

SIEGE NOTES – WINDOWS TO THE PAST

PART II

John E. Sandrock

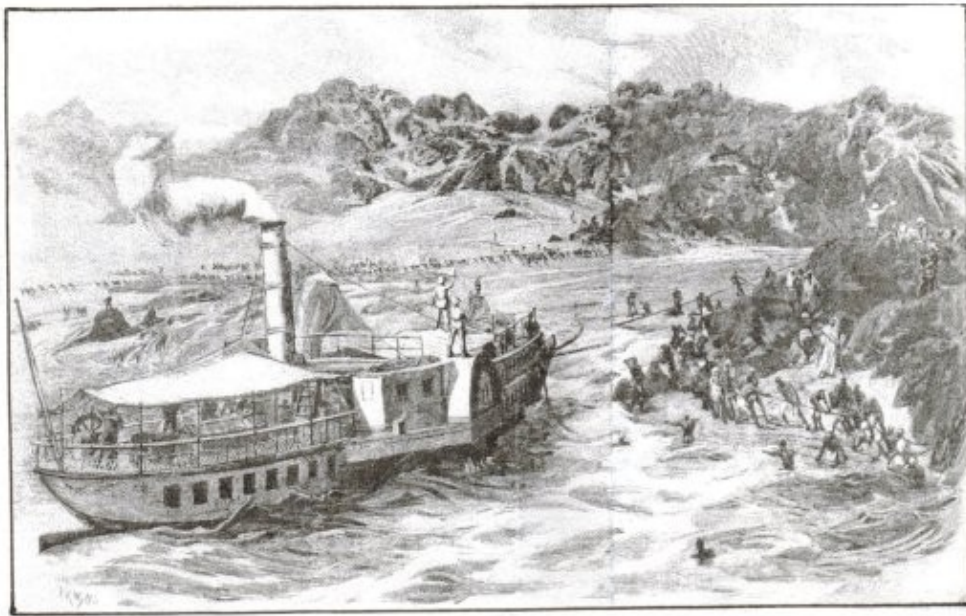
The Siege of Khartoum

After the completion of the Suez Canal in Egypt, the British found themselves more and more drawn into Egyptian affairs. Gradually they completed the conquest of the upper Nile valley concentrating their efforts on the suppression of the Arab slave trade in the Sudan. At that time much anti-foreign unrest existed in Egypt. This agitation was directed toward outright nationalism. Because of this and to protect their interests, the British were forced to occupy Cairo, setting up a British dominated Egyptian government there. By 1883 outright opposition to this arrangement had taken root. The leader of this hostility was a desert warrior-prophet calling himself the Mahdi (the Long-Expected One). After completely wiping out an Egyptian-led force of 1700 men at El Obeid south of Khartoum on Nov 5, 1883, the Mahdi organized a great religious movement throughout the Sudan aimed at overthrowing the nefarious Egyptian rule. A vigorous offensive was directed at the Red Sea ports until, one by one, the Sudanese provinces succumbed to the Mahdi's forces.

The British government, opposed to further colonial adventures and seeking to avoid further humiliation, advised a reluctant Egyptian government to evacuate their subjects from Khartoum and to abandon the Sudan. On January 18, 1884 Major General Charles Gordon was ordered to the Sudan to oversee the evacuation of the Egyptian garrisons. The man sent to do the job was none other than "Chinese" Gordon of Taiping Rebellion fame. While in China he had voluntarily led an international force known as the "Ever Victorious Army" which saved Shanghai and the foreigners there from annihilation at the hands of the Taiping rebels.

Seven river steamers were available to send upriver to the aid of Khartoum. This plan of evacuation sounded good, but was something else when actually put into practice. For one thing, the upper Nile was largely uncharted. Another obstacle was the river cataracts which made navigation difficult and dangerous. Some of these were only passable in both directions from April to September. The second third and fourth cataracts presented the greatest obstacle to upstream traffic, as these were negotiable only with the aid of hundreds of men on towropes. A plan was worked out which called for evacuation by steamer downriver from Khartoum to Abu Hamid, then overland by camel to Korosko and thence down the Nile to Cairo. By this route the perilous

cataracts could be avoided, as well as the hostile tribes along the banks of the Nile. This plan also saved time by not taking the circuitous river bends between the two towns. It was estimated it would take eleven roundtrips using three of the seven boats to accomplish the evacuation of all who chose to leave the garrison. Each steamer could carry 500 persons and an additional load in two native boats towed behind. In this manner 1700 people could be accommodated per trip downriver. The remaining steamers were used for close protection below Khartoum, making sorties to break up enemy concentrations and to capture cattle to augment the garrison's food supply. For this purpose the steamers were converted into small warships with the addition of Krupp breech-loading cannon.



