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Researching for FIBIS Members

By Lawrie Butler (Research Co-ordinator) and Beverly Hallam (Researcher)

Amongst its many services, FIBIS offers a research facility to members who require assistance in completing their own family tree. This service is undertaken by a few FIBIS volunteers able to reach London where all the main research centres for India-related sources are to be found: primarily the India Office Records at the British Library, but with occasional trips elsewhere sometimes necessary, for example to The National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives, or the Society of Genealogists. Members requesting assistance are expected to pay the researcher's travel and out-of-pocket expenses but otherwise the service is free.

The Society is presently trying to expand its panel of researchers and while ideally one should have an overall knowledge, those with specialised skills in say military history, or the civil service, or missionary societies, etc, will be particularly welcome. In another way, it may be that someone living near a particular Record Office, say The National Archives (TNA), may find it easier to deal with TNA enquiries. Access to the Internet these days is essential and one should be aware of the new sources becoming available. The Society always encourages new members to 'field' their enquiries on the India List and researchers can add to their own knowledge by following the List.

The ideal volunteer researcher is one who is still doing personal research, regarding it as a hobby, and who will find that research for others will often open up new avenues for pursuing their own interests. Research can be time-consuming involving not only visiting Archives but typing up, corresponding and background reading. Volunteers should think in terms of spending, on average, a minimum of a half a day per week. But the time spent can be enormously rewarding as the experience of my first volunteer, Beverly Hallam, demonstrates.

Beverly writes

I, hesitantly, responded to Lawrie Butler's request for researchers about three years ago not really knowing what to expect. As I live and work in London and had spent a few years using the India Office Records to research various aspects of my own family tree, I felt I should like to assist members who were unable to access information themselves. Any doubts I may have had about my research abilities were soon dispelled. In the first instance Lawrie Butler is a fount of knowledge and was ready with suggestions of where to look whenever I thought I had hit a brick wall. I really have learned a tremendous amount under his guidance and this has opened doors onto my own personal research. Secondly, the staff at both the British Library and The National Archives have always been pleasant, ready to assist and exceptionally patient in explaining how to access materials and use the various technology.

Besides expanding my knowledge of the India holdings it has been an absolute delight to have been in contact with so many members – some of whom I have never met and others with whom I have spent time when they have visited London. All have been very appreciative and, in some cases, we have retained contact although the research enquiry has finished.

I tend to visit an Archive for a morning every week but spend as much time doing background research and correspondence – particularly as two members for whom I am currently researching have no email facility.

For me, being a research volunteer is not an academic exercise but a very enjoyable way of assisting and getting to know other members and furthering my own research along the way. I would strongly recommend anyone who has enjoyed their own research and has a little time to spare to consider volunteering – only expenses are covered but satisfaction brings its own reward!

Would anyone interested in volunteering please get in touch with Lawrie Butler, email: research@fibis.org. Lawrie will be pleased to explain how the system works including the way travel expenses, etc, are paid for.

The Battle of Plassey, 23 June 1757

By David Blake

With two articles on the Indian mutiny (150th anniversary this year), and one on Indian independence (60th anniversary), I felt we should not entirely neglect the 250th anniversary of the battle of Plassey, an event which has a good claim to have begun the transformation of the East India Company from a commercial organisation into a territorial power. However, I can claim no specialist knowledge on the battle or on its victor Col Robert Clive, the future Lord Clive of Plassey¹. What follows rests entirely on a few secondary sources.² Reading these accounts one is immediately struck by three things: the vacillation and fear which characterised the actions of Clive's opponent, Siraj-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bengal; the fact that the initiative for his overthrow came from Indians rather than the British, in fact from his own chief officers of state; and the dishonesty and deceit practised by all the principal players, Indian and British, and their consequent suspicion of one another.

The root cause of instability in Bengal at this period lay in the arbitrary and capricious behaviour of Siraj-ud-daula, which was punctuated by fits of uncontrolled temper alternating with bouts of panic. Among other things this meant that he pursued no consistent policy towards the British and French. Instead his actions were conciliatory or threatening by turns depending on which of the two rival European powers appeared most dangerous at any juncture. He hated the British, and would have preferred a French alliance, but his actions were frequently dictated by his fear of the former, induced partly by his experiences of the military and naval actions which took place between the 'Black Hole' incident in 1756 and Plassey itself, and partly by such missives as this from Admiral Watson:

I shall kindle such a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish. Farewell: remember that he promises you this, who never broke his word with you or with any man whatsoever.

In terms of his own morale, Siraj was a defeated man before he ever reached Plassey.

His unbalanced behaviour had also alienated the leading men of his own court including his *Diwan* (chief minister) Rai Durlabh, his commander-in-chief Mir Jafar, and not least his

¹ Clive, regarded as a *parvenu* by the English political establishment, was fobbed off with an Irish peerage which did not entitle him to a seat in the House of Lords. His son, Edward, did better, marrying the daughter of the Earl of Powis who had no male heir. He took the Powis surname Herbert and was himself created Earl of Powis in the English peerage. His daughter, Charlotte, reached the pinnacle of respectability by becoming a Governess to the future Queen Victoria. The present Earl of Powis is in direct male line of descent from Clive.

² In order of publication: (1) Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (London, 1974); (2) Percival Spear *Master of Bengal: Clive and his India* (London, 1975); (3) James P Lawford, *Clive, Proconsul of India* (London, 1976); (4) Penderel Moon *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (London, 1989); (5) Robert Harvey, *Clive. The life and death of a British Emperor* (London, 1998). I have relied chiefly on (1), (2) and (4). The two others are probably more favourable to Clive, and Lawford has a good description of the battle itself.

hindu bankers, including the most important, Jagat Seth, whom he is said to have struck in the face and threatened with circumcision. Other men in high places were spat upon or beaten. It is not surprising therefore that the Seths and a number of his chief officers, alarmed and disgusted by such behaviour, began to form plots to remove him. Nor is it surprising that Clive and the Select Committee of Company servants at Calcutta responsible for policy making, despite having made a treaty with the Nawab in which the latter had agreed to return to the British all the privileges they had previously enjoyed (plus additional rights to fortify Calcutta and to coin rupees) and to compensate them for their losses, eventually agreed to join the plot when invited to do so, for it was evident that they could not rely on the Nawab's good faith once Clive and his troops had returned to Madras. Clive also had before him the earlier example of the French having twice replaced a Nizam of Hyderabad. And of course he and the Select Committee could stipulate that they would receive handsome personal rewards for placing a pretender on the *masnad* (throne) of Bengal. For the moment Clive wrote deceitfully to Siraj in friendly soothing terms while the Company's agent at the Nawab's capital, Murshidabad, William Watts and Clive's own agent Luke Scrafton, concerted plans with the conspirators. The Nawab meanwhile was still conspiring with the French – ineffectually, but enough to provide Clive with a pretext to attack him when he was ready to do so.

A complication arose towards the end of the negotiations with Mir Jafar and his fellow conspirators when a wily merchant and intriguer named Aminchand (often referred to as Omichand in older books) who had been involved in the negotiations as a go-between, threatened to reveal the plot to Siraj unless he received thirty lakhs of rupees for his services. Clive evaded this piece of blackmail by outright deception. He ordered two treaties to be drawn up, one genuine on white paper and one fictitious on red paper which had an additional clause giving Aminchand his reward which he was shown. It bore the signatures of Clive, the Select Committee, and Admiral Watson. Watson's signature was forged as the Admiral had scruples about signing the document himself, though according to Clive he did not object to someone else signing it for him. In any case, Clive later told Parliament:

Where the lives of so many people were concerned³ and when the existence of the Company depended on it, I would not have scrupled to put Mr Watson's name to that treaty even without his consent.

With Aminchand's intervention having been finessed, events now moved to a climax. After further negotiations and various alarms Watts was eventually able to meet Mir Jafar in secret to clinch the deal. Mir Jafar swore on the Koran to observe the treaty with the English, and Watts and his companions, knowing the danger of Siraj discovering the plot, and fearing for their lives, escaped from Murshidabad soon after. This was enough to alert Siraj to the hostile intentions of the English. He had also got wind of rumours that Mir Jafar was conspiring against him, and was on the point of arresting him, but now, typically,

³ i.e. those of Watts and other British personnel in Murshidabad plus those of the Indian conspirators had Siraj been informed of the plot.

vacillated and attempted to conciliate him and enlist his support against the English. According to Craffton (quoted in Moon, p53):

The Koran was introduced, the accustomed pledge of their falsehood; the Soubah [i.e. Nawab] swore he would never attempt his life; Meer Jaffer that he would be his faithful soldier, and fight for him to the last drop of his blood. They parted with smiles in their countenances and treachery in their hearts.

The two armies began to move towards Plassey where a part of the Nawab's army under Rai Durlabh was already entrenched, but it was obvious that Siraj could not be truly confident of Mir Jafar's assistance. Neither of course could Clive. Both of them therefore were assailed by doubts and fears as they approached the battlefield. In addition to anxiety over Mir Jafar's doubtful loyalty, the Nawab knew he had insulted many of his army commanders but failed to replace them with men he could trust, and moreover his troops were still in a mutinous state despite the liberal donation they had demanded in order to move at all. On the other hand Clive, with a force of only about 800 Europeans, 2200 sepoys, and eight light field guns, was completely outnumbered by the Nawab's 50,000 men⁴ and fifty heavy guns, and would surely be overwhelmed if Mir Jafar were to double cross him, and the signs from that quarter were not good: he had not deserted the Nawab as agreed, and the messages received from him were ambiguous.⁵

It was therefore understandable that, on nearing Plassey, Clive – often so masterful – suffered a moment of irresolution and called a Council of War at which he and a majority of officers voted for delay. But among those for an immediate advance was Eyre Coote who had a great military career before him. Clive also wrote to the Select Committee in Calcutta seeking their sentiments. What persuaded him to change his mind and fight before their answer arrived was to become a matter of controversy between Coote who believed it was his advice, and Clive who asserted that it was his own unaided counsel (the two men had already quarrelled some months previously). The receipt of a much more encouraging letter from Mir Jafar may well have finally decided him, though he was already moving troops forward before it arrived. The battle which took place on 23 June was hardly a battle at all, costing the victors only 65 casualties and the defeated not more than 500, but it ended in complete victory for Clive. It began with the Nawab's troops beginning an encircling movement to the right of Clive's position and an artillery duel in which the heavier Indian guns outranged the English and began to cause some casualties leading Clive to

⁴ This is the figure usually given. It may have been an exaggeration but even if it was a gross exaggeration it is clear that Clive would be heavily outnumbered if Mir Jafar's contingent fought for the Nawab. However, Harvey and Lawford argue that the Company's troops were used to meeting and defeating very large Indian armies.

⁵ According to Bence-Jones, p134, there may have been a genuine misunderstanding between Clive and Mir Jafar with the latter sincerely believing his promise extended no further than joining Clive on the day of battle but not before. He also remarks that with his chances of success 'wholly dependent on the intentions of Mir Jafar and the other conspirators, Clive's march to Plassey seems more like the Jameson raid than a rational military enterprise' - a striking comparison.

withdraw his men into the protection of a mango grove. At this point both sides were drenched by an hour long monsoon storm which largely silenced the Indian guns but not those of the British who had apparently been better at keeping their powder dry. Moreover, Siraj had been further unnerved by the death of Mir Madan the one commander who was both capable and loyal. At about 3 o'clock the Indians began withdrawing to their entrenchments probably as a result of Siraj's increased terror following Madan's death, and intentionally bad advice from Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh. Clive, intending to remain in the grove all day and mount a night attack, had returned to Plassey House to change his wet clothes and it was his second-in-command Major Kilpatrick who made the key decision to attack part of the Nawab's retreating force (in fact a small contingent of Frenchmen). Clive was angered by this piece of insubordination but, realising it would now be dangerous to withdraw, ordered up more troops. The Indians re-emerged from their entrenchment, there was a sharp exchange of fire during which the Indians lost several of their leading officers. They then retreated in some confusion which turned into a rout as soon as they heard that Siraj had left the scene on a fleet-footed camel.

Below is Admiral Watson's laconic description of the battle in a despatch to the Home Government, dated 16 July 1757. He has just explained that Katwa had been seized on 19 June and that the army had remained there ...

From Watson's letter book. IOR: Mss Eur D1079

[‘Jaffur Ally Cawn’ is Mir Jafar]

remained two or three days for Intelligence from Jaffur ally Cawn, who it was agreed by all in the Confederacy should succeed to the Nadobship; He being a man of Family and held in great Esteem by all Ranks of People: The 22^d they crossed the River, and the next day had a decisive Battle with Suraja Dowla, over whom our Troops obtained a complete victory. Put his Army to Flight and took possession of his Camp, with upwards of Fifty Pieces of Cannon and all his Baggage. He was joined by Fifty French Troops who worked his Artillery, and by the most Authentick Account, his Army consisted of about Twenty Thousand Fighting Men, exclusive of those, under the Command of Jaffur ally Cawn and Red Dowlat, who did not act against us. The Number killed in the Enemy's Camp, were few as they only stood a Cannonading. We had about nineteen Europeans killed and wounded and thirty Sepoys.

As Spear remarks, ‘the Indians virtually defeated themselves’. Mir Jafar's contribution to the proceedings was to do nothing: ‘having taken two contradictory oaths on the Koran, [he]

deemed it best to keep neither of them, and so throughout the day he and his corps remained inactive on the left flank of the Nawab's army' (Moon, p54).

One is reminded of the situation prior to the battle of Bosworth in 1485 when Richard III knew the loyalty of Lord Stanley and his brother Sir William was suspect while Henry Tudor could not rely on the Stanleys' promised assistance. In the event, they did nothing until they were sure of intervening successfully on Henry's side, and to my mind, Mir Jafar behaved in similar fashion. Nevertheless, in both cases the inactivity of the third party was far more damaging to the 'king-in-possession' than his enemy.

