

Ceylon Planter's Rifle Corps Correspondence on OHMS Postcards

By Kathryn Johnson

Ceylon Planter's Rifle Corps has a rich history, on OHMS Postcards a bit of this history can be followed easily as a collector. The OHMS Postcards were often used for routine correspondence for the Corps, and enough of this mail has survived that making a small collection of cards is fairly easily accomplished. This brief article provides a look into the CPRC from the backs of a number of postcards from 1894 through 1902. Most of the OHMS postcards used are notifications of drills, with time and place information. These come handwritten and preprinted.

As a brief history, In 1900 a new regiment named the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps was established with headquarters in Kandy; the officers and other ranks were made up of Europeans, who were tea and rubber planters in the central highlands of Ceylon. Its first Commanding Officer was Colonel R.N. Farquharson, a retired Naval Captain. The regiment was a volunteer regiment mobilized under internal emergencies or for deployments overseas.



Collar badges from Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps

The regiment's first deployment was in 1902 when a detachment was sent to South Africa arriving just before hostilities ended, not having experienced combat in the Second Boer War. The overall conduct of Ceylon troops received accolades from General Kitchener, Chief of Staff to Lord Roberts in South Africa, who affirmed, "The Ceylon Contingent did very good work in South Africa I only wish we had more of them."

Ceylon Planter's Rifle Corps correspondence is often found on the reverse of Official Correspondence, "On H.M.S" postcards. These examples are presented chronologically.



May 30, 1894 Colombo to Dehiwella

Front: Boxed Free Marking. Colombo Marking in Use from March 1894-March 1899. Colombo large CDS and Dehiwella cds, Marking in Use August 1883-April 1897.

Colombo 30.5.94

The Complete Corp will parade for inspection by H.C. the General Officer Commanding on Monday 24th June.

Fail in at HQs at 4 P.M. sharp Dress Drill Order with Helmet (Khatt) & ammunition Hoop. This parade is the General's inspection for the year as compulsory for the Extra Grand the Officer Comd. "A" Coy expects every man of his Company to be present.

Any man who is unable to be present must send in his excuse before that of June to his Section Commander.

You will also communicate your present Office & Private address at once to your Section Commander or to me.

You will note that you now belong to No 2 Section "A" Company.

By Order
W.C. De Sylva
Sec Compt.
for Section Commander
no 2 section
"A" Company

May 30, 1894 Colombo to Dehiwella

Reverse: Addressed to Volunteer: The Complete Corp will Parade for Inspection for the General Commanding Officer. Dress: Drill Order with Helmet. By Order, W.C. De Sylva, Section Commander, #2 Section, "A" Company.

C.P.R.C.

Guard of Honour at Kandy on 12th inst.

Members will travel per 5.35 p.m. train from Galle on Thursday 11th inst. Rifle, belt, 1 pouch, bayonet & frog must be obtained at Galle Armory previously. Accommodation provided in Planter's Hall, Kandy, but bedding to be taken. Warrants for Ry. travelling will be provided.

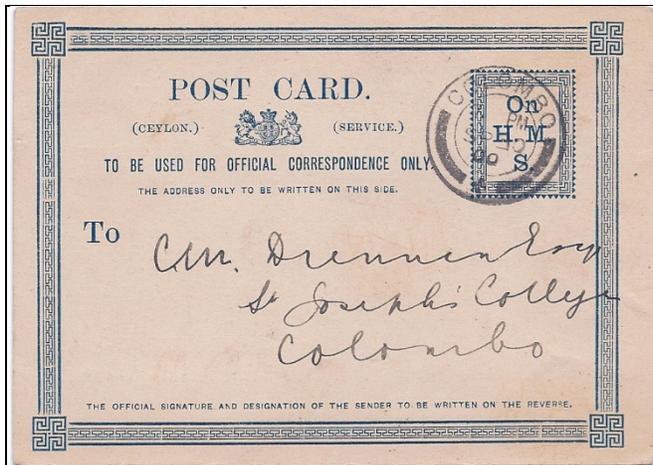
alarter.
SAR 5659
Sect. C.P.R.C.
Section leader,
Galle Section.
9.4.01.

Halls Capt. Ch.
Comd of 3rd Co Ch.

April 9, 1901 from Galle to Badegama

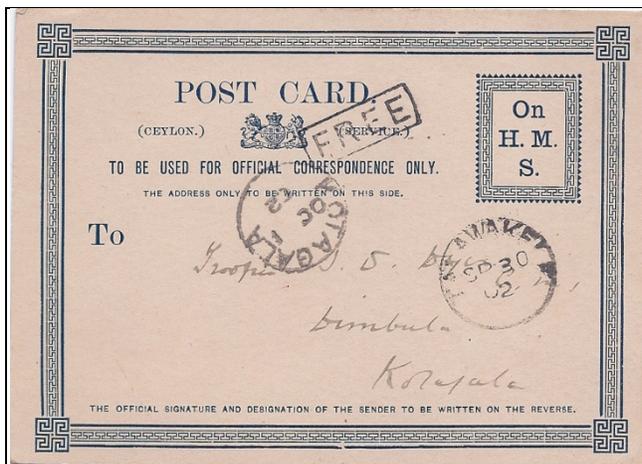
Guard of Honor at Kandy:

Members will travel by train from Galle. Rifle, belt pouch, bayonet & frog must be obtained at Galle Armory. Accommodations at Planter's Hall, Kandy, bunk bedding to be taken. Warrants for travelling will be provided.



September 30, 1901 from Colombo to St. Joseph College

Reverse: Colombo Rifle Corps drills held on Rifle Green every Wednesday and Saturday and 7 a.m. and Thursday at 5:15 p.m.



Sept 30, 1902 - from Talawakelle

To Kotagala on card with boxed Free marking. Addressed to Dimbula, plantation, famous as 1890s Sir Thomas Lipton tea estate.

Some notable names that might be found looking at Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps correspondence includes these officers:

- Years 1900-1904 Commanding Officer Lt. Colonial A J Farquharson
- Years 1904-1907 Commanding Officer Lt. Colonial TY Wright
- Years 1900-1907 Adjutants Captain GE Bayley

The Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps was made up largely of European planters of tea and rubber from the central highlands of Ceylon. The regiment was volunteer, and the postcards notifications of drills tend to echo the volunteer nature of the assignments. The unit drills were for preparation for use in the case of internal emergencies or overseas deployments.

Where the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps comes to be known outside of Ceylon is when the regiment's first deployment was in 1902 when a detachment was sent to South Africa to fight in the Second Boer War. The detachment arrived just before the ending of conflict, and did not enter into combat in the war.