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## Editorial

## Autumn 2004

India was part of a complex imperial network – a world wide web of a former age. At its centre of course was the United Kingdom, and the three main articles in this issue all in different ways remind us of this fact. At the heart of the UK was London and Margaret Makepeace's article might almost lead one to say that at the heart of London was the East India Company. She describes the pervasive presence of the Company's warehouses in the very centre of the City. Large areas were depopulated to make way for them but at the same time they, together with the Company's other 'Home Establishments', including for example its head office, East India House in Leadenhall Street (now the site of Lloyds Underwriters), provided large scale employment, totalling at its peak almost 4,000 men, from which three regiments of volunteers (or 'Home Guard') were recruited during the French Revolutionary wars. One guesses that at that time the Company was the country's biggest employer apart from the Royal Naval dockyards in Chatham and Portsmouth.

Dealing with a period a century later, the concluding part of David Mitchell's history of the British India Steam Navigation Company reminds us, among much else, that its world wide shipping operations were ultimately controlled from London, and even contributed to education in the mother country by providing vessels for 'educational cruises'. A third article, a fascinating autobiographical fragment by Gordon Alexander Jahans, describes his early life in India from 1888 to 1908. Families in British India almost always had members in both Britain and India, and their mental horizons were rarely confined to one country or the other. Jahans's story is a reminder of the latter point. His family had evidently been domiciled in India for several generations, yet it was to England that he and his father looked to complete his education. As things turned out he stayed here for the rest of his life, but other members of his family remained in India, with a brother becoming a railway surveyor and a sister Principal of the Girls High School at Allahabad, and Jahans himself remained proud of his Indian roots. The diaspora of the Jahans family, and families like them, has created innumerable links between India, Britain and indeed many other countries. In researching and recovering those links Jahans's daughter and granddaughter, Penelope Alexander and Philippa Milnamow, like other FIBIS members, contribute to a fuller understanding of the British-Indian relationship.

One facet of that relationship is the fact that many Britons who went to India never returned: 'victims' in their way of the Imperial project. Such was the fate of Matthew Baillie Pollock whose brief life story is recounted by his three times great granddaughter Shirley West: a dedicated surgeon he died of cholera in 1844 at the early age of 40. But many of the British who never returned remained in India by choice: marrying, settling down and founding families which became part of the European Domiciled or Anglo-Indian communities. Biographical details of those from a military background can often be found in the 'Unattached List' as Peter Bailey explains in his helpful article on that source. Another source, on POWs in World War Two, recently opened up by the IOR, is briefly described by Hedley Sutton.

*David Blake*

## The East India Company London Warehouses

*By Margaret Makepeace*

The East India Company began commercial operations in 1600 based in a few rooms in a London mansion. Two hundred years later the Company occupied a large number of properties in London which had been acquired piecemeal as its trading empire grew and wide-ranging administrative and military responsibilities evolved. The Company's different functions and interests were reflected in the range of real estate which it held: offices for commercial and political business, warehouses, almshouses with a chapel, a military recruitment centre, an inspection room for firearms.

By 1800, East India House, the Company headquarters, occupied a large site in Leadenhall Street, and there was extensive warehousing in the City to store the goods brought to London on board the mighty East Indiamen. This description appeared in *The Picture of London for 1806*:

For muslins, calicoes, raw and wrought silks, shawls etc, imported from Bengal - New Street, Bishopsgate.

For white and blue calicoes, handkerchiefs, muslins, & other piece goods from the Coasts of Coromandel and Malabar, from Surat etc, cloth from China, and for silks and nankeens - New Street, Bishopsgate.

For tea, coffee, spices, drugs, Indian hemp and flax, sugar etc imported by the Company - Crutched Friars, Haydon Square, Minories, Fenchurch Street, Jewry Street, French Ordinary Court, Coopers Row, Leadenhall Street.

For indigo, tea, drugs, etc, imported by private traders - Billiter Lane, Seething Lane.

For saltpetre - Ratcliffe Cross.

For the examination of baggage, and for woollens for exportation - Great St Helen's, Bishopsgate Street.

For pepper - cellars under the Royal Exchange and New Street, Bishopsgate Street.

Wharf for landing and shipping of goods - Botolph Wharf, Thames Street.

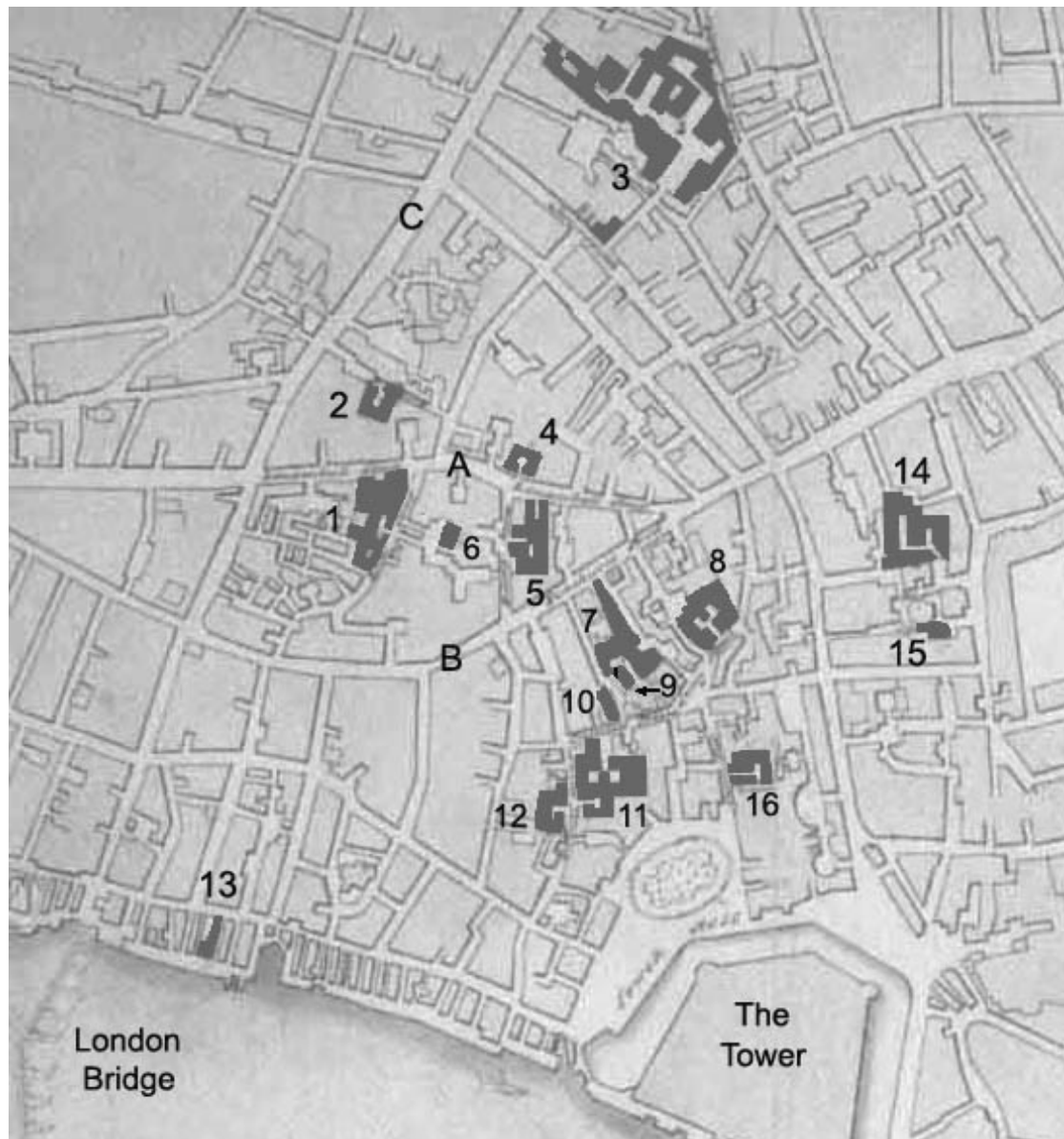
Also several smaller and temporary warehouses.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the EIC properties were located on the north bank of the Thames, but the Company did rent warehouses and wharves on the south bank, for example, tea warehouses at Potter's Fields Horsleydown and at the Borough, and sugar warehouses at Tooley Street in Southwark and at Rotherhithe.

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<sup>1</sup> John Feltham, *The Picture of London for 1806...*(1806) p. 383.

Location of East India Company buildings in the City of London. Based on a map in the IOR



*Home Miscellaneous Papers, ref: H763a.*

#### KEY

A. Leadenhall Street    B. Fenchurch Street    C. Bishopsgate

- |                     |                   |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. East India House | 5. Billeter Lane  | 9. French Ord Court | 13. Semers & Lyons Qy |
| 2. St Helen's       | 6. Lime St Square | 10. Crutched Friars | 14. Haydon Square     |
| 3. New St           | 7. Fenchurch St   | 11. Crutched Friars | 15. Haydon Square     |
| 4. Leadenhall St.   | 8. Jewry St.      | 12. Seething Lane   | 16. Cooper's Row      |

(The Ratcliffe warehouse was further east, close to the north bank of the Thames.)

As the EIC expanded its activities during the eighteenth century, street after street of small houses were gradually cleared to make way for the Company's large impressive commercial buildings, and the impact of the Company's activities on the topography and social make-up of London was clear to contemporary Londoners: 'As the stranger turns from the India-house, and casts his eyes over the warehouses of the company, (which are daily swallowing up the sites of many hundreds of houses) he enlarges his idea of the commerce that fills them, till he imagines that he has almost exaggerated its bulk.'<sup>2</sup> *The Original Picture of London* recorded in 1826 that: 'The principal Warehouses of this Company, which are of a great size and substantial construction, are well worthy of inspection, both from the immense value of their merchandise, and from the excellence of their internal arrangements. Those between Devonshire Square and New Street, Bishopsgate Street, are very extensive, and have fronts of several hundred feet in length...The great height of these buildings, the multitude of windows, and of cranes for hoisting up goods, combine to create admiration and surprise...In the erection of these buildings, several very mean streets, and, some hundreds of poor habitations, were removed.'<sup>3</sup> The East India Company's New Street development swept away much poor housing and caused a steep decline in the population of the parish of St Botolph Aldgate from 24,600 in 1710-11 to 8,700 in 1801<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the Company contributed to the trend whereby offices and warehouses came to dominate the City rather than homes. In Elizabethan London, most citizens lived near, or often at, their place of work, but by 1850 the replacement of domestic premises by commercial had become widespread: 'No one thinks of lodging or living in the City. The great City merchants live at the West-end, or a little way out of town, and leave their counting-houses and warehouses to the keeping of their porters; even their clerks, for the most part, have suburban cottages.'<sup>5</sup>

As well as leasing properties, the EIC had many warehouses purpose-built to meet its needs. Whereas in the late 17th and early 18th centuries the Company had relied on the services of bricklayers such as Joseph Lem when commissioning its warehouses, it later employed architects such as Richard Jupp, Henry Holland and Samuel Cockerell to design elegant but substantial buildings built from good quality materials befitting the status of the Company and reflecting the high value of the goods to be stored there. Often it took years to accumulate all the properties needed to form the site of one of its proposed warehouses. The first part of the Fenchurch Street tea and drug warehouse was erected in 1734-1736. A private trade warehouse was then constructed in a number of stages between the years 1752-1766 using sites in Leadenhall Street, Billiter Lane and Sugar Loaf Court. This housed the restricted range of commodities which the Company allowed its servants to import for personal gain, such as precious stones, ambergris, musk, carpets, and certain spices and textiles.

