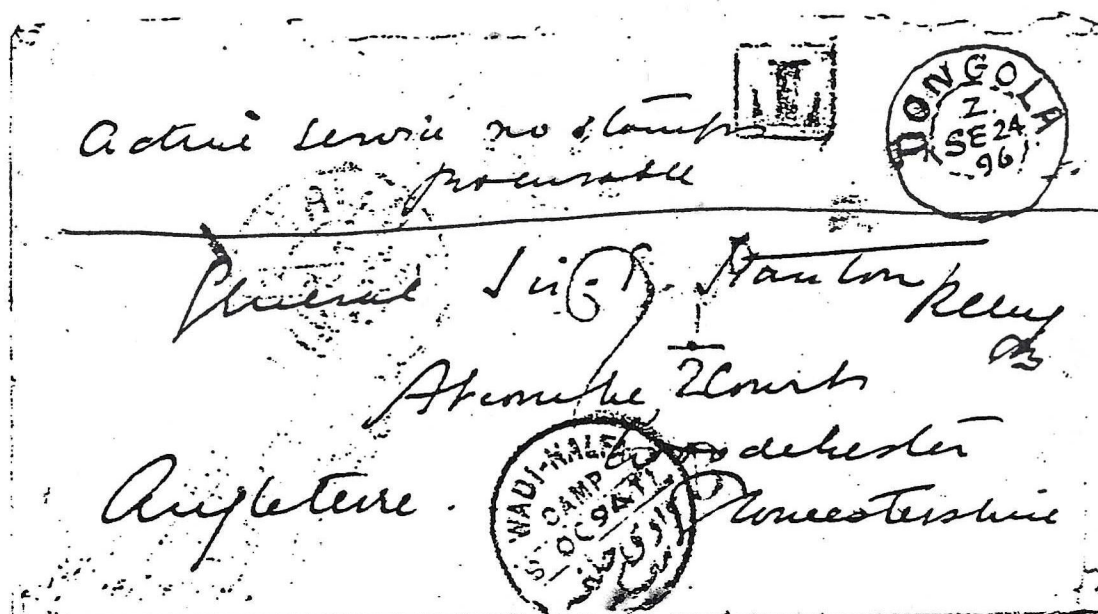


BRITISH FORCES ABROAD 1896 - 1939

EXCLUDING THE WORLD WARS

This exhibit illustrates with philatelic material Britain's military activities in the expansion of its territory and influence from 1896 until the eve of World War II, excluding the overwhelmingly large military history of World War I (which could make a separate exhibit). During the nearly 50 years treated here, Britain was involved in peace-keeping (e.g. Crete, the Boxer Uprising, Albania and occupation of parts of the post-World War I Austrian, German and Turkish empires) as well as various other activities, including pacification of its League of Nations mandates in the Middle East.



In an attempt to overthrow the fundamentalist government of the Mahdi in the Sudan, the British mounted an expedition up the Nile in 1896. Cover with hand-drawn circular postmark of Dongola dated the day after its occupation by the British forces. Entered the mails at Wadi Halfa Camp two weeks later.

As the oldest of the European Great Powers, Great Britain has been engaged in military activities outside of its home territory for many centuries, including frequent campaigns in Continental Europe as well as in Africa, Asia and North America. Because of the development of extensive field post organizations in the early part of the 20th Century, this period is particularly interesting to military postal historians. Thus, the purpose of this exhibit is to chronicle the British efforts to enhance their national prestige and influence by military means in relatively modern times.

"Abroad" for the purposes of this exhibit excludes military mail originating in the British Isles, its colonies and other possessions. Organization is (roughly) chronological and, within operations occurring at the same times, geographical.

BRITISH FORCES
Sudan

Firket
June 1896

Dongola
October 1896

Field Service
No Stamps Available

M. A. Dragl

←
Kaim
D. A. A. S.

Mrs Anti Sim

Posti Restanti

Wadi Halfa
CAMP
29 JUL 1896

From
H. S. S.
D. A. A. S.
Firket
27.6.96.

Field Service
No Stamps Available
M. A. Dragl

←
Kaim
S. O. Supplies

Mrs Anti Sim

Posti Restanti

Wadi Halfa
CAMP
31 OCT 1896

From
Mr. H. S.
Dongola

Sudan was ruled by a Mahdist theocracy from 1881 until the British gathered forces in Egypt and began an offensive up the Nile. Firket was the British base camp in northern Sudan; Dongola was captured on 23 September 1896 and used as an advance base for the assault on Khartoum. These covers are endorsed from a supply officer but did not enter the mails until Wadi Halfa Camp on 29 June and 31 October 1896, respectively.

