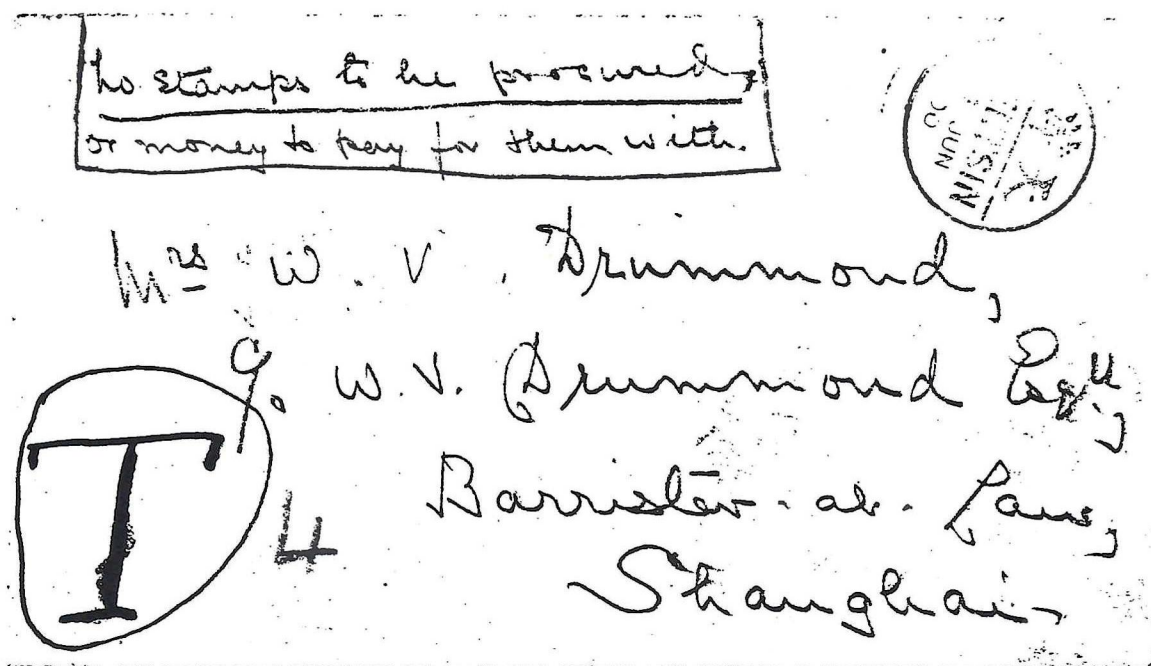


ANGLO - AMERICAN FORCES IN THE BOXER UPRISING

On 9 June 1900 members of the Chinese anti-foreign movement, the "Boxers," supported by conservatives in the Chinese Imperial court, besieged the legations in Peking. Foreign forces in North China were inadequate to reach Peking or to secure the region around it, so a major international military relief operation was organized, involving 8 nations. Just over 5,000 American troops were rushed to North China, most from the ongoing war in the Philippines. The peak British troop strength was approximately 30,000. Nearly all of the British forces were Indians, but tiny contingents were supplied by the Australian colonies of Victoria and New South Wales.



26 June 1900. The International Settlement in Tientsin was attacked by Boxers on 17 June and relieved on 23 June.

Until the arrival of reinforcements, Allied operations were confined to an unsuccessful British-led attempt to reach Peking, capture of the Taku forts, and securing the area around Taku and Tientsin. The arrival of additional forces allowed the Allies to relieve the Peking legations, suppress the Boxers, extract reparations for damage and the costs of the international expedition, and force the Chinese government to adopt a less hostile view toward foreign interests in China. Actual combat was limited; troops spent most of their time guarding lines of communication. The relatively quick suppression of the Uprising led to the withdrawal of almost all of the US troops and the Australian contingents by May 1901. Other British troops were steadily drawn down as well, through August 1901, after which small garrisons were left to guard rail lines, the legations and the international settlements.

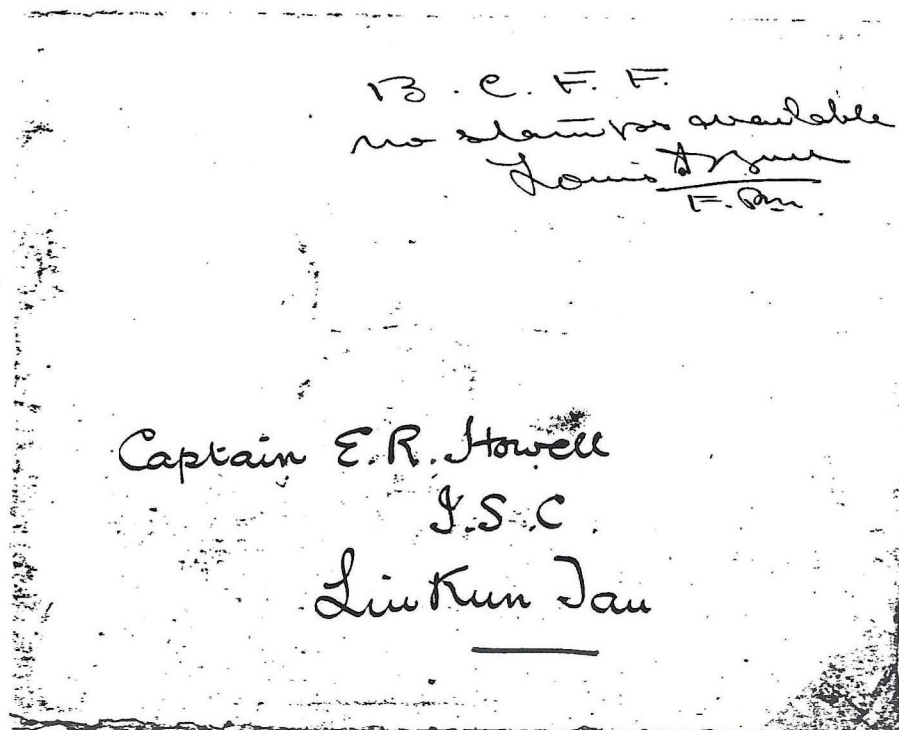
Both the US and Britain provided field post offices and concessionary postal rates for their forces in China during the Boxer Uprising. The British (Indian) Army post offices sold specially overprinted stamps and stationery. The British contingent (albeit those in charge of the railways, and not the post office) also produced the one notable philatelic boondoggle of the Boxer campaign: the B.R.A. 5¢ "late fee" stamps.