The pace of building quickened during the 1760s, reflecting a rapid increase in the import of goods from 1763 to 1769. The acquisition in 1765 of the *diwani*, which was the right to collect revenue in Bengal, brought about unprecedented levels of investment in Indian and Chinese goods, many of which could not be sold immediately and therefore had to be stored in London. In the 1760s the Company built tea and drug warehouses in Haydon Square and Coopers Row at Tower Hill, as well as the Old Bengal Warehouse in New Street which was used to store raw silk, piece goods<sup>6</sup>, and textiles from Bengal. The Leadenhall Street pepper and spice warehouse was built in 1771, marking the end of a period of property expansion. There was then a break in the Company's building activities until the mid 1780s. The Company faced near

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<sup>2</sup> *Picture of London*, p.52.

<sup>3</sup> J Britton, *The Original Picture of London* (1826).

<sup>4</sup> Penelope Hunting, *Cutlers Gardens* (London, Commissioned by Standard Life Assurance Company, 1984), p.66.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Cunningham, *A Handbook for London* (London, John Murray, 1850).

bankruptcy in 1772 and 1782 and was in no position to make large capital outlays, and, besides, it had enough warehouse space because of the earlier schemes. However, the situation changed again when the reduction of duty on tea in 1784 caused annual imports of tea to increase from about 4,000,000 lbs in 1784 to 15,000,000 lbs two years later. By then, the Company was also obliged by law to keep in stock at least two years worth of domestic tea consumption and consequently needed extended storage facilities. In 1785 work started on the tea and drug warehouse at French Ordinary Court (which was connected to the Fenchurch Street warehouse), followed by the construction of the Crutched Friars tea and drug warehouse in 1787. During the 1790s, the Company built the second stages of the Fenchurch Street and Crutched Friars warehouses, the Jewry Street tea and drug warehouse, and a complex of warehouses in New Street. It also bought existing warehouses: for example, one in Seething Lane, and also Rumball's Warehouse on the south side of Haydon Square, both of which were used for private trade goods.

Before the East India Docks opened in 1806, the Company landed its goods at the 'legal quays' along the Thames and transported them by road to the warehouses. East Indiamen were too large to come up as far as the legal quays, and so EIC goods were shipped by hoy from Blackwall. The East India Docks were built at Blackwall, less than three miles by road from the City, and EIC ships were henceforward prohibited from unloading elsewhere, except partially in Long Reach further down the Thames to lessen the draught of water. In 1807, the EIC purchased land at Blackwall from the East India Dock Company in order to build a shed for the caravans used to transport goods by road to the City, and to construct warehouses to store bulky goods of small value which were uneconomic to move by road to the main uptown warehouses, mainly pepper, but also sugar, saltpetre, cotton, arsenic, hides and wood.

Saltpetre warehouses were built to the south of Cock Hill at Ratcliffe in 1775, well away from the City. This choice of site was deliberate in view of the inflammable nature of the saltpetre, the chief constituent of gunpowder. These warehouses were destroyed by fire in July 1794. *The Times* reported that the fire began at the premises of Mr Cloves, a barge builder, when a pitch kettle that stood under his warehouse boiled over. As it was low water, the flames spread to an adjacent barge laden with saltpetre and other stores. Several other vessels and small craft quickly caught fire. 'The blowing-up of the saltpetre from the barge, occasioned large flakes of fire to fall on the warehouses belonging to the East-India Company, from whence the saltpetre was removing to the Tower (20 tons of which had been fortunately taken the preceding day.) The flames soon caught the warehouses, and here the scene became dreadful; the whole of these buildings were consumed, with all their contents, to a great amount. The wind blowing strong from the south, and the High-street of Ratcliffe being narrow, both sides caught fire, which prevented the engines from being of any essential service.'<sup>7</sup> 'The Saltpetre destroyed at the late fire at Ratcliffe, ran towards the Thames and had the appearance of cream-coloured lava; and when it had reached the water, flew up with a prodigious force in the form of an immense column. Several particles of the petre were carried by the explosion as far as Low Layton, a distance of near six miles.'<sup>8</sup> A fund was launched to provide relief for the hundreds of people who had lost their homes and their personal belongings, including working tools, in the fire. The Company subscribed 200 guineas to this fund and quickly set about rebuilding and enlarging the saltpetre warehouses during 1795-1796 using ground leased from Jeremiah Snow in addition to the site already held from the Coopers'

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<sup>6</sup> Textile fabrics woven in standard lengths for sale; Indian and other Oriental fabrics re-exported to Europe.

<sup>7</sup> *The Times*, Friday 25 July 1794, p.2d.

<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, Saturday 26 July 1794, p.3d.

Company. In 1796 the EIC was granted permission by the City to build an embankment on the Thames adjoining the warehouses. Further enlargement of the premises was carried out in 1801, and in 1828 the Company spent nearly £6,000 in altering the eastern and western sections of the warehouses.

The Naval Store warehouse at Stone Stairs Ratcliffe was also destroyed by the fire in July 1794. In October 1794 the Company purchased the assignment of the lease for £150 agreeing to spend £1,500 on rebuilding the warehouse, and in November 1795 the Company purchased the copyhold of these premises with some additional property for £5,000.

Even after the loss of the monopoly of trade to India in 1813, the Company directors continued to acquire property. Fresh building projects were embarked upon at Blackwall and in Church Row Fenchurch Street, and purchases were made in Devonshire Square, Haydon Square, and Highlord's Court at Crutched Friars. The New Street complex was expanded until the 1820s and became the largest of the Company's City warehouse sites, growing to cover five acres. The cost of building the new warehouses next to the Old Bengal Warehouse amounted to over £46,000 by 1822.

### Sources for warehouse buildings

The history of the EIC warehouses may be traced through a number of sources in the India Office Records at the British Library. The minute books of the Court of Directors, which span the period 1599-1858, detail decisions about leases, rents, repairs, alterations and building works.<sup>9</sup> The Accountant General's ledgers contain entries for Company warehouses and offices, including expenditure on building, maintenance, taxes, tithes and staff, and income from the sales of property.<sup>10</sup> Other important sources are the Surveyors' records starting in 1837<sup>11</sup> and the large collection of EIC title deeds.<sup>12</sup> Sir George Birdwood in his *Report on the old records of the India Office*, published in 1891, wrote '... there are a number of parchments (some of ancient date) in the custody of the Legal Adviser. These are, however, as far as is known, of no public interest, being merely title deeds and leases of property held at different times by the East India Company.'<sup>13</sup> Over 2,000 documents were left jumbled together in boxes until the 1980s when they were sorted and listed to provide a useful source for local and family historians. A register of deeds was compiled by the Company with abstracts of the deeds for the different sites. It is clear from the register that the Company acquired sites in piecemeal fashion from several different owners, which means that there is often more than one series of deeds for a single property. For example, there are six sets of deeds listed for the Fenchurch Street warehouse. Many deeds pre-date the establishment of the Company because it was customary to pass on to the new owners all documents relating to previous transactions. Thus when the Company purchased premises in Seething Lane in 1795, the previous landlord James Hunter handed over a long series of title deeds dating back to March 1549.<sup>14</sup>

The system of passing deeds on as proof of title meant that many documents were transferred to the new owners when the Company was forced to sell its London properties in the 19th century, although many did remain to be inherited by the India Office. Over 200 deeds for properties once held by the Company have been deposited in the Guildhall Library by subsequent owners, and at least another 150 are to be found amongst the Port of London

<sup>9</sup> British Library, India Office Records: B.

<sup>10</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/AG.

<sup>11</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/SUR.

<sup>12</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/L/2.

<sup>13</sup> Sir George Birdwood, *Report on the Old Records of the India Office* (1891), p.288.

<sup>14</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/L/2/778-924.

Authority archives at the Museum in Docklands. The catalogue of Company deeds is one of over 250 India Office Records catalogues which have been mounted on Access to Archives, a database of English archive catalogues hosted by the National Archives website.<sup>15</sup>

### The warehouse staff

Sir William Foster's books and articles are an excellent starting point for anyone studying the East India Company in London.<sup>16</sup> As well as describing the buildings, Foster chronicled the working day of the directors and clerks at East India House.<sup>17</sup> However, it is possible to view the Company from a different historical perspective, 'from the bottom up'. We can gain an insight into the lives of men who worked in the London warehouses, not only the clerks and writers, but also the warehouse-keepers and elders holding managerial posts, and the thousands of labourers and commodores (foremen) who moved, weighed and stacked the goods, mended tea chests, and prepared the merchandise for sale. Although the records of the Committee of Warehouses were amongst the 300 tons of Company papers sent for pulping in the mid-nineteenth century, there is still plenty of information tucked away in the India Office Records about the way the warehouses operated.<sup>18</sup> The warehouse-keepers oversaw everyday business, authorizing payments for such things as staff wages, cartage, hoy transport, postage, export duties, crockery, breakfast for the clerks, chimney sweeping, washing towels and tablecloths, padlocks, and also for meat to feed the vital workforce of warehouse cats, which could number as many as twenty in one building to keep down the mice and rats. The conditions of employment for labourers can be reconstructed, especially for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For that period, it is also possible to gather an impressive array of personal data about individual men from the EIC archives, including age, height, residential address, dates and place of service with the Company, wages, pension, date of death. Comments about the labourers' health and character can be found: for example John McGhee had worms in the head, Charles Twort had bad feet and corns, while Owen Ellis was both unfit and stupid.<sup>19</sup>

The labourers formed the regiments of the Royal East India Volunteers based at the Old Bengal Warehouse, first raised by the EIC in 1796 to assist regular troops in the event of an invasion of England by the French and also to protect the warehouses from the threat of looting. By 1813, just over 1,700 men served in three regiments with another 90 in an artillery unit. The men were equipped with arms supplied by the government and uniforms provided by the Company, and one of the Cutler Street warehouses was used as an armoury. The Volunteers marched from New Street two or three times a week for training and exercise in the Company's military field at Allerton Street, Hoxton. When peace was made with France in 1814, the EIC disbanded the Volunteers. In 1820, during the aftermath of the Cato Street conspiracy against the government, the Company raised a new regiment of 800 men which was maintained until 1834 when it was stood down following the 1833 Act of Parliament which brought about the cessation of the Company's commercial activities and the closure of the warehouses.

Figures for the numbers employed in the warehouses are available. For example, in 1794 there were 16 elders, 18 assistant elders, and 1,800 deputy assistant elders, commodores, writers

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.a2a.org.uk/>.

<sup>16</sup> See Anthony Farrington, *Sir William Foster 1863-1951. A Bibliography* (London, India Office Library and Records, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> William Foster, *The East India House - its history and associations* (London, John Lane, 1924).

<sup>18</sup> Primarily in series IOR: B, D, H, L/AG, L/F, L/MIL, L/PARL, O, V.

