

The attack on Magdala 13th April 1868, a Jamaica-British Diamond and Golden Jubilee, Spanish Town compliance unit; OAU (AU) 2013 youth: Ras Tafari International Consultants inquiry. contact; seymour31@hotmail.co.uk

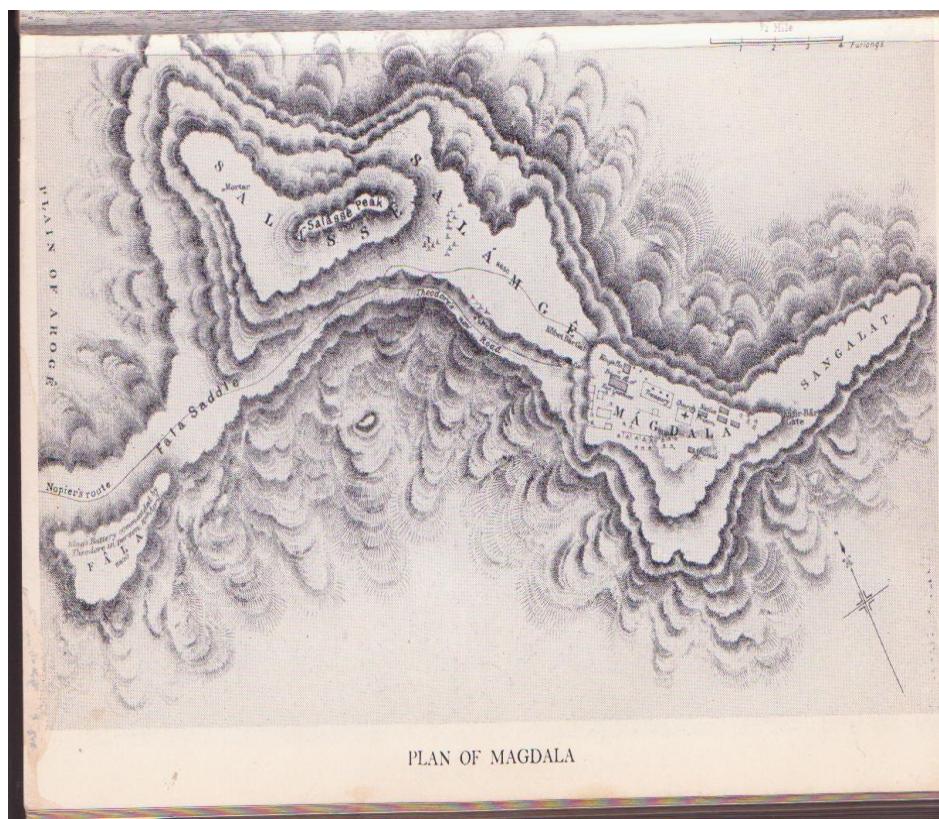


From Major-General Sir Charles Staveley, K.C.B, Commanding the 1st Division of the Abyssinian Expeditionary Force, to the Deputy Adjutant-General.

Head-Quarters, Camp before Magdala, 14th April 1868.

Having been directed by **His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief** to report on the disposition made by the Division under my command for the **attack of Magdala on the 13th instant**, a brief description of

the place will first be necessary.



The defences consist of three very steep mountains, named **Fahla**, **Selassie**, and Magdala, each being surrounded at the top by steep and precipitous scarpes.

Fahla and Magdala are joined to Selassie by saddles, and are nearly at right angles to it.

A tolerably good, but in some places very steep, road leads from the British camp up the north side of **Fahla**, over the saddle along the south side of **Selassie**, and over the next saddle called **Islamgie**, into **Magdala**.



A pathway branches off this road at the **Fahla** saddle to the left, along the foot of the **Selassie** scarp for some distance, and then turns up a zigzag to the top, another pathway leads direct up to **Selassie** from the **Fahla** saddle.

