

SIEGE OF LADYSMITH POSTCARDS



TOWN HALL
LADYSMITH

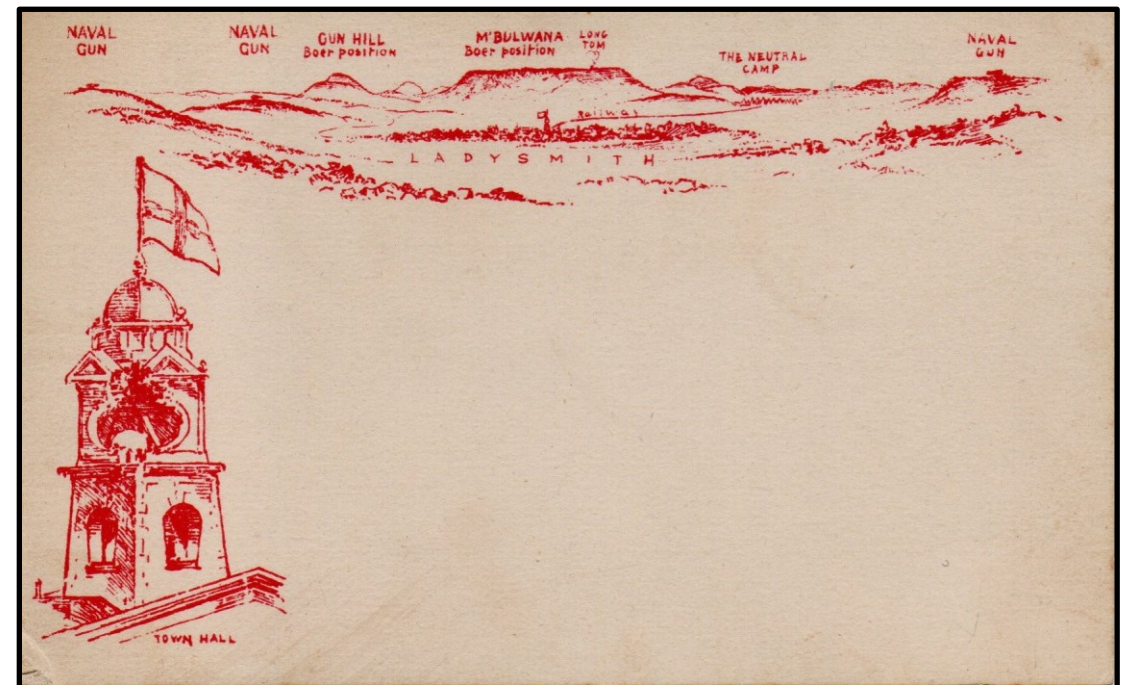
The Siege of Ladysmith was a protracted engagement in the 2nd Boer War, taking place between 2nd November 1899 and 28th of February 1900 at Ladysmith, Natal.

During the siege, postcards were printed in Ladysmith presumably for local use in the town. At this time the use of private postcards had not been approved by the post office of Natal hence the wording “SUBJECT TO LETTER RATES”.