<sup>19</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/MIL/5/485.

and labourers. Twenty years later the equivalent figures were 16, 38 and 2,700. In 1832, total warehouse staff numbers were 2,547 which by 1834 had dropped to 2,102.<sup>20</sup>

Information about the warehouse staff can be gleaned from sources outside the India Office Records. Labourers appear in the records of the Old Bailey sessions as witnesses or victims of crime, and incidental facts are given about their homes, families, possessions, leisure activities, and social circle. As many as six labourers appeared at the Old Bailey in any one year accused of stealing from the EIC warehouses, although the number was generally less than this. Details of daily working practices are noted as well the harsh punishments which could be meted out to those found guilty, such as death, transportation, or being whipped for one hundred yards in front of the warehouse whilst tied to a cart. Faced with body searches, known as 'rubbing down', when leaving the warehouse at the end of the working day, skilful methods were devised to smuggle goods out of the warehouses, often involving the sewing of pouches into underclothes which was especially good for concealing tea. Ingenious excuses were offered at the Old Bailey for possessing Company property when searched, such as during the trial of Samuel Russell who tried to explain the presence of three ounces of tea in his shoes by saying that it had simply found its way in there from spillage on the floor as he had walked to and fro in the Fenchurch Street warehouse<sup>21</sup>. Another interesting case is that of Samuel Clough who went to elaborate lengths to have himself shut into the warehouse one Saturday night by hiding in the roof space. On Sunday, he broke through the ceiling and removed silk to the value of £608. Having thrown his booty down into the yard, he let himself down on a rope but landed in the water cistern. Clough then dropped a number of cloth bales over the perimeter wall, only to find that he was unable to climb over and join them. He then settled down to sleep in the yard to await discovery by his fellow workers when the gates were opened on Monday morning. Clough was sentenced to transportation for life.<sup>22</sup>

### The fate of the warehouses

The Government's removal of the Company's China tea trade monopoly in 1833 and the order to cease all commercial activities prompted the sale of most of the London warehouses during the years 1834-1840. The remaining buildings, including East India House, were sold at auction or taken over by the Crown after the Act of 1858 had dismantled the Company's administrative and military powers.

Most warehouse staff were laid off in a rolling redundancy programme as commercial operations were gradually wound up, and they were granted a pension based on their rank and length of service. A few labourers were still employed in the stationery and cloth warehouses and the Military Store department, and a small number of men were re-deployed in other Company posts in East India House as messengers, porters, watchmen and fire-lighters.

Very little now remains of the East India Company properties in London, although there are some surviving buildings in the City and further east along the Thames. Most of the warehouses have long since disappeared in the face of the demand for valuable sites for redevelopment. It is possible to find out a great deal about the sale of the warehouses in the 1830s because the financial transactions are recorded in the Accountant General's records and

<sup>20</sup> *Proceedings of the Select Committee appointed by the Court of Proprietors [of the EIC] on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1813...* (London, 1814); evidence of Simons and Hall to Commons Committee on the EIC, 1832 (*Parl. Papers*); EIC Finance and Home Committee Dept of Buying and Warehouses, 24 Jun 1834 (British Library, India Office Records: L/F/1/53, no.150).

<sup>21</sup> *The whole proceedings of the Sessions of the Peace, and Oyer and Terminer for the City of London and County of Middlesex; continued as Sessions' Papers ... held at the Justice Hall, in the Old Bailey* (1825-1833), case no.600 Sep 1803 pp.462-463.

<sup>22</sup> *Old Bailey Sessions* case no.485 Jan 1830 pp.201-202.



a sale prospectus was produced for each property which usually included a detailed plan. The sale catalogue for the Fenchurch Street and French Ordinary Court tea warehouses tempted prospective buyers with the following description: 'This highly important Property consists of Nineteen Stacks of Warehouses, in which are 108 lofty and well ventilated Ware-rooms (capable of containing 22,097 Tons of Merchandise, or 442,000 Chests of Tea in Stack Pile, and 265,000 Chests for Shew and Delivery); Two Warehouse-Keeper's Offices, Four Public Offices, Two Elder's Offices, Three Entrances for Carts, Two unoccupied Areas, Four commodious Yards, Fourteen Loopholes with Cranes for receiving Goods, four of which are furnished with Delivery Machines. The whole of the Warehouses are supplied with every requisite for carrying on a Business of the first magnitude; and it is enough to state, that they were erected by the East India Company expressly for their Tea trade. The substantial mode of their construction must be obvious to the professional eye, and the many and various advantages which they possess are too apparent to need description.'<sup>23</sup>

Some of the warehouses were sold to private businessmen, but most were bought by the Dock Companies. In 1835, the West India Dock Company purchased the Fenchurch Street and French Ordinary Court tea warehouses together with 55 Crutched Friars, paying a total of £86,000. The warehouses were knocked down in about 1900 when the new Lloyd's Register of Shipping was built.

At an auction in April 1835, the East India Dock Company bought the Crutched Friars tea warehouse for £70,500, and the Private Trade Warehouse in Billiter Lane for £16,000. Rangoon Street was laid out in the 1890s on the site of the Crutched Friars warehouse, but the Billiter Lane warehouse was still standing at the end of the 19th century. H. M. Tomlinson wrote in 1921: 'And in those days, just round the corner in Billiter Street, one of the East India Company's warehouses survived, a sombre relic among the new limestone and red granite offices, a massive archway in its centre leading, it could be believed, to an enclosure of night left by the eighteenth century, and forgotten. I never saw anybody go into it, or come out. How could they? It was of another time and place.'<sup>24</sup>

The Jewry Street tea warehouse was sold in May 1835 to the East and West India Dock Companies on joint account for £30,000. This site too was redeveloped in the 1890s. In 1835 the St Katharine Dock Company bought the Haydon Square tea warehouses together with a family dwelling for £46,000, and in 1836 it signed an agreement with the EIC to buy the warehouses and houses in New Street, Cutler Street, and Devonshire Square for £164,000. The completion of the purchase of the New Street complex was postponed by agreement until Michaelmas 1838. The Old Bengal Warehouse was retained by the EIC and used by the Military Store Department. In 1863, the St Katharine Dock Company took up their option to purchase the Old Bengal warehouse, paying just over £6,500 to the India Office.

The Port of London Authority took over ownership of the docks and dock company warehouses in 1909. The secure accommodation and fireproof construction of the Cutler Street warehouses inherited from the EIC meant that the most valuable goods were sent there, for example, carpets, silk, ostrich feathers, cigars, drugs, spices, clocks and watches. In the 1950s, most of the tea business was transferred to the London Dock, although Cutler Street continued to sort tea samples for merchants. Wine, port and sherry were then stored there instead.

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<sup>23</sup> British Library, India Office Records: L/L/2/470.

<sup>24</sup> H. M. Tomlinson, *London River* (London, Cassell, 1921).

The Cutler Street warehouses became redundant in the 1970s. In June 1978 the Standard Life Assurance Company bought the five acre site for redevelopment at a cost of nearly £5 million.



*The Ratcliffe Road warehouse as it is today*

Four of the seven EIC warehouses were preserved in the Cutlers Gardens scheme. The external brickwork was retained whilst the internal structure was remodelled to create offices, homes, shops and restaurants. Two of the residences built by the Company still stand. The development is a short walk from Liverpool Street Station and has areas of public access.<sup>25</sup> The Old Bengal Warehouse, renamed Shield House, adjoins Cutlers Gardens and is now also being converted into office accommodation.

The Ratcliffe saltpetre warehouses have survived to the

present day, escaping the threat of further fires and explosions to outlive the EIC warehouses storing less dangerous cargoes. They stand as part of the Free Trade Wharf development and have been restored. Two blocks of warehouses face each other across a courtyard running between the Thames embankment and The Highway. The central block has been demolished but the change in the pattern of the paving between the surviving blocks indicates where it stood. The Company arms appear over the gateway on The Highway side.

## Conclusion

Two hundred years ago, the massive stacks of warehouses and the imposing façade of East India House were a constant reminder to onlookers of the power and influence of the East India Company in London, and there were thousands of men and their families who depended on the warehouses for their livelihood. Since most of the physical evidence of the East India Company's presence in London has disappeared, few Londoners today are aware of the Company's importance in their city's history. Yet a large body of written evidence does survive which enables us to understand just how influential the Company was in shaping the topography and commercial life of London in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

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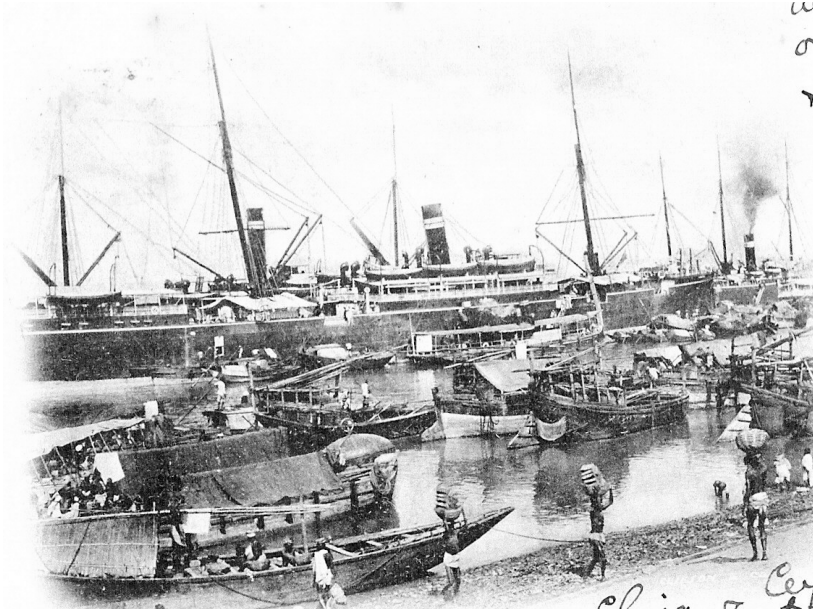
<sup>25</sup> See Hunting, *op cit*, and Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London I: The City of London* (London, Penguin, 1997).

# The British India Steam Navigation Company

By David J Mitchell

Part Two, 1914-1971

## Lull before the Storm



*Shipping in the Hooghly, Calcutta, 1905*

In the decade prior to war breaking out in 1914, the BI added substantial tonnage to its fleet as it was unthinkable that anything could disrupt the status quo and the maintenance of Empire. By the beginning of August that year, the fleet comprised 126 vessels, fifty-eight of which were ten or less years old. Six specific designs of ships, either built or building, evolved as a result of the Chairman himself asking senior seagoing staff for their opinions and ideas,

the only constraint being the limit of draft for navigation on the *Hooghly* up to Calcutta. This proliferation of ships was soon to be taken advantage of as the Government commandeered them to satisfy war need.

Every Friday, the Principals of the London agents Messrs Gray, Dawes & Co. sat down with the BI directors in the BI boardroom for a curry lunch, this culinary delight produced and served by Asian crew sent up from whichever BI ship happened to be in London at the time. Business carried on at a leisurely pace. Letters to the managing agents in Calcutta would not bring forth a response for at least six weeks as this was the shortest time for a reply to reach HQ in London.

All the major passenger services had been revitalised with over thirty new ships boasting higher standards of cabin and crew accommodation and speeds capable of satisfying the new mail contracts. Amongst these, and capable of 18kts, were the first steam turbine propelled vessels in the fleet. Four vessels with the ability to specifically double as troop transports besides service on the London to Calcutta service were to play major roles during the war. The policy of design to enable interchange of ships between routes if required continued. Over a dozen cargo ships joined the fleet including three with a carrying capacity nearing 12,000 tons, the largest so far. The normal peacetime trooping routine ran like clockwork with *Rewa*, *Rohilla*, *Jelunga*, *Dilwara* and *Dunera* called upon as required to meet seasonal needs.