When the battle was over Mir Jafar sent Clive a message of congratulation. When he appeared in Clive's camp next morning he was understandably nervous but was 'agreeably surprised' to be told he was now Nawab of Bengal. Aminchand was less agreeably surprised when in due course he was 'undeceived' as Clive put it. As for the other leading figures, Siraj was soon captured and murdered by Mir Jafar's son, while the East India Company and its servants received large rewards from the revolution they had helped to bring about, Clive of course above all.⁶ Spear provides an excellent summary of the battle and its significance:

Plassey was decisive for the British in India and for Clive. ... Clive's reputation, which soared when the news of success reached Britain, plummeted later when his critics realized that it was more the work of a lucky trickster than a daring military genius. ... He was firing notes rather than cannon balls to the last moment [before the battle]. ... Up to the moment of victory his acts were those of a cautious man playing for time. It was the results of the battle which were dramatic. For Britain it meant involvement in north Indian politics on a large scale and without option of withdrawal. ... For Clive himself the result was also dramatic. ... His actual contribution was a certain dogged resolution which led him to persevere as dangers appeared to thicken, and made his will to win superior to that of the doubt-torn Siraj. ... The battle completed his transformation from the soldier to the statesman. Before he was a soldier who resorted to politics; henceforth he was the statesman who used war as the last resource of statecraft.

But true as all this is, to the present writer the key role of Mir Jafar and the other leading Indian players should not be lost sight of. Without Siraj-ud-daula's defects of character there would have been no conspiracy against him, and without that conspiracy Clive would not have had the attractive opportunity for intervention which in fact opened up before him; and above all, had Mir Jafar thrown in his lot with Siraj, Clive would probably have lost the battle if only because of sheer weight of numbers. Perhaps finally, one should spare a thought for the luckless Siraj. He was not an estimable man, indeed quite the reverse, but he was young, inexperienced and very probably his character had been ruined by the over indulgent upbringing which spoilt so many Indian princes.

⁶ One person not rewarded was Admiral Watson whose request for a share of the spoils was refused by the Select Committee, presumably as a punishment for his non-cooperation in the matter of deceiving Aminchand.

The Lady's Log-book

By Mark William Fletcher

On 1 August 1832 in Penegoes, Wales, my great great Grandfather the Rev William Kew Fletcher, BA, MA (1802-1867) married his first wife, a promising author and poet, Maria Jane Jewsbury (1800-1833). She was a woman he had doggedly pursued for a number of years, succeeding only on his second proposal and while promising to tidy himself up and cease smoking cigars. William had secured the position of chaplain with the British East India Company and they set sail from Gravesend on 19 September aboard the East Indiaman *Victory* bound for India. Maria Jane's descriptions of this voyage, published under the title of 'Extracts from a Lady's Log-book' and a series of poems called 'The Oceanides' make entertaining reading for those whose ancestors travelled this route, aboard an Indiaman ship as guests of the Company

To-day we may be said really to have commenced our voyage. Our pilot is gone, and the last faint trace of the Devonshire coast is melted into the sky; I watched it gradually disappear, rock, headland and cultivated hill, so that I should recognize particular fields again by their shape - yet, contrary to all the declarations of poetry and fiction, the farewell look affected me singularly little. The truth is, that occasions for great emotion are rarely times of great emotion; we are the slaves of passing events and necessities; and even against my will, the beauty and novelty of the scene charmed away sadness. Last night, the wind was fair for our purpose (blowing us out of the channel), but it was rather rough, and the sea was splendid; the magnificent swelling of the waves, the dazzling foam of their curled heads, running hither and thither - with the bright and quiet stars looking down from above - all awoke wonder, how one could be a pilgrim of the waters, and ever yield to poor, vain, foolish thoughts! And yet, alas! both with one's self, and others, folly and vanity come to sea! - to sea, where one seems to have breath and being immediately in the presence of Deity.

Our cabin, though one of the two best in the ship, for convenience, light, air, and size, has a rather ludicrous drawback: a good portion of some eighty dozen of poultry, ducks, geese, fowls, pigeons, &c., &c., have their local habitation in pens over our heads; and all day, and almost all night, they peck, crow, quack, gabble, and quarrel according to their several natures. The sound of their beaks resembles a shower of hail; they are of necessity cramped for room, and like children, are always crying out for food. They disturb one grievously, but then they amuse; and when, at daybreak, their cries are joined by the low of our three cows, the grunt of some of our twenty pigs, and the bleating of a few of our sixty sheep, I am transported to a farm-yard.

An event occurred just as dinner was served, and, to the utter discomfiture of curls, all the ladies hastened on deck to see a steamer from Portugal hailed. We had not been long enough from land to regard it with much sentiment; added to which, the vessel was such an ugly common thing, with such a crewish looking crew, that I thought we did them too much honour by standing to have our curls blown out. Our captain wanted information of the two

Dons, Pedro and Miguel; the master of the steamer cared for nothing but the bearing of the Scilly Islands. After a little mutual trumpeting, we separated; certainly the steamer bore away at a gallant rate, but looking as ugly as possible, the picture of a fat woman with her arms a-kimbo, or of three single boats rolled into one. I dislike steam-boats: there is nothing calm in their speed, or dignified in their motion; on they go, splashing and dashing, the bullies of the water, or, when their smoke is visible - Beelzebub's frigates.

* * *

Maria Jane's earliest published work was *Phantasmagoria* (1825) a collection of satirical sketches, stories and poems she dedicated to William Wordsworth whose work she admired intensely. On publication, she forwarded Wordsworth a copy and soon after was invited to see him, striking up a friendship with his daughter Dora. So close was the association, that when Maria Jane suffered a prolonged illness in the spring of 1826. Wordsworth was inspired to write a peculiar sonnet in her honour, apparently inspired by her love of stuffed birds! Other titles included *Letters to the Young* (1828) based upon letters of advice she wrote to her younger sister Geraldine and *Lays of Leisure Hours* (1829) dedicated to her close friend and fellow author Felicia Hemans.¹

* * *

We are in the Bay and, if it is generally what it has been to us, in the much calumniated Bay of Biscay. The sea is quiet, and the wind so fair, that its continuance would blow us to Madeira in a week. It seems magical: in five days we have traversed the space that this very ship and captain have been, beforetime, three weeks in accomplishing. Whilst our present propitious circumstances hold, except the want of newspapers, and a hall-door to walk out at, we have no need of land. I have just cut a pine[apple?]; we have fresh fruit, bread, and vegetables every day. Wonderful is the ingenuity of man! More wonderful still the protecting kindness of Providence! Here are we floating in ease and security over this fathomless, and, to the eye, illimitable element. On deck, our band is playing all kinds of home tunes, and there comes a strange blending of the dashing of waves, the boatswain's whistle, and 'I'd be a Butterfly', waltzes, and quadrilles - sounds of English towns and streets. With regard to the said band, music is music at sea, and it behoves one not to be finical, otherwise discontented recollections might arise of orchestras one has heard in days of yore. However, any music is at times valuable, because its mere noise brightens the spirits, sets people talking, and by the time we reach Bombay, our musicians may have learned to play in time. The orders transmitted to them (in nautical phrase) are amusing - they are playing an ugly tune, or a pretty one badly - 'Bid those fellows take a reef in - 'or they suddenly stop - 'Ask those fellows why they have hove to,' says the captain to the steward, a person grave as Sancho's in the island of Barrataria. These poor fellows (the musicians) occupy an anomalous position on board. They are to play morning, noon, and night, should we require them to do so; they play us to dress, and to meals; they play to keep the men in step when the anchor is weighed, and yet upon occasion they have to haul at the ropes and go aloft, - as Wordsworth says, 'Something between a hindrance and a

¹ See sources at end for fuller list of her writings.

help'. If one of them fell into the sea, we should note them by their instruments, (fell overboard, the key bugle, &c.) for they seem musical abstractions.

Hitherto I have spoken of the agreeable side of a sea life; to-day and yesterday, from being unwell, I have done little, but say with Mariana in 'The Moated Grange', 'I am weary, weary'. There is both comfort and discomfort in knowing that one shall be weary and unweary, well and unwell, sick and unsick of every thing and person on board, full twice a week before the voyage ends. An active mind may countervail much of this; but much will yet remain, the consequence of varying wind and wave. The ear becomes fretted with the ceaseless sound of 'many waters; ' the eye aches with traversing their monotonous expanse; and the mind is perfectly fevered for want of one retired spot, one moment's perfect stillness. Now is the time to be tormented with longings after English green-lanes - English hayfields - anything, but the universal brininess that makes all one eats, drinks, touches, breathes, thinks, and feels - salt. Now is the time to adventure a new reading of Shakespeare, and vow that Hamlet had an eye to a sea voyage, when he exclaimed - 'Oh flesh, how art thou fishified! ' Now, one gets uncharitable, and reverses the good-day impression of one's fellow passengers. Now, one votes that the band (their instruments, at least) be thrown overboard; that the piano in the next cabin do follow them; that the musical snuff-boxes, together with their owners, be sent either to the hold or to the main-top. Now, are the excellent breakfasts and dinners turned away from with distaste; and now, does the crazed appetite sympathize with the South American woman, when she longed 'to pick the little bones of a little Tapoona boy's head'. Now are the steward and cook perplexed with the strange and diverse fancies of the ailing passengers.

Divine service was not held till the next evening, and in the cuddy (large dining cabin) - I could not personally attend, but, by leaving the door ajar, I could hear, and never did the celebration of Divine Service, whether in rustic church, crowded chapel, or gorgeous cathedral, come home so much to my heart and understanding. Doubtless there were personal reasons why the voice of 'the white-robed priest' [the Rev William] should affect me peculiarly, but there was much to solemnize and affect of a more general nature. Floating over the waters, severed from all communion with our fellow beings on land, we were yet, by the words we uttered, the feelings we experienced, the blessings we prayed for, and many of the evils we asked deliverance from, one with every Christian assembly and church in the world.

With all my salt-water babble, I have said nothing of the mode in which the day slips from one - I dare not say the mode of employing a day, for, in truth, the instances are few, of persons achieving much on shipboard. If you worked the ship, there would be occupation and interest: as a mere passenger, the business of the vessel goes on before your eyes, like a cabalistic process; and if danger really arose, you would have to lie still, listening to every species of noise, command, and effort, with the comfortable conviction, that if you go to the bottom, you will hardly understand how or the why. 'But how do you pass your time?' inquires some one. Why, those who have canaries air and feed them; those who have legs, sea legs, I mean, use them by the hour; those who have cigars, smoke them by legions; those who have appointments in the service, compare them; those who have not been in

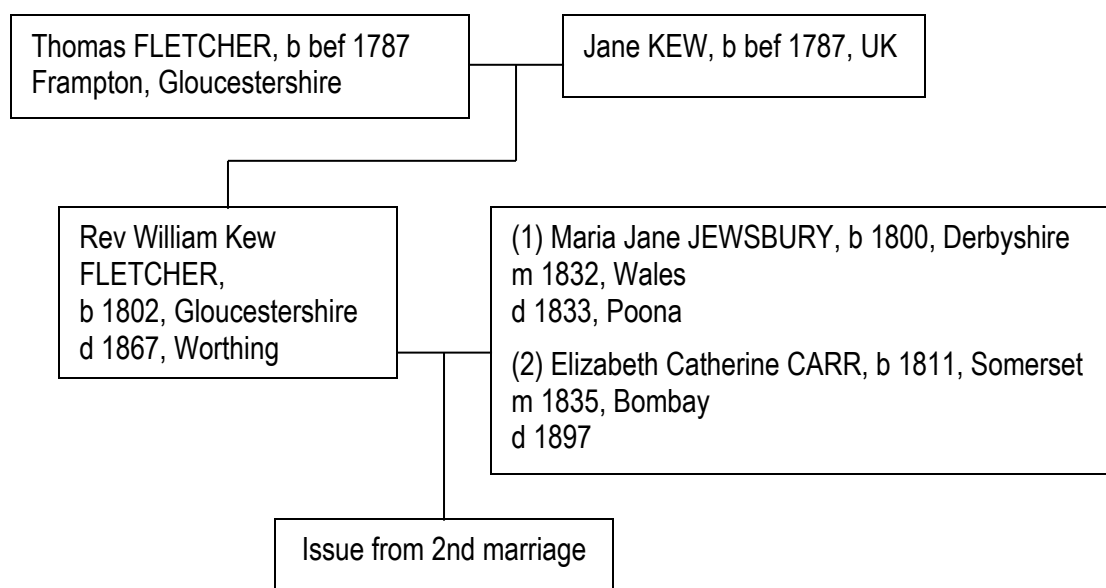
India, ask questions, which those who have been there, answer; those who have books, borrow and lend, oftener than read them; those who have appetites, (and happy are they,) eat; those who have the power, (and they are yet happier,) sleep; those who have minds, (and they are the happiest of all,) think, and are the better for it. Ladies have many advantages in this cooped up life. They have, even here, chests of drawers to arrange, disarrange, and re-arrange; they have muslin to hem, caps to quill, their outfits to discuss, and new tunes to play till they become old. They have been trained to sit still, or to walk in a style that resembles sitting still in motion. Moreover, they are not required to shave and in a rolling sea.

Off Madeira. Strange that a spot wherein none of has a single acquaintance, should be looked forward to as a perfect land of Canaan. 'When we get to Madeira, ' has either begun or ended every body's third sentence for the last two days, coupled of course with some appropriate scheme. 'Lots of grapes' - 'The Nunnery' - 'A long ride on mules' - 'Clothes washed' - 'Wine' - 'Parties' - &c, &c. Now, when I get to Madeira, I will be put in a garden so thickly planted, that everything shall be shut out, particularly Capt. Basil Hall's 'element of which one never tires'; I will rejoice in being once more on the solid, solid earth; I will endeavour to get to some place so still, so retired, so perfectly free from sights, that I might say with truth - A Convent, ev'n a hermit's cell, Would break the silence of this dell. After that - the sea again, with fresh spirits, renewed energy, and revived health. Meanwhile, nearly a calm tries the patience and wastes time; - yet is the moonlit sea like a vast plain studded with glow worms; and the noonday sea like lapis lazuli, flecked with silver.

* * *

Tragically, Maria Jane's promising life and career were cut short, dying of cholera in Poona less than 12 months after leaving England on 3 October 1833. However, her talent, sense of humour and zest for adventure, were fortunately captured in these descriptions of the material realities of her passage to India. According to her sister Geraldine, the opportunity for Maria Jane's work to reach a wider audience was severely handicapped by William's lack of response to her attempts to collect Maria Jane's unpublished writings after her death. William re-married in 1835 to Elizabeth Catherine Carr, eldest daughter of the Right Reverend Thomas Carr and reportedly maintained little interest in Maria Jane's work. In an effort to belatedly right this historical wrong, I hope this article finds an appreciative audience.

Tracing the Rev William Kew Fletcher's family prior to and after his appointment to the HEIC, unfortunately remains incomplete and any information would be gratefully received.