An armed steamer being towed up the Nile and over the Second Cataract

At first all went well until the Madhi's army gathered strength cutting off the river escape route. Gordon soon found himself surrounded and besieged in Khartoum.

Gordon was no stranger to the Sudan, having served there as Governor General from 1877 to 1880. At this time the influence of the Ottoman Empire in the region was fading, while that of Great Britain was ascending. The Expected One and his followers found themselves on a collision course with this new superpower, the *de facto* administrator of Egyptian affairs.

Khartoum, the principal market town of the region, lay at the confluence of the White and Blue Nile rivers some 1750 miles upriver from Cairo. It was the seat of Egyptian authority in the Sudan. When Gordon arrived at the garrison there, he found himself an unwilling participant in a holy war. Discovering that the loyalty of the Egyptian troops he commanded was at best neutral, and therefore useless to him,

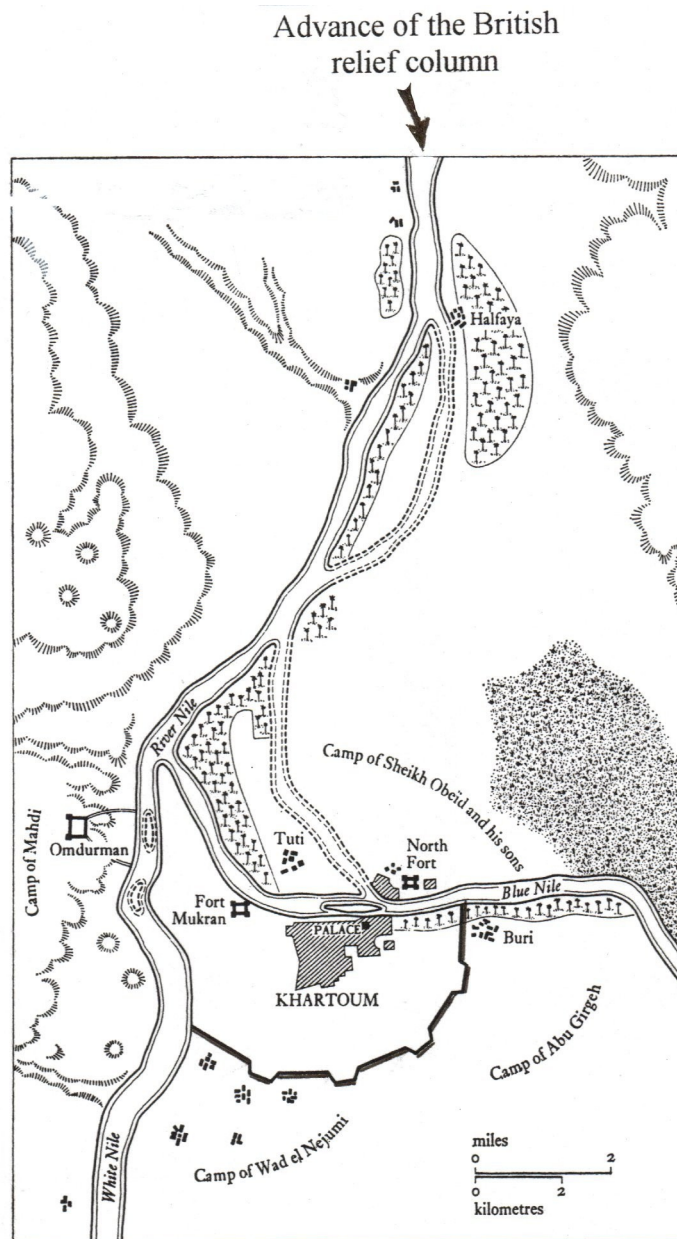
Gordon requested immediate assistance from the British government. He requested that a slave trader named Zubeir Pasha be sent from Cairo to assist in negotiations with the Madhi. The government hesitated. Gordon then asked for British regulars to reinforce the Khartoum garrison. Nothing happened. Finally, in exasperation, he resigned his commission. His resignation was refused. Instead of rendering assistance Parliament told him to save himself while he still maintained control of the Nile and to abandon Karthoum and its citizens to their fate. This Gordon refused to do.

Realizing that he was on his own, Gordon began by strengthening the garrison's defenses, relying on self-preservation as an incentive for the Egyptian troops to cooperate. As he worked on the new defenses, one outlying garrison town after another fell to the Madhi's army. On March 15, 1884 the Madhi arrived before Karthoum, cutting the only remaining telegraph wire to civilization. The siege of Karthoum had begun.

