

# ***The Runner Post***



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P.O. Box 294, MONTAGU 6720, SOUTH AFRICA  
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Botswana Representative:	R.J.F. 'Andy' Andersson P.O. Box 1240, Gaborone, Botswana.
South African Representative / Auctioneer (S.A.):	Howard Cook P.O. Box 6, Gillitts, Natal 3603, South Africa.
Editor:	Alan MacGregor P.O. Box 3130, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the 40th issue of *The Runner Post* - celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Bechuanaland and Botswana Society.

This issue, a little larger than usual at 40 pages (not a coincidence), diverges from the balance of most issues in that it concentrates on fewer but longer articles from a range of different contributors. The main article is a masterly piece of research by Alan Drysdall and Jim Catterall entitled 'The Sitwell Correspondence'. Although a longish article, publishing it in two or more issues of *The Runner Post* would not do it justice and as this is our 40th anniversary, it is fitting to indulge ourselves and publish such a major work in one piece.

An additional reason for publishing it as one piece in this issue is due to Alan's impending visit to South Africa where he will be giving a series of lectures including two entitled 'The Sitwell correspondence - a case history'. The article, with all the helpful illustrations of maps, tables and covers, should prove useful to those attending either of the lectures.

For the reasons mentioned above, much of the usual sections 'Member's Comments and Queries' and 'Items of Interest' have been held over for RP 41.

To mark this very special BBS occasion, we are distributing with this issue, a copy of the Society's 'Bechuanalands and Botswana Postal Marking Classification' (better known as 'Typology') by Brian Trotter. To quote from this invaluable reference work: "the classification has been developed to enable easy, reliable identification and description of postal markings". Much effort has gone into its production and we hope you will find it useful.

## MEMBERS' COMMENTS AND QUERIES

## MAUN POSTAL ROUTES - Peter Thy

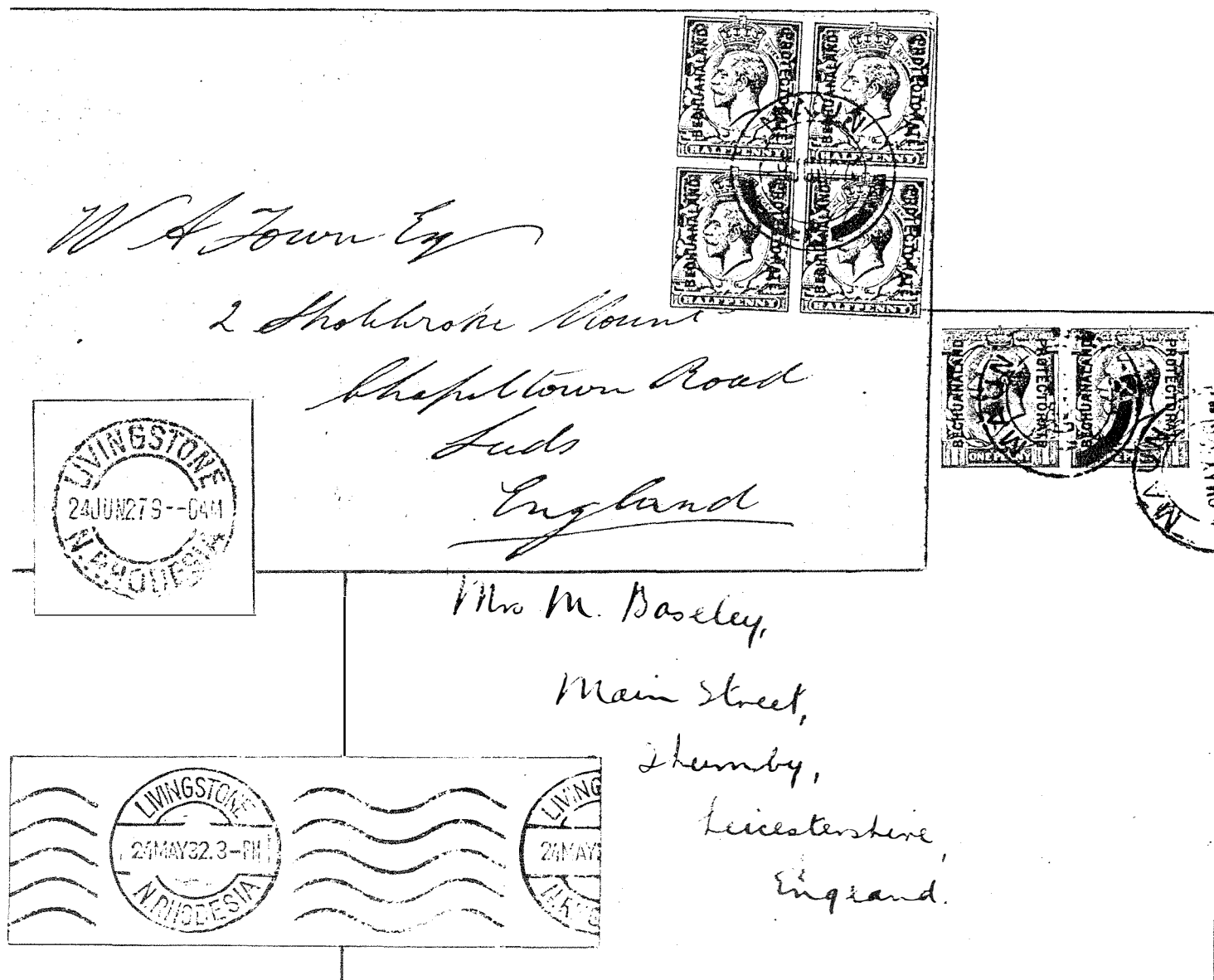
In RP 39, Jim Catterall shows a cover posted in Maun during 1926 and backstamped Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia. He asks if this was the regular or an occasional postal route.

I can confirm that this was the regular route. Until about 1920, mail from Ngamiland was transported by runner via Serowe to Palapye. Around 1920, the Ngamiland route was reorganised. Mail was then collected at Rakops and sent via the Serowe-Palapye route, despite that no postal agency was opened at Rakops. Mail from Maun and Kasane went via Livingstone connecting to the Rhodesian railway. The Maun-Serowe route appears to have been used again during 1936-45, perhaps as early as 1930. The Maun-Francistown route dates from about 1945. Kasane has always been served via the Livingstone-Bulawayo rail route.

The Maun-Kasane route was not the only postal route crossing foreign territory. From about 1920, the Ghanzi mail went via Olifantskloof and Gobabis in South West Africa. Further, the Makgobisstadt mail went direct to Mafeking over Republic of South Africa territory. All these routes appear to have been maintained by the Bechuanaland administration.

Peter Thy

Two covers in Brian Fenimore's collection corroborate Peter's information. Both are from Maun to England and bear 2d in postage. The first, dated 9 June 1927, is backstamped Livingstone 24 June. The second, five years later, was posted 10(?) May 1932 and is backstamped with a Livingstone machine cancel dated 24 May.



**BOTSWANA 'ZEBRA' POSTAGE DUES - NEW INFORMATION***Andy Andersson*

An updated listing of the 'Zebra' postage due printings with printing figures and comments on scarcity.

**PRETORIA 1977 - 84 PERF. 12½**

Pretoria D20 1t black and vermilion. The rarity of the first issue and almost impossible to find in Botswana today, the initial order being somewhat smaller, by accident, than the other values. This postage due value was definitely used in 1978 and is so referred to in the Minutes of the Philatelic Advisory Committee as 27th April. I am still checking further Committee Minutes to verify that date.

Pretoria D20a 1t black and bright orange still occasionally available from collectors but not from any post office nor the Philatelic Bureau.  
D20b, D21a, D22a, D23a, D24a Perf. 14 not available anywhere (mint) - most collections have gaps.

**HARARE 1989 PERF. 14½**

Natprint D25 to D29 are very hard to find - even with advertising (1989)

Pretoria Now we come to another issue hitherto not known.

This issue was a repeat request to Pretoria in 1988 about February/March. Pretoria said they were temporarily overloaded with the 'Homelands' issues, SWA and RSA, but since it was a firm order they would print as soon as opportunity permitted. The order was for:

1t	-	50,000
2t	-	100,000
4t	-	200,000
10t	-	750,000
16t	-	400,000

Natprint But fearing that Pretoria would not be able to supply in time, the above quantities were quoted on an additional and urgent order to Harare - National Printing & Packaging Co. Who accepted the order and promised early delivery.

Pretoria What actually happened was that the Government Printer in Pretoria completed the order on 17th August 1988 and payment therefore was made on 7th September with release of the urgently needed postage dues on 15th September. THE PERFORATION WAS / IS 14½ x 14 !!

This had not been advised to the Philatelic Bureau, Post Offices, philatelists or the general public. Everyone (including me) thought that it was still the 1984 Perf 14 issue.

Natprint To complete this chaotic situation, Harare then delivered their order, which was paid for on 7th November 1988. This supply was kept aside and released on 1st April 1989 - Perf 14½ listed by Stanley Gibbons as SG D25-D29.

When stocks were again running low a new order was sent to Harare (Natprint) as follows:

1t	-	75,000
2t	-	150,000
4t	-	300,000
10t	-	750,000
16t	-	1,200,000

This order was received in Botswana and paid for on 26th July 1993 but to clear remaining oddments in stock the new postage dues were only released on 1st December 1994. The sheets are smaller in size than the Perf 14 !!

At this point I must state that all postage dues all over Botswana are in short supply even though this last issue was only released nine months ago. I think they will have to re-order postage dues or else use definitives as a temporary measure. All in all, a most interesting state of affairs.

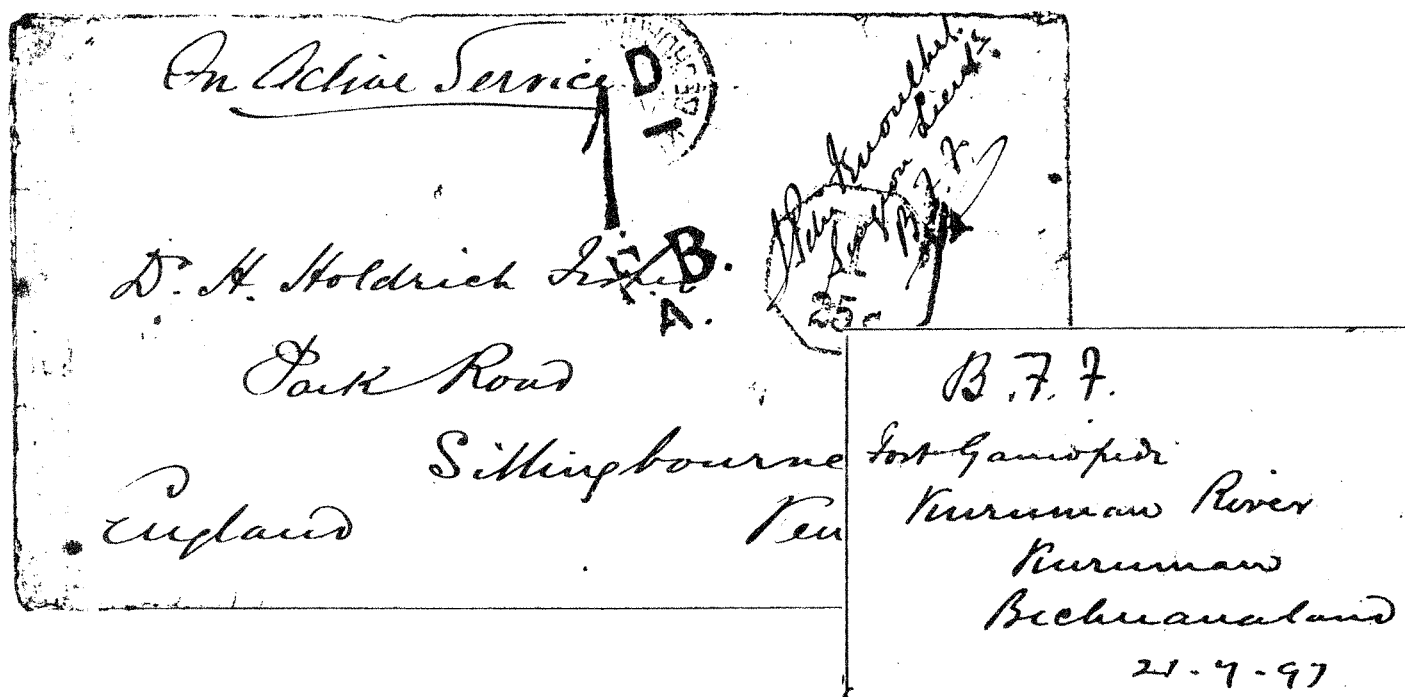
## THE BECHUANALAND CAMPAIGN OF 1896-97 (LANGEBOURG REBELLION)

*Jim Catterall*

Trouble began after an outbreak of rinderpest led to the slaughter of native cattle which in turn caused resentment and disputes over the question of compensation. The first disturbances began in November and December 1896 and were centred on the Taung area. After various confrontations a European trader and his assistant were murdered. Local police and volunteers were unable to cope with the situation and a large group of 600-700 rebels escaped to the Langeberg, a range of hills south-west of Kuruman.

More volunteers were recruited in Cape Town who eventually arrived at Kuruman on March 14th 1897. This force of about 1000 men was called The Bechuanaland Field Force, the commander being Lt. Col. Dalgety.

A rather inefficient campaign followed which dragged on in the Langeberg area until August when about 1000 prisoners were rounded up. One of the ringleaders, Chief Galishwe, was not captured until some weeks later and after being tried was sentenced to 12 years in prison. By the time the Field Force stood down it had expanded to about 2000 men of whom 28 were killed, died of wounds or from other causes.



Letters from the campaign were posted at Kuruman, although on the cover illustrated the datestamp was poorly struck, only the 'K' of Kuruman showing. At that time the postal rate from the Cape to the UK was 2½d per ½ oz for civilian letters, hence the octagonal 25c Tax mark applied in Cape Town on the stampless cover. The 1d F.B. (Foreign Branch) mark was struck in London and shows the amount which would actually be due on a letter from a soldier on active service.

The cover was signed in the top right hand corner by Surgeon Lieutenant J. Peter Fenoulhet, the writer of the enclosed letter. The letter heading shows that it was written at Fort Gamapedi on 21st July 1897. Gamapedi was the scene of a skirmish with the rebels in mid-March when the Vryburg volunteers lost two men killed.

Fenoulhet writes that to get from Cape Town to Kuruman took 3 days and nights on the train and 2 days and 2 nights in a posts-cart. After that it took him 2 days on horseback to get from Kuruman to Gamapedi, sleeping out at night. As is the habit of soldiers, Fenoulhet grumbles about most things including the hot days, cold nights, shortage of food, desert conditions etc. etc. However, he was satisfied with his pay of 2 guineas per day plus horse and clothing.

### Acknowledgements:

To Richard Stroud, who unearthed the cover from a non-philatelic source.

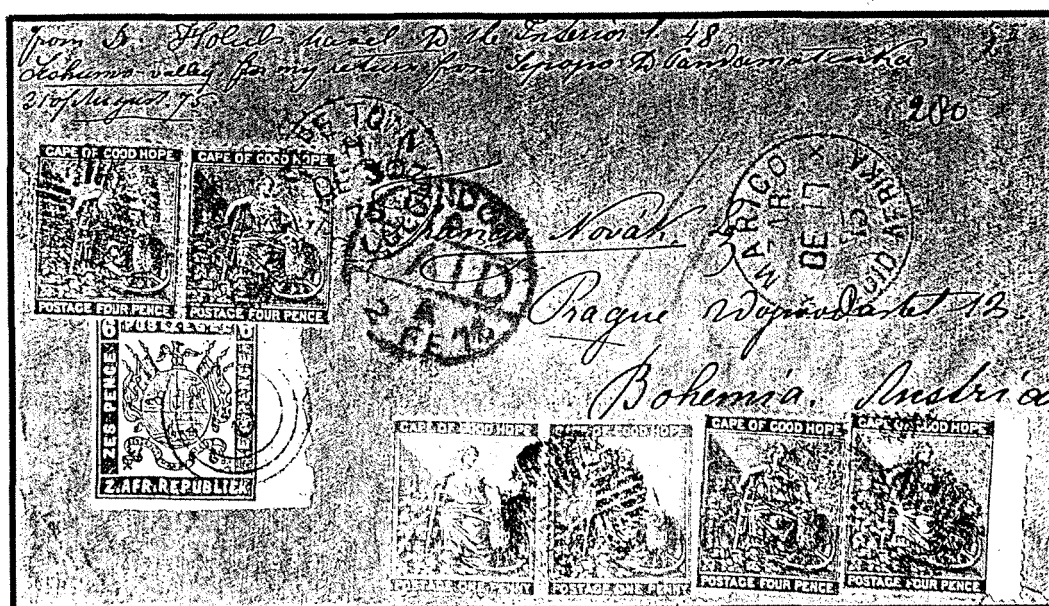
*The Cape Town Highlanders, Chapter 2 - The Bechuanaland Campaign. Published ?*

AN INTERESTING EARLY COVER FROM THE FAR INTERIOR<sup>1</sup>

Richard Knight

Known covers from the far interior prior to 1888 have hitherto been represented by the Oates Correspondence of 1873-75<sup>2</sup> and a handful of covers addressed to or by David Livingstone; the appearance<sup>3</sup> of a cover from another correspondent was therefore an occasion.

The cover, illustrated below, is addressed to *Prague, . . . , Bohemia, Austria*, and is endorsed by the sender *From Dr Holub's travel to the interior, No. 48, Leshumo Valley for (?) my return from Sepopo to Pandamatenka. 31 of August 75.*

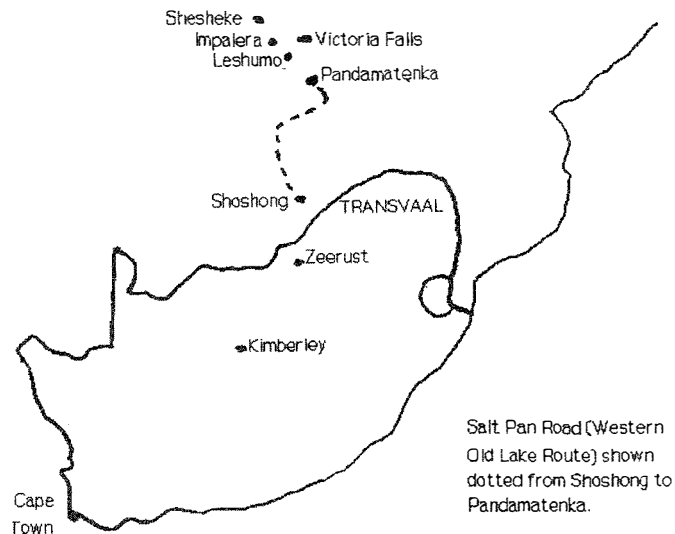
**The Sender**

The sender, Dr Emil Holub (1847-1902) was born in Holitz (Holic) in eastern Bohemia, the son of a surgeon; he himself studied medicine and natural science at Prague<sup>4</sup>. His boyhood reading of the life and travels of Dr David Livingstone made him determined to explore southern Africa. Within three months of graduating on 2nd February 1872 he sailed for South Africa, where he set up medicinal practice at Dutoitspan (Kimberley). Working hard and living frugally he collected sufficient funds to enable him to journey to the Transvaal early in 1873 and to Taung, Molepolole and Shoshong from November 1873 to April 1874; from the first expedition he returned with 30 skeletons, 1500 dried plants, 3000 insects, skins of birds and mammals, fossils and mineral samples, ethnographical specimens and notes on geological observations.