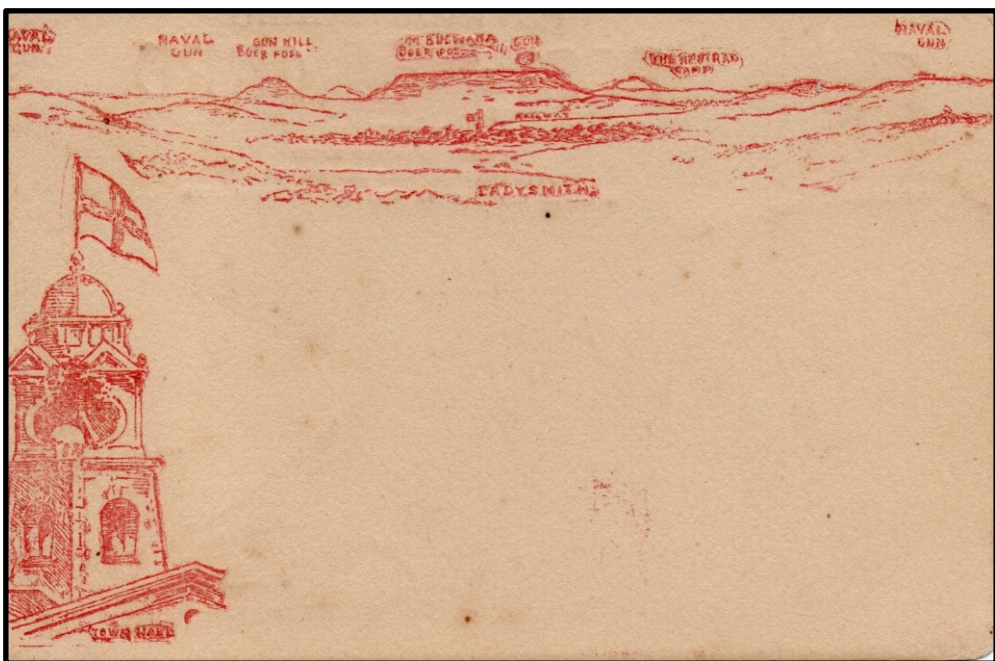
According to John Dickson and Keith Hanman in their publication *The Postal Stationary of Natal*, “They are said to have been designed by Earl Robert of the *Illustrated London News* who was present in Ladysmith at the time”.

This is debatable as you will see later in this presentation.

Two distinct designs of the cards were produced, the example shown here is accepted as being the first design printed. The most distinct difference between the cards being the addition of a third figure on the bottom right of the front of the card. The cards were printed on both the front and reverse.



When were these cards printed? We are unsure of the exact date when the cards started to be printed, but certainly