

ITALIAN POW MAIL in LIBYA. 1942-1946

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1: AIM of this STUDY

The subject of this study is the Italian POW Mail in Libya, November 1942 to 1946. The author has been collecting POWs correspondence and other camps, in Libya, for several years. Realising that this POW Camp in Tripoli was established from February 1943, he discovered that there was also virtually nothing written about it. This was despite his enquiries about the camp during two postings to Tripolitania in 1951 and 1956. For Bengasi, the story is much the same but with no dates or location known for certain.

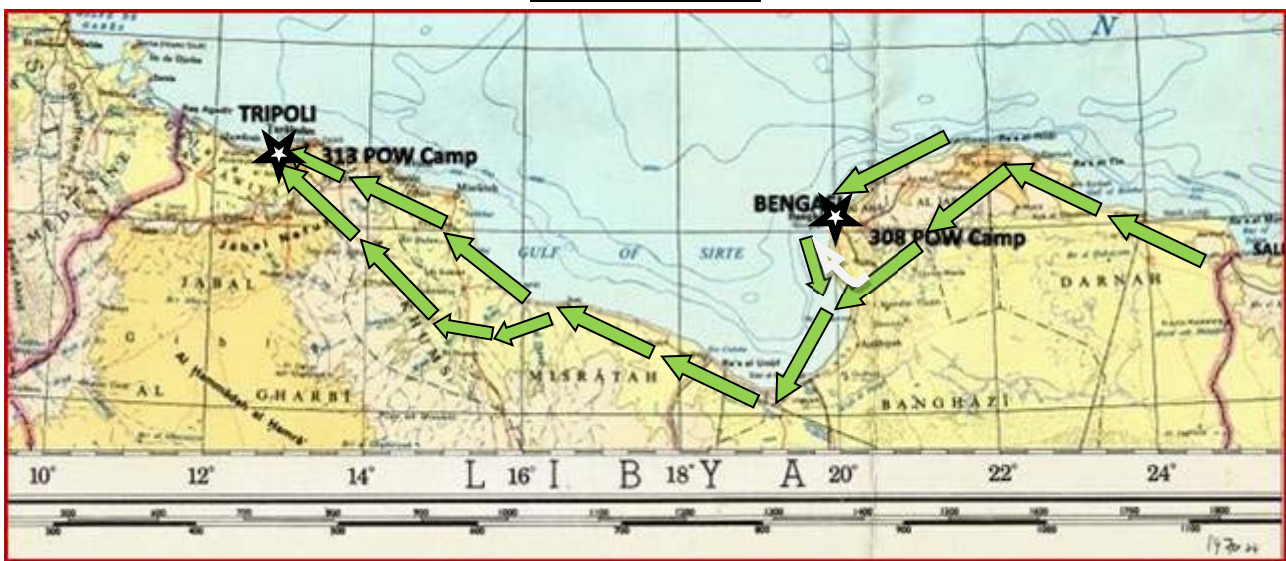
There is one book on Italian POW mail in Africa but it does not list Libya as a country, and in the text Libya is included under Italian POW Mail in Egypt. However, Libya was an Italian colony, an entirely separate country from Egypt. Tripoli, the capital, is about 1,750 km west of Cairo. An important aspect of Libya was that the language of authority was Italian. The author of this paper considered that the Italian POW Camps in Libya [313 POW Camp, Tripoli, and 308 Camp, Bengasi,], should therefore be described separately from those in Egypt.

2- WAR SETTING

The map below shows the advance of some 1,400km over three months by Allied forces [8th Army] from the Egypt-Libyan border on 10 November 1942 to Bengasi on 20 November 1942 and to Tripoli on 23 January 1943. The advance was against the forces of the Italians and the Afrika Korps [German]. This study focuses on the Italian forces.

The only cities were Bengasi and Tripoli [the capital] on the line of advance, and there was only one road along the Mediterranean coast. The majority of the country is covered by desert and coastal marshland, except for the Tripoli region in the west and areas around Bengasi to the east.

LIBYA 1942-1943



Map 1. Shows the advance of 1,400km over three months by Allied forces [8th Army] from the Egypt-Libyan border on 10 November 1942, to Bengasi on 20 November 1942 [about 550km] and to Tripoli on 23 January 1943.

At Bengasi the Allies took several thousand prisoners, mostly Italian. A site to accommodate them was found in and 313 POW Camp unit under British control established.

The fall of Tripoli, about 1,000km from Bengasi took place on 23 January 1943. About 11,000 Italians were captured and guarded by 30 Corps [British]. During February the situation changed with the arrival of 313 POW Camp unit with its unit name moved from Bengasi.

Sources of information about POW Camps

The War Diaries, which were a unit form of record, provide accurate details. The start of 313 POW Camp, later 308, in Bengasi was about November 1942. The completion of 313 POW Camp proper, near Tripoli, was at the end of March 1943.

This paper examines the correspondence from and to 313 POW Camp during the period 1943 to 1946. The 313 POW Camp came about because it was 1,000km from Bengasi, too difficult to move thousands of POWs. It differs from other camps most of which had been established for several years in existing buildings. This camp was ordered to be built near Tripoli, by the POWs at a location [previously unknown], under supervision of 313 POW Camp unit. Its layout was constructed by the future occupants. A study of the correspondence from this camp is important because being newly established it included the reports of capture cards from POW. It also indicated the state of mind and health of the POWs. There were two units mentioned in this study, 313 POW and 308 POW Camp units. They were not tied to the locations of the POW Camps, but were moved by orders from HQ, Middle East Forces.

3 POW MAIL Transit Arrangements

There was no shipping route across the Mediterranean Sea. Tunisia, to the west, was occupied by the Italian and German armies until they surrendered there on 7 May 1943, and Sicily was not secured by the Allies until 17 August 1943.

The International Red Cross was the intermediary selected by Italy for mail services. Italian POW mail from Libya travelled to Egypt, then northeast [Palestine and Syria] and northwest through Turkey and the Balkans, then west and south via Switzerland to get to Italy. The POW Mail was handed over to the International Red Cross Bureau in Cairo for onward transmission, and vice versa for incoming mail.

Postal supplies and services came from Headquarters, Middle East Forces in Cairo, Egypt. It had this function because it contained the British Censor Office for all the POWs in Egypt, Libya, and East Africa

313 POW Camp at Tripoli

The date of 23 January 1943 was the occupation of Tripoli. On 1 February a detachment of 313 POW Camp arrived there, and then took over Italian prisoners from 30 Corps [British]. This date is from the War Diary of 313 POW Camp unit. On 17 February the Headquarters Detachment arrived from Bengasi, and the unit was complete.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

ORIGINAL
WAR DIARY
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Unit 313 Prisoner of War Camp Army Form C. 2118.
Commanding Officer Lt Col. W.T. Lang.

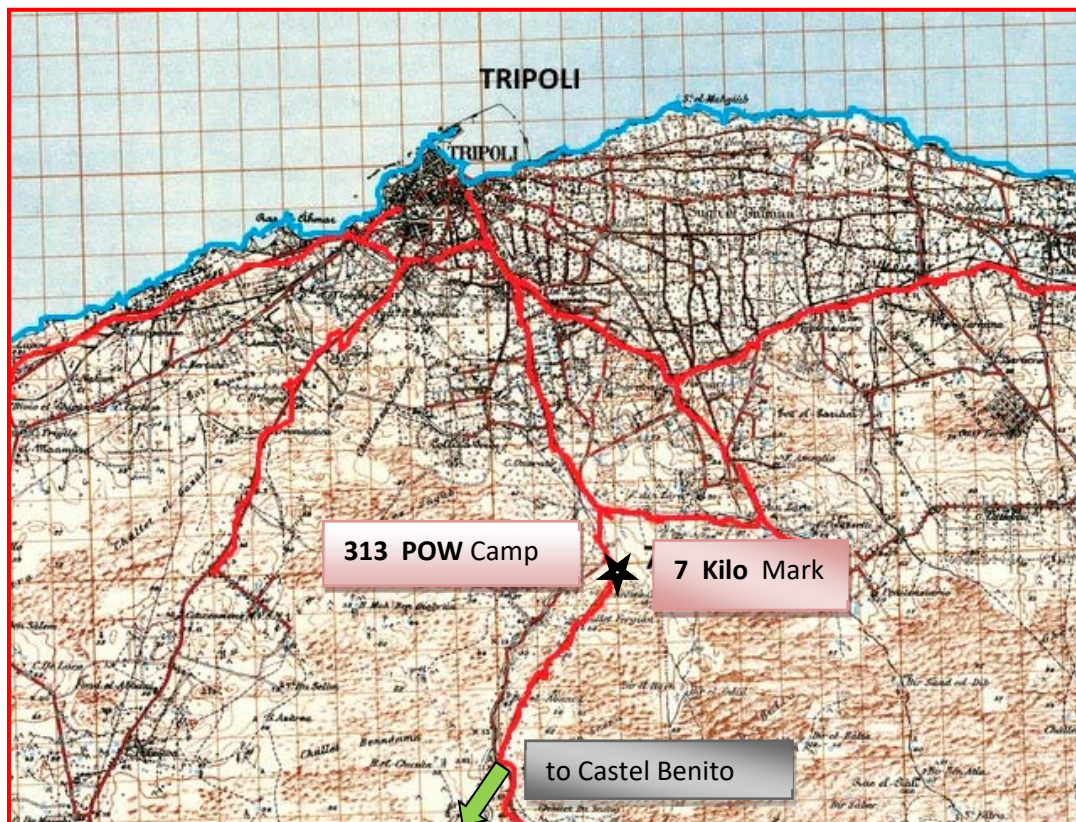
Month and Year February 1943. (Erase heading not required).

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
Tripoli	1 st		Lt Hird and detachment arrived Tripoli from Sultan	5th.
"	17 th		Lt Col. Luthenland and Headquarters Detachment arrived Tripoli from Bengasi. The whole unit was concentrated at Tripoli.	5th.
	24 th		Received notification ^{from HQ MEF} that this unit would be made up to full establishment to form a Base POW Camp at Tripoli. Major W.T. Lang promoted to Lt Col. Lt (Col) Luthenland to Captain and Adjutant W/E 21 Jan 43.	5th.

Fig. 1 Extract from War Diary of 313 POW Camp, 1 February 1943

Camp 313 was to be upgraded to a Base POW Camp at Tripoli. On 4 March orders were received to urgently erect a Base Camp for 10,000 POWs at Castel Benito Road, 7 Kilo Mark, Tripoli.

The unit moved to the new site on 8 March. They had the assistance of POW labour, but virtually without earthmoving equipment. The cages were made from stakes and barbed wire. The camp was completed on 30 March 1943 [23 days]. It comprised 13 Cages; about 830 POWs to a cage. The main POW accommodation was in circular [bell] tents. It is assumed that timber was used for the permanent staff.



Map 2 - Showing location of 313 POW Camp.
7 Kilo Mark, Castel Benito Road, south of Tripoli.

308 POW Camp [formerly 313 POW Camp] at Bengasi

Before 1 February 1943 the HQ of 313 POW Camp unit was at Bengasi, but it was ordered to Tripoli to take over the prisoners from 30 Corps [British]. From November 1942 the 308 POW Camp unit was transferred to Bengasi.

At that time the main body of the 308 POW Camp unit was in Egypt or eastern Libya, but it had to transfer to the POW Camp in Bengasi. Once transferred in January 1943, 308 POW Camp unit was then responsible for Bengasi POW. It is still required to confirm the location at Berca, but meantime this will be referred to as Bengasi.

4 - ADMINISTRATION of ITALIAN POWs and CAMPS

Administration of Italian POWs was carried out by the British Army. Specially formed POW units were designated and given instructions as to when and where to set up the camps. At the time of capture the POWs would be disarmed and guarded. As soon as possible they were moved away from the front line to a safe place, guarded by the British soldiers, initially those who had captured them. The 30 Corps took the prisoners first, then 313 POW Camp advance party arrived on 1 February 1943.

From the stories of surviving POWs, and the War Diaries [British].

The first order we heard was 'Hands Up! 'This was for us to show that we were not holding any weapons. We kept our hands up for ages while the British troops searched us . Once satisfied, they allowed us to drop our tired arms.



Figs 2 Italian soldiers captured



Fig 3 On the way to a POW Camp.

Then we would be forced to march on foot, or in part on vehicles to the POW temporary camp. That might be only a short way but how were we to know?

We set off for where? That might be many kilometres. We had no idea except that it was well away from the front line. Some days we walked the whole day. In the case of Cap. Maggiore [Corporal Gino Grandi he was captured on 29 March 1943 at Gabes and was received at 313 POW Camp on 30 April, a distance of some 300 kilometres. He probably walked the whole way.



Figs 4 and 5. Italian POWs



starting off on a long walk.

A few British soldiers would accompany us [sometimes as many as 5,000 prisoners in a batch] as we made our long queue-like across the desert. There was little thought of escape - where we could go to?

The images of POW, on the way to camp, show that they were well wrapped in their winter clothes or blankets. [Note that the capture of Tripoli was in January 1943, it was very cold, especially at night]. We slept under the stars. There was just sufficient drink and food given to us on the way.



Figs 6 and 7. Still on the way!

We occasionally came across some trucks, which the British guards allowed some of us to use. It was up to our Sergeants to decide who got on and off the trucks.

Where were the officers? Ours just vanished. We presumed that they had been taken by the British well away from us. Later we discovered that a few, about 60 officers, were prisoners also, amongst our numbers of more than 11,000.

Construction of Camp. We received a shock when we were gathered in Tripoli. -The 313 POW Camp had just received orders to 'urgently erect a Base POW Camp for 10,000 POWs at Castel Benito Road, 7 Kilo Mark just south of Tripoli '. We were completely overcome, and had no alternative but to labour. From 8 March to the 30 March, we completed the camp in 23 days.

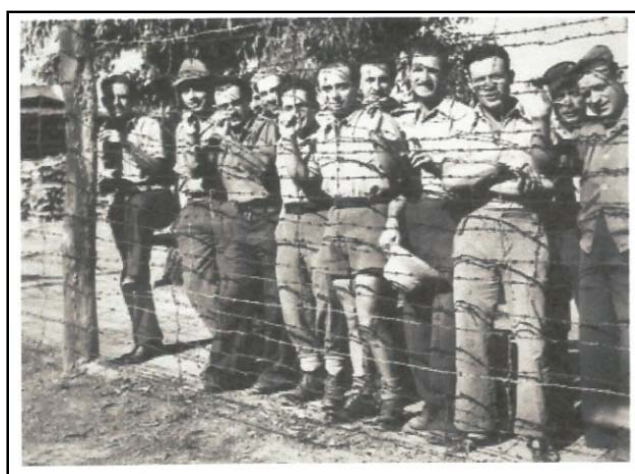


Fig. 8. POWs - temporary 'home ' at last.

Population. At last, we were accommodated at the POW Camp and were directed to one of the barbed wire cages which divided it. Unfortunately there was some overcrowding. Initially there were a total of 12,049 which included some 63 Italian officers, and some 400 Germans. On 31 December 1943 it recorded a total of 12,522.

This was relieved by moving some POWs east to Bengasi, and In February and March 1944 there were 1,000 and 1900 Libyan soldiers repatriated locally. They had been regarded as colonial soldiers by the Italians.

Camp Records. Here is the British Army Form W. 3000 [Italian] Prisoner of War. The front was completed as soon as the POW Cap. *[Corporal]* Maggiore Grandi arrived at the Camp. It described him physically in detail, and recorded his marks, trade, religion, observations and personal effects. It was signed in by the Commandant. [see Fig. 9 below].

2061.
Army Form W. 3000 (Italian) Prisoner of War
PART I.
CO-OPERATIVE
414388 M.E.

To be completed by O.C. unit and retained by him until the prisoner is transferred. When the prisoner is transferred, Part I will be handed to the escort for delivery to the new place of internment.

