**TNA FO 369-198**

**9 June 1909**

**Pogson to Sir Edward Gray re Captain T.W. Whiffen**

Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Gray, Bart., M.P. etc etc etc

Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

London

Consular No. 2

H.B.M. Consulate

Para,

Brazil,

9 June 1909

Sir,

I have the Honour to report that Capt. T.W. Whiffen, of the 14th, the King's Hussars, who was reported to have been killed in January last by uncivilised Indian tribes in the Eaqueta region of the Amazon whilst prosecuting a journey of exploration from Iquitos to Manaos returned to Para in comparatively good health on the 2nd instant.

I was able to procure from him the following brief notes in regard to his journey.

Provided with about thirty five armed natives as an escort and as bearers, it was his intention to reach Manaos on a line running nearly 1 degree S. Lat viz by crossing the rivers Napo, Ita (Putumayo) and Japnra (Caqueta), and then, striking the upper Vaupes, thence by means of the last mentioned river and the Rio Negro, to his destination.

Captain Whiffen was only partially successful as a British pioneer along an apparently hitherto partially untraveled route. Beset by many difficulties and hardships, chiefly due to the difficulties of obtaining supplies and the hostility of the tribes, his troubles culminated in a severe attack of beri-beri whilst traversing the banks of the Vaupes river. His escort, with the exception of two men only, took the opportunity of deserting, with stores and rifles, and these misfortunes necessitated the abandonment of the originally planned line of exploration. It was probably with a view to exculpating themselves that the Captain's ex servants spread the report of his death, which ultimately filtered through to Para, and thence to Europe.

Captain Whiffen recorded several exciting episodes of his journeys of nine months, amongst which were three serious attacks upon his reduced escort, that in December 1908 including a seige of ten days in an abandoned Indian hut. A whole month was occupied in an endeavour to trace the French explorer Eugene Robuchon who disappeared in the neighbourhood of the Impura river as far back as 1896. The last report was that M. Robuchon had been killed and devoured by a cannibal tribe known as the Pamar Boros in the district of the mouth of the Capuinari. A vague report, however, reached Captain Whiffen that said explorer was still a prisoner amongst Indians in the district, but unfortunately it proved untrue. The death of Eugene Robuchon was confirmed, and a telescope, a quadrant, and some broken negatives belonging to the deceased were recovered.

Captain Whiffen obtained some very interesting, and in many cases unique, photographs of native races and places en route and these, with voluminous anthropological and ethnological notes and rough maps of the country and rivers traversed, will doubtless form an interesting addition to the work of previous travelers in the Amazon district. In addition to the foregoing, he completed vocabularies of more than 5000 words in two quite unknown Indian languages, also utilizing a phonograph for records of native dances, singing, etc.

Only two servants remained faithful throughout the journey, viz, John Brown, a native of Montserrat, and an Indian boy. The former courageously returned to the scene of Captain Whiffen's misfortunes and was fortunate enough to recover many of his sick master's effects, photographs and curios, which he had been compelled to abandon.

Captain Whiffen has proceeded home via Barbados.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant

G. Ambrose Pogson

H.B.M. Consul