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'Oceanides', twelve poems published by the <i>Athenaeum</i> between 29 Dec 1832 and 28 Dec 1833. They can also be found on the University of Maryland's website 'Romantic Circles' at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/oceanides
Numerous poems and essays published in annuals such as the <i>Forget-me-not</i> , the <i>Literary Souvenir</i> , the <i>Amulet</i> , and the <i>Juvenile Forget-me-not</i> |

Rebecca Dorin, April 1813-July 1857: a Heroine of the Mutiny

By Brenda M Cook

In this year when we remember the Mutiny, it seems worth telling the story of an ordinary woman who lived and died in extraordinary circumstances. It is not this writer who calls her 'a real heroine'. The honorific was bestowed on her by someone who had once known her and remembered her with affection fifty years later. In 1906, the *Recollections of a Lucknow Veteran* (Longmans) by Major-General J Ruggles was published as part of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Mutiny. Ruggles had been a young subaltern during the siege. Following a clue on a Welsh tombstone – of which more later – I was searching for references to members of the Dorin family, when I came across the following passage (p59):

Readers will remember the name of Mrs Doran [sic], one of our Seetapore [Sitapur] refugees, whose husband was killed before her eyes, being shot by the rebels with his own rifle, she escaping dressed as a native woman. Well, this poor lady was herself shot dead by a matchlock ball, after it had traversed two suites of rooms, reaching her in a standing position. Her death was greatly deplored, as she had been so helpful to all around her. A real heroine, this woman!

Additionally, Christopher Hibbert in his *The great mutiny: India 1857* (Allen Lane, 1978) adds the poignant detail: 'Mrs Dorin ... was shot dead while getting into bed.' I had no doubt that this was a reference to one of 'my' family in spite of the misspelling of her surname, and was as delighted to find such a warm a tribute as I was dismayed at the manner of her death. I set out to discover which Mrs Dorin this was and how she had found herself at Lucknow. After the usual trawl through IGI (International Genealogical Index), the EIC Registers and similar reference books, and recently the invaluable FIBIS database I was able to piece together the following story.

Rebecca was born in London, the second child and younger daughter of Clement Johnson and his second wife. Clement Johnson had been born in Ringwood in Hampshire in the 1780s; by 1805 he was in London with his young wife, Maria, and on 15 June 1806 their daughter Lavinia was baptised at the church of St Luke, Old Street, Finsbury. Unhappily, before the year was out both mother and child must have been dead, since there is no further trace of them, and on 10 May 1807 Clement married for the second time, also at St Luke's which was presumably his parish church, to Sarah Beedle, the nineteen year-old daughter of Joseph and Anne Beedle of that parish. Three children followed in due order. Sarah – later records show her full name to have been Sarah Anne, named for both her mother and her maternal grandmother - baptised at St Leonard's, Shoreditch on 12 August 1811; Rebecca (our heroine) baptised in St Gregory-by-St Paul on 2 May 1813; and finally a son, Arthur William also baptised in St Leonard's Shoreditch on 13 Nov 1814. The son was presumably named for Clement's brother, Arthur, who had been an officer in the Royal Navy.

I have not traced Clement Johnson's occupation in London, but sometime between 1814 and 1819, he went out to Bengal to be an indigo planter and he took his wife and children with him. At least one of his brothers, Arthur the former Naval Officer, was an indigo planter and so probably was at least one other relative. At this time, before the invention of chemical dyes, it was a profitable trade. Indigo was then one of the most widely used dyes in the western world: the original colour of blue jeans. Opinions about indigo planters vary. In her memoirs, Harriet Tytler calls them 'the most hospitable of men' and they probably were, starved for European company on their lonely plantations; but for the same reasons of isolation, they also had a reputation for hard drinking and debauchery; and they were looked down upon by the snobbish members of the East India Company. Additionally they were resented and despised by the native Indians not only because of the above-mentioned debauchery but also because the cultivation and harvesting of the indigo bulb ran counter to the time-honoured agricultural practices of India and took land which had been traditionally farmed for subsistence. The play *The Blue Devil* (OUP, 1992) by A and B. G. Rao gives a devastating, if biased, account of these days. Since Clement had his wife and three young children with him, it is to be hoped that his conduct was not so extreme.

Clement Johnson is listed in the East India Company Directory as 'Indigo Planter, Krishnagar' [Bengal] for the years between 1819 and 1824; for 1823 and 1824 he is also listed as a merchant. Perhaps he was initially successful, but disaster struck. On 1 February 1824 he drew up his will. It was a hasty, home-made document showing all the signs of having been written by a sick and frightened man:

Marajpore [Maharajganj ?] 1st Feby 1824. I hereby declare myself to be in a sound state of mind and as we at no time know when we may be called to leave this world I wish to will and bequeath the whole of my property to Mrs Sarah Johnson (my lawful wife) of whatever sort or kind it may be at my death also I leave her my Executrix and my brother A. Johnson Esq Executor and in case of her (Mrs Johnson's) Death the property to be equally divided among my children. signed: C. Johnson

Less than six weeks later, Clement died at Marajpore on 13 April 1824. Sarah was left with three small children to bring up alone. At the time of their father's death, Sarah Anne was 12, Rebecca nine and Arthur William eight. It would not have been possible for a young widow to run an indigo plantation, so Sarah moved to Calcutta and in Durrumtollah Street opened 'A Public Seminary for the Instruction of Female Children'. While this school is first listed in the Calcutta Directory of 1831, it may have been in existence several years earlier, for Sarah's will was drawn up in Durrumtollah Street in January 1830. The school was probably for the daughters of Europeans of the middling sort who could not afford to send their children back to England for their education, and possibly for Anglo-Indians who aspired to a European life-style. It was also a sensible way for Sarah to support herself and supervise her daughters' upbringing at the same time.

European women of decent family were in short supply in India so it is not surprising that both Sarah Anne and Rebecca married young, although Rebecca seems to have beaten her elder sister to it in a whirlwind romance:

1st December 1830. Marriage of Rebecca Johnson (Mother: Sarah Johnson) in Fort William Cathedral [Calcutta] to John Terry Harwood, H[onorable] C[ompany] Cadet. Under age. (Youngest daughter of Clement Johnson of Colgong, Bihar & Orissa, Indigo Planter.)

John Harwood had only arrived in Calcutta in the May of that year, so it must have been a brief courtship. He was the eldest son of Charles and Elizabeth Harwood of Overton in Hampshire and had been baptised at Deane in Hampshire on 14 April 1811. Since both the Harwoods and the Johnsons were Hampshire landed gentry it is likely that the families knew each other and John may have come armed with an introduction. He was only nineteen at the time of his marriage, but as a Cadet in the army of the East India Company he might be presumed to have a good career ahead of him, and a Company Pension for his widow if he should die in Company Service. According to his Hodson record¹, John had matriculated at Oriel College Oxford in 1829 but changed his mind about a university career, which at that period would almost inevitably have led to him being ordained a clergyman in the Church of England, and became a Cadet in the East India Company's army instead. He arrived in Calcutta in May, and on 7 June 1830 was attached as an Ensign (then the lowest rank of army officer) to the 53rd Bengal Native Infantry. The day after his wedding, he was attached to the 55th B.N.I.; by August 1832 he was with the 63rd B.N.I.; and in August 1833 he was with the 68th B.N.I. With hindsight this looks highly suspicious. Was John Harwood the kind of young officer no regiment wanted to keep?

Meanwhile his wife had given birth to a baby. Eliza Sarah Harwood (named as her aunt had been after both of her grandmothers) was born 30 December 1831, and baptised at Sericole (near Jessore), Bengal on 29 February 1832. A James Johnson was living there at that time so it would seem that Rebecca had gone to a kinsman's for her baby's baptism. It is possible that little Eliza Sarah did not survive infancy. If so, Rebecca's troubles were only just beginning. However individually tragic, the death of a small child was not an uncommon experience for a young mother in India. In August 1833 John Harwood was transferred to yet another regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry, this time the 68th who were stationed at Mhow, a very large army cantonment in the Bengal Presidency. By now Sarah Anne and their mother had joined Rebecca. Perhaps they had all been together since the wedding – a not unusual arrangement - or perhaps the future grandmother and aunt had come to help with the coming baby. It must have been at about this time that John borrowed four thousand rupees from his mother-in-law, and she, being a prudent woman, had added to her Will a codicil dated 31 May 1834 to the effect that if John had not paid back the sum in full, it was to be deducted from Rebecca's share of her estate. What John wanted such a large sum for is not specified but it is possible that he said he wanted it to purchase his lieutenancy, and he was indeed promoted to lieutenant on 30 May 1836.

Meanwhile Sarah Anne had caught the eye of one of John Harwood's brother officers, and on 20 May 1835 she married Lieutenant Edward Pinkard Bryant also of the 68th B.N.I. Two sisters, two army officer husbands, but the contrast could not be more dramatic: in the summer of 1836 Edward Pinkard Bryant was made Adjutant; but John Terry Harwood was

¹ V C P Hodson, *List of the Officers of the Bengal Army, 1758-1834* (Constable, 1927-47)

court martialled. It is worth transcribing in full this account in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* for January-April 1837 (Part 2, p 127):-

CALCUTTA
COURTS-MARTIAL
ENSIGN J.T. HARWOOD

Head-Quarters, Aug 30, 1836 - At a general court-martial, assembled at Mhow on the 15th July, 1836, Ens. J.T. Harwood, of the 68th N.I. was arraigned on the following charges; viz.

Charge. - "For unofficer-like conduct, and disobedience of repeated general orders, in having borrowed from Subadar Major² Sewraj Sing, of the same regiment, several sums of money, amounting with interest to Sonat³ Rs 624; for which sum Ens. Harwood gave a note of hand, dated Mhow, 26th March, 1835, witnessed by Serg.-major Hume, of the same regiment, promising to pay the said sum of 624 R.s by monthly instalments of 100 Rs.: on account of which instalments, sums amounting to Rs. 145 14 annas only have been paid by Ens. Harwood.

Additional Charges: - 1st. "With conduct dishonourable and disgraceful to the character of an officer and gentleman, in having, whilst in charge of the 5th comp. 68th regt. on the 31st March 1835, cancelled two Sepoys' family remittance drafts, No. 128, dated 17th of March, 1835, on the Collector of Cawnpore, for Sonat Rs. 45: and No. 57 dated 17th March, 1835, on the Collector of Shahabad, for Sonat Rs. 52.4.0, without the knowledge or authority of the remitters; and not having subsequently renewed these drafts, nor refunded the money to the Sepoys; thereby defrauding Bekharee Chowbay, Sepoy, 5th comp. Radhay Sing, Sepoy, 5th comp. and others, to the above amounts.

2d. "For falsely stating in a letter, dated 11th April, 1836, to the address of Capt. Des Voeux, in charge of the military chest at Mhow, that the above transaction took place early in Feb. 1835; and that the amount of the above-mentioned drafts had been returned to the military chest office for fresh drafts."

Upon which charges the Court came to the following decisions:

Finding. – "That the prisoner Ens. John Terry Harwood, of the 68th N.I. is

"Of the original charge, guilty.

"Of the 1st additional charge, guilty.

"Of the 2d additional charge, guilty.

Sentence - "The court having found the prisoner guilty of the charges preferred against him, do sentence him, Ens J.T. Harwood, to be dismissed the service."

"Approved.

"(Signed) H. Fane, Gen.

"Com. in Chief, E. Indies."

Ens. Harwood to be struck off the strength of the 68th N.I. from the date of this order being made known to him, which the commanding officer of the corps will report especially to the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief, and to the Adjutant General of the army.

² The highest rank that a native Indian could attain in the East India Company's army.

³ The rupee was the basic currency of India but the exchange rate varied in different cities. The Sonat Rupee was based at Calcutta and was the most stable. Its value was roughly 2 shillings (10p).

Embezzling the money of the men under one's command is a peculiarly despicable act. It is not surprising that John was ignominiously discharged from the East India Company's army. Whatever had led him into such a crime? Drink or women or gambling? Blackmail? The last word on the matter was noted in the *East India Register and Directory* (1837 2nd edn and again in 1838). Under 'Military Casualties' we read: Lt. John Terry Harwood, 68th N.I. dismissed the service 23rd September [1836].

The sharp-eyed will have noticed that John Terry Harwood is called an Ensign at his trial but in the intimations he is given the rank of Lieutenant. This is actually not a slip. He had been promoted to Lieutenant on May 30th 1836 but the promotion had been a regimental rank only and had not been ratified by the time his fraud came to light. At the trial he was given his original and permanent rank. What happened to him next? Who knows? John Terry Harwood vanishes from the records completely. If he had done the 'gentlemanly thing' and shot himself there would have been an account in the papers. He simply drops out, to become perhaps one more derelict Englishman in India.

But poor Rebecca. Not only would she have suffered extremes of anxiety and humiliation, and indeed if she had any inkling of what her husband had been doing she must have been distraught, but by his condemnation she would have lost her status, her income and her prospect of a pension. But possibly not her home. It is likely that Sarah, Sarah Anne and Rebecca all shared a house together with their husbands when not on duty. It must have been a painful and embarrassing time, especially those weeks between the initial sentence on John and the final ratification of it. Sarah Anne was also pregnant at the time and gave birth to a daughter on 5 February 1837. But the strain told. Just before the first anniversary of John's dishonourable discharge, Sarah died at Mhow: 16 September 1837 'Sarah Johnson widow of Clement Johnson, Indigo Planter in her 52nd year' and was buried the following day.

Sarah Johnson's will was dated 27 January 1830 and had been drawn up before her daughters married. In it she made Arthur Johnson, her brother-in-law of Bhangulpore [Bhagalpur ?], Indigo Planter; Francis Derozio of Circular Road Calcutta gentleman (a member of a very distinguished Anglo-Indian family) and Alexander Fraser of Lyons Range, Calcutta, gentleman, all trustees for her children, especially her daughters. Basically her estate was divided into three equal shares. Her son was to get his outright on reaching the age of twenty-one but the daughters' shares were to remain in trust and they were to have the income only and their husbands (if any) not to be allowed to get their hands on the capital. At this date, this was the only way to protect a woman from a spendthrift husband. In the event, all three children were over twenty-one at the time of their mother's death. Probate was granted to Arthur Johnson of Bhangulpore but residing at Lyons Range in Calcutta, Indigo Planter, on 19 December 1837.

Arthur William seems to have become an indigo planter like his father. He is listed in the Bengal & Agra Directory for 1844 as being an indigo planter at Purneah, Banda, together with other men called Johnson.