He practised again in Kimberley from April 1874 and on 2nd March 1875, accompanied by a young storekeeper's clerk named Theunissen, he set out on his third trip, with the aim of going to the Zambesi and Angola on Livingstone's route of 1852-1854; it is from this journey that the cover emanates.

Holub travelled first to Shoshong via the Marico district and then along the Salt Pan Road<sup>5</sup> to Pandamatenka which he reached on 31st July 1875. Here he was welcomed by George Blockley, who operated George Westbeeche's trading store<sup>6</sup> at that place. Blockley was on the point of setting off to Shesheke, the home of Sepopo<sup>7</sup>, King of the Barotse, so he travelled with Holub, leaving Theunissen at Pandamatenka. The Zambesi was reached at Impalera (at the junction of the Chobe and Zambesi rivers) about 10th August and the two men waited there until a message arrived from Sepopo telling them to come to Shesheke, which they reached on 18th August. Holub remained at Shesheke for ten days and obtained leave from Sepopo to travel through Barotse country. On 28th August a message arrived that Westbeeche (who had heard of Holub's plans from John MacKenzie at Shoshong) was at Pandamatenka.

Holub left Shesheke on 29th August and reached Impalera on 30th. Here he found Westbeeche with a considerable party; the party had left its wagons at Pandamatenka and was making a visit to Shesheke to pay their respects to Sepopo before returning to Pandamatenka to start on their visit to the Falls. They had with them a quantity of mail for Holub. Holub crossed the river and reached the Leshumo Valley<sup>8</sup> on 31st August and it was here that he wrote the letter illustrated, possibly in answer to one he had delivered to him by Westbeeche. Here too he met two English officers, Captains Macleod and Fairlie,<sup>9</sup> who allowed him the use of their wagon to take him to Pandamatenka while they visited Shesheke. Holub left Leshumo on 3rd September and reached Pandamatenka to find Theunissen had determined to return to the Cape Colony.



When Westbeeche returned to Pandamatenka, his wife (whom he had recently married) decided to return home with some members of the party instead of visiting the Falls; she reached her father's farm in the Marico district on 22nd November 1875. Westbeeche with the rest of the party and Holub as guest, visited the Falls; on their return to Pandamatenka Holub again travelled to Shesheke whence he set out by canoe up the Zambesi on 1st December 1875. However, the loss shortly afterwards of his powder, medicines and food in an overturned canoe and an attack of fever, caused him to turn back. Not expecting to need them, Holub had sold his wagons and oxen before setting off up the Zambesi; he was ill for a month at Shesheke and was now in dire straits. He was rescued by Westbeeche with whom he travelled back towards the Cape Colony, with many delays. Westbeeche left him at Shoshong to go on to Marico but lent him a wagon for his onward journey. Holub left Shoshong on 17th June 1876 and made a slow journey to Kimberley which he reached on 26th November 1876 - he was so short of food and funds that he practised as a doctor en route to earn his expenses.

Holub remained in Kimberley as a doctor until 1879 when he returned to Europe with a huge collection of bird skins and specimens. These he presented to various museums and made a name for himself lecturing on his travels. He married in 1883 and with his wife made a further, disastrous, trip to the Falls and up the Zambesi reaching a point about 160 miles north of Kazungula. The couple returned to Europe in 1887 and Holub died in 1902. "Holub was not an explorer, for he left the beaten track only once . . . However, he enriched the museums of Europe with many thousands of specimens in many branches of science and the literature of travel with interesting books and articles."<sup>10</sup>

### Postal History

The cover is franked with a 6d Transvaal stamp<sup>11</sup> cancelled by a target-type mark coded '8' and 1s 6d in Cape stamps (4 x 4d, 2 x 1d) cancelled by the Lined Circular Bar dumb defacer<sup>12</sup>. In addition, the cover bears the Transvaal single circle canceller<sup>13</sup> of Marico of December 17 1875, a Kimberley backstamp, the Double Arc datestamp<sup>14</sup>, a Cape Town circular datestamp of December 30 1875, a 'London Paid' mark (in red) of 2 February 1876 and, on the reverse, an indistinguishable mark which appears to be an arrival cancellation. There is also a red crayon endorsement '1/0½', being an accountancy mark applied in Cape Town indicating the amount due to the British Post Office. The Transvaal stamp (6d) was required to pay the Transvaal internal postage; the circular date stamp used at Zeerust is unusual in that it bears the name of the district (Marico) and not that of the Post Office (Zeerust) - the only South African Republic datestamp with this peculiarity<sup>15</sup>. The Cape internal/transit rate was 4d and the Cape rate to Austria (Bohemia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) was 1s 2d per half-ounce<sup>16</sup>, accounting for the 1s 6d in Cape stamps these would have been purchased and affixed at Zeerust, Transvaal post offices carrying supplies of Cape stamps for this purpose. The rule was that the Cape stamps were cancelled at the office of exchange, in this case Kimberley which used the Lined Circular Bar dumb defacer.



As mentioned above, Mrs Westbeech reached her father's farm in the Marico district on 22nd November 1875 and, as the cover was posted at Marico (Zeerust) on 17th December, it seems highly likely that Holub had given her this, and probably other letters, to post for him. It has been suggested that Holub, and other early travellers, carried supplies of stamps with them for letters. This may be so, but one is inclined to think it more likely, particularly in this case, that Holub handed letters and funds to Mrs Westbeech to pay for the postage. The entry of the letter into an organised postal system at Zeerust provides further evidence of the importance of that Post Office in the period before any formal system was created in the Rhodesias and Bechuanaland Protectorate.

The cover travelled to Cape Town by coach and left Cape Town for Europe on the *Asiatic* of the Union Line which sailed from Table Bay on 6th January 1876, offloading the mails at Plymouth on 2nd February 1876.<sup>17</sup> As with other covers from this period, this one illustrates the long time span necessary for letters to reach Europe from the early travellers.

## NOTES

1. "The phrase *far interior* was in use for many years in England and South Africa as a name for the regions beyond the most advanced white settlements." (E.C. Tabler *The Far Interior* published by A.A. Balkema, Cape Town 1956, p 6). As Tabler remarks, the phrase has an alluring connotation of adventure in wild places difficult of access.
2. See *The Oates Correspondence: A Postal History of Frank Oates Travels in Matabeleland and Zambesia 1873-1875* (E.K. Wright & A.R. Drysdall, the authors, 1988)
3. At auction in Johannesburg - Stephan Welz & Co, November 1994
4. Holub himself wrote a detailed account of his journeys in southern Africa - *Seven Years in South Africa* (translated E.E. Frewer) (Sampson Low Marston Searle and Rivington, London 1881). There are also accounts of his travels and life in E.C. Tabler *Pioneers of Rhodesia* (C. Struik (Pty) Ltd, Cape Town 1966, pp 73-76), *Dictionary of South African Biography* (Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk, Cape Town, nd, pp 390-392) and *The Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* (Vol V, p 571)
5. Also referred to as the Western Old Lake Route (E.C. Tabler *The Far Interior*, p 408)
6. George Westbeech, hunter, trader roadmaker and concessionaire, was in the far interior almost continuously from 1870 until his death in 1888. "He was the firm friend of Sipopa, Lewanika and Lobengula, he became a member of the Barotse council of state and was the induna of Pandamatenka. . . . His trading operations covered a wide area in North Western Rhodesia. Westbeech was for many years the best known European in Zambesia, where he was most helpful to all visitors and was liked and admired by all who knew him." (E.C. Tabler *Pioneers of Rhodesia*, pp 166-170)
7. Various spelled as Sipopa, Sepopo.
8. Leshumo (also Lesumo) was on the road from Pandamatenka to the Zambesi and was a well-known stopping point on the route. It is to-day on the Botswana side of the Botswana/Zimbabwe border.
9. Capt. N.M. Macleod (who later succeeded as Chief of the Clan Macleod) and Capt. W.F. Fairlie had been officers together in the 74th Highlanders. They travelled extensively in South Africa from 1873-1880 (E.C. Tabler *Pioneers of Rhodesia*, pp 50, 102)
10. E.C. Tabler *Pioneers of Rhodesia*, p 75
11. A stamp Commission (Celliers) printing on semi-pelure paper, probably position 8 in a right-hand pane. (I am indebted to Dr Alan Drysdall, FRPS,L, for this information)
12. Goldblatt, Type G.1
13. Mathews, Type 1a
14. Goldblatt, Type G.4
15. I am indebted to Dr Alan Drysdall, FRPS,L, for help on this point and for reading and commenting on a draft of this Note.
16. *Cape Almanac*, 1875, p 177
17. I am indebted to Mr Peter Wingent, through Dr Drysdall, for information regarding the arrival of the *Asiatic* in England as my local sources only gave the date of departure.

## POSTAL OFFICES IN THE BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE 1906-1955

*Peter Thy*

The Annual Reports from the Postmaster-General of the Cape of Good Hope to the Resident Commissioner in Mafeking detail postal offices in the Protectorate. These yearly reports are available between 1900 and 1955 in the Botswana National Archives, Gaborone. The Post Office and Agencies are found in the detailed listings of issued and cashed postal orders. Postal orders were introduced in the Protectorate early 1907, and the first list appears in the 1908 annual report for the 1907/08 fiscal year. The fiscal years ended 31 March, and reference to a year (e.g. 1908) in the following lists is to the fiscal year beginning 1 April 1907 and ending 31 March 1908.

From the preparations for the introduction of postal orders, it appears that in 1906 only six offices and one agency (Serowe) existed:

OFFICE	POSTMASTER
Francistown	H. Langton
Gaberones	T. Wilson
Lobatsi	W. Storey
Mochudi	F. C. Roodt
Molepolole	Rev. R. H. Lewis
Palapye Road	M. Hussey
Serowe	Miss. J. Garrett

It was recommended that Serowe should be upgraded to a Post Office. This would suggest that postal orders were planned only to be supplied to regular post offices. Nevertheless, the listings suggest that all agencies, shortly after introduction, were supplied with postal orders, and it is not clear whether Serowe was actually upgraded in 1907. The reason for this is that postal orders soon became a major part of the revenues of the postal services. Besides the postal order information, the establishment of savings banks and money order services are also given in the reports.

All post offices and agencies in the Protectorate are listed in the annual reports, with a few exceptions. Mafeking is not listed, and clearly were not supplied postal orders, but became a savings bank in 1952. Telegraph offices are another exception (Macloutsie). The annual growth between 1900 and 1955 is graphically illustrated in Fig. 1. There are some uncertainties in the listings. There are a few, occasional omissions of some smaller agencies. Also, the designations 'Station', 'Village', 'Siding' and 'Road' are not always clear and consistent. The following is my best interpretation of the listed information (given in parentheses).

The reports after 1955 do not exist in the National Archives, probably because of the preparations for the take-over of the postal services by the Protectorate and the movement of the postal administration to Lobatsi in 1957/58. The continuations may exist in the Botswana Postal Services archives which, unfortunately, are not open to the public. Still, some information exists on the growth of postal offices after 1955 as illustrated in Fig. 2. The Bechuanaland/Botswana Telephone Directory gives yearly(?) listings of postal offices. I have seen these for the years 1960, 1963, 1965-72, and 1974-80. Unfortunately, in 1980 the postal and telegraph services were separated, and again our information dies out. Subsequent to 1980, I have only seen three unpublished listings dated 1986, 1988, and 1991, which Andy Andersson has kindly let me photocopy. If anybody has additional information particular for the years 1956-1959, 1973, and 1981-93, let me see a copy, and I will be happy to complete the listing to the present day (correspondence to 581 9th St. 29, Davis CA 95616, U.S.A.).

### Legend

- x Postal order
- A Money order
- B Money order and savings bank
- C Savings bank Only
- Not supplied postal orders
- ? Not listed, but probably an error

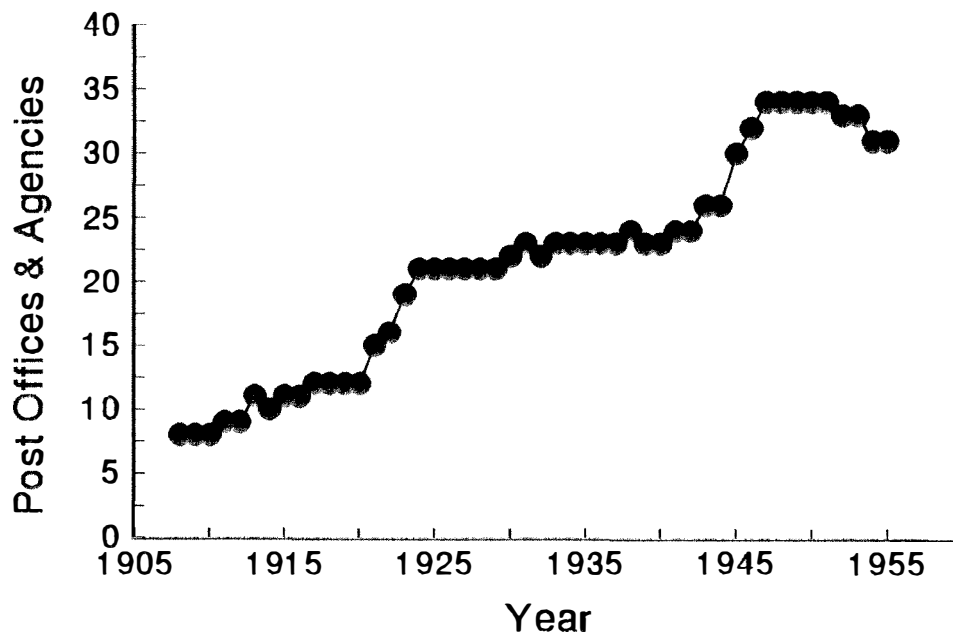


Figure 1 The numbers of postal offices in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1907-1955.

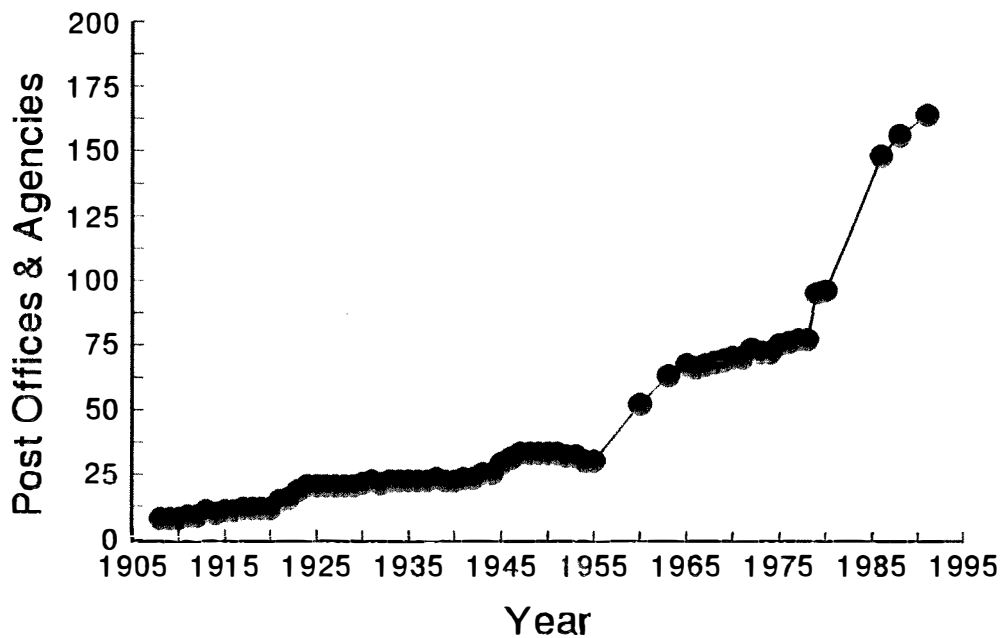


Figure 2 The number of postal offices in Bechuanaland Protectorate and Botswana between 1907-1991.