Covers from US forces in the Boxer uprising are at least scarce, with probably no more than a couple of hundred covers in collectors' hands. Mail from the British forces is more common, though there are rarities to be found here. To date, only 2 dozen covers from or to the Australian contingents have been recorded. Philatelically significant items are "headlined" throughout the exhibit.

PLAN
PAGE
REQUIRED

British Field Post

"No Stamps Available"
October 1900



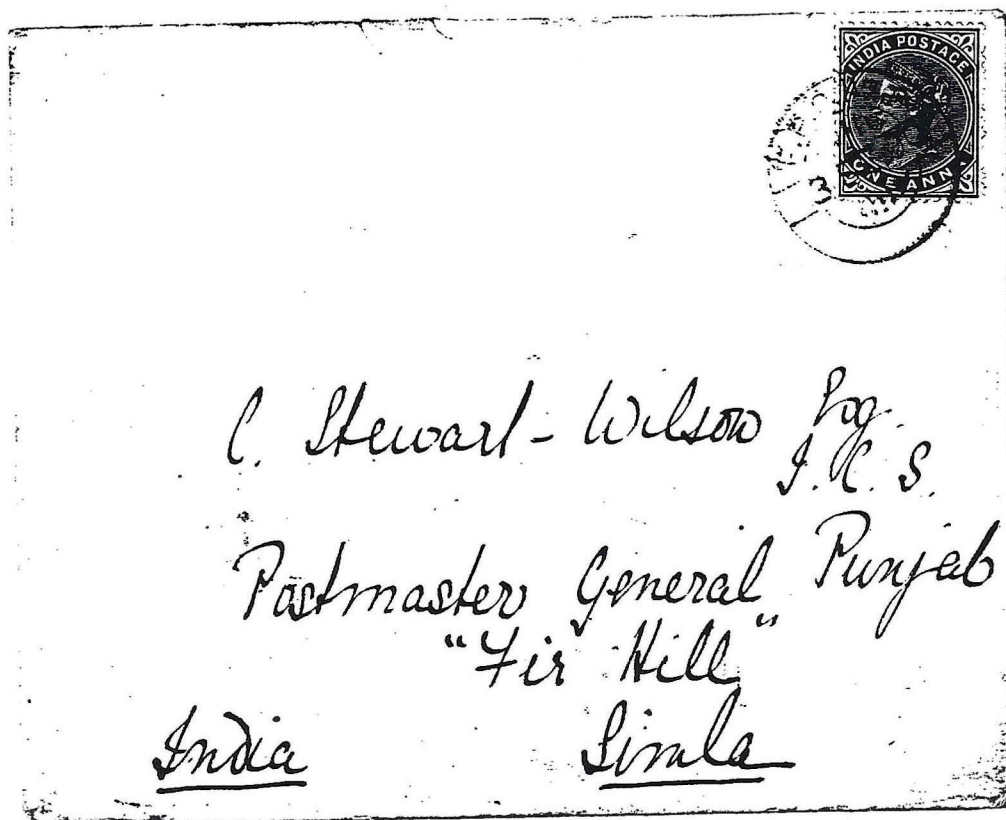
C.E.F. Order No. 942, issued 12 August 1900, provided that troops quartered at places where there were no FPOs, or in columns unaccompanied by FPOs, could frank their mail "No Stamps Available." Such letters were to be accepted by an FPO and sent free to the Base Post Office, "where they will be stamped and despatched to their destination, the cost being charged to the state."

Intra-theatre cover processed only partly in compliance with Order 942, backstamped FPO 13 on 1 November 1900 (suggesting that the first FPO which it encountered was FPO 13 at Liukungtau, leased territory of Weihaiwai, which would have made transmission to Tientsin for application of a stamp nonsensical given the address on the cover).

British Field Post

Unoverprinted Indian Postage
FPO 5 - 3 September 1900

Covers bearing unoverprinted Indian postage are among the scarcest items of British Field Post material from the Boxer uprising.