after the damage to the clock tower of the Town Hall which is depicted on the reverse of all of the postcards. The building was struck multiple times, including a direct hit to the bell tower on December 20th 1899, by a Long Tom cannon known as “Puffing Billy”.



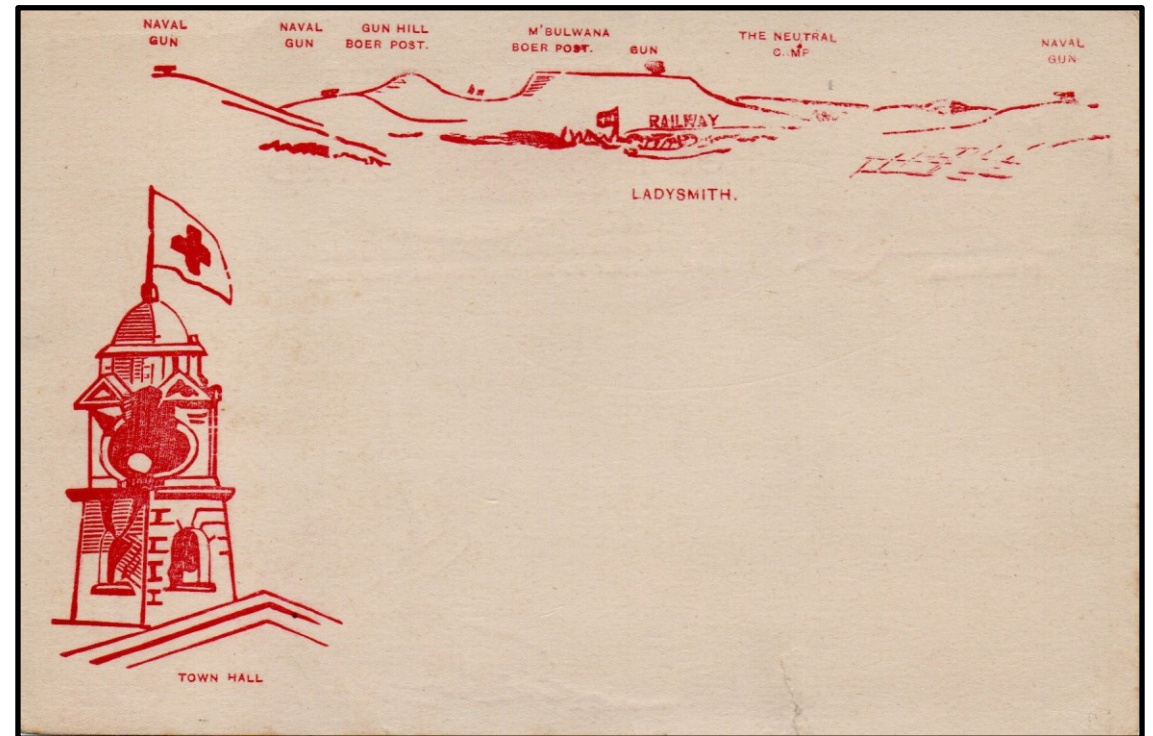
All of the cards produced were printed in varying shades of red ink. Some are a dark red whereas some are tending to almost orange in colour. Not only did the colour vary but the size of the card and thickness was also not consistent. The size of this particular example is 132mm X 88mm, whereas the previous card shown is 146mm X 91mm. It can be assumed that this was due to the shortage of card and the printer used whatever was available.



