It is possible that the camp was located in another part of Up Park Camp or even elsewhere in Kingston or at the hill station of Newcastle, but it would have needed a certain proportion of women guards who presumably would have been supplied by the A.T.S. In this respect, it should be stated that the United Kingdom A.T.S. at Up Park Camp were entirely signals personnel employed on cypher duties, whilst the local A.T.S. were all clerks in the various offices within the main camp.

Any information concerning the location of this camp would be of the greatest help to the author.

### The Gibraltar Camp at Mona

After the fall of France in 1940, there was considerable speculation regarding a possible advance by the victorious German armies through Spain against the fortress of Gibraltar at the eastern entrance to the Mediterranean.

The British military authorities took a serious view of the situation and to alleviate future possibilities, decided to evacuate the civilian population from Gibraltar until some safer time. Most of the refugees were brought to the United Kingdom, but a considerable number were taken to Jamaica and on arrival, were housed in a camp erected at the southern end of the old Mona Estate lying between the Hope River and Long Mountain, about three miles north-east from the Up Park Camp military complex.

The camp was officially named Gibraltar Camp to distinguish it from the Mona Camp on the other part of the estate which housed the Jamaica Battalion of the local defence force. It was opened in 1941 and most of the men were enrolled into the local Pioneer Corps and served as guards at the nearby P.O.W. and Internment Camp. At a later date, some of the married quarters in the main Up Park Camp were used to house certain married families, leaving Gibraltar Camp to be occupied mainly by the camp guards or single personnel.

Gibraltar Camp was administered as a separate army unit from a Camp Orderly Room and until the postal agency was opened in 1943, mail from the refugees had to be handed into that office for despatch and was handled as follows:-

1. Letters had to be fully prepaid at the current civil rates and on receipt were hand-stamped with an

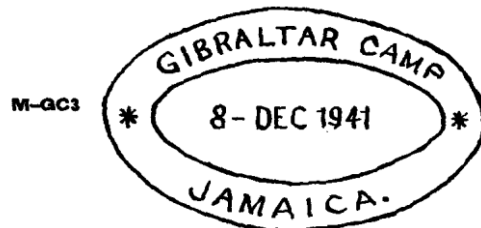
identifying unit marking. Six hand-stamps of this type were used and they were always applied to the envelope and did not cancel the adhesives.

(a) Type M-GC1 (not illustrated) had the words 'GIBRALTAR CAMP' set up in a straight line. It was used at a very early date but the author has not seen it and would appreciate the chance of inspecting an example.



M-GC2a

(b) Types M-GC2 and M-GC2a struck in black ink and undated. M-GC2 (July 21st to December 8th, 1941— not illustrated) has the letter 'C' of 'CAMP' raised out of line. M-GC2a (April 1st to October 28th, 1942) has all the lettering in line. Both these hand-stamps were in concurrent use with the following types and were intended to be used only on civilian mail from the camp.



M-GC3

(c) Types M-GC3 and M-GC3a struck in violet ink. M-GC3 (latest known date December 8th, 1941) has a 3 mm. gap between 'GIBRALTAR' and 'CAMP' and the word 'JAMAICA' is 25 mm. long. (April 1st, 1942, onwards, not illustrated) has a 4 mm. gap with 'JAMAICA' measuring 20 mm in length.

Both hand-stamps were intended for use only on military mail from the Camp Orderly Room.

(d) Morale at the camp was always very high and to foster it, many of the letters carried the 'V' Slogan type M-GC4 (December 1941 to May 1942) in violet ink and applied at the orderly room.

2. The letters were taken to the Kingston G.P.O. for posting and received the normal treatment, i.e., mail for overseas was liable to postal censorship. Nearly all the letters seen have the stamps cancelled with type DCK1e-4 of that office.

3. Letters for the United Kingdom were usually opened on arrival and re-sealed with gummed strip bearing examiner's number, etc.



M-GC4



DCK1e-4



Letters for Gibraltar were censored on arrival and have been opened and resealed with gummed strip. Some letters were hand-stamped at Gibraltar with type M-PC5 (September 24th, 1941, onwards) in red ink.