**1. POSTAL OFFICES IN THE PROTECTORATE 1906-1911**

	19/	06	08	09	10	11
Francistown	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gaborones Station		x	x	x	x	x
Gaborones (Village)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lobatsi	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mahalapye						x
Mochudi (Station)	x	x	x	x	x	x
Molopolole	x	x	x	x	x	x
Palapye Road	x	x	x	x	x	x
Serowe	x	x	x	x	x	x

**2. POSTAL OFFICES IN THE PROTECTORATE 1912-1928**

	19/	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Francistown	x	x	x	x	x	x	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Gaberones Station	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gaberones (Village)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ghanzi													x	x	x	x	x	x
Kanye						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Kasane												x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lobatsi	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Macloutsie*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-										
Mafeking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mahalapye	?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Makgobisstadt													x	x	x	x	x	x
Maun													x	x	x	x	x	x
Mochudi (Station)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mochudi Village											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Molepolole	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Palapye	x																	
Palapye Road	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Palla (Road)							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pitsani (Siding)											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ramaquebane			x											x	x	x	x	x
Ramoutsa					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Serowe	x	x	x	x	x	x	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Shashi														x	x	x	x	x
Tsessebe			x	x	x							x	x	x	x	x	x	x

\* Telegraph Office closed 1917/18

## 3. POSTAL OFFICES IN THE PROTECTORATE 1929-1946

	19/	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46
Bobonong																x	x	x	x
Debeeti		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Francistown	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Gabane																		x	x
Gaborones Station	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
Gaborones Village	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Ghanzi	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Goshare																		x	x
Kanye	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Kasane	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lobatsi	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Macloutsie																			
Mafeking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Madinare			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mahalapye	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Makgobisstadt	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Maun	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Maunatlala											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mochudi Station																			
Mochudi (Village)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Molopolole	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Moshupa																			x
Palapye																			
Palapye (Road)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B
Palla (Road)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pilane (Station)			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pitsani (Siding)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ramaquebane	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							
Ramoutsa (Station)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ratholo																		x	x
Sefhare													x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Serowe	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Seruli																			x
Shashi	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							x	x
Tsabong														x	x	x	x	x	x
Tsessebe	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tsienyane																x	x	x	x

## 4. POSTAL OFFICES IN THE PROTECTORATE 1947-1955

	19/	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55
Bobonong		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Debeeti										
Debeeti Station		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Francistown		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Gabane		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gaberones Station		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Gaberones Village		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B
Ghanzi		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Goshwe		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Hildavale						x				x
Kanye		x	x	x	x	x	A	A	B	B
Kasane		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lobatsi		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Madinare		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Macloutsie										
Mafeking		-	-	-	-	-	C	C	C	C
Mahalapye		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Makgobisstadt		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Maun		x	x	x	x	A	A	A	B	B
Maunatlala		x	x	x	x					
Mochudi Station										
Mochudi (Village)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	B	B
Molopolole		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Moshupa		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Palapye										
Palapye (Road)		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Palla (Road)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pilane		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pilane Station										
Pitsani (Siding)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ramaquebane										
Ramoutsa		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rasebolai		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ratholo		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sefhare		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Serowe		B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Seruli		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Shashi		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sherwood (Ranch)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tsabong		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tsessebe		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tsienyane		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

## THE SITWELL CORRESPONDENCE

*Alan Drysdall and Jim Catterall*

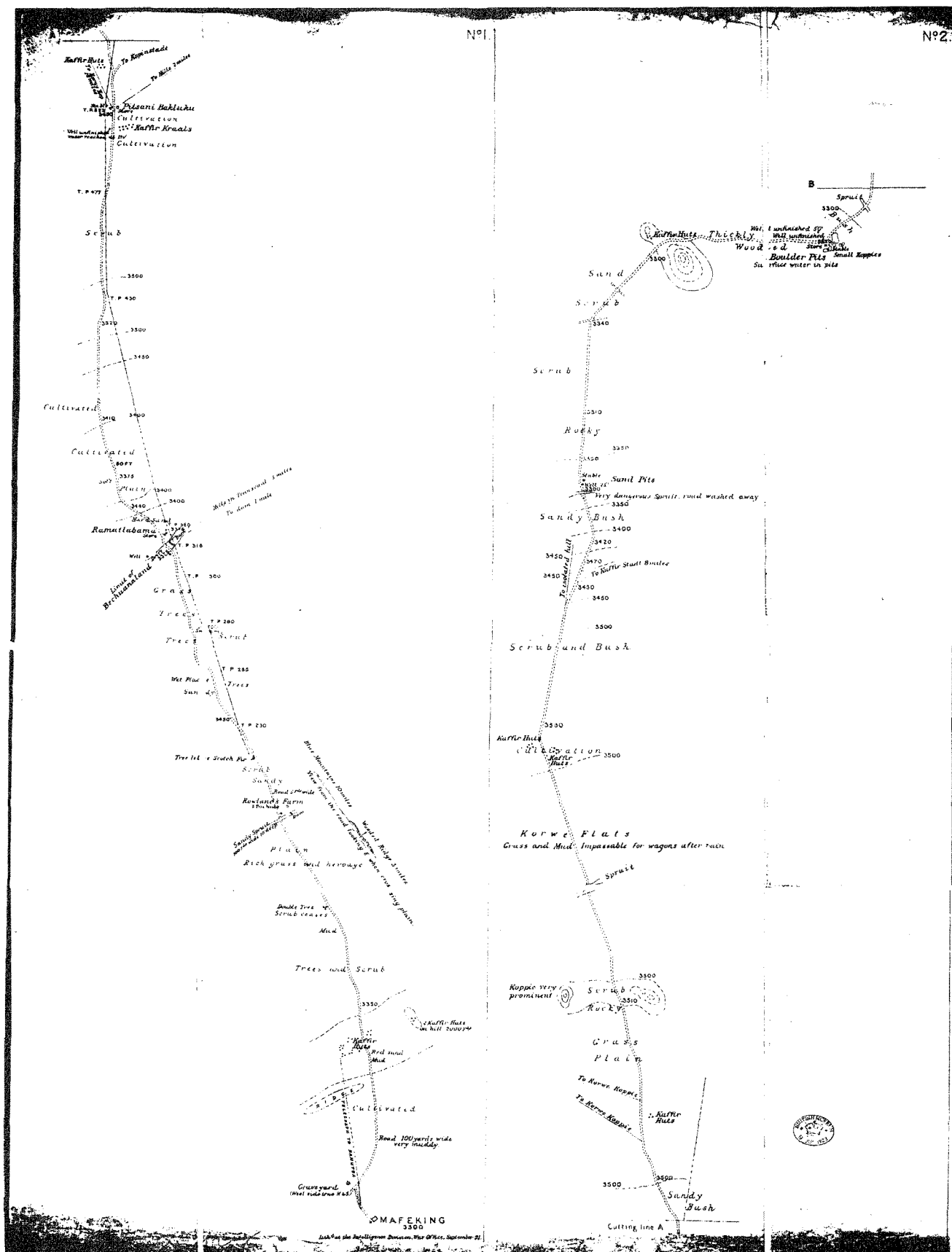
### Capt. W.H. Sitwell

William Henry Sitwell, the eldest son of Major Francis Henry Massey Sitwell (Bengal Army) of Barmoor Castle, Lowich, Northumberland, was born at Benares on the 20th November, 1860<sup>1</sup>. The Northumberland Sitwells were related to the Derbyshire Sitwells, and thus to Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell of literary fame. Barmoor Castle was built for them in 1801 by John Paterson, a pupil and partner of the Adams brothers, in the 'Castle Style' favoured by the Adams. (The estate is now a holiday camp.) William was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers on the 14th January, 1880, and served in Afghanistan that year. He was promoted Lieutenant on the 1st July, 1881, and Captain on the 10th April, 1889. He served with the Bechuanaland Border Police (BBP), then commanded by Col. F. Carrington – later Sir Frederick Carrington, KCMG, KCB – from the 20th March, 1891, until the 9th May, 1893. He spent most of his service at their headquarters at Macloutsie, and wrote frequent letters to his mother. These were posted once a week, but many of the envelopes contained more than one letter, and occasionally he sent two envelopes with the same post. He later served in the Ashanti Expedition (1895–96), Guernsey, the Sudan (1897–99) – where he was twice mentioned in despatches and wounded in a skirmish on Shebalia Island – and the Boer War (1900–02), during which he was again mentioned in despatches and awarded the DSO, the Queen's Medal with three clasps and the King's Medal with two clasps. He married in 1902, was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel in 1904 and was awarded the C.B. in 1908. He then saw service in India, and married for the second time in 1912, his first wife having died in 1908. It was his second wife who was the mother of his children, a daughter and two sons. He was in India when war broke out in 1914, but the following year commanded the 34th Infantry Brigade at the landing in Suvla Bay. He retired from the army with the rank of Brigadier-General, and died at Barmoor Castle on the 7th September, 1932.

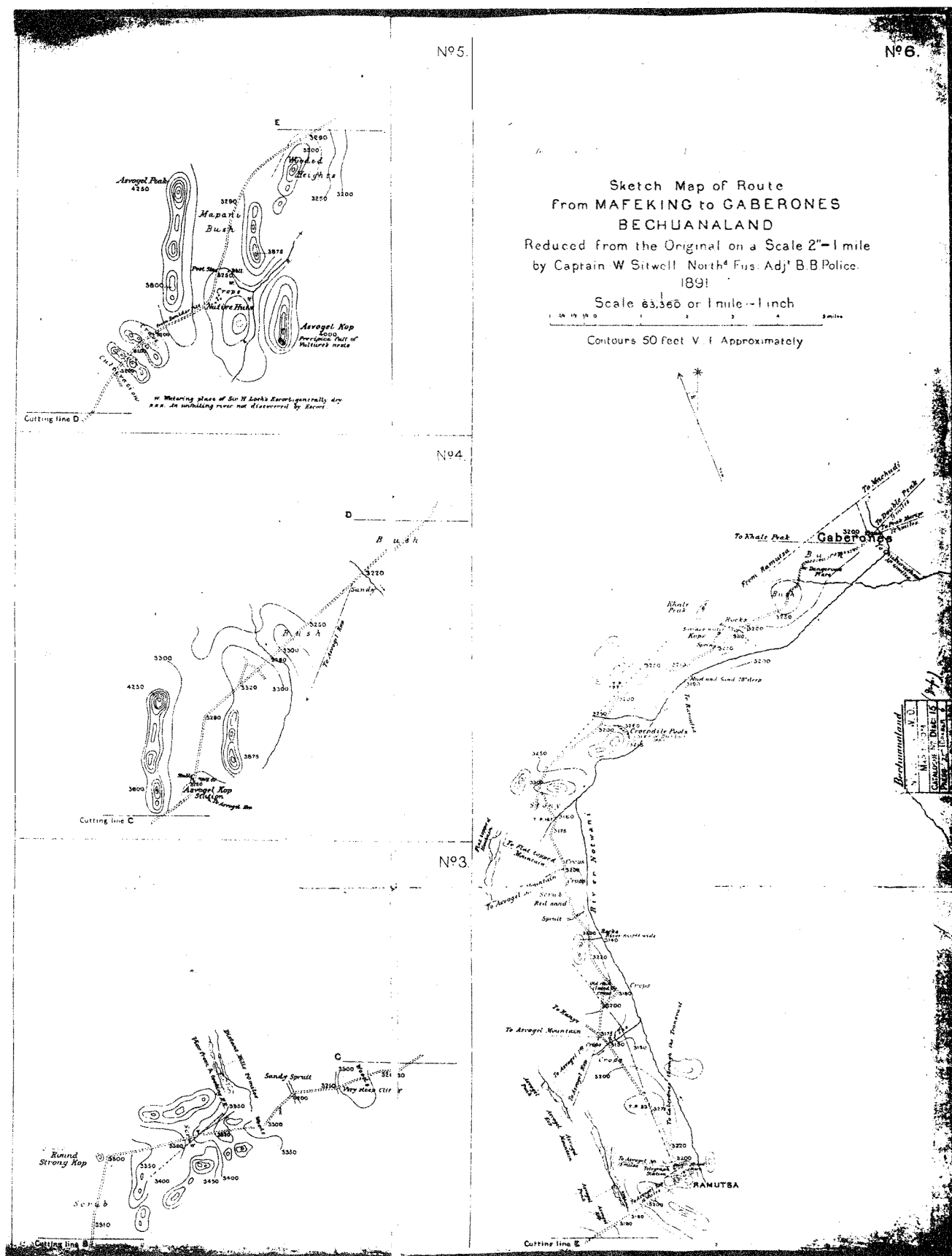


**Figure 1** The officers of the Bechuanaland Border Police, Macloutsie, 1892

Back row (left to right): Lt. the Hon. D. Marsham, Lt. Walford, Dr. Vigne, Lt. Wright, Capt. Molyneux, Capt. Greener.  
Front row (left to right): Capt. Brown, Major Grey, Col. Sir F. Carrington, Capt. Sitwell, Capt. the Hon. C. Coventry,  
(courtesy of the National Archives of Zimbabwe)







At the time Sitwell was at Macloutsie, the Officer-in-charge at Fort Tuli was Capt., later Major, A.G. Leonard of the BSA Co. Police. In an entry dated May 1891 in his account of his experiences in Mashonaland<sup>2</sup> Leonard was rather disparaging about an officer who was better qualified than he was.

"Now Sitwell is a most excellent fellow socially, but as adjutant of the BBP he is a bit of a nuisance, and an awful alarmist. A Staff College man, most proficient in theory, he is sadly deficient in experience, and being quite new to this style of work, he seems to seize on every shave with avidity. But worse than this, in a trice he converts it into a scare, which he passes on to me, and already, though the wires are only a few days old, he has supplied me with two!"

### The Bechuanaland Border Police

In 1891 Lord Randolph Churchill, at the invitation of Sir Henry Loch and Cecil Rhodes, Governor and Prime Minister of Cape Colony respectively, undertook an expedition through the Cape and Transvaal as far north as Salisbury<sup>3</sup>. Travelling north from Pretoria *via* Pietersburg, he crossed the Limpopo at Rhodes Drift.

"On the other side of the Limpopo, 500 yards from the river, lay the camp and fort of the Bechuanaland Border Police. . . These Bechuanaland Border Police are as fine an irregular cavalry force as could be seen. Composed of men of good education, and in many cases of good family, their training fits them for all kinds of service. . . They are clothed in a tunic and breeches of dark yellow corduroy, very smart and well fitting, and wear a most picturesque sombrero kind of hat of the same coloured felt, adorned with a red or blue ribbon, according to the particular troop. Black boots, three-quarters up the knee and partly laced over the ankle, complete the attire. They are armed with a Martini-Henry rifle, which is carried with its stock resting in a small leather bucket hanging from the saddle on the right side. Across the shoulder hangs a bandoleer, holding fifty rounds of ammunition. A strong, long sword-bayonet is carried on the left side. Haversack, water-bottle, cloak in front, patrol tin in leather case on the saddle, and a thick, warm rug behind, are also added; the whole weighing, with the rider, on an average about sixteen stone. The force numbers about 600 men divided into five troops. It has been entirely raised and organised by Sir Frederick Carrington, its present commander. . . The BBP are now guarding about 150 miles of the Limpopo in anticipation of the Boer trek. [The threatened Boer invasion of Mashonaland.]

On his return from Mashonaland, Churchill travelled *via* Macloutsie and Kimberley.

"At Macloutsie we experienced the most hospitable welcome and entertainment from the officers of the Bechuanaland Border Police who have their headquarters here. The situation has been skilfully selected both as regards strategic or sanitary conditions. The camp occupies a small elevated plateau, and overlooks and commands the surrounding bush. No traveller can fail to be struck by the exceeding cleanliness and order, as well as by the excellent construction of the quarters of the officers and men. It would be difficult to speak too highly of this force. . . Two of the officers had just returned when I arrived, from a ten days' prowl all by themselves right into Lobengula's country, entered upon partly for survey purposes, partly for the obtaining of information; a service by no means devoid of peril performed in the most light-hearted but effectual manner. [This was the reconnaissance expedition undertaken by Sitwell, which is described below.] . . . Captain Sitwell displayed the efficiency of his force in a field day performance specially ordered for our benefit and instruction. . . I doubted not, after witnessing this performance, that should Lobengula take it into his head to make a raid into the Protectorate, he will encounter from the Bechuanaland Border Police an uncomfortably warm reception.

Lord Randolph was not one to mince words, and Major Leonard for one would have been taken aback by this assessment:

"I am constrained to remark that the contrast between the police force of the Chartered Company and the Bechuanaland Border Police is startling and deplorable, the latter being as smart, as efficient, and as thoroughly to be depended upon as the former is the reverse."

### The route to Bechuanaland Protectorate and Mashonaland

Prior to 1890 the only official mail route serving Bechuanaland Protectorate was the Mafeking-Gubulawayo runner post, introduced in 1888. In 1889 this was partly replaced by the mule-drawn passenger carts of the Bechuanaland Exploration Co., which operated as far north as Shoshong. Following Khama's move from Shoshong to Palachwe later the same year, this service was extended to Palachwe. The office at Shoshong was closed, and a new office opened at Palachwe, but the Shoshong datestamp continued in use until August 1890. The Pioneer Column, which was to colonise Mashonaland, began to assemble at Macloutsie, the most northerly staging post of any significance in the Protectorate and the new base of the Bechuanaland Border Police, in May 1890. Mail was at first conveyed to Palachwe by despatch riders, but Scotch carts were introduced by the BSA Co. in July 1890.

The 1890–92 issues of the Cape of Good Hope *Government Gazette* include a number of Postal Notices relating to the timetable for the Bechuanaland route. These show the changes consequent upon the extension of the railway from Kimberley to Fourteen Streams and the preparations for the occupation of Mashonaland, including the establishment of Macloutsie as the new base for the Bechuanaland Border Police. The earliest of these notices is dated the 23rd January, 1890<sup>4</sup>. (The Khama's Town referred to was then Shoshong.)

“BECHUANALAND MAIL.

The Mails to and from Bechuanaland will in future be conveyed in accordance with the following Time Table:—

ROUTE 107, KIMBERLEY TO VRYBURG,  
MAFEKING AND KHAMA'S TOWN.

Leave Cape Town	Thursday	8.50	p.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Saturday	5.0	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	7	a.m.
Leave Barkly West	Sunday	0.30	p.m.
Leave Wittefontein	Sunday	5.45	p.m.
Arrive at Taungs	Monday	4.30	a.m.
Leave Taungs	Monday	6.0	a.m.
Leave Dry Harts	Monday	10.0	a.m.
Arrive at Vryburg	Monday	3.0	p.m.
Leave Vryburg	Monday	6.0	p.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Tuesday	5.30	a.m.
Leave Setlagoli	Tuesday	7.30	a.m.
Arrive at Mafeking	Tuesday	7.0	p.m.
Leave Mafeking	Wednesday	11.0	a.m.
Arrive at Kanya	Wednesday	11.30	p.m.
Leave Kanya	Thursday	5.0	a.m.
Arrive at Molepolole	Thursday	2.0	p.m.
Leave Molepolole	Thursday	3.0	p.m.
Leave Notwani Junction	Friday	7.0	p.m.
Leave Mahape	Saturday	6.0	p.m.
Arrive at Khama's Town	Sunday	6.0	a.m.

RETURN JOURNEY

Leave Khama's Town	Saturday	7.30	a.m.
Leave Mahape	Saturday	1.0	p.m.
Leave Notwani Junction	Sunday	5.30	p.m.
Arrive at Molepolole	Monday	6.0	p.m.
Leave Molepolole	Monday	11.0	p.m.
Leave Kanya	Tuesday	8.30	a.m.
Arrive at Mafeking	Tuesday	9.0	p.m.
Leave Mafeking	Thursday	7.0	a.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Thursday	4.30	a.m.
Leave Setlagoli	Thursday	5.30	a.m.
Arrive at Vryburg	Friday	5.0	a.m.
Leave Vryburg	Friday	8.0	a.m.
Leave Dry Harts	Friday	2.0	p.m.
Arrive at Taungs	Friday	5.0	p.m.
Leave Taungs	Friday	7.0	p.m.
Leave Wittefontein	Saturday	5.30	a.m.
Leave Barkly West	Saturday	1.30	p.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Saturday	7.0	p.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	1.30	p.m.
Arrive at Cape Town	Tuesday	7.40	a.m.

G. W. AITCHISON,  
Postmaster-General

General Post Office,  
Cape Town, 23rd January, 1890.”

