

1933

1933

3362

KENYA

C0533/439

3362

Murders by the Samburu
& death of Mr. T. Cowys.

Previous

Subsequent

23048/34.

Reg 297	19/12
Mr. Hunter	1
298	19/12
297	25/12
Room 309.	1)
297	

1933

2

Lady Elinor Cole called this afternoon, bringing with her Mr. A.R. ^{Powys} ~~Pellys~~ (address attached). They had come on from the East African Trade and Information Office, and I had been told by Major Corbett-Ward on the telephone that they wished to enquire whether we had any knowledge of the death of Mr. ^{Powys} ~~Pellys~~' nephew on Lady Elinor Cole's estate in Kenya. The accident, I gathered, took place 18 months ago, and at the time the pupil's death was attributed to a lion; in view, however, of recent evidence of aggressiveness by the Samburu, the suspicion has been raised that he was murdered by men of that tribe.

Lady Elinor Cole has heard by air mail from her manager ~~at Eldoret~~ that the Samburu have recently been very truculent; and that although the D.C. at Rumuruti is anxious to take measures accordingly, his colleague in the district further north, where the Samburu live, remains inert. It was not at all clear what Lady Elinor Cole wished us to do. I told her we had no official information at all on the subject either of the death of the pupil or of recent disturbances. She expects a full letter from her ~~colleague~~ ^{manager} by next week's air mail, and on its receipt she will probably write in a letter of which I promised to send a copy to the Colonial Government.

^{Powys}

As the pupil's parents (Mr. ~~Pellys~~ ^{Powys}' brother and sister-in-law) are still very much distressed, it is desired that any news we may receive from Government should be communicated to the uncle and not to them.

This note can be kept for attachment to Lady Elinor Cole's letter, if and when, she writes.

AA
11

1. Extract from 'Times' of 11 December 33.
2. " " " " " " " " " " " "
3. " " " " " " " " " " " "

4. Lady Eleanor Cole (S.O.) _____ 18th Dec. 33

States has received a further letter from her manager in Kenya regarding the death of Mr. T. Powys & murders by the Samburu & enquire what steps are being taken to prevent further murders & whether which can be left on the district.

cf. action taken on 15/13/32 Kenya.

D.H. or Sir C. Battersby. information

Wren
19/12/33

By Air Mail
19/12/33

5. To Kenya 954 (w/c 4) covers 19 DEC 1933

6. To Lady Eleanor Cole 210 (4 ansd.) 19/12/33

W

7. Lady Eleanor Cole (S.O.) _____ 22 Dec. 33

WESTBYE UNDER STATUTE

Notes. No 6 & 7 give her address after 20th Jan.

Put by

B. Battersby

11/34

at own

W

314
OA

336/ps

Kueryn

C. O.

Mr. Weston 19/11/52 f

Mr.

Mr. Tomlinson.

Sir C. Bottomley.

Sir J. Stuckburgh.

Sir G. Grindle.

Permt. U.S. of S.

Parly. U.S. of S.

Secretary of State.

4. f. C. Bottomley
R 19 DEC
D 19 7

~~Handwritten signature~~

19 DEC

~~Secretary of State~~

I am sorry to hear

of the trouble with the
Samburu. We have had
no recent information on
the subject from Nairobi, but
an enquiry, based on
your letter, is going out
by tomorrow's air mail.

~~Handwritten signature~~

(Signed) W. G. BOTTOMLEY.

Sorry to miss you this day
and I do hope that when we hear from
you we shall be glad to see you

DRAFT.

Lady E. Banno Cole.

[for address see
end of letter]

O. O.

3562/30

Kang

Mr. Frachten 19/12/34

Mr.

Mr. Tomlinson.

Sir C. Bottomley.

Sir J. Shuckburgh.

Sir G. Grindle.

Perms. U.S. of S.

Parly. U.S. of S.

Secretary of State.

Air Mail

Answered by Mob 23048/34

19 DEC 1933

S4

I have ...

DRAFT.

Kang

from
No. 954

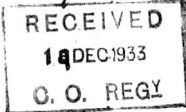
~~Handwritten scribbles and a box~~

First to you an extract
from a letter rec^d in the
C.O. from Lady Elvina
Cole concerning a report
of recent lawless activities
on the part of the Southern
I shall be glad
to hear what assurances
may be given to Lady
Elvina Cole.

2 Mfi

(Sgd.) P. GUNL...-LISTER.

Fishers Hill
Woking - Tel. 6. 421



Dec: 18. 1933.

5
H

Amos C
M.A.R. Kenya (5)
M.A.R. Kenya

Dear Sir Cecil Bottomley,

I was sorry I could not see you the other day when I called at the C.O. with M^r. A.R. Powsy. I [had that day] had a cable from my Manager in Kenya, M^r. E.W. Pardoe, about these statements being made, in connection with the recent murders by the Samburu Tribe, to the effect that M^r. Theodore Powsy (who was in my employ) had been murdered by the Samburu, & had not died by accident.

I have now had a letter from M^r. Pardoe by air mail giving further particulars. It would appear that the Saison of the Samburu is implicated & is probably directly responsible for all the murders recently committed in that district.

If M^r. Powsy was really murdered it naturally makes both M^r. Pardoe & myself anxious for the safety of the man who has replaced him & for that of my herds - Masai & Kikuyu - who are in charge of my sheep in that district.