The back of the card also has a number of changes.
The clock tower has far less detail than the first version.
The cross on the flag has changed.
The font of the names is smaller.
The detail of the drawing of the horizon has been significantly reduced.

This particular card is notably missing NATAL in the super scripture, though the 2nd version should normally have the word below the coat of arms.

The 2nd version of the Ladysmith postcard has a number of differences when compared to the 1st version.
The front of the card has an extra soldier standing in the bottom right hand corner.
The smoke from the cannon is different.
The Boer soldier has been given a name 'Piet', presumably that representing General Petrus Jacobus Joubert.
'Piet' has a sword in his hand.
His hat has also changed and has ZAR instead of a badge.
'Long Tom' is written next to the cannon and not on the barrel.

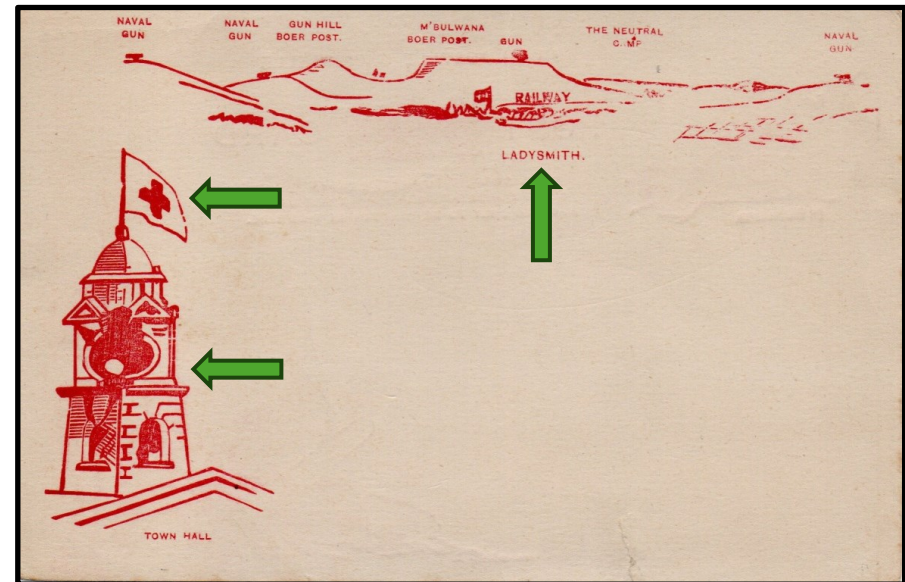
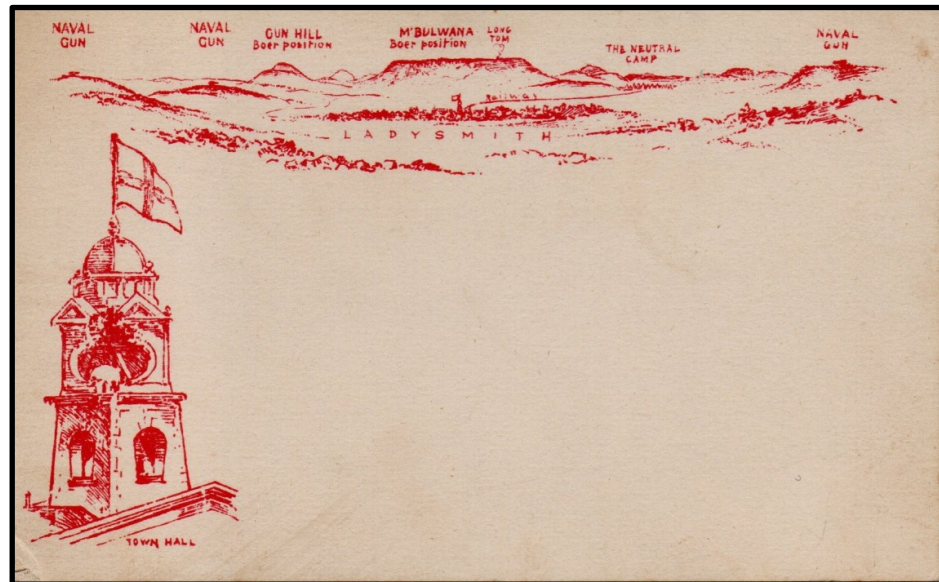
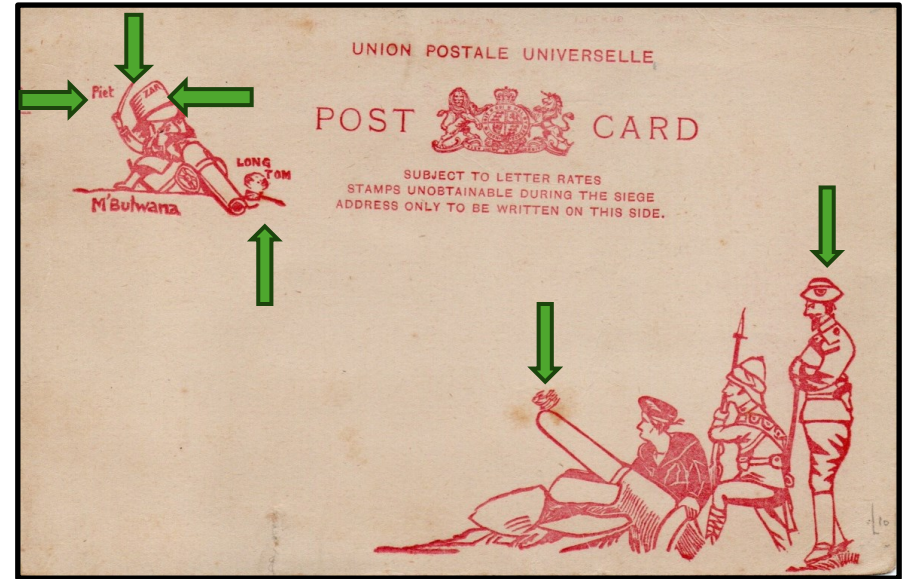