John Terry Harwood may have been drummed out of the regiment, but for whatever reason, Rebecca remained faithful to the 68th B.N.I. Her second marriage, which took place in 1850, was also to an officer in that regiment. Fourteen years had passed since her first husband had been disgraced. Did she have to wait until reliable news of John's death reached her, or had she some time after 1845 brought a court case claiming she had not heard from her husband for over seven years and could she have him declared dead? In the meantime, had she been living respectably with her sister (who had given birth to a still-born son in 1842) or had she entered into a less formal arrangement with one of the other officers in the regiment? Meanwhile, Edward had been promoted to Captain in 1844 and the Regiment had seen active service in the First Sikh War in 1845. In 1851 Edward had been promoted to Brevet Major and put on the invalid list. He finally retired in 1859 with the honorary rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, returned with Sarah-Anne to England where they lived to a ripe old age near Hastings. This must have meant a parting of the ways for the sisters, for by now Rebecca had married again.

On her second marriage certificate Rebecca described herself as a widow; possibly this was the truth, but one other statement on the certificate most certainly was not:

27 August 1850. At Meerut. Jas. A. Dorin, aged 22, bachelor, Lt. 68th regiment N.I. to Rebecca Harwood, **aged 30 [!]** –, widow, daughter of Clement Johnson. Witnesses: Capt. E. P. Bryant & Lt. A.H. Paterson.

I know a lady is permitted to lie about her age, but this is a massive whopper. In April 1850 Rebecca had celebrated (or not) her thirty-seventh birthday, but if you are marrying a young man of twenty-two perhaps a little flexibility is called for. Whether it was a genuine love match or whether she was cradle-snatching, who can say? Certainly James Augustus Dorin was, in vulgar terms, 'a catch'. He was the younger son of one of the most powerful men in Calcutta: Joseph Alexander Dorin, Financial Secretary, Accountant-General, President of the Bank of Bengal, and in 1853 member of the Governor-General's Council - rich, influential and discretely adulterous. Within the year, Rebecca had given birth to a daughter born in July 1851 in Cawnpore where the regiment was stationed at the time. Sadly, the little girl did not survive. She certainly died before the Mutiny broke out in 1857.

The events that led up to the Mutiny are various and complex, and this is not the place to discuss either the Mutiny in general or the Siege of Lucknow in particular; but one of the precipitating factors was the annexation of Oudh (or Awadh). This was an independent kingdom in the Bengal Presidency whose king scandalised the bureaucrats of Calcutta by his dissolute life-style. Not only was he a poet, he was reputed to enjoy Western-style dancing, taking the woman's part dressed in a crinoline! A scheme was hatched whereby the king appeared to have broken his treaty with the EIC and gave the 'Honourable' Company an excuse to invade. Incidentally, Lt James Dorin's father was among the hawks in Calcutta who supported this project. While the actual invasion and abdication of the king went smoothly, the reputation of the EIC was badly smirched in the eyes of many, both Europeans and Indians alike. The king had been popular with his people who viewed his debaucheries with pride. Additionally, his capital city of Lucknow had grown wealthy supplying the court with food and wine, jewels and fabrics and the skilled workmen who

crafted such things. The overthrow of the court caused an economic crisis in the city. Furthermore, Oudh had provided many of the sepoys (infantry men) for the Bengal Native Infantry, and these men had been paid extra because they were 'foreigners'. Once Oudh became part of EIC territory, this financial distinction was abolished. Not only had the EIC taken over the civil administration of Oudh, they took over its considerable armies as well, and European officers were despatched to train, discipline and lead the former royal regiments. Lt James Augustus Dorin was given the brevet rank of captain and sent to Seetapore to become one of the officers of the 10th Oudh Irregulars billeted in that town. Rebecca went with him.

The insurrection known as the Indian Mutiny (or in India as the First National Rising) broke out at Meerut on 10 May 1857. It reached Sitapur on 3 June. An early account of the main events there was published on 29 August 1957 in a letter to the *Times* from one 'NHR', quoting a friend who had survived the initial fighting, reached the illusory safety of Lucknow and had managed to get his letter out before the siege began:

The mutiny broke out [at Sitapur] on the 3d of June. A Sepoy came in the morning of that day to acquaint my friend [who was an officer in the 41st Regiment] of the determination of the soldiers to mutiny, but stated that they would not harm their officers if they would leave the place. The regiment was divided, a part being stationed about a mile and a half from the other, and as more plunder was to be had in the town itself the mutineers first attacked it. The Colonel [Birch] although warned by a friendly Sepoy, would not believe that the regiment intended to mutiny, and conducted two of the disappointed companies to the treasury, and there he and another officer were shot. The sergeant-major was also killed and one other officer wounded. The officers had received orders, of course, to remain with their men, but on hearing the firing in the town the men at once disbanded themselves, rushing there to join in the plunder. A few faithful Sepoys now implored the officers to escape, and seeing the bungalows and lines in a blaze, they left about noon in their buggies. The party consisted of 12 officers, six ladies, and as many children, with a number of the wives and children of civilians - about 50 in all. During their journey they had to avoid the high road, and were obliged to go over ravines, ploughed fields and places where no wheeled carriage could ever before have passed. The party halted for an hour only and were pursued by the mutineers, after they had satiated themselves by murdering about 50 people in the town, men, women and children; but fortunately they reached Lucknow, a distance of 50 miles, in safety, escorted by 20 Sepoys who remained faithful to them. The party were two days and a night on the road, and the heat was intense. They lost all they possessed, and escaped with only the things they had on. The station was burnt to the ground. My friend, with his wife and family, were, when he wrote, staying with a civilian at Lucknow, entirely dependent upon the kindness of a stranger not only for food but for clothing.

Some supplementary information about this party of refugees is to be found in L. E. R. Rees *A personal narrative of the Siege of Lucknow* (Longman, 1858):

From Seetapore we had no news; and a party of the Volunteers Cavalry were therefore despatched by Sir Henry [Lawrence] to escort the ladies of that station in. They met them

- thirty officers and ladies - tired, weary, hungry and sunburnt, and with blistered feet and hands at a place called Bukshee Ka Talao not far from cantonments which we were still keeping as a piquet.(p. 50).

Though the Dorins were not in this party, this account does give a vivid picture of the prevailing conditions. John Ruggles, whose enthusiastic praise of Rebecca opened this article, gives one account of their fate.

I may state here what we heard, but not for some time after, of what occurred in the civil lines and other parts of Seetapore ... Captain Doran [sic] commanding one of the Irregular regiments managed to escape with his wife into the country, but they had not gone far before they were overtaken. Captain Doran had a double-barrelled gun in his hand. The rebels swore to preserve both his and his wife's life if he would give up the gun. He hesitated for a long time, and at last surrendered it. They instantly shot him with it, but let his wife go. She, poor woman, went back to their house and was concealed by her *ayah* (her Indian maid) and by her help succeeded at last in reaching the Residency [at Lucknow], disguised as a native woman, being obliged to hide for a fortnight in a village but having been kindly treated en route. Mrs Doran [sic] and Lieutenant Burnes were the only ones of the 10th Regiment who escaped with their lives from Seetapore.

Ruggles was writing long after the event and was not an eye-witness. Possibly he had not even heard the story from Rebecca herself. A more immediate but hitherto unpublished account occurs in the House of Lords transcripts of the case of Dorin v Dorin of 1873 arising from a dispute over Joseph Alexander Dorin's will, in which it became necessary to establish that his younger son was indeed dead, and dead without issue. Had the little daughter of James and Rebecca survived infancy, she would surely have been mentioned at this juncture. Because of the nature of James Augustus's end, there was no official record of his death. However, his step-mother was able to produce the following letter as evidence. (Because this is an article for a genealogists' magazine, I have attempted to identify all the other people named in the letter. In common with much nineteenth century correspondence, people are seldom referred to by their personal names.)

Mrs Margaret Dorin (James's step-mother) said: 'I have found among the papers of my late husband [Joseph Alexander Dorin] a letter dated [from] Calcutta, no.109 Old China Bazar Street 6th April 1858 from E.C.[sic] Dudman',⁴ which read:

I beg to enclose two letters in original for your perusal. [*I believe these two letters from Rebecca were destroyed before 1873, otherwise they would presumably have made even more reliable evidence for the death of James Augustus.*] The writer was the lady of the late Captain J. Dorin who commanded the 9th local regiment at Seetapoor [*actually it was the 10th but Dudman was a civilian*] in Oudh & she told me that Captain Dorin was a

⁴ Edward Tetley Dudman is therefore writing almost a year after the events he witnessed. The son of an indigo factor, he had been born at Murshidabad in January 1828. The E Dudman living in Bhagalpur in 1831 at the same time as Arthur Johnson, Clement's brother, was almost certainly his father, also Edward, and an employee or associate of Rebecca's uncle. Therefore Rebecca and Edward Tetley had probably known each other before they met in Seetapore.

relative of yours. [*This is a tactful understatement. Dudman must have known he was writing to James' father.*] I was at Seetapoor at the time the mutiny took place & witnessed a spectacle that I can hardly describe. Men women & children were cut down & shot in a most deliberate manner. The accompanying extract from a narrative which I have written from memory will shew how the outbreak commenced, what caused it & what were the consequences.

Captain Dorin had made his escape & was with Mrs Dorin in the jungles across the stream about a mile away from the enemy when a sepoy of his own regiment, a man that he was very fond of, joined him. This villain, while speaking to his master most feelingly, took him unawares & cut him down with a sword. Mrs Dorin herself would have shared the same fate but the wretch spared her life contenting himself by depriving her of the little money and valuables she possessed. Mrs Dorin remained hid in the jungle for about a week, fed by the well disposed zemindar⁵ of that place. I heard of her being in the forest and as I was afraid the enemy would find out her hiding place being too near to them, I went to her at the risk of my life and brought her to my camp which was composed of my family (consisting of a mother [*Louisa Elizabeth Dudman née Tetley*], mother-in-law [*Mrs Alexander Rennick*], wife [*Eliza Tetley née Rennick*. *They had married at Agra 10 December 1849*], and four children [*Two of the children were to die during the siege of Lucknow but Robert H. Dudman and Augustus G. Dudman survived to 1876 and 1895 respectively.*] & some other women and children refugees whom I had gathered together from the forest.

I endeavoured to make her as comfortable as I could & at last succeeded in bringing her with the rest (some 20 souls) to Lucknow. We arrived at Lucknow on the evening of the 28th June. On the morning of the 30th the 'Chinhut' battle which ended so disastrously came off and from that day till relieved by Sir Colin Campbell we remained besieged in momentary dread of our lives.

In other words, the Dudman party only just made it to Lucknow in time. After the abortive sortie he refers to, the siege began in earnest and no more refugees could have reached the European quarter alive.

Rebecca's father-in-law was not the only person to whom Dudman had given an account of the events that had involved him, and he provided different details relevant to different people. Captain G. Hutchinson of the Bengal Engineers and Military Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Oudh published his *Narrative of the Mutinies in Oude, compiled from authentic records* (1859):

The following officers have supplied valuable information - Mr E. Dudman, late [of the] Setapore Deputy Commissioner's Office ... 'Another party, consisting of Mrs Dorin, widow of Lieutenant Dorin, 10th Oude Irregular Infantry; Mr Dudman, his wife, mother, mother-in-law, and four children; Mr Morgan and wife; Mrs Horan and five children; Mrs Keough, widow of Sergeant Keough, 9th Oude Irregular Infantry, and child; Mr Birch son of Colonel Birch commanding at Setapore, Miss Birch, daughter of ditto; and Mrs Ward, all reached

⁵ A small landowner.

Lucknow on the 28th June having been protected by a zemindar of Ramkote, who was liberally rewarded by Sir Henry Lawrence.

It will be noted that Rebecca, in view of her status as the widow of an army officer in one of the E.I.C.'s regiments (and possibly also because they knew she was Joseph Alexander Dorin's daughter-in-law) was listed first in order of precedence. Once the refugees had arrived in Lucknow the same social distinctions were observed when billeting arrangements were made. Rebecca was invited to stay at the house of Martin Gubbins, one of the most colourful characters of the siege. A Haileybury old boy, Gubbins had not only been Financial Commissioner of Oudh, he had been Intelligence Officer as well. One of the most senior of the Bengal Civil Servants in Lucknow and occupying a fine house that became part of the defences during the siege, he was one of the few Europeans who had no illusions about what was likely to happen. Accordingly he had fortified his house on his own initiative and stocked up with food and drink. As part of his defences, he had 'sandbagged' vulnerable windows with the books from his library, thus sacrificing a collection of priceless Indian manuscripts that he had lovingly collected over the years. But even that was not enough ...

from the 1st to the 20th of July, [the mutineers] kept up a terrific and incessant fire day and night, not less than eight thousand men, and probably a larger number, firing at one time into the defenders' position. Their fire was very effective ... Their shells penetrated into places before considered absolutely secure. Many of the garrison succumbed to this incessant rain of projectiles. Mrs Dorin was killed in an inner room of Mr Gubbins' House.⁶

Gubbins himself described the event, which he states occurred on 22 July, as follows:

Mrs Dorin ... occupied a room on the north side of the upper story of the house. During the day she was killed by a matchlock ball, which, entering by a window on the south, had traversed two suites of apartments before it reached that in which she was standing. She had rendered herself very useful by her kindness and attention to everyone, and was much regretted.⁷

Another account of Gubbins's house and Rebecca's death comes in the 'descriptive notice' of the drawing of the house included in Clifford Henry Meham's *Sketches and Incidents of the Siege of Lucknow* (see cover illustration). The notice is by George Couper who, as Secretary and ADC to Sir Henry Lawrence, and subsequently to Sir John Inglis and Sir James Outram throughout the siege, is an authoritative witness:

It was a critical and important position, and was heavily cannonaded by the enemy, as its ruined condition testifies. The garden all round it too was commanded by houses from which the insurgents kept up a very destructive fire of musketry...The house itself was no less exposed; for in one of its most sheltered rooms, Mrs. Dorin, a poor lady who had escaped from the horrors of Seetapore, and reached Lucknow in a native dress, was shot dead on the spot.

⁶ Kaye & Malleson's *History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, vol. 3 (W H Allen, 1893), p300.

⁷ Martin Richard Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh and of the Siege of the Lucknow Residency* (London, 1858), p228.

