"C" Force - The Hong Kong Story

REPATRIATION

With the surrender of Japan on August 15, the priorities were the freeing and tending to the needs of the former POWs, such as for medical and health issues, communicating with their families, clothing and feeding, and ultimately the process of bringing them home. Of those Canadians who surrendered at Hong Kong on December 25, 1941, approximately 900 were kept in Hong Kong camps while the balance of about 750 were taken to work camps in Japan. The liberated Canadians in Japan came home via three different routes depending on each individual's circumstances:

- a) those with lung trouble, seriously ill and unable to fly were taken by hospital ships to the hospitals on Guam and then sailed to San Francisco, where they were placed on special medical rail cars to be transported to British Columbia;
- b) those requiring a few weeks of special feeding and care prior to travelling were sent to hospitals in Guam and then either flown or sailed to San Francisco and then travelled by train to British Columbia;
- c) all others were transported by ship or air to the main reception camp at Manila for processing, There, they underwent medical check ups and travelled by ship either to Canada, or to San Francisco and then by rail to British Columbia.

All the liberated Canadians in Hong Kong were sent to the reception camp at Manila.

Those that Came Home via Guam

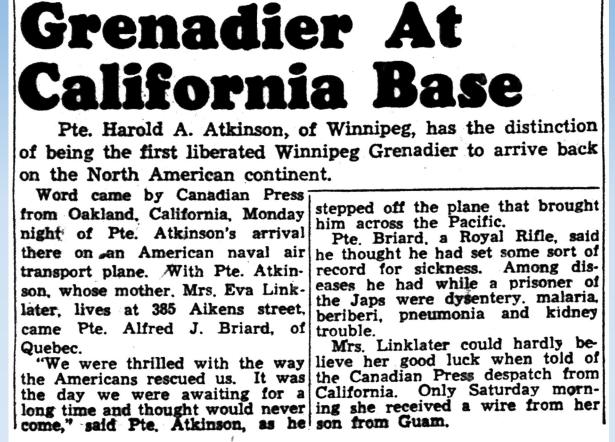
The first liberated POWs (LPOWs) to arrive on Canadian soil were those who were kept in Japan. Upon the surrender of the Japanese, the American forces began to bring the LPOWs to Yokohama where those who needed medical attention were transported to Guam and then to San Francisco, upon arrival at San Francisco they were taken by special train to Seattle and then by ferry to Victoria.



Liberated Canadian receiving medical attention aboard the American hospital ship SS Benevolence. – Winnipeg Free Press, September 11, 1945



Liberated Canadians aboard the American hospital ship SS Benevolence on their way to Guam. – Courtesy Library and Archives Canada PA-131532



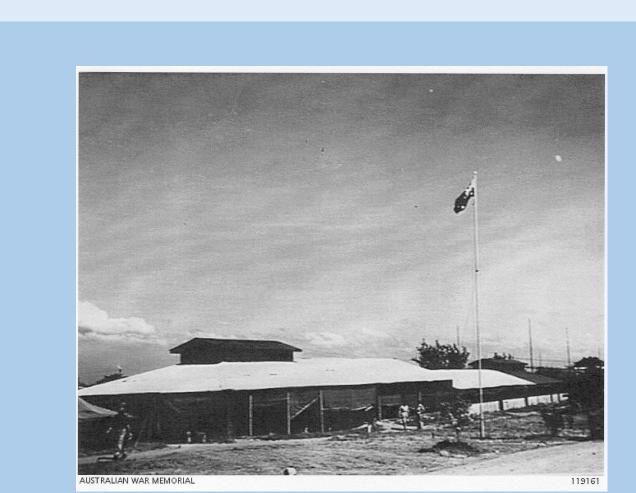
Newspaper story of the first Grenadier to arrive in North America. – Winnipeg Free Press, September 11, 1945

Those that Came Home via the Philippines

Canadian LPOWs began arriving in Manila from Japan on British and American war ships as well as US military air flights. Those coming from Hong Kong arrived in British war ships and the Canadian war ship HMCS Prince Robert and the troop transport HMAT Empress of Australia. All Canadian LPOWs from Hong Kong were brought to Manila as were many from the Japanese POW camps.

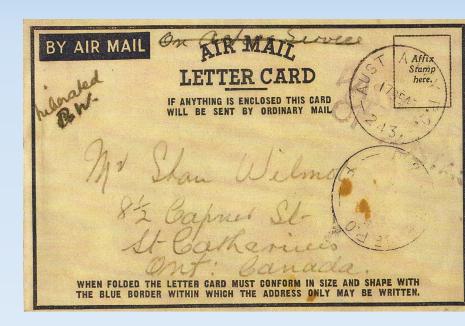
Prior to the official surrender, the U.S. Army in the Philippines began converting the 5th Replacement Depot to a repatriation camp for the British and Commonwealth LPOWs. When the Canadians arrived at the 5th Replacement Depot, the Canadian section of the camp had a truly Canadian atmosphere; freshly-painted street signs bore names of such streets in Canadian cities as Portage Ave., Yonge St., and St. Catherine, Granville and Sparks Sts. The two mess halls were named Fort Garry and Frontenac.