Meanwhile the British government endlessly debated Gordon's fate. Time after time proposed courses of action were delayed. Gordon's position was becoming increasingly perilous. Belatedly realizing that something must be done, Parliament authorized the "Gordon Relief Expedition". The generals, however, could not decide on the best plan of action. Some favored an overland approach through the desert, while others favored using the Nile. Their positions atrophied and more time was lost. The squabbling lasted for several months. In the end both sides had their way, settling on both a desert and river approach. While Gordon remained within the city walls, the British cavalry was transformed into a camel corps, and British regulars were augmented by men from Canada, knowledgeable in the art of riverboat navigation.

The relief expedition was headed by British General Wolsely, a close friend of Gordon. Arriving at Wadi Halfa on the upper Nile with his first batch of double-ended whaleboats on October 14, 1884 he immediately set out to relieve the siege. These large craft could carry a 12,000 pound load and a crew of ten. It took many weeks to bring the boats up through the second cataract on the Nile. By Christmas day 800 men had ascended the river as far as Korti some 400 miles below Khartoum.

Meanwhile Gordon continued his preparations for a protracted siege. He had at his disposal the four river steamers, which had been sent upriver before the siege. These he used to maintain communications downriver, running the gauntlet of the Madhi's army which was sniping at them from the banks of the Nile. Messages could be smuggled in and out, but there was no way to know whether or not they would get through.



The siege of Khartoum, showing Gordon's defensive position between the White and Blue Nile.



Major General Charles Gordon of the British army. Known as “Chinese Gordon” for his earlier heroics while fighting during the Taiping Rebellion, he was sent to the Sudan by the British government to evacuate British citizens from Khartoum in face of a mounting “holy war” being fanned by a desert warrior calling himself the “Mahdi”. He soon found his forces caught up in a do-or-die situation.

It was not long before his government letter-of-credit was exhausted leaving him with no way to pay his troops. A desperate shortage of cash existed due to hoarding; and the money, which had been sent from Cairo had not arrived. To guarantee their loyalty, Gordon reasoned, the troops must be paid. To solve this problem a lithographic press was set up to print serially numbered currency notes in denominations ranging from 1 to 5000 piastres. Later some notes of L50 were produced. A total of 91,700 banknotes were printed. Their aggregate worth was L168,500. The first 50,000 notes issued were signed by Gordon himself, a horrendous effort considering the time involved and the heat of central Africa. Later on, a rudimentary technique was developed wherein the notes could be signed hectographically. The early difficulty in getting the troops and merchants to accept the notes was soon overcome, to the extent that they were soon being counterfeited!

Stating that he was personally responsible for the liquidation of the siege notes, Gordon invited anyone to bring action against him in a civil capacity to recover their money. Controversy surrounding their redemption lasted for several years after Gordon’s massacre at the hands of the Madhi.

All notes were dated April 24, 1884 in Arabic. Denominations issued were 1, 5, 10, 20, 100, 500 1000, 2000, 2500 and 5000 piastres. Khartoum siege notes are difficult to identify, as no numeric denominations are indicated on the notes themselves. Unless one can read Arabic, identification can best be made by studying the design beneath the Arabic rectangle caption at the top of each note.

Here are found various geometric forms, each representing a different Arabic

denomination. These include circles, ovals, rectangles, half moons and diamond shapes. The notes carry the hand-stamp of the “Gouvernorat General du Soudan” in English and in Arabic, together with Gordon’s Arabic signature seal. The author has in his collection a 100 piastre note with a violet oval hand-stamp on the reverse placed there by one Titto Figari, “Avocat a la Cour” (Barrister of the Court) at Le Caire (Cairo) which lends credence to the theory that court actions did, in fact, follow the siege.



A 100 piastre note from the siege of Karthoum. The note is signed by General Gordon in his own hand, and is also authenticated with his Arabic signature seal.