The first change relates to the opening of the Kimberley–Fourteen Streams section of the railway on the 1st December, 1890<sup>5</sup>. No information was given with regard to the timetable for the route north of Mafeking, which presumably remained unchanged.

“BRITISH BECHUANALAND MAILS

From and after Thursday, the 31st July, the mails to and from Bechuanaland and the Cape Colony, will be despatched to and from Fourteen Streams instead of to and from Kimberley, and conveyed as follows:—

Leave Cape Town	Thursday	8.50	p.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Saturday	5	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	7.40	a.m.
Leave Fourteen Streams	Sunday	1.00	p.m.
Arrive at Taungs via Greefdale	Sunday	10.30	p.m.
Arrive at Vryburg	Monday	9.0	p.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Monday	11.30	p.m.
Arrive at Mafeking	Tuesday	1.0	p.m.

RETURN JOURNEY

Leave Mafeking	Thursday	1	p.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Thursday	11.30	p.m.

Arrive at Vryburg	Friday	11.0	a.m.
Arrive at Taungs	Friday	11.0	p.m.
Arrive at Fourteen Streams			
via Greefdale	Saturday	10.30	a.m.
Leave Fourteen Streams	Saturday	1.30	p.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Saturday	5.35	p.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	1.30	p.m.
Arrive at Cape Town	Tuesday	7.40	a.m.

The respective Postmasters will from and after the above date enclose their Mails for British Bechuanaland under cover to Head Office, Fourteen Streams, instead of as now under cover to Kimberley.

G. W. AITCHISON,  
Postmaster-General

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
14th January, 1890.”

The Pioneer Column set out from Macloutsie for Mashonaland on the 25th June. They reached Fort Tuli, 40 miles to the east, on the 1st July, and 10 days later the main column crossed the Shashi River and began the trek to Mount Hampden. Fort Victoria was established where the route reached the high veldt, and Fort Salisbury in the vicinity of Mount Hampden.

Mail to and from Mashonaland was in the first instance carried by British South Africa (BSA) Co. police despatch riders between Mashonaland and Macloutsie and by Scotch cart, again organised by the Company, to

Palachwe, 70 miles west-southwest of Macloutsie. It was intended that there should be a weekly service in both directions linking Mashonaland *via* the Protectorate with southern Africa. On the 17th July the Administrator (of Mashonaland) informed the BSA Co.'s Kimberley office that he was arranging for the mail to be carried by Scotch cart between Fort Tuli and Macloutsie. The south-bound cart left Tuli on Sunday mornings and arrived at Macloutsie Monday night; it left for Palachwe the following morning. On the 10th March, 1891, the Bechuanaland Exploration Co., operators of the mule-drawn carts on the Mafeking–Palachwe service took over the Palachwe–Macloutsie leg. The contract for this service was placed by the Bechuanaland Government and not the BSA Co., and this therefore became an official mail route<sup>6</sup>.

The public was informed of the timetable for the route through British Bechuanaland and the Protectorate to Palachwe and Macloutsie in a Postal Notice dated the 13th April, 1891<sup>7</sup>. (The opening of neither office was gazetted in the Cape.) There was also a change in the train timetable, with two mail trains a week to and from Mafeking, but only a weekly mail cart service north from there. (The route from Mafeking to Gaberones was later mapped by Sitwell – see Figure 2.)

#### “BECHUANALAND MAILS

It is hereby notified for general information that the undermentioned mails are now being conveyed as follows:—

Leave Cape Town	Friday	9	p.m.	Sunday	8.20	p.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Sunday	9	a.m.	Tuesday	9	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	9.45	a.m.	Tuesday	9.45	a.m.
Arrive at Vryburg	Sunday	6.55	p.m.	Tuesday	6.55	p.m.
Leave Vryburg	Monday	9	a.m.	Wednesday	7	a.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Monday	7	p.m.	Wednesday	5	p.m.
Leave Setlagoli	Monday	7.30	p.m.	Wednesday	5.30	p.m.
Arrive at Mafeking	Tuesday	9	a.m.	Thursday	7	a.m.
Leave Mafeking		stop.		Thursday	3	p.m.
Arrive at Boulder Pits				Friday	7	a.m.
Arrive at Ramoutsa				Friday	3	p.m.
Arrive at Gaberones				Friday	11	a.m.
Leave Mochudi				Saturday	9	a.m.
Leave Palla				Sunday	9	p.m.
Arrive at Palachwe				Tuesday	2	p.m.
Leave Palache				Tuesday	3	p.m.
Arrive at Macloutsie				Wednesday	9	p.m.

#### RETURN JOURNEY

Leave Macloutsie	Thursday	noon.				
Arrive at Palachwe	Friday	6	p.m.			
Leave Palache	Friday	7	p.m.			
Leave Palla	Sunday	8	a.m.			
Leave Mochudi	Monday	8	p.m.			
Leave Gaberones	Tuesday	6	a.m.			
Leave Ramoutsa	Tuesday	2	p.m.			
Leave Boulder Pits	Tuesday	10	p.m.			
Arrive at Mafeking	Wednesday	6	p.m.			
Leave Mafeking	Thursday	3	p.m.	Sunday	10	a.m.
Arrive at Setlagoli	Thursday	11.30	p.m.	Sunday	6.30	p.m.
Leave Setlagoli	Thursday	midnight.		Sunday	7.0	p.m.
Arrive at Vryburg	Friday	3	p.m.	Monday	10.0	a.m.
Leave Vryburg	Friday	9.30	p.m.	Monday	9.30	a.m.
Arrive at Kimberley	Saturday	6.25	a.m.	Tuesday	6.25	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Saturday	8.0	a.m.	Tuesday	7.0	a.m.
Arrive at Cape Town	Sunday	8.20	p.m.	Wednesday	1.5	p.m.

G.W. AITCHISON,  
Postmaster-General

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
13th April, 1891.”

A Cape Postal Notice dated the 20th August, 1891<sup>8</sup>, detailed changes to a number of routes, including the route to Mashonaland *via* the Protectorate, and included the timetable for an alternative route *via* Pretoria and Pietersburg in the Transvaal. The Pretoria–Tuli service, operated by the Zeederburg brothers, was not, however, used for mail, except possibly for mail between Mashonaland and the Transvaal. (The Zeederberg service is referred to as a ‘private conveyance in this notice because the contract was with the BSA Co. rather than the Transvaal GPO.)

## "MAILS FOR MASHONALAND

It is hereby notified for general information that Mails for the British South Africa Company's Territory are being conveyed as follows:-

The time occupied between Tuli and Fort Salisbury is 20 days  
A service of Native runners is being organised, when the journey will be accomplished in 9 days.

## ROUTE 1.- VIA VRYBURG (WEEKLY).

Leave Cape Town	Friday	9.0	p.m.
Arrive Kimberley	Sunday	8.0	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Sunday	9.45	a.m.
Arrive Vryburg	Sunday	6.55	p.m.
Leave Vryburg	Monday	9.0	a.m.
Arrive Macloutsie	Monday (following)	10.0	p.m.
Leave Macloutsie	Monday	10.5	p.m.
Arrive Tuli	Tuesday	10.5	p.m.

## RETURN JOURNEY.

Leave Tuli	Sunday	9.0	a.m.
Arrive Macloutsie	Monday	9.0	a.m.
Leave Macloutsie	Tuesday	noon.	
Arrive Vryburg (9 days after)	Thursday	7.0	a.m.
Leave Vryburg	Thursday	9.30	a.m.
Arrive Kimberley	Friday	6.25	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Friday	8.0	a.m.
Arrive Cape Town	Saturday	7.0	p.m.

## ROUTE 2.- VIA PRETORIA (WEEKLY).

Leave Cape Town	Thursday	9.0	p.m.
Arrive Kimberley	Saturday	8.0	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Saturday	9.45	a.m.
Arrive Pretoria	Monday	3.0	p.m.
Leave Pretoria	Tuesday	9.0	a.m.
Arrive Pietersburg	Thursday	9.0	a.m.
*Leave Pietersburg	Thursday	noon.	
*Arrive Hendrikzdal	Sunday	noon.	
*Leave Hendrikzdal	Monday	morning.	
*Arrive Tuli	Monday	3.0	p.m.

[\* By private conveyance]

## RETURN JOURNEY.

Leave Tuli	Tuesday	morning.	
Arrive Hendrikzdal	Tuesday	3.0	p.m.
Leave Hendrikzdal	Friday	noon.	
Arrive Pietersburg	Monday	morning.	
Leave Pietersburg	Monday	10.0	a.m.
Arrive Pretoria	Wednesday	noon.	
Leave Pretoria	Wednesday	1.0	p.m.
Arrive Kimberley	Saturday	6.25	a.m.
Leave Kimberley	Saturday	8.0	a.m.
Arrive Cape Town	Sunday	7.0	p.m.

G.W. AITCHISON,  
Postmaster-General.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
20th August, 1891."

The Bechuanaland Exploration Co. instituted a passenger cart service over the Macloutsie-Tuli section in late 1891, and indicated an interest in tendering for the carriage of the mails. A weekly service was contracted for, starting on the 1st January, 1892<sup>9</sup>.

It is particularly important to bear in mind that mail from Mashonaland was carried at the BSA Co.'s expense until it entered the official mails in Bechuanaland Protectorate, initially at Palachwe and subsequently at Macloutsie. (The earliest despatches from the Column may have been 'posted' as far south as Mafeking, but this complication is not relevant in the present context.) Incoming mail was similarly regarded by the Bechuanaland postal authorities as being addressed to the Protectorate. In this case the Protectorate charge, 2d per half ounce on letter mail, was paid by the BSA Co. and then recovered from individual addressees.

Describing his journey northwards from Cape Colony to take up the position of Postmaster at Macloutsie, J.F. Symons<sup>10</sup> states: "At 2.30 p.m. on the 28th December, 1891, the coach stood near the Vryburg Post Office, ready to bear me away". The 28th December, 1891, was a Monday, but the coach was starting late if the timetable published in August 1891 was still in force. When Symons reached Mafeking, he visited the post office, "where the officials were working in their shirt sleeves, sorting the Mashonaland mail - a heavy one. I clambered over a mountain of newspapers to shake hands with my colleagues, nearly maimed myself by tumbling over the parcels, and was thankful to escape by the back door." Symons' account of the rest of the journey is interspersed with grumbles about the hardships in general, particularly the food and accommodation - or rather the lack of both - all of which are omitted from the following summary.

"Here [i.e. at Mafeking] we left the American coach and eight spanking horses behind, and took on a square box on wheels with a couple of springs and eight mules. . . We left Mafeking at 6.0 p.m. and arrived at Ramathlabama about 8 o'clock, having crossed the borders of Bechuanaland and arrived in the Protectorate. . . We arrived at Ramoutsa at 9.40 a.m. 30th December . . . We then went to the Telegraph Office and ordered a meal. There are no Post Offices at these small places in the Protectorate; a storekeeper is generally appointed postal agent and does the little postal work that is to be done; Maclouts (sic) indeed is the only Post Office in the Protectorate. We arrived at Gaberones at 1.45 p.m. . . Fort Gaberones is a police station manned by K Troop of the Bechuanaland Border Police. Our next stage was Mochuli about 30 miles distant . . . and I asked the telegraphist to advise Inspector Osborne, an old friend of mine, at Mochuli, to agitate and have a good spread for us when we arrived. [He was to be disappointed; tinned herring was all

that was available.] An hours delay [at Mochudi], during which time they transferred our luggage and the mails to a smaller coach, and we were off again. . .

"Toward 5.30 p.m. we arrived at Palla Camp . . . I walked a couple of miles over to the store at Notwani Junction. . .

"Here we changed again, and took on a two-wheeled cart on springs, drawn by oxen, as the horse-sickness is too bad for horses or mules to go further.

"New Year's Eve in a post-cart, far away from civilisation . . . How dreary it was on this vast bushy veldt! I sang 'Home, sweet home' . . . and at midnight I launched out into 'Auld lang syne', and was joined by the others; the chorus rang out on the still night air, and presently we heard it taken up a long way in front of us; it was the 'down' cart. . . we stepped into the darkness and greeted the others and wished them a Happy New Year.

Thus the 'up' and 'down' postcarts evidently crossed, at least on this occasion, north of Palla. Symons does not record precisely when the cart reached Palapye, but it was about lunch time on the 2nd January. The journey was resumed after an hour's rest, and he eventually arrived at Macloutsie at 8.00 p.m. on Sunday the 3rd January. Sitwell, however, noted in his diary (see below) that the mail arrived at 7.00 p.m. that day.



**Figure 3** The Mashonaland mail coach at Macloutsie Post Office

Symons<sup>11</sup> records the timetable for handling the mails at Macloutsie as follows:

"I generally despatched the Tuli mail about eight hours after the arrival of the mail from Vryburg. The mail arrived Sunday morning as a rule. The mail from Tuli and other Mashonaland offices arrived Sunday night, late, and I sorted and checked it on Monday. The down mail, including England, Colony, etc., left here at noon on Tuesdays."

The cover evidence provided by mail originating from Mashonaland in 1891-92 is summarised by Drysdall and Collis<sup>12</sup> as follows:

"Borrow covers 943 and 951 passed through Macloutsie on a Wednesday ('JY 22 / 91') and a Monday ('AU 3 / 91') respectively, and the latter was backstamped at Vryburg a week later. All the [Borrow] covers with readable Macloutsie transit marks dated between late August and December 1891 – representing six different dates – passed through Macloutsie on a Sunday and Vryburg on Monday of the following week. They reached Cape Town two days later.

"Three Brown covers (no. 15 to 17) dated between July and November 1891 passed through Macloutsie on a Tuesday. Cover 16 passed through Vryburg six days later, but cover 17 apparently took 13 days – an additional week – for the same journey as the franking was cancelled at Macloutsie on 'NO 3 / 91' and the Vryburg backstamp is dated 'NO 16 / 91'. (Cover 15 is actually a front, and there are therefore no backstamps.) Cover 17 may have just missed the south-bound mail, and was as a result delayed at Macloutsie for a week. Another possibility is that a postal clerk forgot to change the date in the 'MACLOUTSIE' canceller on the 10th November, 1891, and the datestamp when it was used that day was therefore dated a week previously. However, [a] . . . cover posted at Tuli . . . passed through Macloutsie on 'NO 1 / 91' – a Sunday – where the franking was cancelled, and was backstamped at Vryburg on the same date, 'NO 16 / 91', as Brown cover no. 17. . .

"All the Borrow covers with readable Macloutsie transit marks dated between January and June 1892, with two exceptions, passed through Macloutsie on a Monday and Vryburg a week later. The exceptions . . . passed through Macloutsie on a Tuesday, but were backstamped at Vryburg the following Monday. Such variations may simply reflect whether or not the cart arrived at Macloutsie before the post office closed on Monday afternoon.

"[An] . . . incoming item of mail . . . provides further information regarding this route in mid-1892. It passed through Mafeking on Tuesday the 7th June, Macloutsie on Sunday the 12th and Tuli the following day."

In official correspondence dated August 1891<sup>13</sup> it is stated that:

"Mails leave Cape Town for Mashonaland on Fridays (the English mail generally arrives on Wednesdays) and are conveyed by rail to Vryburg, leaving there again on Monday mornings at 9 a.m. by post cart, and arriving at Macloutsie the following Monday night at 10 p.m."

"[Down mails leave Macloutsie at noon Tuesdays,] arriving at Vryburg on Thursday at 7 a.m. in the next week, and Cape Town on Sunday nights (delivery Monday mornings)."

It is evident from the cover evidence cited, from the dates on which Sitwell posted his letters and the dates on which they reached Vryburg, etc. (see Table 1), and from information regarding the timing of the mails passing through Macloutsie which is provided by Sitwell's diary for 1892 (see below), that neither this statement nor the timetable published in August 1891 conforms with what was actually happening at Macloutsie. Bearing in mind the primitive nature of the tracks which passed for roads, it is hardly surprising that there were occasions when it was impossible to adhere to official timetables. Moreover exceptionally heavy rainfall during the 1890–91 rainy season resulted in Mashonaland from Fort Tuli northwards being virtually isolated. Nevertheless the dates listed in Table 1, that is the dates on which mail was despatched from Macloutsie and passed through Vryburg, show a remarkable degree of consistency.

Revised postal rates for mail addressed to Mashonaland, to come into effect on the 1st August, 1892, were announced in a Postal Notice dated the 29th June, 1892<sup>14</sup>. The timetable was restated as follows:—

"The mails to and from Mashonaland will be conveyed as follows:—

**CAPE TOWN TO SALISBURY VIA  
BECHUANALAND.**

Leave Cape Town, Friday 9.0 p.m.  
Reach Vryburg, Sunday 5.25 p.m.  
Leave Vryburg, Monday 9.0 a.m.  
Reach Mafeking, Tuesday 9.0 a.m.  
Leave Mafeking, Tuesday, 4.0 p.m.  
Reach Macloutsie, Monday 10.0 p.m.  
Reach Tuli, Tuesday.  
Leave Tuli, Wednesday.  
Reach Victoria, Thursday (the following week).  
Leave Victoria, Friday.  
Reach Salisbury, Saturday (the following week).  
Time occupied, 29 days

**RETURN JOURNEY.**

Leave Salisbury, Wednesday.  
Reach Victoria, Thursday (the following week).  
Leave Victoria, Friday.  
Reach Tuli, Saturday (the following week).  
Leave Tuli, Sunday.  
Reach Macloutsie, Monday.  
Leave Macloutsie, Tuesday noon.  
Reach Mafeking, Monday, 6 p.m.  
Leave Mafeking, Wednesday 7.0 a.m.  
Reach Vryburg, Thursday, 7.0 a.m.  
Leave Vryburg, Thursday 10.25 p.m.  
Reach Cape Town, Saturday 6.35 p.m.  
Time occupied, 31 days.

**SALISBURY TO UMTALI.**

Leave Salisbury, Thursday afternoon.  
Reach Umtali, Thursday morning (the following week).  
Time occupied 6½ days

**RETURN JOURNEY.**

Leave Umtali, Saturday morning.  
Reach Salisbury, Saturday evening (the following week).  
Time occupied, 7½ days.

**CAPE TOWN TO SALISBURY VIA THE  
TRANSVAAL.**

Leave Cape Town, Thursday, 9. p.m.  
Reach Pretoria, Sunday, 7.15 p.m.  
Leave Pretoria, Monday, 5 a.m.  
Reach Pietersburg, Tuesday, 9.0 p.m.  
Leave Pietersburg, Wednesday, 12 noon.  
Reach Tuli, Friday, 9 a.m.  
Leave Tuli, Wednesday.  
Reach Victoria, Thursday (the following week).  
Leave Victoria, Friday.  
Reach Salisbury, Saturday (the following week).  
Time occupied 30 days.