STAMP of
P.W. DEPOT COY.
or
MEDICAL UNIT

Date of Capture 29.3.1943
Surname Grandi
Christian Names Gino
Date of Birth 20.3.1915
Regimental Particulars 320 Fanteria
Rank Cap. maggiore
Place of Capture Gabes
Firma del Prigioniero Grandi
(Signature of Prisoner) Chino

Height 1.70 Weight 65 Complexion brn Hair brn Eyes brn

2061
Ferrara
Marks (if any) PAESANT
Trade (if any) operaio agricolo
Religion R.C.
Special Observations
T.A.B. 2.4. 22.8.43
Place 12/10/44
2.5.43
Personal Effects (if any) to be enumerated
T.A.B. 2.4. 19/7/44.

Signature [Signature]
Lt. Colonel. Commandant
No. 313 Prisoner of War Camp.
O.C.
Date 30.4.1943
PART I. The date of receipt of prisoner should be recorded by office stamp on reverse.
2361

CO-OPERATIVE

414388 M.E.

To be completed by O.C. unit and retained by him until the prisoner is transferred. When the prisoner is transferred, Part I will be handed to the escort for delivery to the new place of internment.

STAMP of 1 MAY 1943 [Unit British]
P.W. DEPOT COY. or MEDICAL UNIT

Date of Capture 29.3.1943
Surname Grandi
Christian Names Gino
Date of Birth 20.3.1915
Regimental 350 Fanteria
Particulars
Rank Cap. Maggiore [Corporal]
Place of Capture Gabes
Firma del Prigioniero
[Signature of Prisoner]
Height Weight Complexion Hair Eyes
Feet Inches lbs

Split in upper and lower portions of Form

Ferrara [heavy pencil] Blacksmith [partially overwritten]
Marks [if any]
Trade [if any] ~~operaio agricolo~~ paesant
Religion R.C.

Special Observations
[Manuscript entries of inoculations etc]
Personal Effects [if any] to be enumerated
[More details of inoculations]

Signature
Lt. Colonel. Commandant
No. 313 Prisoner of War Camp
Date 30-4-1943
PART I. The date of receipt of prisoner should be recorded by office stamp on reverse.

Fig. 9 A.W.F 3000 [Italian] Prisoner of War

Army Form W. 3000 (Italian) PART 1 Reverse.

414388 M.E.

Stamp of O/CP. of W. Coy. or O/C Medical Unit.

No. 2661 ITALIAN <i>4-11-44</i> DEPOT COMPANY	
28/12/45 - 4/2/46. No. 2658	
31 JAN 1946 ITALIAN COY.	
Town or village of birth: <i>Vigunano</i> District: <i>Ferrara</i>	

414388 M.E.

No. 313 PRISONER OF WAR CAMP.
JAN 1944 M.E.F.

No. 313 PRISONER OF WAR CAMP.
JUL 1944 M.E.F.

No. 2661 ITALIAN DEPOT COMPANY
4 - 11 - 44

27 GENERAL HOSPITAL.
28/12/45 - 4/2/46

No. 2658 ITALIAN COY.
31 JAN 1946

Town or Village of Birth:
Vigunano
District:
Ferrara

Fig. 10 A.F.W. 3000 [Italian]

Trade. If we had any experience in a trade, it was noted on the personal record. Cap. Maggiore Grandi was noted as ~~Operaio-agricolo~~ 'paesant' [sic], but had a pencil entry for 'BLACKSMITH' obscured. The preliminary entries were completed on 30 April 1943. [See Fig.9].

Medical and Hygiene. These inspections took place in May and October 1943; February and June 1944. Cap. Maggiore Grandi was given a medical inspection and an injection. Later he was admitted to 27 General Hospital [location not known] from 28 December 1945 to 4 February 1946.

Cages. These were identified on Camp Record. at 30 July 1944, [after the Italian armistice in September 1943]. Prisoners were encouraged to sign up as CO-OPERATIVE'. The vast majority did so. About three per cent of the men indicated they would be NON-CO-OPERATIVE. and were marked on the POWs Record. One of the cages was intended for 'troublesome' prisoners [NON-CO-OPERATIVE].

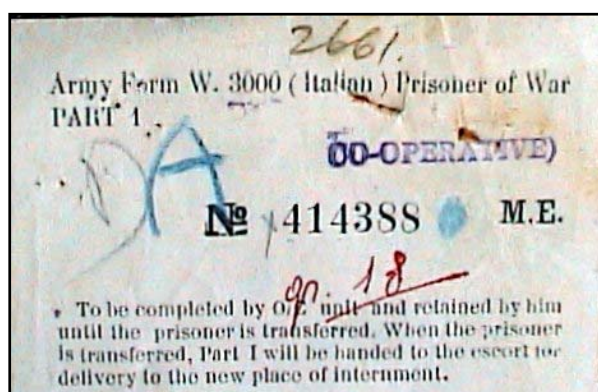


Fig. 11. Co-operative or Non-Co-operative marking.

Mail. The first thing we were given in the camp were two postcards. They were designed to let the Red Cross in Geneva and our correspondents know that we had been captured, and not to worry about us. We were supposed to receive them within seven days of being captured, but some were late.

Pens and ink. These were made available to us. The ink was generally black. Only one card in forty was written in pencil.

Incoming mail was received about once a month. We had the tasks of sorting it and then giving it out to the queues outside the post office. We had plenty of time to allow us to read incoming mail.

Outgoing mail. We were later given every seven or fourteen days, two cards or letter sheets [see Section 6]. These last allowed us to write a letter of 24 lines.



Fig. 12 POW reading mail.

Censorship. All cards and letters were subjected to censorship. Censoring could take the staff at least a fortnight to deal with. Censorship meant that we could give details of our health, and exchange greetings with our correspondents, advise and confirm sending of small amounts of money, but not much else.

Other events. We had other activities such as the daily run around the tents or huts. After some time we acquired a football - a much treasured possession. The games were often keen.

In November 1943 and April 1, 1944, we had welcome visits from the Bishop of Tripoli. We undertook the construction of a structure which served as a church. Pasquale [Easter] was particularly special to us.

We had a visit in November 1943 from a Mr Duchosal, Secretary General, International Red Cross Committee. In January 1944 the visitor was Mr Sidi [?] IRCC who stayed a week in Tripoli.

Experience. If we had some experience there would be a chance of a job in the POW Camp workshop, bakery or assisting in a POW hospital.

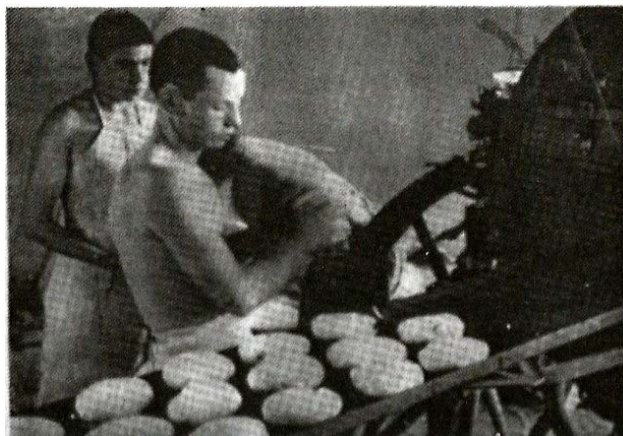


Fig. 13 POW working at baking rolls

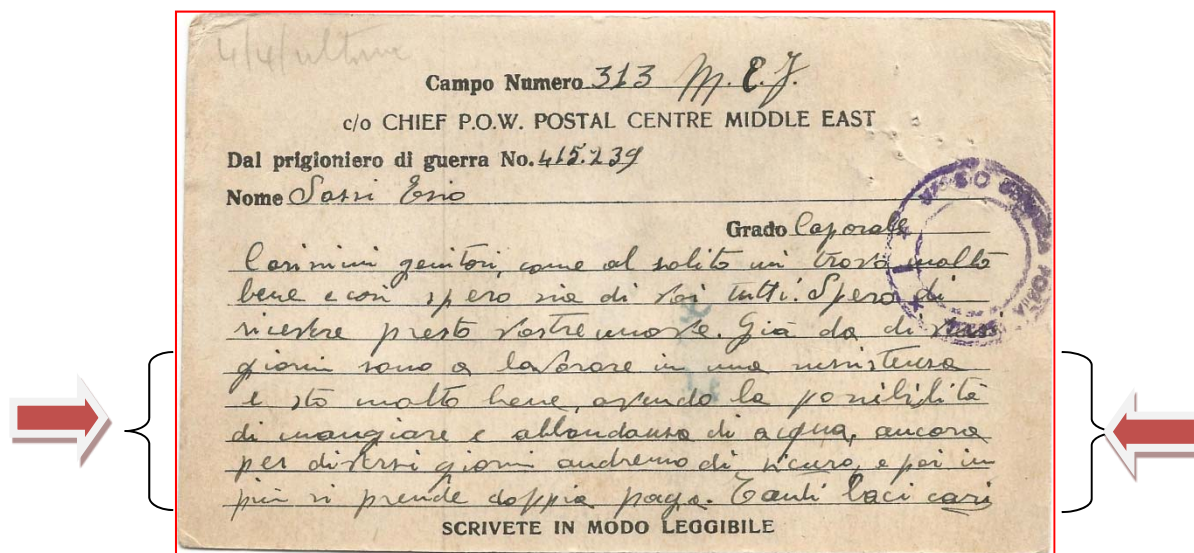


Fig. 14 In this card Caporale Ezio Sassi gives his parents a picture of his working as, an assistant? He says that '*...it is really good because I can eat and there is lots of water too. We will be there for more days, and it also good because we can get double wages/ pay*'"

Later in 1944, some of us were sent to new units in the British Army. They were established as the Italian Companies [see Section 15]. They gave us opportunities to be out of the POW Camp for some days. Inmates were mainly employed as labourers repairing roads. Some were hoping for work with farmers.

Thus the long days gave way to months and years of waiting for freedom.

And now, let us examine in detail the mail writing for Italian POWs in Libya.

5- INSTRUCTIONS for MAIL from ITALIAN POWs in LIBYA

The office of the International Red Cross in Geneva had been asked by Italy in 1941 to act as an intermediary all mail to and from POWs. All types of mail to Italy [and colonies] were transmitted through Chiasso [Switzerland] on the Italian border.

Instructions - from June 1942

The following paragraphs are based on extracts from Italian regulations, from 1 June 1942, for mail, parcels, money orders and telegrams from POWs in Libya.

Censorship

Surface and air mails arriving from abroad and addressed to families in Italy from Italian prisoners of war, were to be sent to Rome Foreign Mail Office, or Navy Mail Office. They were to be subjected to censorship depending on whether the sender had been attached to the army, the air force, the navy or the merchant navy. After censorship, letters were sent directly to their respective destinations by the Rome Foreign Mail Office or the Navy Mail Office.

If, by mistake, cards or letters were to arrive at a provincial head office or the destination office without the Censorship handstamp, they were to be returned in an envelope to the Rome office which had the censorship responsibility for the error.

Correspondence from Libya coming from prisoners of war was sent post free by surface routes. The letters were to be sent to the Foreign Mail Office or Navy Mail Office, both in Rome, to be censored and later sent to destinations. By air mail, they should have borne an extra fee of at least 50c.

Packages from Italian prisoners of war in Libya were sent post free. The limit was a weight of 5 kilograms. These were to be sent through normal channels to the Provincial head office of the district where the addressee was located. They were to be subjected to censorship by the Provincial Commission before being forwarded to destinations.

Money Orders from Italian prisoners of war in Libya would be paid for by the POW sender. They would arrive at the International Money Orders department of the Posts and Telegrams, Rome. If, by chance, a money order contained a message for the addressee - and these were not allowed - the money order itself would be sent to Foreign Mail Office or Navy Post Office, Rome, for censorship. It would then be returned to the Head Post Office for forwarding to destination.

Telegrams from Italian prisoners of war in Libya would be handled, after approval by the censor in Rome, for dispatch to destinations. Fees were payable by the POW sender.

Fees for telegrams sent from Libya, via Switzerland, first to Rome for censorship, then to destinations:

Fee per word	Ordinary Rate	Overnight Rate
Gold Francs	Gold Francs	
To Great Britain	0.54	0.27
To Italian East Africa	2.20	1.10
To other countries, [as for Italy]	1.30	from 0.65
<u>plus</u>	0.30	0.15

The exchange rate for the gold franc was then 6.55 lire.

Action on behalf of POW



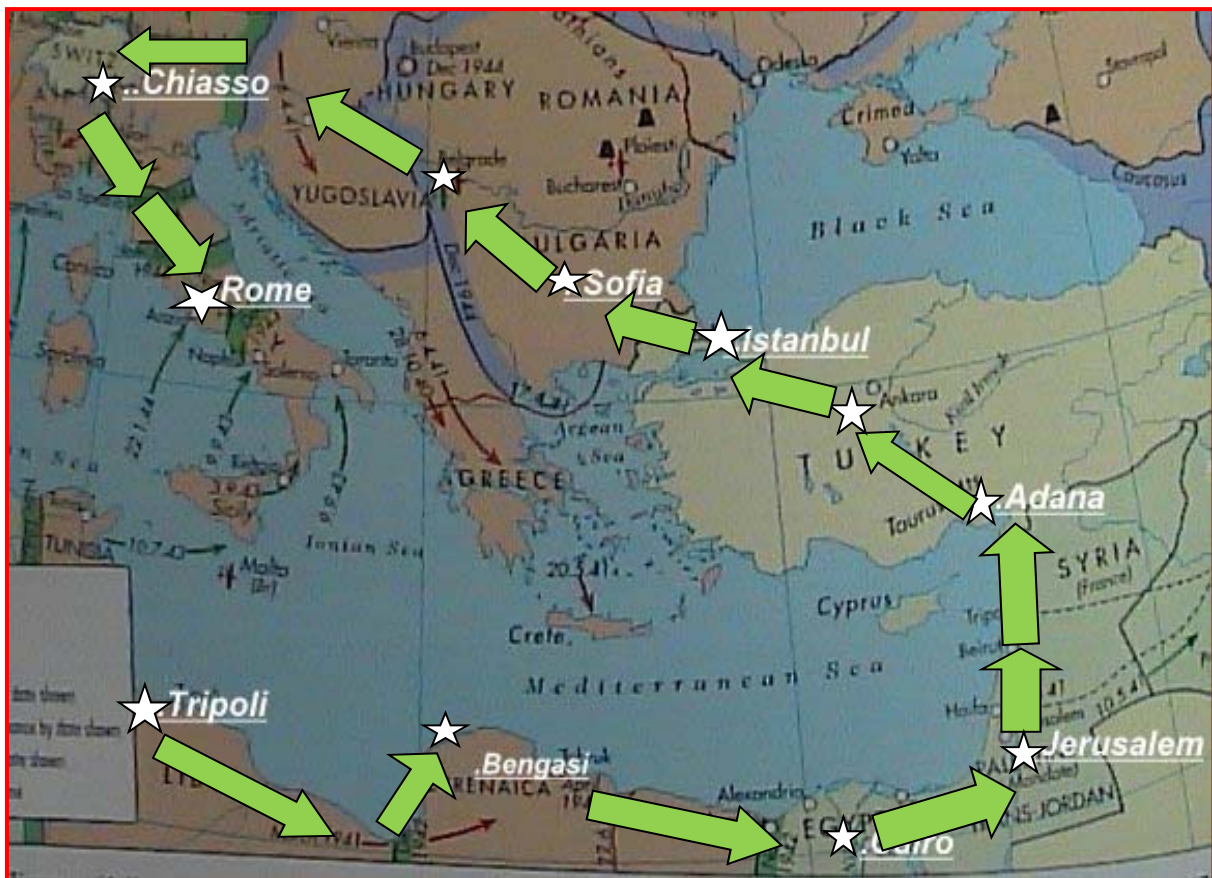
Fig. 15 Handstamp by the Head of the Documentation Centre indicated that the wife or parents had sought financial assistance. The stamp was a one-off strike which could obviously only be used once.