Version 1



Comparison of the two versions

Version 2



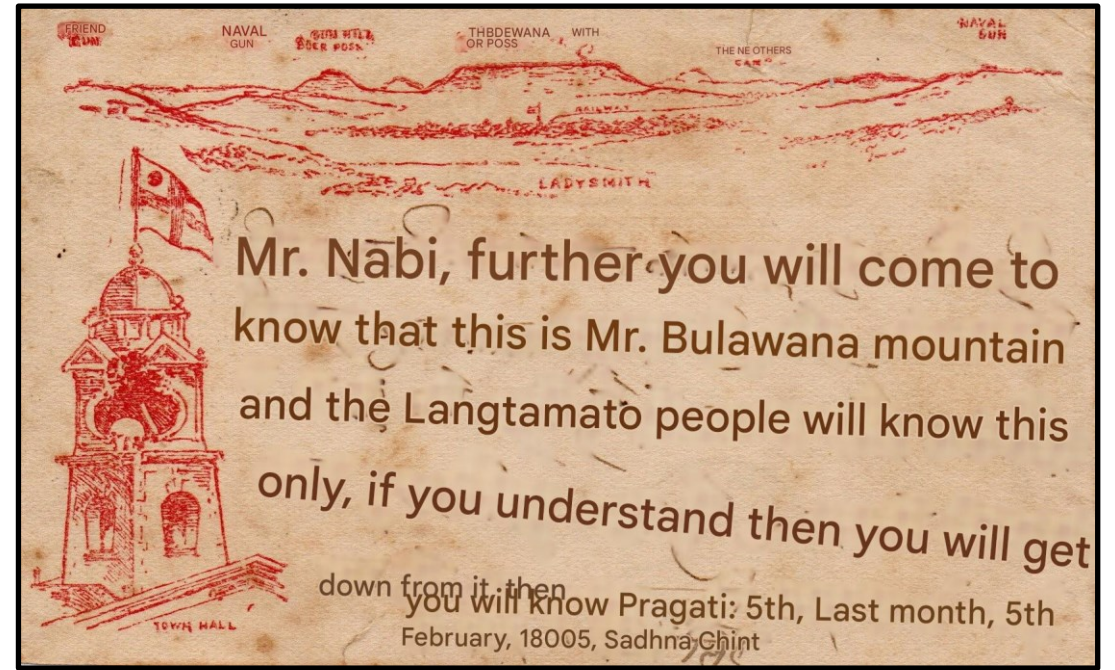
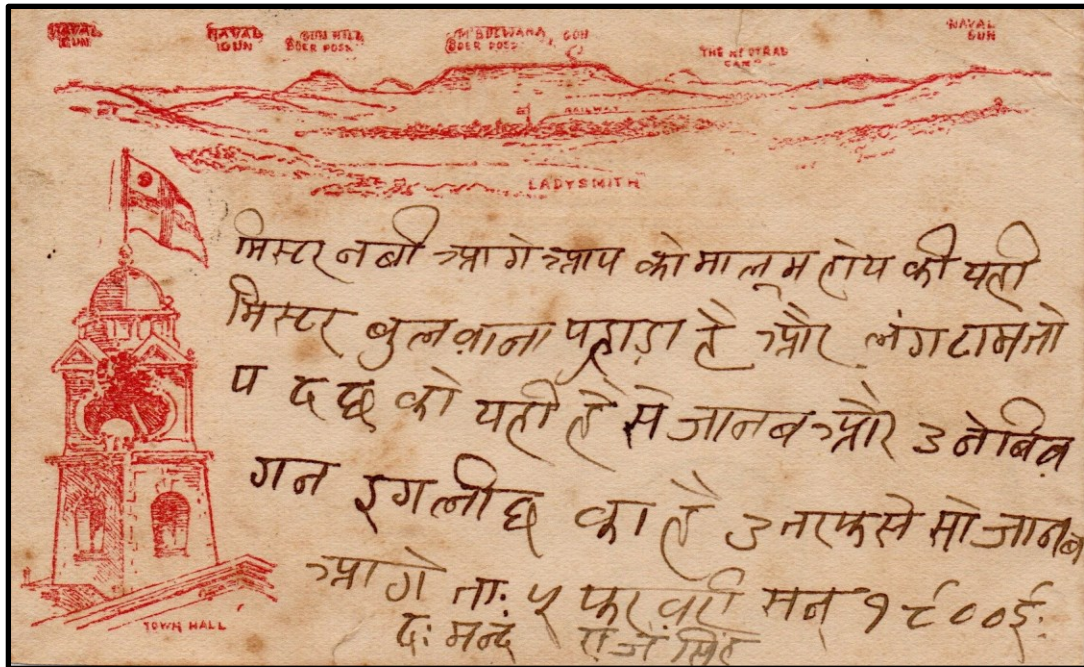


Both of these cards are cancelled during the Siege, on the 27th February 1900, the day before the relief of Ladysmith. Neither cards have stamps which would have been allowed had the cards been addressed within Ladysmith. However both cards are addressed to New Guelderland and neither have receiving cancels so it is doubtful that they were ever posted, and rather that they were cancelled to order.