**RETURN JOURNEY.**

Leave Salisbury, Wednesday.  
Reach Victoria, Thursday (the following week).  
Leave Victoria, Friday.  
Reach Tuli, Saturday (the following week).  
Leave Tuli, Saturday, 9 a.m.  
Reach Pietersburg, Monday, 6 a.m.  
Leave Pietersburg, Monday, 9 a.m.  
Reach Pretoria, Wednesday, 6 a.m.  
Leave Pretoria, Thursday, 6 a.m.  
Reach Cape Town, Sunday 6.35 p.m.  
Time occupied 25 days.

S.R. FRENCH,

Postmaster-General.

General Post Office,  
Cape Town, 29th June, 1892."

This timetable, which is again difficult to reconcile with the cover evidence, may, however, have never have been in force as further changes were notified in a Notice dated the 3rd August, 1892<sup>15</sup>. This records the departure of the mails south from Macloutsie at 3.30 a.m. on Mondays, which would suggest that the bags were made up the previous day and letters posted at Macloutsie would therefore have been dated stamped on the Sunday. This conforms with the evidence of the majority of the Sitwell covers posted during and after August 1892, all of which passed through Vryburg according to the published schedule on the following Monday.

**"Alteration of Time Table to the Bechuanaland  
Protectorate and Mashonaland.**

It is hereby notified for general information that the Posts to and from Mafeking, Macloutsie, Salisbury, &c., are now being conveyed as follows:—

Leave Cape Town	Thursday,	9.0	p.m.
Reach Vryburg	Saturday,	5.25	p.m.

Leave Vryburg	Sunday,	9.0	a.m.
Reach Mafeking	Monday,	9.0	a.m.
Leave Mafeking	Monday,	10.0	a.m.
Reach Macloutsie	Sunday,	4.0	p.m.
Reach Tuli	Tuesday,		
Reach Victoria	Thurs. the following week.		
Reach Salisbury	Sat. the following week.		

## RETURN JOURNEY.

Leave Salisbury	Wednesday.
Leave Victoria	Friday, the following week.
Leave Tuli	Sunday, the following week.
Leave Macloutsie	Monday, 3.30 a.m.
Reach Mafeking	Sunday, 9.30 a.m.
Leave Mafeking	Sunday, 10.30 a.m.

Reach Vryburg	Monday,	10.30 a.m.
Leave Vryburg	Monday,	10.35 p.m.
Reach Cape Town	Wed.	0.55 p.m.

S.R. FRENCH,  
Postmaster-General.

General Post Office,  
Cape Town, 3rd August, 1892."

A brief Notice dated the 10th October, 1892<sup>16</sup>, stated, "On and after Monday, the 17th October, the Mails to and from Mashonaland will be conveyed between Tuli and Salisbury in twelve instead of seventeen days; the Time Table of the Post between Cape Town and Tuli remaining unaltered. Details of the days and hours of running between Tuli and Salisbury will shortly be published." These details were included in a Notice dated the 15th November, 1892<sup>17</sup>.

## "CORRESPONDENCE FOR MASHONALAND

It is hereby notified for general information that the Mails to and from Mashonaland are now being conveyed at the accelerated times shown in the following Table:-

CAPE TOWN TO SALISBURY VIA  
BECHUANALAND

Leave Cape Town	Thursday,	9.0	p.m.
Reach Vryburg	Saturday,	5.25	p.m.
Leave Vryburg	Sunday,	9.0	a.m.
Reach Mafeking	Monday,	9.0	a.m.
Leave Mafeking	Monday,	10.0	a.m.
Reach Macloutsie	Sunday,	4.0	p.m.
Reach Tuli	Monday,	10.0	p.m.
Leave Tuli	Tuesday,	8.0	p.m.
Reach Victoria	Monday,	8.0	a.m.
Leave Victoria	Monday,	noon	
Reach Salisbury	Sunday,	8.0	a.m.

Time occupied, 23 days 11 hours.

## RETURN JOURNEY

Leave Salisbury	Monday,	4.0	p.m.
Reach Victoria	Sunday,	noon	
Leave Victoria	Sunday,	4.0	p.m.

Reach Tuli	Saturday,	4.0	p.m.
Leave Tuli	Sunday,	4.0	a.m.
Reach Macloutsie	Sunday,	6.0	p.m.
Leave Macloutsie	Monday,	3.30	a.m.
Reach Mafeking	Sunday,	9.30	a.m.
Leave Mafeking	Sunday,	10.30	a.m.
Reach Vryburg	Monday,	10.30	a.m.
Leave Vryburg	Monday,	10.25	p.m.
Reach Cape Town	Wednesday,	0.55	p.m.

Time occupied, 22 days, 21 hours.

## SALISBURY TO UMTALI

Leave Salisbury	Thursday afternoon
Reach Umtali	Thursday morning (the following week)

Time occupied, 6½ days.

## RETURN JOURNEY

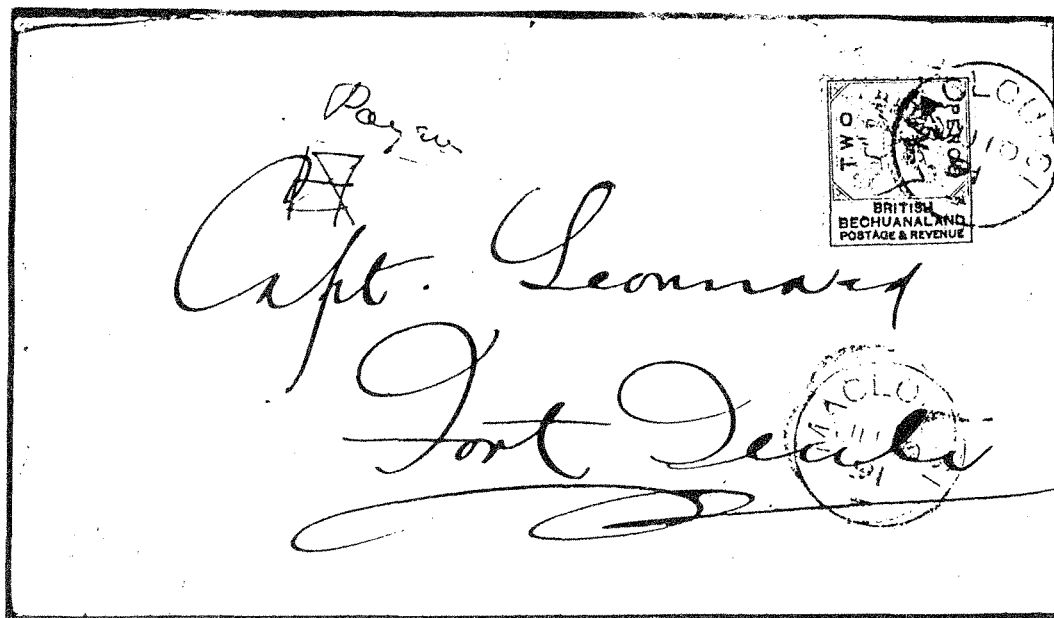
Leave Umtali	Saturday morning
Reach Salisbury	Saturday evening (the following week)

Time occupied, 7½ days.

BEN DUFF,

Acting Postmaster-General.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
15th November, 1892."



**Figure 4** Cover addressed to Capt. Leonard at Fort Tuli franked with a 2d stamp, to receipt payment of the Protectorate inland half-ounce letter rate, which was cancelled at 'Macloutsie' on 'JU 10 /91' (a Wednesday), the earliest recorded date for this datestamp. (The cover is annotated to show that the addressee was required to pay 4d, but this was evidently a mistake as the figure is crossed out.)



### Macloutsie

Precisely when the post office at Macloutsie was opened is uncertain. Jurgens<sup>18</sup>, quoting Post Office records states that, "By 1891 the Postal Agency at Macloutsie had been made a Post Office and a Postmaster appointed". The Protectorate's only mail service had been routed as far as Macloutsie from sometime prior to mid-April 1891 (see above), but both the BSA Co. and the Bechuanaland Border Police had maintained a camp there from the time the Pioneer Column began to assemble in mid-1890. A postal agency may therefore have been opened at that time, but it probably did not have a datestamp. It is possible that the office was upgraded in March, 1891, when the Bechuanaland Exploration Co., under contract to the Bechuanaland Government, assumed the responsibility for transporting the mails between Macloutsie and Palachwe. What is certain is that the 22 mm single-circle datestamp inscribed 'MACLOUTSI' was in use from June 1891 (Fig. 4). A similar datestamp inscribed 'MACLOUTSIE', which may well have been the datestamp issued to the telegraph office, was first used on mail on the 25th September, 1892 (see Fig. 9 and Table 1). (The telegraph line reached Macloutsie on the 12th May, 1891, and was open to Fort Tuli from 3.45 p.m. on the 28th May.) The recorded range of dates for the two datestamps is: Macloutsie 10.6.91–16.1.99; and Macloutsie 25.9.92–10.9.00.

Symons<sup>19</sup> describes 'Macloutsie' and its post office as follows:

"Macloutsie is the most northerly camp of the Bechuanaland Border Police in the Protectorate, and is manned by three troops, viz., E, F, and G, some 250 men altogether, who mostly live in huts, but some few in tents. The Macloutsie River is four miles north of the camp, and runs from east to west. To the westward of the camp, and a mile distant, runs the Big Matlaputla River; to the eastward, and not half a mile distant runs the Little Matlaputla, both of them are small streams, and both run northward towards the Macloutsie. The post office was a round hut, somewhat larger than the ordinary . . . [native] hut, but totally unsuited for postal work, and I found that it leaked somewhat after the manner of a vegetable strainer. The wind troubled not to go round but came right through, and there were no conveniences for the performance of postal work. Macloutsie is a busy office on mail days, as the whole of the mail going into British South Africa Company's territory is dealt with here; and the manner in which letters, papers, parcels mail bags, etc., were strewn over the floor was thoroughly distracting. This has, however, been altered, and Macloutsie now boasts a very decent post office, with pigeon holes, sorting table, and necessary office gear. It is a longish roomy hut; and for the place and the times it is sufficient. A monetary order branch will, I think, be opened here."

He further described the appalling conditions in the original hut in which he lived and worked in a few verses of doggerel published under the heading *Lines from the Limpopo*<sup>20</sup>. The following is a sample:

"The P. M. sat on the cold, cold floor,  
The chair was defunct – it would moan no more,  
The table collapsed and was ruined quite,  
And part of the roof gave way in the night,  
The rain poured on his devoted head  
And saturated his rough camp bed,

So pass the night on the floor he must,  
And he struck a light while he mildly cursed,  
He sorted the mail bags – some were dry –  
And passed the night in damp misery,  
Vowing he'd alter the state of affairs  
And get a new hut and table and chairs.

Symons himself supervised the building of the new office<sup>21</sup>.

"I was the architect, and watched its growth with keen interest; it took nearly 14 days to build, and every day I sat on a stump close by, smoking and watching and listening with gentle approval to the builder as he coined choice epithets for the . . . workmen.



Figure 5 The second Macloutsie Post Office

"The view . . . taken from the south-west [Fig. 5]. . . shows the most beautiful part of the building; the nearest door is for the public, and that farthest away leads to my sanctum. The two natives are runners, who convey the Tati and Buluwayo mails from here. Standing up against the building is my assistant – a trooper in the Bechuanaland Border Police – and to his left, a little in advance, appears your humble servant (the beard mown off), dressed in the usual tropical manner – white, trousers, light shirt, open in front and sleeves rolled up above the elbows, a sash around the waist, and a broad-brimmed felt hat.

"The office is a large hut 30 feet x 14, and is rather well built; the walls being of strong poles smeared over with clay and cow dung; the roof is of dried grass. The windows are small wooden frames covered with canvas. . . The telegraph instrument is on a small roughly-made table in one corner, alongside of which is the safe, and next to that my office table, under which is arranged the Daniell's battery, so that I have to be careful with my feet. On the other side is the sorting table, about 10 feet in length and two feet wide; and 20 feet from the front door are arranged the pigeon-holes running nearly across the room, leaving just space enough for a small doorway leading into my chamber beyond. For the public there is a space inside about six feet square, the barrier consisting of boxes piled to a convenient height, and a small light table which I can move on one side to allow a passage to and from the public entrance; a very primitive letter box, four shelves, and two chairs complete the furniture and adornments of the office, barring some lengths of limbo from one rafter to another, arranged as a ceiling to keep the dust and straw from the roof from falling on the tables.

"My private apartment is rather snug, 14 feet by 10. In it I have my stretcher, an easy chair, a table which contains my small but select library; a trunk and another chair; and looking glass, photos and knickknacks arranged on the walls. I have covered the floor with carpeting, and the walls with blue limbo to hide the back of the pigeon-holes and to cover the naked walls."

Symons continued with a description of how he handled the mails, and how the Protectorate charge on incoming mail ('additional postage') was applied and accounted for.

"The mail from Vryburg, including English and Colonial mails, arrives once a week, and up to the end of July [1892] brought me a large amount of work, as all the Mashonaland mails were made up on this office; running from 8 to 13 bags, and containing some 3,000 to 4,000 items, including letters, papers, parcels and book-packets, each item carrying an 'additional postage' debit; letters 2d per ½ oz.; papers 1d per 4 ozs.; parcels and book-packets 4d per lb. The letter bills carried the total debits, and all the items had to be checked to avoid errors; so that if the letter bill stated '913 letters, 1,014 rates' (½ ozs.), etc., etc., I had to see that I received letters, etc., agreeing with this. I used to empty all the mail bags on to the floor, placing the papers, parcels and book-packets in distinct heaps, and the letters on the table; the letters I would first check, then stamp and sort (for I was alone for some months), and pacify the 'madding crowd' by delivering them first; then I would check all the other items and sort them, and nearly always managed to deliver the whole local mail under three hours. . . I give below an example of the 'additional postage' bill:-

"800 letters,	912 rates
1,000 papers,	1,610 rates
48 parcels,	138 rates
50 books,	60 rates

"I had to count the letters and weigh those that were over ½ oz. to arrive at the correct number of rates, and in the same way I had to deal with the papers, etc., and their rates. Items originating in the Protectorate had to be put on one side, as they were not charged with additional postage.

"Then the local delivery, and miniature letter bills (for I had to collect the additional postage). Example:-

"3 letters,	4 rates . . .	8d.
6 papers,	7 rates . . .	7d.
1 parcel,	1 rate . . .	3d.
1 book-pkt.	2 rates . . .	6d.

"When the local delivery was finished, I made up the Mashonaland mail on Tuli, making a slight addition [the amount to be paid] to his letter bill as under:-

			£	s.	d.
"800 letters,	912 rates . . .		7	12	0
1,000 papers,	1,610 rates . . .		6	14	2
48 parcels,	138 rates . . .		1	14	6
50 books,	60 rates . . .		0	15	0
			<u>£16</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>8</u>

"For this he would forward me a cheque by the following mail. And at the end of the month my 'additional postage' schedule showed total number of letters and rates, papers and rates, etc., etc., and their total value, which I remitted."

The downgrading of the Macloutsie office is recorded by Jurgens<sup>22</sup>:

"In 1893 the Postmaster at Macloutsie was removed and a Post Office Agent appointed in his stead, which resulted in a saving to the Postal Administration of £200 a year. The making up of the Mashonaland mails, which was formerly done at Macloutsie, was now done at Vryburg and later all mail matter for Mashonaland from the Cape Colony and other South African states was made up at Kimberley."

Jurgens implies that the Mashonaland mails were made up at Vryburg rather than Macloutsie from sometime in 1893, but Symons states (see above) this change was introduced in August 1892. All Mashonaland mail was routed *via* Tati and Bulawayo with effect from the 1st August, 1894, but with the completion of the telegraph line to Bulawayo from Macloutsie *via* Mangwe in the same year, Macloutsie retained some importance.

## Sitwell's diary for 1892

As is common with a private correspondence, the punctuation is minimal and there are a number of abbreviations. Sitwell's handwriting is difficult to read, and at times, especially in his diary, it degenerates into scribble that is indecipherable. The minimum necessary alterations have been made in the following transcripts, and any uncertainties with regard to particular words are indicated with queries.

The diary records what must have been a rather boring existence in an isolated outpost, which was relieved by entertaining the occasional traveller to or from Mashonaland in the officer's mess. Sitwell, who came from a family devoted to hunting, was obviously a keen hunter himself, though he does not appear to have shot anything larger than a roan antelope. Apart from many entries recording that he spent part of the day hunting, he listed his trophies, a number of which he purchased, in the memoranda pages. He was consistent in recording parades, drills, bayonet exercises, his visits to outposts and temporary camps established for grass cutting, changes in the weather, and such recreational activities as cricket matches, shooting competitions and gardening. Many evenings were spent playing whist or piquet, and there were the occasional singsongs.

One such singsong is described by Symons<sup>23</sup>:

"A few waggon loads of wood were piled up on the square near the forts, and towards 8.0 p.m. it was lighted. Half an hour afterwards the glare of a great fire was lighting up the country for miles around, and showed, not far off, the officers seated at a table, while close to them gathered the men. A little distance off were collected the native servants, forming altogether an almost complete circle around the fire. It was quite a treat to hear a popular chorus welling out from about 200 manly throats . . . These 'sing-songs' are of rare occurrence, and life at Macloutsie is terribly dull; nothing but the deadly routine of camp life, far away from civilisation."