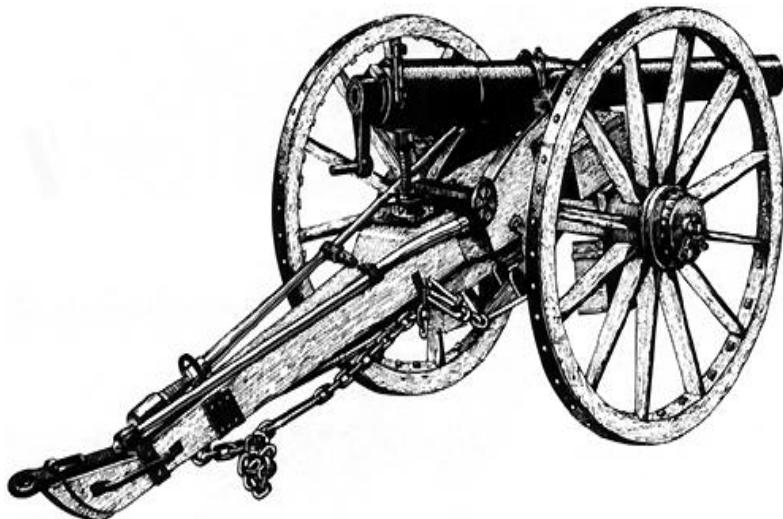
Neither of these paths was found practicable for mules, although we had been informed that they were.

The summits of Fahla and Magdala are flat that of Selassie slopes upwards from the scarp to the centre, and commands the other two mountains.

On the morning of the 13th instant, at seven o'clock, a detail of 50 sabres of the 3rd Light Cavalry (Bombay) and 12th Bengal Cavalry, under **Lieutenant-Colonel Loch**, of the 3rd Light Cavalry, was sent up to the Fahla saddle, and placed at the disposal of **Captain Speedy**

of the Intelligence Department, to communicate with those of the King's Troops who had surrendered.

On the advance being ordered at half-past eight A.M., according to instructions received from the **Commander-in-Chief**, the G 14 R.A. under Captain Murray, and the two 8-inch mortars under Captain Hills, R.A., were placed under Colonel Wallace, R.H.A., in a position covering the troops with **Selassie** in front and **Fahla** on the right, the A. 21, Mountain Battery, under Lieutenant-Colonel Penn, having ascended a short distance with the column was placed in position on a spur to the left of the road to cover the head of the ascent, whilst the B. 21, R.A., under Captain Twiss, followed next in rear of the leading battalion of infantry.



The 3rd Dragoon Guards, under Lieutenant-Colonel Tower, the 3rd Light Cavalry, under Captain Moore, and the 12th Bengal Calvary, under Major Gough, V.C., the whole under the command of Colonel

Graves, of the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, **were sent round to the south, and below the mountain to prevent the escape of the Magdala garrison in that direction.**

The division moved up the, the 2nd Brigade, with a ladder party of sappers, leading.

A company of the Belooch Battalion was sent up the first accessible spur on the right into **Fahla**, and two companies of the 10th Regiment Native Infantry up the next spur.

On arriving at the Saddle the advanced guard of two companies of the 33rd Regiment were sent up the direct path to **Selassie**, and the remainder of the 2nd Brigade, and B.21,R.A., by the pathway above described, to the left.



The path up the zigzag was so bad that, although practicable for infantry, **only three mountain guns could be passed up and those by hand**. The 1st Brigade moved along the high road to the south of **Selassie**, followed now

by Captain Murray's battery, the two 8-inch mortars and the Naval Rocket Brigade.

The 2nd Brigade crowned Selassie before the 1st Brigade had moved along its southern side. I mention this because Mr. Waldemaier, one the released European prisoners, and my guide on the occasion, informed me afterwards, from information he had received, that **King Theodore** imagined we should advance by the high road along the south of Selassie, without first occupying Selassie, and had arranged accordingly to fall on our troops from the heights overlooking that part of the road; so far, for reasons which it is unnecessary for me to explain no opposition was offered to our advance.