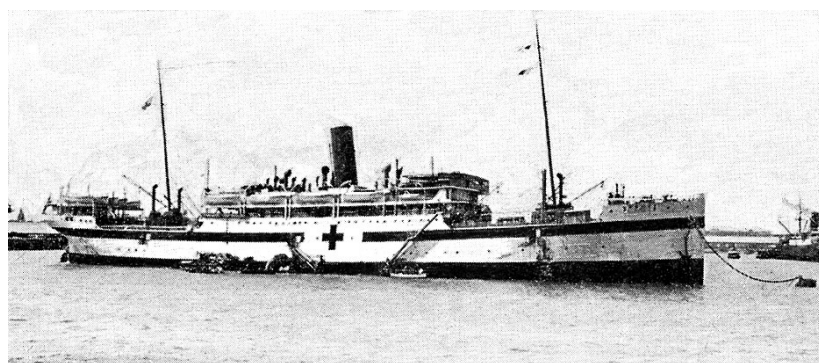
## The Great War

At one time or another, no less than 109 individual BI ships fell under the control of the Admiralty Transport Department, the first being *Varela* on 2 August, two days before the

declaration of war. In the course of the war roughly a fifth of the fleet was destroyed, some ships lost to torpedo attack, some to mines. *Chilkana* became the first victim, sunk by the *Emden* in the Arabian Sea on 19 October 1914, the last *Surada*, torpedoed off Port Said on 2 November 1918. Out of a fleet totalling nearly 570,000 gross tons, twenty-five ships were lost (128,000 gross tons).

Perhaps the most astonishing examples of the BI doing things no other shipping company could do were the convoys from Bombay in 1914 carrying Indian troops to Europe, East Africa and other points west. Troop carrying in large numbers presented no problems to the BI as it was quite the norm to handle several hundred unberthed passengers at a time. In September two separate convoys including no less than thirteen and nineteen BI ships left India carrying Indian Army troops for Marseilles, whilst the following month, twenty-six left for various destinations, fourteen of which arrived in Marseilles. Such was the strength of the BI that no ship took part in more than one of the Marseilles convoys. The enemy naval threat came from the light cruisers *Konigsberg* and *Emden* and troop transports had to be escorted until the threat was dealt with, hence the convoys. At this stage in the war camouflage played no part in confusing the enemy, so merchant vessels still wore their company colours. The arrival of all these BI ships in peacetime guise in one place was sensational, the like of which was never to be repeated.

At the call to support the Raj and Empire by the Viceroy, India's princely rulers took up the call to arms with an enthusiasm that confounded perceived German beliefs. Indian troops had been excluded from action in the Boer War, and these natural fighters were only too anxious to show their qualities. The bravery and commitment of all those sent to the Western Front is unquestioned, but reality saw them thrown into a conflict for which they were ill prepared where loss of life to come on both sides could not be imagined. Without the Indian Corps relieving the initial Expeditionary Force there would not have been time for the Territorial Army to mobilise and take up the fight. Eventually the Territorials were relieved by Kitchener's Army of Pals. The slaughter on 1 July 1916 was to ensure that never again would men from the same community be placed together in such numbers. Later, overseas forces shored up the diminishing numbers until the whole nonsense came to a stop in November 1918. In a little over twelve months after landing in France, Indian Corps casualties totalled over 34,000 with Meerut and Lahore Divisions virtually wiped out. The last remnants of these Divisions left Marseilles on 26 December 1915.



*Hospital Ship Madras moored in Madras Harbour*

After meeting their transport commitments, several of the larger passenger liners changed roles to become Naval or Military Hospital Ships. Conversions were made easier by the general design to accommodate 'unberthed' passengers.

Significant amongst these, *Rohilla* was wrecked with 83 lives lost on 29 October 1914 off Saltwick Nab, Whitby on her way to Dunkirk to collect war wounded. Sister ship *Rewa* displaying full illumination in her role as a Hospital Ship laden with 279 sick and wounded was torpedoed in the Bristol Channel by U55 on 14 January 1918. The only casualties were four crew. In the context of a specific Indian contribution, the *Tanda*, delivered in May 1914 for the

Calcutta–Far East service, was unique. Requisitioned by the Government of India as a Hospital Ship, her conversion costs were met from the Madras War Fund, a purely voluntary civilian organisation. To acknowledge this she became *Madras* and carried the name until May 1921, although released from Government service in November 1919.

A little over 2000 war sailings left Bombay in the four years to August 1918, of which 1317 were BI vessels undertaking transport duties. This intensity of activity can be explained by the fact that Bombay Port was the centre for all Indian troop movements and the supply base for all Indian forces involved in Mesopotamia, East Africa, Egypt, Palestine and France. Further north the new Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co (MM&Co) office building in Karachi served as a hospital. As a final contribution to the war effort, the BI's *Katoria* landed troops at noon on Armistice Day to accept surrender from the Turks on the Dardanelles.

### Domestic Activities

The BI was still in the business of looking after its own interests despite the mayhem going on around, and within three months of war breaking out the amalgamation with the P&O was complete. Since 1852 MM&Co had leased the Calcutta office site, but after outright purchase during the war, a new construction commenced due to be completed by 1925. In 1915 the two dockyards in Bombay owned by the BI and P&O respectively were amalgamated to form The Mazagon Dock Company. Dockyard vessels sported a BI funnel with the crossed house flags of the two companies below. A year later Garden Reach Workshops were set up in Calcutta on a 44-acre site with a river frontage of nearly 800 yards, part of which had originally been purchased by the BI in 1865. One of the strangest things the BI did was to start operating a cadet ship, its first, in 1916. Cadets had been taken onto the company books since 1906, so quite what the logic of putting twenty-five in one place in war-time was, who knows? However, *Berbera* filled the bill, but not for long, as she was torpedoed in March 1917 with the loss of three cadets. *Waipara* was then converted to take on the role with accommodation for thirty-two cadets. She fulfilled this role until nearly becoming a total loss in August 1918 with the loss of one cadet.



*A 1911 Series 'B' awaits departure from Karachi wharf with a Slow Gulf Mail Service*

Prior to the outbreak of war the BI ran twenty-five identifiable passenger and cargo liner services. By the end of the following year six had been mothballed, and other services cut back. Worse was to come. On Armistice Day, a mere four ships kept the Calcutta-Burma Straits run alive compared to

eleven pre-war. The 'Coast Service' from Calcutta to Bombay struggled on with one instead of nine. Nothing traded between Queensland or Africa and 'Home Line' sailings were both

infrequent and irregular. Services overall were a mere shadow of their former selves. Future intentions of the P&O group under Lord Inchcape were

evident in the purchase by the P&O of the New Zealand Shipping Company and Federal Line in 1916, the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand and, with the BI, The Hain Steamship Co. Ltd. in 1917. F.C.Strick & Co. Ltd. was acquired by Gray, Dawes & Co. the London agents in 1919.

### Twenty Years of Peace

Losses inevitably required replacing so to this end besides wartime take-overs, negotiations were under way in 1918 to acquire new tonnage. These would be new, second hand, war prizes or war emergency standard ships bought from the Government. Of these standard cargo designs in various sizes, the BI bought thirty-nine and with other additions, the fleet increased in size to 161 ships totalling around 830,000 gross tons in 1920. This was the largest number of ships flagged under the Red Ensign ever owned by a British shipping company at one time. This enormous floating empire engaged the services of around 3,000 Europeans on company contracts, (excluding staff on leave). For a deck or engineer officer on 'the Coast' or 'Eastern Service' as it eventually became known, this meant a 3½ year spell followed by seven months paid leave. Add to this around 15,500 Asian crew on articles, all those ashore in some support capacity, the logistics of keeping 161 ships fuelled, watered and victualled, the thousands of passengers and thousands of tons of cargo transported, then the scale of the BI operation is quite astonishing.

It is no coincidence that the recovery was achieved in such a short time as behind it all was Lord, soon to be Viscount, Inchcape<sup>1</sup> who had his ear close to the ground in UK shipping matters. By 1922 normal service had been resumed albeit in the face of opportunist competition which had stepped into trade routes vacated by the BI during the war years. Competition from European, Japanese and Indian national companies increased with the economic expansion of these countries. Commercial opposition to the BI was seen as fair game. Since 1856 the BI had been on the ball and so it still was. Around the turn of the century, to limit the damage any out-and-out competition could inflict, routes, freight rates, and other common interests were discussed with the various shipping companies at the Colombo Conference. It gave the new players a position in the grand scheme of things but the dominant partner, the BI, kept the whip hand, so protecting its interests. In 1923 a formal trading agreement was reached with the successful Scindia Company. Less fortunate organisations had been taken into the BI or P&O fold in previous years.

To satisfy cargo-passenger needs the BI turned to one of its favourite yards, Barclay, Curle & Co. Ltd., to build six vessels out of a total order of eight for the UK-East Africa and UK-India services. Technical developments included the adoption of twin screw geared turbines for the first time with oil fired boilers in all but the first delivered in 1920 which stuck to twin screw reciprocating propulsion main engines. A further two ships of the same basic design again from Barclay, Curle had diesel main engines, another first for the company, carrying appropriately names beginning with 'D'. The lead ship, *Domala*, was the first British passenger vessel to have diesel machinery of British design and manufacture. This innovation was not a precursor to widespread adoption of motor ships in the Company as the majority of the fleet had access to cheap Indian coal, albeit of poor quality. Innovation continued with the first twin-screw diesel powered ships in 1924. One of this pair, *Kistna* had a remarkable life with various owners. When finally sent to the breakers in 1971 it still had the original engines. New tonnage continued to be added to the fleet on a regular basis up to 1927 including three triple funnel

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<sup>1</sup> Viscount Inchcape 1924, and Earl of Inchcape 1929.

ships built for the Calcutta-Japan service in 1924. Although the aftermost funnel was a dummy, the thinking behind three funnels was to impress the native Chinese who associated them with speed. And flyers the 'T's were, achieving over 17kts on trials. In 1926 two sisters, *Rohna* and *Rajula* entered service on the Straits Settlements-Madras Mail service. *Rajula* was destined not only to be the longest serving ship in the history of the BI, but a legend in her own lifetime: not until 10 October 1973 did the BI house flag come down for the last time, just short of forty-eight years service.