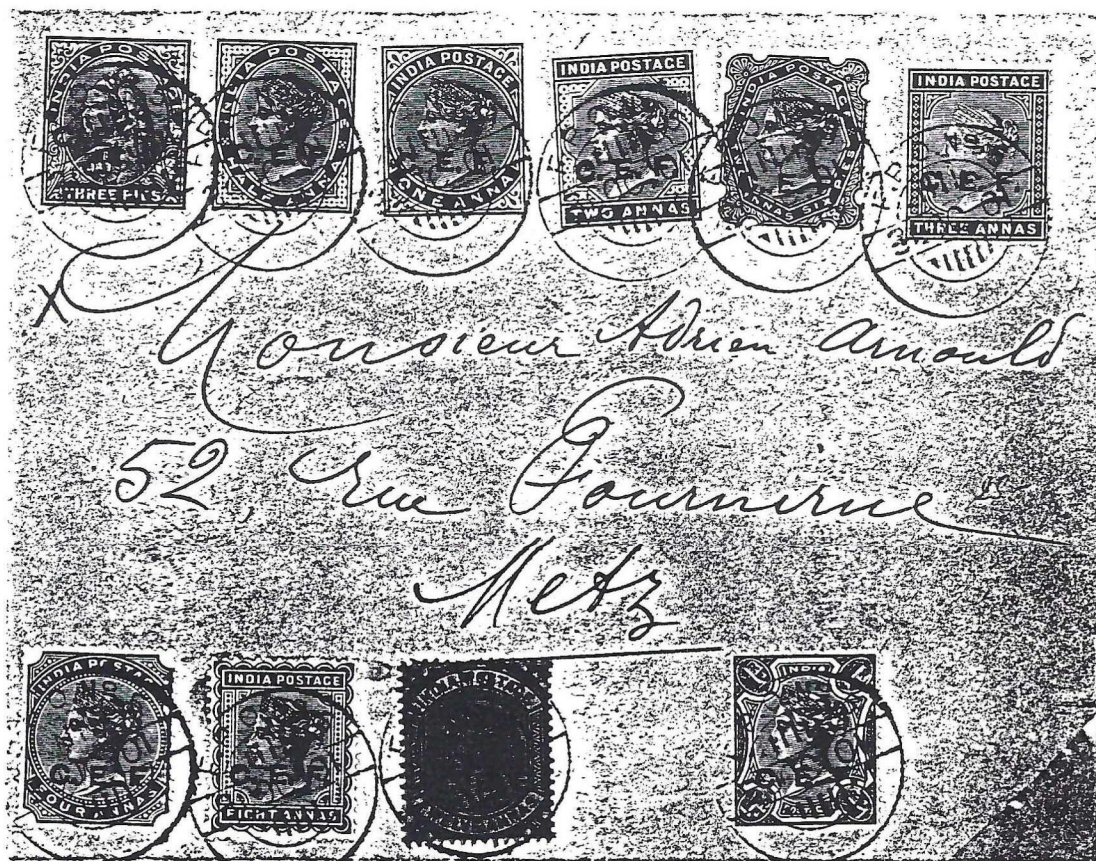


Prior to the arrival of C.E.F. overprinted stamps and stationery in North China in mid-August, unoverprinted Indian stamps (but not postal stationery items) were used at "the Base Post Office and FPOs 1, 4, 11, 9 and possibly 5." (Virk)

FPO 5 was initially sent to Weihaiwei with Base Post Office A but did not operate there and returned to Hong Kong on 10 August, before the arrival of the C.E.F. overprinted stamps. As the 2nd Infantry Brigade was sailing on 10 August for Shanghai and needed a field post office, FPO 5 was immediately embarked on the same ship with the Brigade HQ. It reached Shanghai on 18 August and continued to operate there throughout the Boxer period.



Unissued C.E.F. overprint
(120 copies sent to China)



The exchange rate during the Boxer period was 1 anna = 4.35¢ (Chinese currency). There was no means of collecting the fraction of a cent, and a decision was taken to sell stamps at 1 anna = 4¢, rather than 5¢, so as not to penalize the troops. To prevent large numbers of stamps from being bought and shipped back to India for a windfall profit, stamps and postal stationery were overprinted C.E.F. and delivered to North China in mid-August 1900. C.E.F. overprinted items issued during the Boxer period consisted of the 10 stamps shown above, one ½ anna imprinted envelope, two ¼ anna and one 1 anna postal cards, and one (possibly two) ¼ + ¼ anna reply postal cards.

British Field Post

OHMS Overprinted Stamps

Official (OHMS) stamps were not sold in China, but were distributed to Army offices under strict accountability rules. As they were not sold, the inexact exchange rate problem did not arise, so the C.E.F. overprint was not needed. Covers franked with OHMS stamps are scarce.



ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE.

*Instant Supply General
Supply General's Office
13 Wood Street
Calcutta*

ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE

*Captain G. S. T. Napier
Oxfordshire Light Infantry
To H. B. M. Conone
Newchwang*

*Cecily
H. P. Staff Officer*

*Mrs. T. Taylor
Major*

Cover carried in the British Field Post system from Peking (FPO 1) to Tientsin where it entered the Chinese Imperial Post. Backstamped Base Office B (Tientsin), Chefoo and Newchwang.

British Field Post

BRA 5c Overprinted Stamps
20 April 1901

This envelope to be returned to bearer.

To Majr C.A.R. Brooke R.F.

Tientsin

Despatched at _____ hrs _____ mins. on the _____

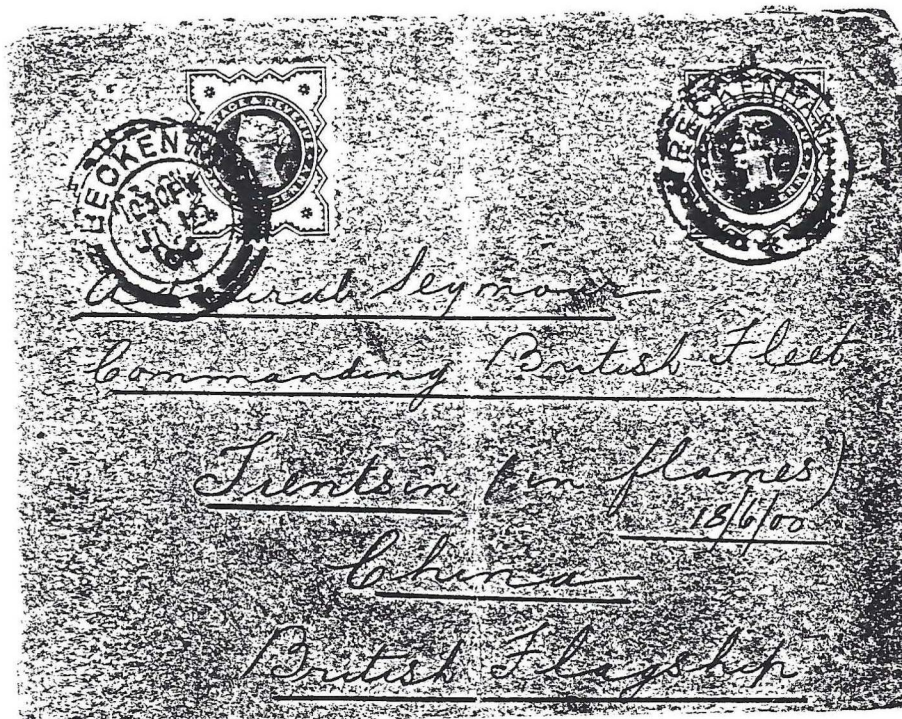
Received at _____ hrs _____ mins. on the _____

*Captain Twining
Royal Engineers
Tongku*

(Receiver's Signature.)

