

Fuzzy-Wuzzy

By Rudyard Kipling

30 December 1865 — 18 January 1936

(Soudan Expeditionary Force — 1885)

We've fought with many men acrost the seas,
An' some of 'em was brave an' some was not:
The Paythan an' the Zulu an' Burmese;
But the Fuzzy was the finest o' the lot.
We never got a ha'porth's change of 'im:
'E squatted in the scrub an' 'ocked our 'orses,
'E cut our sentries up at Suakim,
An' 'e played the cat an' banjo with our forces.

So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in
the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-
class fightin' man;
We gives you your certificate, an' if you want it
signed
We'll come an' 'ave a romp with you whenever
you're inclined.

We took our chanst among the Khyber 'ills,
The Boers knocked us silly at a mile,
The Burman give us Irriwaddy chills,
An' a Zulu impi dishd us up in style:
But all we ever got from such as they
Was pop to what the Fuzzy made us swaller;
We 'eld our bloomin' own, the papers say,
But man for man the Fuzzy knocked us 'oller.

Then 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' the
missis and the kid;
Our orders was to break you, an' of course we
went an' did.
We sloshed you with Martinis, an' it wasn't
'ardly fair;
But for all the odds agin' you, Fuzzy-Wuz, you
broke the square.

'E 'asn't got no papers of 'is own,
'E 'asn't got no medals nor rewards,
So we must certify the skill 'e's shown
In usin' of 'is long two-'anded swords:
When 'e's 'oppin' in an' out among the bush
With 'is coffin-'eaded shield an' shovel-spear,
An' 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush
Will last an' 'ealthy Tommy for a year.

So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' your
friends which are no more,
If we 'adn't lost some messmates we would
'elp you to deplore;
But give an' take's the gospel, an' we'll call the
bargain fair,
For if you 'ave lost more than us, you
crumpled up the square!

'E rushes at the smoke when we let drive,
An', before we know, 'e's 'ackin' at our 'ead;
'E's all 'ot sand an' ginger when alive,
An' 'e's generally shammin' when 'e's dead.
'E's a daisy, 'e's a ducky, 'e's a lamb!
'E's a injia-rubber idiot on the spree,
'E's the on'y thing that doesn't give a damn
For a Regiment o' British Infantree!

So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in
the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-
class fightin' man;
An' 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your
'ayrick 'ead of 'air --
You big black boundin' beggar -- for you broke
a British square!

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1884 — 1885

In late February 1884, British military and naval forces under Major-General Sir Gerald Graham were deployed to the Sudanese province of Suakin on the Red Sea to counter a serious threat to Egyptian control by Osman Digna and his Arab force. After the battles of El Teb, Tamai and several skirmishes Graham and most of his force returned to Egypt on April 4, leaving behind a small garrison including Royal Marines. Little was achieved in this campaign.

In March 1885 an expeditionary force of British and Indian soldiers under General Graham was again sent to Suakin. The purpose was to establish the security of the port and the eastern flank of Wolseley's Nile force, and to protect the construction of the Suakin to Berber Railway. The Army Post Office Corps arrived March 27th. Several battles were fought before the end of the month and by early April it became clear that the campaign was drawing to a close. On May 2 Graham learned that Sudan was to be abandoned. Most of the British forces at Suakin returned to the Delta by the end of May. However, some Indian troops remained, the last leaving in May 1886. Mail was processed by the Egyptian civil post office as well as the British and Indian military postal detachments. Incoming mail from England came overland via Brindisi to Alexandria and on to Cairo to Suez where a steamer took the mail to Suakin.

Some of the important covers displayed include: • Egypt used in Sudan (19 Feb 1885) more than a month before the opening of the British Army Post Office; • Earliest Sudan usage of "British Army Post Office/Egypt –Code C" date stamp, 28 March 1885; • a soldier's cover from a private in the New South Wales Contingent to Australia; • the earliest known use (March 25, 1885) of Bombay B barred circle obliterator; • the earliest recorded date (June 9, 1885) of the barred B duplex with Field P.O., and • the latest date for a FIELD P.O. date stamp.

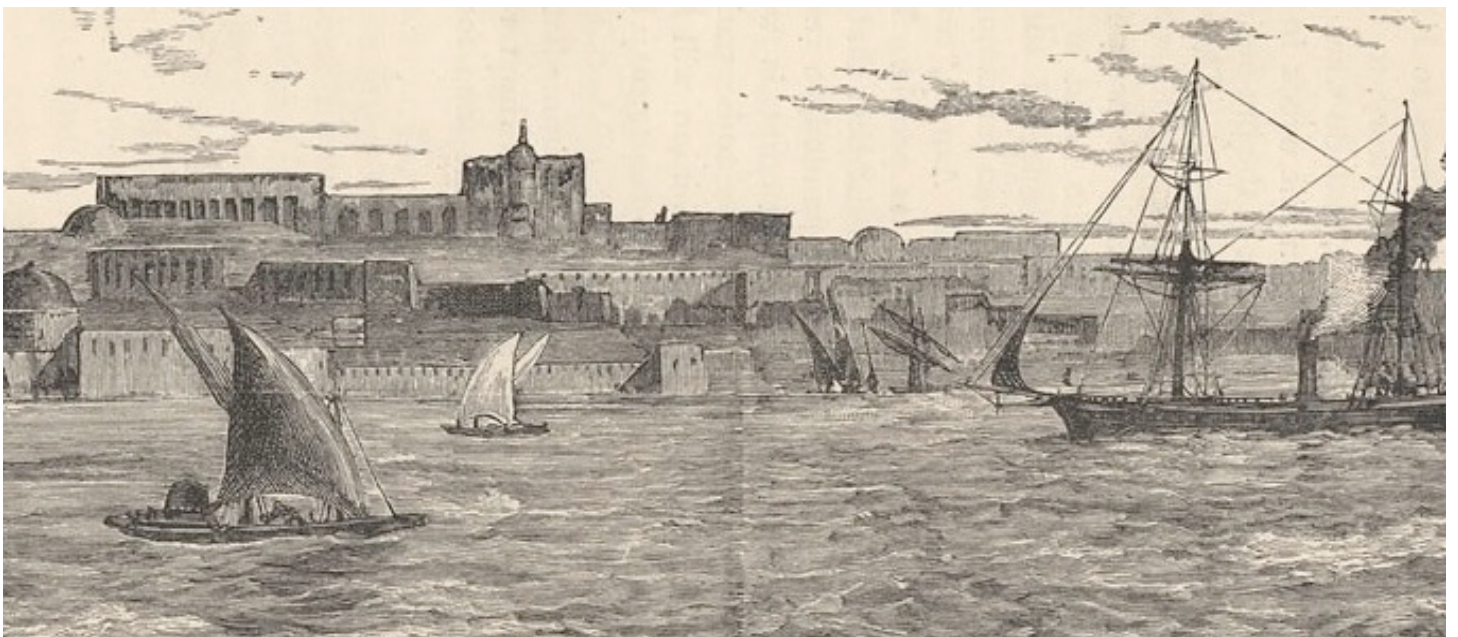
SUAKIN to BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND

about 5 February 1884



Cover from Michael Sullivan, Skilled Shipwright serving on the corvette *H. M. S. Euryalus*, countersigned by a weak rubber stamped signature of Commander Ernest Neville Rolfe. The 2d. stamp paid the normal concession rate of 1d. and a 1d. captain's gratuity for carriage by a private ship to England. It is believed that the cover was placed in the Navy bag and sent on the Orient Line *Iberia* that picked up mail at Suez on 9 February, arriving in Naples, Italy on 14 February. It was then sent overland and upon arrival it was cancelled with a beehive postmark of the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London. The cover is backstamped **BIRMINGHAM K FE 19 84**. *HMS Euryalis* arrived off the port of Suakin in mid-December 1883 and departed 2 April 1884. Commander Rolfe commanded the Naval Brigade in the actions at El Teb (29 February) and Tamai (13 March).

SUAKIM HARBOR in 1884

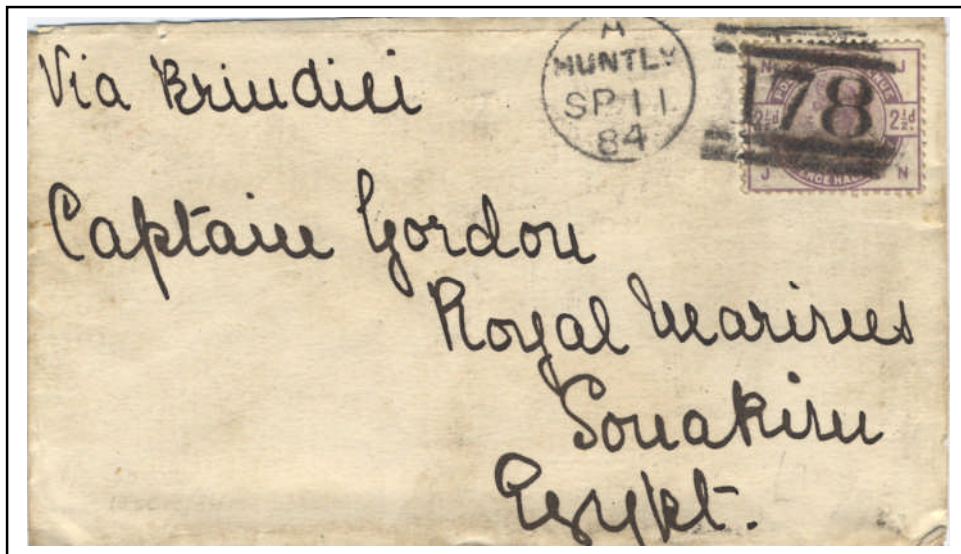


THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1884 — 1885

Incoming Letter from England

HUNTLY, SCOTLAND to SUAKIN via BRINDISI

SP 11 84



Backstamped: SUEZ 18 SE 84 T1

Cosmo G. Gordon (1849 – 1921) was part of the garrison that remained at Suakin after General Graham returned to Cairo. joined the Royal Marine Light Infantry as a 2nd Lieutenant on 22 June 1867. He served as Garrison Adjutant at Gravesend 1881-83, becoming Captain, 1881. In February 1884, Gordon proceeded with the R.M. Battalion to the Sudan, where he took part in the defense of Suakin, the actions of Hasheen and Tofrek, and the burning of Tamaai, receiving the Medal with two Clasps and the Khedive's Bronze Star. In May 1885, he left the Red Sea in command of a detachment for the China Station to form a garrison for Port Hamilton at a time when relations with Russia were strained. As a major he served at the R.M. Depot, 1891-95, was 2nd-Commandant at Plymouth in 1901 and Commandant at Chatham in 1903. He was placed on the retired list with the honorary rank of Major General in 1906.

INCOMING LETTER

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

Incoming covers to Henry Martin Sandbach, G Battery, B Brigade of the Royal Horse Artillery. His unit arrived at Suakin sometime after January 23, 1885 and previous to the assembling of the Field Force in March 1885.

ABERGELE, NORTH WALES to CAIRO

FE 12 85



LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND to SUAKIN

19 MR 85



Sandbach was commissioned a Lieutenant on August 14, 1876, and promoted to Captain on March 13, 1885. He was present at the engagement at Hashin on March 20th and the destruction of Tamai on April 3rd for which he was awarded the Egypt medal with clasp and the Khedive's star.

CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

One Piastre Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to ENGLAND via Brindisi

19 FE 85

This envelope from Captain Richard Henry Francis Wharton Wilson of the 10th Prince of Wales Own Royal Hussars went through the Egyptian civil post office as the British Army Postal Service detachment did not arrive in Suakin until March 27th. Previous to the assembling of the Suakin Field Force in March 1885, there were approximately 2,635 officers and men stationed at Suakin, most of whom arrived between January 23rd and March 1st. The date stamp canceling the two 20 paras stamps lacks the parallels above and below the date. In addition, the S of SOUAKIN is slightly deformed having the appearance of an inverted 2. It is backstamped **SUEZ ARRIVEE 23 FE 85** and **FAIRFORD A MR 9 85**.



INCOMING COVERS

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

LONDON and WINDSOR, ENGLAND to SUAKIN, SUDAN

LONDON, S.W. to SUAKIN
WINDSOR to SUAKIN

MR 3 85
MR 5 85

The covers are addressed to Captain The Hon. North Dalrymple of the Scots Guards. Dalrymple, the second son of the tenth Earl of Stair, served in the Sudan Campaign of 1885 as Brigade Major to the Brigade of Guards, and was present in the engagement at Hasheen and that near Tofrek on the 24th March. He was severely wounded while conducting a convoy of camels to McNeill's zeriba. The covers are backstamped **SOUAKIN 15 MR 85**, six days after the troops arrive at Souakin.



CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

20 Paras Foreign Post Card Rate

SOUAKIN to ORKNEY ISLANDS SCOTLAND

18 MR 85

This post card is from H. H. Johnston, a member of No. 3 Field Hospital. The hospital was in charge of a Surgeon-Major, assisted by two Surgeons. It was the last of the four field hospitals to arrive, and was permanently stationed in the camp, when, towards the end of the military operations, it received sick from the Cavalry, Mounted Infantry, and other details.¹



The message on the post card reads:

Suakin. Tuesday. 17th March 1885

Arrived here yesterday, but am not to disembark until to-morrow. No 3 Field Hospital to which I am attached is to go with the Cavalry Brigade. I am writing this on shore in case it may catch an earlier mail than if I wait until I write a letter. Received your letters of Feb 23 & Mch 2. All well.

H. H. Johnston

¹ Colville, Colonel H. E., *History of the Sudan Campaign*, 1889, reprinted 1996 by The Battery Press, Nashville, Tennessee, p. 192.

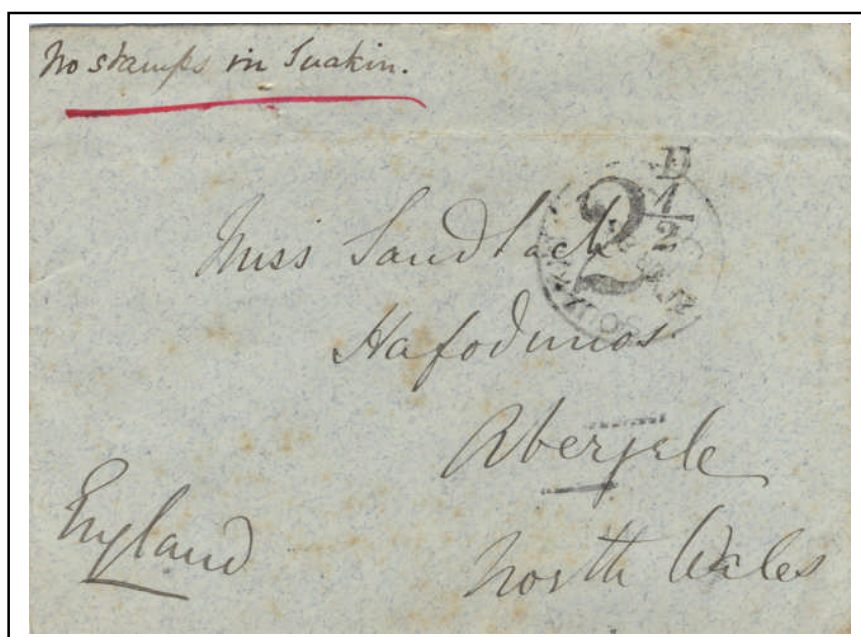
STAMPLESS OFFICER'S LETTER

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

SOUAKIN to NORTH WALES

21 MR 85

Cover from Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, RA, to his sister with letter written immediately after the battle of Hashin on March 20th at Sandbag Camp. Endorsed *NO STAMPS IN SUAKIN* it is postmarked **SOUAKIN 21 MR 85**, a few days prior to the opening of the British Army Post Office. While it should have a boxed **T** marking to indicate postage due, it was properly handstamped **2½D** on arrival in England. It is backstamped **SUEZ 29 MR 85, ALEXANDRIE ARRIVÉE 29 MR 85** and **ABERGELE AP 8 85**.



The letter says in part

The engagement was 6 or 7 miles from here at a place called Hashim where there are some wells. A regiment was left to entrench themselves there, & while they were doing so, the remainder of the force including ourselves went out to cover them. We got into some very thick bush where we could not see more than 30 yards in front of us. We were in 2 squares, the Indian brigade forming one, & the Guard the other. G/B² & the cavalry outside. All of a sudden the Bengal Cavalry were driven back upon us, & we retired inside the Guards square, who received the enemy with volleys [sic]. These drove them off & we shelled the bush for some time till all was quiet.

² G Battery, B Brigade.

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

Letter from Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, R. A. to His Sister

Sandbag Camp.
Suakin

28th March 85

My dear Mary -

I write to say I am alright after yesterday's engagement. I did not think it worth while telegraphing, as you will not hear at Wafodumos the alarming reports which were going about Suakin while we ~~were~~^{out} yesterday, some of which, I believe, were telegraphed home. The engagement was 6 or 7 miles from here at a place called Hashim where there are some wells. A regiment was left to entrench themselves there, & while they were doing so, the remainder of the force including ourselves went on to cover them. We got into some very thick bush, where we could not see more than 30 yards in front of us. We were in 2 squares, the Indian brigade forming one, & the Guard the other. S/B & the Cavalry outside. All of a sudden

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

Letter from Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, R. A. to His Sister

SUAKIN to ABERGELE, NORTH WALES

Sandbag Camp
Suakin
20th March /85

My dear Mary —

I write to say I am alright after yesterday's engagement. I did not think it worthwhile telegraphing, as you will not hear at Hafodmos the alarming reports which were going about Suakin while we were out yesterday, some of which, I believe, were telegraphed home. The engagement was 6 or 7 miles from here at a place called Hashim where there are some wells. A regiment was left to entrench themselves there, & while they were doing so, the remainder of the force including ourselves went out to cover them. We got into some very thick bush where we could not see more than 30 yards in front of us. We were in 2 squares, the Indian brigade forming one, & the Guard the other. G/B¹ & the cavalry outside. All of a sudden the Bengal Cavalry were driven back upon us, & we retired inside the Guards square, who received the enemy with volleys [sic]. These drove them off & we shelled the bush for some time till all was quiet. Towards 2 o'clock we began to retire in a square, when the "Fuzzies" attacked us again. We replied with volleys [sic], but lost several men before gaining the open ground again. In G/B we only had 3 horses hit & no men, although there were plenty of bullets flying about at one time. One officer of the Scots Guards was killed & a Doctor Lane, who was shot thru the lungs, is not expected to recover². The total casualties are said to be 67 but no one seems to know for certain³. Of the enemy about 500 are said to have been killed.⁴ We go out again tomorrow to Handub for the day. It is the first station on the Berber road. I believe a regiment is to be left there to take care of the wells. No fighting is expected. One of our subalterns, Vores⁵, has gone off to the hospital ship again this morning with neuralgia, which he cannot get rid of. I hope he will be alright again soon but he was miserable yesterday, I got a telegram from Arthur yesterday consisting of one word "coming" so I suppose the authorities at home changed their minds & have sanctioned his joining the Mounted Infantry after all. One of their officers was wounded in the face by a spear when we were out reconnoitering the day before yesterday.⁶ I have heard nothing of my little horse yet from . . . and my books are still at Suez, I believe. I suppose we shall have our fight at Tamai next week & then we shall move on Berber.⁷ Not a bit too soon, as it will soon be hot here. I have written a big letter to Aunt Sara today. I hope you will read it as it is difficult to repeat everything.

Best love to you all.

Yr Affate brother,

H. Martin. Sandbach

¹ G Battery, B Brigade.

² Killed was Captain M. D. D. Dalison. Surgeon Major Lane died of his wounds the next day.

³ The official history states that 9 officers and men were killed and 39 wounded.

⁴ The enemy's strength was estimated at 3,000 while the British had 8,192 of all ranks.

⁵ Charles Henry Stiverd Vores, commissioned lieutenant 19 May 1880.

⁶ Believed to be Lieutenant James Richard Kemmis Birch, The East Surrey Regiment.

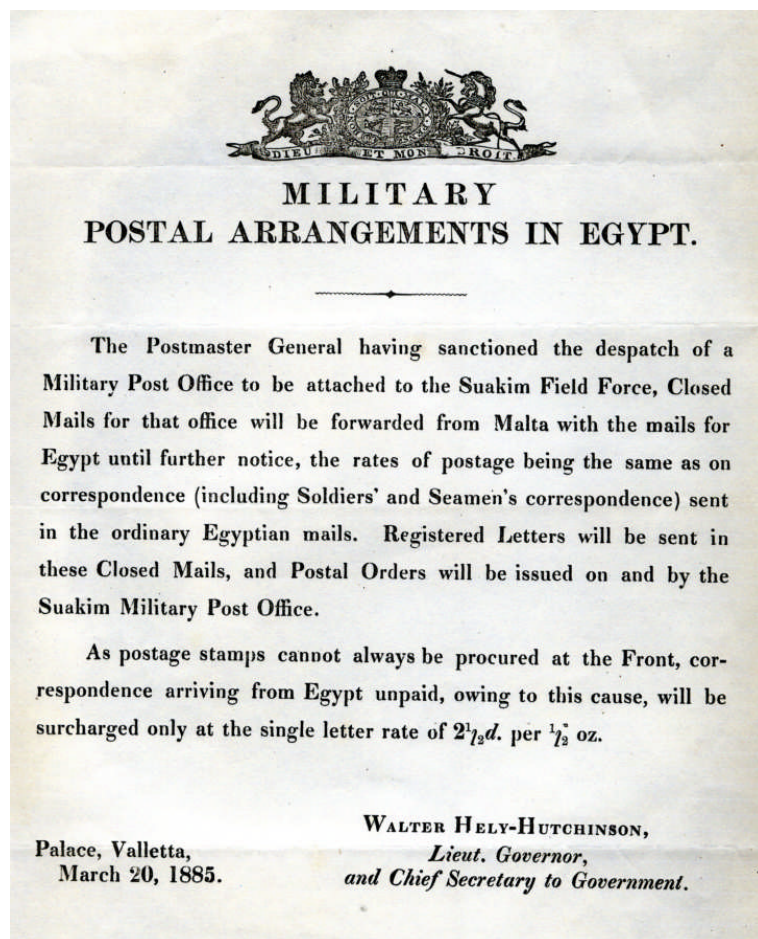
⁷ Tamai was reached on April 3. It was found to be empty of the enemy and so it was destroyed.

BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

COVER CENSUS OF THE BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE/EGYPT C.D.S. (as of January 2007)

	<u>Summary</u>	<u>BAPO A</u>	<u>BAPO C</u>	<u>BAPO ?</u>
	<u>y</u>			
Total Covers	54	32	21	1
Earliest Cover	MR 28 85	AP 18 85	MR 28 85	?
Latest Cover	MY 27 85	MY 27 85	AP 15 85	?
Officers' Letters	39	21	18	
Stampless	16	8	8	
Stamped	23	13	10	
Soldiers' Letters	15	11	3	1
Stampless	5	3	2	
Stamped	10	8	1	1
Destination				
Great Britain	44	26	18	?
Australia	3	2	1	
New Zealand	1	1	0	
Egypt	4	2	2	
Suakin	1	0	1	
United States	1	0	1	



Postal notice reduced by 50%

The Army Postal Corps of 1 officer and 20 men departed England on March 4th and arrived in Suakin on March 27th. They immediately opened a Base Post Office in the Egyptian civil post office. Field Post Office (F.P.O.) 1 was established at Quarantine Island, the terminus of the Suakin-Berber Railway; F.P.O. 2 opened at the Headquarters Camp, and F.P.O. 3 was attached to the 2nd Brigade until it became established at Handoub on April 16th. There was daily service between the post offices with the mail travelling by rail and/or camel. The British Army Post Office Egypt date stamps used are believed to be the same ones from 1882 Egyptian War but only with the A and C code letters. Mail from England came overland via Brindisi, to Alexandria, Cairo and Suez, where a steamer met the mails and took them down to Suakin. In that two-month period the Army Postal Corp handled 25,200 pounds of letters received from the United Kingdom and 1,810 pounds dispatched.¹⁰

¹⁰ Edward Wells, *Mailshot, A History of the Forces Postal Service*, Defence Postal & Courier Services, Royal Engineers, London, 1987

Stampless Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to DETROIT, MICHIGAN

BAPO C MR 28 85

This is the earliest recorded cover with the British Army Post Office/Egypt date stamp from the Suakin Field Force. Twenty-one covers with code C are known. The boxed **T** marking was formerly used by the Suakin civilian post office. If the letter was sent to England the post office would have collected 2½d. from the recipient. However, as it is addressed to the United States, the 2½d. was crossed out, the opera glass postage due date stamp added in New York, and ten cents postage due (double the deficiency of 2½d or 1 piastre) collected in Detroit. The cover is backstamped at Detroit on April 25. This is the only known cover to the United States from the campaign.



The bulk of the British troops arrived at Suakin in early March 1885 and the army postal detachment on March 27th. In total, the Field Force amounted to some 13,000 officers and men. The force was to protect the construction of a railroad from Suakin to Berber on the Nile where it would link up with the Nile Expedition Force. However, only about 18 3/4 miles of rail was laid to Otao when it was ordered abandoned and the troops returned to Suakin. Most of the British troops returned to the Delta by the end of May. The postal detachment left Suakin on May 30th and returned to England leaving the postal arrangements in the hands of the Indian Army Postal Service.

INCOMING LETTERS

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

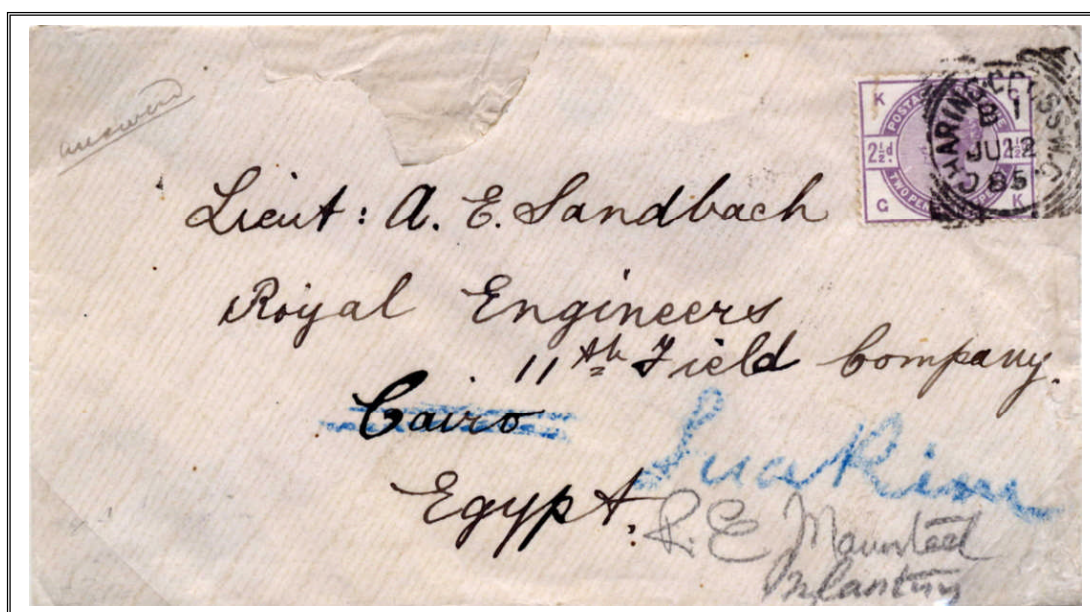
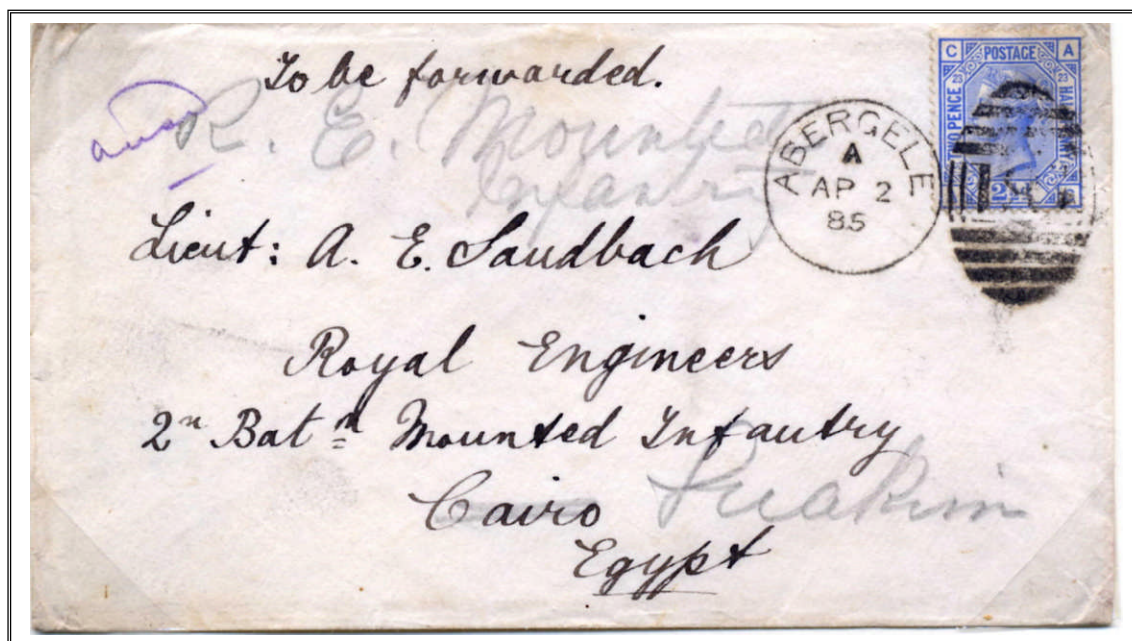
ABERGELE, NORTH WALES to CAIRO

AP 2 85

CHARING CROSS, W.C. to CAIRO

JU 12 85

Incoming covers to Lieutenant Arthur Edmund Sandbach of the Royal Engineers forwarded to Suakin as his Mounted Royal Engineers Section had left Cairo to join the Mounted Infantry at Suakin about April 12th, 1885.¹¹



Sandbach was back in Cairo at the time the above cover was posted. Why it was forwarded at that late date is unknown and there are no markings indicating its return to Cairo.

¹¹ Stock, Richard and Collier, Norton, *The Sandbach Correspondence*, The Camel Post, Journal of the Sudan Study Group, No. 49, Spring 1994.

CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

1 Piastre Officer's Letter

SUEZ to NORTH WALES

13 AV 85

Cover from Lieutenant Arthur Edmund Sandbach, RE, to his mother, while in transit from Cairo to Suakin to join the Mounted Infantry. He departed Suakin on May 25th for Cairo via Suez.

The stamp is cancelled with the **SUEZ DEPART 13 AV 85** c.d.s. and is backstamped **ABERGELE 21 AP 85**.

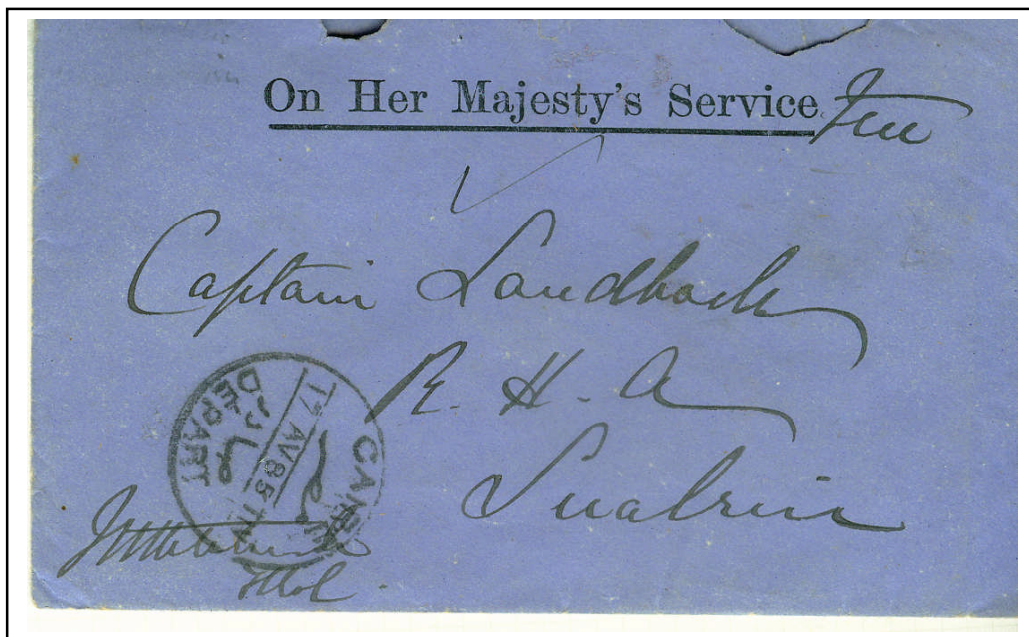


Endorsed *Free*

CAIRO to SUAKIN

17 AV 85

O.H.M.S. envelope endorsed **Free** sent to Captain [Henry Martin] Sandbach of the Royal Horse Artillery at Suakin. It is countersigned by a Lieutenant Colonel in the lower left corner and has the **CAIRE DÉPART 17 AV 85** postmark. Free internal military mail covers are extremely scarce. On the back is the transit marking **SUEZ ARRIVÉE 17 AV 85** and what may be the earliest known use of the **SAWAKIN** date stamp. Stagg¹² records that this date stamp (type 19a) came into use in 1886. This one is dated **24 IV 85**.