The curved initials are those of Magg. [Major] Antonio Donno

6 MAIL ROUTES from ITALIAN POWs in LIBYA

Surface Mail

With increasing numbers of Italian POWs held in British camps in Egypt and Libya, the routes north and westward from Cairo carried significant amounts of POW mail. In April 1942 a service was introduced, and mails from Cairo were carried by rail and road north-east to Jerusalem, then by rail or road northwards to Adana and onward to Istanbul in Turkey where the exchange of mails from the British to Swiss Red Cross occurred. Followed by rail to Sofia [Bulgaria] and to Chiasso [Switzerland]. The mail was then handed over to Italian authorities to be carried by rail to Rome, where it would be censored again. Mails would then be distributed to their destinations in Italy.



Map 4. Showing surface routes for mail from Italian POWs in Libya

Air Mail

Provided that the fee, of at least 50c, was paid by the POW sender, an item could be sent by air mail. Another source, of official Instructions, stated that the rules for air mail [to POW] must be followed. This meant that items weighing not more than 5grams would be charged at L2.50, and at the corresponding rate for excess at L2.50 for each portion over 5grams. This seems a lot for a POW to pay.

BOAC

BOAC had a service from Cairo to Adana [Turkey] from 3 September 1941. It continued with variations.

On 11 November 1944 a service was established by BOAC from Cairo to Nicosia [Cyprus] and Ankara [military airfield] twice weekly. Calls at Adana might have been made in event of bad weather. On 4 April 1945 an extension was introduced from Ankara to Istanbul [twice weekly].

Turkish State Airlines.

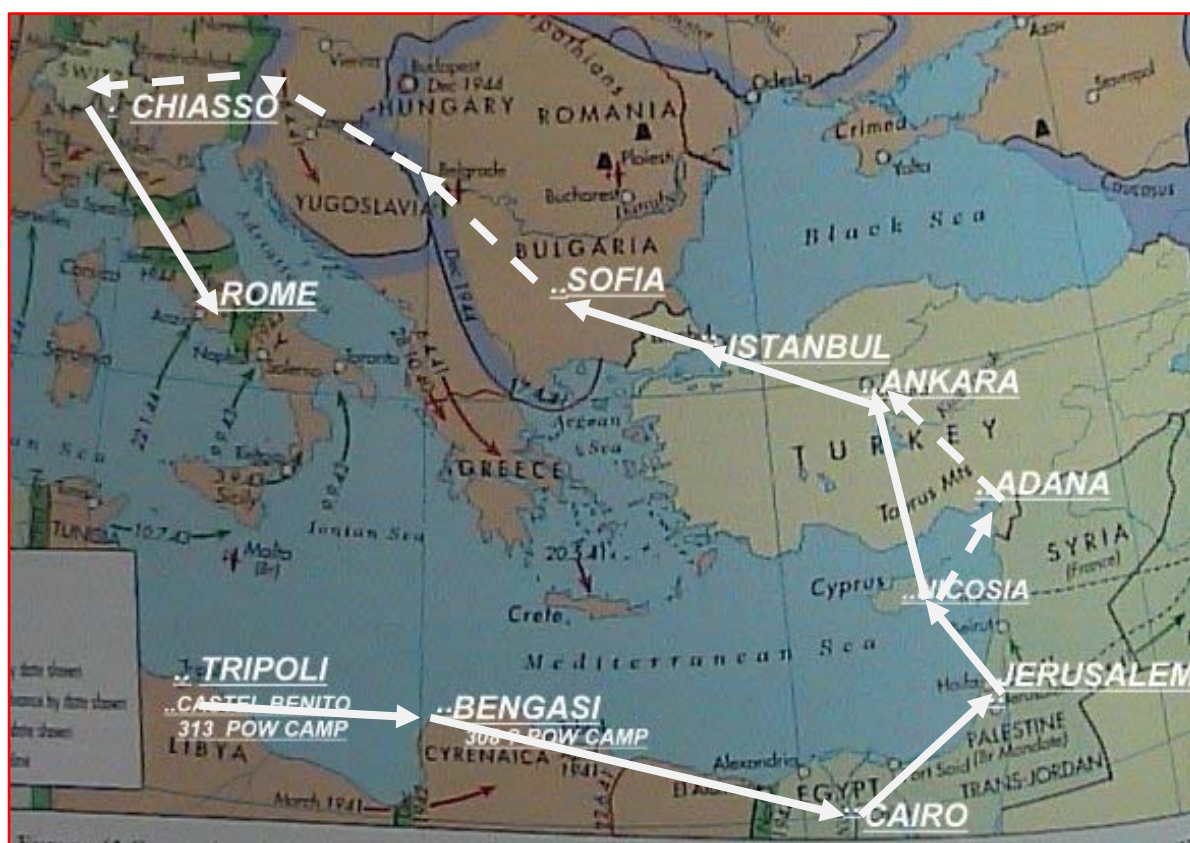
On 1 April 1942 services were resumed for the summer months. In October it was announced that Turkish State Air Lines would continue the services Adana, Ankara to Istanbul, but they had closed down by 1 November 1942.

On 1 May 1943 Turkish State Airlines resumed air services for the summer months. The route Adana, Ankara to Istanbul was operated once daily except Sundays.

On 15 May 1944 summer routes were resumed, on 1 June services from Adana to Ankara[twice weekly] and Ankara to Istanbul [daily] were effective. These were special services to connect with services operated by BOAC to Adana.

Unknown air line

In 1943 to 1945, in the summer the route would be from Istanbul to Sofia, and then to Chiasso. In winter the air route would have been suspended for periods by bad weather, and the POW air mail sent onward by rail.



Map 5.

Map 5. Showing *air routes* [continuous line] and partial air routes [train - broken line] for *air mail* from Italian POWs in Libya

7 - MAIL JOURNEY TIMES to ITALY and PROBLEMS

The journey times for surface mail to Italy were inconsistent, dependent on winter weather and other factors. Below are the known intervals between despatch and arrival dates of mail are listed. The mark 'cds' is an abbreviation for 'circular date stamp'. Other cards and letter sheets are held but there is no indication of dates of arrival.

Ten POWs of 41 wrote that they had received letters, but did not give the dates of arrival with POWs. Most information was from Caporale [Corporal] Colonna, Domenico which indicated that it might be up to four months before the recipients in Italy heard that their senders were POWs.

From the establishment of the camp the earliest cards gave the dates of capture as 6, 8, 9 April 1943. Earliest Card for Notification of Capture was dated 25 April 1943. These do not have an indication of date of arrival.

It is not clear what effect various events during the war, had on the delivery dates of the correspondence. Note the two journeys of *153 days* and *128 days* to reach the destination in north Italy. There may have been some events after the Italian Armistice of 8 September 1943, with the Germans controlling the north from Naples and Foggia, two thirds of Italy. They had developed a distrust of the Italian population, and often censored the correspondence accordingly, causing delays.

<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Camp Despatch</u>	<u>Arrival Date</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Days Taken</u>	<u>Italian Address</u>
4 May 1943	? ? 1943	3 Aug 1943	cds	91	Orbetello [Grosseto]
8 May 1943	? ? 1943	27 July 1943	cds	80	Botticino Mattina [Brescia]
17 May 1943	? ? 1943	12 July 1943	cds	46	Montecchio [Terni]
9 June 1943	? JUN 1943	27 Aug 1943	Cds	79	Casale di Tornolo [Parma]
7 July 1943	? JUL 1943	27 Dec 1943	cds	<u>153</u>	Oleggio [Novara] [north Italy]. No evidence for the delay, except the German control of north Italy.

8 Sep 1943 Italian Armistice declared. German army disarmed Italian forces

25 Sep 1943 Mussolini declared Italian Socialist Republic in north Italy.

15 Nov 1943	? NOV 1943	19 Jan 1944	cds	65	Sersale [Catanzaro]
? Dec 1943	? DEC 1943	4 Mar 44	cds	80	Torre D'Arcugnano [Vicenza]. Censored by Germans in Munich

5 June 1944 Allies entered Rome

13 May 1944	? MAY 1944	26 Jun	m.s.	44	Catania [Sicilia]
15 May 1944	? MAY 1944	26 July 1944	cds	72	Catania [Sicilia]
30 May 1944	? JUN 1944	13 July 1944	cds	45	Catania [Sicilia]
12 June 1944		21 Aug 1944	cds	72	Decollatura [Catanzaro]
24 Nov 1944	4 DEC 1944	13 Jan 1945	cds	41	Milazzo [Messina]

2 May 1945 Allies over all north Italy - Turin, Milan, Brenner Pass, Venice.

8 May 1945 Victory in Europe day for Allies. PEACE

10 Apr 1945	? APR 1945	16 Aug 1945	cds	<u>128</u>	Colorno [Parma] [north Italy] [German control until April, 1945]
28 Mar 1946	? MAR 1946	4 May 1946		37	Rossano [Cosenza]. Card may not have routed through Switzerland. It was then peacetime

8 - ROLES of INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Cards of Capture

Issue of Cards to various belligerent nations. These for POWs to notify the International Red Cross of their capture. They were in addition to a card [see Section 8] given to POWs at the same time so that POW could tell their families of their change of circumstances.

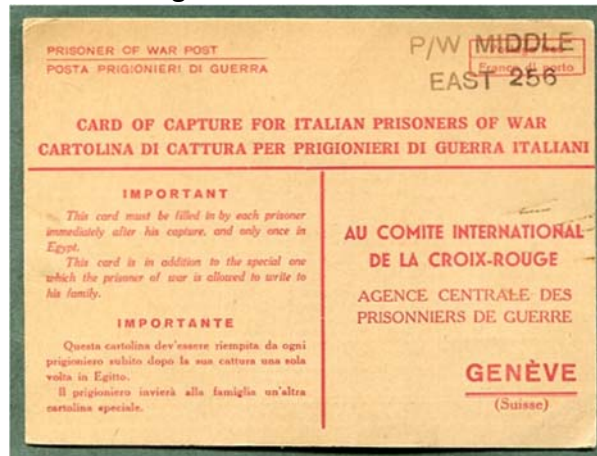


Fig. 16. International Red Cross card for all soldiers who became POW.

Letters giving results of search.

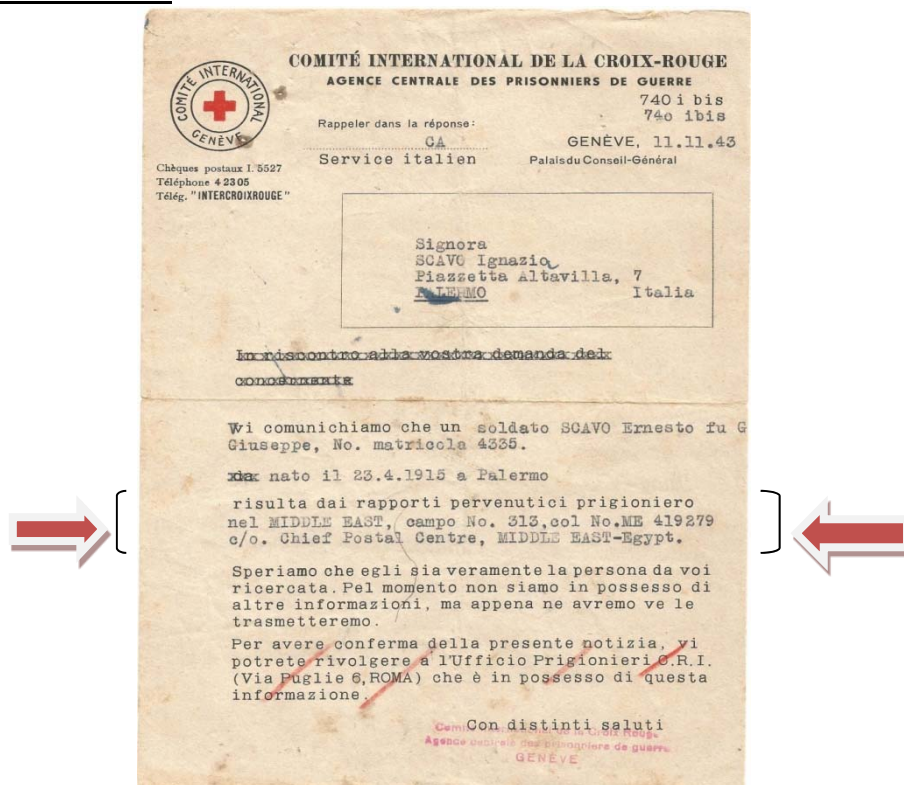


Fig. 17 Red Cross Letter to family of soldier found to be POW.

The International Committee of the Red Cross on 11 November 1943. Letter of Notification of Capture for Italian soldier Scavo, E Giuseppe, was sent to his family in Italy, from Geneva, Switzerland.

It revealed that he was in the POW Camp No. 313.

Providing Letter Sheets specially printed for Red Cross

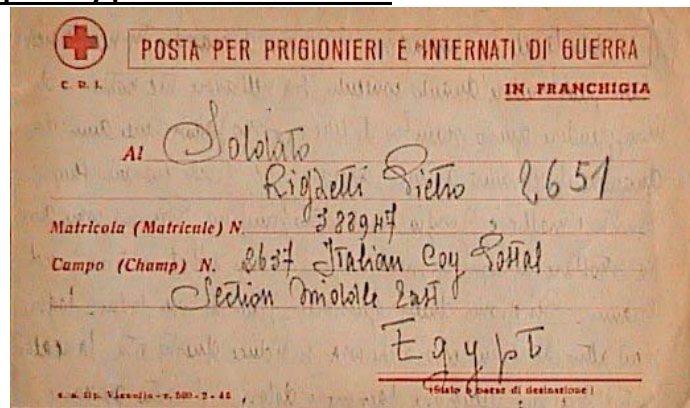


Fig. 18 19 March 1946. Addressed to the POW in Camp, actually 2637 redirected to 2651 Italian Coy. Soldato Rigletti Pietro, location uncertain.

Receipt and forwarding service

There were at least three types of Red Cross cancellations used to mark the arrival of an item in a Red Cross office. The name of the office would vary. The stamp was in red but sometimes in purple.



Diameter 24mm 'UFFICIO PRIGIONIERI GUERRA' [reading outwards] and 'ROMA' [reading inwards].

Figs. 19a, b and c.



Diameter 29mm 'COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX ROUGE' [reading outwards] and 'GENEVE' [reading inwards].



Diameter 35mm 'UFFICIO PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA' [reading outwards] and probably 'GENEVE' [illegible]

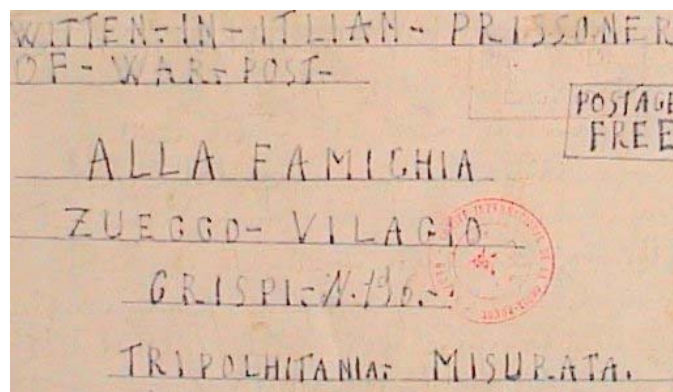


Fig. 20 Writer was in POW camp. His letter was sent to the International Red Cross in Geneva for forwarding. The letter was to POW's family in Tripolitania

Tripolitania office.