The final type of postal paper used by the C.E.F. in the Boxer period was a locally-overprinted stamp issued by the British Railway Administration to indicate payment of a late fee charge for regular letters posted from 60 to 10 minutes before train departure at certain railway stations. Chinese ½c stamps were overprinted, first in green then black, both overprint colors being used simultaneously. These stamps were not sold to the public, but were instead affixed by the Railway postmaster and cancelled in violet ink with a special handstamp. This service, at first opposed then grudgingly accepted by the postal section of the C.E.F., was available only from 20 April through 20 May 1901 at the Peking, Tientsin, Tongku, Tongshan and Shanhaikwan railway stations. Uses from all five are shown below at the end of this section on British Field Post.

Philatelic first day covers, postmarked at a stationary FPO (No 4, Tongku) prior to presentation at the railway station (unusual) and with FPO 15 cancel on board the TPO operating between Tientsin and Hanku.



When this cover was mailed, parts of Tientsin were in flames, but Adm. Seymour was not there.

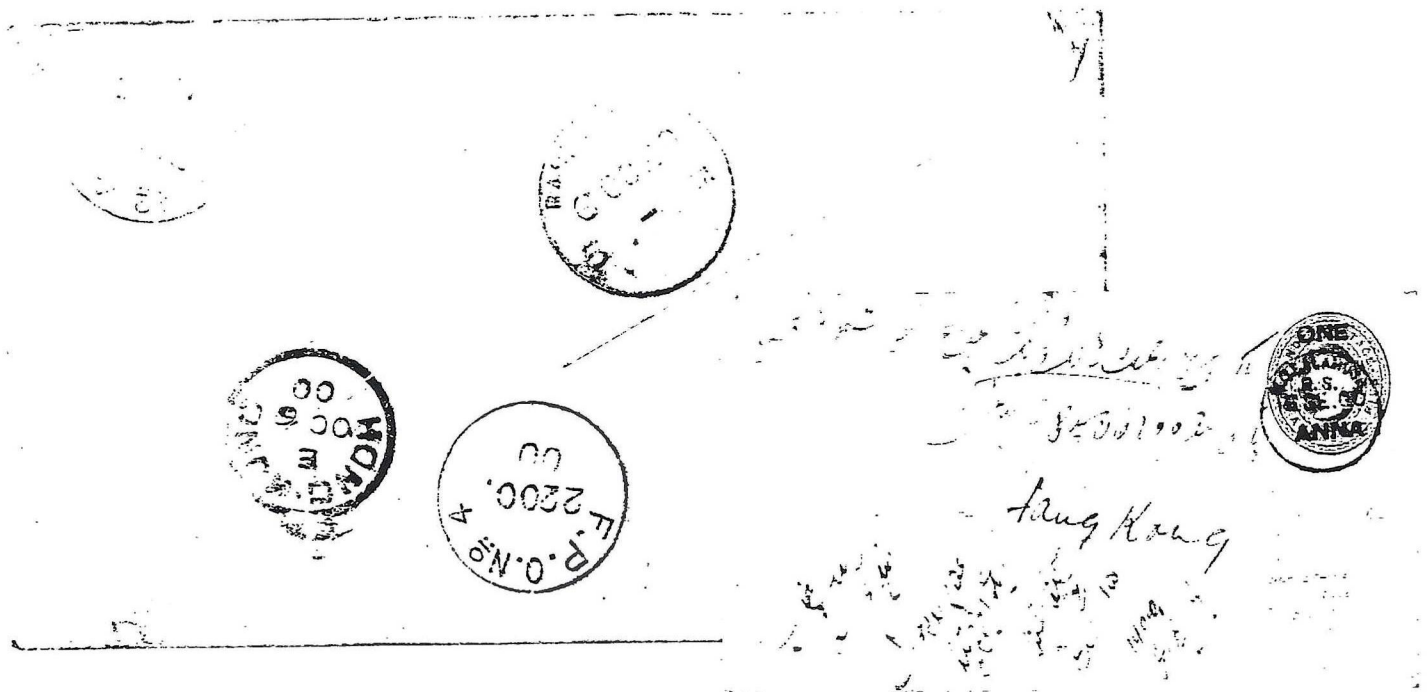
Seymour passed through Tientsin on 10 June with a force of 2129 men, intending to relieve the Legations in Peking. On 19 June this force was in retreat from Langtung (40 miles from Peking) to Yangtsun, where it was cut off from Tientsin by Boxers and Imperial Chinese troops. Meanwhile, parts of Tientsin had been burned and, from 17-20 June, the International Settlement subjected to intense attacks. Considerable credit for the successful resistance to these attacks is given to the defensive positions laid out by Herbert Hoover, later President of the United States. Tientsin was relieved on 23 June and Seymour's column was rescued and returned to Tientsin on 26 June.

Transit time for mail from North China to Great Britain in the Boxer period runs from 38 to 51 days. This cover most likely reached Seymour in early August, when Tientsin was no longer threatened and Allied forces, under Gen. Gaselee, were again preparing to march on Peking.