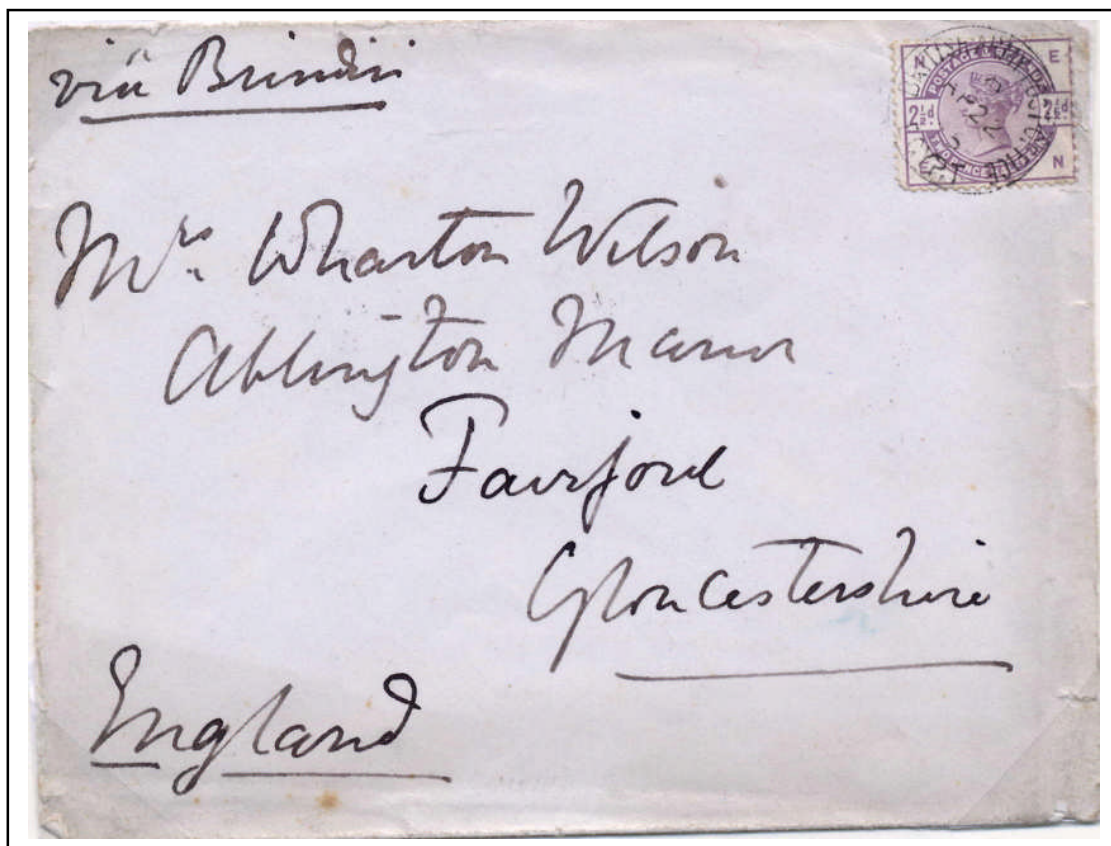


Reverse of cover showing the SAWAKIN c.d.s. reduced to 60% of original size

¹² E.C.W. Stagg, *Sudan The Postal Markings 1867-1970*, 1974, The Royal Philatelic Society, London, p. 18.

BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE**THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE****2½d. Officer's Letter****SUAKIN to ENGLAND****BAPO A AP 22 85**

There are 32 covers recorded with the British Army Post Office Egypt circular date stamp code A with dates from April 18 to May 27 1885. This particular cover is believed to have been posted at the field post office at Headquarters Camp in Suakin. It is endorsed on the reverse in manuscript **Suakin Ap 21 85** and backstamped **SWINDON STATION A MY 6 85** and **FAIRFORD MY 6 85**.



Captain Wilson was present at the engagements of El Teb and Temai and the relief of Tokar in 1884 and served with the 19th Hussars with the Suakin Field Force in 1885 for which he was promoted to Brevet Major and received the Egypt medal with two clasps and the Khedive's Bronze Star.

BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

Undercharged Officer's Letter

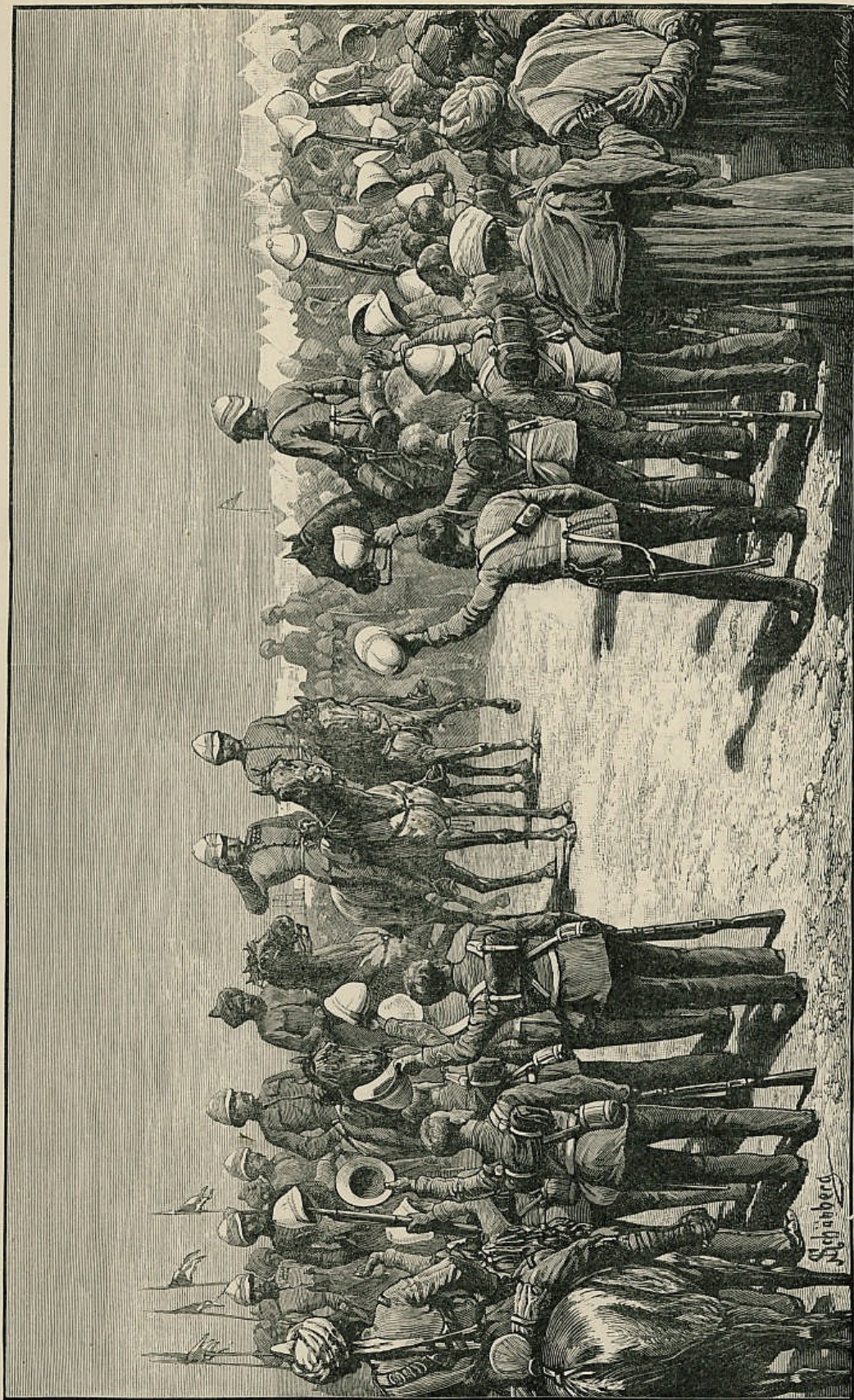
SUAKIN to ENGLAND

BAPO A AP 22 85

While this cover is from an officer, it was erroneously charged the 1d. soldiers' concession rate and not the usual 2½d. rate. The endorsement *No Stamps Available On Active Service, C. T. Holland, Lt. Cold Grds.* was likely to have been mistaken for an officers' approval of a soldier's letter. It is backstamped **LONDON-S.W 26 MY 5 85.**



Cecil Trevelyn Holland was commissioned a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards on January 10, 1884. He served with the 1st Battalion in the 1885 Sudan Campaign in Suakin, and was present at the engagement at Hashin, at that near Tofrik on the 24th March, and at the destruction of Tamai. He was awarded the Egypt Medal with Clasp, and Khedive's Star.



THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT AT SUAKIM.

MEETING OF COLONEL RICHARDSON AND LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR G. GRAHAM, MARCH, 1885.

NEW SOUTH WALES CONTINGENT

1d. Soldier' Letter

SUAKIN to NEW SOUTH WALES

BAPO A AP 22 85

This soldier's letter to Sydney from Private W. R. Grant, "A" Company, New South Wales Infantry, is endorsed at the lower left by A. Paul (Lieutenant Colonel Alfred William Paul), officer commanding the contingent. These troops were served by the British Army Post Office. The cover is backstamped **SYDNEY G MY 27 85 5**. Only six covers exist from members of the Australian force.¹³



On March 3, 1885, 750 officers and men of the New South Wales Contingent left on the SS Iberia, arriving at Suakin on March 29, 1885. It was comprised of one battery of artillery and an infantry battalion. They departed Suakin for home on May 17th aboard the SS Arab, reaching Sydney on June 23rd. Operations included the engagements at Tamai and Takdul, and guard duty during the construction of the railway.¹⁴

¹³ Stock, Richard, *New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan 1885*, The London Philatelist, Volume 113, Number 1320, November 2004, pages 314-319.

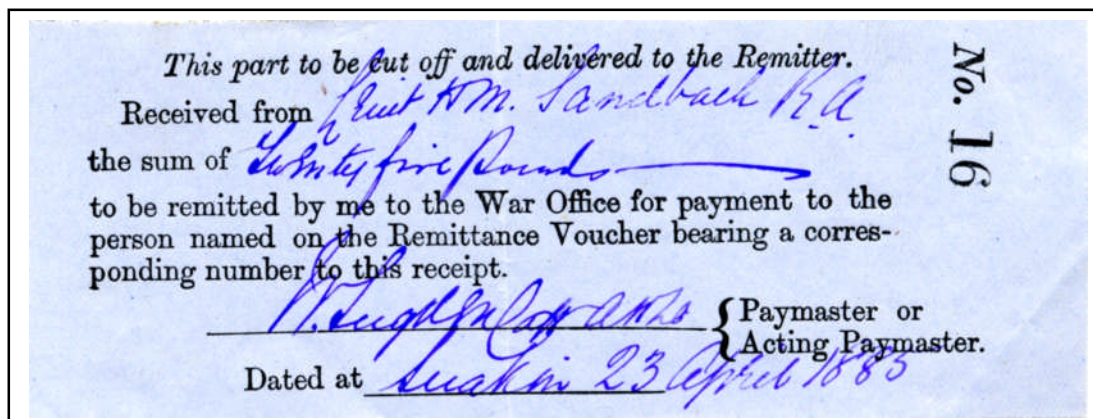
¹⁴ General Gerald Graham, commander of the forces at Suakin said the following in his Farewell General Order, May 13, 1885: "The New South Wales Contingent has furnished a bright example of the martial qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race, and has shown to all the latent military strength of the empire. The soldier-like spirit which has pervaded all ranks of the Contingent is the theme of universal admiration, and it will be a valued remembrance to all who served in the Suakin Field Force to recall this, the first time when their fellow-countrymen from the colonies served and shared with them the fortunes of a campaign."

Official Letter

Suakin to Handoub

BAPO A AP 25 85

This official envelope was sent from the District Pay Office believed to have been at Quarantine Island although it could have been serviced by the Base Post Office at Suakin. The enclosed receipt for £25, dated 23 April 1885, suggests that the BAPO c.d.s. was applied at Handoub as a receiving office mark. While there was daily service by the railway, delays were sometimes incurred. This may account for the two-day difference between the date of the receipt and the date on the cover (Thursday to Saturday).



Receipt for Remittance to War Office

While the cover and the receipt both state that Sandbach is a Lieutenant, he was promoted to Captain on March 13, 1885.

BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE

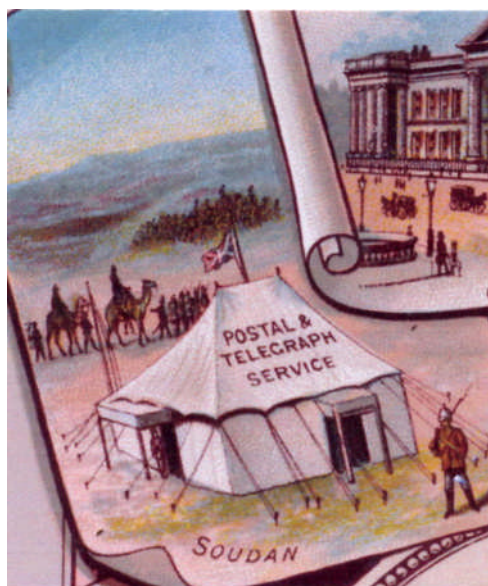
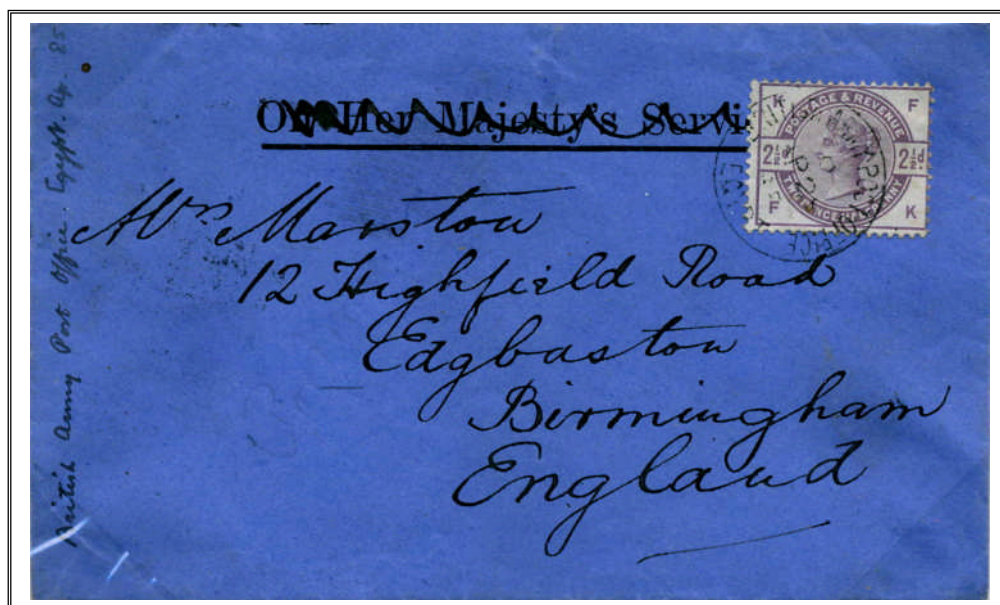
THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

2½d. Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to ENGLAND

BAPO A AP 29 85

One of 27 recorded covers with code A, British Army Post Office Egypt c.d.s. This cover is backstamped **BIRMINGHAM 57 A MY 11 85.**



Scene of the Army Post Office in Sudan
from the 1886 New Year's card of the General Post Office, London

BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE

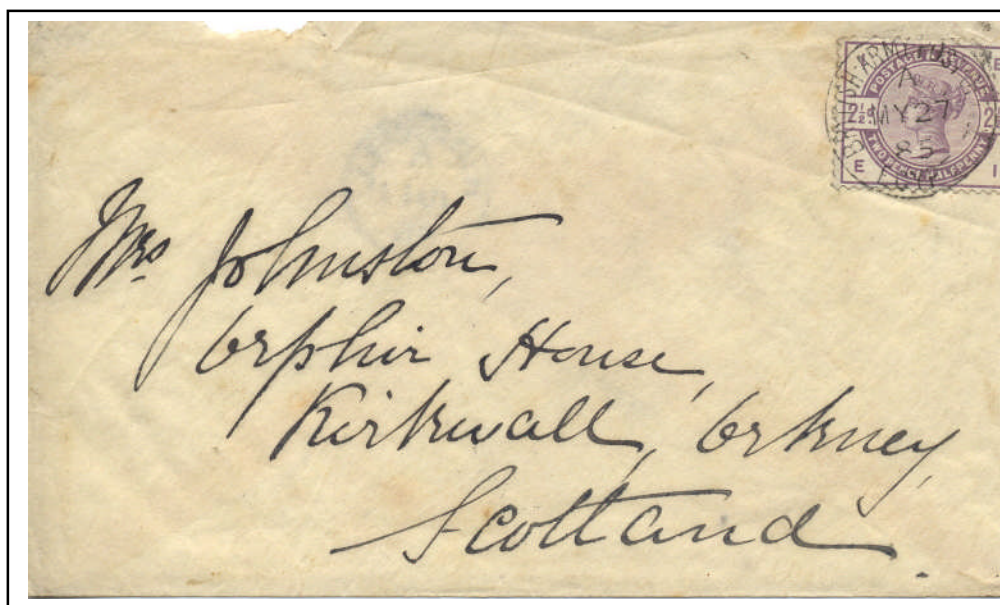
THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

2½d. Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to ENGLAND

BAPO A MY 27 85

This is latest recorded British Army Post Office cover from the Suakin Campaign. It is backstamped **KIRKWALL A JU 11 85**.



The cover is from Surgeon Henry Halcro Johnston who was born at Orphir, Orkney on 13 September 1856. He received his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Edinburgh University in 1880, the Doctor of Medicine (MD) in 1893, Bachelor of Science in 1893 and Doctor of Science (Public Health) in 1894. He was appointed Surgeon on 30 July 1881, Surgeon Major 30 July 1893, and Lieutenant Colonel 30 July 1901. He served in the Sudan campaign in 1885 receiving the Medal with Clasp and Khedive's Star. Johnston also served in the campaign on the North West Frontier of India in 1897-98 in charge of No. 1 British Field Hospital, Malakand, and was present in the engagement at Landaka, in the operations in Bajaur and the Mahmud country, and at the capture of the Tanga Pass (mentioned in dispatches, Medal with Clasp). He served in the South African war in 1899-1902 (mentioned in dispatches). Johnston was Deputy Assistant Director General of the War Office 1899 to, 1904. He retired 28 September 1904 but was re-employed during World War 1 from 27 August 1914. H.H. Johnston died October 18, 1939.

CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

1 Piastre Officer's Letter

CAIRO to BAREILLY, INDIA

3 JU 85

Cover from Lieutenant Arthur Edmund Sandbach, RE, to his brother Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, Royal Artillery, after their return to their respective posts from Suakin. The cover is postmarked with the **CAIRE DEPART 3 JU 85** c.d.s. and backstamped **SEA POST OFFICE 4 JUN 85** and **FIRST DELY BAREILLY 12 JUN 85**.



Copy of letter dated 2 June 1885 was enclosed. Written from Kasr-el-Nil Barracks, Cairo, Arthur Sandbach wishes his brother a happy birthday and writes about his hope for being sent to duty in India.

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

Letter from Lieutenant Arthur Edmund Sandbach, R.E.
to Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, R. A.

CAIRO to BAREILLY, INDIA

3 JU 85

*Kasr-el-Nil Barracks
Cairo
June 2nd,*

1885

My dear Martin:

Many happy returns of your birthday.

You have hardly arrived at Bareilly yet, I suppose. My mind is quite made up to try and get to India this winter.

If I can get home on leave (in about a month now) and put my name down for India, then I might be sent out direct from home about October.

I was on parade as adjutant to a Battalion consisting of George's battery, R.A. and the 11th Co. R.E. Plunkett commanded and of course went wrong, when he could.

What do you advise me about a gun & rifle: shall I bring out the old 12 bore I have or get a new one: 12. 16 or 20 bore, and where and what sort of rifle should I get?

Write to me at Cairo till further orders.

Yours affec,

Arthur E. Sandbach

CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

One Piastre Officer's Letter

CAIRO to INDIA

16 JU 85

Cover from Lt. Arthur Edmund Sandbach, RE, to his brother, Captain Henry Martin Sandbach, Royal Artillery. Both soldiers had just returned to their respective posts from Suakin.

The cover bears the **CAIRE DEPART 16 JU 85** c.d.s. and is backstamped **SEA POST OFFICE E 23 JU 85** and **FIRST DELY BAREILLY 6 JUL 85**.



The copy of the letter that was originally enclosed reads:

Kasr el Nil

Cairo

June 15, 1885

My dear Martin

Yours from Bombay of the 28th May was sent on here. When you get to Bareilly you should get 2 letters from me and one I think from Allsopp. What a [---] thing it is, staff officers always do forget to telegraph to say you have left for such & such place or if they do, they omit the numbers of men and officers. I invariably send off a telegram myself to our own people as soon as the train goes or else one is sure to be stranded. However, you managed to get on board.

What a pity you did not get your promotion a month later then if I were in any position to advise, I would say, stay it out a year or two; get people at home to work the D.A.G. about your jacket.

Sam must be out with the militia now, I suppose. For myself, I am going to try and come out to Roorkee this winter for 3 years: - & then get home on leave or promotion. August & September & part of October I hope to spend at home and then put my name down for India and not come back to this Company. Egypt has had 3 campaigns and is played out, I think & my CO is such a fellow! Bindon Blood is at Roorkee now. I have written to him about going there. Allsopp and I go about together a good deal - pyramids & took dinner with us.

CIVIL POST OFFICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

1 Piastre Officer's Letter

CAIRO to NORTH WALES

30 JU 85

Cover from Lieutenant Arthur Edmund Sandbach, RE, to his mother, after his return to Cairo from Suakin. The stamp is cancelled with the **CAIRE DEPART 30 JU 85** c.d.s. and is backstamped **ABERGELE B JY 6 85**.



Copy of letter dated 29 June 1885 to his mother mentions friends in the Indian Army, chances of his going to India in the autumn, and troop arrivals in Egypt.

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

Letter from Arthur Edmund Sandbach, R.E., to his mother.

Cairo, Monday

29th June 1885

My dear Mother -

Try and let the home by all means, without reference to me if you wish it.

My movements are quite uncertain, as a soldier sons' always must be. Egypt will be under British Protectorate, or annexed before many months are up, or what else means all this great collection of troops?

Poor Martin – I wish heartily he could be ADC to Lord Reaq- - that would be splendid – and Allsopp perhaps will be ADC to the Viceroy – and then I shall have two friends at court, when I get out there. – selfish this this: very? – Martin must not come home at any rate now – he must stay it out till he gets his jacket at home.

When I arrive, home will be very much changed no doubt, but home influences always remain the same, and they must be of great help to the bona fide officer in his duty.

Last week I wrote to Inarjz Sophy Khan, so I shall expect replies in due course. I have written to our AAG at the Horse Guards a private letter asking about my chances of going to India this autumn and of all want his reply before doing anything more.

This afternoon three of us are going down to Benha to shoot pigeons. Troops arrive every day now from the Nile – the 42d – the 46th are here. 75th arrive tomorrow and go to Alexandria.

When will Uncle Willy and Aunt Sara be back in Princess Gate? Kitchener goes home next week – he has shaved his beard!

