

The Army Post Office

(from Wikipedia)

The First World War mail services to the British Army and later the Royal Air Force (RAF) were provided by the Royal Engineers (Postal Service) (RE (PS)). The Field Service Regulations (FSR), Part 2 published in 1909, referred to the service as the Army Postal Service (APS). The FSR chapter covering the function of the APS was written, at the request of the War Office, by Lt Col (later Brig-Gen) W Price CMG, who was the Director Army Postal Service (DAPS) throughout the war.^[1]

The RE (PS) operated in all theatres of war and where expedient their service was dovetailed into the services of the Dominion troops (principally Australian, Canadian, Indian and New Zealand army postal services).

Staffing - Members of the RE (PS) were almost exclusively recruited from the General Post Office (GPO) and at the start of the war had an establishment of 10 officers and 280 other ranks, by the end of the war the establishment was approx. 7,000 all ranks. From May 1917 members of Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) were employed at the Base Army Post Offices (BAPO) and the stationary Army Post Offices (APO) located on the Western Front, they too were wholly recruited from among the GPO staff.

Mail circulation - Generally, mail (letters & parcels) posted in the UK addressed to troops overseas was circulated by the GPO to the Home Postal Depot (HPD) in London where it was sorted by theatre and unit. It was then despatched to embarkation ports and loaded on vessels for transportation to the theatre's BAPO. At the BAPO the mail was sorted and loaded onto supply trains for transportation to the railhead. At the railhead the mail guard, who had accompanied the mail from the BAPO, and members of the railhead APO transferred the mails to the supply column (usually lorries) for the journey to the Refilling Points where the attached Field Post Office (FPO) staff would receive the mail and then distribute it the Unit Post Orderlies (UPOs) who had travelled to the Refilling Point on regimental transport. Homeward bound mail was sent in the reverse direction back to the BAPO, who would be responsible for loading it onto vessels bound for the UK. On the mail's arrival in the UK it was put into the GPO system for delivery to the addressee

Functions - The Base Army Post Office (BAPO) was the principle sorting office for all postal matter passing between the forces' postal service, HPD and other postal administrations. It also carried out the ancillary postal administrative functions required to maintain the postal service in the field.