The 2nd Brigade having occupied Selassie, the King, troops were ordered to lay down their arms, and retire to the plain below; the first order was immediately carried out, and thousand of men, women and children left the mountain as soon as the narrow exit permitted.



Some of the enemy and amongst them the King, being observed on the Islamgie Saddle, below Selassie, a company of the 23rd Regiment, under Captain Campbell, was pushed down the slope to the Saddle, and the cavalry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Loch, advanced along the road; these parties were fired on by the enemy, but the fire being returned, and

some of the King's guns being turned on him by order of Lieutenant Colonel Loch, he soon retired into Magdala.

Dispositions for the assault

I now received the orders of His Excellency the Commander-in-chief to make the following dispositions for the assault of Magdala by the 2nd Brigade supported by the 1st.

The 33rd regiment, ten companies strong, to advance across Islamgie, to companies skirmishing, and two in support, the remaining six companies, under Major Cooper, commanding the regiment, headed by a detachment of the Royal Engineers under Major Pritchard, and the K Company Madras Sappers and Miners under the Captain Elliot, with powder bags, crow bars and ladders to form the storming party.

Two companies of the Bombay Sappers and Miners, under Captain Leslie and Lieutenant Leacock, to follow in rear of 33rd Regiment.

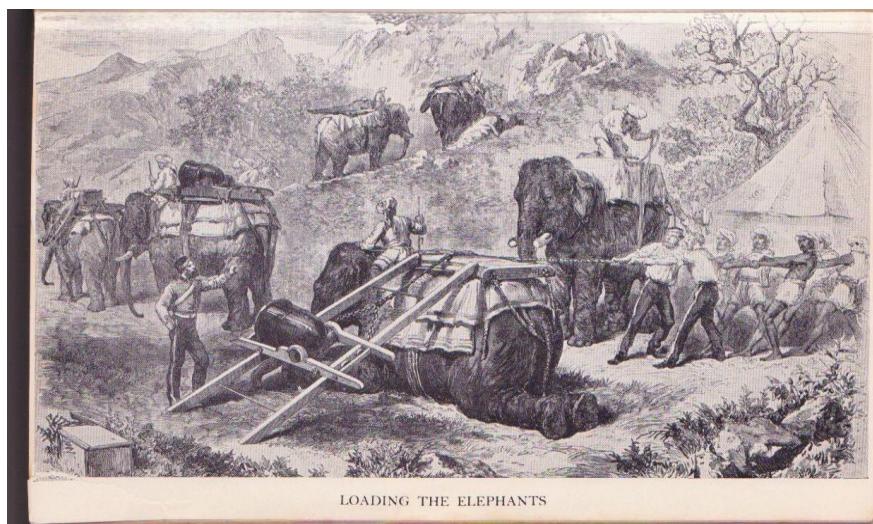
On nearing the steep ascent to Magdala gate the skirmishers to halt, and be reinforced by the supports, and keep up a fire at the gate and defences during the ascent of the storming party.



The 45th Regiment under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Parish, to advance rear in reserve, except the Punjab Pioneers, left with two companies of the 10th Bombay Native Infantry

to guard the camp.