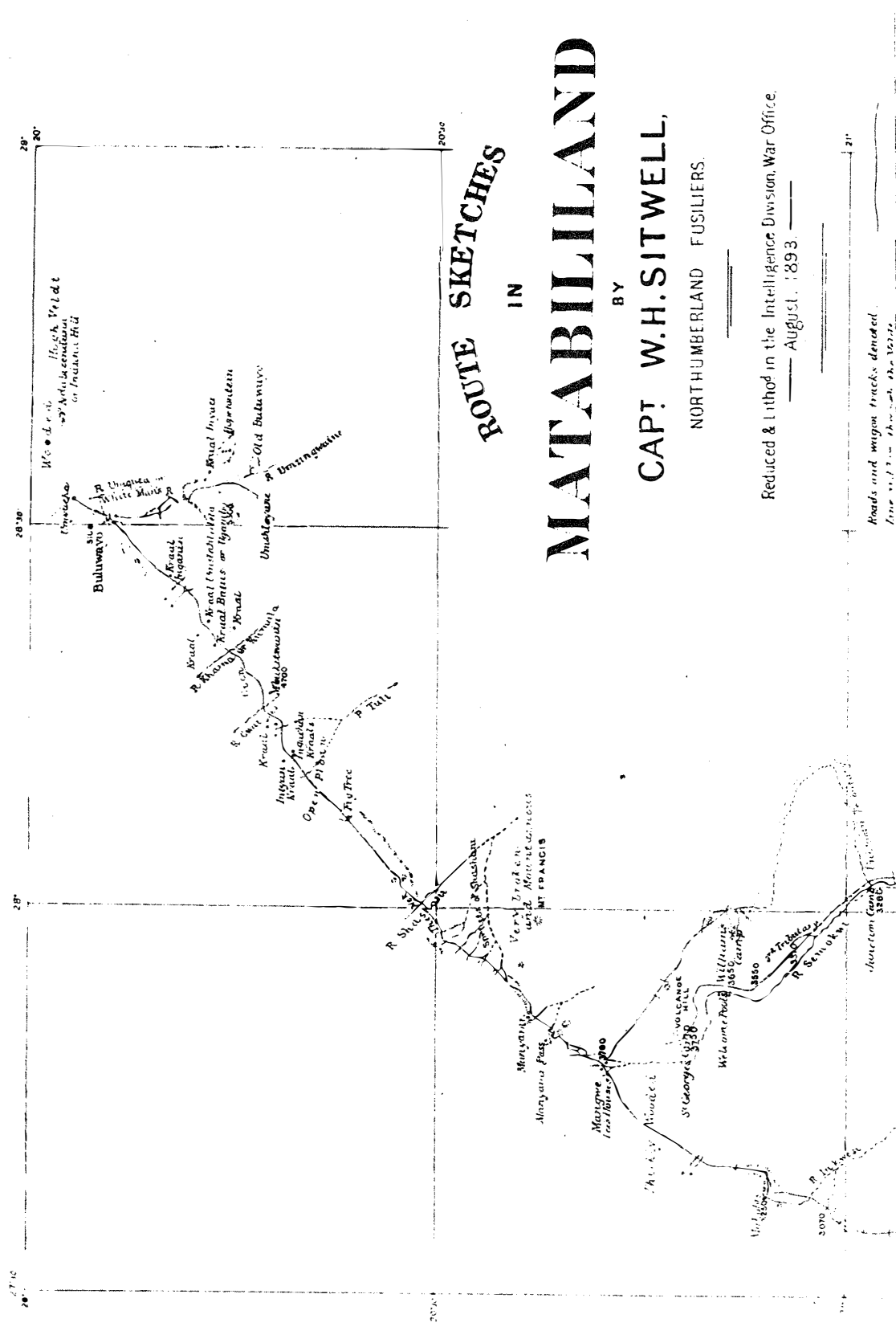
Sitwell used his observations of the stars to compile two maps, the route through the Protectorate to Macloutsie and the route to Bulawayo (Fig. 2 and 6), and sketching was evidently one of his spare-time occupations. (He was later to compile maps of the route from Fort Victoria to Umtali.) His closest friends do not appear to have been his fellow officers, though he did spend much of his spare time in the company of Lt. the Hon. D.H. Marsham, the third son of the Earl of Romney. He was friendly with two Catholic priests, Father Victor Nicot, S.J. and Father Ken (who arrived on the 3rd June, 1892). Father Nicot owned a telescope and was also interested in astronomy. Sitwell records that he occasionally "spoke French" with him. He also records a number of visits to the hospital where he met the nurses, who were Dominican Sisters. Only Sister Edith is mentioned by name. (Mother Patrick was no longer at Macloutsie in 1892.)

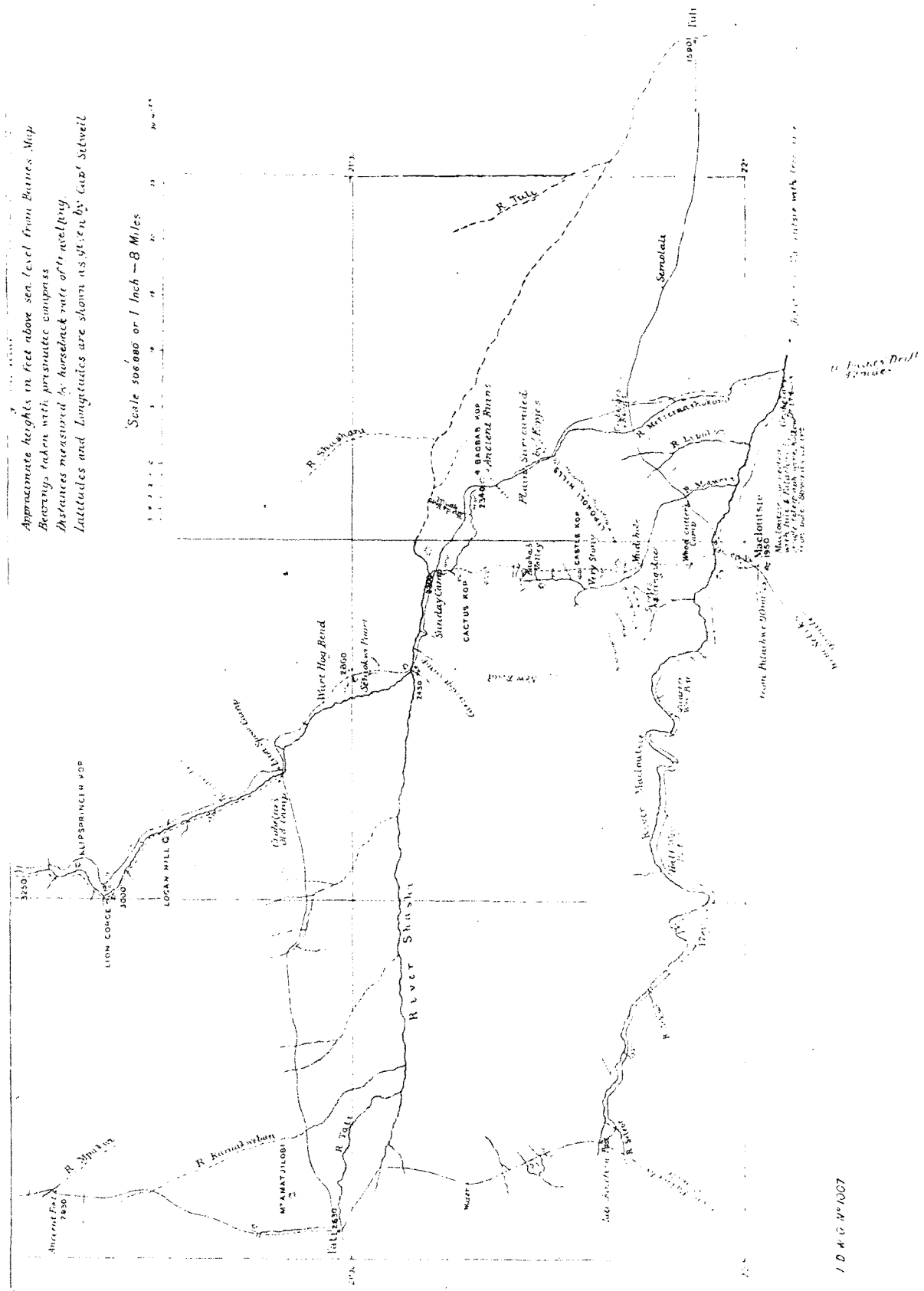
Sitwell was not one to waste words, and many of his entries are frustratingly brief. They are nevertheless revealing. For example, the entry for Sunday the 25th September reads, "Quiet day; wrote letters; Postmaster and Telegraph Clerk; both [or lots] drunk".

The camp itself is rarely mentioned, but he records a heavy storm during the evening of Sunday the 18th September, and the burning down of the BSA Co. store. On the 29th October he wrote, "Heavy storm blew down all tents", and on the 30th he "repaired damage to camp".

The names of at least some of the travellers who were entertained in the mess at Macloutsie will be familiar to those interested in the history of central Africa. For example, the last entry for Sunday the 26th June reads, "Sir John Willoughby dined". (Willoughby had been Second-in-Command of the Pioneer Column.) Other names mentioned include, Parker (10th January), Gisbourne (14th May), Codrington (30th May) and Moffat (24th July). 'Parker' was presumably Gerald Parker, the son of the Hon. G.T. Parker, whose correspondence has been previously described<sup>24</sup>. 'Gisbourne' was Dudley Guy Gisbourne, who was discharged from the BBP in 1892, and after the occupation of Matabeleland became a prominent businessman in Bulawayo. 'Codrington' was Robert Edward Codrington, who was to become the Administrator of North-Eastern and then North-Western Rhodesia. 'Moffat' was John Smith Moffat, who made his final visit to Bulawayo in May 1892, and was Assistant Commissioner for Bechuanaland Protectorate and stationed at Palachwe from June 1892 until August 1895. 'Gifford', who evidently stayed at Macloutsie from the 27th to the 31st August while *en route* to Victoria, was probably James Gifford, a professional elephant hunter who had made a number of expeditions to Mashonaland and Matabeleland between 1863 and 1870.

The names of other travellers may not be familiar, but their reasons for passing through Macloutsie will be. For example the entry for Sunday the 15th May reads (in part), "Turner late BBP and BCA arrived by post cart on his way to delimitate Portuguese frontier". Most entries of this type were made on Sundays, when the north-bound post and passenger cart arrived, or Mondays when the south-bound cart arrived from Tuli.





**Figure 6** Sitwell's map of the route from Macloutsie to Bulawayo  
 (reproduced with the permission of the British Library, ref. 67078/10)

5th. Moon's first qu.	JAN. & FEB., 1892.	2nd. [Sun rises 7h. 40m.]	Sets 4h. 5m.	FEBRUARY, 1892.	[Day 9h. 8m. long.]
SUNDAY 31 [31-335]	4th after Epiphany.			THURSDAY 4 [35-331]	
	<p>Parade of guns. &amp; bells &amp; with for Belongs. Show on trips. Went out by the river at sunset. 14 1/2 miles</p>			<p>Rode to <del>Umtata</del> to <del>Umtata</del> for breakfast satisfactory return to King. No game in bush &amp; here. with little,</p>	
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1 [32-334]	Partridge and Pheasant Shooting ends			FRIDAY 5 [36-330]	
	<p>Rode into Bulawayo 7. mile &amp; put up at Dawson's store.</p>			<p>Rode to Umtata 15 miles Left sea on track &amp; all evening. Crossed a grand veldt. Had P.M. held a meeting with a good with little. Dined in Umtata and all night.</p>	
TUESDAY 2 [33-333]	Purification. Candlemas. Scotch Quarter D.			SATURDAY 6 [37-329] 6TH WEEK	
	<p>Umtata. dined with Rev. Taylor. To. Rae Dumb.</p>				<p>Withy. practice.</p>
WEDNESDAY 3 [34-332]					
	<p>Rode to Umtata 15 miles S.E. Left sea on track &amp; all evening. Took dinner &amp; light evening.</p>				

Figure 7 The diary entries for the week of the 31st January to the 6th February, 1892

The highlight of 1892 for Sitwell was undoubtedly his expedition to Bulawayo, which he described in his diary and in an article written for *The United Service Magazine*<sup>25</sup>. His purpose was to meet Lobengula and attend the Inxwala – the Great Dance – with a view to assessing the military strength of the Matabele and the defensive positions along the route to Bulawayo. He set out on the 18th January with Sub-Lt. Ashley Williams, Regimental Sergeant-Major Drury and Trooper Rae. They were mounted on salted horses, and had with them a pack horse and a Scotch cart drawn by six oxen. They followed a route via the ‘disputed territory’ – the area between the Shashi and Macloutsie Rivers – Sunday and Cartridge Camps on the Shashi River, and then along the Semokwe River to join the Palachwe-Tati-Bulawayo road at Lee’s House – “a ruined structure of green brick, and roofless” – at Mangwe. A reconnaissance made three months previously, which Sitwell refers to in his letters dated the 15th and 16th October, 1891, had shown this to be a practical route, avoiding the need to first travel westwards to Tati. However, they had underestimated the problems which would ensue from the onset of the rains and the flooding of the rivers, which resulted in near disaster. From Mangwe they passed through the Manyami Defile, the Inner Gate to Matabeleland, a hilly area Sitwell described as Little Switzerland, and Figtree, finally reaching the high veldt. Sitwell described Bulawayo as follows:

"On February 1st 1892, we marched into Bulawayo, the white man's portion of it, that is to say, for the Small Dance held at the new moon on January 29th was just over, the King had gone away, and the city was closed to the outer world until his return for the Big Dance at the full moon still twelve days distant. The Royal city of Bulawayo is not a city at all, but simply a Royal kraal surrounded by a 'scar'em' or thorn fence. In the fence itself are some huts, and here and there patches of mealies and kaffir corn, but nowhere a town in the sense implied by a 'statt' in Khama's country or the Southern Protectorate. But the glory of the place is the King's Brick House, and the commanding nature of the position. For a position it is a magnificent one; a lofty plateau in an angle between two rivers, sloping gradually away for half a mile and more from the Royal dwelling, and finally dropping precipitously into the rivers beyond, a position . . . absolutely impregnable if held with rifle fire."

The remainder of the article is concerned with a detailed description of the Inxwala – a cross between a military parade, an eisteddfod and a harvest festival – which included the ritual in which the King threw an assegai to show the direction in which the regiments which were to take part in the forthcoming season of pillage and rape would set out. Sitwell estimated that 11,000 fighting men were present, but this presumably excluded five regiments which he records had been sent to guard the eastern frontier.

The following is a selection of the diary entries relating to Sitwell's expedition to Bulawayo:

- 1st February "Marched into Bulawayo, 7 miles, and put up at Dawson's store".
- 2nd February "Visited King Lobengula at Umvootcha [northeast of Bulawayo]; dined with Rennie Tailyour<sup>1</sup>; Tom [John?] Rae<sup>2</sup> drunk."
- 4th February "Rode to Hope Fountain Umvootcha with Colenbrander<sup>3</sup> before breakfast; satisfactory interview with King, who gave us beef and beer; wrote letters."
- 5th February "... wrote letters; dined with Colenbrander."
- 7th February "Rode with Williams<sup>4</sup> to Hope Fountain; service at Helms<sup>5</sup>; very pleasant; stayed night and slept in a bed with sheets."
- 8th February "Rained all day; great day at Hope Fountain."
- 9th February "Rode into Bulawayo after breakfast; Scott and Welsh arrived."
- 10th February "Visit with Scott<sup>6</sup> to Royal Kraal in Bulawayo, and saw the King; no beer."
- 11th February "Rode with Scott to Hope Fountain."
- 12th February "Rode round Bulawayo with Scott; ... wrote letters and worked at stars."
- 16th February "Orders to return at once; Scott ... started for Macloutsie, which he reached in 66 hours; 230 miles ..."
- 17th February "... Spoke with the King and his mother."
- 18th February "Saw big dance<sup>7</sup>; wonderful; started 6 p.m. and rode 12 miles."
- 19th February "Started at day break; breakfasted at Chicken Camp ... Halted at Fig Tree ... rode by moonlight; mighty little to eat; 46 miles."
- 20th February "Arr. [Arrived] Mangwe Pass a.m. ... 3 miles." (From noon onwards Sitwell worked on a broken disselboom, but whose wagon this was is impossible to decipher.)
- 21st February "Passed Lee's<sup>8</sup> ... reached Mahobi Pass."
- 22nd February "... reached Nkwesi River that night ..."
- 23rd February "Marched from R. Nkwesi 5.40 a.m.; reached Ramokweban [Ramaquabane] 8.5; left 10.30; reached bad water halt 2.35 p.m.; left 4.28 p.m.; reached Tati 6.35 p.m.; very hospitably recd [received] by Farley and others; worked at stars all night; 27 miles."
- 24th February "Left Tati with Drury<sup>9</sup> 11 a.m.; halted 1.20 p.m.; started again 4.10; reached Junction Post 6.25 p.m.; clean post; 27 miles."
- 25th February "Left Junction Post 6.25 a.m.; took short cut; overtook Douglas' wagon and halted 8.20; left 10.25; halted 12.30; left 3 p.m.; arr. [arrived] Half Way Post 5.20 p.m.; found Jepp in charge; 34½ miles."
- 26th February "Left Half Way Post 10 a.m.; arr. (?) halt 12 noon; left 3.10 p.m. reached ¼ [Quarter] Way Post 4.50; found Trooper Booth in charge; 19½ miles."
- 27th February "Left ¼ [Quarter] Way Post 10 a.m.; reached Macloutsie 8.30; long day in Orderly Room; ... Heaps of letters; visited hospital and Father Nicot in evening."

<sup>1</sup> Rennie-Tailyour represented the financier Lippert.

<sup>2</sup> Trooper No. 2102 John Rae was Sitwell's batman.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes Wilhelm Colenbrander originally went to Bulawayo with Rennie-Tailyour, and established amiable relations with Lobengula. It was he who accompanied the Indunas when Lobengula sent a delegation to Queen Victoria in 1889–90. On his return he and his wife settled in Bulawayo and commenced to trade. Colenbrander was then offered a position as representative of the BSA Co. – mainly to circumvent the possibility of him continuing to promote Lippert's interests – and in this capacity kept Rhodes informed of events at Bulawayo. It was Colenbrander who delivered Lobengula's warning message to the Pioneer Column when they were north of Tuli, but he told Col. Pennyfather, who was in command of the Column, that in his opinion Lobengula had no intention of attacking and the Column proceeded. After the occupation of Matabeleland he became Native Commissioner.

<sup>4</sup> Sub-Lt. Ashley Paget Wilmet Williams.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Charles Daniel Helm of the London Missionary Society.

<sup>6</sup> Capt. James Robson Scott.

<sup>7</sup> Inxwala.

<sup>8</sup> John (or Jan) Lee, the first Rhodesian settler – from 1866 – who was not a missionary. He farmed an area of 200 square miles centred on the upper reaches of the Mangwe River and the track linking Bulawayo and Tati. He acted as an immigration officer for Lobengula,

detaining travellers until they were 'given the road' by the King. He retired to the Transvaal in 1891. His land was confiscated by the BSA Co. when he refused to help fight the Matabele in 1893.

<sup>9</sup> Regimental Sgt Major G. V. Drury, who was later commissioned.

Sitwell may have posted the letters he wrote at this time in Bulawayo, which would have been easy enough as the Rev. Helm acted as Postmaster. The alternative possibility is that Scott carried them with him when he returned post haste to Macloutsie. (There appears to be no record of a Sitwell cover or covers originating from Bulawayo or of a letter describing the Inxwala. The absence of such a letter is surprising, as Sitwell wrote several times a week to his mother describing trivial events at length.)