General Gordon kept a diary while under siege which has survived. It makes fascinating reading, portraying vividly the portending doom. A few select excerpts follow: December 3: “ This morning the Arabs fired eight rounds at us. Twenty shells fell in town yesterday, but none did any harm.”... “5PM: Artillery duel going on between our two guns and the Arab gun; our practice is very bad.”... “7PM: Another battle! (the third today). The Arabs came down the river and fired on the Palace. 7:10PM: battle over, we are as we were, minus some cartridges”. December 4: “Was at Omdurman Fort all night. They had a man wounded yesterday. The Arabs at Goba are quiet after their exertions of yesterday”... “I tried to entice the Arabs at Goba into a fight this evening, but they would not be drawn. They only replied with two shells, which fell into the river.” December 5: “We are going to make an attempt to relieve Omdurman Fort (really things are looking very black). The men who came in say the Madhi is short of ammunition.”... “A soldier deserted today to the Arabs. I have almost given up the idea of saving the town; it is a last resort, this attempt we make to open the route to Omdurman Fort”. December 6: “The steamers went down and fired on the Arabs at Omdurman”... “We have L150 in cash left in the treasury.”... “In the affair today we had three killed and thirty-six wounded in the steamers, the Arabs came down in good force.” December 7: “The 270th day of our imprisonment.”... “It is rumored the cock turkey (Madhi) has killed one of his companions, reason not known (probably some

harem infidelity).”... “A soldier escaped from the Arabs and came in; he says the Expeditionary Force has captured Berber and is approaching.”... “In the *Ismalia* were eighty bullet holes in the water line of her hull. These were stopped by screws made for the purpose.” December 10: “Truly I am worn to a shadow with the food question; it is one continual demand.”... “The Arabs are shaping the stones they fire like the shells of their guns; they will soon spoil the rifling of their guns if they continue this.” December 11: “I have given the whole garrison an extra months pay – I will not hesitate to give them L100,000, if I think it will keep the town.” December 12: “We have in hand 1,796,000 rounds rifle ammunition; 540 rounds Krupp; 6000 rounds mountain gun ammunition; L140 in specie; L18,000 in paper money in the treasury!! And another L60,000 in town in paper; 110,000 okes of biscuits and 700 ardebs of dhoora.” December 13: “We are going to send down the *Bordeen* the day after tomorrow, and with her I shall send this journal. If some effort is not made before ten days time, the town will fall. If the Expeditionary Force has reached the river and met my steamers, one hundred men are all that we require, just to show themselves.”... “The buglers on the roof, being short of stature, are put on boxes to enable them to fire over the parapet.”..... and finally on December 14: “Arabs fired shells at the Palace this morning; only 546 ardebs of dhoora remain in store!; also 83,525 okes of biscuit”... “The steamers are down at Omdurman engaging the Arabs, consequently I am on tenterhooks!”... “Now mark this: if the Expeditionary Force does not soon come, the town will fall; and I have done my best for the honor of our country. Good by.”

A month later the Madhi took Khartoum, massacring Gordon and the entire garrison. General Wolsely’s relief force arrived at Khartoum on January 28, 1885, two days after the massacre was over.

The Madhi did not live long enough to enjoy his victory. He died six months later of typhus. Thirteen years later, in 1898, another expeditionary force under command of General Horatio Kitchener won a decisive victory, killing eleven thousand of the Madhi’s surviving religious fanatics, thus reestablishing British control over the region. The final indignity occurred when the Madhi’s bones were located, dug up and thrown into the Nile.

Of the siege notes, most were destroyed during and immediately after the fall of Khartoum. Of the total 91,700 notes issued, only 3,000 or 4,000 escaped destruction when Khartoum was overrun.

The Sieges of Koffyfontein and O’okiep

When first coming to Africa, the Dutch settled at the Cape of Good Hope, setting up a colony there in 1652. Cape Town originally was a supply station serving East India Company ships en-route to the Spice Islands. It wasn’t long before settlers from Holland arrived to raise cattle for this lucrative trade. These cattlemen and farmers soon

spread beyond their Cape Colony into the hinterland, subduing the native Zulus and Hottentots as they went.

By the Treaty of Paris, drawn up at the conclusion of the Napoleonic War (May 30, 1814), Britain was awarded possession of the Cape settlements. From this moment on constant struggles took place between the British and the original Dutch inhabitants (Boers). The Boers, irritated by British interference in their affairs, made the Great Trek north in search of new lands upon which to settle. In 1856 they set up the republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal and recognized each other's independence. Diamonds were discovered in 1867 at a site on the Orange River. In 1871 the town of Kimberly was founded, soon becoming the center of a flourishing diamond industry. This, and the discovery of gold in the Transvaal in 1886, completely changed the economic composition of South Africa from agricultural to industrial. The British then rapidly annexed all available territory displacing the native populations. The Boers, finding themselves landlocked wanted access to the sea. This brought on further conflict, which led to the Boer War of 1899-1902.

Koffyfontein, a small mining town near Kimberly, was occupied by the British during the Boer War. The forces there were besieged by the Dutch during the war. During the siege, Major Robertson authorized the release of a five pound siege note. This single Koffyfontein note carries the heading "Koffyfontein



Koffyfontein was an important South African diamond mining town. During the Boer War the British forces were besieged there, causing Major Robertson, the garrison commander, to issue this 5 pound note dated January 1, 1901.