The 5th Replacement Depot was administered by the 3rd Australian Reception Group which was composed of the Australian Army and they would be running the camp and tending to the affairs of the Commonwealth soldiers until their respective repatriation teams arrived.



3rd Australian Prisoner of War Reception Headquarters, with the Australian flag flying outside. - Courtesy Australian War Memorial, Photo 119161. - Photograph by Lieutenant N. B. Stuckey.

Percy Wilmot was a member of the Royal Rifles of Canada and was kept as a prisoner of war in Hong Kong, upon his arrival in Manila he wrote a letter home to his wife and son. The Canadian postal material hadn't yet so the LPOWs used Australian, British or US envelopes for sending mail to their families.



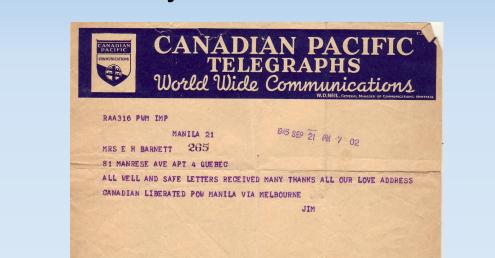


313 General Hospital A.P.O. 75 Manilla P.I. Post Office At last I am writing you again as a free man. We have left Hong Kong and are now in the American Army Hospital in the Philippines about 20 miles from Manilla we arrived here last Thursday morning on the British transport ship HMAT Empress of Australia & laid out in Manilla Bay till evening when we docked and were brought here by Ambulances. I will never forget the sight of the ships in the habour, there were hundreds of them, from aircraft carriers & battleships to transports & large

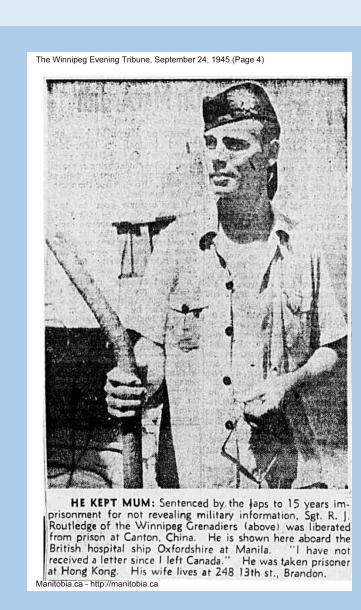
The contents of the letter are:

Well old son I hope you and Mother are well take care of yourself and I hope to be home soon we may be flown home from here as we get fit Do not worry about me as I am getting well looked after here the Americans are very good to us here. They simply can t do enough for us & I shall never forget their kindness. Well old chap I think this is all I can say now. Write if you can air Mail hoping to see you soon Love to Mother.

Soldiers had the use of sending telegrams home to their families to inform them that they were now in safe hands.



Telegram from Chaplain Barnett now in Manila to his family. – Courtesy of Gray Scrimgeour



Sgt. R. J. Routledge of the Winnipeg Grenadiers (above) was liberated from prison at Canton, China. He is shown here aboard the British hospital ship Oxfordshire at Manila. He had not received a letter since he left Canada. - The Winnipeg Evening Tribune, September 24, 1945

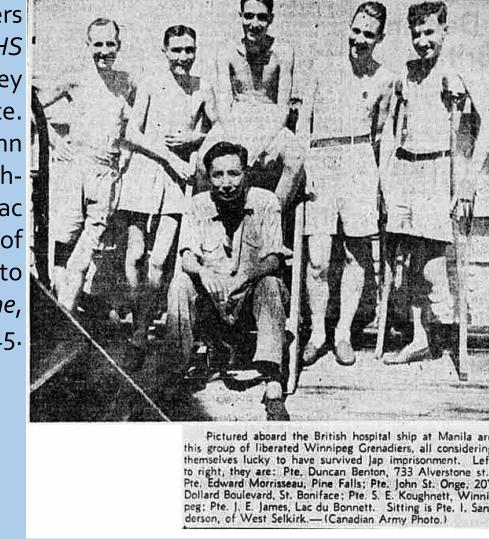


Photo of Canadian liberated POWs outside a tent at the 5th Replacement Depot. – Courtesy of Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies



Canadian LPOWs who had just arrived at Manila. -Library and Archives Canada, PA-137745

A group of liberated Winnipeg Grenadiers aboard the British hospital ship HMHS Oxfordshire at Manila. Left to right, they are Pte. Duncan Benton, Winnipeg; Pte. Edward Morisseau, Pine Falls; Pte. John St. Onge, St. Boniface; Pte. S. E. Koughnett, Winnipeg; and Pte. J. E. James, Lac du Bonnett. Sitting is Pte. I. Sanderson of West Selkirk. - Canadian Army photo from The Winnipeg Evening Tribune, September 24, 1945.