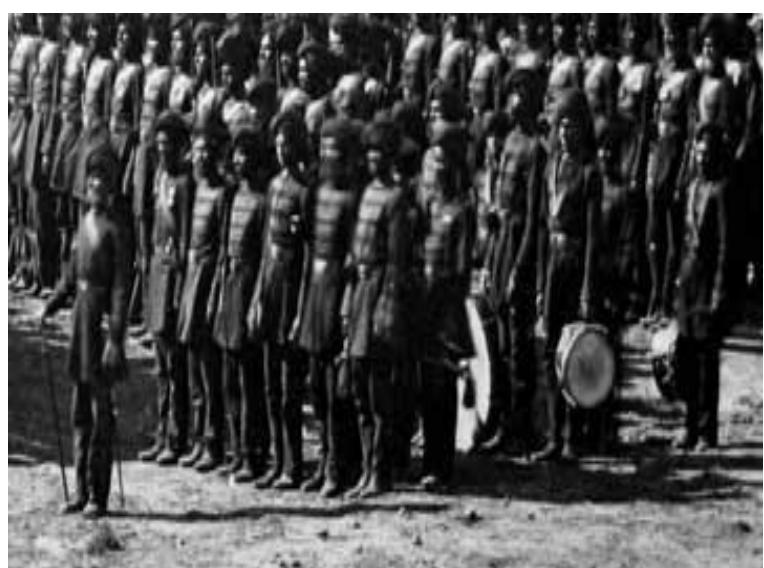
Two companies of the 10th Native Infantry, under Colonel Field, to remain on Selassie to guard the arms, and clear the Abyssinians off the mountain. The two mountains, and the Naval Rocket, Batteries, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace, **now arrived on elephants from below, to advance, and keep up a fire Magdala Gate.**



The G. 14, R.A., and 28 inch mortars, under Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace, now arrived on elephants from below, to advance along the main road south of Selassie as far as

practicable, and also cover the advance of the troops.

I leave it to His Excellency how far these dispositions were carried out. There were two lines of defence, with a gate in each, at the head of the very steep and strong ascent of the point of attack ; the first gate had a porch 15 feet deep, filled up as high as 12 feet with large stones. **From this line of defence the enemy kept up a fire through the loop holes of a wall**, topped with a strong fence, and a passage for the column could not be affected here until a ladder had been passed over a wall to the right of the gate.



In the meantime some men of the 33rd Regiment scrambled up a cliff to the right, and succeeding with much difficulty in surmounting the wall and fence, **turned the enemy at the gate, and, with the head of the column, drove him to the second line of**

defence above; this being comparatively weak, no further resistance was offered.



On entering the second the body of King Theodore was found shot through the head with his own hand.

The only two gates by which the garrison might have moved out being watched, the one to the south by our cavalry, and

the other to the east by the Gallas, the men lay down their arms, and begged for mercy; **this was accorded, and not a man was injured.**



I enclose a return of our wounded, all of whom were taken the night of the assault to the field hospital, 2nd Brigade, where they received every attention from Surgeon Major Wylie, the Medical Officer in charge.

I also enclose a return showing the number of rank and file of the corps who took part in the attack, **and a return of our wounded on the three mountains and destroyed ; also a photograph of the attack on Magdala, from a sketch by Major Baigrie, Assistant Quartermaster-General.**

I wish to bring the names of the following officers to the notice of his Excellancy Brigadier-General Wilby, who commanded the 2nd Brigade, and let it to the assault.



He mentions the very effective service rendered him by Captain Hicks, his Brigade Major; Captain James, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General; and Captain Carpel, 12th Bengal Cavalry, A.D.C.

Major Pritchard, R.E (who was wounded), the senior officer with the Royal Engineers and Sappers, and who

mentions the able assistance he received from Captain Elliot, commanding K Company, Madras Sappers.



Captain Foord, Lieutenant Bird, Cornet Dalrymple, and Surgeon Pearl, of the Madras Sappers ; Sergeants Harrold and Dean, R.E., Corporal Mc Donagh, and Sapper Bailey.

Major Cooper, commanding 33rd Regiment, who led his regiment to and over the gate; and I beg here to bring

especially to notice No. 3,691, Drummer Michael Magner, and No.949, Private James Bergin, 33rd Regiment, the two men who first forced an entrance to the extreme right and turned the gate.

Captain Elliot, who commanded the Madras Sappers.