O.H.M.S. letters can often be found from this camp without adhesives but bearing strikes of the various Camp Orderly Room hand-stamps. It must not be forgotten that the camp itself was a military unit, and that a certain amount of unclassified correspondence would emanate from its orderly room, i.e., orders for supplies to merchants in Kingston, and that these letters could be posted in the normal way through Post Office channels.

At the same time, the unit would have certain military correspondence of a classified nature that would have to be transmitted by Army Signals despatch rider and not by post. It is my firm conviction that the scarcity of the M-GC3 and M-GC3a markings lies in the fact that they were intended only for use on military mail from the camp, leaving the M-GC2 and M-GC2a hand-stamps to be used on refugee mail. I have never seen examples of either of the oval hand-stamps on refugee mail or cancelling adhesives.

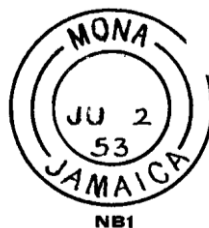
Another point worth mentioning is that servicemen employed at the camp only paid the privileged military rates on their air and sea mail and this is the reason for the differing postal rates that can be found on mail from Gibraltar Camp.

By the end of 1942, the quantity of mail handled through the Camp Orderly Room was assuming large proportions and on April 1st, 1943, a Postal Agency of the Jamaica Post Office was opened in the camp. At that time, it was normal post office procedure to issue newly-opened agencies with a temporary date-stamp, struck in violet ink, but it is extremely doubtful whether a T.R.D. was ever issued to this agency, and the earliest known date of the steel date-stamp provided, type B2a (May 15th, 1943, to February 12th, 1947) and struck in black ink bears out this assumption. For a long time, it was thought that M-GC3 and M-GC3a were the T.R.D. provided but this theory is now disproved, and up-to-date records reveal that many other army units employed markings resembling these T.R.D.s and that they were made by the same manufacturer in the island.

The Gibraltar refugees were repatriated to the 'Rock' during February and March 1947 and the postal agency closed about the same time.

The empty site and its hutted accommodation was immediately utilised for the new West Indies University, now known as the Mona University, pending the erection of permanent buildings and, nowadays, is an attractive university campus. Evidence of the existence of the old camp can still be seen in the presence of three roads crossing the campus, i.e., Gibraltar Hall Road West & East and Gibraltar Camp Road. The university and neighbourhood are now served by a modern post office which was opened in December 1950 and stands within

the university grounds, but bears the old district name of Mona (type NB1).



Finally, one or two words concerning Up Park Camp itself, which was the headquarters for the whole of the Northern Caribbean. The name was usually applied to the main garrison camp but in actual fact, applied to the whole area including the Mona Camps and was rather like a miniature Aldershot. The various camps within its boundaries were not large by United Kingdom standards but they were scattered over an area of several square miles. What was called the main camp, comprised three or four separate barracks including the Harman Barracks, various stores, garages, vehicle parks, workshops, maintenance areas, married quarters, messes, offices and a hospital, together with a polo ground, sports ground and market garden, the latter, incidentally, tended by P.O.W's.

Part of the Harman Barracks were occupied by the North Caribbean Wireless Link—the main link to the United Kingdom and a relay station to the Far Eastern Network. Another part was occupied by the Command Pay Office and the remainder by the Jamaica Regimental Police Barracks and the Detention Barracks.

I hope to deal with other sections of the military postal history of Jamaica since 1939 in future articles and, meanwhile, would welcome correspondence from ex-servicemen who have served in Jamaica together with details of any postal markings or information not mentioned in this article.

#### Acknowledgements

No literature on this subject is thought to exist, although there are one or two working notes to be found in the various bulletins of the British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group. To these bulletins and the following gentlemen, I am grateful for assistance in preparing these notes:— Doctor R.H. Blackburn, L.A. Courtney, W. H. Crow, R.H. Lant, Clinton L. von Pohle, Col. F.F. Seifert, U.S.A.F., V.N.F. Surtees, Robert Topaz, Ronald Ward and others.