Poor Rebecca, to have come so far, endured so much and to die by a fluke; yet when reading accounts of the victims and survivors of the Mutiny, one is struck again and again how often arbitrary circumstances made the difference between life and death. So too it seems did personal character. Many of those who survived did so because, like Rebecca, individual friends or servants loved them enough to risk their own lives to rescue or conceal them.

And there is an unresolved discrepancy in these accounts. How did James Augustus die? Was he shot with his own gun or was he cut down with a sword? Or both? Did the shot simply disable him so that he was actually hacked to death? And was Rebecca raped as well as robbed? This latter topic seems covered by a conspiracy of silence in contemporary accounts. Possibly the fact that James Augustus was fool enough to surrender his weapon was omitted from Dudman's letter to spare his father's feelings; probably Dudman also omits the matter of Rebecca's disguise for the same reason: this behaviour might well have shocked a senior bureaucrat. I detect a certain fastidious distaste in the expression 'a poor lady who had escaped from the horrors of Seetapore, and *reached Lucknow in a native dress*' employed by Couper.

James Augustus had no burial; Rebecca would have been hastily interred in a communal grave within the besieged area. A tablet commemorating James and his fellow officers was put up in St Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta. When Joseph Alexander Dorin's first wife, Anna, died in 1863 he erected a splendid marble obelisk over her grave in Mathern Road Cemetery, Chepstow. Sometime later, commemorations of the family members who died in far-off India were added to the sides, either by old Joseph himself, or more likely by his grandson, Arthur Frederic Loch Dorin. Probably none of them had ever met Rebecca, they did not know her age (she was 44) or even the exact day of her death, but to them she was family just the same:

IN MEMORY OF	TO THE MEMORY
LIEUT JAMES AUGUSTUS DORIN	OF
OF THE 68 TH REGT. NATIVE INFANTRY,	LIEUT JAMES AUGUSTUS DORIN
WHO DIED DURING THE MUTINY OF	OF THE 68 TH REG.
THE NATIVE TROOPS AND SUBSEQUENT	BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY
OPERATIONS FROM 1857 TO 1859; SOME	AND COMMANDING
ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE; SOME BY THE	THE 10 th REG OUDE LOCAL INFANTRY
HANDS OF THEIR OWN FOLLOWERS; OTHERS	WHO PERISHED DURING THE INDIAN MUTINY
FROM DISEASE; ALL DOING THEIR DUTY.	AT SEETAPORE IN OUDE
THIS MONUMENT HAS BEEN ERECTED	IN JUNE 1857
BY THEIR FELLOW OFFICERS	AGED 29 YEARS

	ALSO OF HIS WIFE
	MRS REBECCA DORIN
	WHO ESCAPING FROM SEETAPORE
	INTO LUCKNOW
	WAS KILLED BY A CHANCE MUSKET SHOT
	DURING THE HEROIC DEFENCE
	OF THAT RESIDENCY
	BY THE BRITISH GARRISON
	IN THE MONTH OF JULY 1857

The Defence of Lucknow: letter from Lt Clifford Henry Mecham

Transcript made on 3 June 2007 by Sylvia Murphy by applying Optical Character Recognition to a scan of a 25 page typescript copy of the original provided by Michael J Mecham, on behalf of the Mecham family of Australia. We are grateful to them both for allowing us to publish it.

Clifford Henry Mecham (1832-65) was baptised at Melcombe Regis in Dorset, the son of George and Harriett Mecham. His application papers to join the Madras Army in 1849 state that he received a 'mathematical' education at Cheltenham College, and that his father was by that time a retired Captain of the 3rd Dragoon Guards living at St Helen's, Jersey. He served in the 52nd and 27th Native Infantry. In February 1856 he became Adjutant of the 7th Oudh Irregular Infantry. He served throughout the siege of Lucknow until its relief by Sir Colin Campbell in late November 1857. He then served with the 1st Madras Fusiliers defending the Alambagh position about six miles outside Lucknow, and subsequently with Hodson's Horse in further operations at Lucknow until its final re-capture from the rebels. The remainder of his career was spent with various cavalry regiments, sometimes as Commandant, until it was cut short by his early death on 15 September 1865 having reached the substantive rank of Captain. (IOR: L/MIL/9/220, ff342-45; article by John Fraser in Journal of the Army Historical Society, vol.LX, Autumn 1982).

He is noted for his Sketches and Incidents of the Siege of Lucknow one of which is on our cover.

Camp Alum Bagh, Dec 18th 1857

My dearest Mother,

I commenced to-day my promised letter, purposing to detail therein to the best of my memory, the many and I may fairly say terrible adventures of my late life, but without a journal, or data of any description to refer to, save my own memory, it must be allowed the task is one of no small magnitude, and were it not that I knew for certain, that a detail of my own personal adventures will be far more valued by you, than any general account (one or two of which will shortly be published on the subject) I would fain bury the whole in oblivion, as indeed would almost everyone who has witnessed and undergone the horrors of the late siege, which appears to me like a terrible dream from which one has suddenly awoke, so much so that at times, I feel inclined to argue with myself whether the whole can really be true, or not, so suddenly did the storm (the approach of which, till it burst over our heads, not a soul had the most remote idea of) gather and overwhelm us.

He continues that, on returning from a brief shooting holiday in April, he found his own regiment (stationed in cantonments outside Lucknow) in a mutinous state of mind. It was in fact the first to mutiny in the Lucknow area. He recounts at length how open mutiny developed, and the efforts which he and fellow officers, at great danger to themselves, made to persuade the men to return to their duty. The regiment was eventually disarmed by the aid of troops sent by Sir Henry Lawrence from Lucknow, and subsequently those most implicated in raising the mutiny (including all but one of the native officers, 60 NCOs, and 100 men) were dismissed at a parade by Sir Henry in person ...

in the presence of the other Irregular corps assembled for the purpose. A long speech was made to them, and rewards both in money and promotion awarded to all who had stood by us, or shown an inclination to do so, during the mutiny. Their arms and accoutrements

were then returned^{*} to them, and we once more found ourselves in command of a Regiment instead of a rabble!

He then recounts events leading up to the siege. For example,

Several alarms now took place in Cantonments, and one night it was reported that the regiments were rising and had commenced firing cantonments. This caused an immediate flight of all the poor women and children into the Residency Bungalow, round which the European guns were placed. The alarm took place in the middle of the night, and the flight being a precipitate one, the ladies were seen in every stage of *déshabille*. A similar occurrence happened several times, and induced Sir H. to order all the women and children to vacate cantonments and proceed to the Residency in the city, where preparations had been commenced already for the siege.

The Native Regiments in the cantonments finally mutinied on the night of 30/31 May. His own was stationed at an outpost (the Daulat Khana palace) and for the moment remained firm. He briefly describes the effort to create a defensible position based on the Residency [see map on p28]. ...

in this position was enclosed an area of about two square miles, in which were included all the buildings belonging thereto, together with numerous others round about, which we connected together with breast-works and walls so as to combine the position as much as possible, which although on higher ground was completely commanded on all sides by buildings and mosques etc., a fact which we afterwards painfully experienced, and the work of demolishing which was incomplete when the siege came so suddenly upon us. All our dawks [*postal service*] and communication with the rest of the world was long before this period stopped, and except by *cossid* [*a courier or running messenger*] we seldom received any news. Cawnpore, however, we knew had gone, and the poor garrison closely beleaguered. Heavy firing was continually heard in that direction, and an occasional *cossid* made his appearance, bearing imploring letters from Sir Hugh Wheeler for assistance. A council of war was one day held, and it was determined to send three companies of H.M. 32nd to reinforce him! Fortunately however, for us Sir Henry most resolutely put his veto against so insane a project, for had they gone we must inevitably have perished, while they could not possibly have afforded the slightest help to the poor Cawnpore garrison, whom it was out of the range of possibility to assist. Conceive such a painful state to be in, knowing full well the awful extremity they were in, and utterly powerless to offer the slightest aid!

The siege finally began on 30 June following the rout of a force sent from Lucknow to attack rebel sepoys gathering at Chinhut. Meham was still at the Daulat Khana palace and suffering from fever. On the news of Chinhut, his regiment deserted and he had to flee to the Machchi Bhavan fort which it had been hoped to hold besides the Residency.

At 12 o'clock next day a signal was made to us from the Residency (to communicate with which we had erected a Semaphore) to the effect that we were that night at 12 o'clock to blow up the magazine, spike all the heavy ordnance, and destroying to the best of our power all our shot, shell and ammunition, evacuate the place and retreat into the

* Underlinings in original.

Residency. ... Providentially the fever left me immediately after entering the fort, and I had now only to battle with that extreme prostration, which it leaves, which, however, I so far succeeded in overcoming as to be able to crawl about a little. At the appointed hour all having been got ready we formed in order of march, fully expecting to have to fight every inch of the road, and having seated myself on a gun limber being too weak to ride, the gates were opened, and out we sallied in the greatest silence, which had also accompanied all our preparations. And the road being gained, we advanced at a brisk pace towards the Residency, the guns there covering our retreat and firing over our heads as we advanced. Providentially not a shot was fired at us, and we gained the position without the loss of a man, which proved that the enemy had not the least idea of our intention, as had they only resisted us numbers must inevitably have fallen before the desired goal was attained.

The enemy during the first few days of the siege confined the severity of their fire to the day, the night being principally employed by them in sacking the city, and as good fortune would have it, they were busy in this operation when our retreat was effected, which accounts for our not having been molested. We had only just gained the position [*i.e. the Residency entrenchment*] when the magazine [*at the fort just abandoned*] exploded, shaking the whole city and filling the sky with dust and smoke, as you may conceive when I tell you that some 300 barrels of powder together with stores of ammunition exploded. On this movement being successfully carried out depended the safety of the whole garrison, as had we been annihilated (which, if the enemy been aware of our intentions, they would have had little difficulty in doing) the garrison would have been so reduced as to have rendered their holding out as long as we did an impossibility. But, by God's blessing, all was managed capitally and the whole completed with perfect success. The gates of our position were now closed (after our rear had entered), and doomed not to be opened again till our deliverers were at hand, and a period of misery and suffering, which it had been ordained by Providence that we should undergo, had been completed.

At daybreak the next morning the enemy besieged us most desperately and closely bringing their artillery to bear on all the houses in our position, into which round shot and shell crashed with deadly effect, and a perfect rain of bullets showered on every part of the position. I tried in vain to overcome the prostration I was suffering from, which though considerably better would not yet enable me to proceed to duty. For the first few days, therefore I was laid up in a room next to Sir Henry Lawrence where I was lying when the shell which caused his lamented death crashed through the partition wall and mortally wounded poor Sir Henry, as he lay on his bed. The noise it made of course was tremendous, and the dust so great that nothing was to be seen in the room till the smoke cleared away, when Sir Henry was found on the floor, with his right leg almost severed from his body at the hip joint, which was completely smashed. In company with several others, I rushed into the room, and assisted in carrying him out. Never shall I forget the scene as long as ever I live! Poor man! He exclaimed at once, though in the most intense agony that he was mortally wounded, and desiring that all the head men might be sent for, appointed poor Major Banks (destined shortly after to meet a similar fate) to succeed him, and addressing a few words to all around him, was carried away to the hospital. Here was

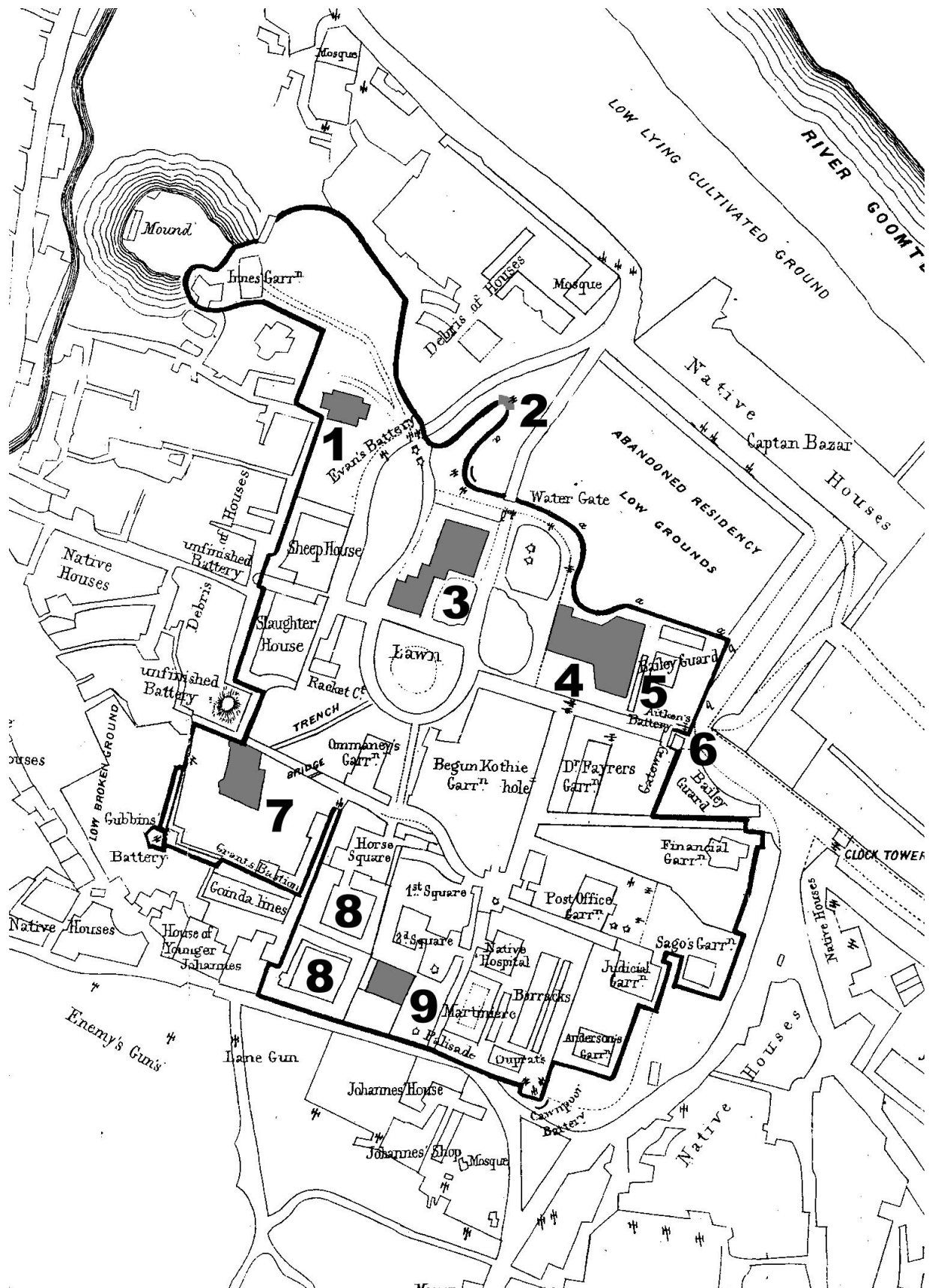
indeed a blow! Our head man gone the first day. The most profound melancholy seized the whole garrison on hearing of it, and he died the second day after receiving the wound, suffering the most fearful agony the whole time.