The diary entry for the 9th February records the arrival of Capt. Scott and Trooper Welsh, who had travelled via Tati in order to survey the alternative route to Bulawayo. In his account Scott<sup>26</sup> records that he was granted 14 days leave by the High Commissioner in Cape Town for a shooting expedition. However, someone was out to make mischief, hence Scott's sudden recall.

"I got to Macloutsie late the following night, and I found that indeed so far as I was concerned 'the fat was in the fire' and frizzling with uncommon vigour. To make matters worse, a paragraph appeared in *Truth* to the effect that 'Captain Scott, in temporary command of the Bechuanaland Border Police, had taken the opportunity of going into forbidden country to witness the war dance of the Matabele, etc.'. Sir Frederick Carrington and the officers on leave had been recalled, and altogether I got myself thoroughly disliked. In the meantime I was to consider myself under arrest. However, when the General arrived in Cape Town things were soon smoothed over."

A diary entry dated the 11th December, 1892, records that he had "applied for land in Mashonaland". Archived records<sup>27</sup> show that J.H. Adams was authorised by Dr. Jameson in June 1893 to peg the farm *Marowa* in the Victoria District on Sitwell's behalf. The records also include manuscript copies of two maps of the route from Fort Victoria to Umtali compiled by Sitwell, one consisting of nine sheets and the other a single sheet; both are dated the 2nd August, 1893. It would seem therefore that Sitwell left the Protectorate via Mashonaland and Mozambique, and chose his farm en route, leaving an agent to complete the pegging and paperwork. He evidently surveyed his route, and completed compilation of the maps on the 2nd August, 1893. On the 24th October, 1895, Sitwell, then in Guernsey, gave Power of Attorney concerning the farm to Capt. H. Greener of the BBP. The file ends in 1905.

Sitwell was consistent in recording the arrival of the 'English mail', that is the north-bound cart. Up to and including the 7th August he normally received his letters from home on a Sunday, though occasionally the post cart was either a day early or a day late. For example, the entry for Sunday the 17th April reads, "Mail arrived 1 a.m.; didn't get letters till 11". There are also many entries recording that official mail was dealt with in the Orderly Room on a Monday. From the 13th August the English mail was evidently scheduled to arrive on Saturdays. (The times almost certainly record when Sitwell received the letters addressed to him, that is after the mail had been sorted, and not the arrival of the postcart.)

The entry for Saturday the 8th October includes the terse statement, "Mail late". Other entries for Saturdays in October make it clear that the English mail was expected but was not received until the following day. The entry for Monday the 12th December, "a heavy mail", relates to official mail, which would not have been dealt with on a Sunday. A week later Sitwell wrote, "Light mail; got through with it in forenoon", which is again a reference to official mail. It would seem therefore that there was a change in the timetable from the 13th August, the north-bound cart arriving Saturday rather than Sunday. There may have been a delay over Christmas, a Sunday, as the "English mail left" on Monday the 26th December. (Sitwell usually referred to the mail received from England as the 'English' mail, but in this case it he may have been referring to the south-bound postcart.)

Up to and including the 2nd August there is a consistent record of the south-bound mail being despatched either 'early' or by 11 a.m. on Tuesdays. For example the entry for Tuesday the 31st May reads (in part), "Got mail off in good order at 11 a.m.". There are few subsequent entries relating to this mail, but mail was despatched south on Saturday 3rd September – "Got mail off; English mail arrived" – and Saturday 5th November – "Got mail off early". This evidence, however, would seem to conflict with the despatch dates listed in Table 1 which suggest that there was a change in the timetable from August and that the south-bound cart normally left on a Sunday.

There are far fewer references to the telegraph service. For example, the entry for the 1st March includes a note that there was "lots of writing and wiring to do", and on the 5th May there were "heaps of telegrams to answer".



Table 1 A listing of the Sitwell covers and letters

Annotation	Date of letter(s)	Franking (SG no.)	Macloutsie / Macloutsie* (Palachwe†) date day	Vryburg/ Mafeking* date day	Cape Town date day	Earliest UK date	
?	-	11 & 13	†29. 5.91 Friday	?*	?		1
18.9.91	-	14	22. 9.91 Tuesday	28. 9.91 Monday	30. 9.91 Wednesday	19.10.91	2
	15/16.10.91						3
?	-	14	4. 1.92 Monday	?	?		4
?	-	14	25. 3.92 Friday	?	?		5
?	-	11 & 35	12. 4.92 Tuesday				6
27.4.92	-	14	3. 5.92 Tuesday	9. 5.92 Monday	11. 5.92 Wednesday	27. 5.92	7
?	-	14	17. 5.92 Tuesday				8
?	-	14	24. 5.92 Tuesday				9
30.5.92	-	14	31. 5.92 Tuesday	6. 6.92 Monday	-	29. 6.92	10
10.6.92	9/10.6.92	14	14. 6.92 Tuesday	20. 6.92 Monday	-	11. 7.92	11
15.6.92	11/13.6.92	14	14. 6.92 Tuesday	20. 6.92 Monday	-	11. 7.92	12
?	?	14	21. 6.92 Tuesday	27. 6.92 Monday	28. 6.92 Tuesday		13
2.7.92	?	34 & 35	5. 7.92 Tuesday	11.7.92 Monday	?	31. 7.92	14
4.7.92	4.7.92	14	5. 7.92 Tuesday	11.7.92 Monday	?	31. 7.92	15
?	9.7.92						16
25.7.92	?	36	26.7.92 Monday	?			17
?	30.7.92		2. 8.92 Tuesday				18
11.8.92	9/11.8.92	36	14. 8.92 Sunday	22. 8.92 Monday	-	10. 9.92	19
?	?	15§	14. 8.92 Sunday	22. 8.92 Monday	-	10. 9.92	20
?	18.8.92		19. 8.92 Friday				21
19/20.8.92	19.8.92	36	21. 8.92 Sunday	?	?	7.9.92 Wednesday	22
21.8.92	21.8.92	34 & 35	21. 8.92 Sunday	5?9.92 Monday	-	26? 9.92	23
25.8.92	25.8.92	36	26. 8.92 Friday	5. 9.92 Monday		26. 9.92	24
16/17.9.92	-	36	18. 9.92 Sunday	26. 9.92 Monday	-	19.10.92	25
25.9.92	13/15.9.92	36	*25. 9.92 Sunday	3. 10.92 Monday	-	24.10.92	26
2.10.92	-	36	*3.10.92 Monday	10.10.92 Monday	12.10.92 Wednesday	31.10.92	27
11.10.92	-	36	*17.10.92 Monday	24.10.92 Monday	-	15.11.92	28
21.10.92	-	36	*23.10.92 Sunday	31.10.92 Monday	7.11.92 Monday	?	29
25.10.92	-	36	*30.10.92 Sunday	7.11.92 Monday	9.11.92 Wednesday	25.11.92	30
26.10.92	-	36	*30.10.92 Sunday	7.11.92 Monday	9.11.92 Wednesday	25.11.92	31
9.11.92	-	36	*13.11.92 Sunday	21.11.92 Monday	-	13.12.92	32
14.11.92	-	36	*20.11.92 Sunday	28.11.92 Monday	30.11.92 Wednesday	19.12.92	33
17.11.92	-	36	*20.11.92 Sunday	28.11.92 Monday	30.11.92 Wednesday	19.12.92	34
29.11.92	-	36	‡*4.12.92 Sunday	12.12.92 Monday	-	1. 1.93	35
?	-	36	*15.1.93 Sunday	?			36
?	-	36	*23.1.93 Monday	?		?	37

§ the only known cover franked at the double rate

‡ the franking was affixed after the Macloutsie datestamp was struck, and was cancelled with the barred-oval mark coded '555' at Vryburg

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1 Christie's Robson Lowe, 16.3.87, lot 53   | 9 Christie's Robson Lowe, 24.11.87, lot 549                  | 17 Christie's Robson Lowe, 22.7.86, lot 35; 5.12.89, lot 504; 22.1.90, lot 203 | 24 Reitz, 1977, p.56-7; Sotheby's, 22.9.83, lot 94; Christie's Robson Lowe, 10.12.85, lot 236 |
| 2 Catterall Collection                      | 10 and 11 Campbell Collection                                | 18 Knight Collection   | 25 and 26 Catterall Collection  |
| 3 Campbell Collection                       | 12 Catterall Collection                                      | 19 Lt.-Col. Sir John Inglefield-Watson   | 27 to 34 A. MacGregor   |
| 4 Christie's Robson Lowe, 12.6.91, lot 195  | 13 Knight in Reitz, p.76; Wessely Collection                 | 20 Robson Lowe, 15/16.6.83, lot 1185   | 35 Trotter Collection   |
| 5 Christie's Robson Lowe, 16.3.87, lot 54   | 14 Christie's Robson Lowe, 22.7.86, lot 34; 5.12.89, lot 503 | 21 Reitz, 1977, p.55-6   | 36 Christie's Robson Lowe, 16.3.87, lot 55  |
| 6 Robson Lowe, 15/16. 6.83, lot 1183        | 15 Trotter Collection  | 22 Fenimore Collection   | 37 Holmes Collection; Harms, 29.10.91, lot 1359   |
| 7 A. MacGregor                              | 16 Reitz, 1977, p.54-5                                       | 23 Lt.-Col. Sir John Inglefield-Watson   |   |
| 8 Christie's Robson Lowe, 24.11.87, lot 548 |  |  |   |

### The Sitwell correspondence

There are a considerable number of letters in existence, as well as some 40 covers, which have in some instances become separated from them. For example, Reitz in his article published in *Rhodesiana*<sup>28</sup> quotes three letters, only one of which was in the cover in which it was sent. Knight, writing in response to the article, quotes a further letter dated the 30th June, 1892, which remains with the cover. The Catterall Collection includes four letters and the covers in which they were sent. The Campbell Collection included two letters, one without a cover, and two covers, one without a letter. Alan MacGregor has reported a total of ten covers, none of which contains a letter.

The covers show little variation. With one exception they are all franked at the 6d rate, and carry minimal postal markings. The rate paid is, however, significant, and is discussed further below. The letters are also disappointing in that they refer mainly to family affairs, usually in response to letters received from his mother, day-to-day trivia of Sitwell's chores as Adjutant, and the hunting of game which may have been big but which would not normally be regarded as dangerous. There must have been times when Mrs Sitwell was bored to tears by her son's letters.

#### Cover, no letter, posted Macloutsie 22nd September, 1891 (2)

The cover is annotated '18<sup>th</sup> September 1891' at bottom-left, and is franked with a single 6d stamp (SG 14), which was cancelled with the 'MACLOUTSI' datestamp on Tuesday 'SP 22 / 91'. It was backstamped at Vryburg on Monday the 28th September and at Belford on the 19th October, and was delivered in Beal the following day.

This is the only cover from the correspondence which was taxed. The manuscript 'T' (in red) was probably written at Mafeking or Vryburg. The '2' in blue crayon at top-left was written to indicate that this was a double-rate letter weighing more than a half but less than one ounce. The '6D' handstamp was struck at Cape Town to record the deficient postage. This was cancelled when the letter reached the UK, and '1/-' written in manuscript to indicate the amount to be collected from the addressee.

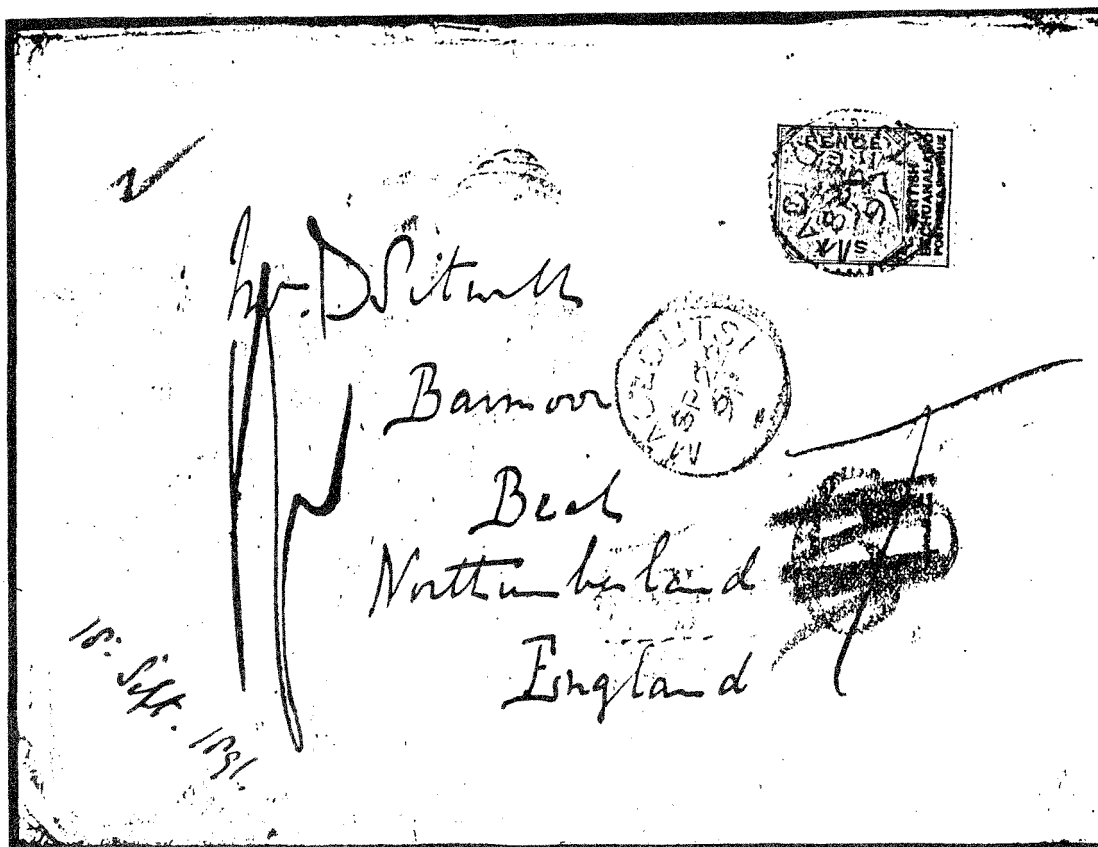


Figure 8 The cover posted at Macloutsie on Tuesday, 22nd September, 1891

**Letters, no cover, headed Macloutsie and dated 15th and 16th October, 1891 (3)**

"A wild windy night and a cold cloudy day, a vast [amount] of work to be done including the relief of two of the Despatch Riding Stations. They are riding their horses to death. Another instance of Troop Officers neglecting to send the best men on important duty, tho' they wd [would] grumble if they dared when I pick out men and horses at 5 minute notice and send them on long patrols from which both men and horses return in good order.

"However, I've called in all the horses and sent 3 salted ones to Tati Junction Post, leaving two men at Half Way Post and Quarter Way Post in charge of supplies and forage. So that a despatch rider from the furthest point need not starve in the wilderness.

"With a great effort I cleared off all the work of the week, and tomorrow ?? and I start with two orderlies and 5 horses on our Mission.

"By the Major's [Grey] advice we are taking a Scotch cart and 4 oxen, and they have gone on this evening.

"I doubt the lions will get the oxen, but at any rate a cart always makes a good base, and will come in handy to carry heads if we shoot any big game.

"I haven't had a glimpse of the sun for 2 days to correct my watch by, so I shall have difficulty with the longitude. But still difficulties only exist for the purpose of being defeated.

"My new hut is at last progressing, and my garden sprouting in all directions.

"The cold is intense and crinkles up our livers like winter apples, but it is better weather for travelling in than the awful heat.

"I don't think I have much else to report. It seems rather extraordinary, however, to start on an 8 or 10 day's march into an absolutely unknown country, with no more preparations than one would take at home to go on a railway journey of a few hours. A blanket, a tooth brush, a petrol tin and a frying pan represents all the personal baggage.

"Instruments and a notebook of course, *voile tout*.

"3 days bread, 5 days meal, and an emergency ration of bully beef for the rest we trust to our rifles.

"Certainly African campaigning kit has the merit of simplicity."

A note added the following day reads:

"Parade at 6.30 a.m. Bitterly cold. There is no more work to do, and we start in 2 hours time."

There is no hint in this letter as to where Sitwell was going, but this must have been the reconnaissance expedition along the Semokwe River which Sitwell states in his article was undertaken three months before his visit to Bulawayo. It is hardly surprising that at the end of the dry season he was to grossly underestimate the amount of water the Semokwe would carry when in flood, especially after exceptional rain.

**Cover with letters dated 9th and 10th June, 1892, posted Macloutsie 14th June, 1892 (11)**

The cover is annotated '10<sup>th</sup> June 1892' at bottom-left, and contained letters dated the 9th and 10th June. The franking is a single 6d stamp (SG 14), which was damaged before it was affixed, and which was cancelled with the 'MACLOUTSI' datestamp on Tuesday 'JU 14 / 92'. The cover was backstamped at Vryburg on Monday the 20th June, and delivered in Beal on the 11th July.

The letters, a total of 17 pages, are rather disappointing as they include little more than a lengthy description of a hunt, on horseback, with Lt. Marsham, which resulted in the shooting of two tsessebe. "Verily two days of sport fit for a king, and brought to a successful issue in spite of apparently hopeless odds. I am well pleased." (Sitwell recorded in his diary that he shot the tsessebe on the 8th June.) The only comments of historical interest are contained in the letter dated the 10th June.

"A longish morning in the Orderly Room destroying time expired papers and giving a wholesome slap in the face to my friend Capt. Browne, who commands the Hd Qr [Headquarters] Troop. He is too good a soldier to take offence and will help us all the more in future. . ."

"The doctor reported a civilian patient in the hospital to be dead. He was practically a dead man when they sent him here from Tuli."

"Rode out this afternoon with Father Ken and showed him the Macloutsie River. Inspected the graveyard, and a shooting match on the range. . ."

"Marsham buried the dead man this afternoon."

Capt., later Major, S.D. Browne, R.A., was the son of Gen. Sir Samuel Browne, V.C., of Sam Browne belt fame. He served with the BBP from the 31st March, 1892, until June 1894. The unfortunate corpse remains unidentified.

**Cover with letters dated 11th and 13th June, 1892, posted Macloutsie 14th June, 1892 (12)**

The cover is annotated '15<sup>th</sup> June 1892' at bottom-left, and is franked with a single 6d stamp (SG 14), which was cancelled with the 22 mm single-circle datestamp inscribed 'MACLOUTSI' on Tuesday 'JU 14 / 92'. It was therefore carried in the same post as the previous letter, and was backstamped at Vryburg on Monday the 20th June and delivered in Beal on the 11th July.