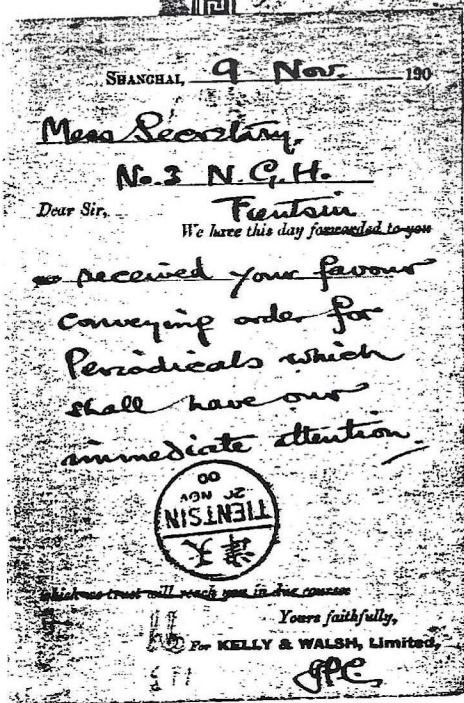
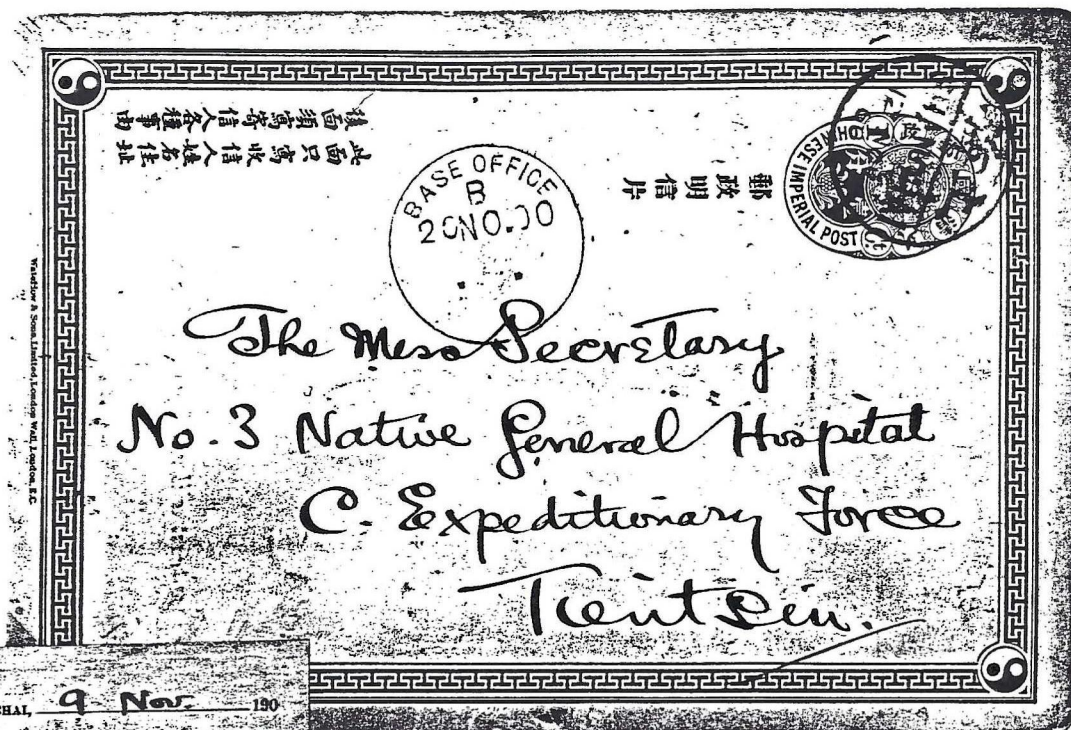
British Field Post

Incoming Mail
22 October 1900
6 December 1900

Incoming covers to the C.E.F. during the Boxer period are much scarcer than outbound covers.



The usual practice for covers from India was to go straight to the British Base Post Office in Hong Kong, and from there to the appropriate Base or Field Post Office, bypassing the Hong Kong civil Post Office. Adding "Hong Kong" to the address of the top cover no doubt confused the issue.