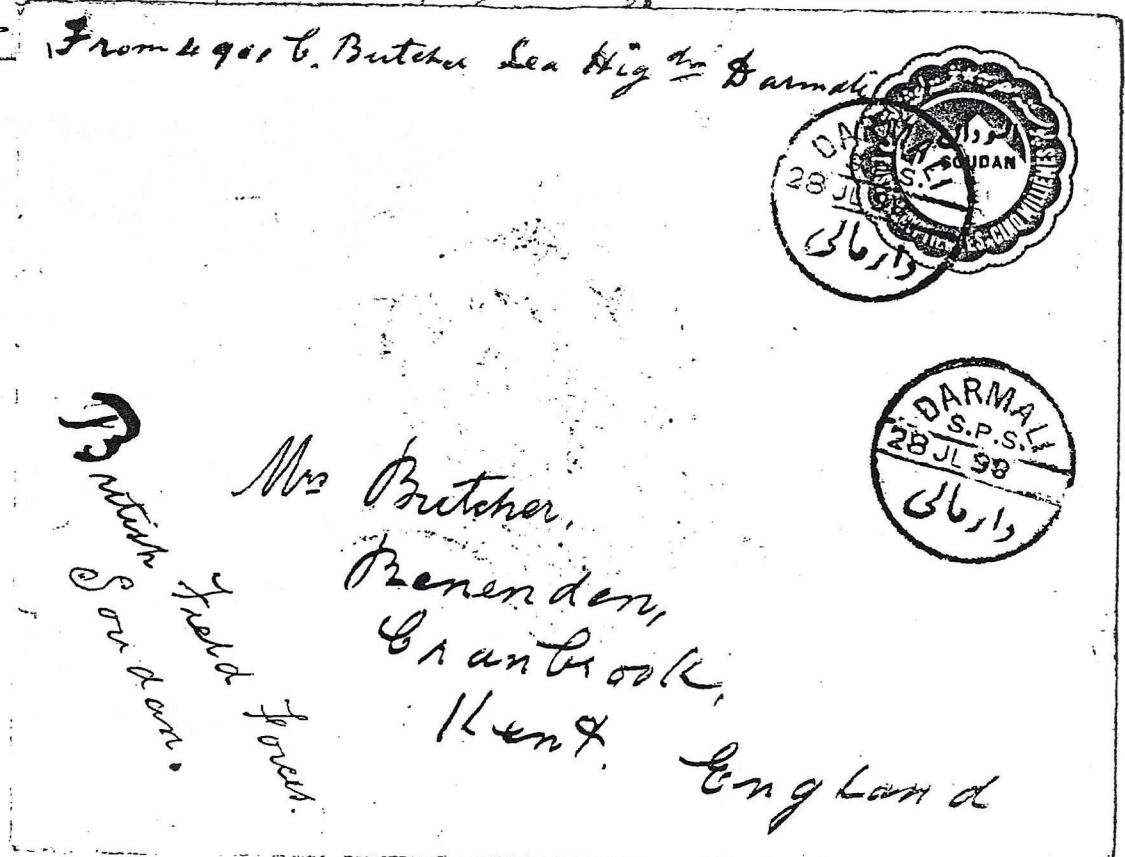
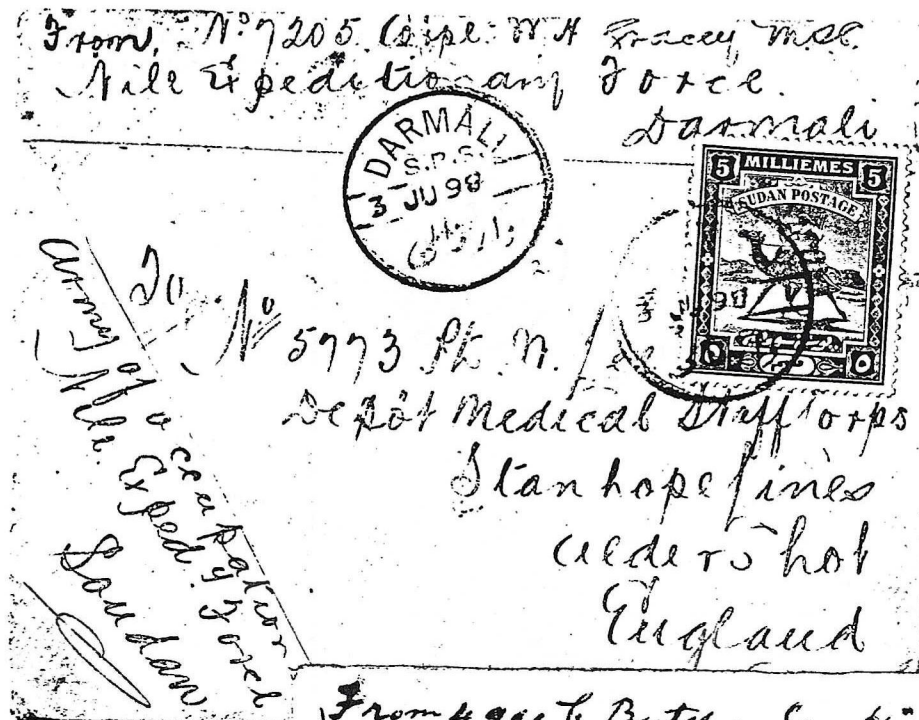
Merowi
3 February 1899

CAIRE
MAJOR T E Sandbach R E
Egyptian Army
Wady Halfa
Meraut

Lower cover from Cairo represents inbound mail to an officer in the Royal Engineers at Wadi Halfa. In the meantime, the addressee had been transferred to Merowi, about 300 miles further up the Nile.