It is obvious from the letter dated the 11th June that Sitwell was bored and fed up:

"They can get someone else to prop up this Corps after my two years are up. The experience has been most valuable . . . but my sword is too highly tempered to stand in a hut. Its proper place is dangling against the ribs of a good horse, and I don't think that providence intended my pen to write in a magistrate's office. So when the Colonel arrives I shall dictate a testimonial for myself and make arrangements for Aldershot next April. . .

"Thanks to [Capt.] Greener and myself, the organisation and system of accounts in this Corps are at last definitely established. . .

"[Major] Grey returns tomorrow I am glad to say. . . The next step will be to decide how much Scott has to pay to make up for deficiencies caused by neglect."

Sitwell evidently received mail on Sunday the 11th June as the following day he again wrote to his mother saying how delighted he was to hear that she had "enjoyed all there was to see at Alnwick", and that he had received "very few letters this week".

"Grey arrived yesterday morning, and today has been an exceptionally busy day, tremendous mail and work increasing tho' entirely in the magistrate's department. Nothing for the good of the Corps.

"I am a bit savage accordingly. Another ? of cold weather has come, and I can hardly get any sleep at all. ½ inch of ice in the tubs this morning.

"I am sleeping on the floor, for then one cannot throw blankets off, and the hard ground suits me well."

A diary entry confirms that Major Grey arrived with the post cart on Sunday the 12th June.

**Letter, no cover, headed Macloutsie and dated 9th July, 1892 (16)**

Sitwell's letter of the 9th July, 1892, the first of the three quoted by Reitz<sup>29</sup>, starts with an account of the recovery of a lost remount and a grumble about unbroken horses, and continues:

"The artificers and farmers have applied today to go out lumbering timber for a fortnight. Knowing that Williams had got 50 large trees a few months ago, this afternoon I rode out with him along the Macloutsie banks to see whether they had all been brought in. We found one with about 70 feet of timber still untouched since it was felled, tho' we hadn't time [to] ride the whole of the banks, there are others without doubt. The artificers are all skilled workmen and do a great deal of valuable work, but they are all heavy drinkers and a fortnight's timber felling means for them a week's debauch.

"The river banks are tremendously dangerous, great brakes of reed and swamp grass, which has hid koodoo in the heart of the day, and likewise leopards, wolves, hyenas and occasionally bold Leo too.

"Last year's flood too has altered the river bed a good deal, and there are some enormous pools each of which contains one (?) crocodile.

"There is to be a sing song tonight. Full moon at 1 p.m. today and she rose in splendour 10 minutes before the sun went down.

"It will do the men good without doubt – the sing song – but I rather wish it were all over."

**Cover with letter dated 30th July, 1892, posted Macloutsie 2nd August, 1892 (18)**

This letter is quoted in full by Knight<sup>30</sup> in correspondence relating to the biography by Reitz. It is again concerned entirely with hunting in the company of Lt. Marsham.

**Cover with letters dated 9th and 11th August, 1892, posted Macloutsie 14th August, 1892 (19)**

" . . . In the evening I fit[ted]? in 3 hours work at the stars with Father Nicot. All the old observations for time, some new ones for latitude, and a final effort to get longitude by direct observation of the moon. . .

"Went down to the range this afternoon and practised with 12 of the rifle club, but I was not in good form. I have already proved myself the best shot in the Corps, so any score of mine that is not good must be bad. . .

"I propose resigning from the 14th April 1893, on which date I shall apply to join the Aldershot Division. I [will] also apply for leave from the 1st February to the 14th April. . .

"It is somewhat premature to send in my papers, but I have seen quite enough of S. Africa to know how matters are pigeon-holed and allowed to drag on."

#### Cover with letter dated 18th August, 1892, posted Macloutsie 19th August, 1892 (21)

This is one of the letters quoted by Reitz<sup>31</sup>, and is another concerned mainly with hunting. The paragraphs describing to the shooting of a roan antelope are omitted from the following extract.

"On Monday night I had a fairly satisfactory evening with the stars, tho' slightly impeded by the smoke of the veldt fire and one or two feathery clouds which from time to time reduced the stars of the 1st magnitude to impractical dimensions. Yesterday heartily sick of everything and the whole atmosphere and firmament surcharged and crackling with heat, I set out for the disputed territory with Trooper Hay the Orderly for the day, one of the Hays of Dums Castle who knows every field on Barmoor intimately. . .

"This morning an hour's parade under the Colonel [Carrington], who gave men and horses a deuce of a dusting. Did this batt(?) [battalion?] a lot of good and the field firing was really excellent. Immediately afterwards I sent Rae . . . to fetch in the rest of the meat.

"This afternoon I went fishing on the Macloutsie with Browne and Marsham; caught a lot of little ones."

#### Cover with letter dated 21st August, 1892, posted Macloutsie 21st August, 1892 (23)

This cover is one of the few franked with 2d and 4d stamps to make up the 6d rate. The backstamps are imperfectly struck, but the letter appears to have passed through Vryburg on the 5th September and to have reached Beal on the 26th of that month. These are the dates reported for another cover posted five days later on the 26th August, cover 24 in Table 1. There was therefore apparently a delay in the mail as the letter posted on the 21st August took 15 days to reach Vryburg rather than the normal six to eight.

"Church parade this morning consisting of only 5 men. However I turned out to it just to see that all was regular. 80 men on pass, and the remainder of the garrison on duty. . .

"Many thanks for what you tell me regarding cash and a possible allowance in the future.

"In addition to my papers this mail carries letters from me to the Intelligence and to ?, applying for an odd job if one is going in the neighbourhood of the Portuguese Frontier or Madagascar, and reporting the expiration of my present appointment to the latter, also adding that the reasons which precluded my accepting to become his A.D.C. formerly have been overcome.

"So at last I really feel in touch with the Queen's Army once more and no longer dependent on the caprice of the Colonial Office with their infernal full-pay and half-pay salaries and proclamations and civil servants."

#### Letter, no cover, headed Macloutsie and dated 25th August, 1891 (24)

It would seem almost certain that this letter, dated the 25th of August, 1892, has become separated from the cover posted on the following day, and the two are therefore grouped in Table 1. This is the last of the three letters quoted by Reitz<sup>32</sup>, and reveals some unexpected facets of Sitwell's character.

"Made very short work with the official letters yesterday [Wednesday] and put in an hour's sleep before lunch which I needed for I had had a stormy drill at sun-rise.

"No fault to find with the men, but Lt. Allen Wight, the worthy son of a Scotch Meenister [sic], honest and the soul of integrity tho' underbred, drove me perfectly wild. . .

"A miserable policeman. I can't call him a soldier.

"In the afternoon I went to Big Tree Hill on the Macloutsie to fish with Browne. Only caught one barbel but my word the beauty of the scene was beyond compare. A stretch of water a couple of hundred yards in length but varying in width, so very deep under the reeds, which grow 10 feet high . . . golden sands and sharply defined igneous rocks, now cropping up in the channel, now scarped sheer and precipitous into the water. Lumps of wrack and flood debris high up above the water line, a background of massive foliage and over all a sky of ethereal blue. Behind us the western horizon lit up with wonderful tints of pink and amber, all of which were faithfully mirrored in the pool. The trade wind had dropped with the setting sun, and a hush was over the scene which one only meets in tropical latitudes. Not silence for at least three varieties of kingfisher were busy fishing, thousands of reed birds twittered in the reeds, from time to time a great fish wallowed in the shallows and sent the small fry flashing over the surface of the water, a large horned owl was hooting in the bush and our watchful ears listened instinctively for the stamp and swish of our horse's tails, who were tethered in the veldt a hundred yards away from the bank.

"A wonderful sight to see, and stranger to listen to, which repaid us for the sport which was very indifferent. A close evening followed by a hot and breathless night, and at 3 this morning I was up and studied the stars for ¾ of an

hour. All old friends now, tho' the planets Mars and Jupiter blazing in the firmament are rather confusing at first. However, I located all the constellations visible in due course, and then slept peacefully till day break.

"Another very hot day and the Colonel didn't return till after lunch. However, I put in a very good morning's work and shot on the range in the afternoon, tho' not in good form.

"Visited the hospital in the evening: a dialogue with Father Nicot, and so another day has gone by."

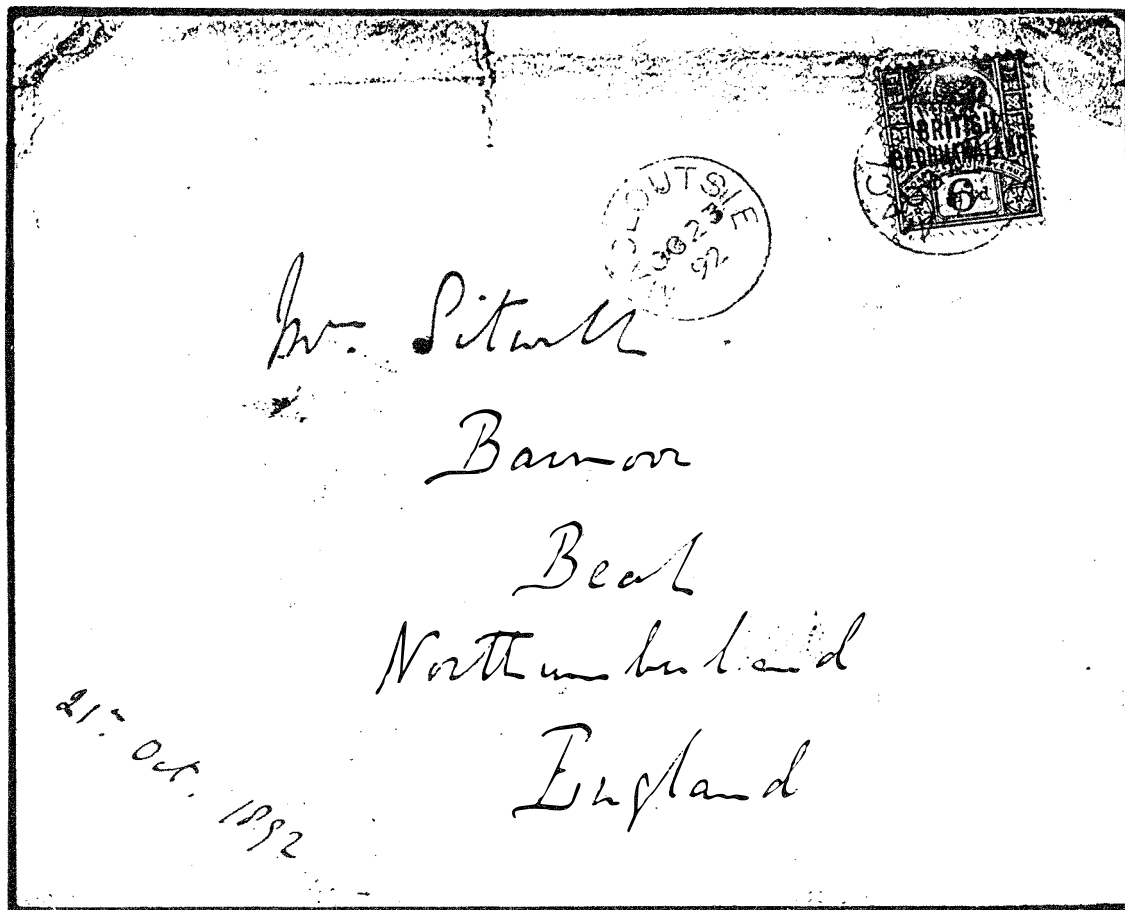


Figure 9 The cover posted at Macloutsie on Sunday 23rd October, 1892

**Cover with letters dated 13th and 15th September, 1892, posted Macloutsie 25th September, 1892 (26)**

The cover is annotated '25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1892' at bottom-left, but the letters it now contains are dated the 13th and 15th September and may at some time have been replaced in the wrong envelope. The franking is a single 6d stamp (SG 36), which was cancelled with the 22 mm single-circle datestamp inscribed 'MACLOUTSIE' on Sunday 'SP 25 / 92', the earliest recorded date for this mark. It was backstamped at Vryburg on Monday the 3rd October, and delivered in Beal on the 24th October.

The letter dated the 13th September is concerned almost entirely with Sitwell's duties as Adjutant, which included "an exhaustive examination of the books of the Sergeant's Mess, which is horribly in debt", and "lastly the very unpleasant duty of quietly pointing out to Ralph what an ass he has been making of himself. . . I must be off into the veldt tomorrow I think to give the liver a jog and remove vapours." This is indeed what he did as his letter dated the 15th September describes an afternoon spent hunting with a Troop Sergeant-Major, "no officer being available". His quarry on this occasion was a roan antelope. (Most of the rest of the letter concerns Ralph's inability to understand accounts.)

"A cart brought him in this morning, a fine head, tho' I am getting tired of killing roan antelope. This makes the 5th roan head, and I have 14 others ready to send home, 4 koodoo, 2 sable antelope, 3 wildebeest, 1 sessaby, 1 bush buck, 2 ? buck and 1 eland."

### Conclusions

Sitwell wrote to his mother every few days, but the only known letter referring to his travels was written before he made the reconnaissance trip to Matabeleland. He recorded in his diary that he wrote letters while he was at Bulawayo, and it is inconceivable that he did not write to his mother when he travelled through Mashonaland via Fort Victoria to Umtali. But where are the letters, and, more importantly, where are the covers in which they were sent?

### Acknowledgements

The photograph of the officers of the Bechuanaland Border Police in 1892 is published with the permission of the Director of the National Archives of Zimbabwe. The maps are reproduced with the permission of the British Library. We are indebted to the Ministry of Defence Whitehall Library, and in particular to Ms J. Blackwell, for information concerning Sitwell and Scott. John Taylor gave permission to quote Sitwell's diary, and describe and illustrate the accompanying letters and covers. Additional information concerning the covers and letters which comprise the Sitwell correspondence has been supplied by Lt.-Col. Sir John Inglefield-Watson, Alan MacGregor and Brian Trotter. Ian Johnstone, Michael Leach, Robson Lowe and Arnold Berman assisted in tracking down various references.

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## ADDENDUM

The Cape of Good Hope *Government Gazettes* for the second half of 1892 contained three other postal notices of interest. The first, dated the 10th October, 1892, which was published in the issue dated the following day (No. 7440, p.1993) relates to postage rates from the Cape to Bechuanaland Protectorate. The first part reads as follows:

**"CORRESPONDENCE FOR BRITISH  
BECHUANUINALAND PROTECTORATE.**

**I**t is hereby notified for general information that on and after the 1st November next the rates of Postage on Correspondence posted in the Cape Colony and its Dependencies, and addressed to offices in the British Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Districts of Tati and Buluwayo, will be made uniform with the existing Tariff to Mashonaland, and will be as follows:—

Letters	4d per ½oz.
Post Cards	1½d each.
Reply Paid Cards	Not at present authorised.
Newspapers	1d. for each paper not exceeding 4 ounces in weight.

**Book and Sample  
Packets**

Not exceeding 1 oz., 1d.  
Not exceeding 2 oz., 2d.  
Not exceeding 4 oz., 3d.  
Every additional 4 oz. or fraction thereof, 3d.

**Parcels**

Not exceeding 8 oz., 1s. 2d.  
Not exceeding 12 oz., 1s. 5d.  
Not exceeding 1 lb., 1s. 8d.  
Every additional 1 lb. or fraction thereof, 1s. 8d.

The Postal Administration of the Protectorate and the Districts named, has notified its intention of abolishing from the same date the fees at present charged on delivery of Correspondence addressed to those Territories when prepaid as above, and of adopting a similar tariff to that given above for Letters, etc., addressed to this Colony."

The letter rate was the same as previously, but the addressee would no longer be required to pay either the Protectorate or the Trans-Protectorate surcharge. The effective date was announced as the 1st November, 1892, but the equivalent notice published in the Bechuanaland Gazette, quoted above, announced this date as the 18th November, 1892. Neither notice provides any clue as to why the covers comprising the Sitwell correspondence – and a number of others addressed to the UK originating from Mashonaland – are franked at a 6d rather than an 8d rate. The second half of the notice lists the Protectorate and Trans-Protectorate offices. (Maggwe was presumably Mangwe.)

**Bechuanaland Protectorate**

Boulder Pits  
Gaberones  
Kanye  
Macloutsie

Mochudi  
Molopolole  
Palapye  
Palla  
Ramoutsa

**Trans-Protectorate**

Buluwayo  
Maggwe  
Tati

The second of the notices referred to, published in issue no. 7451 of the 18th November, 1892 (p.2304), was a rider to the first. The legal jargon can be translated as a simple statement that parcels, etc., could not be delivered to Trans-Protectorate offices because the service north of Macloutsie was still operated by runners.

The third notice, published in the *Gazette* dated the 29th November, 1892 (No. 7454, p.2366), announced that 1½d. postal stationery cards could be sent to Mashonaland from the 1st December, 1892.

**"CORRESPONDENCE FOR BRITISH  
BECHUANUINALAND PROTECTORATE.**

**W**ith reference to my Notice of the 10th of October last, on the above subject, it is hereby notified for general information that Book Packets, Samples and Parcels cannot be accepted for transmission to the Offices at Tati, Maggwe and Buluwayo, owing to the means of Transport being at present inadequate for the conveyance of these descriptions of mail matter.

BEN DUFF,

Acting Postmaster-General.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
17th November, 1892."

**"POST CARDS FOR MASHONALAND**

**I**t is hereby notified for general information that Post Cards at a postage of three half-pence each will be available for transmission from any Post Office in the Cape Colony or its dependencies to the British South Africa Company's Post Offices in Mashonaland, on and after the 1st of December next.

BEN DUFF,

Acting Postmaster-General.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
24th November, 1892. (2209/91)."





# B.B. STATIONERY ESSAY



## Inland Registered Letter Post.

Compensation given to Inland Registered following scale. — Amounting:—

£2 on payment of

£5 on payment of a to registration

£10 on payment of a to registration

Subject to the Conditions in as to Insurance of Inland

for loss or damage Letters according to amount not exceed-

registration fee only.

fee of 1d. in addition fee.

fee of 2d. in addition fee.

the published Regulations Registered Letters.

1886 Hand-painted stationery essay for a British Bechuanaland registered envelope. The artist has utilised a Great Britain Queen Victoria 2d blue 'K' size envelope which had printed compensation terms. These terms were not printed on the issued Bechuanaland envelopes (type H&G 5). The words 'British Bechuanaland' have been hand-painted in an arc in sans-serif black capitals above the embossed registration stamp. Very scarce.

For further details, please contact:

**ALAN MACGREGOR**

Member: PTS, SAPDA, APS

P O BOX 3130, CAPE TOWN 8000, SOUTH AFRICA

TEL. (+27 21) 000 4043 FAX (+27 21) 000 4707