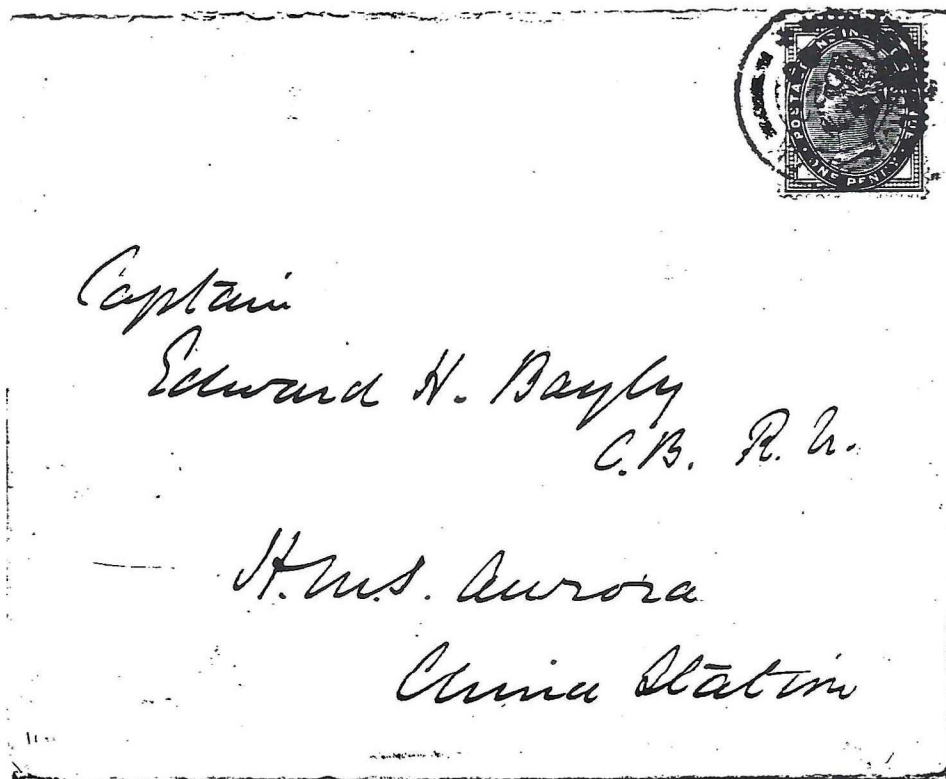


Relations between the Imperial Post Office and the Base and Field Post Offices serving the C.E.F. were quite good, to the point that for a time the IPO carried Allied forces mail between Shanghai and Tientsin without charge. Mail to the C.E.F. originating in the Chinese postal system was paid at domestic rates and sent to the Chinese post office nearest the FPO serving the addressee, where it was transferred to the Field Post system.

China's Declaration of War on 21 June 1900 was generally ignored by Chinese officials outside the Peking-Tientsin area, as well as by the Allies who chose to view it as having been coerced by a minority faction in the Imperial Court. Eventually, all Chinese officials adopted this view.

British Field Post

Incoming Mail
January 1901



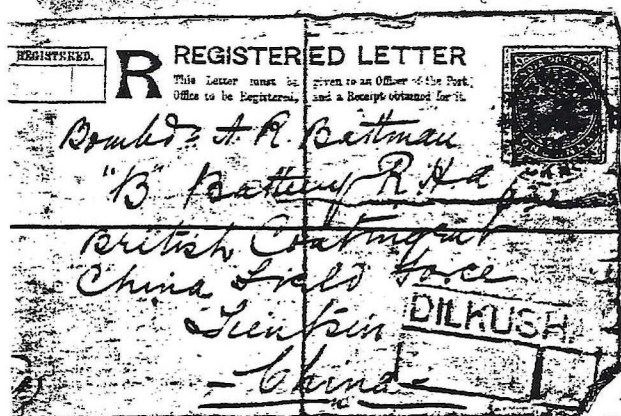
The British post office had had long experience of getting mail to ships of the Royal Navy in exotic locations, and such letters were entitled to Imperial penny postage. *HMS Aurora* was one of 21 British warships (plus 10 gunboats and 3 colonial vessels) involved in the Boxer uprising.

POSTAL NOTICE.

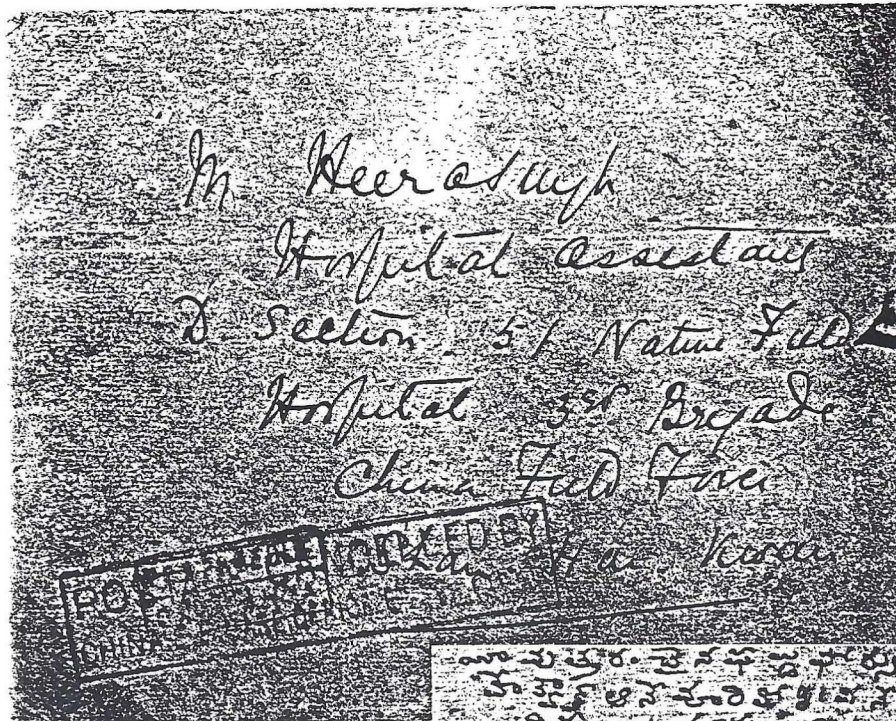
It is hereby notified that postal articles for the British Contingent, China Field Force, can now be registered at post offices in India. Such articles cannot, however, be insured or sent under the value-payable system.

A. U. FANSHAWE,
*Director-General of the Post
Office of India.*

CALCUTTA:
The 16th January 1901.