Besieged", is dated January 1, 1901, and has as its principal motif a likeness of the British union jack. The note is signed by Major Robertson.

O'okiep was an insignificant copper mining town in the Cape Colony. It eventually became the headquarters of the Cape Copper Mining Company. The Dutch laid siege to the town in 1902 toward the end of the Boer War. Typewritten siege notes were issued entitled "O'okiep Siege Note" which were dated May 1902, the month the war ended. O'okiep siege notes were in denominations of 10 shillings, 1 and 2 pounds.

The Siege of Mafeking

From the beginning of settlement conflict existed between the Dutch farmers called "Boers", their neighbors the British, and the native Zulu and Bantu tribes of the interior. The British initially prevailed; however the Boers rose in revolt in 1881, successfully defeating them. Britain then formally recognized the independence of the Orange Free State and Transvaal as Boer states. After gold and diamonds were discovered, both sides began coveting one another's territory becoming convinced that the other was plotting to annex its own territory.

When president Kruger threatened to incorporate Boers living in Natal and the Cape Colony into his own land, another war became inevitable. Combining to form the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, known in English as the South African Republic, to avoid being swamped by the numerically superior British settlers, the Boers found themselves standing alone against the might of the world's sole superpower.

The Boers began to arm themselves with modern weapons, particularly the new German Mauser rifle. The British force at this time numbered 46,000, while the Boer army had 87,000 men. After Kruger's ultimatum concerning the confederation of the Boer republics was rejected, war was declared on October 11, 1899. The Boers were hunters, preferring to use rifles and waiting tactics, the same as in hunting. At war's opening they quickly went on the offensive laying siege to the towns of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberly. Trenches played an important part in the sieges of these three towns. The Boers relied upon the physiological impact of artillery bombardment and starvation to overcome the British garrisons. Although gaining victory upon victory in their initial campaigns, the Boers relied too heavily upon siege warfare, tying down half their resources, thus losing their offensive momentum.

Anticipating the outbreak of war, the British sent Colonel Baden-Powell, a cavalry officer, to Mafeking to evacuate its 1500 white inhabitants. Before this could be accomplished the Boers surrounded the town trapping its inhabitants. The siege was to last for 217 days. The stage was now set for one of the greatest sagas in British military history.



Colonel Baden-Powell, the hero of the siege of Mafeking, later went on to organize the Boy Scout movement.

Of the three besieged towns Mafeking, located in the northern Cape Colony on the Transvaal border, was the least significant, a dust bowl of little strategic value. The town consisted of little more than a market square containing the municipal offices and the Dixon Hotel with the railway station and workshops adjacent.

Surrounded, outgunned, and with an inferior force and little artillery, Mafeking's survival would depend upon the initiative, cunning and resourcefulness of its commander, and his skill as a military strategist. This siege was unlike other sieges, as Mafeking was surrounded by open ground, there being no fortress involved. Being short of artillery, Baden-Powell instructed his men after firing a cannon to immediately drag it through the trenches to the next perimeter location and to fire it again. The accumulated effect was to lead the Boers to believe that Mafeking was well supplied with artillery and that the British were merely conserving ammunition. On another occasion he observed his men ducking, twisting and crawling beneath the perimeter barbed wire when returning to camp after a day in the trenches. After running out of barbed wire, Baden-Powell ordered his men to continue erecting posts and to return to camp each night by crawling in the same manner. Seeing the posts from their distant observation point, but not being able to see the wire, the Boers were convinced that an assault upon Mafeking would prove too costly.

After their initial losses, the British informed Baden-Powell that he must prepare to hold out until the middle of May. This news came as a heavy blow as shortages were already becoming apparent. After receiving the disquieting news, the siege then settled down to a day-to-day routine. Sniping continued and the town was shelled daily. In all, the Boers lobbed over 20,000 shells at the defenders. Sundays were off limits, with both sides agreeing to a day of rest. To keep up morale Cricket matches and band concerts were organized.

Baden-Powell also had a flare for the dramatic. Fearing that there may be spies in the town, he made a sign and posted it one morning in the market square which read:

“ There are in town today nine known spies. They are hereby warned to leave before 12 noon tomorrow, or they will be apprehended.”

Setting up headquarters in Dixon's Hotel, he used homing pigeons to fly messages out of the besieged town. He also pressed the boys of the town into a corps of runners whose job it was to carry messages by bicycle from one defense location to another.