This is a unique Siege postcard as it is the only known example of a card having been written in Tamil.

The bottom right image is an attempt to use Google Translate to translate into English. Whether it is accurate or not, I am unable to confirm at this stage. I am told that it is a very old form of Tamil that is not understood by today's speakers of the language.

The card is addressed to Verulam, care of a schoolmaster, this was usual at the time as most of the indentured Indian labourers were illiterate. The card also has a half penny stamp which was not the required rate of 1 penny, but seems to have escaped the Postmasters scrutiny.

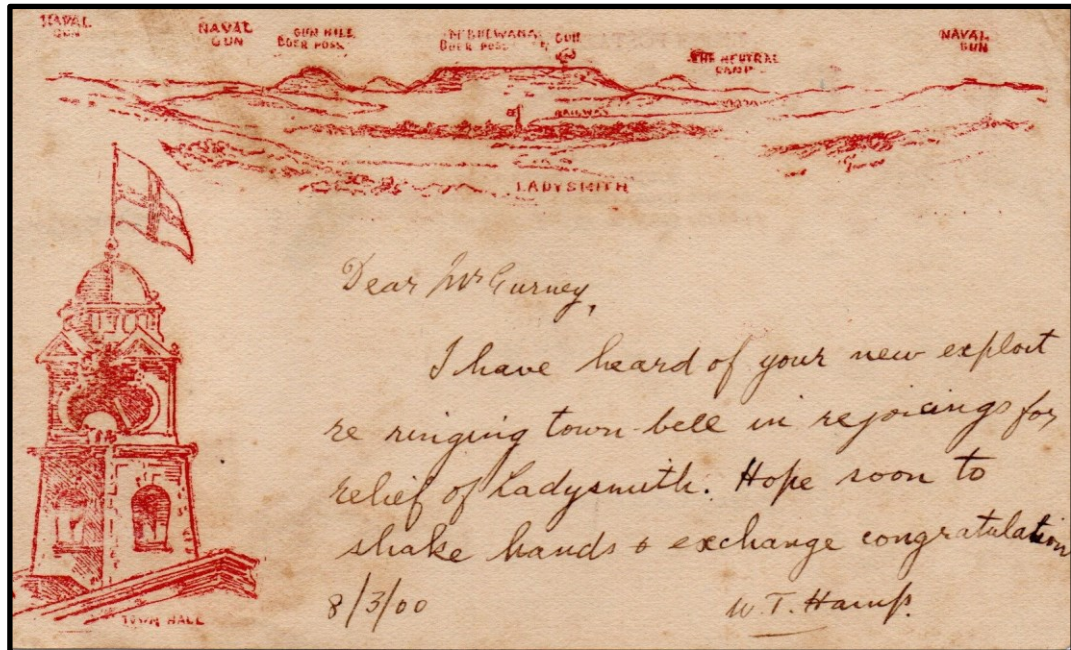




This postcard was not as lucky as the previous example. Again the card is addressed to Verulam, however was taxed 1d as the half penny was insufficient for the required letter rate of 1d.

The card is dated 8th March 1900 in Ladysmith and received in Verulam, via Durban, on the 12 March 1900.

The message written on the card is as follows:



Dear Mr Gurney,
 I have heard of your exploit re ringing town bell in rejoicing for relief of Ladysmith. Hope soon to shake hands and exchange congratulations.
 8/3/00
 W.T. Kamp

