MICHAEL SULLIVAN CORRESPONDENCE
1873 – 1891

Michael Sullivan was born in Cork, Ireland on 14 April 1845, and he joined the Royal Navy on 1 January 1873, at the age of 28, having served an apprenticeship as a Shipwright. His service record shows that when he joined the service, he was 5 feet 9 1/2 inches tall, with black hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion, occupation Shipwright.

A Shipwright is one of the “old occupations”, and the trade dates back to well beyond the middle ages, and by 1260 there was a City Livery Company, known as the Guild of Free Shipwrights. Before you could become a qualified Shipwright, an apprenticeship of seven years had to be served.

Shipwrights in the Royal Navy Yards from 1801, were paid 6d a day in “chip money” to compensate them when the privilege of being allowed to take home small pieces of wood (chips) unsuitable in building ships, was disallowed. Shipwrights were also entitled to sick pay from an early date and received basic pay for six weeks, followed by 2s 0d to 4s 0d per week until they either resumed work or retired. A shipwright would be involved in drawing up the plans and constructing wooden ships to completion and launching. The fitting out was mainly done by other trades, although occasional shipwrights were employed making wooden fixtures etc.

With the arrival of iron ships and steam power, there was less demand for the traditional shipwrights, however in 1862, the Royal Navy retrained their Shipwrights serving in their Yards, with the new skills. The position of Master Shipwright was a privileged one, he was the most important Officer in the Yard, and controlled all the shipwrights, caulkers, scavelmen, boatbuilders, mast makers and general labourers. In a Royal Navy Yard, he had his own large house as well as offices on the site. He was also entitled to 14 days annual leave, sick pay (even for drunkenness) as well as complete security of tenure.1

Michael Sullivan, served on at least 22 ships, during his service with the Royal Navy, before he was pensioned off on 31 March 1891, aged 46 years. Covers have to date, only been recorded from nine ships. He appears to have a checkered record, having served two terms of imprisonment as well as being court-martialed, and dismissed his ship.

Stuart Rossiter reported that he had seen more than 30 Sullivan covers (many more probably exist) and they ranged over the whole East Indies patrol area in the 80’s2.

With the rank of Chief Carpenter’s Mate, he served on the following ships:
- **HMS Hornet** 1 January 1873 to 28 October 1873
- **HMS Princess Charlotte** 29 October 1873 to 30 December 1873
- **HMS Duke of Wellington** 31 December 1873 to 1 January 1874
- **HMS Asia** 2 January 1874 to 9 April 1874

To date there have been no recorded letters to Michael Sullivan from any of the above ships. The 1872 Navy List, shows HMS Hornet at the China Station, HMS Princess Charlotte at Hong Kong, HMS Duke of Wellington, Flag Ship Portsmouth, HMS Asia Guard Ship of Reserve at Portsmouth.

1 Margaret Spiller, *Family Tree Magazine* May to June 1992
2 Stuart Rossiter Naval Mail from East Africa, *Postal History International* April 1972
With the rank of **Chief Carpenter's Mate**, he served on the following ship:

**HMS Lord Warden**

- **HMS Lord Warden**
  - 16 April 1874 to 6 November 1874

On 7 November 1874 he was promoted to **Carpenter 2nd Class** (Warrant Officer)³

**HMS Lord Warden**

*Name – Honoured the title of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports*

The **Lord Warden** was the heaviest wooden ship ever built. It was based on the design of *Bellerophon* with dimensions modified to suit a wooden hull and the battery armour extended the full length of the ship.

Built at Chatham DYd, laid down 24 December 1863, launched 27 March 1865, completed 30.8.1867, sold 1889. Displacement 7842t, Armament 2-9in MLR, 14-8in MLR, 2-7in MLR, 2-20 pdr BL. Complement 605.

Flag Ship Mediterranean stationed at Malta, Vice Admiral Hon. Sir James R.Drummond KCB as at June 1874.

The Log⁴ shows that from April 1874 to March 1875, she was mainly sailing in the northern areas of the Mediterranean, including Italy and Greece.

The Log also records that on the 2 February 1875, whilst in port at Malta, “at 9.30 am placed Mr. Sullivan Carpenter under arrest for being absent without leave on 1 February 1875”

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³ Warrant Officers register Volume 3 of 4 No. 207 ADM 196/31 Off No. 67559 Carpenter
⁴ ADM 53/10332 Log 24.4.1874 to 3.3.1875
Letter dated 29 July 1874 from Birmingham, addressed to Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter's Mate

**HMS Lord Warden** at Malta or elsewhere

One Penny Concession Rate letter, GB One Penny Red adhesive cancelled with Birmingham Duplex datestamp and numeral No. 75 obliterator, correctly addressed to M. Sullivan Chief Carpenter’s Mate HMS *Lord Warden*, to comply with the regulations.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1.** 29 July 1874 Birmingham to HMS *Lord Warden* Malta or Elsewhere, carried on the P&O *Geelong*, left Southampton 30 July 1874, arrived at Malta 8 August 1874, no receiving datestamps.