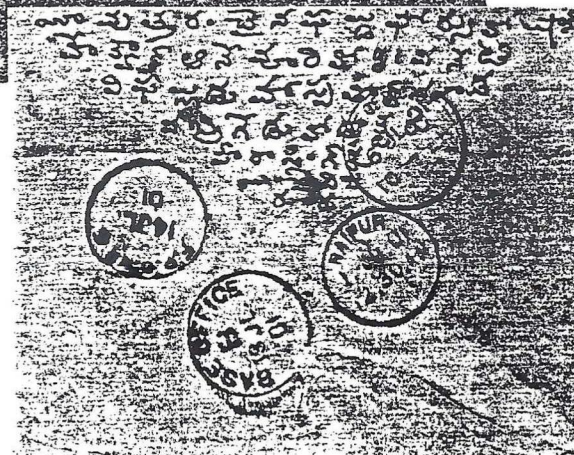


Postage Due



POSTAGE DUE
ONE ANNA

POSTAGE CANCELLED BY
CHINA C.F. BASE OFFICE 6 JLOI



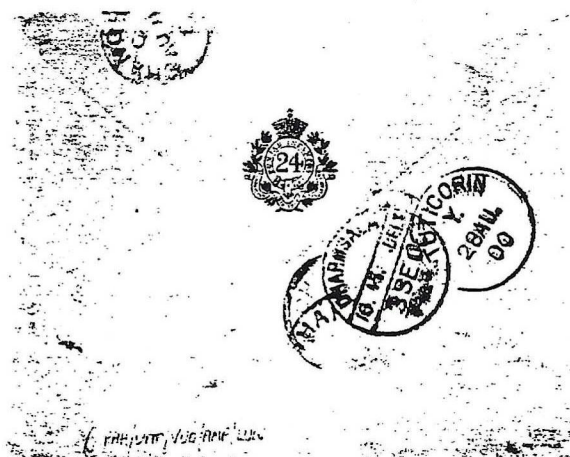
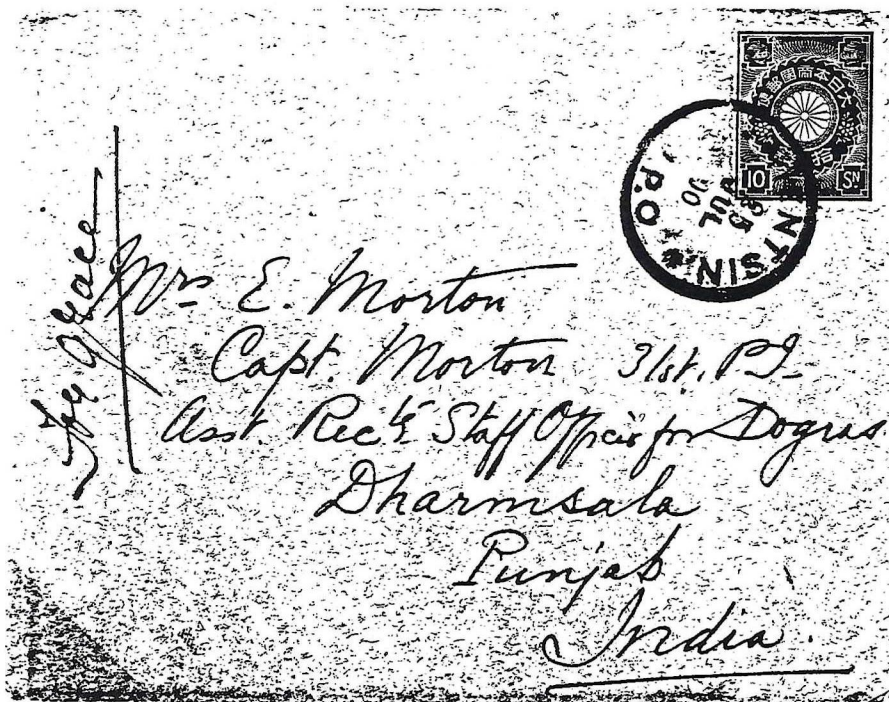
Postage rates between India and the C.E.F. were the same as domestic Indian rates: **letters**, $\frac{1}{2}$ anna up to $\frac{1}{2}$ tola, 1 anna up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ tolas, and an additional $1\frac{1}{2}$ annas per $1\frac{1}{2}$ tolas above that (1 tola = .4 oz.); **postcards** $\frac{1}{4}$ anna; **registration**, 2 annas to 20 tolas, 4 annas above 20 tolas; **acknowledgement of receipt of registered mail**, 1 anna; **packets**, $\frac{1}{2}$ anna per 10 tolas; **parcels**, 2 annas up to 20 tolas, 4 annas to 40 tolas, and 2 annas per 40 tolas above that.

The Indian Post Office directed on 29 June 1900 that all items mailed to the C.E.F. must be prepaid. Non-payment of $\frac{1}{2}$ anna postage resulted in a double-deficiency due charge of 1 anna at Base Office A. (Proud records an identical cancelled handstamp for Base Office B, but its existence is questioned in Virk, *et al.*.) However, it appears that even on mail from India, Base Office A followed the practice agreed upon for underpaid and unpaid mail from England: short-paid mail was passed free to the addressee and the deficiency, evidenced by stamps marked "Cancelled," was charged to the War Office.

British Field Post

Forerunner: Tientsin I.J.P.O.
25 July 1900

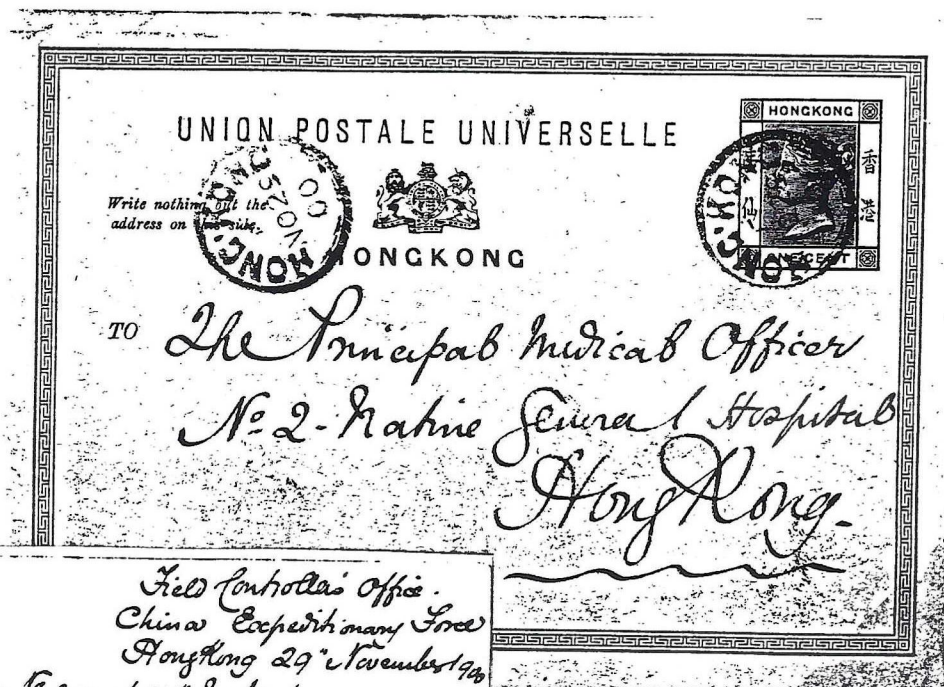
For 9 days, the first troops from India in Tientsin had no Field Post service.