On September 5, 1945, the British hospital ship HMHS Oxfordshire arrived at Manila with the first 319 LPOWs and civilian internees from Hong Kong. Those aboard included British, Canadians, South Africans, Australians, Indians, Norwegians and one American. About 116 were taken from the ship and were transferred to local replacement depots.

Canadian Repatriation Liaison Group (CRLG)



- Canadian Army Photo, Ottawa Evening Citizen, Sept. 4, 1945

As early as August 17, 1945, preparations were made to form a Canadian repatriation team to go to the Far East for the repatriation of the Canadian LPOWs. E. H. Norman, formerly the language officer of the Canadian legation in Tokyo, headed the official repatriation team. Norman himself was repatriated to Canada in August 1942 with other Canadian diplomats.

On August 22, Lt.-Col. M. W. McA Nulty and Major Angus Barwick left Ottawa for the west coast, where they caught a flight to the Philippines. The newly formed CRLG team was made up of 15 officers and 15 NCOs, with other members to be arriving shortly.

The St. Catharines Standard, August 25, 1945 issue, Canadians Fly to Manila, with the following caption: Lieut-Col. M. W. McNulty of Sherbrooke, Que., commanding officer, and Major Angus Barwick of Montreal, second in command of a party of 30 officers and men who are flying to Manila as the Canadian repatriation liaison group in connection with the return of Canadian prisoners of war. They are seen boarding their plane at Ottawa.

On November 12, 1945, the Canadian Repatriation Team along with the members of No. 1 Special Wireless Group, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (RCCS) as well as the British Repatriation Team left Manila aboard the Royal Navy hospital ship *HMCHS Letitia*. They arrived at Vancouver on December 6.

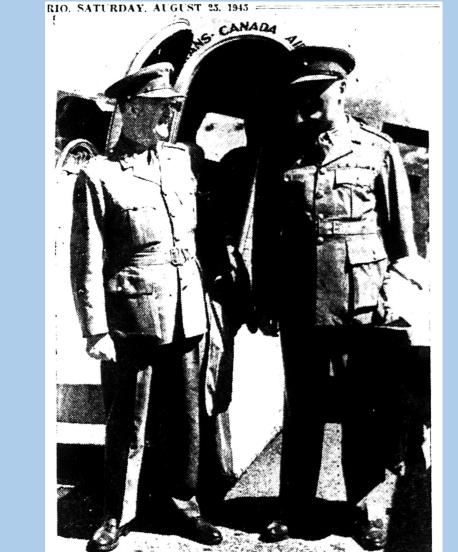
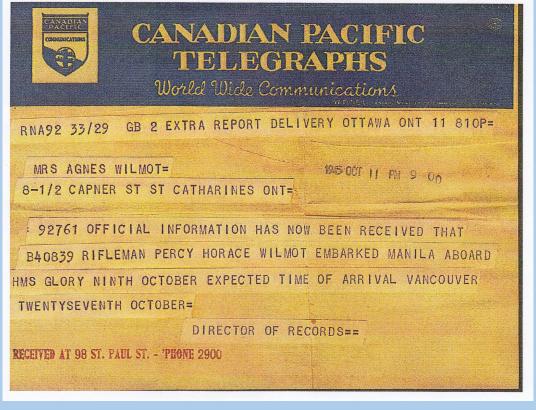


Photo of Lieut.-Col. M. W. McANulty and Major Angus Barwick who are in command of the Canadian repatriation team, as they are boarding a plane for their trip to Manila. - St. Catharines Standard, August 25,

The Trip Home

When it was time to begin the journey home, either the LPOW or the government would notify the family that their soldier was on their way.



Telegram sent to Rifleman Wilmont's wife, dated October 11, 1945 – CWM 20070117-076 George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canada War Museum.