### Troubled Times

'The Great Depression' which descended on the world in the 1930's had disastrous consequences for many shipping companies, but the BI with little emphasis on European trade weathered the period very well. Several ships were laid up or disposed of, but no sea-going staff lost their employment. The importance of Rangoon in activities had little changed from 1856 with eight mail runs still on the go throughout the 1930's. Only on Sunday did the port rest. In the course of a year in excess of ten weekly scheduled activities took place. Add to this the *ad hoc* visits from cargo vessels putting in to load with rice, timber, discharge coal or whatever, Rangoon was a hive of BI activity. The Calcutta-Rangoon Mail schedule required precision time keeping week in, week out, in all weathers. After 2½ days in Calcutta the mail boat left to reach Rangoon in 2 days where it stayed for 2½ days before arriving in Calcutta 2 days after that. This intensive service was shared between *Angora*, *Arankola* and *Aronda*. The ability of the BI to weather the storm and sustain an income stream played a significant part in P&O group finances during these lean times as indeed it had throughout the war. After Inchcape's death in 1932, accountants Deloitte established that the P&O would probably have been out of business had it not been for, amongst other things, the substantial BI earnings remitted home from MM&Co, the managing agents in Calcutta. (On a personal note this was a well known fact in the BI and the resentment of the BI having carried the P&O is not forgotten, even now). New tonnage slowed down considerably as a result of the depression. From 1930 to the outbreak of World War Two only twelve ships joined the fleet, two of them second-hand. Notable were *Kenya* (1930) and *Karanja* (1931) for the East Africa Mail service, *Dilwara* (1936) and *Dunera* (1937), the first ships to be built specifically for trooping, *Amra* (1938) and *Aska* (1939) for the premier Rangoon-Calcutta Mail, and for the first time since 1925 new cargo vessels.

### See the World and be Educated (with fun)

In 1932 the much loved and, for those who participated, never to be forgotten 'Educational Cruises' commenced. The word 'educational' only came into use at a later date, as the early ones were recreational in conception and execution and only undertaken by schoolboys. They had to assist with the preparation and serving of food aboard the *Neuralia* and *Nevasa*, so perhaps this was their only education. Accommodation was in the troop decks for schoolboys, the masters in passenger/officer cabins. These two veterans of World War I, now twenty years old, had been built for the London-Calcutta liner service, but were converted into troop transports in 1925 for contracted Government service. One Mr George White came up with the idea of using ships to give schoolboys an entertaining experience and the Scottish Secondary Schools Travel Trust took up the idea to set in motion an activity which carried on during the 'off' trooping season until 1938 when the worsening international situation brought things to a halt. Normal routine for the contracted transports was for them to be laid up off Netley in Southampton Water, opposite the Royal Victoria Hospital, during the hot summer months. Transiting the Red Sea and eastern waters in ships without any form of air conditioning was

extremely uncomfortable at this time. A benefit to the BI was that this 'out of season' use came as a handy earner.

The first cruise departed from Leith on 25 July 1932 journeying to Baltic waters with over a thousand schoolboys aboard anticipating fresh air and a fortnight of fun. The idea also appealed south of the border and, later in the summer, the English Secondary Schools Travel Trust repeated the experience sailing from Hull. So started the routine pattern of two voyages each summer. *Dilwara* and *Dunera* participated in the duties from 1936 until the premature end in 1938. History has a habit of repeating things and in 1961 after a £100,000 refit the *Dunera*, converted specifically for educational cruises recommenced the pre-war tradition of a unique experience for those boys taking part, but with a subtle addition: girls.

### Here we go again

On the 3 September 1939 the BI owned 103 ships, fifty-five passenger and, forty-eight cargo. Roughly half the total were in port at places between the Persian Gulf and Singapore, the rest scattered across the web of BI routes. From April 1940 the Admiralty or the Ministry of War Transport controlled the whole fleet. The first loss was *Sirdhana* on 13 November 1939 to a friendly mine off Singapore and in successive years losses to enemy action numbered 4 in 1940, 13 in 1941, 13 in 1942, 12 in 1943, and 1 in each of 1944 and 1945. Two ships also grounded, two were lost to fire, one was used as a block-ship, and most unluckily, *Sir Harvey Adamson*, lost without trace and all hands to what was thought to be a mine off the Burmese coast in 1947. A total of fifty-one ships and a loss of 1083 lives. In the course of the war, the BI managed 72 ships of other nationalities and of these 16 were lost along with BI personnel amongst the ships' staff.

Some significant losses are worth a mention in some detail. *Mashobra*, the first of the post World War One 'M' class for the London-Calcutta service was bombed off Narvik in May 1940 and later that year the brand new *Aska* became a victim to bombs in the Western Approaches. She and her two sisters were destined never to fulfil their potential on the Calcutta-Rangoon Mail service. Another relatively modern vessel was *Karanja*, lost to a bomb in the Mediterranean in November 1942 whilst the immediate pre-war cadet ship, *Waroonga* was torpedoed in the Atlantic five months later. A victim of a bombing attack despite full hospital ship colours, *Talamba*, one of the trio of three funnel Calcutta-Japan liners built in 1924, sank off Alova, Sicily, in July 1943. By far the largest loss of life involving a BI ship was the bombing of *Rohna* with a radio guided device in the Mediterranean in November 1943. At this time *Rohna* had a goat as a mascot with the free run of the accommodation as did her sister *Rajula* after the war. As both ships ran the Straits Mail in peace time, were the goats related? Carrying American troops to Bombay in convoy the ship sank taking 134 crew, 1015 troops and the mascot with her. This was only second in American loss of life to the sinking of *Arizona* at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 with 1103 casualties. A freak loss was *Baroda*, destroyed in the Victoria Dock, Bombay explosion of 14 April 1944 after Fort Strikine blew up. Last but not least a veteran of World War One, a regular contracted transport between the wars, and a pioneer of the 'Educational Cruise' concept, the 1912 built *Neuralia* had the misfortune to hit an Italian mine on 1 May 1945, the eve of VE Day. The war in the east carried on until a spectacular end came about in August 1945.

### Post War Revival

The toll of nearly six years' conflict gave the BI problems not dissimilar to other shipping companies, but at least it had not succumbed as some others had to near or complete wipe-out. Half the fleet gone was bad enough though. With loss of tonnage went crews, much reduced economic activity, total loss of markets to various factors, speculative and emerging



national fleets, clamour for political change and, through that, independence from the colonial power. So what to do? True to the traditions of this well established company it set about a programme of replacement vessels to sustain viable passenger, passenger-cargo and cargo services in its traditional trading waters.

Some tonnage ordered before the outbreak of war and delivered as war time conditions allowed had supplemented losses, but of these seven, three had a premature end before 1943. Toward the war's end, six standard 'Empire' design were ordered and new vessels from a variety of yards continued to be added to the fleet from 1945. With second hand ships, 43 in total were in service by the end of 1952. As with the fleet rebuilding prior to World War One, the new ships were larger, more luxurious for passengers and, faster. They ranged from the diminutive *Kilwa*, bought from Chinese owners for feeder services down the East Africa coast to the largest vessels built for 'coast' service: *Kampala* and *Karanja* to operate the East Africa Mail. The London-East Africa service would see the introduction of probably the best known 'home line' ships with *Kenya* and *Uganda* displacing the now tired, but still loved pre-war 'M's. The Persian Gulf Service, dating back to 1862, was to see four new 'D' Class diesel engined ships and the Calcutta-Japan line now without any Japanese competition would benefit from three twin screw 'S' Class diesels. A class of thirteen cargo vessels, the 'C's, would be the main workhorses of the cargo fleet right to the end of the BI. Two of these, *Chindwara* and *Chantala* took up the cadet ship tradition, given up at the outbreak of war in 1939.

All these new toys would have been welcomed with open arms by sea staff after nursing time-expired ships well beyond their economic life through the war and beyond. Indeed some ships and staff had seen gruelling service through both conflicts. As if to show the recovery was complete and normal service had been resumed, *Kenya* docked in Mombasa on 16 September 1951 at the end of her maiden voyage to be greeted by a BI ship at every berth, six in all, with *Sofala* on the slip of African Marine undergoing repair. In the same year the company entered into a fifteen year trooping contract and agreement with the Government to build a new troopship designed specifically for the armed forces and their families. Laid down in May 1953, and delivered in July 1956, BI's Centenary Year, *Nevasa* was the largest vessel in the history of the BI at just over 20,500 tons. Another first was a decision in 1955 to enter the tanker business with large bulk tankers to be operated by the various P&O group companies and the first five on order would carry BI colours. All were subsequently transferred to Trident Tankers by 1970.

A significant blow, and the real beginning of the end of the BI, was Indian Independence on 14 August 1947 and next year that of Burma. This would lead quickly to the loss of purely Indian and Burmese trade. Passenger services to and from India continued as before if economic, but only for as long as the same vessels stayed on the run. If the BI took ships off, then there was no way back. Another threat, but as yet underrated in the effect it would have on the world of passenger transport, was the long haul jet to be followed in the 1960's by the wide body jet plane. The full seriousness of these factors would not be felt for another decade, so in its centenary year the BI fleet consisted of sixty-three vessels and it looked forward to a bright and sustainable future. Around seventy Commanders and seventy Chief Engineers had this great fleet in their charge, carrying around 3,500,000 tons of cargo and 300,000 passengers, steaming 3,000,000 nautical miles, and costing £1,500,000 in wages for ships' staff per year.

### Full Ahead

The post war burst of activity though was not the end of further acquisitions as new, second hand, or transferred ships from other group companies joined the fleet. Significant were the five 'B' Class for the Australia-India and Persian Gulf trades introduced in 1959. Fully air

conditioned for officers and crew alike, with machinery spaces and accommodation aft, these were totally different to any previously owned in the company's history. The reintroduction of *Dunera* to 'Educational Cruising' in April 1961 had been a significant gamble, but numbers carried were sufficient for the BI to take another gamble and purchase the redundant troop transport *Devonshire* from Bibby Line. Renamed *Devonia*, and refitted to take 190 or so cabin passengers and over 800 school children, she joined *Dunera*. Within two seasons the pair carried over 34,000 children in a year on a variety of cruises of about fourteen days at a time. In 1962 after the Government terminated the trooping contract as Great Britain withdrew east of Suez and from Empire, *Nevasa* joined the established duo for three seasons before new safety at sea regulations rendered the 'D's obsolete. *Uganda* was withdrawn from the London-East Africa service and converted to take their place in 1968 as air transport was now significantly affecting international maritime passenger travel. An irony of this was that 'fly cruises' had been part of the 'Educational Cruise' arrangements since 1965. Closure of the Suez Canal from late 1967 made the East Africa service uneconomic and resulted in the withdrawal of sister ship *Kenya*.

### Twilight Years

Disposal of older vessels continued through the 1960's, but as the next decade dawned it became clear the writing was on the wall for this famous company. It was unable to replace ageing ships on passenger services because of Indian Government regulations. International air travel had decimated passenger liner services, and the container ship was making rapid inroads into cargo transportation world wide carrying the equivalent of perhaps eight conventional general cargo ships. Despite this, the BI endeavoured to find niche markets to trade in and, in 1969, the first of two 'A' Class heavy lift ships entered service on the Japan-Gulf run to be followed in 1970 by the first of four 'M' Class vessels for the Australia-Persian Gulf trade. By one of those historical coincidences, the last ships to be delivered to the BI, two specialised refrigerated carriers, had names beginning with the last letter of the alphabet, 'Z'. The only initial letter never to have been used to name BI ships was 'X'.

Maritime trading world wide was by 1970 in a state of change never previously experienced. Many well known British companies went to the wall, or struggled on by adapting to the frightening speed of change engulfing them. The P&O decided to rationalise their activities into defined divisions based on type of trade. With effect from 1 October 1971 all the constituent companies lost their separate identities: for the BI this meant the remaining vessels passed into a 'General Cargo Division'. Absorption was visible as the ships took on board P&O colours and, to all intents and purposes, 115 years of independent achievement passed into history. Not quite though, as the BI was to have the last word at international level.