DEMANDEUR - ENQUÊRE - RICHIEDENTE

Nom - Name - Cognome: *MACCIONI*
Prénoms - Christian name - Nome: *ANALIA*
Rue - Street - Via: *FUNICOLARE*
Localité - Locality - Località: *MONTECATINI, VALBINIVOLE*
Département - County - Provincia: *PISTOIA*
Pays - Country - Paese: *ITALIA*

Message à transmettre - Message - Testo del Messaggio
(25 mots au maximum, nouvelles de caractère strictement personnel et familial - not over 25 words, family news of strictly personal character - al massimo 25 parole di carattere strettamente personale e familiare.)
NOTILIAMI. RICEVIMENTO. UAGLA. QUATTRO MILA. CIVOCENTO. CARLO L. BRUNA. STANNO. GENE - SCRIVETEVAIO. RACIO-TUTTI. LUCA.

Date - Date: *6-6-43*

DESTINATAIRE - ADDRESSEE - DESTINATARIO
Nom - Name - Cognome: *MACCIONI*
Prénoms - Christian name - Nome: *ANALIA*
Rue - Street - Via: *FUNICOLARE*
Localité - Locality - Località: *MONTECATINI, VALBINIVOLE*
Département - County - Provincia: *PISTOIA*
Pays - Country - Paese: *ITALIA*

RÉPONSE - REPLY - RISPOSTA
(25 mots au maximum, nouvelles de caractère strictement personnel et familial - not over 25 words, family news of strictly personal character - al massimo 25 parole di carattere strettamente personale e familiare)

Date - Date:

Fig. 21 6 June 1943. Sending an enquiry, by form, from Tripoli to Italy via HQ in Geneva, and the POW office in Rome. No reply received, sent twice more

9 REQUISITION ORDERS for POW CORRESPONDENCE

Requisition Orders

These were orders for printing of the Cards and Letter Sheets. The requisition orders were made by the GHQ staff on their estimates of the needs of POW, and the likely increase in quantity as the campaign went on. The British Army had to produce cards and letter sheets which included certain details about the senders. They had arranged for inclusion of certain terms, agreed with Italian and Swiss Red Cross authorities. The GHQ staff had complete control over the production of requisition orders.

The Requisition Order is shown usually at the lower edge of the address or the reverse side. The table lists it precisely for each card. In the abbreviations the following in brackets are author's suggestions.

G.H.Q.P.	GENERAL HEAD QUARTERS PRINTING [or POW]
PMEO	PRINTING [or POW] MIDDLE EAST COMMAND ['O' substituted in error for 'C']
PMEC	PRINTING [or POW] MIDDLE EAST COMMAND

It is important to note that the size of PC in a single requisition order, e.g. PC 2 and PC 3, may vary by mm. in length and/or height. The use of the various types of card or paper were the result of using whatever came to hand. The printing was subject to the varying skills of the printers, many of whom were locally employed. It can be seen that there are at least five settings for the card printing jobs. The cards and letter sheets appear to have been distributed and used quite randomly. The last two or three numbers show the month and year of the Order.

<u>Listing</u>	<u>Requisition Orders</u>	<u>* Unlisted in Ref 1</u>
PC 1 [Capture]	541/ G.H.Q.P./ 15,000 - 1 - 42	*
PC 2 [Capture]	602/2 G.H.Q.P./ 60,000/ 2 - 42	*
PC 3 [Capture]	859/ 1/ G.H.Q.P./ 50,000/ 4 - 42	
PC 4 141/ 1 /G.H.Q.P./ 1,000,000/ 7-41.		*
PC 5 -- 916/ PMEO/ 500000/ 10/ 41. First figure omitted in listing		
PC 5 a 1916/ PMEO / 500,000/ 10/ 41. Different colour stock to PC 5.		
PC 6 829/G.H.Q.P./750,000/ 4-42		
LS 5 1021/GHQP/30,000 Pads/6-42		
PC 7 1623/ GHQP/ 10-- 42		
PC 8 1892/2a/ GHQP/ 12-42		*
PC 9 6011/ PMEC/ 6-43		

The following are listed but not yet found by the author.

2065/PMEE/250000 - 3 -- 42

6886/PMEC/-9--43

4631/GHQP/ 8--44

4631/GHQP/ 11--44.

6631/GHQP/ 11--44

Cards - Quantities produced

July 1941	1,000,000	
October 1941	500,000	
January 1942	15,000	For Notification of Capture
February 1942	60,000	For Notification of Capture
March 1942	250,000	Listed but not seen by author
April 1942	750,000	
April 1942	50,000	For Notification of Capture
June 194230,000	LS 5 in pads

No quantity in Requisition Order

October 1942

December 1942

June 1943

September 1943

August 1944

November 1944

9 POST CARDS, Official, from POW Camps

In this listing, the author refers to the card as PC 1 [Capture], because it is the first card to be used by POW. [Identification by author]. The listing for subsequent issues is PC 2 [Capture] and PC 3 [Capture]; also the listing of PC 4 to PC 9, is in sequence of Requisition Orders.

PC 1 [Capture]

A.F. W. 3054 (Substitute)
CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF CAPTURE ONLY
PRISONER OF WAR
Postage Free
Franc di Bollo
Nome Ferruccio
Cognome Piva
No. Matr. 105
Grado Soluto
Unità 105 Zanter Spezia
Data e luogo di nascita: 19/9/1922
Benaglie Baschi
Nome { padre: Piva
madre: Giubbin Bertilio
No. dell' Integrito: N. 385502
Indirizzo Piva Ferruccio
Italian Prisoners of War Camp. 313
MEF
1927-23-10
Sig. Piva
MONTECCHIO P. VERAGLIE
PROVINCIA BENI
aux soins du
COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
de la CROIX ROUGE
Agence Centrale
des prisonniers de Guerre
GENÈVE

Fig. 22 PC 1 [Capture] BUFF card 149 x 97mm A.F.W. 3054 [Substitute]

Requisition order: 541/GHQP/15,000/ 1--42 [Arrow, brown, and line at bottom left]

The sans-serif headings are 'CARD TO BE ...' is 95mm. long and 'PRISONER OF WAR' is 41mm. long.

The sans-serif words at right 'Postage Free' are 20mm. long, Franc di Bollo are 24mm.

PC 1: [Capture] Note the two black arrows - Broad = Name. Narrow = Blank space for remarks.

Compare the arrows with the changed version PC 2 [Capture], and the reversion [PC 3 Capture] below.

PC 2 [Capture]

A.F. W. 3054 (Substitute)

CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF CAPTURE ONLY
PRISONER OF WAR

Postage Free
Franc di Bollo
EAST 203

Nome *Asimmo*
Cognome *Aurelli*
No. Matr. *1312*
Grado *Capo*
Unità *1312 Regg. Fanteria*
Data e luogo di nascita: *18-7-910*
Nome { padre: *fu Ettore*
 madre: *Rosa Teresa*
No. dell' Internato: *420609*
Indirizzo *Aurelli Asimmo*
Italian Prisoners of War Camp, 313
Egypt.

Sig. *1000*
Aurelli Gabriella
Grassano Visconti
Sicenza
(Italia)

aux soins du
COMITE INTERNATIONAL
de la CROIX ROUGE
Agence Centrale
des prisonniers de Guerre
GENÈVE

602/2 G.H.Q.P., 60,000/2-42

Fig. 23 **PC 2** [Capture] **GREY-BLUE** card 153 x 94mm A.F.W. 3054 [Substitute]

Requisition order: **602/2 G.H.Q.P./60,000/ 2-42**

The sans-serif headings are ' CARD TO BE ...' is 119mm. long. and 'PRISONER OF WAR' is 53mm. long.

The serif words at right are in Italic - 'Postage Free' are 21mm. long, Franc di Bollo are 22mm.

In **PC 2** [Capture] - above - at left side the entry spaces for names of Padre and Madre, are raised. by 4mm, and a blank space left open for remarks.

PC 3 [Capture]

CARD TO BE USED FOR NOTIFICATION OF CAPTURE ONLY
PRISONER OF WAR
 A.F. W. 3054 (Substitute)
 Postage Free
 Franco di Bollo

Nome *Giuseppe*
 Cognome *Bastiani*
 No. Matr. *8159*
 Grado *Suicida*
 Unità *84^a Gruppo Int.*
 Data e luogo di nascita: *23-9-20*
Giuseppe Bastiani
 padre: *Bi to*
 Nome madre: *Botella Adalgisa*
 No. dell' Internato:
 Indirizzo *Campo 318*
 Italian Prisoners of War Camp,
 859/1/G.H.Q.P./50,000/4-42 **MEF** *Egypt.*

Sig. *Botella Adalgisa*
Luigi Montecchino
Giuseppe Bastiani
Piscina

aux soins du
 COMITE INTERNATIONAL
 de la CROIX ROUGE
 Agence Centrale
 des prisonniers de Guerre
 GENÈVE

Fig. 24 PC 3 [Capture] GREY-BLUE card 150 x 92mm A.F.W. 3054 [Substitute]

In PC 3 [Capture] the spaces for Padre and Madre revert to their previous positions.

Requisition order: 859/1/G.H.Q.P./50,000/4-42

PC 4 to PC 7 - 'Normal' Postcards

Used by POW for normal correspondence. [Identification by the author].

- Dimensions of all cards are within 3mm. of PC 4.
- PC 4 and PC 5 and 5a are without Form Numbers.
- PC 6 to 9 each have Form Number [M.E. Form 65] in different positions.
- Requisition orders: identified by a brown arrow and underlining.
- Fonts: all are in serif fonts except for parts of PC 5.
- On PC 4 and PC 6 to 9, the texts are identical, but differ in inking density.
- The capital and lower-case letters of text are 3 or 2 mm high.
- The measurements below refer to length of text.

PRIGIONIERO DI GUERRA
 SOLO L'INDIRIZZO DA QUESTO LATO
 Alla famiglia
 Tassi Primo
 Formoso Caro
 Via dei Collegati (Parma)
 141/1/G.H.Q.P./1,000,000/7-41

POSTA GRATIS

Fig. 25 PC 4 STRAW card 150-153 x 90-93 mm

Requisition order: 141/ 1 /G.H.Q.P./1,000,000/7-41. Stop at end sometimes omitted.

Text:

PRIGIONIERO DI GUERRA

50 mm

60 mm

10 and 11 mm

Reverse of card

Extension line

35 mm

c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST 93 mm

Extension line

17 mm

Extension line

123 mm

Extension line

35 mm

Number of lines

8

SCRIVETE IN MODO LEGGIBILE 58 mm

PC 5 and 5a



Fig. 26 **PC 5** **SALMON-PINK** card 148 x 92 mm No Form Number

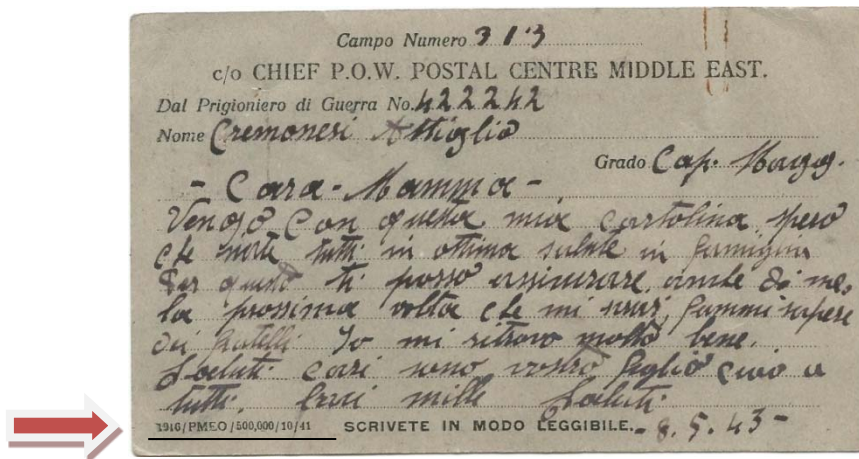


Fig. 27 PC 5 a **GREY-BLUE** [card

Requisition order: **1916/ PMEO / 500,000 / 10 / 41** on Reverse

PC 5 and 5 a are identical in text, but they are on different colour stock. Text dimensions are shown below.

Sans-serif

54 mm

68 mm

8.5 and 9.5 mm



Fig. 28 Showing the *dotted* line box 19 x 28 mm

Reverse	Serif italic			
	Campo Numero	26 x 3-2mm	Extension line	35mm, in dotted line
Non-italic	c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST.			112 mm
	Dal prigioniero di guerra No.	52 mm	Extension line	17 mm
	Nome	105 mm	Extension line	123 mm
	Grado	11 mm	Extension line	35 mm
	Message lines	134 mm	Number of <i>dotted</i> lines	8
Sans-serif	SCRIVETE IN MODO LEGGIBILE.		59 mm	

.....

PC 6 to PC 9 - Text is identical to PC 4



Fig. 29 **PC 6** **BUFF** card 149 x 92 mm

Requisition order: 829/G.H.Q.P./750,000/ 4-42. [The circular hand-stamp at left is illustrated at Fig. 69]

M.E. Form 65'. 'M' is over the 'E' of 'EAST'

Campo Numero 313

c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST

Dal prigioniero di guerra No.

Nome Manolo Piroli

Grado Sargente

Oggi giorno di Pasqua, ho avuto la possibilità di dare una mail. Ho in ultima data scritto spero di vedervi presto il 4-6-43. Desidero non pensare male, perché io sono da parte Alle. Ma una me dice: Re, Emerico e il figlio di Buoci. Vi mandano tanti cari saluti.

SCRIVETE IN MODO LEGGIBILE

Fig. 30 Reverse of same PC 6. Form number printed 20 mm

PC 7

PRIGIONIERO DI GUERRA

SOLO L'INDIRIZZO DA QUESTO LATO

Agosti Aurelio

Borghetto

F. Tiacenna

(Stalla)

1623/GHQP/10-42

Fig. 31 **PC 7** **STRAW** thin paper 140 x 95mm

Requisition order: '1623/GHQP/10-42'

'M.E. Form 65'. 'M' is over the 'E' of 'MIDDLE

Campo Numero 313

c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST

Dal prigioniero di guerra No. 989026

Nome Agosti Aurelio

Grado Sargente

Ho genitori lungo la via dei...

SCRIVETE IN MODO LEGGIBILE

Fig. 32 Reverse of same PC 7 card. Form number printed 20 mm'

PC 8



Fig. 33 **PC 8** **STRAW** thin paper 127 x 90 mm

Requisition order: **1892/2a/ GHQP/ 12-42**

M.E. Form 65 'M' is over the 'E' of 'MIDDLE' as on PC 7 above.

.....

PC 9

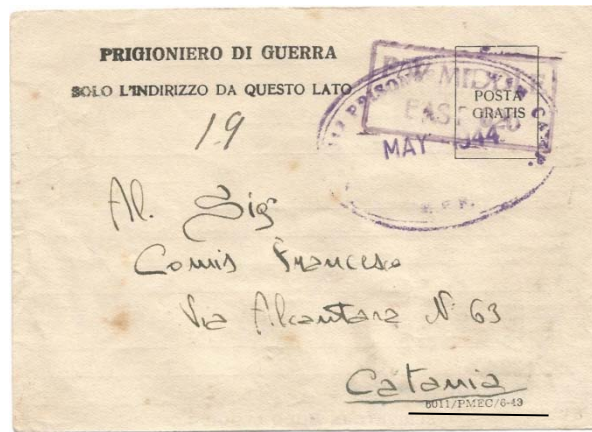


Fig. 34 **PC 9** **STRAW** thin paper 128 x 90 mm

Requisition order. **'6011/ PMEC/ 6-43**

M.E. Form 65 'M' is over the 'E' of 'MIDDLE' as on PC 8 above.