Believed to be the only known surviving cover addressed to Michael Sullivan

HMS *Lord Warden* was at Malta 28 July 1874, leaving on 4 August 1874 for Cagliari, Sardinia.

**HMS Lord Warden** 1 August 1874 Malta

Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter’s Mate

One Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by one of the 18 Midshipmen on board, being the Officer in command. GB One Penny Red adhesive cancelled with Malta A25 Duplex datestamp, Birmingham cds 11 Aug. 1874

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 2.** 1 August 1874 Malta, letter placed in the Navy Bag, carried on the P&O *Zambezi* arrived at Southampton 10 August 1874. Backstamped with Birmingham cds 11 August 1874.
**HMS Lord Warden** c 8 September 1874 Gibraltar

Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter's Mate

One Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Lieutenant Philip HW Mayrow, Officer in command. GB One Penny red adhesive cancelled with 1870 type Numeral No. 4 in oval of bars obliterator, countersigned by Lieutenant Philip HW Mayrow, Officer in command, to comply with the regulations.

![Letter](image)

**Figure 3.** 8 September 1874, Gibraltar, letter placed in the Navy bag on the P&O Peshawar, arriving at Southampton 12/13 September 1874. Birmingham circular datestamp, 14 September 1874, on reverse

The *Lord Warden* arrived at Gibraltar 31 August 1874, leaving on 11 September 1874.

With the rank of **Carpenter 2nd Class** he served on the following ships:

- **HMS Asia** 1 April 1875 to 15 July 1877
- **HMS Pembroke** 16 July 1877 to 3 September 1877
- **HMS Blanche** 4 September 1877 to 28 September 1877

On 18 September 1877 he was promoted to **Carpenter**, and served on:

- **HMS Asia** 29 October 1877 to 20 November 1877
- **HMS Vestal** 21 November 1877 to 14 June 1878

*To date there have been no recorded letters to Michael Sullivan from any of the above ships*

On 14 June 1878, Michael Sullivan was discharged the service by Court Martial held on 18 September 1879, when he was sentenced to forfeit all certificates as Carpenter, and to be discharged his ship.5

Michael Sullivan appears to have left the Royal Navy service for over two years after being discharged on the 14 June 1878.

On 6 October 1880, Michael Sullivan was accepted back into the Royal Navy as a **Skilled Shipwright**, and served on the following ships:

- **HMS Asia** 6 October 1880 to 17 March 1881
- **HMS Excellent** 18 March 1881 to 27 May 1881

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5 AO 17.7.78 and Rd 6818 also Rd 9638/77
Gunnery Ship Portsmouth
28 May 1881 to 4 July 1881
Portsmouth

HMS *Asia*
5 July 1881 to 15 October 1881
Portsmouth

HMS *Inflexible*
16 October 1881 to 11 January 1882
Portsmouth

To date there have been no recorded letters to Michael Sullivan from any of the above ships.

With the rank of **Skilled Shipwright** he served on the following ships.

- **HMS *Euryalus***
  12 January 1882 to 25 April 1882

- **HMS *Ruby***
  26 April 1882 to 30 April 1882

**HMS *Euryalus*** c March 1882 Suez
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
One Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe, being the Officer in command. GB One Penny Lilac adhesive cancelled with upright obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

Lot 1046 Cavendish Auction 16 May 2001

**Figure 4.** 10 March 1882 to 16 March 1882 at Suez.
Letter placed in the Navy bag on the P&O Packet at Suez
Michael Sullivan’s rank was changed as from 1 May 1882 to **Skilled Carpenters Mate**

With the rank of **Skilled Carpenters Mate** he served on the following ship.

**HMS Ruby** 1 May 1882 to 30 August 1882

**HMS Ruby**

East Indies Station, recommissioned at Bombay 2 July 1880, Captain Charles E. Foot.