### Tales of Four Ships

Some ships gave many years of service unsung, unnoticed and in some cases unloved. Here are four that fell into none of these categories.

#### *Quetta*

Unknown, lurking below the waves off Mount Adolphus Island in Torres Strait, off Cape York, Queensland, Australia, a pinnacle of rock ripped the bottom out of *Quetta* on 28 February 1890. Of 293 on board, 133 lost their lives. The rock is now known as Quetta Rock, and on Thursday Island in the Quetta Memorial Church is the ship's bell along with other artefacts recovered from the sea. For years after, every BI ship dipped its ensign as it passed to recognise the assistance given by the Jardine family to the rescue of survivors.

### *Dara*

One of the post World War Two 'D' Class built for the Bombay-Persian Gulf Service, *Dara* left Dubai on 7 April 1961 to stand off during a freak storm. The following morning at about twenty to five an explosion, later attributed to a bomb, but not proven, occurred and, as a result the ship sank with the loss of over 200 lives. When the surviving BI officers arrived back in Bombay with nothing other than the clothes on their backs they were met by a tailor to fit them out with all their needs at his cost until such time as the officers were again in Bombay: BI sahibs' credit was good. It made him for years to come.

### *Dwarka*

BI services from Bombay to Karachi and the Persian Gulf started in 1862. On 15 May 1982 the *Dwarka*, built in 1947 for this service arrived at Bombay for the last time. Three years earlier she had played a starring role in Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi*. It was perhaps fitting that one of the inaugural BI services and the last Imperial Liner Service in the world still operating should be the last to ring down the curtain on the BI after 126 years of this illustrious company. Like many before and since, *Dwarka* was run up the beach at Gadani, Pakistan to be broken up in June 1982.

### *Uganda*

Since 1968, *Uganda* had been entertaining school children as successor to a tradition started in 1932. Although within the P&O passenger division, she still flew the BI house flag and carried BI colours. In 1936 the then Chairman of the BI, the Hon Alexander Shaw (son-in-law of Lord Inchcape) assured the Government all ships were at the disposal of H.M. Government in the event of an emergency. On 10 April 1982, whilst lying at Alexandria she was requisitioned by H.M. Government for Falkland service. After landing all the passengers at Naples, conversion work to turn her into a hospital ship was carried out at Gibraltar. Following distinguished service in the Falklands War she returned to cruising in September 1982, but in January 1983 the Government chartered her for transport services between Ascension Islands and Port Stanley. This continued until April 1985. After laying up on the Fal at Falmouth for nearly a year, no permanent future afloat was forthcoming despite serious endeavour, so the P&O sold her to breakers in Taiwan. She departed Falmouth under her own steam to an emotional farewell on 20 May 1986. Three months later on 22 August, cyclone 'Wayne' blew her broadside to the shore where she lay with her back broken.

That was the end of the BI and the Raj at Sea.

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## **The Early Life of Gordon Alexander Jahans 1888-1908**

*An autobiographical account prepared about 1930 in support of the author's application to become a teacher. It has been transcribed from his rough pencilled notes by his daughter Penelope Alexander and appears in the Journal at the suggestion of his granddaughter Philippa Milnamow, a FIBIS member.*

Seeing that I was educated in one school only perhaps it would be as well to give as briefly as possible as much of my pre-school life as I feel had a bearing on my formal education. Such a statement may also, to some extent, explain some of my reactions to attempts to educate me.

Forty-two years ago, I was born at Sukkur where the great Indus barrage is now nearing completion. At that time Sukkur was as far as the North Western Railway had progressed and my father being employed upon its construction spent a more or less nomadic life, sometimes having my mother with him, and at others without her because he had sent her away to the hills for the hot weather. This [was] quite a common kind of existence for men who have to work in such hot and desert places as Sindh.

My grandfather was of Dutch descent and my memory of him (I must have been five or six at this time) during a visit is of a great tall old man with Dundreary whiskers who when he was angry with the servants would stride in to the verandah of the bungalow with a hunting crop which he could crack very loudly and terrifying[ly]. When the criminal who had called forth his wrath appeared before him he proceeded first to swear at him in Hindustani, then English (neither [of] which languages he could manage very well) and finally, as he worked himself in a rage, in Dutch which was his mother tongue.

My grandmother was an English woman a Miss Chambers, from whom, I presume, my father learnt English for [s]he had no Dutch. My mother was an Irish woman whose father had come out to India in the Army. There is every probability too that there is Indian blood in me through my grandfather's family for there is a tradition in my family that the first Jahans (or Johannes) to come to India was a Dutch privateer who being chased by a British frigate during the Dutch wars ran his ship aground on the Indian coast and marched his men inland to live as best they could. He had no woman on his ship and must have taken an Indian as wife.

My earliest recollection goes back to about the age of five or six. Someone gave me a tricycle as a birthday present and my first attempt to ride it in the compound of the bungalow ended in disaster for I fell off and made my nose bleed. Both this recollection and the incident I have related about my grandfather are the only ones I can remember at this age. They were both of a more or less terrifying nature. Nothing else seems to stand out with any distinctiveness. Even my next memories which relate to events when I was about eight can only be recalled because I must have been thoroughly frightened on each occasion. I can fix the date because I could ride a horse at this time and I have been told since that it was the habit of my mother to send me for a ride with the syce (groom) every evening when it was cool. The first incident is when instead of going for my usual ride I drove out with my aunt in the dog cart. A man wearing a huge turban suddenly came out into the road and forced my aunt to pull up. The man climbed up into the dog cart and my aunt with the reins still in her hands jumped out on the other side and whipped him with the long horsewhip. I do not remember how the incident ended. I have no recollection of running away or crying. I seem to have been just a rather frightened but otherwise passive spectator.

In the second incident of this period I was a more active participant. I had gone with the groom who was also the cowherd to bring home my pony for the usual ride. The groom took the opportunity to bring the cows home as well while he led my pony. For some reason that I cannot now recall I did not ride my pony but I ran ahead of the cows which were nearly all in

milk and were coming home to their calves. Seeing me running in front of them they stampeded and I was severely gored before they could be driven off. This incident has left so vivid an impression in my mind that even last summer in this country when I had to cross a field in which some cows were peacefully grazing I found myself trying to look for a way of getting to my destination other than through the field which contained the cows.

No pleasant memories seem to stand out in this period of my life. I cannot remember how or when I learnt to ride a horse or shoot with a gun, therefore I conclude I must have acquired these two accomplishments if not with pleasure at any rate without any untoward occurrence.

My formal education too must have begun about this time but I can recall no incidents connected with it until I was nearly eleven. From my knowledge of other families like my father's I must assume that I was probably bilingual as soon as I began to talk at all. My father and mother both spoke English and I must have learnt it from them. But I probably learnt Hindustani from my *ayah* (nurse) and other servants. From later observation of young children in India I may say that in speaking to my parents I probably used rules [of] English for the construction of my sentences, but frequently substituted an easier Hindustani word for a more difficult English one. In speaking to the Indian servants I probably reversed the process using Hindustani structure for my sentences but again choosing from either language only the words which came most easily to my tongue. This, of course, I cannot remember doing but lived long enough in India (until [I] was twenty) to observe in other children.

I come now to the age (about ten) when I can remember more details of my everyday life. But this [is] only, I suspect, because of the great event of being sent to a boarding school in Simla at eleven. I can remember being taught reading, writing and arithmetic by a crippled uncle – an Irishman with a fiery temper, a large heart and probably not the haziest idea of how to teach. I can remember being taught Hindustani in form of Urdu by one of my father's Mohammedan clerks. I can even remember the writing material I used. This consisted of a thin board of hard white wood, about the size of a slate, both of whose surfaces were smeared with a fine white clay. On these surfaces I drew the beautiful curves of the Persian characters in Indian ink with a reed pen which the *munshi* (teacher) shaped very cleverly, an accomplishment which I was too young to acquire then without cutting myself and have been too careless to acquire since.

I received my Urdu lessons very early in the morning, generally about half past six or seven o'clock, before it became too hot for me to be allowed out in the verandah. My *munshi* and I sat on mats in the verandah while the lesson proceeded as he would on no account sit at a table on an European chair. I believe also that the reason why I received my lessons in the verandah was that this old fashioned Indian gentleman would on no account enter my father's house while the master of it was away on duty. He always arose politely and salaamed my mother if she came out to the verandah (he made me stand too) but would not proceed with the lesson until she went in again. My mother must have known that the old fellow did not like feminine interference for she seldom came out while my lessons in Urdu were in progress.

The education which my uncle gave me was a much less formal business. I cannot recall that there was any timetable. The lessons were given sometimes in the garden of the bungalow, in the evening when it was cool, sometimes in the day after lunch indoors, and sometimes in the verandah in the morning. There was also a favourite tree near the well where it was cooler for longer in the day than anywhere in the garden. I cannot recall doing any systematic work. My uncle was not in very good health and a cripple. I can remember him storming at the servants who could not understand his somewhat sketchy Hindustani; but I cannot recall him being angry with me. All this period, till I was eleven, must have been very peaceful and happy because I cannot recall a single untoward event connected with learning during the whole time.

And yet I must have learnt a considerable amount by the age of eleven. I could ride and shoot with my father's 12-bore double-barrelled shot gun. I could drive a railway engine when I was ten and did so several times when engines were required at the rail head and travelled up light to bring back empty ballast trucks. The grown up driver, who might sometimes be an Englishman (who knew how to swear and taught me words which shocked my mother), always, of course, accompanied me. But I had become well known among the drivers and they would frequently sit on the coal in the tender while I took charge of the pneumatic brake and steam regulator and looked ahead for signals in a truly professional manner.

I could read and [read] all the books [I] could lay my hands on in the house. Before I was eleven I read all Lewis Carroll's books and still can quote from *Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, and the *Hunting of the Snark*. I read Ainsworth's *Lancashire Witches* but cannot recall the story probably because it was above my head. I read nearly all Mrs Henry Wood's books and some of Marie Corelli, and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories because they happened to be in the house. But my father was an engineer and not given to dabbling in literature. I read his books on road construction and learnt some geometry by questioning him and my uncle. I know all about meteors and planets and fixed stars because when we slept out of doors my father used to point them out to me. I also know many Indian folk tales which were told me by the servants. In arithmetic I had learnt to work decimal fractions for I remember I was very disgusted when on entering school I was put back to learning vulgar fractions. The point about all this early education is that I cannot remember learning to do any distasteful work until I actually went to school at the age of eleven. I cannot also remember receiving corporal punishment until I went to school.

Now before describing my school life perhaps I had better describe what manner of school it was to which I was sent. The name of the school is Bishop Cotton School, and it is situated about 7000 feet above sea level in the Himalayas, within a mile or two of Simla, the summer headquarters of the Government of India. Simla is an ideal spot for a school. The climate during the summer is temperate and healthy, never in fact hotter than, say, Bournemouth in midsummer. Kipling, although he is frequently unjust in some of his characterisations in *Kim* and other books dealing with life in India, certainly conveys more accurately than any other writer that I know, the healthy scent of morning pine-cones, the bracing air, clean and rare which makes well fed children deep chested and healthy, and the grandeur of the great dark green mountains, eternally snow capped further in. The world's children, when the world begins to think together and constructively, should all be educated on mountain tops. No other place is good enough for a school.