The text on both sides is identical to PC 8. However, on the front it is printed 10 mm to the left, and on the reverse is 5 mm to the right. [common to three examples].

11- LETTER SHEETS from POW

The Letter Sheets were designed to give the POW greater space to write than the cards. Generally, the POW was entitled to two Cards or one Letter Sheet per month. There were three folds made to form a loose letter sheet. The first fold is at the top end of the Letter Sheet, the Slot is followed by the second fold, the address label and tongue being below the third fold.

There are seven types of Letter Sheet each of which is distinctive be identified here as LS 1, 2, 3, 4 and LS 5. Also LS 6 and 7. Differences are given in the tables and illustrations below.

- a. Sizes in mm. - Allow for differences of up to 3mm. in length and width of the letter sheet. This was due to the war-time production.

- b. On the inner side of each type of Letter Sheet, except one, there were printed 24 feint lines to aid writers. LS 5 has no printed lines on the inner side.
- c. Slot length 60mm - LS 1, LS 2, LS 5, LS 7. 55mm - LS 3, LS 6.
- d. Requisition order [for the quantities and type of printing]. Printed only on LS 5
- e. Printing was done in Cairo [see Section 8]

DISTINCTIVE DIFFERENCES between Types of Letter Sheet

LS 1 to LS5. See LS 6 and LS 7 for other differences.

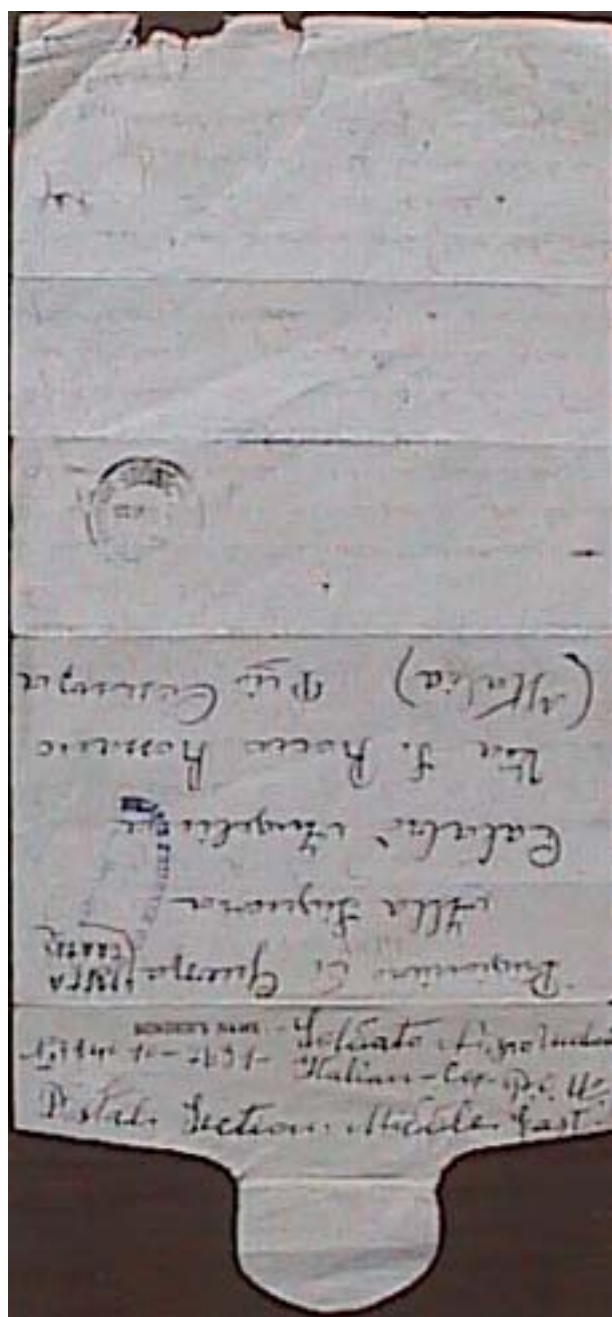


Fig. 35 LS 1, 2, 3, 4. and 5. This is the design for the first five Types of Letter Sheet

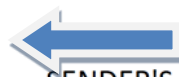


FIRST FOLD

SLOT for Tongue



SECOND FOLD



THIRD FOLD

SENDER'S NAME

Guide to other identification of Letter sheets see below.

TONGUE of flap [into Slot]

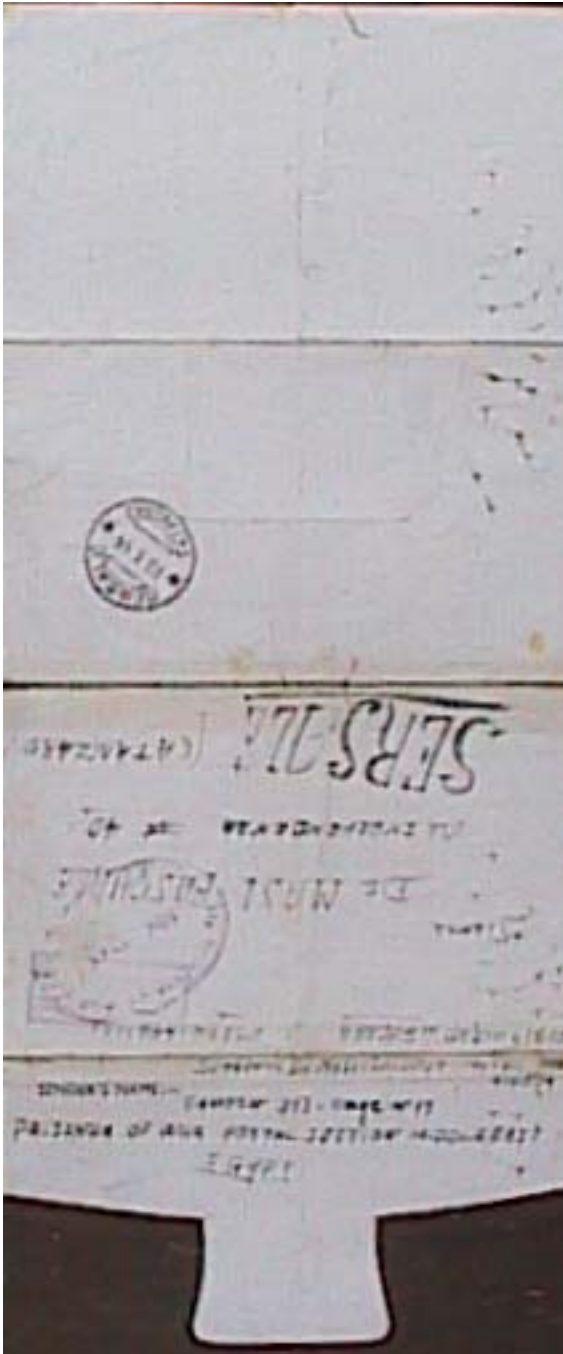


Fig. 36 LS 6. WHITE paper, coated



FIRST FOLD

SLOT for Tongue



SECOND FOLD



THIRD FOLD

SENDER'S NAME

TONGUE of flap [into Slot]

1871
Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.
Very respectfully,
J. H. [Signature]
[Circular Postmark: NEW YORK, N.Y. 1871]
SENDER'S NAME: J. H. [Signature]
ADDRESS: 107 N. 4th St. N.Y. N.Y.
MIDDLE EAST



SENDER'S NAME

TONGUE of flap [into Slot]

Identification of Letter Sheets

The simplest procedure is to first identify the paper colour, font type, and location of 'SENDER'S NAME'. Dimensions refer to the letters only, and do not include the colon and dash: -. Also the Tongue shape, and Slot Length is 55mm for LS 3, 4, 7 and 60mm for LS 1, 2, 5, 6.

LS 1 **STRAW** paper, thick 330-350 x 155-167mm.

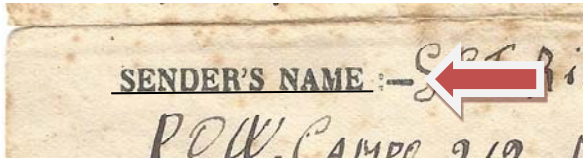


Fig. 38 **SENDER'S NAME** - [Serif font] has Curved leg R. 32 x 3mm Printed on flap, LH side of Outer.



Fig. 39 Tongue with flap. Convex with concave bends each side.
One example is in a Brown paper, thicker and similar to that used for LS 7.



Fig. 40 **LS 2, 3, 4 and 5.** Tongue with flap for these types.

LS 2 **STRAW** paper, thin 345 x 157mm.

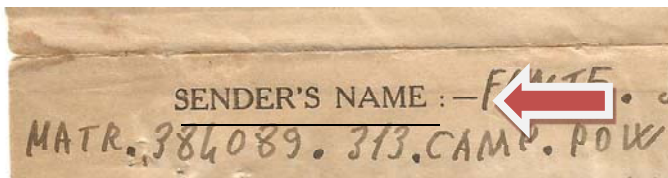


Fig. 41 **SENDER'S NAME** - [Serif font] has Straight leg R. 33 x 2.7mm
Printed on Flap, LH side of Outer. Tongue convex with sides cut to form internal angles. Slot length 60mm.

LS 3 **STRAW paper**, thin

335 x 165mm.

Printed Inverted just above third fold.

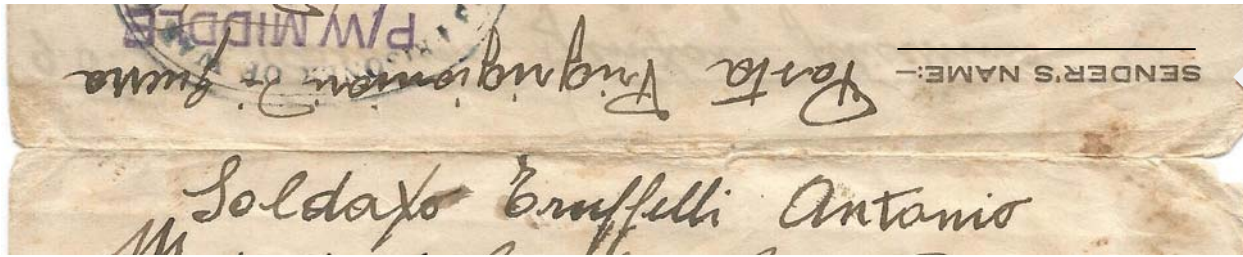


Fig. 42 **SENDER'S NAME** -- [Sans Serif font]. **Straight leg R.**

36 x 2.2mm

Tongue convex with sides cut to form internal angles. Slot length 55mm.

LS 4

STRAW paper, thin

338 x 163mm.

OFFRS - Printed Inverted just above third fold.

It appears that there was no discrimination applied in this case.

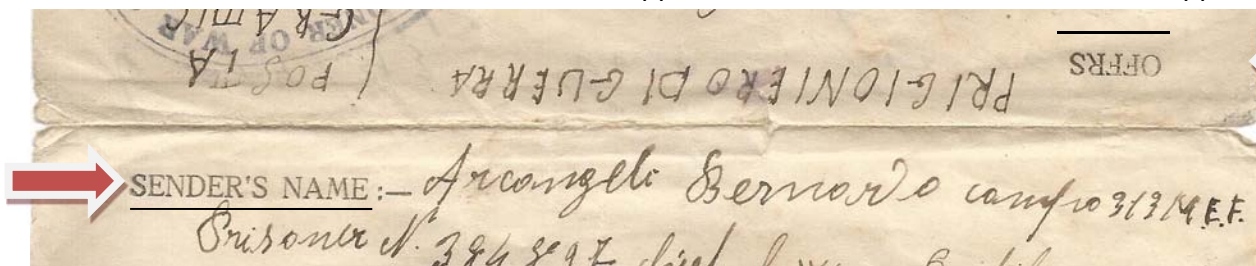


Fig. 43 **SENDER'S NAME** - [Serif font] **Straight leg R**

32 x 3mm

Tongue convex with sides cut to form internal angles. Slot length 55mm.

LS 5

STRAW paper, thin

344 x 165-167mm.

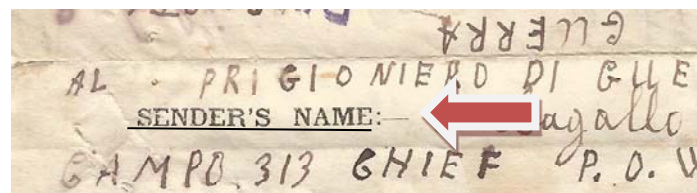


Fig. 44 **SENDER'S NAME** - [Serif font] **Curved leg R.**

31 x 2.3mm

Tongue convex with sides cut to form internal angles. Slot length 60mm.

Requisition Order - printed on LS 5. Three examples, illustrated below.

The SENDER'S NAME and Requisition Order are aligned with each other vertically.

Requisition Order - **1021/GHQP/30,000 Pads/6--42.**

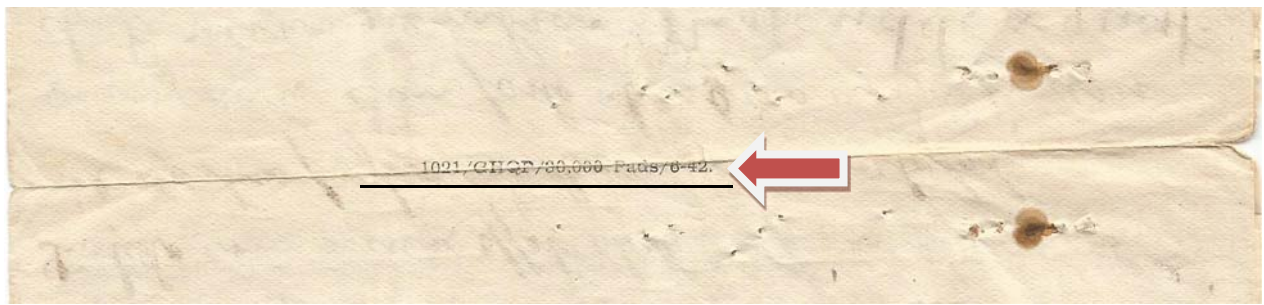


Fig. 45 Example at Centre of Outer, on first fold.

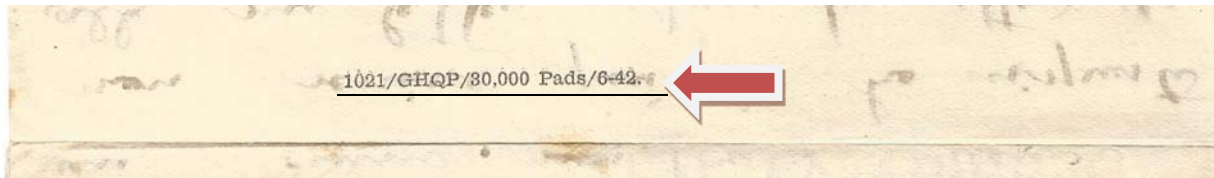


Fig. 46 Example at mid Left of Outer, just above first fold, [two examples held].

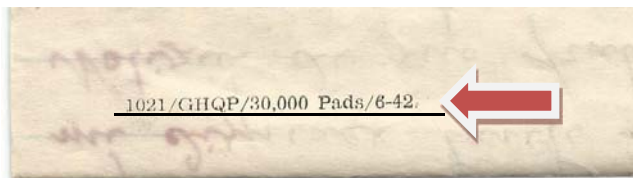


Fig. 47 Example at LH of Outer, just above first fold.

LS 6 WHITE paper, coated, slightly glossy. 334 x 157mm. Three examples.