*Your affectionate son,
Arthur E. Sandbach*

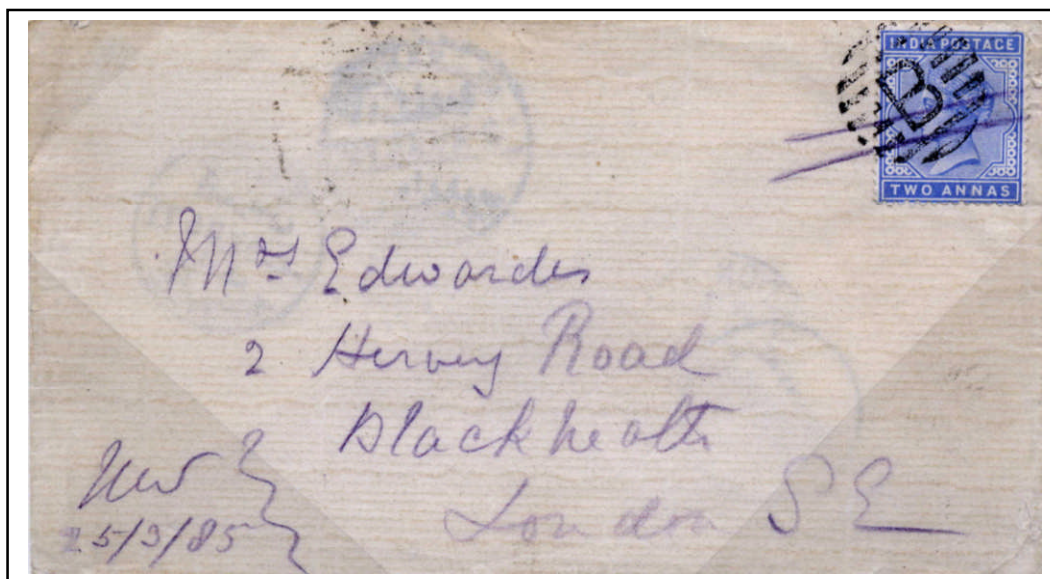
Mail goes tonight.- Tomorrow I could write a fuller letter – I missed writing yesterday – Sunday – which is my regular day.

Two Annas Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to LONDON

25 MR 85

A thirteen-man Indian Army postal detachment arrived at Suakin on March 7th and opened a Base Post Office the next day using the standard Bombay **B** barred circle obliterator. This cover is believed to be the earliest known date of use.¹⁵ Postage to England was two annas. The cover is backstamped **FIELD P.O. 26 MAR 85, SUAKIM 27 MR 85, SUEZ ARRIVEE 1 AV 85, ALEXANDRIE ARRIVEE 2 AV 85, and LONDON W7 AP 13 85.**



THE LATE LIEUTENANT A. F. T. EDWARDS,

Endorsed on the lower left **RW 25/3/85** (Major Richard Westmacott of the 28th Regiment of Bombay Infantry), the cover is addressed to the mother of Lt. Alexander Thomas Frederick Edwards¹⁶. On March 22nd, as the regiment was preparing a zeriba at Tofrek about six miles from Suakin, it was attacked and Lt. Edwards mortally wounded, dying the next day. The battle is known as the Battle of Tofrek or McNeill's Zereba.

The following is from *The Illustrated London News*, 25 April 1885, p. 428:

... Lieutenant Alexander T. F. Edwards of the 2nd Battalion 18th Royal Irish, the same regiment in which his father, the late General C. C. Edwards, C.B. had served twenty-six years. Lieutenant Edwards, who was in the twenty-fourth year of his age, was in India as a probationer for the Staff Corps, when he volunteered to join the 28th Bombay Native Infantry for the Soudan Expedition.

¹⁵ See Firebrace, p. 130.

¹⁶ The name of F. G. M. Edwards is given in the official history of the campaign, *HISTORY OF THE SUDAN CAMPAIGN*, Colonel H. B. Colville, The Battery Press, Nashville, reprinted 1988, originally printed 1889, p.208. However, no reference to him is found in *Hart's Army List*, 1885.

Two Annas Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to LONDON

31 MR 85

Here is another cover to Mrs. Edwards. This one went through the Indian Field Force Post Office where the stamp was cancelled with the Bombay **B** obliterator and the **FIELD P.O. 31 MAR 85** datestamp applied on the reverse. The next day the British Army Post Office added the c.d.s. **BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICE C AP 1 85**. It also is backstamped with the red **LONDON, S.E. AP 14 85**.



Three Annas Officer's Letter to India

SUAKIN to KARACHI, INDIA

FIELD. P. O. 15 APR 85

Three annas was the officers' and civilian rate to India. The postage on this cover is comprised of a half-anna postal stationery envelope uprated with two and one-half annas postage on the reverse. The stamps are cancelled with the B barred circle and tied by manuscript **15/4/85**. It is backstamped **BOMBAY INW 27 APR 85** and **FIRST DELY KARACHI 30 APR 85**. Mail between Bombay and Suakin was at first transported on ships involved in the expedition. When these sailings ceased mail was then sent by weekly mail steamer plying between Aden and Bombay. At the end of April weekly service was established between Suakin and Aden to meet the India-United Kingdom mail steamer. In July the service was changed to fortnightly.

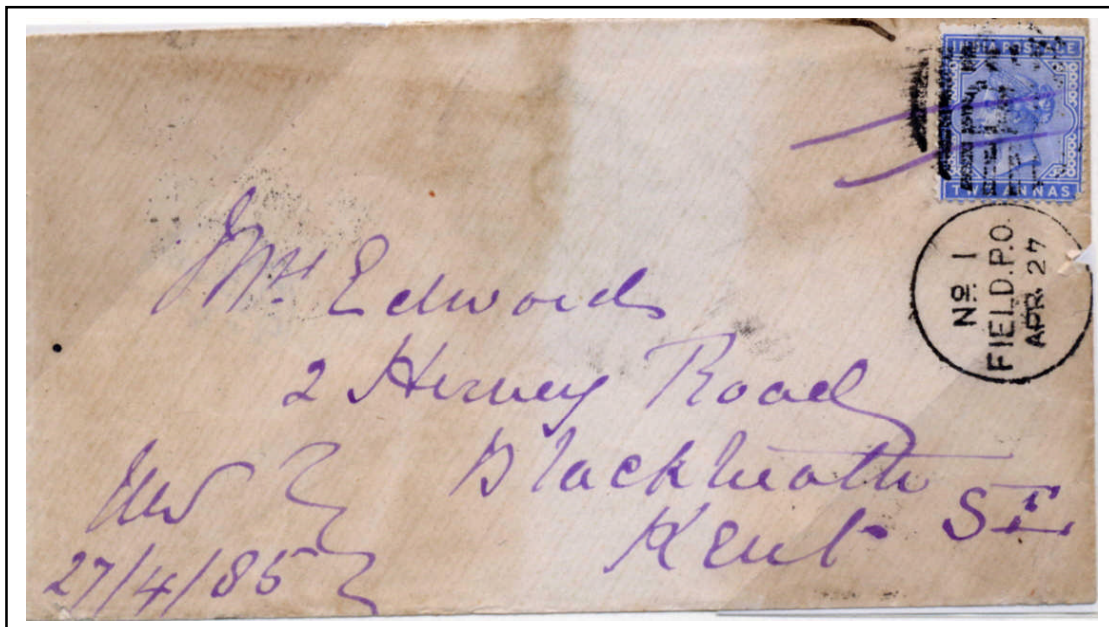


Two Annas Officer's Letter to England

OTAO to LONDON

27 APR 85

No. 1 FIELD P.O. APR 27 with the eight-bar **B** duplex canceller was used at Otao, the temporary terminus of the railroad being constructed from Suakin to Berber.¹⁷ The cover is backstamped with **LONDON, KH S.E. MY 11 85**. The lower left corner shows the endorsement **RW 27/4/85** (Major Richard Westmacott of the 28th Regiment of Bombay Infantry). This regiment formed part of the small garrison remaining in Suakin and sailed for India on October 16th.



The envelope's flap has the crest of the 1st or Grenadier Regiment of Bombay Infantry.

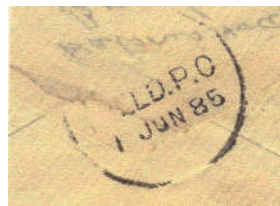
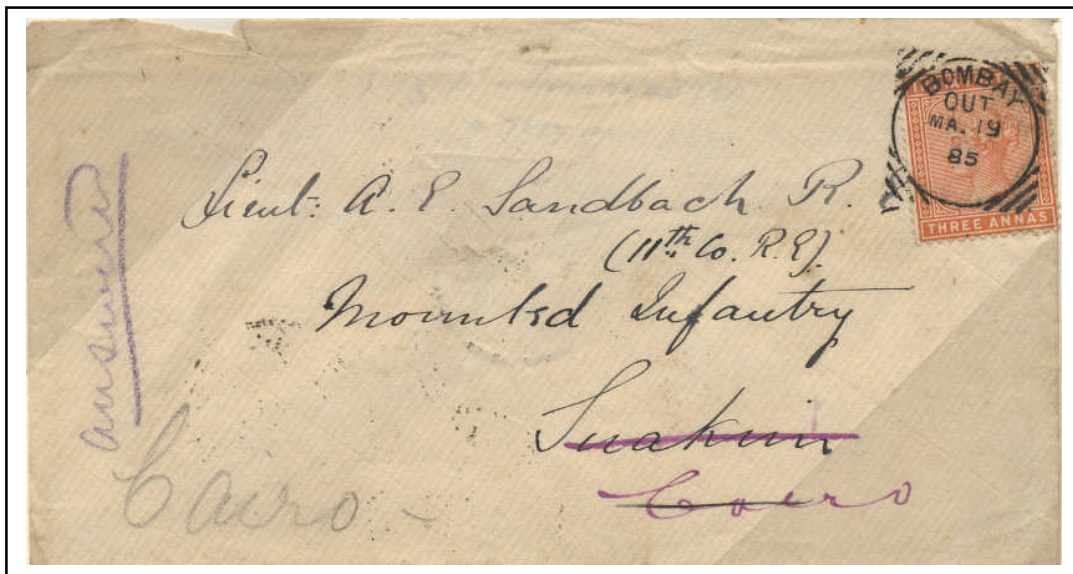
¹⁷ See Proud's *Indian Army Postal Service*, p. 135.

Incoming Cover from India

BOMBAY, INDIA to SUAKIN and forwarded to Cairo

MA 19 85

Cover to Arthur Sandbach from his brother Captain Henry M. Sandbach. It was mailed at Bombay while Henry Sandbach was on his way to his post at Bareilly. It was received at the Indian Army postal facility at Suakin, backstamped **FIELD P.O. 1 JUN 85**, and then forwarded on to Cairo. Lieutenant Sandbach had departed Suakin on May 25 to rejoin the Headquarters of the 11th Company, Royal Engineers, in Cairo. Lieutenant Sandbach returned home to England in July.



backstamp

2½ d. Officer's Letter

HUNTLY, SCOTLAND to SOUAKIN, EGYPT [sic]

JU 4 85

This much-traveled incoming cover from Huntly, Scotland to Captain Gordon of the Royal Marines at Suakin passed through the Indian Army Field Post Office as indicated by the backstamps **FIELD P.O. 22 JUN 85** and **FIELD P.O. 23 JUN 85**. By this time the Royal Marines and most of the Expeditionary Force had left the eastern Sudan. The cover was forwarded to Gosport on the outskirts of Portsmouth where the endorsement "*To await arrival of H.M.S. Victor Emmanuel China*" was added. It was incorrectly charged 2½d. postage due in Egypt that was not collected. Other backstamps include **PORTSMOUTH JY 6 85** and **GOSPORT A JY 7 85**.