Finding myself rapidly getting back my strength, in two days I proceeded to duty, and had assigned me a post in the rear of the position¹, at which I remained throughout the entire siege. The enemy daily increased in numbers around us, and daily opened guns from fresh positions, pouring in a perfect hailstorm of bullets on all parts of the garrison. Never shall I forget this part of the siege, and had they only continued to press us in the extreme manner they did for the first thirty days, very few more would have seen them in possession of the place. The labour was intense, and many sunk under the sheer fatigue engendered by getting neither rest in the day nor sleep at night, but it was fighting for dear life, which fact alone enabled us to stand so much. For twelve days at a time I never had my clothes off my back, in which time they were wet through and through dozens of times, both by rain and perspiration, for to add to our miseries the rains set in with fury immediately on our being made prisoners, and not an atom of rest could be taken except snatches of sleep, from which we were invariably roused up, ere we had succeeded in getting a few winks, by alarms. Our casualty list increased daily, and cholera made its woeful appearance to swell the list. Numerous desertions took place every day from among the native portion of the garrison, and every circumstance seemed to be against us, though every man felt it his bounden duty to keep his thoughts to himself and make the best of matters, notwithstanding the black prospect one could not fail to see before one. Fortunately at this crisis we had abundance of provisions and spirits, without which it would have been physically impossible to have stood what we did. I used on an average to drink some half dozen wine glasses of raw spirits in the course of the day, and never felt the least the worse for it, as when one was not wet through with rain, one was soaked through with perspiration. The enemy's fire was so deadly and hot that to execute any repairs was an impossibility in the daytime. Consequently we were compelled to repair our shattered defences at night, in which operation, notwithstanding the dark, lots of our poor fellows used to get knocked over, as the enemy fire was always directed to any position where the sound (ever so slight) of working was going on, which compelled us invariably to execute such with the most perfect silence possible. Owing to the suddenness with which the siege came upon us, almost all our wretched defences were incomplete, and many we were compelled to leave so throughout, though with the greatest possible difficulty we managed to complete (after a fashion) some that had been left most advanced, and connected others more imperfect together by breastworks thrown up with the greatest difficulty, and in the most imperfect manner. At first we used to fire over these, but the enemy were so close on us that numbers of our poor fellows were knocked over, which eventually compelled us to surmount the works with sandbags and boxes filled with earth, all of which had of course to

¹ He later states that it was 'in the rear face of our defence, and was a large one-storied building in the corner of a yard (the Sikh Square) with a terraced roof, round which was erected a six-foot parapet (loopholed) through which we used to fire on the enemy in the surrounding houses, from which it was only separated by a very narrow lane.' [see map].

Map of the Entrenched position at Lucknow, 1857

Based on Lt W R Moorsom's map in Martin Gubbins's book (see previous article, p22, note 7)



- 1 Church; 2 Redan battery; 3 Residency; 4 Hospital; 5 Treasury; 6 Baillie Guard Gateway;
7 Gubbins's House; 8 Sikh Square (both areas); 9 Brigade Mess.

to be done in the most intense silence at dead of night. Another labour that was at this time added to our already overtaxed exertions was burying dead cattle, numbers of which were killed daily in the garrison, and cholera having already broken out, it of course behoved us doubly to allay (to the utmost of our power) its ravages on our weak garrison. Consequently, in addition to other duties, one suddenly found oneself called upon to aid in burying carrion in a most advanced stage of decomposition, and many a time, after a hard day's work, during which one's energies were exerted in full force towards driving back our determined and fanatical enemy, has one found oneself summoned (perhaps just as one had fallen down from sheer fatigue) to assist in the above loathsome occupation.

Such, my dearest mother is a description, and but a very faint one, of what we had to undergo at this time. A more graphic one it is out of my power to give - indeed words, however well expressed, must fail in conveying an adequate idea of our excessive labours and miseries at this time. The hospital very shortly became so crammed with victims both to the enemy's fire and cholera, that the unfortunate wounded had to be stowed away in any underground or tolerably secure corner that might be found. One grave was dug at night for all, and at this period of our sufferings from 30 to 35 corpses used to be thrown into it, officers, soldiers, ladies, children, and all Europeans promiscuously. This had always all be carried out in the dark, owing to the churchyard being commanded on all sides by the enemy, so that to pass through it in the daytime was almost certain death. Forty children fell victims the first fortnight, and many poor ladies, who were all stowed away in underground cellars, notwithstanding which two were shot dead the first week and several wounded. Things continued in this manner getting worse and worse daily till the memorable 20th July, on which date the enemy made their most determined effort to storm the place, but by the blessing of Providence were unsuccessful. Several parties were suspicious of their mining towards us, as large bodies of them had occasionally been seen digging. The engineer officers, however, with their usual incredulity persisted that such could not be the case, as they were unable to drive galleries any length. However, they were speedily undeceived on this head, as will presently be narrated.

About eight o'clock on the above day large masses of our foe were seen pouring into position around us, and complete regiments marching across the bridges into the city. This, of course, (dead beat as we all were from our incessant labour of the previous twenty days) sufficed to brace us up for the struggle, which we then felt certain was to take place. Accordingly extra grog was served out to the whole garrison, and I believe not a man of us differed from the general opinion of dying sooner than allowing the enemy to gain an inch of our ground. At half past nine the enemy sprung a very large mine, heavily loaded, which shook the entire position, throwing down several of the houses within our lines, and prostrating many who were near to it on their faces. The attack now commenced in furious style, the foe coming on in the smoke in strong columns, which were suddenly stopped short in their determined advance by rounds of grape and canister being rained in on them from two eighteen and two nine-pounders situated in the Redan Battery, which were discharged and reloaded till the guns were so hot that to serve them any longer became an impossibility. Repulsed in that quarter, the attack then became general all round our

defences. My post was assaulted almost immediately after the explosion, but we were all ready for them, and from our loopholes poured in a continuous rattle of musketry so close that almost every shot told, notwithstanding which, as fast as one party was driven back another came on and was saluted in the same manner. The other officer and myself, who were commanding, each manned our loopholes, and we were obliged to change our muskets for fresh ones every ten minutes, as the barrels became so hot from rapid firing that it was impossible to hold them. Four poor fellows were, however, laid low by shots before twelve o'clock, received through the loopholes, and my cap was perforated by a bullet. At the above hour, after having repulsed numerous attempts and feeling ready to drop down from downright exhaustion, on they came again, and so far succeeded as to place scaling ladders against the wall of the house on the top of which we were stationed, but fortunately for us they proved to be too short, and the first scoundrel that did succeed in gaining our loopholes was bayoneted and shot through the same, which damped the spirit of the others, of whom there were at this time hordes so close under our walls that the muskets from the loopholes could not be depressed sufficiently to touch them. Accordingly it became necessary for us to mount the parapets and fire down on them, which we did with killing effect, they returning the compliment from beneath us also all round. Numbers of them shortly strewed the ground, and finding they had no chance they drew off, leaving their ladders and all their wounded, who were speedily decapitated by us. Several other attempts were made after this, but about two o'clock they began visibly to withdraw, and at three the attack ceased, though almost the usual amount of firing into our position continued.

Never shall I forget, or indeed will any man who experienced that day, how deeply grateful we felt to the Almighty on their at last withdrawing, as, had they only persisted for another hour or so, I don't think we could have prevented their getting in, which, had they only succeeded in doing at any part, the whole must inevitably have fallen. Every one of us was so completely done that I for one fell down from the intense hard day's work. Six poor fellows were killed and four wounded on my post, though the loss we inflicted on the enemy was at least ten times that number, which was proved sufficiently by the amount of bodies which thickly strewed the ground outside, where they were left to rot, causing us thereby an intolerable nuisance, for to remove them or rather, to have attempted to remove them, would have been certain death. Many a hearty shake of the hand was given that evening, and congratulations exchanged on the gallant manner in which the enemy had been driven back on all sides. Their loss that day was tremendous, as the whole of our position was, outside, covered with dead bodies, and we were afterwards told by spies that they acknowledged to 1400. Our loss was one officer killed and thirty-eight men, though our wounded were, unfortunately very numerous, many of whom afterwards died.

A description of one of these attacks must suffice for all, of which I believe there were five, though the one narrated was the most determined one. They all commenced with the explosion of one or two mines, which served as a general signal. Our eyes were now opened to their capabilities of mining, and I became particularly vigilant on that head, as my post was closer to the enemy than any part of the garrison, and he had excellent cover up

to almost the very walls. I therefore kept the greatest attention towards this point, and my exertions were amply repaid by discovering sounds of the enemy at work underground towards the Brigade Mess, a large building in the lower storey of which were numbers of women and children. I was certain on this point, and reported the same at once, when the engineer commenced a counter mine, the shaft of which, by working all night we managed to complete to 18 feet deep, when a gallery was commenced, and run to 20 feet by the next afternoon. The enemy all this time were busy at their mine, and we were entirely guided by the sound of their pick, which directed us so truly that in a few hours we ceased work, and they broke into our mine, intensely of course to their astonishment, which, unfortunately was not great enough to deter them from bolting, which they did in the most precipitate style, leaving their light burning and mining tools behind them. Possession was immediately seized of their mine, which was found to run for 30 yards in a straight direction for the above building, under which they would have arrived within another twenty-four hours. Powder was at once laid in their mine, and the whole blown up. In this instance (though I say it who perhaps ought not) I was the means of saving numerous lives, and probably the whole position, as the panic caused by such an explosion and loss of life would have been tremendous.

The day after (viz. 21st July) my good and kind friend Major Banks was shot dead through the head, leaving his poor widow and child. In him I lost a true friend, and the garrison a head which would have been of inestimable value to all. Our list of killed and wounded increased every day, and although numerous spies had been sent out, none ever returned, till one day an exception happily took place as a man came in at night with a note composed of three lines written in the Greek character, and concealed in a small quill, which was as follows: "A force has this day crossed the Ganges sufficient to crush all opposition, and by the blessing of God we hope to be with you in a few days." This news filled us with joy, and every man bent himself to his labour with a double will, animated by the hope of speedy relief. A messenger was despatched into the city, to await their arrival, and to direct them to send up the rockets as announcing to us their approach. In many nights did we strain our wearied eyes for the proposed signals, and for many evenings were we doomed to be disappointed, till at last it appeared too true that we were given up, or perhaps abandoned, the force not being able to fight its way to us. Despair fell upon the hearts of all as this terrible conviction rose before us, which was farther increased by the enemy at this time sending in spies with stories that the whole of Havelock's army had been annihilated in endeavouring to force their way to us - with the intention, of course, of intimidating the native portion of our feeble garrison, and inducing them to desert us. Every man now felt it incumbent on him to bear a cheerful face, while the almost certainty of a second Cawnpore tragedy appeared forcibly to rise before us. Not that we should ever have subjected ourselves to that fearful end, as in our position was a large powder magazine with 800 barrels of powder, and on the top of this we had all determined to stand, should we find our fate inevitable!

Still we kept on fighting day and night incessantly, no news of any description reaching us, except the enemy's reports of our relief being destroyed and no hope left! We remained in

this wretched state of despair till the 22nd of September, on which date the joyful news reached us by a spy (the same who brought us the previous note) to the effect that succour was at hand, Outram and Havelock in full march to our assistance! Oh, what intense delight was visible in every man's face the morning after this announcement was made! Excessive joy took place of the most profound despondency, which was increased by distant guns being distinctly heard the same afternoon. A cheer rang through the garrison, which came from the inmost heart of everyone, though many were still afraid to be too sanguine. The next day, however, no doubt existed on the matter, and the day after that we saw from the look-out tower our deliverers at hand, fighting their way nobly through the city, the enemy raining down on them a storm of bullets from each side of the streets, leaving their track too plainly seen by the dead bodies of our gallant fellows, with which their path was strewn! Every man who could possibly manage it crowded to the look-out tower, and strained his anxious eyes in the direction of the firing. The most painful thing to us was being totally unable to assist them, as we could not possibly have sallied out, and to have fired in that direction would of course have endangered our poor fellows as much as the enemy.

About nine o'clock that night, however, a cheer such as no description can give any idea of, a cheer never to be forgotten by those who heard it, ran through and through the garrison, filling the air and bursting from the hearts of all! Our brave deliverers were at hand, and had commenced entering our entrenchments! A general rush was made to welcome them, notwithstanding peremptory orders had been issued binding us to our respective posts. But it was in vain to expect any one to obey. Every one's heart was too overflowing to think of anything but embracing our noble fellows, and all the sick and wounded who could possibly crawl out of hospital, as also many poor ladies, joined in the general rush. The rush was made for the main entrance, viz. the Baillie Guard Gateway, which had been earthed up inside, and against which some gun tumbrils filled with earth had been driven to barricade it against the enemy. These we set hard to work to remove, with a view of letting our deliverers in, the bullets flying thick round and in the gateway itself, from which many of our poor fellows were killed, and I received one through the back of my coat. This unfortunately came from our men outside, who at first in the confusion and dark mistook our position for the enemy and being too hasty to wait the opening of the Gate, leaped the ditch and scaling the earthwork poured in through the embrasure of a gun. Poor fellows! it's wonderful how any of them ever managed to reach us, as their entrance into our entrenchments was nothing less than a headlong flight from the enemy, who were pressing close on their rear, cutting up all their wounded, and pouring a deadly shower on them the whole way up to our very walls! They had been fighting hard from 8 o'clock in the morning, and had left 600 of their number killed on their track through the city.

[The letter continues for several more pages describing events up to the eventual relief and evacuation of the besieged garrison by the Commander-in-Chief Sir Colin Campbell at the end of November. Further extracts will be published in the next issue of the Journal and the entire letter will be made available on the FIBIS website.]