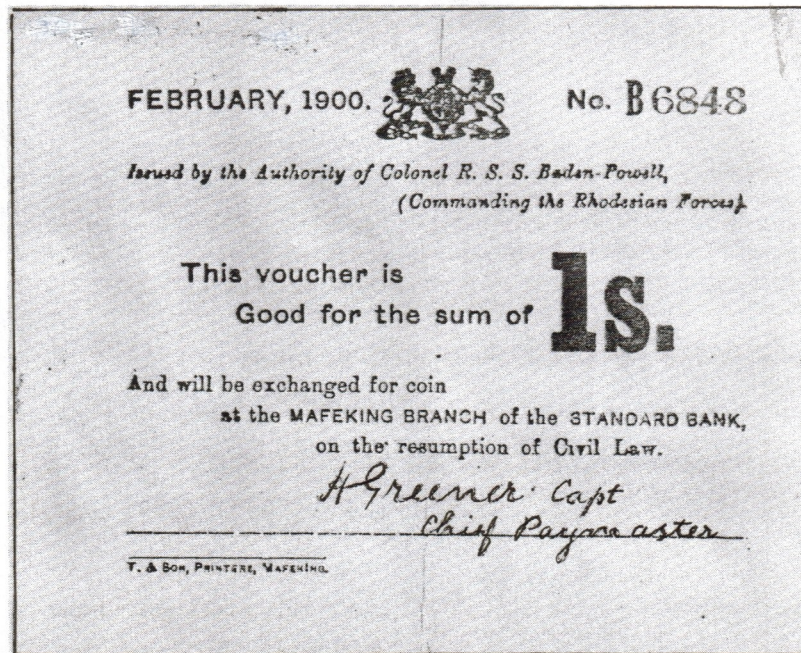
By now, however, the constant shelling, monotony and continuing call to arms were beginning to take their toll. Shortages were becoming more acute by the day. Rationing of food started in November. A month later garrison members were beginning to die of starvation. To alleviate the food shortage Baden-Powell ordered horses to be slaughtered and soup kitchens set up. The soup produced consisted of half a horse at 250 pounds; mealie meal, 15 pounds and oat husks, 50 pounds. This concoction made 132 gallons of mush like soup. Horsemeat was also used to make sausage, using the horse's gut for skins. As rations were further reduced the townsfolk took to frying locusts. When asked what he thought of them, one trooper replied: “They're not so bad, they have all the full aroma, flavor and consistency of chewed string.”

To alleviate his shortage of cannon Baden-Powell improvised by refurbishing an old artillery piece found on Rowland's Farm. It was a 1792 vintage ship's canon, which was then being used by Mr. Rowland as a lawn ornament. The gun was taken to the railway workshop and renovated there. Special cannon balls were made for it. The reconstructed gun was nicknamed “The Wolf” and served well in the defense of Mafeking.

In another ploy Baden-Powell had his men fill small cardboard boxes with sand to simulate land mines, which were then buried outside of town. To add realism he took some of the precious dynamite available to “test” the minefields efficiency. The Boers kept their distance.

By the end of 1899 the garrison's finances were in disarray. The shortage of small change was so acute, it was impossible to sell less than sixpenny worth of flour to a customer as smaller coins no longer circulated. Banknotes, coins and postage stamps had by now all disappeared. Something had to be done. Baden-Powell was equal to the occasion. He authorized the immediate issue of small denomination siege notes to be backed by South Africa's Standard Bank. In January the garrison “mint” commenced printing notes and postage stamps to meet the needs of the townspeople, the stamps satisfying the need for “small change”.

The Mafeking siege notes were issued from January through May 1900. The first issue consisted of one, two and three shilling notes. These were printed by the local printer Townsend and Son on blue ruled notebook paper or on railroad stationery. The 1 and 2 shilling notes are dated January or February 1900, while



One shilling siege note of Mafeking. Placed under siege in 1899 at the outbreak of the Boer War, the town soon ran out of money. The British garrison solved the problem by issuing necessity money, which served as the sole medium of exchange for 217 days, until Mafeking was relieved on 18 May 1900.

the 3 shilling banknote was only issued in January. One and two shilling notes dated March, 1900 were printed but never issued. The notes, as one would expect, are relatively crude affairs. The basic design shows the British arms at top flanked by date and serial number. Beneath this is a line which reads "This voucher is good for the sum of 1s, etc.". The text which follows promises that the "note will be exchanged for coin at the Mafeking branch of the Standard Bank upon the resumption of civil law." Values were printed in green, brown and red respectively for the three notes. All notes; with exception of the unissued notes dated March 1900, are signed by the Chief Paymaster, Capt. H. Greener. These notes were meant to contain a dry embossed one penny revenue stamp, but few notes ever received them.

