

BRIC-A-BRAC: Mafeking Siege Slips, Lady Sarah Wilson and Mr. Ludwig Neumann

Presented is a leather-bound portfolio (marked inside IR Purdie 6 Mar 1919) containing issues of the MAFEKING MAIL and PROTECTORATE GUARDIAN 14th and 21st October 1899 and 1st edition MAFEKING MAIL SPECIAL SIEGE SLIPS dated 1st November 1899 through to 2nd June 1900, together with a typed news bulletin and two telegraphs. *Ex Libris* Sydney Mullne.

The following notes relate thereto.

THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING BEGINS: 14 October 1899

Mafeking ('Place of stones'), situated on the main railway line to the north, some thought strategically important to the British because of the supplies stockpiled here and because it was seen as a symbol of British rule by the black tribes in the region. This small town with about 1700 white and about 7500 black and coloured inhabitants, was defended by 1016 men, mostly locally recruited (including a 300-strong Town Guard) under Colonel R.S.S. Baden-Powell. Among the besieged are Lord Edward Cecil, son of the British Prime Minister and husband of Lady Violet (who is to marry Milner after being prematurely widowed), Major Hamilton Goold-Hamilton, Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland, Captain Gordon Wilson (husband of Lady Sarah Spencer Churchill) and several other famous people.

THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING ENDS: 16 May 1900

After 216 days the Republican forces abandon their positions and allow the relief column to enter the town and end the siege. During that time, 67 whites and 25 blacks were killed in action or died of wounds, 118 whites and 68 blacks were wounded.

Of the 333 civilians who died, 5 whites were killed or died of their wounds and 32 of disease or illness. No accurate record was kept of black civilian casualties, but it was very substantial; and mainly as a consequence of starvation and disease.

The Republicans lost 64 killed, 105 wounded and 108 captured.

Col. Plumer's Rhodesian Force and Col. Mahon's Relief Column had about 166 casualties during the relief operation. When they discovered the nature of that for which they had risked their lives, many expressed great disillusionment and even disgust.

PUBLISHING THE MAFEKING MAIL SPECIAL SIEGE SLIPS

The last full edition (No.22) of the MAFEKING MAIL and PROTECTORATE GUARDIAN was published on Saturday 14 October 1899, the first day of the siege; and the MAFEKING MAIL and PROTECTORATE GUARDIAN Special Siege Edition (No.23) dated Saturday 21 October 1899 but headed "re-printed on 23 October 1899".

On the 1 November 1899, a fortnight after the beginning of the siege, saw the publication by the same company of the first of the famous siege slips headed "THE MAFEKING SIEGE SLIPS" ... "ISSUED DAILY SHELLS

PERMITTING" "ONLY TERMS: ONE SHILLING PER WEEK, PAYABLE IN ADVANCE". They were to be numbered 1 to 152, of which 143 (less nos.45 & 56) appeared during the actual siege. The newspaper contained snippets of information - both parochial and national, General Orders and advertisements.

In this volume No. 88 is preceded by a carbon copy of a typed announcement detailing the capture of General Cronje and dated 8-3-00.

TELEGRAPHS

There are two rare British South Africa Company's Telegraph forms in the collection.

One, written in cursive, is from "Ludwig", dated London 13th to Gordon Wilson, Mafeking, the canceller "22 MAR 00 CROCODILE POOLS SOUTH AFRICA": "Delighted hear from you all well but most anxious for your relief markets firm fond thoughts & wishes"

The second from London dated 22/3/00 to Lady Sarah, Mafeking: "Thankful cable first victories everywhere relief Lady Smith wild enthusiasm London empire absolutely determined union Jack South Africa queen goes Ireland instead Italy".

CROCODILE POOLS Telegraph Office, first listed in 1897, was situated on the Cape Railway, well within British Bechuanaland and *en route* to the then embryonic Rhodesia. The Postal Agency of that name that existed during the Second Anglo-Boer War is thought to have been under the control of the Military Administration in Cape Town. In 1902, a Telegraph Office again is listed, finally to be closed 1 November 1914. The canceller "CROCODILE POOLS SOUTH AFRICA" is extremely rare and highly sought after.