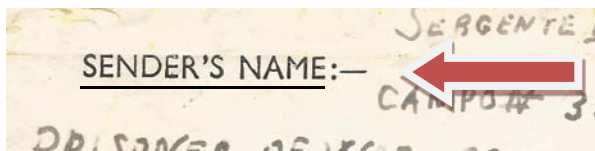


Fig. 48 SENDER'S NAME : -- [Sans Serif font]. Straight leg R. 32 x 3

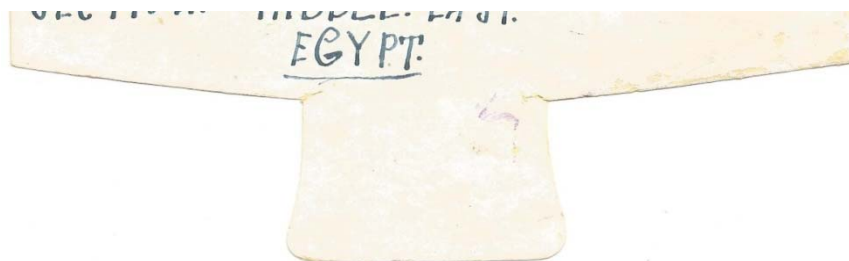


Fig. 49 Tongue square-cut and splayed. Slot length 60mm.

LS 7 BROWN paper, thick 334 x 158mm. Four examples.



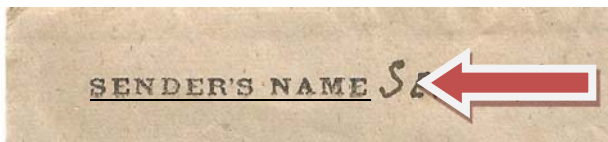


Fig. 49 **SENDER'S NAME** - [Serif font] curved leg R. 37 x 2.3mm. No colon and dash.

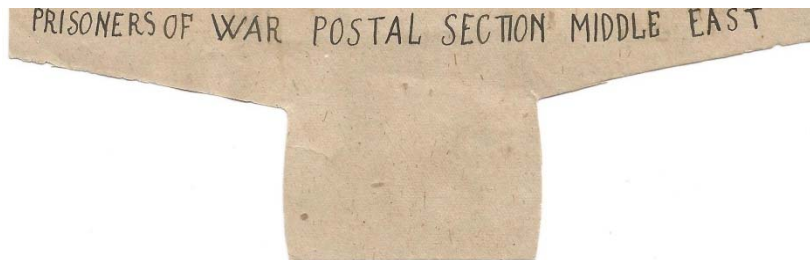


Fig. 50 Tongue square-cut. Slot length 55mm.

12 CAMP CACHETS

There were basically two types of Camp Cachet for 313 POW Camp. The following listing shows their occurrence on Letter Sheets and Cards. They are also sometimes referred as 'Authoris' handstamps in reference to a similar handstamp used in the regular Italian forces.

Heading **CC 1** shows the general appearance of the elliptical Camp Cachet. Variations are as shown. Heading **CC 2** is similar, but is without borders.

Colours of Ink

There are four types of ink used with Camp Cachets:

- Violet All except for the following.
- Blue-black Five examples, all MAY to JULY 1943,
- Blue, deep One example SEP 1945.
- Greenish-blue Two examples JUNE & JULY 1943

CC 1 Border lines.



Figs. 51 **Normal version of CC 1**

Thick [outer] and Thin [inner] borders.

Oval, horizontal. Dimensions overall 54 x 36--37mm

Text in **Serif**: No. 313 PRISONER OF WAR CAMP. / M. E. F.

Height of text 3mm

Date in **Sans-serif, with dot**. In centre of oval **Month and Year**

Height of date 4mm

Varieties



Fig. 51 Variety CC 1a

Date: Month elevated 3mm above level of Year. Four examples used JUN and AUG 1943



Fig. 52 Variety CC 1b



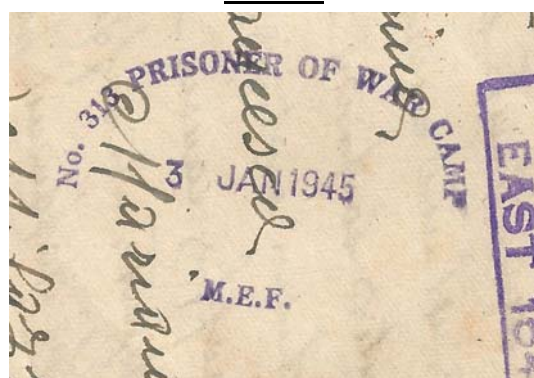
Fig. 53 Variety CC 1c

Date: Month omitted. Six examples used, **Date:** Inverted. Two examples DEC 1943 all in May 1943.

Both examples also show month elevated. as in CC 1a

CC 2 No border lines

Normal



3 JAN 1945 **Second CC 2** unframed

Note: Unusual full date & month are shown [4 DEC 1944 and 3 JAN 1945]

Variety



Fig. 54 Variety **CC 2a**

Used with the unusual full date - 29 SEP 1945.

Distorted at right hand side
where '**CAMP / M.E.F.**' is turned inward.

Variety



Fig. 55 Variety **CC 2b**

Used MAR 1946. No day in date.

In this case '**CAMP**' is even more distorted. '**M.E.F.**'
is not apparent.

13-CENSORSHIP and CENSOR MARKS

All cards and letters were subjected to censorship. There were at least thirty-one censors at work on the mail from 313 Camp. Each censoring officer was obliged to sign for the censor number hand-stamp so that it could be used to trace back the item if necessary. From 313 POW Camp alone, there were probably upwards of 8,000 mail units to be censored each month.

In addition, there was some censoring carried out by Germany [see Figs. 60 and 61], especially for destinations in north Italy.

Censor marks

Three known types of Censor Marks were used on mail from 313 POW Camp - **CM 1**, **CM2**, and **CM 3**.

Variations are as shown. Example: P/W MIDDLE / EAST 000

CM 1 Rectangle frame for sans-serif text

CM 2 Rectangle frame for serif text

CM 3 Unframed for sans-serif text

The listings show the occurrence of Censor Numbers on Letter Sheets and Cards.

Censor Marking CM 1 for sans-serif fonts



Fig. 56 **CM 1**

The frames vary in size, with no consistent pattern. 9 items recorded;

Rectangle framed 40mm x 17mm. Sans-serif; Letters 35 x 4.5mm;

Censor numbers noted, **25, 111, 133, 203, 205, 209, 213**. Numbers **146, 260** used at Bengasi No 8 Working Camp (July 1945].

Varieties



Fig. 57 Variety **CM 1a**

Rectangle framed 38 x 18mm. Sans Serif: Letters 35 x 4-4.5mm.

Height of frame slightly greater, particularly above 'P/W MIDDLE '

Censor Marking CM 2 for serif fonts



Fig. 58 **CM 2**

W caused by overlapping double V. 14 items recorded.

Rectangle framed 40 x 20mm. Serif font, letters 35 x 4.5--5mm

Censor numbers noted; **026, 037, 045, 047, 057, 065, 092, 098, 143, 153, 154, 183, 186, 189**.

Number **099** applied to incoming envelope. No date but after 1 March 1943.

Varieties



Fig. 59 Variety- **CM 2a**

Narrow Rectangle framed -46 x 13mm; Serif font, 46 x 13mm

Note: Censor number **154**

Additional German censorship

German censorship took place - after the Italian surrender to the Allies on 3 September. How was it achieved? A probable answer is to be found in the surface route north from Sofia and Belgrade which was by train. It would have been a simple matter to divert bags or cars of mail to Vienna or Munich. Then, after censorship, to despatch them to Switzerland for sending on to Rome. The German censors were the Intelligence branch of the Armed Forces [Wehrmacht].



Fig. 60 P/W MIDDLE / EAST 272, unframed, released DEC 1943.

German censor machine, Munich, code initial 'd', and hand stamps [Ag] and 4227 [rect. framed], who were in control of Austria & northern Italy at that time. Munich was responsible for censoring Italian mail to and from Italy.



Fig. 61 P/W MIDDLE / EAST 186, framed, released MAR 1944.

German censor machine [Ag] and hand-stamps Vienna, code initial 'g', and 4310 [rect. framed]. Vienna was responsible for censoring Italian POW mail from the Middle East. Destination was Brescia, in Lombardia.

Additional censorship in Cairo by Apostolic Delegation

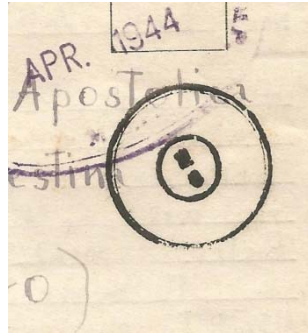


Fig. 62 CM 2 applied. This double ring including two dots, was applied at the Apostolic Delegation in Cairo.

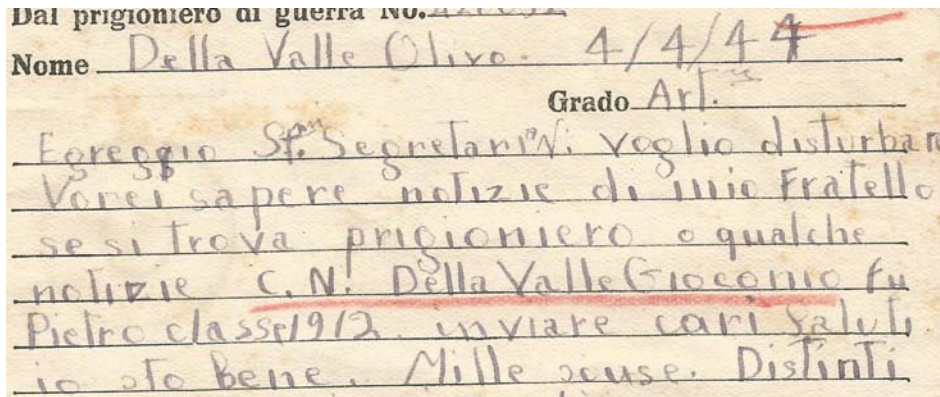


Fig. 63 Underlining in red; the name of his brother who the soldier was enquiring about.

Censor Marking CM 3 for sans-serif fonts

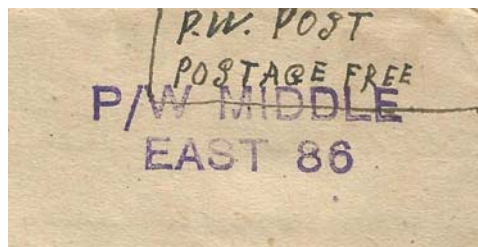


Fig. 64 NO frame. Sans-serif font.

Normal [?], Spacing between lines usually 2-3mm. 13 items recorded.

Censor Numbers noted: 9, 16, 20, 73, 86, 117 [2], 131, 143, 164, 198, 241, 246, 264, 272.

Two instances of 117 cancelling cards PC 4 and 5 [both used 1943].

Varieties

It appears that some censorship marks differ in overall length overall.



Fig. 65 Variety **CM 3a**

Spacing between lines - approx. 5mm



Fig. 66 Variety **CM 3b**

Spacing between lines - approx. 8mm

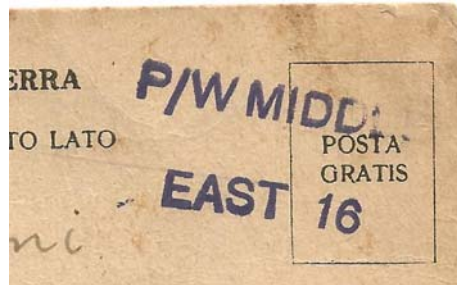


Fig. 67 Variety **CM 3c** P/W MIDDLE / EAST 16, 6 April 1943

The two lines of the hand stamp are convergent towards the right-hand side of the card.

Censor Marking CM 3 for sans-serif fonts

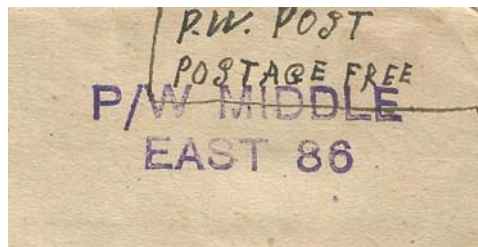


Fig. 64 No frame. Sans-serif font.

Normal [?], Spacing between lines usually 2-3mm. 13 items recorded.

Censor Numbers noted: 9, 16, 20, 73, 86, 117 [2], 131, 143, 164, 198, 241, 246, 264, 272.

Two instances of 117 cancelling cards PC 4 and 5 [both used 1943].

Varieties

It appears that some censorship marks differ in the length overall.



Fig. 65 Variety **CM 3a**

Spacing between lines - approx. 5mm



Fig. 66 Variety **CM 3b**

Spacing between lines - approx. 8mm

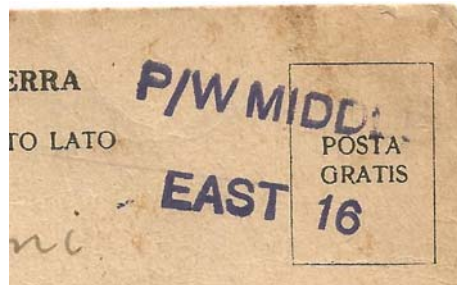


Fig. 67 Variety **CM 3c** P/W MIDDLE / EAST 16, 6 April 1943
The two lines of the hand stamp are convergent towards the right-hand side of the card.

Censorship as applied

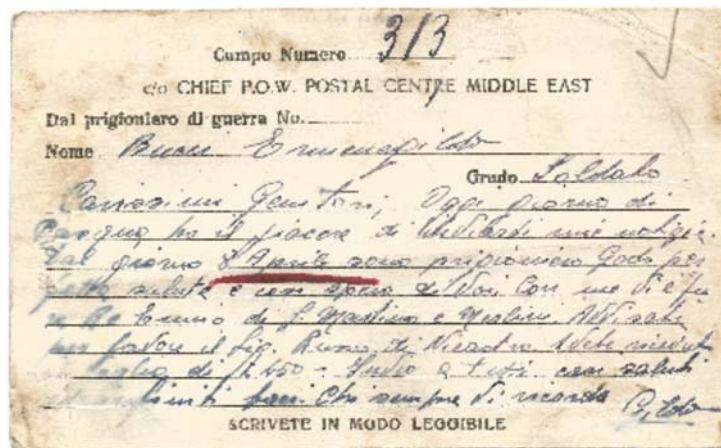


Fig. 68 P/W MIDDLE / EAST 20.
Red crayon underlining of 8 April [1943] indicating censor interest in dates of capture.

Additional Censorship - ROME



Fig. 69 P/W MIDDLE EAST 16. PC 6 used probably April-May 1943. This cachet [rubber hand-stamp] is of the UFFICIO CENSURA POSTA ESTERA / * 'I' *. [ROME]

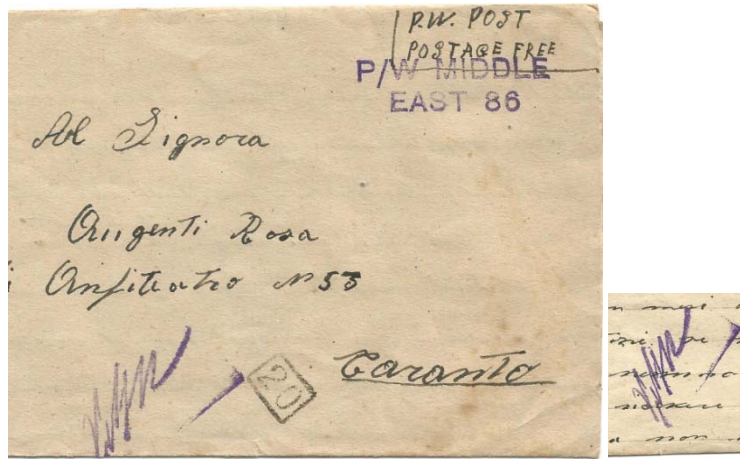


Fig. 70a and 70b

Two items written in October 1943 [on different LS] and released OCT 1943, were both subjected to a rubber stamp facsimile on the outer and inner of the sheet. The ink on the outer hand-stamp is the same density as the censor mark. It probably represents the signature of someone in a censorship office.