BRITISH FORCES
Sudan

Darmali
3 June 1898
28 July 1898



Covers used from Darmali. Upper example sent by Cpl. Gracey and endorsed as from the "Nile Expeditionary Force/Soudan." Lower example used by a member of the Seaforth Highlanders and endorsed as from the "British Field Force/Soudan."

BRITISH FORCES
Crete

Canea
13 May 1897

Candia
19 August 1898

1st Batt. Seaforth Highlanders
International Force of Occupation
Island of Crete.

Akrotiri Peninsula
Canea - Crete

May 19th 97

Dear Mrs Knowles
I recd you

letter yesterday and
it - I am so glad
- things went off
& Mrs Bowker are

England

Mrs C. B. Knowles



UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE
MALTA (MALTE)

POST CARD

THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



Mr Charles Mallock

C/o Messrs Gale & Goldsmith
Wellington Works Aldershot
England
Amherst

Curzon Street
Mayfair
London

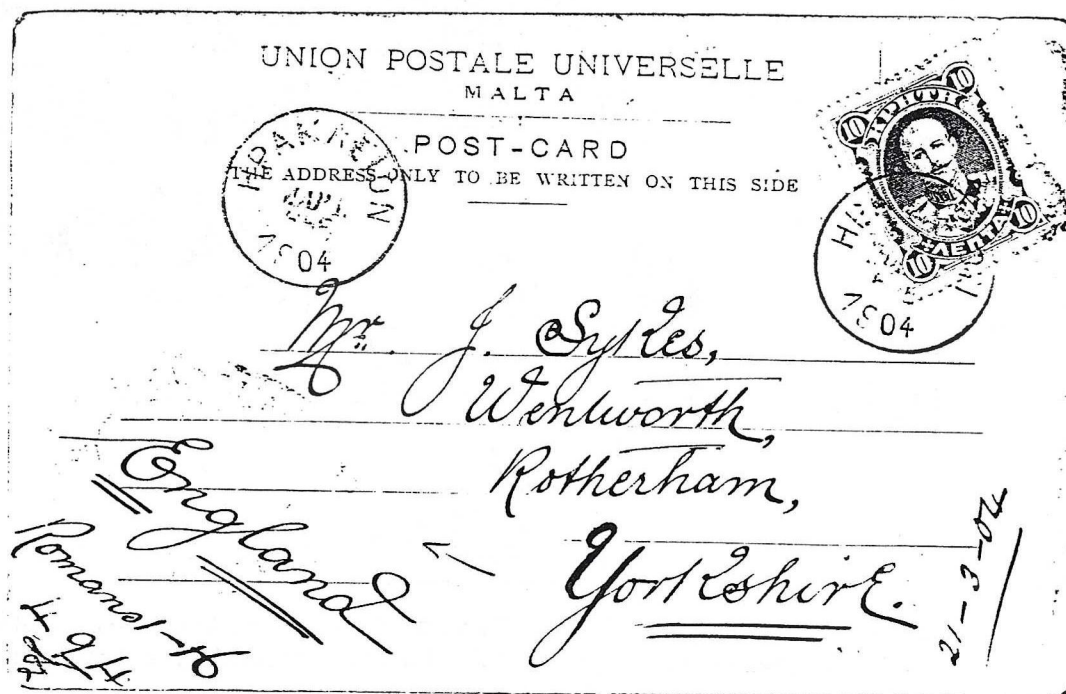
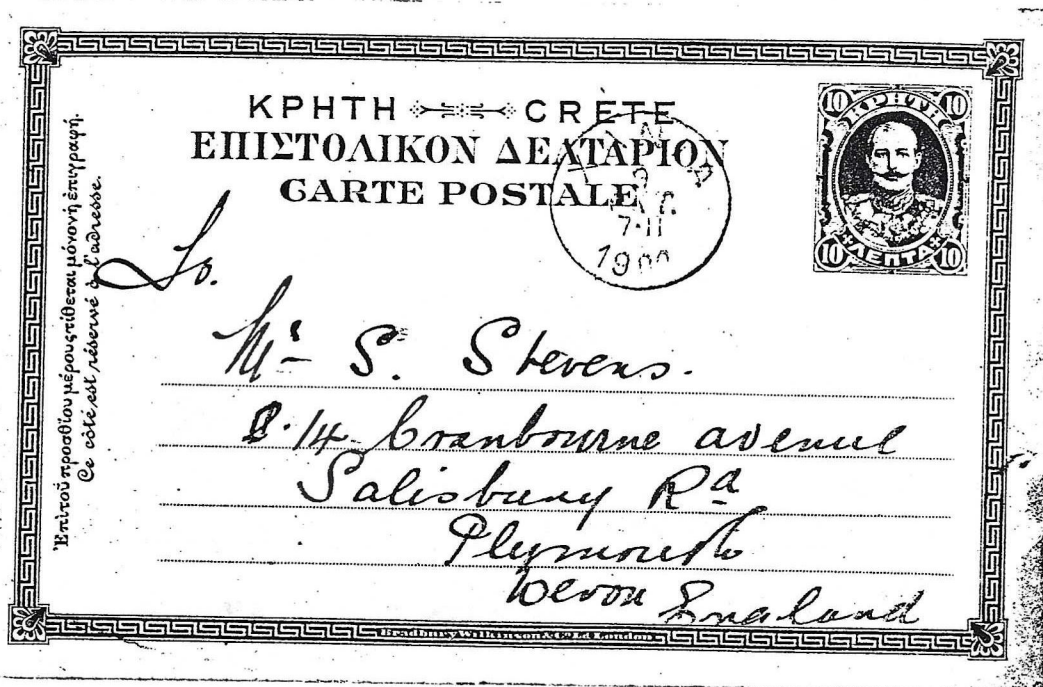
When the Greek population of Crete rebelled against Ottoman Turkish rule, six of the Great Powers decided in May 1897 to send what became the first multi-national peacekeeping force to the island. The British contingent of 700 men was commanded by Major G. Egerton, the writer of the letter shown above.