**HMS Ruby** EMERALD class composite screw corvette.

Built by Earle at Hull, launched 30 October 1875, completed October 1876, sold 1921. Displacement 2120t, 220ft x 40ft x 18ft. 2018ihp, armament, 12-64pdr MLR, complement 230.
HMS Ruby Trincomalie c May to August 1882
Michael Sullivan Skilled Carpenter's Mate.
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Midshipman John F. Lea Officer in command. Two GB One Penny Lilac adhesives cancelled with upright obliterator with No.26 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009) at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London

Lot 676 Robson Lowe Auction 11 June 1981.
Figure 5. circa May 1882 to August 1882 at Trincomalie, Ceylon

HMS Seagull
East Indies Station, recommissioned at Devonport 18 February 1879, Captain Mather Byles

HMS Seagull  PLOVER class wooden gunvessel.
Built at Devonport Dyd, launched 1867 to 1871, sold 1887. Displacement 755t, 170ft x 29ft x 9ft 6in, 800-9708ihp, armament, 1-7in MLR, 2-40 pdr BL. Complement 90.
HMS *Seagull* was at Suez 18 August 1882 until 20 August 1882, when she proceeded to the canal, stopping at Chalouf to land troops and commenced attack on Egyptian rebel forces.

**HMS *Seagull* 18/20 August 1882 Suez Canal.**

Michael Sullivan Skilled Carpenter's Mate.

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ebenezer Rae (ER). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters No. – within a diamond (A&H No. 1009) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Image of letter](image)

**Figure 6.** c 20 August 1882 Suez Canal, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O *Khedive* which left Suez 20 August 1882, mail transferred at Port Said to P&O *Malwa* to Brindisi 28 August 1882, and London 31 August 1882.

Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 31 August 1882.

**HMS Euryalus**

Name Mentioned by Homer as the companion of Diomedes during the siege of Troy

![Image of ship](image)

Flag Ship, East Indies Station recommissioned at Malta 27 January 1882.

Vice-Admiral Sir William N.W. Hewett, Captain Alexander P. Hastings, CB.

**HMS *Euryalus*,** BACCHANTE class iron screw corvette. Built at Chatham DYd., launched 31 January 1877., completed 1888, sold 1897. Displacement 3932t, Armament 14-7in 41/2 t MLR, 2-6in (64pdr) MLR, 2-20 pdr BL. Complement 375 (later increased to 420)
Michael Sullivan’s rank was changed as from 1 May 1882 to **Skilled Carpenters Mate**

With the rank of **Skilled Carpenters Mate** he served on the following ships.

**HMS Euryalus** 1 September 1882 to 3 December 1882

The Log of **HMS Euryalus** 25 January 1882 to 7 March 1883 confirms that the ship had returned to **Suez** on 1 August 1882 and was there until 12 October 1882, before leaving for Jiddah and Aden.

On 2 August 1882, Vice-Admiral Sir William N.W. Hewett VC, Commander-in-Chief in the East Indies, HMS **Euryalus**, learning that Suez was in danger of being burnt by the Bedouins, disembarked several hundred Marines, and occupied the town. **HMS Ruby** also contributed to part of the landing force. From Suez on 8 August 1882, Lieutenant Harold Charrington of HMS Euryalus, with Captain Gill R.E. and Prof. Palmer, departed, to make arrangements with the Arabs for the supply of camels. All three were murdered by the Bedouins.

**HMS Euryalus** September 1882 Suez

**Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter’s Mate**

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe, Officer in command. Two GB One Penny Lilac adhesives cancelled with Duplex cds 13 September 1882, and obliterator with No.87 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

![Lot 530 Cavendish Auction 23 January 2004](image)

**Figure 7.** c 3 September 1882 at Suez. Letter placed in the Navy bag on the P&O **Ponca**, the Brindisi Steamer because of the war at Suez, 3 September 1882, which went direct to Brindisi 11 September, London 13 September 1882

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\(^6\) ADM 53/12198
HMS *Euryalus* c August to October 1882 Suez

Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter’s Mate

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe, Officer in command. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright obliterator with No.26 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

(Figure 8. HMS *Euryalus* at Suez undated circa 1 August 1882 to 12 October 1882)

HMS *Euryalus* 10 October 1882 Suez

Michael Sullivan Chief Carpenter’s Mate

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, to comply with the regulations, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe, Officer in command. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London

(Figure 9. 10 October 1882 at Suez, letter placed in the Navy bag on the P&O *Thibet* left Suez 11 October 1882 for Brindisi* Backstamped Birmingham 20 October 1882.)
* From 11 July 1882 until the end of the year, the Postmaster-General allowed the mail to go through the Suez Canal, as the overland route was unsafe because of the war. From mid August, the Brindisi steamer went through the Canal and handed over at Suez.