LADY SARAH Isabella Augusta WILSON (née Spencer-Churchill) (1865-1929)

Sarah Spencer-Churchill RRC. was the 11th child of John Winston Spencer-Churchill, 7th Duke of Marlborough and Lady Frances Anne Emily Vane. She married Lt.Col. Gordon Chesney Wilson in 1891. She traveled to Africa in the months preceding the siege of Mafeking to join her cavalry-officer husband and thereby find a degree of distraction from English societal boredom. On 7 December 1899, and with the reluctant permission of Col. Baden-Powel, she was permitted to enter Mafeking in exchange for the release of a certain P Viljoen who had been imprisoned for horse theft prior to the start of hostilities. Her experiences are related in South African Memories [1909].

GORDON CHESNEY WILSON (1865-1914)

Capt. (later Lieutenant Colonel) Gordon Wilson was the only son of Sir Samuel Wilson Kt., and Jeannie Campbell. He married Sarah Spencer-Churchill on 21 November 1891. He was killed in action on 6 November 1914, aged 49 years, a member of the Royal Horse Guards; and is buried where he died, in Zillebeke, Belgium.

MR. LUDWIG NEUMANN (1859-1934)

Ludwig Neumann, the third son of Gustav Neumann, a merchant and banker, and Babette Goldscheider, was born in Fürth (near Nurnberg), Bavaria.

At the time of the 1881 England and Wales Household Census, he was boarding with a Mariann Williamson, a retired governess, at 84 Elgin Crescent, London (Middlesex). He was a clerk in a Diamond business.

He married Rosie Lilienfeld in Port Elizabeth in 1889. She died on 11 November 1895. She was later immortalized in the name of his niece, Rosie Violet Nina Millicent Newman (née Neumann).

His brother, Sir Sigismund Neumann (later anglicized to Sigmund Newman), 1st Baron Newman of Newmarket (1857-1916), was created a baronet on 6 February 1912.

With the object of establishing a hospital in support of British war effort in South Africa, on 29 December 1899, Lady Georgiana Curzon (later Howe: sister of Lady Sarah Wilson) and Lady Chesham, issued an appeal from Blenheim Palace to the British public for subscriptions.

The core establishment was as follows:

President: The Queen, then Princess of Wales.

Vice-Presidents: The Princess of Wales and Duchess of Connaught.

Chairman of Committee: Countess Howe.

Vice-Chairmen of Committee: Countess of Warwick and Viscountess Valentia.

Hon. Secretary: Earl Howe.

Treasurer: Ludwig Neumann, Esq.

Military Adviser: Major-General Lord Cheylesmore.

Hon. Civilian Director and Treasurer in South Africa: J.G. Hamilton, Esq.

Various working committees were established. In the General Working and Transport Committees we find mention of Mrs. S(igmund) Neumann together with others; in the Finance and the Gifts and Purchase Committees was Mr. Ludwig Neumann.

REFERENCE: **Monday, 14 November 14, 2005** © 2008. Dr R M Pelteret. All rights reserved. www.pelteret.co.za

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- 3) Putzel, RF. The Encyclopaedia of South African Postal Offices and Postal Agencies Vol I (A-E). Hale & Putzel. 1986.
- 4) Putzel, RF. The Postmarks of South Africa and Former States and Colonies Vol 2 (C-D). Ralph F Putzel. ND.
- 5) Pelteret, RM. The Mafeking Special Siege Slips. SA Philatelist 1999;75(5):132-36.
- 6) Commissioned Officers of the Medical Services of the British Army 1660-1960. Vol.I. W Johnston. Gen.Ed. FNL Poynter. Publ. The Wellcome Historical Library, London. 1968
- 7) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints : <http://www.familysearch.org>
- 8) Finlay, D.W., 1993. "Crocodile Pools Siding - occupation by Imperial and Boer forces, October 1899 to May 1900, and postal agency". Runner Post 1933; 33:683-685