Initially, mail from the British forces was posted through the Austrian post offices; the unpaid cover was taxed 5d by the foreign branch on arrival in London. The Malta postal card was sent by Quartermaster Finlayson of the 1st Highland Light Infantry to a mapseller in Aldershot requesting a quotation on 500 copies of a map of Crete.

BRITISH FORCES
Crete

Chania
19 October 1902

Iraklion
23 March 1904

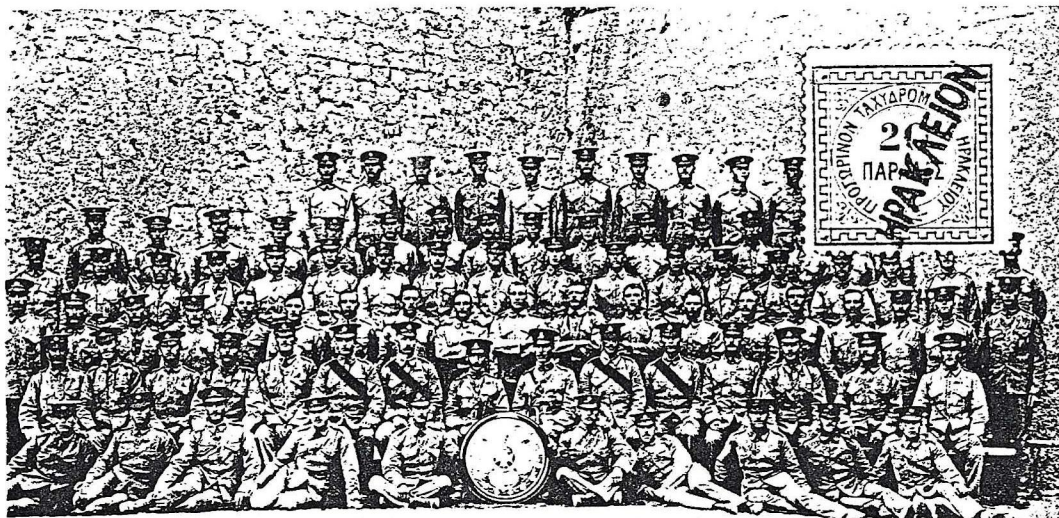


The British Contingent in Crete did not have a field post system for its troops. Therefore, military mail was generally sent through the Cretan postal system, apparently at the domestic rate of 10 lepta. Postal card above is datelined *H.M.S. Pegasus* at Suda Bay. Picture post card below has unusual cachet of "Headquarters/Crete."