Michael Sullivan’s rank of Skilled Carpenter’s Mate, was changed as from 4 December 1882 to Skilled Shipwright, and with this rank he served on the following ship:

HMS *Euryalus* 4 December 1882 to 19 March 1884

HMS *Euryalus* log at Trincomalie [1 January 1883 to 7 February 1883]

**HMS Euryalus** 22 January 1883 Trincomalie

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

**Figure 10.** 22 January 1883, letter placed in the Navy bag, on P&O Thibet, left Colombo 24 January 1883, transferred to P&O Tanjore at Alexandria, 7 February 1883 for Brindisi. Backstamped Birmingham 11 February 1883

From 11 July 1882 until the end of the year, the Postmaster-General allowed the mail to go through the Suez Canal, as the overland route was unsafe because of the war. From mid August, the Brindisi steamer went through the Canal and handed over at Suez. Normal service resumed from 12 December 1882, with the mail being transferred at Alexandria, instead of at Suez.
HMS \textit{Euryalus} c February 1883 Trincomalie
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.
GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

Figure 11. HMS \textit{Euryalus} circa February 1883 at Trincomalie, letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on the P&O Packet.

HMS \textit{Euryalus} c February 1883 Trincomalie
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.
GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright obliterator No.176, originally Used at Chelmsford, but in all probability applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

Figure 12. circa February 1883 at Trincomalie, letter placed in the Navy bag.

HMS \textit{Euryalus} at Calcutta, [26 February 1883 to 13 March 1883]
HMS *Euryalus* 28 February 1883 Calcutta
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

*Figure 13. 28 February 1883 at Calcutta, Letter placed in the Navy bag on P&O ..... Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 20 March 1883*

All mail sent via Suez during June to December 1883 was affected by the Cholera Epidemic in Egypt.

HMS *Euryalus* at Bombay, [3 April 1883 to 3 May 1883]
There was a weekly service from Bombay with the mail to UK, April 6, 13, 20 & 27.
HMS *Euryalus* c April 1883 Bombay
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.
GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office, London.

![Image](image1)

Figure 14. circa April 1883 at Bombay Letter placed in the Navy bag, for the P&O Packet

HMS *Euryalus* c April 1883 Bombay
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.
GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright oval barred obliterator with No.10 within a diamond (A&H No. 1009), applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office, London.

![Image](image2)

Lot 194 Auction unknown [reduced]

Figure 15. circa April 1883 at Bombay Letter placed in the Navy bag, for the P&O Packet

HMS Euryalus was at Mauritius (…………………..)
HMS *Euryalus* c 14 August 1883 Mauritius
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Henry H. Phillips. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with LONDON circular datestamp 9 September 1883.

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 16.** circa 14 August 1883 at Port Louis, Mauritius, letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on the La Compagnie Des Messageries Maritimes *Caledonien* which left Mauritius on 14 August 1883, with the mail to Marseilles, London, 9 September 1883. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 10 September 1883. Redirected to Rhyl at no extra postage, RHYL cds 11 September 1883.

HMS *Euryalus* c September 1883 Mauritius
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Naval Clerk James Murray GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright obliterator No.176, originally Used at Chelmsford, but in all probability applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

![Image](image2.png)

**Figure 17.** circa September 1883 at Port Louis, Mauritius. Letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on the La Compagnie Des Messageries Maritimes *Melbourne* which left Mauritius on 11 September 1883, to Marseilles. Backstamped with BIRMINGHAM cds 3 October 1883.
HMS *Euryalus* c 1883/1884 Zanzibar

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.

GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright obliterator No.176, originally used at Chelmsford, but applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London. (Front only)

Figure 18. circa 1883/1884 at Zanzibar, letter placed in the Navy bag. reduced

HMS *Euryalus* c 1883 / 1884 Zanzibar

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest N. Rolfe.

GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with upright barred obliterator with unknown No. within circle, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office London.

Lot 41 A Robson Lowe Auction 7/8 February 1980

Figure 19. circa 1883/1884 at Zanzibar, letter placed in the Navy bag.

HMS *Euryalus* c 1884 Suakin

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Commander Ernest N. Rolfe.

GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556)

Figure 20. Cavendish Auction 16 May 2001 Lot 1134 (reduced)
HMS *Euryalus* c January 1884 Suakin
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Commander Ernest N. Rolfe. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with the PLYMOUTH SHIP LETTER cds 6 Feb. 1884.

Lot 1133 Cavendish Auction 16 May 2001 ex Firebrace collection

*Figure 21.* circa 6 January 1884 at Suakin, letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on the P&O………………..Plymouth Ship Letter cds 6 February 1884

HMS *Euryalus* c February 1884 Suakin
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Commander Ernest N. Rolfe. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Ex Norton Collier collection

*Figure 22.* circa 1884 at Suakin, letter placed in the Navy bag.
HMS *Euryalus* c 15 February 1884 Suakin – Red Sea

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Commander Ernest N. Rolfe. GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 23. circa 15 February 1884 letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on P&O *Teheran* which left Suez 19 February 1884 for Port Said where it was transferred to the P&O *Surat* for Brindisi. Backstamped with BIRMINGHAM cds 2 March 1884

Michael Sullivan on 19 March 1884 was Court-martialed, he was sentenced to six months “Hard Labour” and then to be discharged the service, however the I.C. Adjutant directed that he should not be dismissed at the expiration of his imprisonment. According to the records he was to be transferred to *HMS Royal Adelaide* for imprisonment, and discharged to Lewes Goal from 25 April 1884.