Captain Mc Donnell, commanding Bombay Sappers; Lieutenant-Colonel Parish, commanding 45 Regiment; Colonel Field, commanding 10th Regiment Native infantry; **Brigadier-General Schneider**, commanding 1st Brigade; Lieutenant-

Colonel Cameron commanding 4th King's own Royal regiment; Major Beville, commanding Wing Belooch Regiment; Major Chamberlain, commanding 23rd Punjab Pioneers; **Brigadier-General Petrie, commanding Royal Artillery;** Lieutenant- Colonel Wallace, commanding Division Royal Artillery; **Lieutenant-Colonel Penn, commanding A.21, Royal Artillery.**



**Commander Fellowes,
commanding Naval Rocket
Batteries.**
Captain Twiss,
Commanding B. 21, Royal
Artillery.
Colonel Graves, 3rd Brigade
Light Cavalry; Major
Briggs, Commanding Scind
Horse; Lieutenant-Colonel
Loch, commanding details
of cavalry; Captain Moore,
commanding 3rd Brigade
Light Cavalry; **Lieutenant
W. Scott, A.D.C.,**

Commanding the Commander-in-chief's escort.

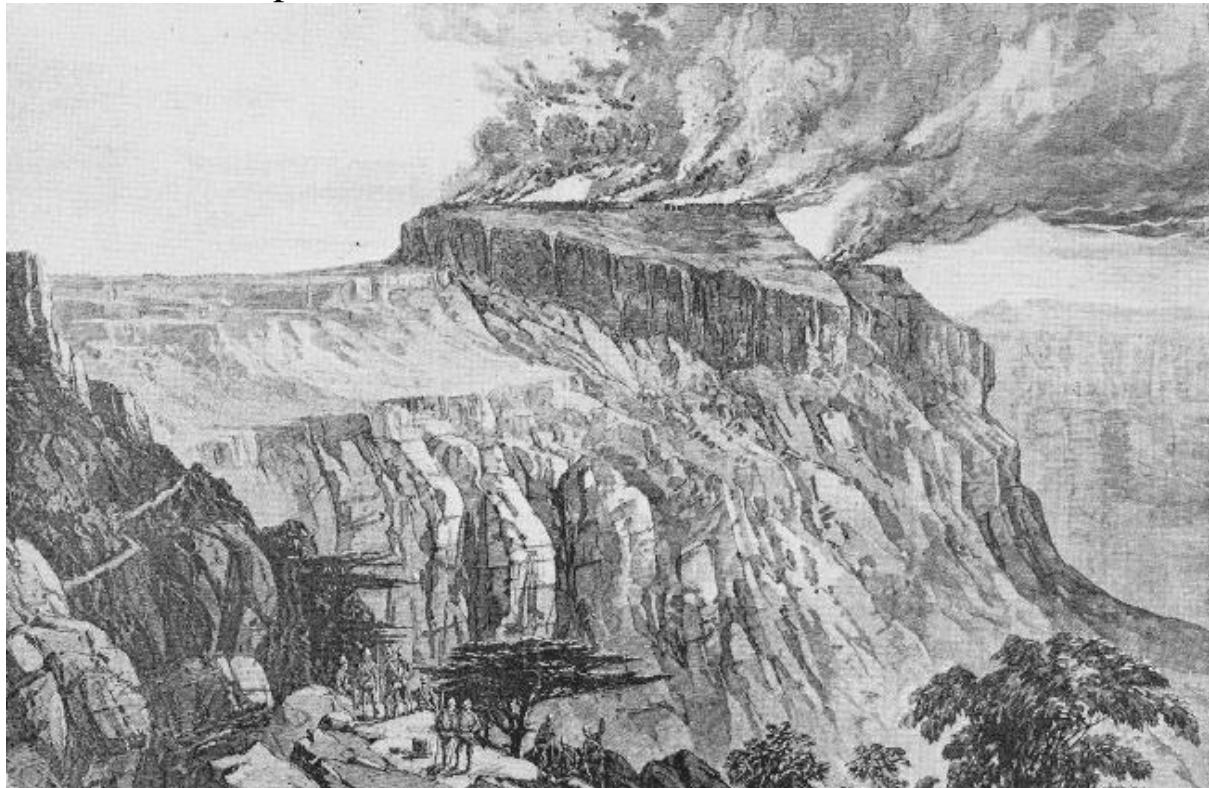
Lieutenant A. Le Messurier, Royal Engineers; Captain Leslie and Lieutenant Leacock, Bombay Sappers; Captain Bainbridge, Land Transport Corps, **who had the very difficult duty of providing water for the troops throughout the operations since leaving the Bashilo river.**



Cavalry, acting as Assistant Commissary-General, 2nd Brigade; Dr.