14-INSTRUCTIONS for MAIL to ITALIAN POWs

The following paragraphs are based on Official Instructions from 1 June 1942.

Correspondence. Ordinary letters and postcards for prisoners of war did not need to be franked since they were exempt from postal charges and could be deposited in any post box. Letters had to be written on light paper, not quadrilled, and were to be enclosed in equally light envelopes without lining.

It was recommended to send to the same prisoner no more than two letters or two postcards a month, and to keep the writing to no more than 24 lines of script. This reflected the concessions given to Italian POW in camps.

On the top of the envelope or postcard [address side] there had to be written 'POSTA PRIGIONIERI GUERRA' [Prisoner of War Mail] and below this the rank [Grado], surname, first name, prisoner's number, name and number of the prison camp, and the country where the soldier finds himself prisoner. On the back of the envelope containing the letter or on the postcard, must be written clearly the full name and address of the sender.

Photographs

Photographs of persons could be sent, provided there were no views in the background, and they were not pasted on cardboard.

Special services

Insured letters were accepted without fee, and were to be submitted, unsealed, to receiving offices. Insured letters were not to contain money, goods of value, or handwritten correspondence.

Mail was not to be sent C.O.D., registered, special delivery, nor to request notice of receipt [A.R.].

Forbidden items

It was forbidden to send Illustrated postcards and postal letter cards. Nor to include photographs of panoramas, or items of military interest, newspaper clippings, cigarettes, blank writing paper or envelopes, stamps, paper money, blank or annotated music sheets, or writing in code or shorthand.

Letters and cards that did not conform to the standards listed, or contain information that could be useful to the enemy, would not be accepted.

Uncertain address

In the event where the address was not completely known, the sender had to address the letter to either,

- a] POW Chief Postal Centre, Middle East - Egypt; or
- b] The front on which the POW served in combat.

An example of this is given below. In this case the Red Cross office in Rome was used to forward it.

Envelope incoming to ~~Tobruch~~, but readdressed to Camp 313.



Fig. 71 Envelope did not have any sender's details. Addressed to 'Prigioniero di Cirenaica, guerra in Egitto, Tobruch'. Sent to Rome for the Red Cross [insignia], Office of Prisoners - Research [red rubber hand-stamp].

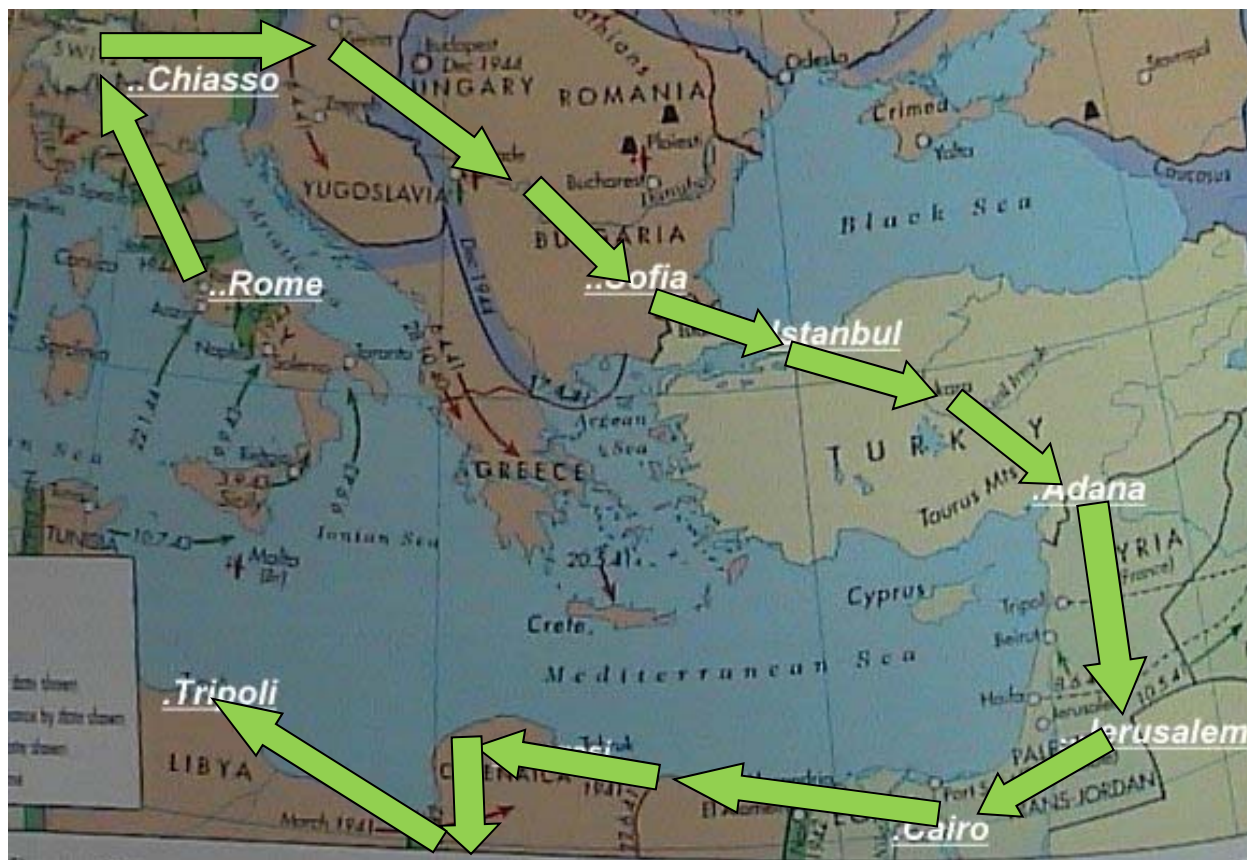
After that the address was deleted [blue crayon] '~~Cirenaica - Tobruch~~', and marked it for Camp 313. It also carried a Censor's mark - P/VV MIDDLE / EAST 099. The date of the letter is not evident, but the earliest for destination of Camp 313 in Bengasi could have been from November 1942, or in Tripoli from March 1943.

Modes of Carriage of Inward Mail to POW in Libya

Surface mail

It seems likely that the bags of surface-carried mail would have used the train route Chiasso to Sofia, and continued by train to Istanbul. Across Turkey to Adana the same would apply. From there the route would have used the rail [if it was serviceable] or road through Syria and Palestine to Cairo.

In Cairo, the mail may have been delayed depending on the course of military operations, but it did get through to Bengasi, and after the establishment of 313 Camp, to Tripoli.



Map 6 Showing the probable surface route to POWs in Bengasi and Tripoli. The rail routes are fairly certain, but which sections used the roads varied depending on operational and weather conditions.

Air Mail

Air Mail was permitted via POW mail routes to Egypt for Libya. Envelopes were to be inscribed 'Air Mail for Prisoner of War', and a marking indicating the air route. The table of Air Mail rates includes the Additional Postage for Egypt as L2.50 for every 5 grams or part thereof.

Air letters were sent to Rome in an envelope where they were handed over to the Office of the Censor for Foreign Mail. Once censored, the mail was returned to the Posta Estero [Foreign Post] and a shipment made up for dispatch by train to Chiasso [on the Swiss-Italian border]. The despatch was marked 'Correspondences Avion' with dispatch note Form AV 2, on which was noted the weight of the package.

Partial Air Routes to Libya

There was a note by the British Administration [about June 1942] stating that it was problematic whether there was any gain in time in sending letters to Egypt and Libya by air rather than by surface mail. However, it is not surprising that air transport was not used all the way. The mode agreed by the Italian government with Swiss intermediary in April 1942 was CHIASSO [on Swiss border with Italy] by train to SOFIA [Bulgaria], then by air to Istanbul, train partway to GERUSALEMME [Jerusalem] and then by air [BOAC] from Jerusalem to Cairo. Thence onward to POW Camps.



Fig. 72 This is a hand stamp for ' POSTA AEREA PER PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA / VIA CHIASSO - SOFIA - GERUSALEMME.

By December 1942 the British GPO suggested that it would be more convenient to make the exchange at Adana [south Turkey]. Trains were used to Adana [Taurus Express] where the POW mail was transferred to BOAC by air to Jerusalem and to Cairo for onward transmission to the camps at Bengasi and Tripoli.

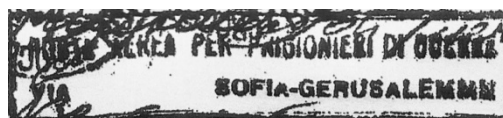
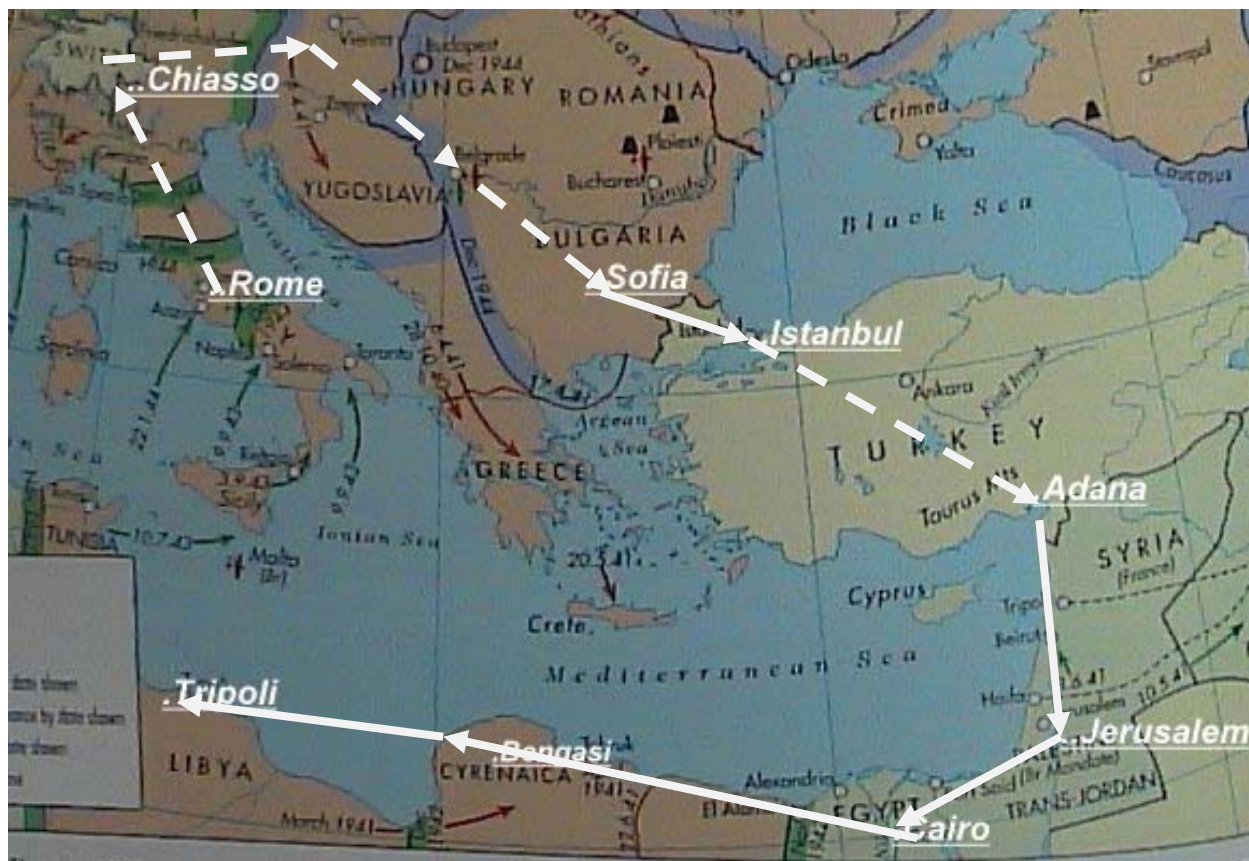


Fig. 73 This hand stamp is on an undated cover. It was shortened to read ' ... / VIA SOFIA - GERUSALEMME ', indicating a later direct link from Italy to Sofia. The dates would have to be after February 1944 [when Rome and southern Italy had been liberated from German troops].



Fig. 74 In this example the remaining words do not include 'SOFIA' May indicate a shorter route - 'CHIASSO - GERUSALEMME'.



Map 7: Showing routes for train [broken lines] and air [continuous lines] for air mail to POWs in Libya. Apart from certain rail routes, the surface portions especially in winter, are not known.

15 ADDRESSING INCOMING MAIL to POWs

No formal instruction nor printing amendment has been seen so far. Apparently, the changes were made by the POWs themselves to their correspondents.

Original

The first address used was the one printed on the Postcard PC 1 [Capture]

Italian Prisoners of War Camp.

~~Egypt~~ MEF and 313 [amended by POW]

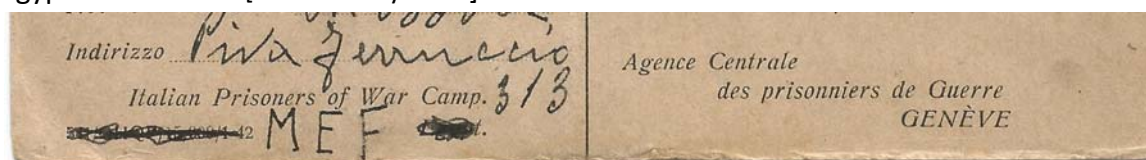


Fig. 75 On left-hand side at base. The details were to be inserted by the POW

Then came the following on the normal Postcards:

On reverse

Campo Numero.....

c/o Chief P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST

Changes

From July 1943, the earliest seen, to March 1946, there were manuscript amendments made by the POWs.

The changes were as follows:

'c/o CHIEF' deleted. Importantly, 'CENTRE' was deleted and 'Section' was inserted.

A photograph of a postcard with handwritten and printed text. The top line reads 'Campo Numero' followed by the handwritten number '313'. To the right, it says 'M.E. Form 65'. Below this, the word 'Section' is handwritten and underlined, with 'c/o CHIEF P.O.W. POSTAL CENTRE MIDDLE EAST' printed below it. The next line reads 'Dal prigioniero di guerra No.' followed by the handwritten number '382/02'. To the right of this, 'Egypt' is handwritten and underlined. The next line reads 'Nome' followed by the handwritten name 'Fiora Vittorio'. Below this, 'Grado' is printed, followed by the handwritten name 'Napoleone'. The bottom line reads 'Riviera Bonifazio, Tempio di Inverna'.

Fig. 76 Example of change in address.

There were four examples on Postcards from July 1943 onwards. There was no printed address on Letter Sheets, merely SENDER'S NAME. The writer's address was written as 'Section' in twelve letter sheets from 7 July 1943.

This change would have come about by the Postal Centre in Cairo, deciding to send a Censor Section to 313 Camp near Tripoli. This would have taken the censoring load off the staff in Cairo, and because the mail left Tripoli already censored, it speeded up the mail.

16 ITALIAN POWs in 308 Camp, BENGASI

308 POW Camp

The author has a letter sheet with handwritten date, 12 June 1944, addressed to Italy. In it the writer says that he had been in Bengasi for nearly a year. This suggests that the Camp had been established by at least June 1943. That was quite possible, since the British final capture of Bengasi was in November 1942, and 308 POW Camp would have been established soon after.

A photograph of a piece of paper with handwritten text. The top line reads 'SENDER'S NAME:'. Below this, 'BUTERA LIBERO' is handwritten. The next line reads 'MATRICOLA' followed by the handwritten number '2027268'. To the right of this, '308 CAMP BENGASI' is handwritten. The bottom line reads 'MEF' followed by the handwritten number '111111'.