* According to the Log of *HMS Humber*, 23 March 1884; “embar ked prisoners for passage to Suez and Malta” the prisoners must have included Michael Sullivan as he has posted a letter at Suez whilst using a *HMS London* printed envelope, changed to *HMS Humber*, no doubt this is where he was transferred to *HMS Royal Adelaide*.

Michael Sullivan was reinstated as a Skilled Shipwright, and served on the following ships:

- **HMS Asia** 20 September 1884 to 18 November 1884
  I have not recorded any letters from this ship during this term.

- **HMS Humber**
  Troop and Store ship of 1878
  *HMS Humber* at Suez (29 March 1884 to 30 March 1884)
**HMS Humber** 29 March 1884 Suez

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Herbert C. Sayce.

GB Twopence Rose adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Figure 24. HMS Humber 29 March 1884 at Suez letter placed in the Navy bag to be taken on the P&O Siam which left Suez 31 March 1884, mail was transferred to the P&O Mongolia at Alexandria 1 April 1884 for Brindisi, 4 April 1884. Backstamped with BIRMINGHAM cds 7 April 1884](image)

Michael Sullivan’s service records do not show him serving on HMS Himalaya, however the following cover exists, indicating that he was indeed aboard as at 2 December 1884 at Malta.

**HMS Himalaya**

Iron Steam Troop ship, 4690 tons, 2580 H.P. No other details available.

Commissioned at Devonport 7 December 1882, Captain Henry St. L.B. Pallister

HMS Himalaya at Malta (1 to 3 December 1884), coaling before proceeding to Alexandria with troops and stores.

**HMS Himalaya** 2 December 1884 Malta.

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

One Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Reginald C. Prothero (RP). GB One Penny lilac adhesive cancelled with MALTA Duplex

![Figure 25. 2 December 1884 Letter placed in Malta Postal System.](image)
Michael Sullivan with the rank of a Skilled Shipwright, and served on the following ship:

**HMS Monarch**

19 November 1884 to 25 April 1885

**HMS Monarch**

**HMS Monarch** MONARCH class masted turret ship, was the first sea-going turret ship, and the first British warship to carry 12in guns, and was the fastest battleship afloat at the time of her completion. Altered to Barque-rig in 1872, and two torpedo launchers were added in 1878. Built at Chatham Dyd, launched 25 May 1868, completed 12 June 1869, sold for BU 1905. Displacement 8322t load, 330ft pp x 57ft 6in x 24ft 3in, 800-9708ihp, armament, 4-12in MLR, 3-7in MLR. Complement 575.

HMS Monarch at Alexandria (19 November 1884 to 26 March 1885)
HMS Monarch 24 January 1885 Alexandria
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant John H. Home (JH). Egypt 20 Para Rose (1884) adhesive cancelled with the ALEXANDRIE DEPART cds 24 January 1884.

Figure 25. 24 January Alexandria, Letter placed in Egyptian Postal System and carried on the P&O Tanjore which left Alexandria 27 January 1885, for Brindisi. Backstamped with SPARKBROOK and BIRMINGHAM cds 2 February 1885

HMS Monarch 30 January 1885 Alexandria
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant John H. Home (JH). Egypt 20 Para Rose (1884) adhesive cancelled with the ALEXANDRIE DEPART cds 30 January 1884.

Figure 26. 30 January 1885 Alexandria, letter placed in Egyptian Postal System and carried on the P&O ……… which left Alexandria ….February 1885, for Brindisi. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds circa 9 February 1885

7 Lot 1147 Cavendish Auction 16 May 2001 ex John Firebrace collection (reduced Fig.)
HMS Monarch  c2 March 1885 Alexandria
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant John H. Home (JH). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Figure 27. c2 March 1885 Alexandria, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on P&O Brindisi which left Suez 2 March 1885 direct for London 17 March 1885. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 17 March 1885.

HMS Monarch  (date unknown) Alexandria
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant John H. Home (JH). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Figure 28. Date unknown [1d Suakin rate 17 March 1885 to ?]
HMS Monarch Insignia on reverse of the above cover.

HMS Monarch returned to Malta 3 April 1885, and on 25 April 1885, the crew were paid off and transferred to HMS Thunderer 26 April 1885.