Reverse of cover - reduced

Three Annas Officer's Letter

SUAKIN to KARACHI, INDIA

FIELD. P. O. JUN 9 85

The normal letter rate for officers and civilians alike was three annas to India. This one anna envelope is cancelled with the barred **B** duplex c.d.s. with **FIELD. P. O. JUN 9**, the earliest recorded date.¹⁸ On the reverse side is a two annas stamp bringing the rate to three annas. The stamp is cancelled with the **B** barred circle and is tied by a manuscript **19/6/85**, perhaps suggesting that the date of the duplex cancel on the front may be in error. It is backstamped **SEA POST OFFICE E 23 JUN 85** and **FIRST DELY KARACHI 6 JUL 85**.



¹⁸ See Proud's *Indian Army Postal Service*, p. 135.

INDIAN ARMY POSTAL SERVICE

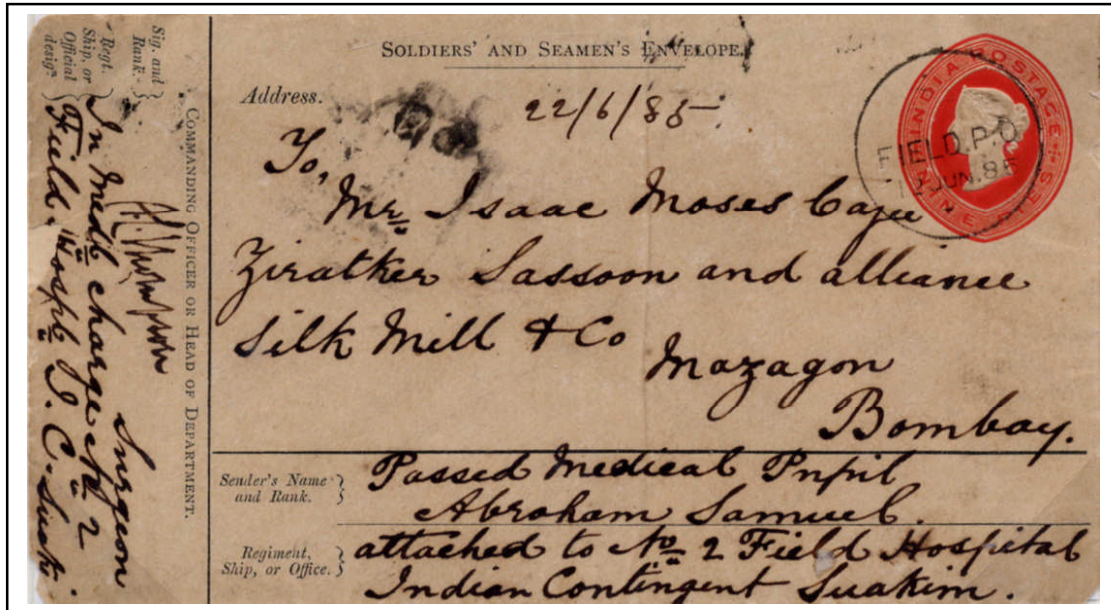
THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

Soldier's and Seamen's Envelopes - - Nine Pies Concession Rate

SUAKIN to BOMBAY, INDIA

FIELD. P. O. 12 JUN 85

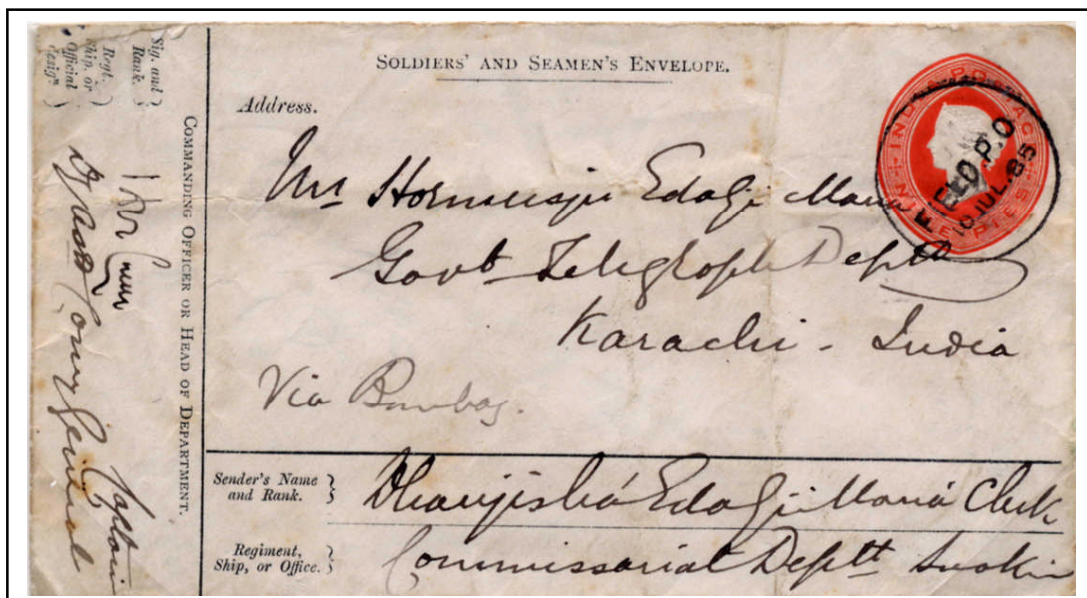
Cover to India cancelled with the **FIELD.P.O. 12 JUN 85** c.d.s and backstamped **BOMBAY 1DELX JUN 22.**



SUAKIN to KARACHI, INDIA

FIELD. P. O. 10 JUL 85

Soldiers' and Seamen's Envelope to India cancelled with the **FIELD.P.O. 10 JUL 85** c.d.s. Note that this date stamp is different from the date stamp used in the B duplex. In this case the day comes before the month and the year is added. The duplex just has the month and day. The cover has backstamps **BOMBAY INW 24 JUL 85** and **THIRD DELY KARACHI 29 JUL 85.**

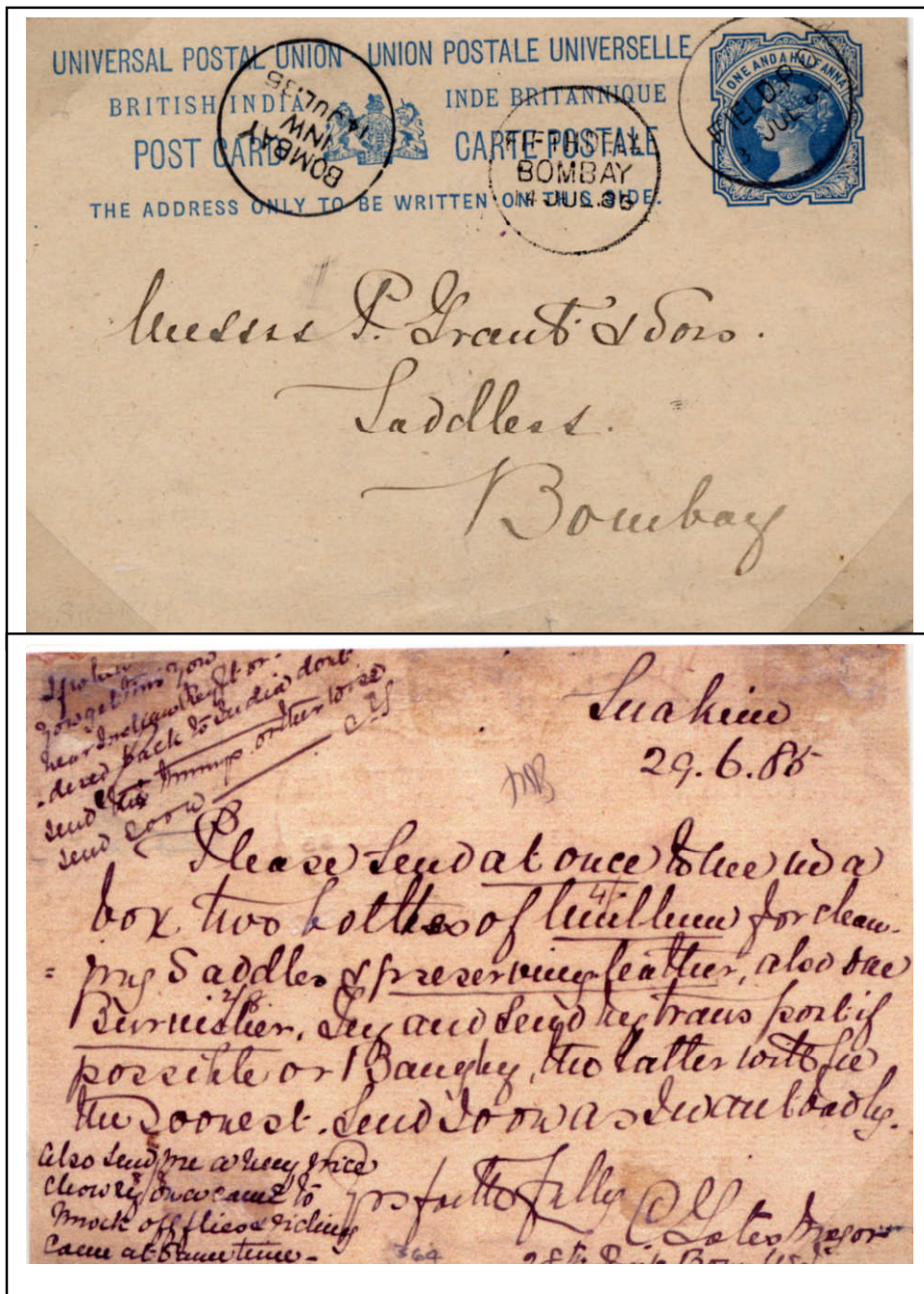


Three Annas Officer's Postal Card

SUAKIN to BOMBAY, INDIA

FIELD. P. O. 3 JUL 85

Postcard written **Suakin 29.6.85** from Major C. Gates of the 28th Bengal Native Infantry to his saddler in Bombay ordering bottles of cleaner and preservative. The card is cancelled with the **FIELD. P.O. 3 JUL 85** c.d.s. with arrival datestamps **BOMBAY INW 14 JUL 85** and **FIRST DELY BOMBAY 14 JUL 85**.



Message on back of postcard.