Bishop Cotton School itself is somewhat of a curiosity among schools in India. It was founded just after the Mutiny in 1860 by George Edward Lynch Cotton, a pupil of Arnold of Rugby and a master at Marlborough before he became Bishop and Metropolitan of Calcutta. It was founded by him because (I quote from correspondence published in his biography) 'we owe a great duty to our countrymen and their offspring, who are scattered over the face of this great country... in all that relates to the upholding and improvement of their moral and intellectual condition'. Because of this 'great duty' Bishop Cotton appealed to the Viceroy for funds and was answered in a lengthy minute of which the material part is as follows: 'But the Government of India cannot undertake to provide education for Europeans... It has other things to do, and it would not do that work well. The missionaries cannot do it; their task lies with those who are not Christians.' This minute seems to have grieved the good bishop but it certainly had the effect of giving a free hand to deal as he pleased with the money he collected. A man with Rugby and Marlborough as the background and possibly the ideal of his youth and young manhood could hardly do otherwise than endeavour to reproduce as nearly as possible a replica of the English Public School in Simla. From what I have gathered since I have been in England, more than

twenty years now, English Public Schools, as educational institutions, do not now hold the position they once did. Be this as it may, Indian educational institutions in spite of, or because of, the work of Thackeray and Macaulay<sup>1</sup> were very much behind anything in this country, and in those days the English Public School was without doubt probably the best kind of school to be found [in] England. Therefore in founding a school in India on the pattern of the English Public School, Bishop Cotton was giving to those boys who went to it the best education that could be obtained even in this country.

All the teachers in Bishop Cotton School have always been teachers educated and trained in this country. The Indian school was a very faithful reproduction of the prototype; in it were reproduced both its good points and its bad points. We fought, we ragged, we had prefects who could scrag us; we fagged and were bullied. When we became prefects we employed fags and scragged and bullied to make up for [our] own uncomfortable earlier days. [In fact during my earlier days in B. C. S. as the school is known all over India, dozens of copies of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* always appeared at the beginning of the session from some unknown source and were read by all the boys.]<sup>2</sup> The masters always referred to the English Public Schools as one speaks about one's peers. We could not fall behind them. We had an O.T.C. [Officers Training Corps] and I began as a full blown cadet in my twelfth or thirteenth [year] and was a sergeant before I left school. I had passed my subaltern's examination the year previous and had had my name inscribed on the cadet Challenge cup and came second in the All-India Cadet Shooting Championships. The school was ruled by the prefects in everything that did not concern our more formal education. Each dormitory had one prefect placed in charge of it and in the morning the prefect on duty called the roll to which we each replied '*Adsum*' ['I am here'] in turn. The master on duty stood at a distance and took no active [part] in the proceedings. All the commands were given by the prefects who also marched us into the school chapel where the Headmaster, a clergyman, took morning prayers.

The first stone of the new buildings as I knew them was laid by the Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, on September 26, 1866 in the year of the death of its founder, and the following report written in 1870 will give some idea of the intentions of the founder in regard to the kind of education that was given at B.C.S.

Besides receiving general religious instruction, the boys are educated usefully in Latin, English, one Indian Vernacular, history, geography, a short course of mathematics and certain optional studies to suit distinct tastes. The English language has a much more important place in the curriculum than the Bishop, from want of acquaintance with the deficiencies of Indian boys in this respect, had originally contemplated.

There are one or two curious points about this curriculum. 'One Indian vernacular' was taught – the one chosen was Urdu, the *lingua franca* of India. It was taught in B.C.S. very much as French and German are taught in some Secondary Schools in this country, and the boys learnt as little. Had it not been for the fact that we returned to our homes for nearly three months during the Christmas vacation we should probably have known as little about the Indian languages as many boys know of French and German on leaving some Secondary Schools. In history and geography we were taught more about Great Britain than we were of India. I believe it has not always been fashionable to know too much about the British Empire, at least, not in

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<sup>1</sup> Jahans presumably had in mind Lord Macaulay's efforts to promote western style education in India summed up in his education minute of 2 February 1835 which included the notorious remark that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. The reference to Thackeray is elusive.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is struck out in the original.

detail. In this respect, also, I was during my early school life educated in what I feel must have been the true British tradition of those days.

It will be noticed that no mention is made of Natural Science in this early report. It was only during my last two years at school that a chemical Laboratory was fitted up in the school. I helped to unpack the first consignment of apparatus that arrived. I spent much of my spare time in helping to arrange the Laboratory – I continually hung about the heels of the science master, but it was long afterwards that I realised what I had missed. The science I now know was learnt almost wholly in Bristol University. About the time the BCS curriculum was laid down the great battle between the modern and classical sides in the Public Schools must have been raging. The autocrat in India decided the fate of several generation[s] of boys. He was above controversy.

How did I react to all this? As I have said I was very early disgusted by having to return to vulgar fractions when I could work in decimals. I thought the school had nothing to teach me and wrote home and told my mother so. I, who could drive a real steam engine, was only allowed to play with a rifle (the old Henry Martin without a magazine) which I took to pieces with a screwdriver when [I] had been given [it] to clean one afternoon. I was soundly thrashed and taught that machinery was none of my business. I could ride a horse well at ten and when I was fourteen or fifteen during my holidays learnt how to catch a jackal with my whip. During my holidays also I learnt to stalk black buck on foot and bustard from a [? camel]. I knew the ways of many animals but at school I was not allowed to keep a tame sparrow. But I am afraid I broke the rules. I purchased with countless marbles the use of my neighbour's locker and reared moths from caterpillars, tame[?d] ravens, kept white mice and when their fecundity threatened to engulf my whole colony in ruin, I fed the worst specimens to two large rock snakes which I kept in two large earthenware pots.

At the age of fourteen I was considered a skilled snake catcher by my peers. But in formal school work I took as little interest as I could with safety. I did not like organised games very much although I could wield a tolerably straight bat at cricket and had the distinction of breaking my arm at soccer when I was sixteen and became a hero when it got out that I had refused chloroform when the doctor was setting it. It was not, however, heroism but fear that caused me [to] refuse chloroform. I have to this day a dread of losing consciousness, a dread which caused me [to] refuse [? ether] when wounded during the war. This fear, unlike the fear of cows, I cannot account for.

In consequence of my lack of desire to win distinction in school work I always contrived to be about the middle of my form. Drawing was the only subject in which I was interested but there were no prizes for this subject. When I was in the fifth form, however, it was announced that His Excellency the Viceroy Lord Curzon would present the prizes. After some consideration I made up my mind that I should like one of these, and thus it was I won my first and only prize at school.

My work had been so mediocre throughout my school life that my father had never spoken about my future. I believe now he was disappointed. But after I had won my prize I informed him that I wanted [to] drive one of my beloved railway engines. I thought that the time was propitious. I had long been scheming to be rid of a school in whose work I was not really interested. But I was mistaken. The winning of this prize had only shown my father that I could if I was interested arrive at a goal. He asked me to go back to school. I remember we argued about the matter while we were in camp on a shooting expedition. I remember that the clinching argument which he used was that if I would take an Indian degree in Mathematics he would send me to a University in England and I should not only learn to drive engines but to design them. He described an imaginary college to me. He set a goal before me. The next year I



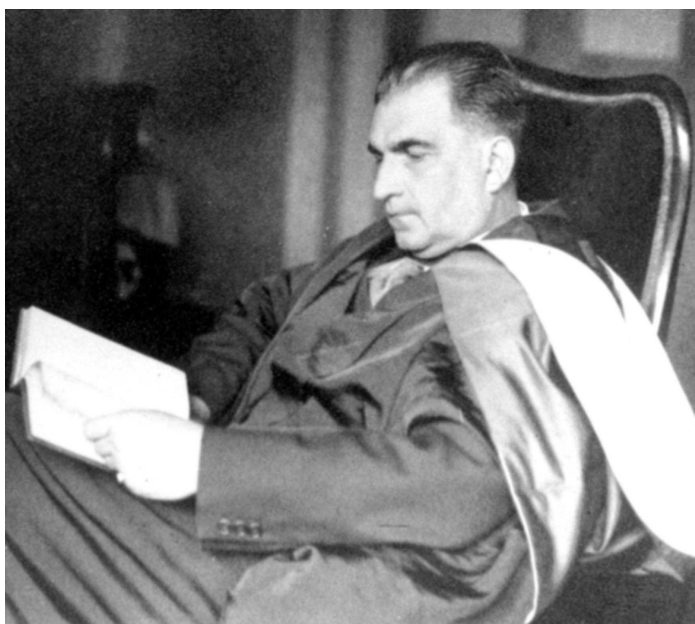
surprised the whole school by coming second in the whole province and winning a scholarship. I took my degree at the Punjab University and came to Bristol University. But alas! Man proposes and frequently circumstances dispose. My father died while I was in the second year of my course and I was left without a profession.

Years have passed and circumstances have brought me back to Bristol University. I know that if I am judged worthy of receiving a teachers' diploma in [? at] this time next year, every boy who passes through my hands will at least be assured of real sympathy. My school career is still vivid with unachieved desire in my memory.

*[Further information supplied by Philippa Milnamow and Penelope Alexander:]*

As he mentions above Gordon Jahans came to Bristol University (in about 1907 or 1908) to study engineering, but with no money after his father's death, was forced to abandon his course. He seems never to have returned to India. He had lodgings in the Redland district of Bristol at the home of the Powell family and in 1912 married Hannah Powell. The couple lived with Hannah's family where she and her sister had a small dressmaking business. They also taught dance classes. When war came Jahans volunteered for the army and fought in Mesopotamia with the Royal Engineers South Midland Division.

Before his marriage and after the war Jahans had various jobs and was often unemployed. The jobs included working for Lennards Shoes, for the Post Office as a telephone engineer, and in paper manufacture which resulted in a book published in 1931 on *Paper Testing and Chemistry for Printers* (London, Pitman). He and his wife and four children continued to live with her parents. They rented out rooms to Indian



students, and Hannah continued to sew. Gordon became involved in the community, was editor of the Bristol Labour Weekly, and in 1929 stood for election to the Bristol City Council. He held weekly discussion groups in his home.

As he mentions, Jahans was eventually able to return to Bristol University and gained a teaching diploma in

1931, but it was not until World War Two, when there was a shortage of teachers, that he was able to get a full time teaching position as a Secondary School teacher. Before then he worked when he could as a supply teacher. He followed up his teaching diploma by working for an MA thesis in child psychology, for which he devised his own intelligence tests, administering them to pupils at the different schools where he taught.

*Gordon Alexander Jahans in his academic robes, c1933*

The picture of Jahans was probably taken

when he achieved his MA, about 1933. He was also a lecturer for the Workers'

Educational Association, and a lecturer in psychology for the extra-mural department of Bristol University. His first wife died in 1944, he remarried in 1946 and died in 1948.]

## Matthew Baillie Pollock 1803–1844: Surgeon, HEIC Madras Army

*By Shirley West*

Matthew Baillie Pollock, my three times Great Grandfather, was born in Govan, Scotland, on 26 November 1803 to the Reverend Dr John Pollock and his second wife Margaret Dickson, the daughter of Nicholas Dickson, a merchant of Dumfries. The Reverend John, the son of John Pollock, a weaver from Hamilton, was the Church of Scotland Minister in Govan, and Matthew spent his boyhood days in the manse at Govan, with his two half brothers and his two brothers and a sister. He attended Glasgow University just across the river Clyde, and the record shows that he matriculated there in 1818. From there he went on to become a Licentiate of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow (now the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow) qualifying on 2 January 1826.