BRITISH FORCES
Crete

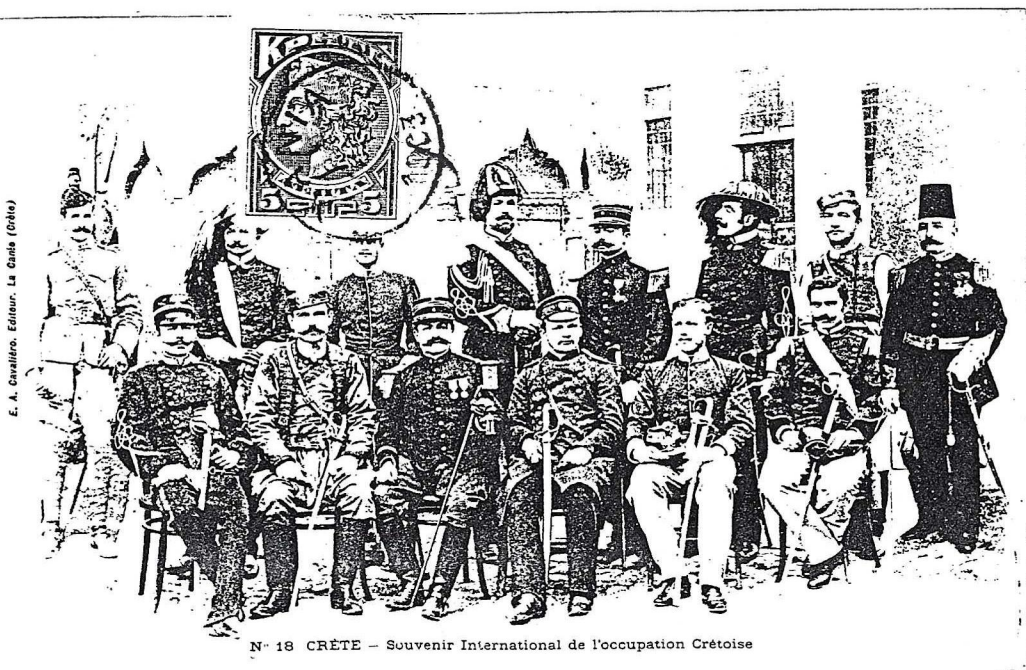
Iraklion

Chania
28 March 1903



128. - D Coy. - 2^d Royal Sussex Reg^t, Candia-Crete

Edit. R. Behaeddin, fotogr., Candia-Crete



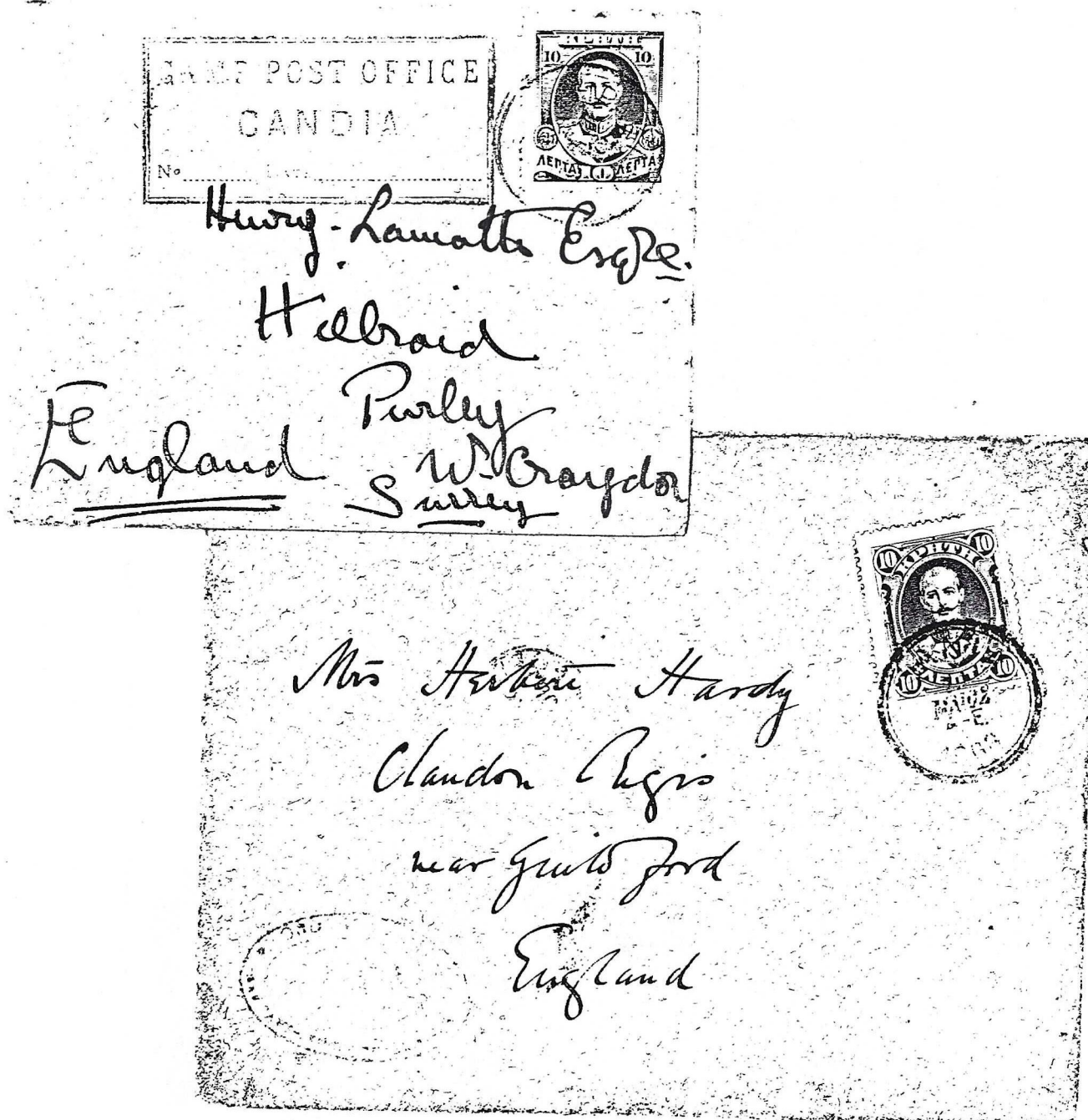
N° 18 CRÈTE - Souvenir International de l'occupation Crétoise

The 20 para postage stamp was issued under the joint administration of Britain, France, Italy and Russia to pay postage (for local letters or international postcards) on civil mail. The 5 lepta Cretan stamp was used to pay postage on a printed matter postcard to Brussels.

BRITISH FORCES
Crete

Iraklion
February 1907

Chania
21 May 1908



Military mail was sent through the Cretan postal system until the international forces were withdrawn on 26 July 1909. Above covers show unit cachets of "Camp Post Office/Candia" and "Orderly Room/King's Royal Rifles."