The Army Rank of Conductor, and the History of an HEIC Conductor VC

By Lawrie Butler (Research Co-ordinator)

Introduction

My interest in Conductors and Sub-Conductors was first kindled by a copy of a British Ministry of Defence press release put on the India List by a member of FIBIS, Leslie James of Penang. It was obvious from this that the ranks were not peculiar to the Armies of India. I then came across a Conductor in 1793 attending a baptism of one of the ancestors of Denielle West (see my article in the previous issue of the *Journal*). Finally in researching the article 'Looking for Gunner Hurley in India' (also in the previous issue), I was so inspired by the pride shown by Malcolm Hurley Mills in his great grandfather Conductor William Hurley that I looked for photographs of Conductors and was lucky enough to find two, both of whom were Conductors in the Bengal Ordnance Dept and had been awarded Victoria Crosses in the Indian Mutiny.

The Origins of Conductors

The term 'Conductor' and the lower rank of Sub-Conductor are often queried by FIBIS members and India listers. While the rank of Conductor is relatively common in the HEIC and the Indian Army, it is not generally realised that the rank originates in England and is still in use here. Like conductors on buses and conductors of orchestras, the source of the title is the same, conductor from the Latin *conducere*, to conduct and therefore one who leads, guides or escorts. The earliest recorded mention of conductors was in a Statute of Westminster dated 1327 whereby Edward 3rd enacted that the wages of conductors (conveyors) of soldiers from the shires to the place of assembly would be no longer a charge upon the shire. In the siege of Boulogne in 1544 there were conductors of ordnance and with every train or assembly of artillery and other equipment, there were conductors. A guide book of 1776 defined 'conductors as assistants to the Commissary of the Stores, to receive or deliver out stores to the army, to attend at the magazines by turn when in garrison and to look after the ammunition wagons in the field'. In 1879, when the rank of Conductor was formally introduced into the British Army, there were 35 Conductors: sixteen from the Royal Artillery, two from the Royal Engineers and the remaining seventeen were serving with the Ordnance Store Branch of the first Army Service Corps.

Conductor William Hurley was promoted Conductor of Ordnance in 1887 and was obviously one of the earlier Conductors in the Royal Artillery. It is therefore appropriate to consider the evolution of the rank in the British Army. Practical administrative problems that had arisen with the appearance of these new ranks in the field were resolved by General Order 94 of July 1879. This specified that Conductors would fill the place of subaltern officers when required, but would not sit as members of Courts of Enquiry or Regimental Boards. They would take post on parade as officers and would salute commissioned officers; non-commissioned officers and men were to address Conductors as they would an officer, but would not salute them. A special privilege was permission to wear plain clothes

under the same conditions as laid down for officers. When their numbers were not sufficient to form a separate Mess, they were to be authorised in Queen's Regulations to be at liberty to become honorary members of Sergeants' Messes. In various other matters such as leave and widows' pensions the Conductors were to have similar conditions to those enjoyed by commissioned officers.

Today in the British Army, there are 16 Conductors in the Royal Logistics Corps (RLC) and one in the RLC Territorial Army. There have been appointments of two female Conductors. The appointment is in recognition of an individual's contribution to the life and work of the Corps and is an honorary position. Most conductors go on to commissioned status – Lt., Capt and Major. Their position in the Army has been defined as 'inferior to that of all commissioned officers and superior to that of all non-commissioned officers'. Officially they are known as Warrant Officer 1 (Conductor) or WO1(Cdr) and are addressed as 'Mr' by Officers and other WOs but as 'Sir' by NCOs and men. The Wikipedia website shows the badge of rank of a WO1(Cdr) to be the Royal Coat of Arms surrounded by a wreath within a circular red band. Elsewhere in the world, the Chief of Army in Australia has given approval for the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps to reinstate the appointment of Conductor, which had lapsed in the 1950s.

Conductors in India

Looking at the East India Register and Directory, one can get what one might call a 'bird's eye view' of the Conductors in each Presidency Army. In the 1817 issue, there is a listing of 41 Conductors of Ordnance in the Madras Army alone, giving their date of appointment and location. In 1895, there were 66 Conductors in Bengal Ordnance, 22 in Madras and 24 in Bombay Ordnance. There were Conductors (and Sub-Conductors) in the Commissariat/Transport, Public Works Dept, Barracks Dept, Military Works Dept and the Miscellaneous Dept (IML). Conductors were later promoted to various grades of Commissary (Comy) and were accorded honorary ranks: Deputy Asst Comy (Hon.Ensign/Lt), Asst Comy (Hon Lt/Capt.), Deputy Comy (Hon Capt/Major) and Commissary (Hon Maj/Lt-Col).

The web homepage¹ of the British RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps) RLC (Royal Logistics Corps) shows that pride of place is given to two Conductors of the Bengal Ordnance who were awarded the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny:

Buckley, John

Aged 43 years, English

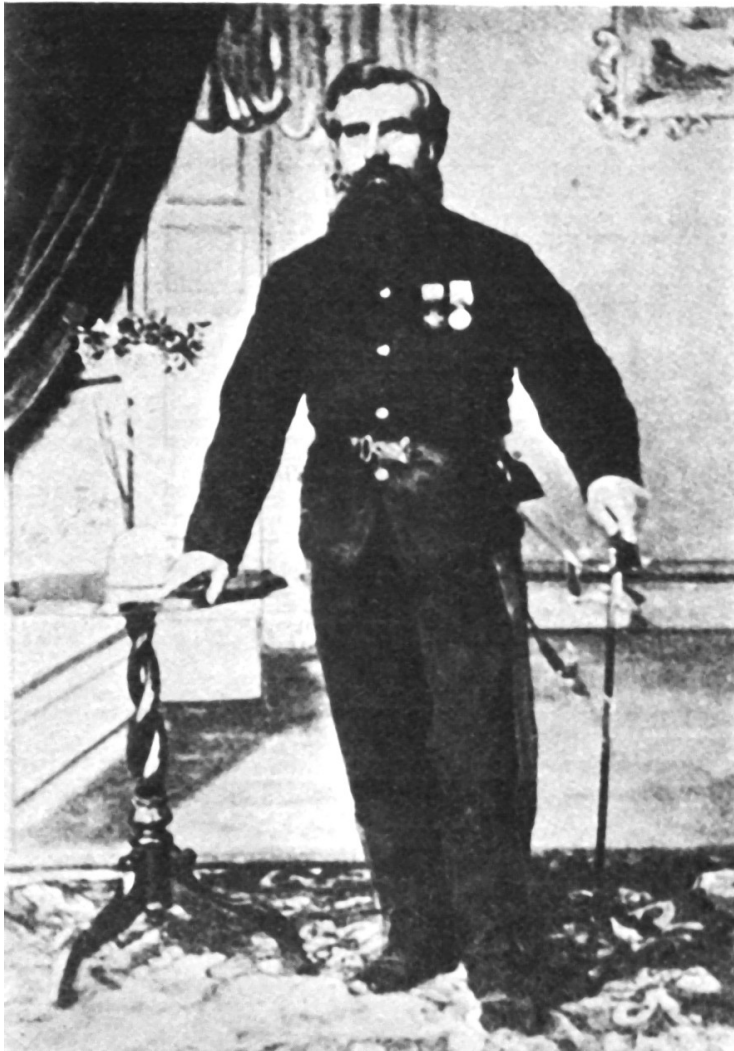
Deed – On 11 May 1857 at Delhi, Conductor Buckley was one of nine men who defended the Magazine for more than 5 hours against large numbers of mutineers, until, on the wall being scaled and there being no hope of help, they 'fired' the Magazine. Five of the gallant band (including 2 Conductors) died in the explosion and one shortly afterwards but many of the enemy were killed. Conductor Buckley was later promoted to Honorary Lieutenant.

¹ www.rlc-conductor.info

Miller, James

Aged 37 years, Scottish.

Deed – On 28 Oct 1857 at Futtehpore Sikri, near Agra, India, Conductor Miller at great personal risk, went to the assistance of a wounded officer, Lt Glubb of the late 38th Regt of Bengal Native Infantry and carried him out of action. He himself was subsequently wounded. He later achieved the rank of Honorary Lieutenant [*but see below promotion to Hon Capt*].



Conductor James Miller, VC

There was no all-ranks award for bravery until the institution of the Victoria Cross in 1856 and in 1912 the VC was made accessible to Indian Troops as well. And it was only in 1902 that it was decreed that the VC could be awarded posthumously and in 1907 six were awarded in respect of past actions.² Miller of course survived his action and his award was gazetted on 25 Feb 1862. His VC was recently sold privately at auction but its whereabouts are not known.

Since Buckley's award was one of three VCs given for the same action, and since Miller's citation in the book *The Victoria Cross*³ was not accompanied by a photograph I have directed my efforts towards finding out more about Conductor Miller. I contacted the National Army Museum (NAM), The Colindale Newspaper Archives, Firepower (The Royal Artillery Museum), the Victoria Cross &

George Cross (VC&GC) Association and The Imperial War Museum but not one was able to provide a photograph of Cdr Miller. The NAM did have a postage stamp size copy and the VC & GC Association said photographs of portraits did exist but it was only when I contacted the Indian Military & Historical Society that I was lucky enough to be provided

² Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny* (London, 2002).

³ Sir O'Moore Creagh and E M Humphris (eds) *The Victoria Cross, 1856-1920* (Polstead, J B Hayward & Son, 1985).

with a copy obtained by them from the Victoria Cross Society. From the Dress Regulations quoted below it appears that the photograph is of Cdr Miller in 'Undress' uniform.

The Dress Regulations of 1885⁴ state that the dress for all Warrant Officers other than in the Medical Dept shall be as follows:

Patrol Jacket.- Blue cloth, shape of infantry officers' with stand-up collar fastened with hooks and eyes down the front, and edged with 5" black mohair braid all round, including collar and up the openings at the sides. An Austrian knot of black cord 9 inches high on the cuffs. **For Conductors a gold shoulder-knot, fastened with a small button on each shoulder. For sub-conductors a gold twisted shoulder cord.**

Trousers.- Blue cloth, with a scarlet stripe, 1½ inches wide down side seams.

Undress Patrol Jacket.- Staff European blue serge, made similar to the cloth patrol jacket, but without any braid and **five small buttons down the front, instead of hooks and eyes.** The same shoulder ornaments.

Undress Trousers.- Staff European blue serge, with red stripes 1½ inches wide.

Field Service Uniform.- brass distinctive letters will be worn on each shoulder strap as follows: -Ordnance Dept.....O., Commissariat....C....Military Works Dept....MW. Public Works Dept...PW....Miscellaneous.... Mis.

Using the India Office Records (IOR) I have obtained the following details of Cdr Miller:

Entered service 1841⁵ Miller, James, Gunner 1st Troop, 3rd Brigade, Artillery; previously a Candle maker, from Glasgow, Lanarkshire, attested Glasgow 22 June 1841, contracted for 'unlimited' period, leaving for Bengal via 'Warrior' in 1841. His service is shown as Sergt, acting Sub-Conductor Dec 1856; Conductor 1 Oct 1857; V.C., Hon. Lt Deputy Comy Ordnance. Later Commissariat Dept as Storekeeper, Gun Carriage Factory Jan 1876. (See Casualty Roll 1 Sep 1857 below).

Further details are given in the Embarkation List:

'Warrior', embarking 31 Jul 1841; James Miller, Glasgow, for Artillery; Landed in Bengal 7 Jan 1842.⁶

and others in the Depot Embarkation Lists:

James Miller, 21 yrs old, 5' 7". Parish Glasgow, town Glasgow, County Lanark.⁷

The Casualty Long Roll of 1857 shows:

Miller James, at Agra Magazine, of fair complexion, with grey eyes and fair hair; appointed acting sub Conductor vide General Order of Commander in Chief (GOCC) of 30 Dec 1856.⁸

⁴ IOR: L/MIL/17/5/583.

⁵ IOR: L/MIL/11/125. Bengal Army European Soldiers, Alphabetical List 1840-1850.

⁶ IOR: L/MIL/9/101. Embarkation Lists Feb 1840-Nov 1847.

⁷ IOR: L/MIL/9/78. Depot Embarkation Lists.

⁸ IOR: L/MIL/10/178. Muster rolls. The use of the term 'casualty' can be confusing – while logically it implies injury or death, in the Musters it is used to report 'changes of location'; it also appears that once a man is appointed to the Sub-Conductor rank he leaves the Musters and appears in the *East India Register & Directory* or the *Indian Army List*.

In the Bengal Army List of Sep 1882 Miller's Ordnance Dept includes 39 Conductors and 22 Sub Conductors. He is shown as:

*V.C., James Miller, Hon. Capt., with rank as from 29 May 1879 and pensioned as from 10 Aug 1882 in India.*⁹

It is interesting to follow the timings of his promotions: 12 June 1874, Deputy Asst Cmy and 2 Sep 1874 Hon. Ensign; 10 Sep 1875 Hon. Lt. and Asst Comy 9 Aug 1878; finally 29 May 1879 Hon Capt and 9 Sep 1879 Deputy Comy.

The salient facts of James Miller's private life are as follows. He was born on 5 May 1820 in the parish of Glasgow.¹⁰ He first married Mary Fowles, a widow, in Calcutta on 5 Aug 1845 when he was a Sergeant in the HEIC Artillery at Dum Dum.¹¹ He later married Agnes Forsyth, 16 years old, on the 24 Oct 1849 when he was a Sergeant in the Arsenal Dept at Fort William. Two Conductors witnessed this latter marriage.¹² I have not investigated his children since my main purpose was to find out as much as possible about Cdr Miller himself. He appears to have been a good family man and meticulous in his work. It was his good fortune that when he rescued a severely wounded officer he not only escaped with his life but his action was witnessed by others and he was subsequently recommended for the Victoria Cross. It is good that 150 years after the event we can again pay homage in this anniversary year to the second of two Conductors in the HEIC to win this supreme award in 1857.

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to mention the Indian Military Historical Society whose members appear to have an unrivalled knowledge of items military and who have helped me on more than one occasion. Also I acknowledge the assistance of the Victoria Cross Society who have allowed us to use a copy of the portrait of Conductor James Miller V.C. which not only shows the V.C. but also the Indian Mutiny Medal. I have also received web-site references from the RLC Offices at Bath.

Particular thanks are also due to Col. (Retd) J D Fielden LVO MBE, Regimental Secretary of the Royal Logistics Corps Association Trust; Lt Col (Retd) I H W Bennett, author of 'Conductors were the first Warrant Officers' published in the RLC 2006 Review; and to Major (Retd) M J Dalley, Regt Editor of the RLC.