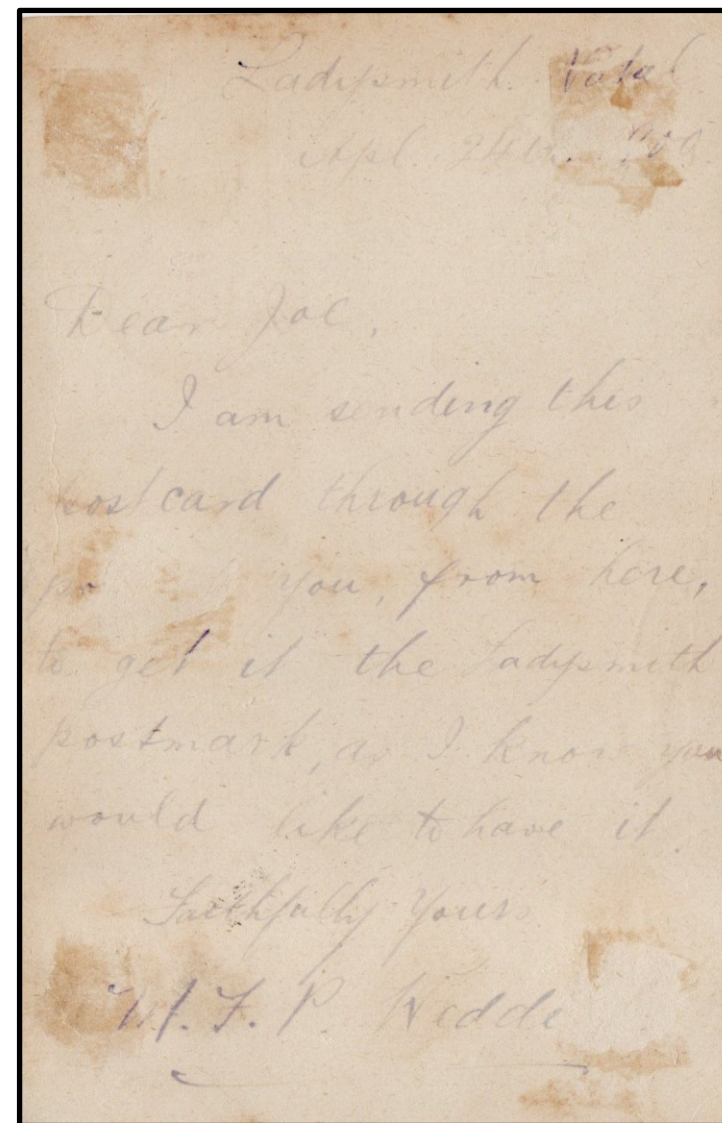
Another unique card, part of the super scripture is of a larger size and 'NATAL' appears under the crown. The card was sent from Standerton and cancelled "ARMY POST OFFICE, 29 June 1900". The card has a pair of half penny GB stamps (use not permitted for local postage) but was not taxed. There 3 routing cancellers on the back with the destination being Durban.



The message on the back reads as follows:

Dear Charlie,
 A Mr Allison belonging to the Imperial Guides left here today for Durban.
 I have given him several shells etc. that I have collected I've asked him to leave them at the Art Studio, also to call upon you.
 Your affect brother
 Phil





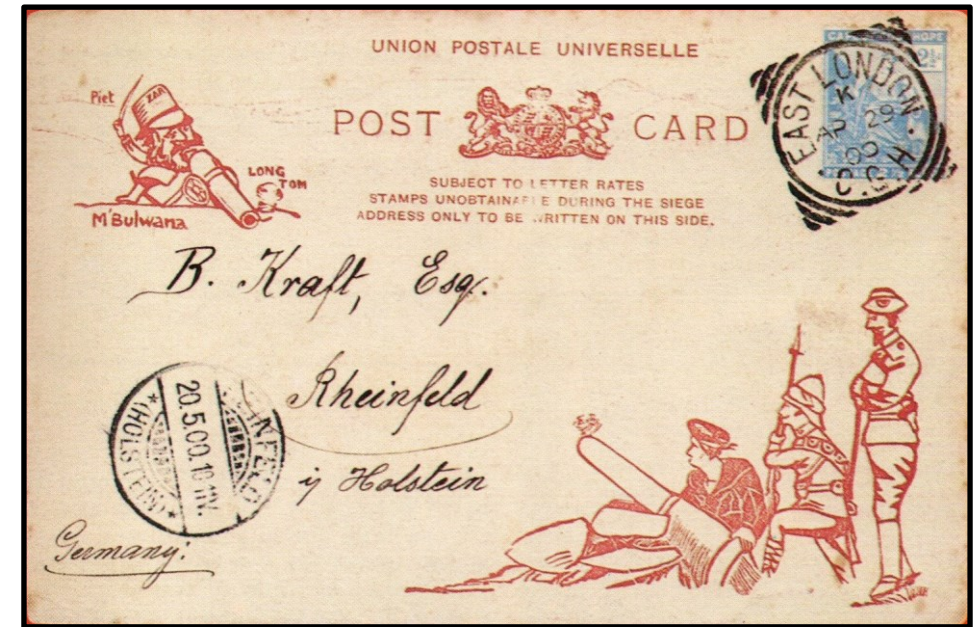
A philatelic example of the siege postcard with a half penny stamp, cancelled at Ladysmith almost 2 months after the end of the siege.