Field Post Office 6
15 February 1900



The initial phase of the Anglo-Boer War, which broke out on 11 October 1899, saw Boer raids into Cape of Good Hope and Natal Provinces, leading to the sieges of Kimberley and Mafeking, while the British were sending large contingents to South Africa for the eventual attack on the Boer territories. The group assembling in Cape Province for the advance into the Orange Free State was named the South African Field Force. Covers above sent from the Advance Depot at De Aar and from the 3rd Division at Sterkstroom just prior to the northward thrust.

BRITISH FORCES
Orange Free State

Field Post Office 30
2 April 1900

Thaba 'Nchu
22 May 1900

Field Post Office 35
24 May 1900

BRIEF KAART

San S. Craig Esqr
Merchant Sailor
Harrismith
To Orange Fr

Stamp: Vrij V.R.I. 300 Half penny 00

From H. B. Leman & Co. by 1st class Regt. S. R. Field Force

Active Service Register

Mr. S. G. L. Hobbis
London
Birmingham
England

Mr. S. G. L. Hobbis
London
Birmingham
England

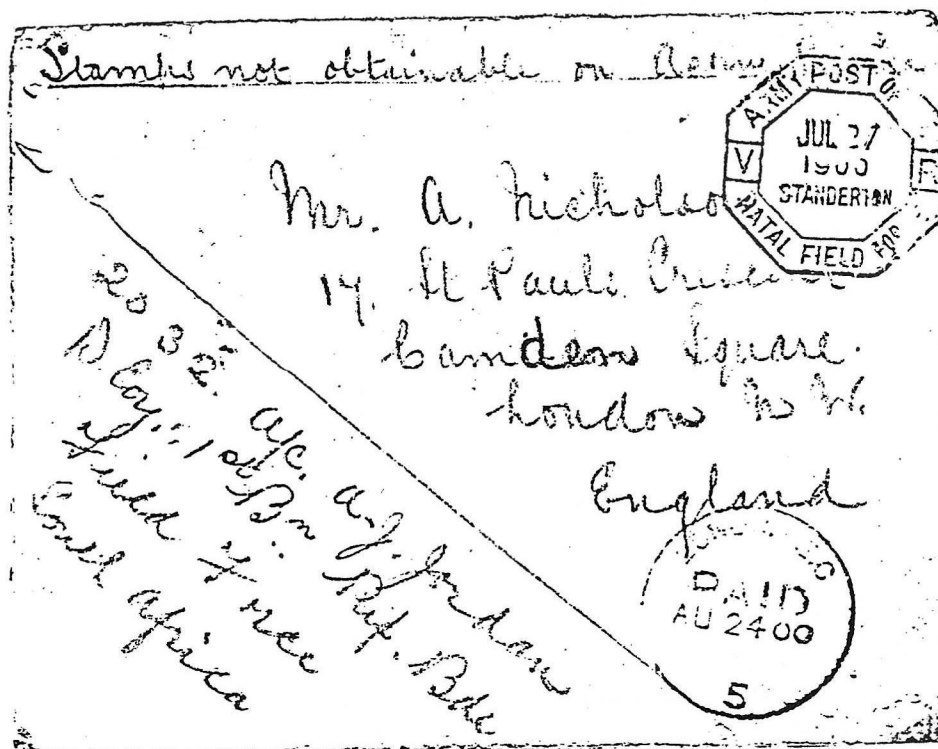
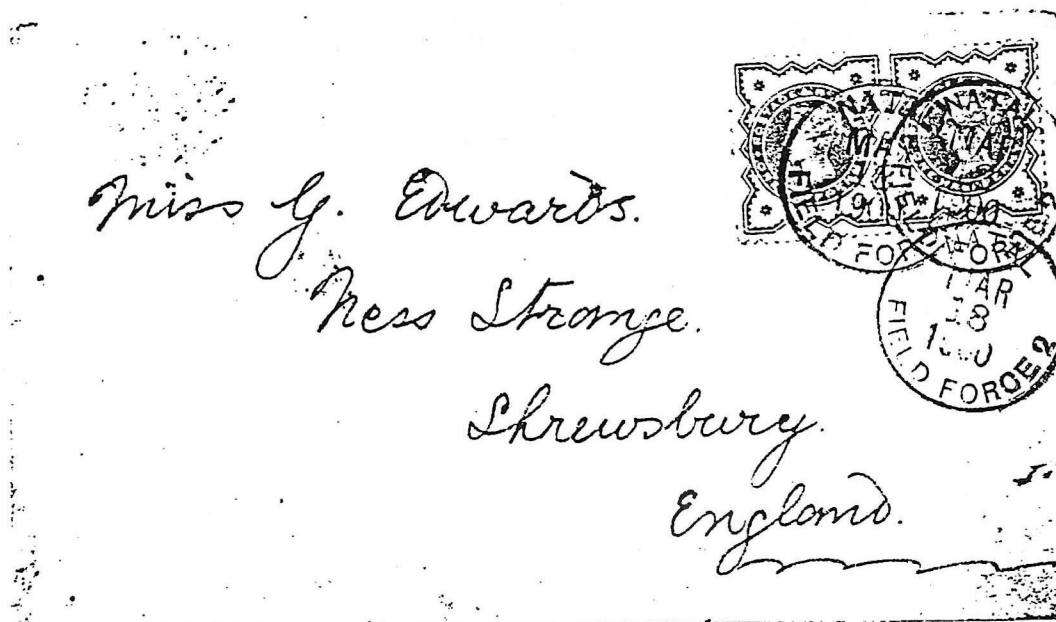
Stamp: Vrij V.R.I. 300 Half penny 00

When the British were ready, they advanced northward along the main railway line and entered Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, on 13 March 1900. On the dates shown above FPO 30 was at Harrismith and FPO 35 was at Senekal.

