

EDITH FURLEY AND MARCUS FALLOON

One finds correspondence to and from the Rev. Marcus Falloon, chaplain at Nairobi from 1904-16, far more frequently than one would expect from a non-philatelic source. Indeed, the suspicion that he might have been a philatelist was one of the earliest questions raised in BEA.

The earliest and most unusual item, by far, is this combination cover from Edith Furley, then a missionary in Uganda, addressed to him at Christchurch Vicarage, in Folkestone Road, Dover.



Figure 1: Cover from Edith Furley to Marcus Falloon

This cover abounds with interest, including the mysterious twin ring and cross backstamp, perhaps indicating outbound mail.

Edith Markham Furley, in 1895, a member of the first group of women to go to Uganda, was from Lincolnshire. She was born in 1854 at Morton, Gainsborough, the eldest of three children of a Russian Merchant from Beckingham in Nottinghamshire and his Ellerker-born wife Felicia (née Markham?) – her younger siblings were born in Hull where, according to Steve North's directory of Europeans in East Africa, she was a nurse when accepted as a missionary in East Africa on 30th April 1891. On 9th May 1892, then aged 37, she had departed from London for East Africa and arrived at Mombasa on 9th June 1892. She was in charge of the Mombasa Ladies' House in 1893 and returned to England on leave in 1894.

She returned to East Africa the following year, departing Southampton on 18th May 1895 on the Union ship s.s. *Guelph* via Cape Town and Zanzibar, arriving at Mombasa on 9 July. The party left Rabai on 21st July

1895 for Mengo, and included the first five C.M.S. women to go to Uganda. Here we see them in marching dress. Edith Furley, second from left, middle row, was described by (Martin) Hall, (middle front row) as 'frightfully plain ... and none too cheerful'.



Figure 2: The Uganda Party of 1895 in marching dress

Left to Right: Back Row - Chadwick, Buckley, Dr Baxter, Dr Rattray, Wright
 Middle Row - Browne, Furley, Bishop Tucker, Thomsett, Pilgrim
 Front Row - Wilson, Hall, Purvis

They walked the whole way and arrived at Mengo two and a half months later on 4th October 1895. The type-written stamps produced by Ernest Millar for internal use were then into their third refinement, before a change in administration called for the more complicated design for the type-written stamps of 1896. She was in Mengo in 1897 – and who is to say she was not the Uganda Missionary who responded to a request for East African stamps in the words of this unsigned letter¹ which gives us insight into the postal arrangements at that time?:

"I am sorry I cannot send you any B.E.A. stamps. They are not in circulation here, and those you find on our letters have been put on at Mombasa. Our postal regulations are complicated and are as follows:- From Mengo we put on the local stamp which carries the letter to Kikuyu, 400 miles from here, and the limit of our postal union. This is paid for us by the CMS. From Kikuyu to the coast there is a charge of Rs 3 per lb on each person's mail, payable at the coast from our private account; and at the coast the officials put on the BEA stamp to complete the journey."

Pre-payment of postage to the frontier had been made compulsory from September 1896; and the letter hints at two occasions when the local stamps might have needed some form of cancellation – on despatch from Mengo and at the border at Kikuyu. The stamps referred to were the typeset designs produced by Rowling in 1896, of which we have an example on the Furley/Falloon cover.

Later in 1898 BEA stamps did become available in Uganda (Remington had recommended this as early as 1895) – proved by a Uganda stamp overlapping a BEA as on this cover – but whether they were taken up-country privately or supplied officially is not certain. Such combinations are often cancelled together at Mombasa, but not this one.

By this time Edith Furley was into her third year in Uganda. What this cover does seem to show is that Edith Furley did not herself apply the stamps, otherwise why would she need to initial the envelope? So, it seems that both stamps were actually applied by the CMS postal service in Mengo.

The initials, E.M.F. in the bottom left corner indicated that the postage was to be charged to Miss Furley's account. The adhesives used for this cover pay the combination rates at this time: for Uganda, 4 annas per oz, and for BEA at 2½ annas per ½ oz. The 4 anna Rowling, which took it to British East Africa, is cancelled with pencil and blue crayon strokes – but why it should have been cancelled twice over is not clear. When

Millar returned from furlough in May 1898, he began to cancel all the stamps on the home letters with a pencil. Thus, the earliest typset/BEA covers bear uncanceled Uganda stamps, while the later ones are cancelled. The 2½ anna DLR, applied at Mombasa, illustrates how the cancellations of the BEA stamps were usually carefully placed so as to avoid marking the Uganda stamp.

The mail took 34 days to reach Mombasa, carried as follows:

- Kampala to Ravine by Uganda Protectorate runners organised in relays:
 - Kampala – Luba's (3 days)
 - Luba's – Mumia's (4 days)
 - Mumia's – Nandi (3 days)
 - Nandi – Ravine (4 days)
- Ravine to Kikuyu (150m) by station runners from Fort Smith (5 days)
- Kikuyu to Ndi (245m) by Kamba runners supplied by Ainsworth (11 days)
- Ndi to Mombasa (110m) by Mombasa transport Office staff (4 days)

At this time, Nairobi, near Fort Smith, was no more than a name for a watering place in the open scrub where the railway constructors would pause and take stock the following year. As the railway construction gradually advanced from the coast, the last two sections of this route, across British East Africa, were adapted so the railway carried the mails as far as possible. However, the earliest surviving complete timetable, for a passenger service to Mtito Andei which opened on 20th August 1898 when Railhead moved up to Makindu (mile 207), makes no mention of mail-carrying, so this cover was carried by runner mail from Uganda right through to Mombasa – when the railway builders were still contending with the man eaters of Tsavo.

The date of the Mombasa cancellation is not clear; the blue canceller, however, was used during September and October 1898. It is believed that the black ink pad had been taken for use at Railhead from the end of August, leaving a pad of blue ink for use at Mombasa and Kilindini. This gradually darkened, presumably as it was topped up with black ink.

This true blue example was applied early in that time frame, and implies, therefore, a dispatch from Mengo in late July or early August, to reach Mombasa during the first fortnight in September. From Mombasa, it went (probably) by dhow to Zanzibar where it received a transit backstamp on 16th September. It just missed the *Kaiser* which had sailed on 13th September; so it was held there for the next fortnight, pending the departure of the next mail ship for Europe.

In those days, the normal transit time to England was about three weeks. An arrival backstamp at Dover Station on 15th October implies a departure from East Africa around 20-24 September. From Steve North's booklet, we can surmise that the cover was carried by the DOAL *Bundesrath*, sailing from Zanzibar on 28th September, calling at Mombasa on 29th and arriving at Aden on 4th October. It was probably transhipped at Naples and carried overland by rail to somewhere like Calais or Bologne and then ferried across the Channel to Dover, arrival mark 10-30 pm, for final delivery to its destination at Christ Church rectory next morning. It had spent about two and a half months in the postal system.

This cover is an interesting illustration of how five months could elapse before a reply to correspondence could be received from remote parts of the empire.

The combination cover from Edith Furley to Marcus Falloon at Christ Church vicarage in October 1898 shows an East African interest going back at least six years before he went out to East Africa.

References:

1. Letter printed in the *Pioneer of India* of 11 March 1898