INDIAN ARMY POSTAL SERVICE

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE

5 Pence Double Letter Rate

BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE to SUAKIN

AP 19 86

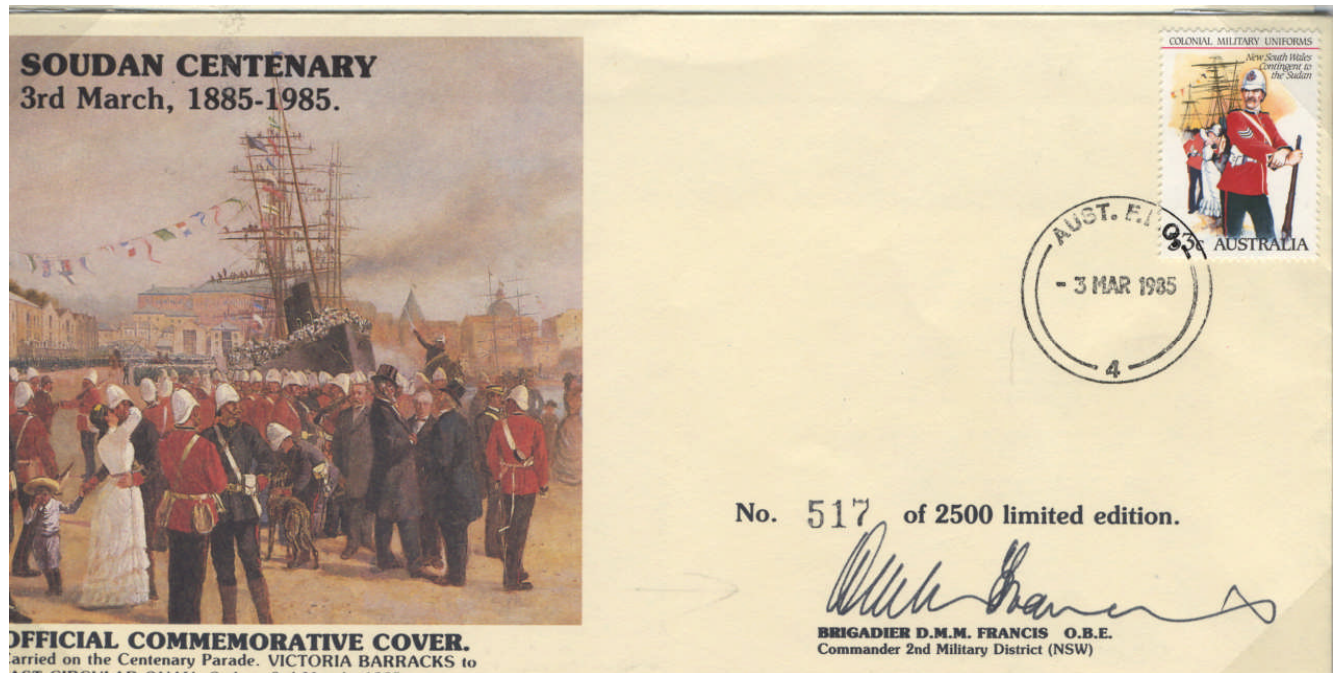
While most of the Indian troops were withdrawn from Sudan by the end of 1885, a few remained on garrison duty. They finally departed on May 11, 1886, when the garrison was taken over by the Egyptian army. This double-weight cover, addressed *To The Principal Medical Officer*, bears on the reverse the arrival date stamp of **FIELD.P.O. 4 MAY 86**. This is the latest date known.¹⁹



Arrival date stamp on reverse of cover

¹⁹ See Proud's *Indian Army Postal Service*, p. 135.

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885
CENTENARY OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES CONTINGENT
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAR



Reduced in size

The following is on the reverse side of the cover.

The departure of the Soudan Contingent on 3rd March, 1885. was a most significant event in Australian military history as it was the first time that a formed body of troops had sailed away to fight overseas.

In January 1884, Major General Gordon was sent to Egypt to assist the Khedive in suppressing a revolt by Mohammed Abdullah (the Mahdi or Messiah). He reached Khartoum in February and was almost immediately besieged by a large force of Dervishes. After a ten month resistance, Gordon & the garrison were massacred on 26th January, 1885.

News of the defeat was received in Sydney on 11th February and the acting Premier, Mr. W. B. Dalley cabled London offering an Infantry Battalion and two batteries of Artillery. Recruiting commenced on 16th February and two weeks later on 3rd March, the force of some 750 men and 225 horses were embarked in two troopships, the "Iberia" and "Australasian".

The troops landed at Suakin on 29th March and were attached to the British Brigade of Guards. After taking part in a number of skirmishes the Contingent embarked for home on 17th May, and landed in Sydney on 23rd June, 1885

Our first Battle Honour "SUAKIN 1885" commemorates these events.

THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE 1885

The Embarkation of the Sudan Contingent at Circular Quay, Sydney, 3rd March, 1885



ARTHUR COLLINGRIDGE

The Embarkation of the Sudan Contingent at Circular Quay, Sydney,
3rd March, 1885

Oil on canvas
91.1 x 151.2 cm

This painting by an English graphic artist who became a pioneer art figure in Sydney is believed to have originally been commissioned by the New South Wales Government. In it the artist has included recognisable portraits of himself painting by his easel, a relative who was chaplain to the contingent, the then Governor of NSW, Sir George Dibbs, and politicians of the day. The painting was acquired by the Memorial in 1968.

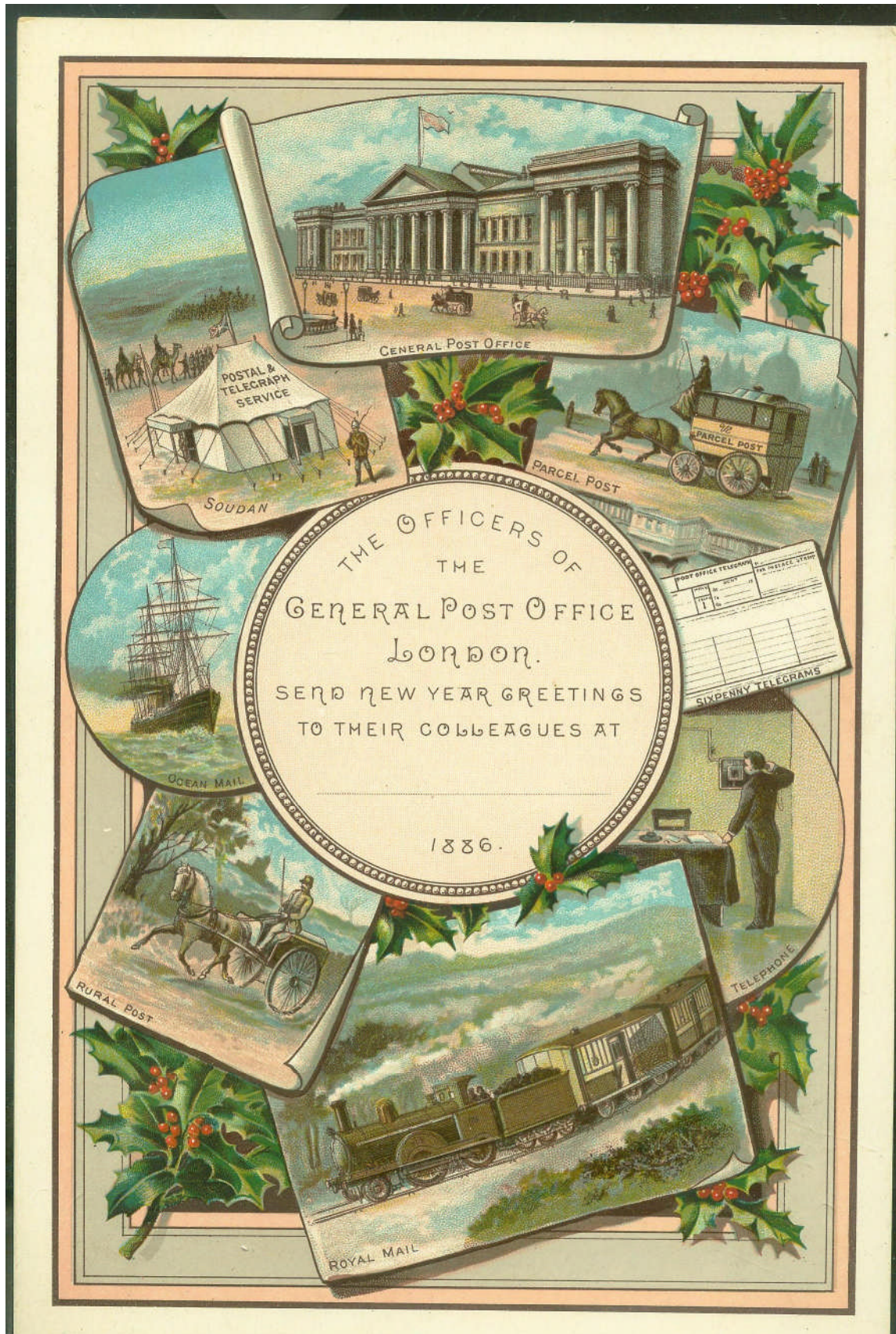
Australian War Memorial, Canberra



CANCL HL 525 27 AUG 02

NEW YEAR'S CARD from the GENERAL POST OFFICE, LONDON

This card depicts various postal scenes including that of a British Army Post and Telegraph Service office in the Sudan.



MANGLED BY A LIONESS

In Saving the Life of a Native Servant Major Sandbach Lost His Own.

Capt. W. L. H. Paget, who was with Major H. M. Sandbach when the latter was fatally injured by a lioness in Somaliland, recently, has sent to The London Times the following account of the tragedy, which varies in several respects from those previously published:

Major Sandbach lost his life, not from any rashness or foolhardiness on his part, but in a gallant attempt to save the life of the shikari, who had failed at a critical moment in his duty of handing the second rifle to his master.

Early on the morning of Nov. 18 we were called by our headman, Adan Yusuf, with the news that a lion had been heard roaring near the camp during the night. We accordingly started, about 6 A. M., in the direction from which the sound had been heard, but after upward of three hours had been spent, and no tracks had been found, we decided to separate for the day in search of ordinary game, Major Sandbach being armed with a twelve-bore Paradox and 450 Express.

About 2:30 P. M. my shikari called my attention to a column of smoke, which he said showed that Major Sandbach had come across a lion, and was burning it out of some grass. We started off at once toward the smoke, and, after walking hard for about two hours, were met by a syce, galloping toward us on a pony, with the news that both Major Sandbach and his shikari had been badly bitten. Shortly afterward we met the Major walking toward us with both his hands bandaged up, and he gave me the account of the accident that evening, after I had dressed his wounds, as follows:

"About 10:45 A. M. we came across the tracks of a lioness, and followed them very slowly, owing to the hard ground, for nearly three hours, and at last marked her into a patch of thick jungle grass. My first shikari, Ghalib Farah, and I posted ourselves at one end of the patch, behind a bush, where we could command the end and one side of the strip, while my syce, on a pony, galloped up and down the other side, making a noise, so as to prevent her from breaking on that side, and the second shikari and a camelman set fire to the grass.

"Shortly afterward I caught sight of her sneaking through the grass toward me. I let her come on, in hopes of being able to put in a deadly shot at a close range. However, she saw me, and bounded off at a gallop, and I fired both barrels at her without result. The syce galloped on, and headed her, and rounded her up into another patch of grass.

"We pursued the same tactics as before, and soon after out she came, with a roar, close to us. I again fired two barrels at her as she was going away, hitting her in the quarters. The syce soon headed her again, and the second shikari, aided by several camelmen and Hirsi Sherer, my servant, who had joined us from camp, set fire to the jungle again. It was not until almost the last bit of grass had been burned that I could see something yellow moving at the edge about ten yards away from me. I fired and hit her with both barrels of the Paradox, and heard her scuffling in the grass. I turned to take my second rifle from the shikari, but he had left my side and was standing some yards away on my left, and so I stepped two paces to my right behind a bush to reload.

At that moment the lioness charged out at the shikari, although very badly wounded, with her entrails dragging along the ground. The shikari fired one shot, and then dropped the rifle and bolted. She caught him in a few strides, and pulled him down under her with his head in her jaws. I had only time to reload one barrel, but ran in to within three yards of the lioness and fired into her, aiming rather far back behind the shoulder so as to avoid hitting the shikari.

"She dropped him and bounded straight at me. I tried to force the butt of my empty gun down her throat, but she seized me by the right hand and arm and held me, but without getting me down, as I was partially covered by a small bush which took part of her weight. She began crunching my right hand and the stock of the gun, and so I tried to open her jaws with my left hand, but she let go the right hand and seized me by the left and held me until Hirsi Sherer and two camelmen, Hussein Mohammed and Mohammed Abdul, came up. Hirsi hit the lioness on the head with the butt end of his carbine and made her let go my hand, and the other two shot her with their Sniders and finished her."

The sad sequel is known. The shikari, Ghalib Farah, died the following morning without ever having recovered consciousness. Major Sandbach and I reached Aden on the ninth day after the accident, but gangrene of the right arm had supervened, and, although the arm was amputated and he bore the operation with the same quiet pluck that distinguished him all through, he slowly sank and died from blood poisoning on Dec. 6.