Note use of OFS stationery and stamp overprinted "V.R.I." (for Victoria Queen Empress), in the latter case to pay part of the registration fee. On 24 May 1900 the territory was incorporated into the British Empire as the Orange River Colony, thus ending its status as occupied territory.

Natal Field Force 2
18 March 1900

Army Post Office/Standerton
27 July 1900



A second British invasion force was assembled in Natal Province to advance into the Transvaal from the east. It was known as the Natal Field Force and had its own distinctive postal markings in round and octagonal formats. The cds on the upper cover was in use at HQ of the NFF from 19 February to 22 March 1900. Lower cover posted from Standerton in occupied Transvaal.

BRITISH FORCES
Transvaal

Rustenburg
June 1900

Johannesburg
18 December 1900

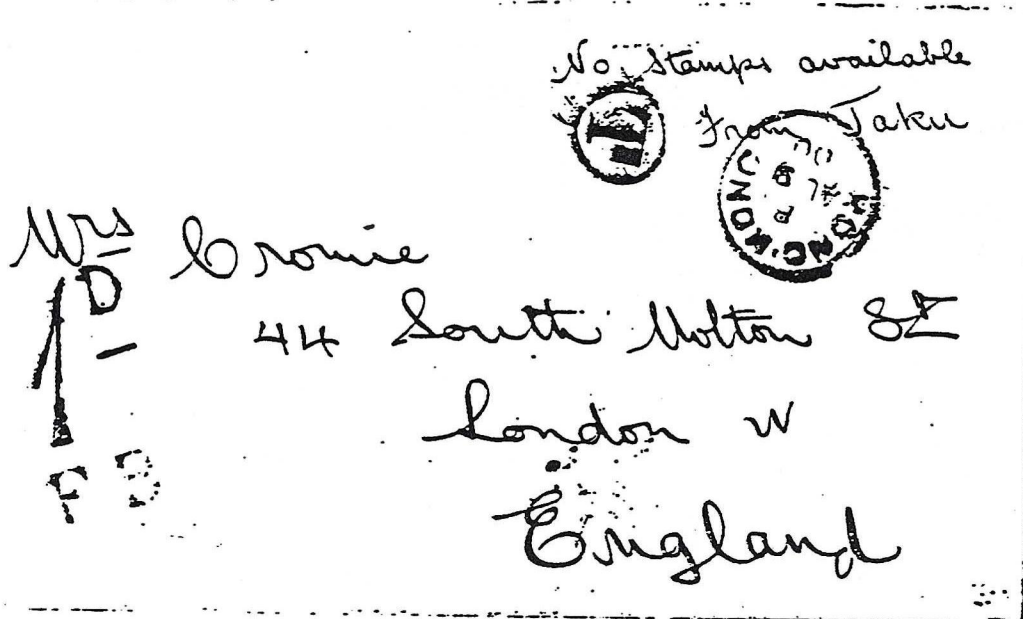


After being cut off as a result of a Boer counterattack, Rustenburg was relieved by a British force from Mafeking on 23 June 1900. There was a temporary shortage of valid postage, and the authorities prepared a provisional overprint reading "V.R." (Victoria Queen) on a total of 2,640 Transvaal stamps still available in the post office. This issue was used for only eight days and only a few examples are known used on commercial covers.

Elsewhere, stamps of the republic were overprinted "V.R.I." and used during the British occupation by both military and civil senders. The Transvaal was proclaimed British territory on 1 September 1900 although resistance by the Boers continued until the Treaty of Vereeniging which was signed on 31 May 1902.

BRITISH FORCES
China

"No Stamps Available"
August 1900
October 1900



B. C. F. F.
no stamps available
F. B.

Captain E. R. Howell
J. S. C.
Liu Kun Jau

In June 1900 anti-foreign insurrectionists, known as Boxers, laid siege to the foreign legations in Peking. Eight of the great powers sent troops to China to quell the uprising, with British forces being sent from India and Hong Kong. The British postal orders provided that soldiers at places where there were no FPOs could send mail with a handwritten endorsement "no stamps available" for transmission to the addressees.

BRITISH FORCES
China

Base Office A (Hong Kong)
21 July 1901

Base Office B (Tientsin)
8 November 1900
29 January 1901

مقام کو برتیباب

مقام کو برتیباب
مقام کو برتیباب
مقام کو برتیباب



Please forward

REGISTERED

Mrs. Haices.

Chaplains As.

Wm. H. Hill

R
BASE-OFFICE-B

INDIA POST CARD

THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON

THE ANNEXED CARD
IS INTENDED FOR
THE ANSWER.