Fig. 77 A letter from Caporale [Corporal] Butero Libero of 308 POW Camp.

POW in Bengasi

A Letter Sheet dated 12 July 1945 sent from Bengasi. It was sent by a POW who was then in an Italian Coy [British Army].

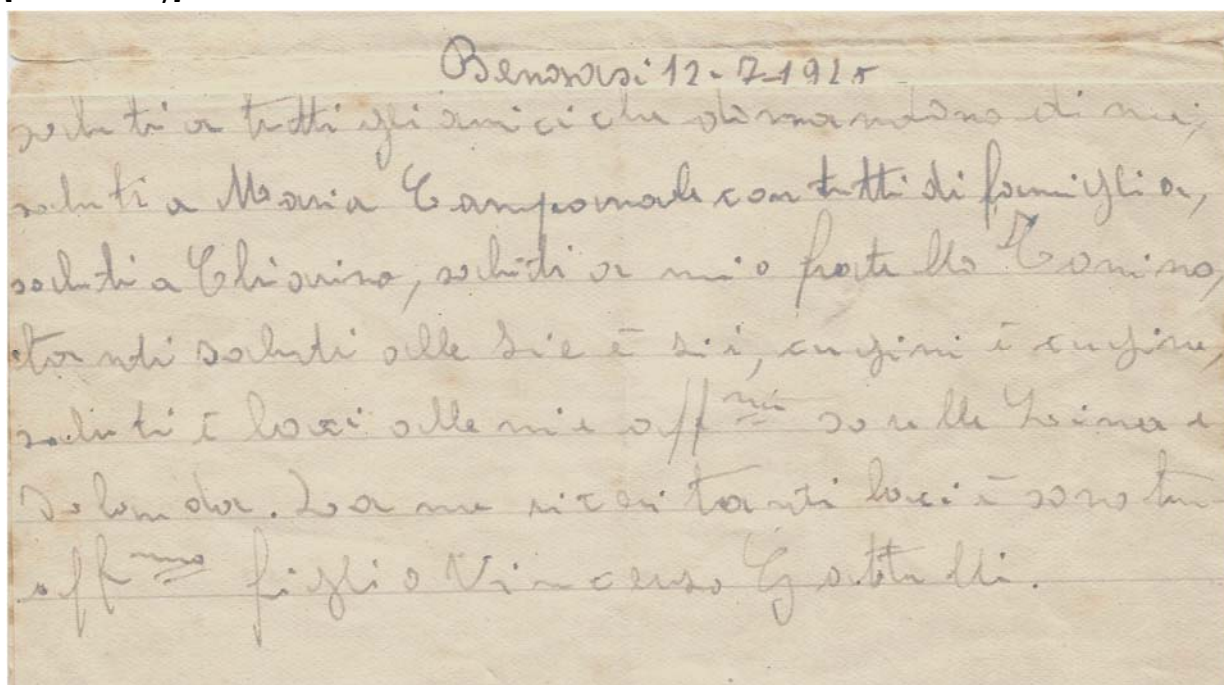


Fig. 78 Sent by Soldato Gothelli Vincenzo, Comp. No 2628, Italian Coy PNR [Pioneer], MEF.

17 ITALIAN COMPANIES in the BRITISH ARMY

POW in Italian Pioneer Companies [British Army]

Italian POWs who were 'CO-OPERATIVE', were encouraged to join Italian Companies [mostly Pioneers]. On 30 July 1944 at 313 POW Camp on some 5,000 signed up as CO-OPERATIVE. About 160 there did not.

The establishment of the Italian Companies was 31 July 1944 at 313 POW Camp, Tripoli, and probably the same time at 308 POW Camp, Bengasi.

The locations of the Italian companies are not all yet fully known.

No. 9 Italian Administration HQ	
2628 Italian Coy, PNR	Bengasi
2658 Italian Coy	
2660 Italian Coy	
2661 Italian DEPOT Coy	Tripoli?
2681 Italian Coy	Tripoli

The dates seen so far are as follows.

Date on documents

31 July 1944 from War Diary of 313 POW Camp unit.

	Formation of No 9 Italian Admin. HQ
	Italian Companies Nos 2684, 2685, 2686, 2687 and 2691
4 November 1944	2661 Italian DEPOT Coy, on Camp Record
31 January 1945	2658 Italian Coy

Dates of letters From

12 July 1945 from	2628 Italian Coy PNR, at Bengasi [see Fig. 78 above]
24 October 1945 from	2660 Italian PNR
28 March 1946 from	2691 Italian Coy, Tripoli. Camp Cachet applied. The latest letter from a POW seen. It is notable that this letter received the cachet of 313 Camp unit, at this time.



Fig. 79 Camp Cachet dated MAR 1946

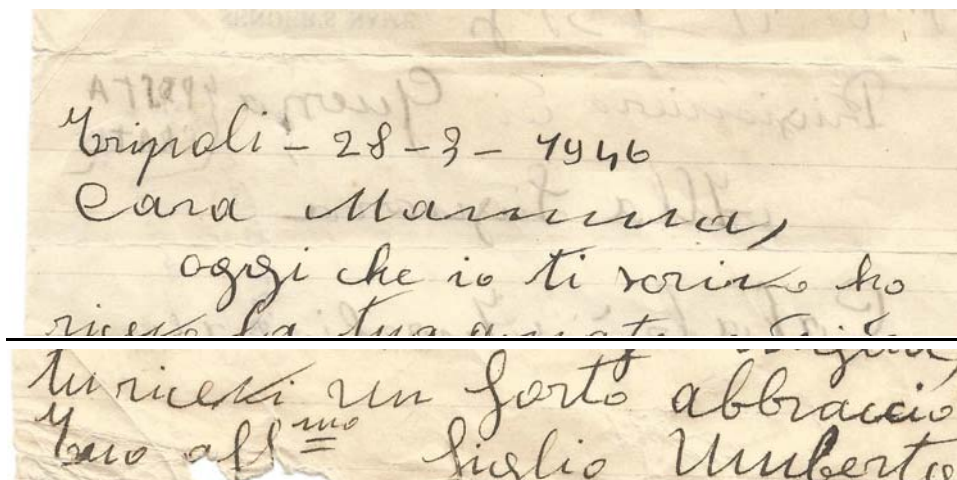
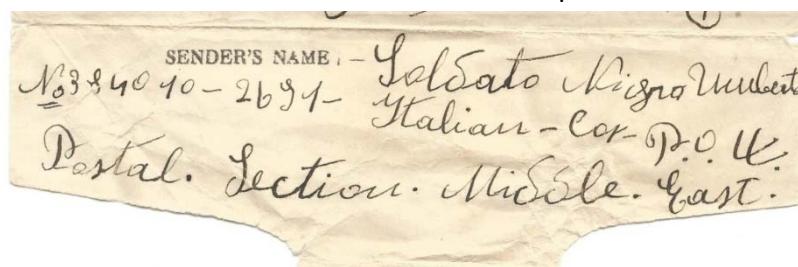


Fig. 80 Sent by Soldato Nigro Umberto, 2681 Italian Coy POW, Postal Section, Middle East.
Written 28 March 1946 at Tripoli.



18 CLOSING of POW CAMPS in LIBYA

POW or Italian Pioneer Coy Camps

The precise date of closing of 313 POW Camp [after 28 March 1946] is not known to the author at present. It was reported to have been 31 July 1944, as the date when the camp was formally closed, on establishment of the Italian Companies [British Army]. But there were still POWs in the camps, as shown by the latest known references [see below].

Even when many of the Italian POWs were organised into Italian Companies, some of them still showed 'POW ' in their address. Latest known correspondence:

308 POW Camp at BENGASI, Letter Sheet [Fig. 77 above] which was written on 12 July 1945 at 308 POW Camp.

313 POW Camp at TRIPOLI was formally 'closed down' in 31 July 1944, once the Italian Companies were formed. But in March 1946 a Letter Sheet [Figs. 79, 80 and 81 above] shows the written date and 'POW:' Written address 'TRIPOLI'. Camp cachet 313 POW Camp was applied.

Thus, for now, we draw to a temporary close, the story of POWs in 308 Camp, Bengasi, and 313 Camp, Tripoli, Libya from 1943 onward.

19: SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

In this last section, I list the sort of the things I am still looking for. They would be on the lines of samples, or reports of:

- a. Evidence of air mail by either outward or inward route. Examples if possible.
- b. Postage stamps on air mail letters.
- c. Officers' mail. Likely to be very scarce.
- d. Examples of parcels, insured, money orders or telegrams.
- e. Local addressing, where is the official Instruction, and its date?
- f. Censorship. How many personnel were stationed to reside at the POW camps from Cairo?
- g. Location of the Documentation centre [Section 4].
- i. Official Instructions on Closing of the POW Camps for Italians. When? from HQ, MEF
- j. What about the 'Non-Cooperatives'
- k. War Diaries [British] - any more in 1944, 1945 [enquiries at National Archives?].

Appendix A.

308 POW Camp

Believed to be at BENGASI for some time in February 1943 to June 1944. Some confirmation is available; a POW letter which was addressed from Bengasi on 12 June 1944 and included 308 Camp in address [see Fig. 75 above].

[There was no record of a War Diary for 1942]

The following six lines of 1943 were notes from the War Diary.

1943.

19 April, 321 Italian Officers and 2083 ORs *[Other Ranks]* from 313 Tripoli Camp

5 May, Visit by M Combe [?] International Red Cross.

21 May, Italian POWs arrive from Malta, *[probably to Bengasi]*

11 June, Visit by Colonel B[?] International Red Cross Delegate.

26 July, Italian Officers and 1185 ORs arrive from Sicily, *[probably to Bengasi]*

9 October 12 Italian Officers and 413 ORs arrive from 8th [British] Army.

There were also a few German and other POWs accommodated.

1944

12 June, POW letter sheet sent to Cantanzaro, Italy.

Appendix B

313 POW CAMP, to TRIPOLI - Notes from WAR DIARY

10 January 1943. Ordered to send detachment from BENGASI to NOFILIYA

24 January. Detachment took over POW Cage at SULTAN

29 January. Arrived TRIPOLI to take over POW Cage from 30 Corps

17 February. Whole unit now concentrated in TRIPOLI

4 March. Orders to urgently erect Base POW Camp for 10,000 POWs at Castel Benito Road, 7 Kilo Mark, just south of TRIPOLI

8 March. Unit moved from Cage to new camp-site.

30 March. Camp completed by POW labour with 13 Cages

Population

Date	Italians	
1943	Officers	Other Ranks
30 April	63	11,570
31 May	47	9,230
30 June	29	9,027
31 July	144	11,600
31 August	159	11,739
1 October	154	11,768

1 November	27	11,861
31 December	28	12,038

[There were also a few German and other POWs]

19 October. Hygiene Inspection by Lt Col Lamb

14 November. Bishop of Tripoli visited camp for service

26 November. Visit by Col B?, President Mixed Medical Commission ME and Mr Duchosal [?]
Sec. Gen., International Red Cross Committee.

1944	Officers	Other Ranks
31 January	30	12,021
29 February	29	11,892
31 March	30	11,069
30 April	29	9,554
31 May	25	7,091
30 June	26	5,199

10 January 1944 Visit by Mr M Sidi [?], International Red Cross Committee. Stayed one week in Tripoli.

2 April. Inspection by Gen. Sir Bernard Paget KCB DSO MC, General Officer Commanding, MEF

4 April. Bishop of Tripoli visited camp for service

7 June. Visit by ADMS* and DADH* Tripoli Area [Assistant Director Medical Services and Deputy Assistant Director Hygiene].

30 July. 5033 Italian POW signed up as Co-operators. *[About 165 Italian POW there did not sign up]*

31 July. 313 POW Camp and No 10 POW Working Unit disbanded, on formation of No 9 Italian Admin HQ, and #2684, 2685, 2686, 2687 and 2691 Italian Companies.

Appendix C.

POWs identified in Libya. from 1943.

SOLDIERS in POW CAMPS [so far 42 names]

The Date is either that by the writer [month in lower case] or the Camp Cachet handstamp [with month in capitals]

<u>Cognome</u>	<u>Nome</u>	<u>Grado</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Indirizzo [Address]</u>	<u>7</u>
A?agour?, Francesco		Bersagliere	24 Nov 1944	Milazzo	Messina
Agosti, Vincenzo		..-..	13 Jun 1943	Roncaglia	Piacenza
Arcon geli, Bernardo		-	6 Jul 1943	Carsali	Aquila
Arciola, Salvatore		--	APR 1944	Catania	
Barbagallo, Alfio		--	8 Feb 1944	Centuripe	Enna
Bucci, [Gildo] ?		Soldato	8? Apr 1943	Collechio	Parma
Butera , Libero		Caporale	12 June 1944	Decollatura	Catanzaro 308 Camp
Cardenchi, Francesco		-	4 Nov 1943	Dozza	Bologna
Cattafi, Santi		Soldato	18 Dec 1943	Olivarella	Messina
Colonna, Domenico		Caporale	13 May 1944	Catania	
Comis, Sante		-	MAY 1944	Catania	
Corsaro, Martino		Sergente	30 May 1944	Catania	
Cremonesi, Attiglio		Cap. Maggi.	8 May 1943	Botticino Mattina	Brescia
Dal Lago, Silvio		Art.	DEC 1943	Arzignano	Vicenza
Demasi, Vincenzo [Cage 13]		Sergente	15 Nov 1943	Sersale	Catanzaro
Della Valle, Olivo		Art.	4 April 1944	Cairo	Egypt
Fiom, Vittorio		Artiglie	AUG 1943	Mantova	
Giosso, Fianasco		Soldato	17 May 1944	Mondovi	Cuneo
Gothelli, Vincenzo		Soldato	12 July 1945	Bari	
Grandi, Gino		Fanteria	[29 Mar 1943]	On AFW 3000 Italian [Camp Record]	
Grasso, Salvatore		Caporale	4 May 1943	Orbetello	Grosseto
Landone, Luigi		Sergente	6 May 1943	Saronno	Varese
Marconi, Luigi		Soldato	26 May 1945 -	Rome	
Massimo, Manelli		Fante	28 Feb 1943	Grassano Visconti	Piacenza
Mauro, Guiseppe		Fanti	JUL 1943	Lecce	
Morizi, Sante		Soldato	25 Apr 1943	Santerno	Ravenna

Nigro, Umberto	Soldato	28 Mar 1946	Rossano	Cosenza
Ortuno ?, Bastieri	Sergente	25 Apr 1943	Gropporllo	Piacenza
Paganelli, Dino	Bersagliere	[10 April 1943]		
Pina, Ribella	Soldato	MAR 1944	Brescia	Lombardia
Pioli, Nando	Fante	6 ? Apr 1943	Collechio	Parma
Piva, Ferruccio	Soldato	17 May 1943	Montechio	Terni
Rizzoli, Arturo	Sergente	10 Apr 1945	Colorno	Parma
Sarnicola, Guiseppe	Caporale	28 Mar 1944	Benevendo	Campania
Sassi, Ezio	Caporale	?? 1943		Parma
Scavo, Ernesto	Soldato	[11 Nov 1943]	Noted in Red Cross letter toPalermo	
Sonzini, Giovanni	Fante	7 Jul 1943	Oleggio	Novara
Stefanelli, ?	Soldato	JAN 1944	Loreto	Ancona
Tagliinto, Cosimo	Soldato	24 Oct 1943	Taranto	
Trufelli, Antonio	Soldato	9 Jun 1943	Casale di Tornolo	Parma
Veci or Vice, Donato	Fante	[May ? 1943]		
Vitale, Michele	--	14 Oct 1943	Salentino	Brindisi

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