Captain Ross and Griffiths and Twenty men, 20th Hussars, commanding Divisions Land Transport Corps; Major Mignon, Assistant Commissary-General, 1st Division, **whose difficulties are well known to the Commander-in-chief;** Major Bardin, Assistant Commissary – General, 1st Brigade; and Major Goldworthy, Brigade Major of

Mahaffy, Principal Medical officer, 1st division, whose arrangements for the field hospitals were all that could be desired.



Surgeon-Major Wyllie, in charge of the field hospitals, 2nd Brigade. I desire also to bring to notice the officers of my staff: -Lieutenant-Colonel Wood, Assistant Adjutant-General; Major Baigrie, Assistant Quartermaster-General; **Lieutenant Saunders, 20th Hussars, Aide-de-camp; and Captain George Arbuthnot, extra Aide-de-camp.**



These officers rendered me great assistance in carrying out the orders of his Excellancy the Commander-in-Chief during the day, and have served with me since my first arrival at Zula with the first-arrived brigade.

RETURN of ORDNANCE captured by the Force in the Magdala Fortress on the

13th April, 1868

Guns.

3 brass 56-pounder, smooth-bore
1 brass 18-pounder, smooth-bore.
4 brass 6-pounders, smooth-bore, Turkish.
4 brass 6-pounders, smooth-bore.

**2 brass 6-pounders, smooth-bore, English,
Cast at Cossipore.**

1 brass 6-pounders, smooth-bore, French.

6 brass 24 pounders, howitzer, Native and French.

3 brass 12-pounders, howitzer
1 brass 3-pounders, howitzer
4 iron 1- pounders, howitzer.

Mortars.

1 brass 20-inch
1 brass 13-inch
2 brass 10-inch
5 brass from 2.25 to 6 inch.
N.B.- The guns, howitzers, and mortar



"THE NEGUS THEODORE II"

s were all found serviceable, and supplied with ammunition, **except one 56-pounder, which had burst on the 10th instant.**

NOMINAL ROLL of Officers and Men wounded at the Capture of
Magdala

On the 13th April 1868.

Camp, near Magdala,

15th April 1868

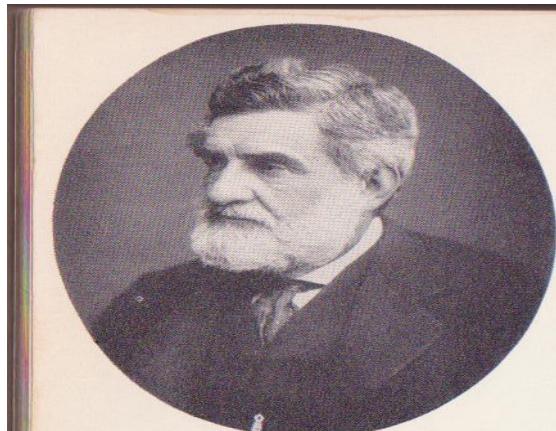


Photo: Radio Times Hulton Picture Library
RASSAM



NAPIER



Royal
Artillery
Major
Gordon
Pritchard,
two slight
wounds,
caused by
splinters of
stone, on
tight
shoulder,
with
onsiderable
contusion.

Lance-
Corporal
William
Hobson,

No.5, 957, slight splinter wound of right leg.