Germany

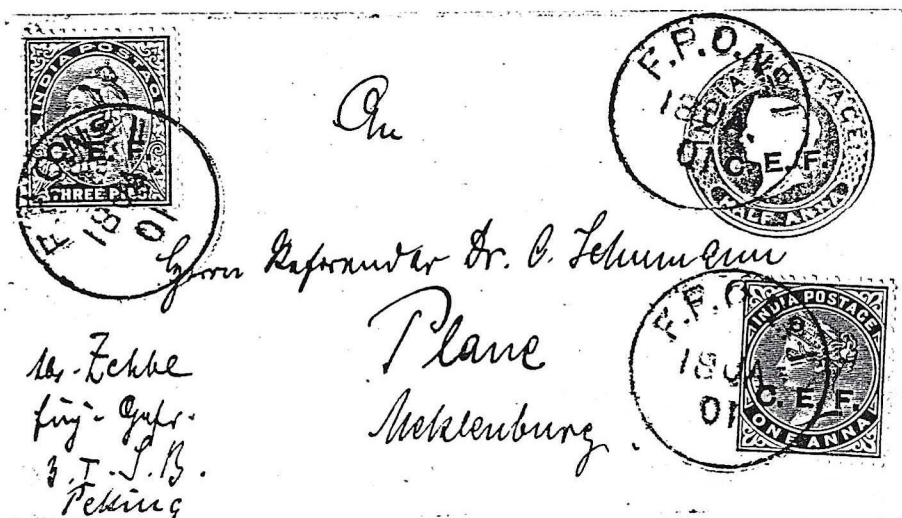
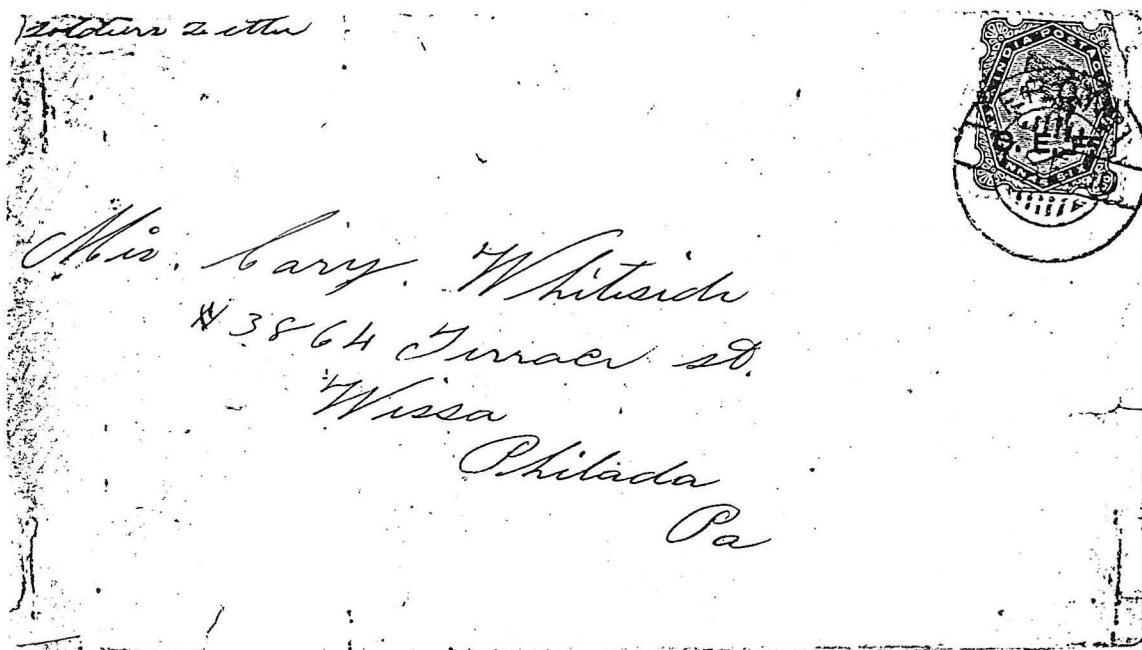


Wm. H. Hill
Cassel
23.12.00.7-8V

Base Office A was opened in Hong Kong on 10 August 1900 to assist in the processing of mail to and from the forces in China. It was deemed necessary to have a primary sorting office nearer the troops, so Base B was opened in Tientsin on 1 November 1900.

BRITISH FORCES
China

FPO No. 1 (Peking - Legation Gate)
9 September 1900
18 January 1901



FPO 1 served Army Headquarters in Peking, operating from 1 September 1900 until late 1923. During the Boxer period, this office used two types of datestamps as shown above.

BRITISH FORCES
China

FPO No. 2 (Peking - Temple of Heaven)
27 August 1901
6 July 1904

POST-KARTE.

Carte postale, Cartolina postale, Post-Card.

FPO No. 3 (Tongshan)
1 August 1901



Stewart Wilson Esq.

Postmaster General
C/o ...

F.P.O. No. 2

To
the Agent of the
Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking



Mrs J. Colquhoun

14 Arthurlie St

Barrhead

Near Glasgow

Scotland

FPO 2 served the HQ of the 1st Infantry Brigade, operating from 1 September 1900 to 15 September 1901. It used two different datestamps. FPO 3 opened at Tungchow on 30 August 1900 and moved to Tongshan on 1 August 1901.