The ten shilling note has proven the most popular with collectors. A large note, measuring 120 x 160mm, the ten shilling carries the heading "Mafeking Siege Note" and contains a wood-cut of two soldiers manning cannon in the defense of the town. They were issued only in March 1900. Better paper was used for this issue, the note being printed in olive green. An interesting error appears on the earlier ten shilling notes. On these the word "Commanding" in the bottom line of text is misspelled, with the letter

“d” omitted. The error was soon detected and corrected resulting in the existence of two varieties of the note.



Siege of Mafeking, ten shilling note, dated March 1900 showing artillery used in defense of the town. Printed locally, the earlier notes contain an error. The error appears in the bottom line of text where the word “Commanding” is misspelled as “Commaning”. The second printing, of which this note was one, corrected the deficiency, thus creating two varieties of the 10 shilling note.

The final siege issue, a L1 note, was personally designed by Baden-Powell. It also is dated March 1900 and was photographically produced by the ferroprussiate process. They were printed on blue architects paper. The L1 note is a neat piece of propaganda designed to lift the spirits of the sagging garrison. It prominently shows Colonel Baden-Powell standing by a British flag and the cannon nicknamed “Wolf”, flanked by riflemen and a kneeling woman. All are hand-signed and numbered. Less than seven hundred of these notes entered circulation, making them the rarest of the Mafeking siege notes.

In addition to the notes described above, several essays of various denominations were prepared containing designs, which were never adopted. Also exceedingly scarce

are the few notes, which were printed on the backs of Bechuanaland Government stationery, to make up for the shortage of paper. There were other related British issues of necessity money during the Boer War not directly relating to the siege at Mafeking. The most interesting of these consisted of notes issued by the Upington Border Scouts due to the unavailability of other money. Authorized by the Paymaster, notes of 2, 5, 10 shilling and 1 and 2 pounds denomination were handwritten on scraps of green military cloth. All carry the hand-stamp of the Upington Border Scouts, were dated March 1, 1902 and then hand-signed by Major Birkbeck, Officer in Charge. After the war the notes were fully redeemed.



At the end, rations for the garrison were reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of meal per man per day. Sausage production stopped. In an effort to increase the meager food supply, former cattle rustlers were rounded up and sent outside in search of steer. Nor did Baden-Powell's never-ending ingenuity and improvisation stop. When the Boers showed interest in making night attacks, he borrowed some acetylene from a traveling salesman who had been trapped in the town when first invested, and made a portable searchlight of it. The light was placed at the top of a pole, which could be turned by hand-crank. Shown several times a night from different locations, it produced 360 candlepower and was a great success.

The British public watched Mafeking with keen interest during the Siege. Baden-Powell's incredible game of bluff soon won him a hero's status. With the Boers in full retreat in April 1900, the British made a major effort to relieve Mafeking. With the help of Canadian and Australian forces the British succeeded in lifting the siege of Mafeking at 4.00 A.M. on the morning of 17 May 1900 after the town had suffered 389 casualties. The entry of the relief column into Mafeking set off an orgy of celebration around the British Empire that was to last for weeks.

Following the loss of their capital, Pretoria, the Boers switched their strategy and began to use guerrilla war tactics, which was to prolong the war for another two years. During this timeframe General Kitchener, of Sudan fame, succeeded in subduing the remaining Boers.

After returning to an adoring England after the war, Baden-Powell gave up his military career to turn his attention to the education of young boys. He wanted to provide the boys with a good solid education while at the same time encouraging them. Drawing upon his experience with his young runners at Mafeking, he realized that young people, properly motivated, were quite ready to take on responsibility and to be of service. From this beginning the Boy Scout movement was born, eventually spreading to all corners of the globe.

The Siege of Scutari

Our final siege took place on the frontier of the old Ottoman Empire in what is today northern Albania. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the power of the Ottoman Turks was in decline throughout the empire. Encouraged by administrative and economic chaos, many of the titled Pashas, who once had served the sultan, seized upon the opportunity to become independent of Constantinople. During this period the Albanians had to struggle not only against the repression of the Turks, but also from the encroachments of their neighbors. In 1912 a national uprising took place in the mountainous north. The sudden collapse of the Turkish army left the Albanians exposed to the onslaught of their Montenegrin, Serbian and Greek neighbors. The Montenegro army placed Scutari and the fortress of Tarabosh, garrisoned by Turkish troops, under siege without delay. This, together with the Serbs' sudden advance into Albania, and the Greek intention to occupy southern Albania alarmed Austria-Hungary and Italy, the two dominant powers in the region. They quickly brokered an agreement with all parties, which would essentially create an independent Albania. By creating an independent Albanian state, Austria-Hungary and Italy effectively blocked Serbian expansion to the Adriatic Sea. It was at this time that Kosovo, with its 800,000 Albanians, was awarded to Serbia. As an interim measure the Turkish general Essad Pasha formed a provisional government in the north.