Michael Sullivan, Skilled Shipwright, after leaving HMS Monarch, served on

HMS Thunderer 26 April 1885 to 31 March 1886

HMS Thunderer  DEVASTATION class turret ship. The forward turret was the first to have hydraulic loading gear. In 1879 one of her 12in 38t guns burst after being double-loaded. She was refitted in 1881, with 2-14in TL, and 8 MG guns, two searchlights, and a fighting top added, and was furthered modernised in 1890-92.

Built at Pembroke Dyd, launched 25 March 1872, completed 26 May 1877, sold for BU 1909. Displacement 9330t load, 285ft pp, 307ft oa x 62ft 3in x 26ft 8in, 6270ihp, armament, 4-12in MLR (2x2) Complement 358.

HMS Thunderer at Malta (26 April 1885 – 11 June 1885)
HMS Thunderer 3 June 1885 Malta
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
One Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by (MM).
Malta One Penny carmine adhesive cancelled with 1881 type Duplex MALTA (curved)
Index E 3 June 1885 date stamp and A25 in an upright ellipse (28x20mm) with horizontal bars,
three above and three below, obliterator.

Michael Sullivan rank was again changed from a Skilled Shipwright, to a Skilled Carpenter’s Mate, and served on the following ships (1 April 1886 to 15 March 1887)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HMS Thunderer</td>
<td>1 April 1886 to 15 August 1886 (Alexandria)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMS Royal Adelaide</td>
<td>16 August 1886 to 17 August 1886 (Alexandria)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMS Indus</td>
<td>18 August 1886 to 30 September 1886 (Devonport ?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Michael Sullivan rank changed to Skilled Shipwright, served on the following ships: -

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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>HMS Indus</td>
<td>1 October 1886 (Devonport ?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMS Lion</td>
<td>2 October 1886 to 8 November 1886 (Devonport ?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Michael Sullivan has once again fallen foul of the Authorities and is sentenced to 54 days imprisonment in Bodmin Goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HMS Lion</td>
<td>1 January 1887 to 19 January 1887</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMS Indus</td>
<td>20 January 1887 to 15 March 1887</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have not recorded any extant letters from any of the above ships during this period (1 April 1886 to 15 March 1887)

Figure 29. Malta 3 June 1885, Letter placed in the Maltese Postal System and carried on the P&O………………… direct for London. Backstamped BROMSGROVE cds 8 June 1885.
HMS Griffon

(Griffin) A fabulous creature with the body and paws of a lion, and the wings of an eagle.

The fourteenth HMS Griffon (CONDER class composite gun vessel) 3 guns (1-7in MLR, 2-64 pdr MLR 780 tons, 795 ihp, 157 ft x 29 ft 6in x 13 ft. Built by Laird, launched at Birkenhead 16 December 1876. Sold by the Board of Trade as a hulk and renamed Richmond 28 September 1891. Ship’s complement 100.

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright, served on, HMS Griffon 1 July 1887 to 30 June 1889

HMS Griffon mainly at Aden (25 May 1887 to 15 April 1888)

HMS Griffon c 1 August 1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by .......... (AP). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the circular barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

Figure 30. c 1 August 1887, Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 15 August 1887

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8 As Fig. 3 reduced Stuart Rossiter Illustrated Postal History International April 1973
HMS *Griffon* c17 September 1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant M.H. Cooper (C). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Figure 31.](image)
c 17 September 1887, Mourning Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O *Sutlej* which left Aden 18 September 1887 to Alexandria, where it was transferred, 26 September 1887 to P&O *Gwailor* for Brindisi, 29 September 1887. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 1 October 1887

HMS *Griffon* c30 October 1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant M.H. Cooper (C). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

![Figure 32.](image)
(reduced) c 30 October 1887, letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O *Bengal* which left Aden 1 Nov. 1887 to Suez 7 Nov. 1887 and direct through to London 24 November 1887. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 26 November 1887
HMS *Griffon* c 28 November 1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant M.H. Cooper (C). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the framed circular barred obliterator, letters F. B applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** c 28 November 1887, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O *Ganges* which left Aden 29 November 1887 to Suez 3 November 1887, transferred at Alexandria to P&O *Gwalior*, 6 Dec.1887 to Brindisi 9 Dec.1887. Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 12 December 1887

HMS *Griffon* date unknown c1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Mourning cover 2d Jubilee GB adhesive, FB cancel, countersigned by Lieutenant Cooper.

Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Robson Lowe Auction 7/8 February 1980, Lot 42. No other details

One other 1887 cover from Aden, has been recorded as follows:

HMS *Griffon* c December 1887 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

London 16 January 1888, 2 x 1d Lilac GB adhesives FB cancel, countersigned EHG, Chris Rainey stock 1997

**Figure 35.** (no copy)
**HMS Griffon** c February 1888 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Leicester F.G. Tippings (LGT).
GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives, cancelled with the framed circular barred obliterator, letters F. B applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 36.** (reduced) c February 1888, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on P&O which left Aden ……… to Suez…, transferred at Alexandria to P&O …… to Brindisi ……..
Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 20 February 1888

**HMS Griffon** c February 1888 Aden
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant M.H. Cooper (C). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives, cancelled with the framed circular barred obliterator, letters F. B applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

![Image](image2.png)

**Figure 37.** (reduced) c February 1888, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O …… which left Aden ……… to Suez…, transferred at Alexandria to P&O …… to Brindisi ……..
Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 5 March 1888.
HMS *Griffon* was at Trincomalie (30 April 1888 to 12 May 1888)

**HMS Griffon** c 1 May 1888 Trincomalie

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Ernest H. Grafton (EHG)

Two One Penny lilac adhesives, cancelled with the framed circular barred obliterator, letters F. B (2) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

![Figure 38](image1.png)

Figure 38. (reduced) Lot 928 Harmers Auction 5 April 2005 (no details)

**HMS Griffon** at the East Indies

**HMS Griffon** c pre⁹ October 1888 East Indies

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant M.H. Cooper (C). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Figure 39](image2.png)

Figure 39. (reduced) c October 1888, side flap missing, pencil annotation 29/88

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⁹ Pre October 1888, Lieutenant Cooper who countersigned this letter was killed on 17 October 1888
HMS *Griffon* mainly at Zanzibar (17 June 1888 to 2 October 1889)

**HMS Griffon c 2 September 1888 Zanzibar**

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Surgeon James H. Dawe (JHD). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the LONDON cds 24 October 1889, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Image](image1.png)

*Figure 40.* 10 c September 1888, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O …which left Aden …….. to Suez…. transferred at Alexandria to P&O ……. to Brindisi ……..

Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 2 October 1888.

**HMS Griffon c2 November 1888 Zanzibar**

Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Leicester F.G. Tippings (FGT). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the LONDON cds 17 December 1888, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

![Image](image2.png)

*Figure 41.* 11 c September 1888, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O which left Aden …….. to Suez…. transferred at Alexandria to P&O ……. to Brindisi ……..

Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 18 December 1888

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10 Ibid Fig 4 (reduced)
11 Ibid Fig 6 (reduced)
HMS Griffon  c May 1889 East Indies
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Leicester F.G. Tippings (FGT). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Figure 42. (reduced) c May 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O .... which left Aden ..... to Suez..., transferred at Alexandria to P&O ...... to Brindisi ......... Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 1 June 1889

HMS Griffon  c December 1888 Zanzibar
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Chief Engineer William Firks (WmF). GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the framed circular barred obliterator, letters F. B applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

Figure 43 (reduced) c December 1888, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O Ballarat which left Aden 27 December 1888 to Suez..., transferred at Alexandria to P&O ...... to Brindisi .......... Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 14 January 1889.
HMS Griffon c January 1889 Zanzibar
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Leicester F.G. Tippings (FGT).
GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the vertical oval barred obliterator, with numeral 18 within a diamond, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

Figure 44 (reduced) c January 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag and by the La Compagnie Des Messageries Maritimes Line, Ligne de la Cote Orientale d’Afrique 1888 – 1895 Mendoza, which left Zanzibar 4 October 1889 for Marseilles 23 October 1889 Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 11 February 1889

HMS Griffon at Mauritius (30 June 1889 to 30 July 1889)

HMS Griffon c July 1889 Port Louis Mauritius
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant John D. Daintress (JDD) GB Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the LONDON cds 2 August 1889, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office

Figure 45. (reduced) c July 1889 Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O … which left Aden ….. to Suez…, transferred at Alexandria to P&O …… to Brindisi ……… BIRMINGHAM double ringed cds 3 August 1889

12 Lot 938 Spink Auction 21 March 2003 ex R.C.Knight collection
13 Argyl Etkin Stock, November 1997 and 1998/1999
HMS Griffon at Zanzibar (2 October 1889 to 7 October 1889)

**HMS Griffon** c 2 October 1889 Zanzibar
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant Leicester F.G. Tippings (FGT). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the LONDON cds 24 October 1889, applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

**Figure 46** c 2 October 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag and by the La Compagnie Des Messageries Maritimes Line, Ligne de la Cote Orientale d’Afrique 1888 – 1895 *Mendoza*, which left Zanzibar 4 October 1889 for Marseilles 23 October 1889 Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 25 October 1889

![Image of the letter and stamp](image)

Embossed **HMS GRIFFON** (dark Blue) and BIRMINGHAM cds on reverse
HMS *Griffon* at Pemba (September 1889)