The first troops from India arrived in Tientsin on 18 July 1900 but the first British FPO, which left India on a later ship, did not open until 27 July. During this period, mail was dispatched through existing local post offices of the Allied powers.

Cover franked at the UPU rate for single-weight international letters, equivalent to 2½ annas.

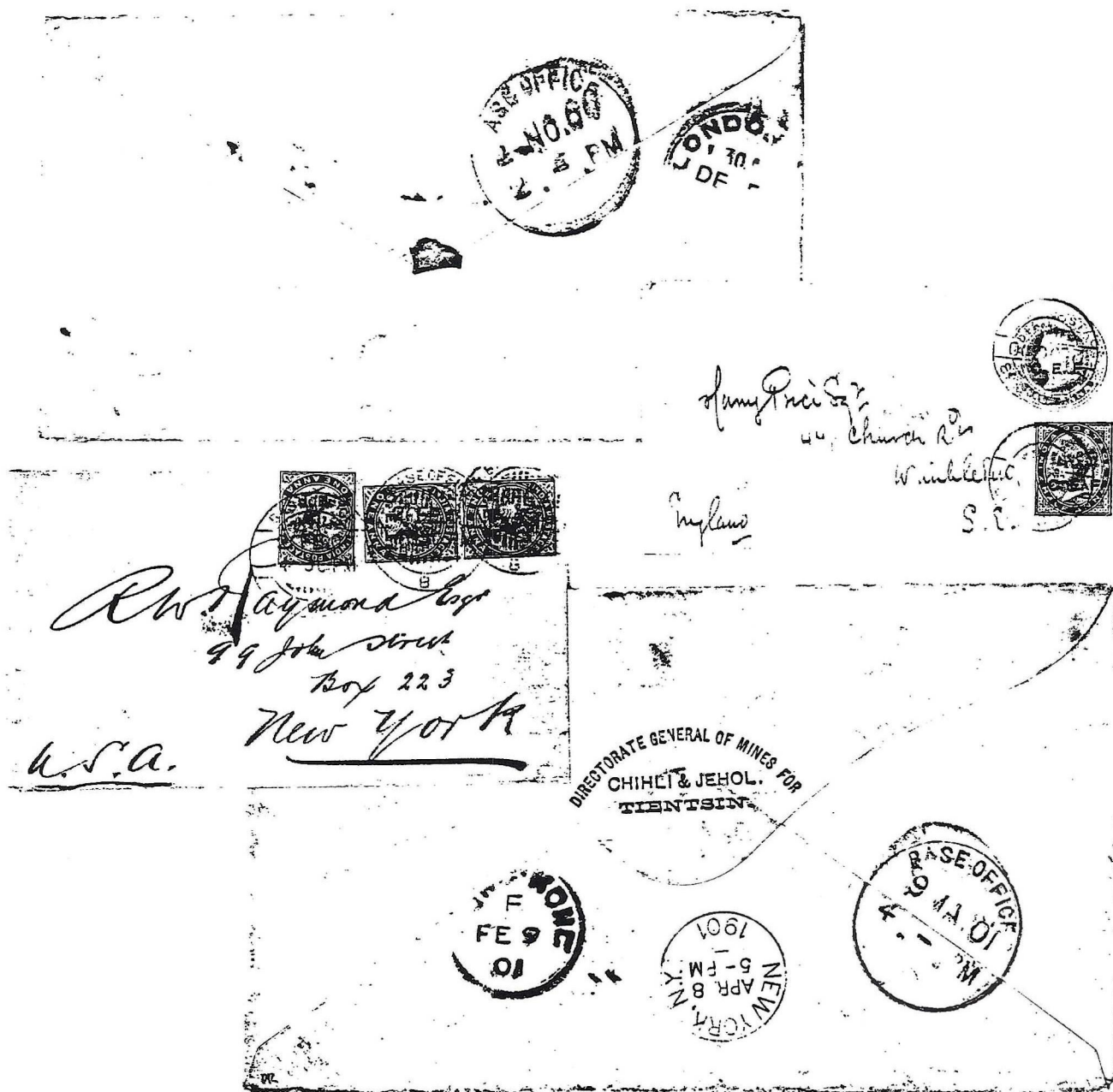
29 November 1900



As a result of the Hong Kong Postmaster's refusal to allow the Base Office to sell stamps or accept mail within the colony during 1900, even official correspondence between units of the C.E.F. had to be sent through the civilian post office, at regular postal rates.

British Field Post

Base Office A (Hong Kong)
2 November 1900
9 March 1901



Base Office A opened in Hong Kong on 10 August 1900, following discovery that the original site at Weihaiwei was not on the normal mail boat routes to North China. It continued to operate in Hong Kong until it was closed on 1 June 1903. Originally, Base Office A was prohibited from selling postage stamps or accepting letters by the Hong Kong Postmaster, as this threatened his revenues. Therefore, Base Office A postmarks are usually found as transit markings. In 1901 this prohibition was lifted, but the exact date is not known. During the Boxer period, Base Office A used 4 types of datestamps.

C.E.F. mail to India and Great Britain was sent overseas directly from Base Office A, while mail to other foreign destinations was first transferred to the Hong Kong civil Post Office.