One of the few tangible assets in the region was the railway the Austrians were then in the process of building. Essad Pasha immediately took control of the Albanian Railway and its branches. The newly printed railway tickets were seized for use by his treasury as a form of currency, as Essad Pasha had few other immediate sources of income. Many of these "tokens" found their way to Scutari.

The fortress at Tarabosh was placed under siege by the Montenegrins in October, 1912 and taken by them six months later, on April 22, 1913. The Turkish general in

command, Essad Pasha worked out an agreement which allowed his soldiers to leave with their arms. Later King Nicholas of Montenegro was forced by the international commission overseeing Albanian independence to relinquish control over Scutari. Confusion and disorder were to reign in the area until the outbreak of World War I, whereupon Albania was again carved up by the belligerents.

Dr. Arnold Keller, in his book *Das Papiergeld des Ersten Weltkriegs, teil 1, Europa* makes mention of the Scutari siege notes, as the first paper money of Albania. The four notes are uniface on cardboard of different colors. Since Turkish currency was in use at that time, they are denominated in para and grosh, the monetary equivalent being one grosh equaled forty para. The 5 para is printed in brown, the 10 para black, ½ grosh blue, and the 1 grosh token purple.



Railway tickets were used as necessity money during the siege of the Turkish fortress at Scutari by the Montenegrin army. When viewed horizontally, this crudely printed 10 para token depicts a train of cars passing beneath mountains.

The basic design is that of a steam passenger train with mountains in the background. These were the mountains where the fortress of Tarabosh was situated. Although the notes are vertical, the design is horizontal and can only be viewed when turning the note on its side. Essad Pasha's name appears in a scroll at the top (Esat Pasha), with Shqiperia (Albania) below. Along the right side of the note are the Albanian words "PER UDHE" (ticket) and at the left "SHEMENDFER" (railway), after the French *chemin de fer*. Completing the design are the denominations at the bottom of

the note, spelled out as “1/2 GROSH 1/2”, “10 PARA 10” and so on.

I hope you will agree with me that much history can be learned from these surviving scraps of paper. The next time you hold one of them in your hand, ask yourself “hummm, I wonder if the loyalist who owned this note survived the slaughter at Lyon?” or “What did a Prussian defender purchase with his note while shells were raining down on Colberg? Did he survive the siege, or was he among the unfortunate 2000 who were killed or wounded?” or “Was this note signed in Gordon’s own hand or hectographically?” or, perhaps “What would have happened if Baden-Powell hadn’t taken the initiative and demonstrated such cunning and resourcefulness in directing the defense of Mafeking?” Only your own imagination can provide the answers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Bresler, Fenton | Napoleon III, New York, Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1999 |
| Chandler, David G. | On the Napoleonic Wars, London, Greenhill Books, 1999 |
| Davis, Paul K. | Besieged: an Encyclopedia of Great Sieges from Ancient Times to the Present, Oxford, ABC Clio, 2001 |
| Duffy, Christopher | Fire and Stone: The Science of Siege Warfare (1660-1860), London, Stackpole Books, 1996 |
| Duffy, Christopher | Siege Warfare, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1996 |
| Embassy of the Republic of Croatia | Correspondence of March 19, 2002 re: Siege of Zadar (Zara) |
| Langer, William L. | An Encyclopedia of World History, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Compant, 1952 |
| Lapa, Charles C. | Check List of Siege and Necessity Issues, San Diego, Pegasus Publishing, 1968 |
| Pakenham, Thomas | The Boer War, New York, Random House, 1979 |
| Pick, Albert | Standard Catalog of World Paper Money, eighth edition; Iola, Wisconsin, Krause Publications, 1998 |

- Rothernberg, Gunter The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon;
Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1978
- Trench, Charles C. The Road to Khartoum, New York, Carroll and Graf
Publishers, 1989
- Violet-le-Duc, Eugene Annals of a Fortress: Twenty-Two Centuries of Siege
Warfare, London, Stackpole Books, 2000
- Watson, Bruce Sieges: a Comparative Study; Westport, Connecticut,
Praeger, 1993