HMS *Griffon* c August 1889 Pemba
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Chief Engineer William Firke (WmF) GB
Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the Barred Horizontal Obliterator

![Letter from M. Sullivan to Wm. Firke, Pemba, dated 3rd August 1889](image1)

**Figure 47.** c September 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag

HMS *Griffon* at Lamu (September 1889)

HMS *Griffon* c September 1889 Lamu
Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright
Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Chief Engineer William Firke (WmF) GB
Twopence Jubilee issue (1.1.1887) adhesive cancelled with the Barred Horizontal Obliterator

![Letter from M. Sullivan to Wm. Firke, Lamu, dated 15th September 1889](image2)

**Figure 48.** c September 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag

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14 Lot 1010 Robson Lowe Auction, 5 March 1876
15 Lot 558 Harmers Auction 27 March 1997
**HMS Griffon** at Bombay (22 October 1889 to 10 December 1889)

The ship’s company took up their quarters on shore, while the ship was being refitted.

Michael Sullivan has once again fallen foul of the Authorities and is sentenced to serve 21 days imprisonment in Byculla Goal at Bombay, for Leave breaking, 15 November 1889 to 3 December 1889.

Michael Sullivan had his rank of **Skilled Shipwright**, changed to **Shipwright** and served on:

**HMS Griffon** (3 December 1889 to 9 September 1890)

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**HMS Griffon**

- c 4 December 1889 Bombay
- Michael Sullivan Skilled Shipwright*

Two Penny Concession Rate letter, countersigned by Lieutenant ………….). GB Two One Penny lilac adhesives cancelled with the upright oval barred obliterator, letters F. B within a circle (A&H No. 1556) applied at the Foreign Branch of the Chief Post Office.

*NOTE Michael Sullivan has still shown his rank as Skilled Shipwright

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**Figure 49.** c 4 December 1889, Letter placed in Navy bag and carried on the P&O *Assam* which left Bombay 6 December 1889, mail transferred at Aden 12 December 1889 to P&O *Arcadia* to Brindisi 21 December 1889, and London 23 December 1889

Backstamped BIRMINGHAM cds 23 December 1889

Michael Sullivan with the rank of **Shipwright** served on the following ships:

- **HMS Indus** 10 September 1890 to 30 November 1890
- **HMS Belleise** 1 December 1890 to 31 March 1891

*I have not recorded any extant letters from any of the above ships during this period (10 September 1890 to 31 March 1891)*
Michael Sullivan was pensioned off on 31 March 1891, aged 46 years.

Notwithstanding all the trials and tribulations which Michael Sullivan went through during his ‘broken’ service in the Royal Navy, his legacy of extant covers, has given many Postal Historians a great deal of pleasure, and as has been said before on many occasions;

“Oh! If only we had the letters, and what a story they could tell”

Due acknowledgement must be recorded to Margaret Frankcom, who carried out the main research at the Public Records Office at Kew, also to Geoffrey Osborn MC, Colin Taebeart and all those other collectors who have willing given me further information and guidance.

The main references have been: -

Contemporary Ships Logs, service records and Navy Lists
The “Times” Newspaper
The Royal Navy A History Sir W. Laird Clowes London 1903
All the World’s Fighting Ships 1860 - 1905
British Warship Names, Captain T.D. Manning & Commander C.E. Walker Putnam 1959
British Maritime Postal History Vol 1 and Vol 2, R Kirk, Proud-Bailey Co. Ltd.
Personal research.

Concession Postal Rates

Seamen have enjoyed special concession postage rates for private letters since a One Penny rate was introduced by Act 35 George III Cap 53, 5 May 1795. This rate continued through out the period 1795 to 1911, provided the letters were no heavier than a single sheet or from 1 September 1840, a half ounce. Letters had to comply with several regulations including being countersigned by Commanding Officer, this was changed in 1803 to the “Commanding Officer for the Time being” and in 1806 to the “Officer having at the Time the Command of the ship or vessel”. Letters had to generally carried by British Packets, additional fees were payable if sent by private or foreign ships or passed through foreign posts.

The Twopence rate was introduced, with the closure of Southampton for the Australian mails via Suez, with all mail going through BRINDISI as from 1 February 1880. During the confrontation at Suakin, a special concession postage rate was set at One Penny, as from 17 March 1885, when an Army Post Office was opened at Suakin.

Conclusion

I am sure that there must still be more information to be unearthed about Michael Sullivan, more covers to be found and lots more details of Routes and historical incidences. I look forward to receiving all comments, advice and just as important, details of additional covers which are no doubt still to be recorded.

Gerald J. ELLIOTT RDP
13 July 2006 (First Draft)