I should be most grateful if you could tell me what steps the local Govt are taking to stop further murders being committed by the Samburgs; and whether I can safely leave my sheep in that district. I may add that it would be next to impossible to move them at the moment as they are in the middle of lambing

If the witch doctor is really at the bottom of the trouble - as I gather there is strong evidence for this - nothing short of his arrest would make the situation safe I feel. I am sure you will appreciate my anxiety, & the responsibility I feel towards those working for me & I should be glad to get some reassuring news ~~of~~

I am going to Scotland on the 20th where my address will be:-

Ballinvie
 Mas Kinch
 Fife.

Yrs sincerely
 E. Evans (E.)

7

24 / 12 / 1951

Daily Herald

11. 2. 51

NOVELIST DENIES IT IS HIS SON'S

A NEW mystery regarding the discovery of a white man's skull in Kenya was created yesterday by a denial that it was that of the man whom it was supposed to be.

It had been suggested that the skull was that of Mr. Theodore Powys, son of Mr. T. F. Powys, the novelist, who lives at Dochester.

Theodore Powys' body was found after his pony returned to the farm, but yesterday his father told the "Daily Herald": "I am surprised at this theory being advanced two years afterwards.

"His pony had a wound in its flank as though it had been attacked by a lion, and it was generally accepted that my son was killed by a lion.

"The body appeared to have been mutilated by hyenas and vultures, and was buried the day following discovery.

"I cannot think he was murdered

by the natives," he continued, "for those on the farm were Masai, with whom he was friendly and whose language he spoke."

Mr. Powys said he knew nothing about the skull being misad.

Messages from Kenya state (says Reuter) that the skull is held to have been in the possession of the Samburu tribe for some time.

It is assumed that the skull belonged to someone who was



Mr. T. F. Powys

murdered at the instigation of a witch doctor.

Mr. Freestone

8 2

Morning Post
16. 12. 33

MYSTERY OF A SKULL

Englishman's Fate in Kenya

SUSPECTED CASE OF MURDER

Victim of Savage Tribal Rite

NAIROBI, Dec. 9.

The finding of a white man's skull, which is believed to have been for some time in possession of warriors of the Samburu tribe, whose territory borders on the settled district of Laikipia, Kenya, may lead to a solution of the mysterious death two years ago of the young Englishman, Theodora Powys.

Mr. Powys, whose home was at Dorchester, was employed as farm manager by Lady Eleanor Cole. He disappeared on October 19, 1931, after setting out one morning on horseback in search of pasturage.

His pony later returned to the farm riderless, and a search, in which scores of settlers took part, was at once begun.

Portions of Mr. Powys' body were discovered, but the fact that the head remained missing cast doubt upon the accepted theory that he had been killed by a lion and mauled.

Later in the year a native employed in the district stated that Mr. Powys had been killed by Samburu warriors in the course of the "bleeding of spears" rites with which the warriors test their manhood.

Six months ago a number of murders by the Samburu were investigated by the police, who learnt that it was a common belief among the natives that Mr. Powys had been murdered.

Two natives were eventually arrested, and a further search having been made, the skull was found. It is suggested, however, that it may have been originally found and taken to the Samburu country as a proof of the warriors' courage.—
Reuter's Special.

London

19

Times
11 72 53

ENGLISHMAN'S DEATH IN KENYA

SAMBURU WARRIORS UNDER SUSPICION

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

NAIROBI, Dec. 9.

Police investigations into a frozen murder in the Laikipia district of Kenya, conducted by Samburu warriors, who killed an individual at Kikuyu for the pleasure of throwing their spears, promise to shed some light on the mysterious death of a young Englishman, Mr. Christopher Powys, on October 20, 1934. Mr. Powys, who was the son of Mr. J. H. Powys, the novelist, was employed as manager of Lady Eleanor Cole's farm at Laikipia.

Mr. Powys went out on the morning of his death in search for new pasturage. His party returned later unscathed but riderless. After two days' search by police and settlers with an aeroplane portions of the body were found, and it was presumed that Mr. Powys had been shot at a lion and that he had been thrown and killed and afterwards devoured. The skull was not then found. Months later a native employed in the district made a statement that Mr. Powys had been murdered by Samburu warriors. When the story could not be substantiated the man said he had lied and was imprisoned for making a false statement. Afterwards the skull was found near the scene of Mr. Powys's death.

In the last six months, while investigating the murders, the police learned of a saying, "Tell the warriors" (said at Samburu). Each were told the story of the murder, one of which mentioned the name Mr. Powys was killed. As a result several have been made. While it is considered probable that the skull was originally buried in Samburu villages by warriors, it remained in the possession of the doctor who investigated the recent case until the news of police activities induced the tribesmen to return the skull to the place where it was found.

Refr. M orders in Kenya.

10
END

A. R. Poyys.

20 Buckingham St WC2

2721 Temple Bar.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

END

TOTAL EXPOSURES →

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

C0533/440

ORDER NO. ⇒ FN/E474

CAMERA NO. ⇒ 19

OPERATOR. ⇒ EM

REDUCTION. ⇒ 12

EMULSION NO. ⇒ 321061

DATE. ⇒ 7/6/72

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