Although the reasons for Matthew's decision are not evident, it is clear that he had his sights on going to India. On 11 February 1826 he was examined by W F Chambers Esq, at Brook Street in London, who wrote that 'he considered him qualified in Physic to serve as an Assistant Surgeon in any of the Company's Presidencies in India'. By 8 March 1826, only two months after he had qualified as a Doctor, he was appointed Assistant Surgeon in the Honourable Company's Madras Army, having been nominated by C Majoribanks Esq, a shareholder and director of the Honourable Company. He was appointed to do duty with the 45<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Native Infantry, and sailed for India on the transport *Felicitas*, in medical charge of all the troops and followers embarked on the vessel, arriving off Madras on 24 June 1826. It would seem that military training was not considered necessary for medical men, and that they could learn what they needed as they went along!

The next we hear of Matthew is that he is petitioning that his pay on furlough and on retirement be regulated on the same progressive scale as is granted by Royal Warrant dated 29 June 1830 to medical officers of the same class in His Majesty's service. Sadly he was unlucky, his request being turned down in March 1832, but he was rewarded in 1833 by being placed in temporary charge of all the medical stores and duties at Belgaum. It does appear that he was more successful than the average Surgeon in the care of his charges, and was highly thought of by the military. On 6 March 1839 he was posted to the 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment Native Infantry at Belgaum, and on 25 March 1839 he was appointed Surgeon.

On 5 September 1837 Matthew married Helen Watson Smyth at Vellore, and they went on to have four children, Mary Helen (1838), Margaret Emma (1839), John Graham (1839) and Agnes Catherine (1843).

By 1841 Matthew was with the Hyderabad Contingent serving with the 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment NI, and it was here that he was part of a detachment which was sent to regain possession of Fort Badamee, in the Belgaum Zillah. It would appear that the Fort had been overrun by a 'body of insurgent arabs', and that they were making life difficult for the local residents. The 26<sup>th</sup>, together with the Grenadier Company of the 7<sup>th</sup> NI, a detachment of HM's 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment and some Artillery set out to address the problem, with Surgeon Matthew in attendance. After a couple of days of fighting, the 'arab insurgents' surrendered, but not until two private soldiers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment had been killed, and some fifteen Officers, NCOs, and Privates injured. From the report published in both the Madras and Bombay General Orders, the event had something of a Boys Own Paper quality about it, although no doubt to those who took part it was a rather frightening experience. Matthew it seems had a dual role in the conflict, firstly to take part in the fighting, and then to patch up the wounded afterwards. After the fighting was over a large quantity of both money and booty was recovered from the Fort, together with 105 prisoners.

Their eventual fate is not recorded! In his report of the events leading to the capture of the Fort, Major Johnson, the Commanding Officer, reports 'that the exertions of Captain Bayley and Surgeon Pollock have been unremitting and are deserving of my best thanks'. Subsequently Matthew shared prize money in respect of the battle, and his widow eventually received over eight hundred rupees.

In February 1842 Matthew left the 26<sup>th</sup> NI to join the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry to be responsible for both the troops and the horses, and on 10 December the Nominal Roll of Officers for that regiment noted that Surgeon Pollock's general conduct and character were 'good and satisfactory', and that he was 'reported zealous and prompt in execution of his duty'. This was in fact something of an understatement for an inspection report issued only two days later stated that Surgeon Pollock was 'most competent and extremely zealous in the discharge of his duties'. During the prevalence of cholera his patients had received 'the most unremitting attention' and so successful was his practice that in the most virulent cases he had lost only 18 out of the 52 admitted into hospital. 'It was most gratifying to hear [the 34 survivors] speak of Mr Pollock's kindness and attention'. The Inspecting Officer, Major-General Showers, also recorded that it would be unjust were he to omit mention of Surgeon Pollock and Assistant Surgeon Currie: their 'unwearied attention and kindness to the sick', and 'the tried professional skill and ability of the former', accounted for the great success this year attending the treatment of cholera.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1843 Matthew, still with the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry, was directed to afford medical aid to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Native Veteran Battalion Detachment and Cantonment Details at Arcot, and on 11 January 1844 he was ordered, additionally, to afford medical aid to camp followers during the march of the Regiment.<sup>2</sup> In a General Order issued by the Governor at Fort St George on 19 July 1844 the death of Surgeon Matthew Baillie Pollock was announced, with the promotion of Assistant Surgeon James Kellie to the rank of Surgeon, *vice* Pollock (deceased).

Matthew died at the age of forty, probably from cholera, and was buried at Bowenpilly on 7 July 1844, having devoted his life to the service of others, leaving a widow and four young children. Helen, Matthew's widow and my three times Great Grandmother, returned to England with a pension from the Lord Clive Fund and the Prize Money from the Fort Badamee episode. Both she and an unmarried Margaret Emma are listed in the 1881 census living at 48 Talbot Road, Paddington, London, in company with a housemaid and a cook. Helen died on 16 August 1899. Of the remaining children, Mary Helen (my twice Great Grandmother) had married Jonathan Wolland Bake, a Corporal in the Madras Cavalry, and John Graham had returned to England with his mother and sister, attending Cheltenham College and Addiscombe before joining the Madras Horse Artillery in 1859. After the Mutiny he joined the RHA, rising to the rank of full Colonel RA. In 1876 he married Jessie Caroline, and he died in Bournemouth in 1921. Sadly, at the time of writing, nothing more is known of Agnes Catherine.

*My thanks, as ever, to Tim Thomas at the IOR for his unstinting help given over many years in searching through the India Office Records, and to James Beaton, Librarian at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons at Glasgow.*

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<sup>1</sup> Inspection Report of 8<sup>th</sup> Light Cavalry, 12 Dec 1842.

<sup>2</sup> General Orders issued by C-in-C, Fort St George, Madras, 24 Oct 1843 and 20 Jan 1844.

## The 'Unattached List'

*By Peter Bailey*

Many researchers will have followed the career of a soldier ancestor in the British Army to the point where his regiment has been posted to India. As elsewhere in the World, his career in India – and in associated territories such as Burma – remains reported with the Monthly Muster Lists returned to the War Office. Today these are available in The National Archives (formerly, Public Record Office) under the appropriate reference number.

A number of soldiers' military careers appear to end abruptly with the note in the Monthly Musters, stating: "Transferred to the 'Unattached List'".

The 'Unattached List' was the name given to the Commissariat Department, Ordnance Department and similar services provided by the Government of India for the support both of the Army of India and for the Army of the Crown serving in India.

These functions had, of course, been established by the East India Company Armies as they were developing and they required such services for each of the three Presidencies. The individuals serving had been mustered to 'The Town Major's List' (Bengal and Bombay), called 'Effective Supernumeraries' in Madras. Their numbers had been supplied by transfer from the ranks of Infantrymen, Artillerymen and Sappers and Miners of the Presidency Armies until their demise in 1861 in accordance with the Government of India Act of 1858. After this date it had become necessary to recruit men for these services from front line regiments and battalions of the British Army.

Frequently, men who were married with a family in India, and who felt at home in that country, wished to stay there when their regiments had completed their tour of duty and were due to be posted to almost anywhere else within the Empire. One way of achieving this was to request transfer to a regiment freshly arrived in India.

The alternative was to request transfer to the 'Unattached List'.

An additional advantage of the latter, apart from withdrawal from the 'front line', was that promotion prospects in the 'Unattached List' were generally rather better. A soldier having already reached the rank of Sergeant in the British Army would have the possibility to become Colour Sergeant, Sergeant-Major or in a very few cases, Warrant Officer. In the 'Unattached List' he might expect eventually to be promoted to Warrant Officer status (sub-Conductor and then Conductor) or even to the ranks of 'Honorary Lieutenant' or 'Honorary Captain'.

Records of soldiers transferring to the 'Unattached List', although disappearing from the War

Office records, are continued in the L/MIL/- series of the India Office Records, which record the following data on an annual basis:

**The Annual Alphabetical Register of the Unattached List as it stood  
1<sup>st</sup> January 1883**

Corps:	Commissariat Dept.
Name:	Bailey, J.
Rank:	Sergeant
Age:	38
Town:	
County:	Kildare
Country:	Ireland
Ship Arrived, or Whence received:	45 <sup>th</sup> Foot
Year of Arrival, or When received:	1876
When last re-enlisted:	27 August 1870
For what period:	9 Years
Remarks:	Died at Madras 25 <sup>th</sup> January 1882

These lists also include the same details for the man once he has retired and is receiving his pension. They also give details of 'Casualties'. Remember that a Casualty is a man who is removed from the list for any reason whatever. Death is only one of the possibilities. A third section is that of 'Casualties by Death'. In this section the deceased soldier's data is supplemented by the value of his estate and to whom his estate was passed, usually his wife of course:

**The Annual Alphabetical Register of the Unattached List as it stood  
1<sup>st</sup> January 1883**

**Register of Roll of Casualties by Death**

Corps:	Commissariat Dept. (Unattached List)
Name:	J. Bailey
Rank:	Sergeant
Date:	25 <sup>th</sup> January 1882
Prize Money due:	Nil
Amount of Estate in Money & Effects:	£191.15.4
To whom bequeathed:	Intestate
To whom delivered:	The widow
When delivered over:	26 <sup>th</sup> January 1882

Unfortunately, the station to which a man on the 'Unattached List' was posted does not feature in the Muster. However, all Warrant Officers have their stations given in the Presidency Almanac and Army List, but for Sergeants and other ranks, their station must be identified by other means.

It is well known that the Attestation Papers, and other documents of all soldiers of the British Army surviving to pension, were transferred to the War Office Pensions Department upon their retirement. These may be viewed in the WO97 series at The National Archives, or even on their website. However it appears that papers for soldiers transferring to the 'Unattached List' during much of the 19th century were not preserved.

On the other hand, files created in a new system of the 1890s form the basis of the L/MIL/14 series and include papers of soldiers who transferred to the 'Unattached List' as early as 1872, if not before, as well as their earlier papers from even before the 1861 reorganisation of the Indian Army. Consultation of these is strongly recommended.

## **Indian Army Prisoners of War in the Second World War**

*By Hedley Sutton*

An alphabetical listing by surname of nearly 900 Indian Army personnel who became prisoners of war between 1941 and 1945 is now available in the OIOC Reading Room (our ref. 212) at the British Library. Comprising photocopies of handwritten cards maintained by the India Office Military Department, the details given usually include rank and unit, name and address of next-of-kin, estimated date of capture, and date of 'recovery from enemy' (i.e. release). Most had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Japanese, but some were held by the Italians, and at least one succeeded in escaping and rejoining Allied forces. The vast majority are Europeans, but a handful of Indians are recorded; plus a few Indian Medical Service nursing sisters. In some cases brief details of the person's medical condition are supplied. There are no photographs.

More biographical information will be found in the L/MIL/14 series, but as the statutory 75-year closure period still applies to many Second World War soldiers, researchers are asked to contact the enquiry desk for this particular line of inquiry.

In this context it may also be of interest to draw attention to two files on Italian prisoners of war detained in India: ref: L/MIL/5/1069-70.