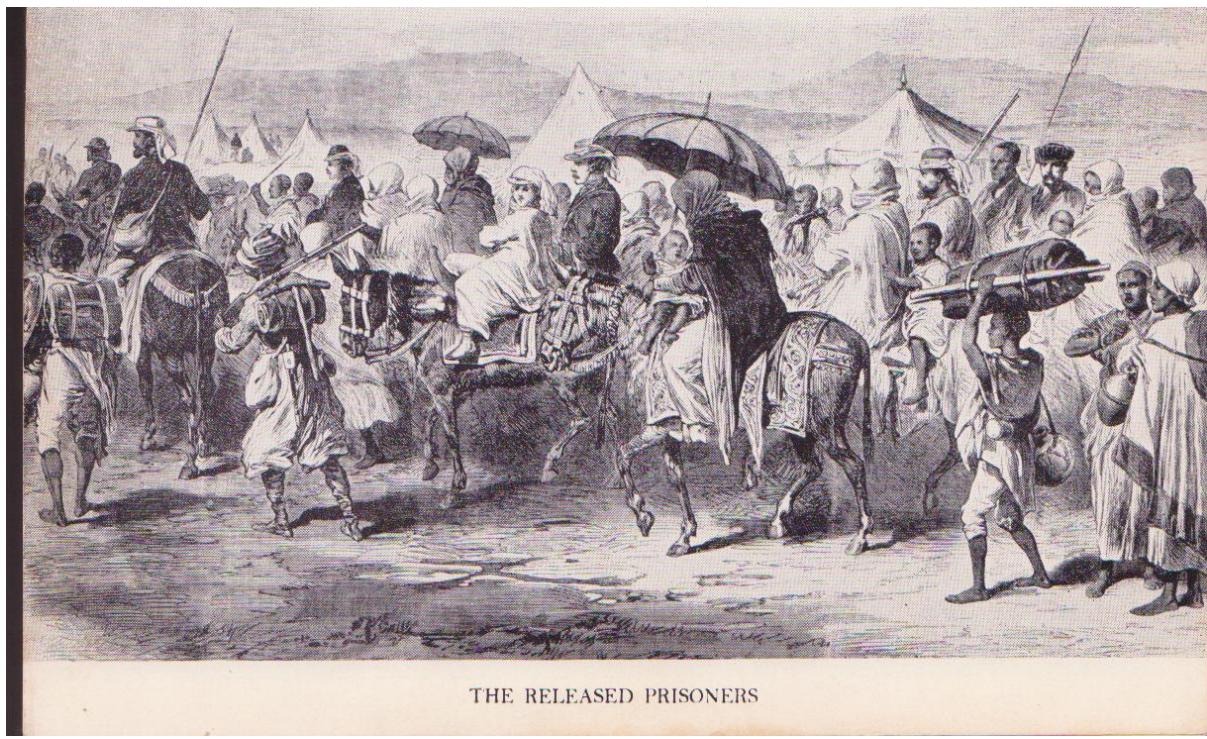
Sapper Henry Davis, No. 3,470, slight slight splinter wound of
forehead.

Her Majesty's 33rd Regiment

Sergeant Evan Jones, gunshot wound through right calf; severely
Private Stephen Lake, gunshot wound through right leg; severely
Private J. Hayne, spear wound over frontal bone; slight
Private J. Daly, gunshot wound, left hand; slight
Private Hickson, gunshot wound of knee; slight

3rd Light Cavalry

Sowar Ramjee Khan, gunshot wound of right forearm; severely



Madras Sappers and Miners

Havildar Kousbin Swamee, gunshot wound, left elbow-joint; severely
RETURN of Killed and wounded at the **Storming of Magdala on the
13th April, 1868.**

Camp near Magdala, 15th

April, 1868.

Magdala Today 13th April 2013.

Your Imperial Majesty, I have brought home to Ethiopia two treasures which left here nearly a hundred years ago, at a moment when the relations between our two countries were far different from those which so happily unite us today.



As I raise my glass to your health, happiness and long prosperity, may I ask Your Imperial Majesty, as a token of our gratitude and esteem for your Throne and Person, to accept from me the Royal Cap and Imperial seal of the Emperor Theodore".

Magdala campaign, meeting at Magdala 12th April 2013.



**A Jamaican-British Diamond and Golden Jubilee, OAU (AU)
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