Welcome Cards

LIST OF REPATRIATION SHIPS WHICH CARRIED "C" FORCE MEMBERS FROM MANILA TO CANADA

Repatriation ship sailings from Manila							
Name of ship	Nationality	Departure Date	Arrival Port	Arrival Date			
To Canada				,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,			
USAT General Langfitt Transported 10 Canadians and :	United States 286 British	Sept. 15, 1945	Esquimault, BC	Oct. 3, 1945			
USS Admiral Hugh Rodman	United States	Sept. 18, 1945	Vancouver, BC	Oct. 7, 1945			
USS Gosper Transported American, 1,936 Br	United States itish and Canadi	•	Victoria, BC	Oct. 12, 1945			
USS Admiral C. F. Hughes United States Sept. 24, 1945 Victoria, BC Oct. 9, 1945 Transported 3,881 passengers including 1,951 U.S. Army enlisted men, POWs made up of 465 American, 1,263 British, 141 Canadian 18 British Indians, Civilians 13 U.S., 12 British and 18 U.S. Army nurses all of whom were confined to Japanese prison camps.							
HMS Implacable Transported 2,127 British of whi	British ch 5 were Canad		Esquimalt, BC RCAF attached to the RAF	Oct. 11, 1945			
HMCS Prince Robert Transported 27 Canadians and	Canadian 15 Missionaries	Oct. 2, 1945	Esquimalt, BC	Oct. 20, 1945			
HMS Glory Transported 1,460 (including 37	British Canadian sick a	Oct. 9, 1945 and 119 fit)	Esquimalt, BC	Oct. 27, 1945			
HMCHS Letitia To Tacoma Washington, transpo To Vancouver, transported the th Repatriation Liaison Group, the Norwegian Merchant Marine an	ne last Canadian British Repatriati	LPOW from the far of on Team, 8 French a	east, 31 members of the Can				

8 D 8				
To the United States*				
USS Catron Transported 58 Canadians and	United States 950 British	Sept. , 1945	San Francisco, Calif.	Oct. 19, 1945
USS General Howze Transported 585 British and Ca	United States anadians	Sept. , 1945	San Francisco, Calif.	Oct. 15, 1945
USS Joseph T. Dickman Transported 2,800 American, 4			San Francisco, Calif.	Oct. 16, 1945
USS Ozark Transported 950 British and Ca	United States anadians	Sept. , 1945	San Francisco, Calif.	Oct. 2, 1945
USS General Brewster Transported 551 British and 19	United States Canadians	Oct. 19, 1945	San Francisco, Calif.	Nov. 3, 1945
*Those who were taken to San then ferry to Victoria.	Francisco were	then transported by	train to Vancouver or by tra	in to Seattle and

Welcome card given to British and Canadian LPOWs arriving

in Canada. - CWM 20120037-022.2 George Metcalf Archiv-

al Collection, Canada War Museum.

A list of the ships which left Manila to return the Hong Kong LPOWs to North America. Those who arrived at San Francisco were placed on trains which took them to Vancouver, British Columbia, or Seattle, Washington where they were then ferried

across to Victoria.



HMS Glory and HMCS Prince Robert

The Prince Robert left Manila on October 2 and arrived at Esquimalt on October 20 with 27 Canadians, 17 British, 1 RCAF officer and 15 Roman



The British aircraft carrier HMS Glory arriving at Esquimalt, B.C. – Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

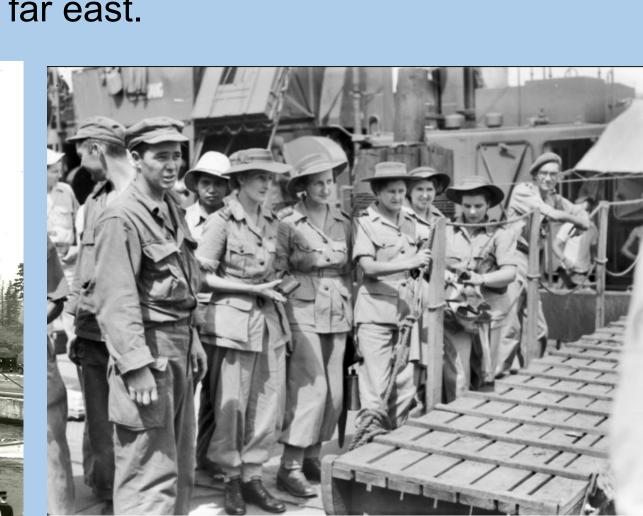


Photo of Australian Sisters bidding farewell to ex British and Canadian POWs boarding a landing craft to take them to the HMS Glory. -Australian War Memorial, Photo 119149





Photo of a Canadian officer being helped aboard the Prince Robert at Manila. – Courtesy Library and Archives Canada PA166426



Photo of *HMCS Prince Robert* arriving at Esquimalt, B.C. – *Courtesy* of Library and Archives Canada



Welcome card given to each British and Canadian LPOW

arriving at Esquimalt or Victoria, BC. – CWM 20120037-

022.2 George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canada War

Museum.

NIAGARA MILITARY MUSEUM

Welcome card presented to Canadian LPOWs as they arrived

or traveled through Winnipeg. - Larry Dowling Correspond-

ence, Collection of Sam Chui

Hours: Wednesday to Saturday 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

5049 Victoria Avenue, Niagara Falls, Ontairo Telephone (905) 358-1949 Email: niamilmuseum@gmail.com http://www.niagaramilitarymuseum.ca