This is apparently the only known card with no pictorial design on the reverse.

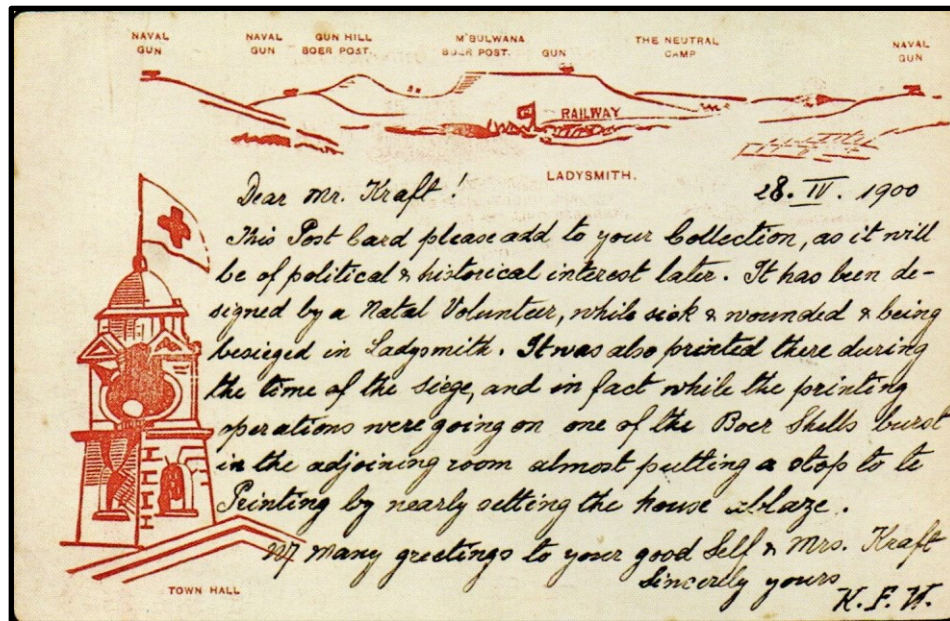
Message reads;

I am sending the postcard through the post from here, to get it the Ladysmith postmark, as I know you would like to have it.

As eluded to earlier in the presentation, this card contradicts Dickson and Hanman's hypothesis as to who designed the siege postcards, however I doubt that this would have been passed on first hand and therefore cannot conclusively say who the designer was.



The message on the back reads as follows:



Dear Mr Kraft!

This Post Card please add to your collection, as it will be of political and historical interest later. It has been designed by a Natal Volunteer, while sick and wounded and being besieged in Ladysmith. It was also printed there during the time of the siege, and in fact while the printing operations were going on one of the Boer Shells burst in the adjoining room almost putting a stop to the Printing by nearly setting the house ablaze. Sincerely yours K.F.W.



Finally, an item of interest. This illustrated siege Cover is one of 2 known examples from the time of the siege. The illustration handdrawn in black ink is a copy of both the front and back of the siege postcard. It is cancelled 28th February 1900 with the Ladysmith canceller, the last day of the siege. It also has the LADYSMITH SIEGE POST OFFICE cachet dated Feb 28th 1900. The back has a Pietermaritzburg receiving cancel dated 3 MR 1900.

This presentation has merely scratched the surface of this subject, and hopefully I might be able to put together a more comprehensive collection in the future.