Finally, as a civilian I feel I may have tackled too much in writing about a rather complicated subject that has evolved over 200 years and more but I felt that an article on Conductors was desirable within the FIBIS Journal.

⁹ IOR: L/MIL/17/2/239.

¹⁰ www.rlc-conductor.info/Profiles.htm The James Miller VC Scrapbook.

¹¹ IOR: N/1/68/45.

¹² IOR: N/1/76/346.

Planning for Indian Independence: Mountbatten, Nehru, and V P Menon

By David Blake

Lord Mountbatten is generally credited with having solved the Indian problem, an achievement which had eluded everyone else, including Sir Stafford Cripps during his wartime mission of 1942, the Cabinet Mission of 1946 (in which Cripps was the leading protagonist), Lord Wavell (the blunt and honest, but not very flexible soldier who preceded Mountbatten as Viceroy), and the Labour Government led by Clement Attlee which in December 1946 had itself held discussions in London with the leaders of the Indian parties.

What was the Indian problem? By this date it was not a matter of persuading the British to grant independence: they had been willing to do this, at least on a 'Dominion status' basis (i.e. granting India independence in the form enjoyed by Canada or Australia), since the Cripps Mission of 1942, although it was not until much later that the Indian leaders came to accept the sincerity of this intention. The problem, as the British saw it, was to secure an agreement between the two main Indian parties on the constitution of the Indian Government(s) which would succeed the British Raj. The Indian National Congress, whose principal leaders were the idealistic Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the more hard-headed Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,¹ and which represented the majority hindu population (and in its own opinion muslims as well), insisted that the successor Government should hold sway over a united India covering the entire territory of the British Raj; but according to the Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, there were two nations in India, the hindus and the muslims, and each nation should have its own independent state. The muslim one, to be named Pakistan, should comprise the whole of the muslim-majority provinces of Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam.² This had been League policy since 1940, though it may well be that Jinnah had initially seen the Pakistan demand as a bargaining counter to obtain the maximum autonomy for the muslim areas within an Indian federation, and indeed the League had for a time given a qualified acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan for a united federal India. But events since June 1946 had convinced Jinnah that Congress would in practice operate the plan so as to deny the muslim areas real autonomy, and by 1947 Pakistan was undoubtedly the League's settled objective.³

The position facing Mountbatten on his arrival in India on 22 March 1947 therefore seemed hopelessly deadlocked between the Congress insistence on a united India and the League demand for Pakistan. Indeed, Wavell had thought the chances of an agreed solution so

¹ Mahatma Gandhi was not now, as he liked to say, 'even a two-anna member' of Congress, but of course he remained a powerful though declining influence behind the scenes.

² There are various slightly differing explanations of the term 'Pakistan'. According to Moon (1989, p1091) it was originally 'Pakstan' denoting **P**unjab, **A**fghan Province (i.e. N.W.F.P.), **K**ashmir, **S**ind and Baluchistan but this was later changed to Pakistan meaning 'land of the pure'.

³ Moon (1979). (See Sources at end for full citations.)

slim that he had proposed a breakdown plan by which the British would conduct a stage by stage withdrawal even in the absence of any agreement between the Indian parties. And this counsel of near despair ('an ignominious scuttle' as the Attlee Government saw it) was a major factor in his dismissal and Mountbatten's appointment. How was it then, that Mountbatten, less than three months later on 3 June, was able to announce an agreed plan for the transfer of power to India and Pakistan? How had he found a way out of the impasse apparently so effortlessly? And how much was he indebted to others for finding a solution?

In fact the problem was not quite as insoluble as it seemed. Indeed the basic elements of the solution were already there on Mountbatten's arrival, for both Congress and the League had come to recognise that they must make concessions. Following the London discussions of Dec 1946, Congress had passed a resolution on 6 January 1947 offering a somewhat guarded acceptance of the League interpretation of the Cabinet Mission plan. It was too guarded to convince Jinnah of its genuineness, but it also contained the declaration that there must be no compulsion of a province. Here was an implicit acceptance of the right of a province to opt out of India and by implication into a Pakistan. The concession came with a crucial rider: there could be no compulsion of a province, but neither could there be compulsion of part of a province.⁴ In other words, if the muslim-majority provinces were allowed to opt out of India, hindu-majority areas of those provinces must be allowed to opt out of Pakistan. This was code for the partition of Punjab and Bengal. There was no corresponding public concession from the League. But Jinnah though he continued stubbornly to resist the partition of Punjab and Bengal was a realist, and though he would still seek to evade it right to the very end he realised that the logic that muslim-majority areas should not be forced into India must also mean that the hindu-majority areas of Punjab and Bengal could not be forced into Pakistan. Occasionally a chink in his armour would appear. Thus, in a meeting with Wavell on 19 November 1946 he had said that he had never rejected the smaller Pakistan⁵; and in an interview with Mountbatten on 17 April 1947, arguing against any federal solution on the lines of the Cabinet Mission plan, burst out that 'I do not care how little you give me as long as you give it to me absolutely'⁶. Finally, Mountbatten was helped by the fact that the Cabinet had been induced to name a specific date, June 1948,⁷ for British withdrawal come what may, even in the absence of agreement between the Indian parties. This helped to concentrate the minds of the Indian leaders on the need to reach some kind of compromise.

⁴ *Transfer of Power* documents (TP), vol 9, p462. The Congress leaders had almost certainly come to prefer a 'Hindustan' in which they could constitute a strong central government, rather than the Cabinet Mission's plan for a federal 'all India' in which the centre would be weak.

⁵ Ibid, p109. Jinnah usually referred to a Pakistan containing a partitioned Punjab and Bengal as 'moth-eaten' or 'truncated'.

⁶ TP, vol 10, 300.

⁷ Mountbatten insisted on this if he was to accept appointment as Viceroy. Unbeknown to him the Cabinet had been softened up by Wavell who had got its India Committee to agree a definite withdrawal date. Attlee then backtracked only to find that Mountbatten insisted on the same thing. (Wavell's date, 31 March 1948, was actually three months earlier than Mountbatten's.)

That the elements of an agreement were already in place was probably not realised by anyone involved. None the less, the fact that they were there made Mountbatten's task much easier than his predecessor's. In essence that task was not so much to work out a new solution, as to devise a route map to get the Indian parties to the gateway marked 'independence and partition'.⁸ The Cabinet still clung to a dying hope that the Cabinet Mission plan for a united India might be accepted and Mountbatten was instructed to begin by investigating this possibility, and he did indeed make a real effort to persuade the Indian parties to revive it. Jinnah at this point was the main stumbling block, convinced as he now was that Congress would never work the plan in a spirit of genuine cooperation. In a series of six interviews Mountbatten sought to cajole him, playing on the fact that the division of India must entail the division of Punjab and Bengal. In one meeting Jinnah 'whilst admitting my logic [was] most upset at my trying to give him a "moth eaten" Pakistan'. 'I am afraid I drove the old gentleman quite mad', Mountbatten added.⁹ But it was clear enough that if compelled to choose between the Cabinet Mission plan and a moth eaten Pakistan, Jinnah would settle for the latter. Mountbatten and his staff therefore concentrated their attention on devising a procedure for the handover of power, and by the end of April had produced a plan which Mountbatten's interviews with the Indian leaders gave him reason to think they would accept. Indeed, on 30 April, a late draft of the plan was shown separately to Nehru and Jinnah by Sir Eric Miéville, a senior member of Mountbatten's staff. The reactions from Nehru and his Congress colleagues reinforced the impression that they would at least acquiesce in its provisions, albeit reluctantly. Jinnah's response was unfavourable but Mountbatten did not 'consider that he is in any position to stop the plan going forward'¹⁰. So on 2 May his chief of staff, Lord Ismay, took the plan to London to secure the Cabinet's agreement.¹¹

The plan laid down a procedure by which the provinces of British India would decide their future. The British were anxious to lay the responsibility for partitioning India on the Indians themselves: there should be 'self-determination' and to that end the provinces must be seen to vote on their constitutional future. The hindu-majority provinces (Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, and the Central Provinces) which had joined the Constituent Assembly set up under the Cabinet Mission plan (but boycotted by the Muslim League) would be asked to confirm that they wished to have their constitution framed by that Assembly. What would happen if a province voted against was not stated, evidently because no one thought such a contingency remotely likely. On the other hand, the muslim-majority provinces (Bengal, Punjab, Assam, North-West Frontier Province, and

⁸ Significantly, one of the leading files among his personal papers was entitled 'Transfer of Power, *procedure* for determining authorities to which power is to be demitted'.

⁹ TP, vol 10, p160.

¹⁰ Viceroy's Personal Report to Cabinet, 1 May, TP, vol 10, p533.

¹¹ ¹ Mountbatten was later to claim that he arrived in India with 'plenipotentiary powers'. The fact that he sent Ismay home to secure the Cabinet's agreement to the plan shows that this was not so. Still, it can be said that right from the outset he behaved with much greater authority and sense of command than his predecessors.

Sind) were given the choice of joining the existing Constituent Assembly, joining a new (Pakistan) Assembly, or opting to set up as an independent state. In Bengal and Punjab the decisions would be taken by the hindu- and muslim-majority halves of their Legislative Assemblies voting separately. A preliminary vote would be taken in each half on whether the province should be divided, and a vote for partition in either half would decide the issue. Furthermore, the independence option would in theory be available to the hindu and muslim half-provinces, as well as to the province as a whole. This independence option for provinces or half-provinces was probably included more for the sake of conformity with the doctrine of self determination than for any better reason, and for the present writer at least, a reading of all the documentation in the *Transfer of Power* documents suggests that the British did not expect or hope that any province would choose it, except perhaps Bengal where there seemed a slight possibility that the local political leaders might engineer a vote for unity and independence as a means of avoiding partition.¹² As regards the Indian States ruled by the Princes, the plan appeared to envisage that they would join either India or Pakistan, though the possibility of independence for a few of the larger ones, for example Hyderabad and Kashmir, was perhaps tacitly envisaged.

On Ismay's departure, Mountbatten and his wife Edwina went to the Viceroy's summer retreat at Simla for a few days' rest taking a skeleton staff with him. He also invited Nehru to stay and when Nehru arrived continued to hold discussions with him about the way forward. On 10 May, the plan arrived back from London and Mountbatten 'on a hunch', and against the advice of his staff, gave it to Nehru to read before he went to bed. As a consequence Nehru had very little sleep that night. Indeed he kept Krishna Menon¹³ up to 4am discussing the plan as refined by the Cabinet, and the following morning he exploded a bombshell by rejecting it. Why was Nehru so shocked, having seen the plan before it went to London? Two reasons may be suggested. Firstly, he was merely shown it by Miéville, he was not allowed to study it at leisure, as Mountbatten had now enabled him to do. Nehru can be forgiven for not fully taking in all the implications of the plan on what was probably a hurried reading, with Sir Eric sitting beside him metaphorically if not literally drumming his fingers on the table. Secondly, the Cabinet's redraft, at Attlee's prompting, brought out just those implications most likely to upset Nehru. For reasons of logical draftsmanship, the independence option for the provinces, or half-provinces, was given more prominence, and in the process the possibility that Bengal might preserve its unity by becoming independent was made marginally more likely. However, there is little evidence that the Cabinet had much expectation that the independence option would be taken up even in Bengal, much less anywhere else. On the other hand the possibility of some of the

¹ ² I take this view despite the fact that in the early stages of its gestation, one version of the plan was naively labelled 'Plan Balkan'. One reason for thinking that the British did not actually wish to balkanise India is that they regarded its unification as one of their greatest achievements in the sub-continent.

¹ ³ Krishna (not VP) Menon - a Congress politician, Borough Councillor in St Pancras, London 1934-47, soon to be Indian High Commissioner in the UK 1947-52, and thereafter filling various diplomatic posts and becoming Minister of Defence 1957-62. He was a friend of both Nehru and Mountbatten, and had been invited to Simla with Nehru.

Princely States opting for independence was now openly stated. To the British, the differences between the two versions seemed to be ones of style and detail, not substance; but as Hodson says: 'if the changes were nuances, nuances are often important in politics, which are essentially exercises in public and political relations'¹⁴. At any rate to Nehru the changes seemed serious and substantial. As he wrote in a long note produced on the morrow of his sleepless night:

owing to the stress of circumstances [Congress had agreed] that certain Muslim majority areas might go out of the [Indian] Union if they so willed. The Union was still the basic factor. ... The [new] proposals start with the rejection of an Indian Union as the successor to power and invite the claims of large numbers of succession States who are permitted to unite if they so wish in two or more States.¹⁵

This overstated the probability of numerous successor states emerging, but Nehru was evidently alarmed that this could happen now that he had fully grasped the theoretical implications of the plan; and as regards the Princely States he had good grounds for his complaint that 'the obvious shift of emphasis' in the Cabinet's redraft amounted to 'a definite invitation to at least the major States to remain independent Kingdoms'. In sum, distrustful as he was of British intentions, the danger of balkanisation (which to the British seemed remote and was not in fact their intention) to Nehru seemed real and disastrous.

Though he described Nehru's reaction as a bombshell, Mountbatten should not really have been very surprised – the records of his ongoing talks with Nehru at Simla show the latter's assumptions about the transfer procedure in fact diverged a good deal from the plan sent to London, and still more from what had come back. Probably Mountbatten sensed this and hence his hunch that he had better show the draft to Nehru. It was fortunate that he did so for it forestalled the public rejection of the plan which would otherwise have occurred and which could have destroyed his viceroyalty. However, he still had to pull the chestnuts from the fire. What to do? There now enters the story a man who is largely unknown to the British public but who from now on was to make a vital contribution to Mountbatten's success. His name was V P Menon. Who was he? An illuminating briefing note prepared for Mountbatten on his arrival by George Abell, the ICS officer who headed the Viceroy's Private Office, tells us much about Menon's background and explains why up to now, despite being the Viceroy's Reforms Commissioner and Constitutional Adviser, he had been excluded from Mountbatten's inner circle of advisers. It is worth quoting almost in full:

[he] has had a remarkable career. He comes from a land-owning family in Malabar, Madras Presidency, but started his Government service as a lowly paid clerk on, I think, about £2 per month. Subsequently he became a petty Revenue official in Madras, then resigned and got employment as a clerk in the Reforms Office of the Government of India. He has been in the Reforms Office, which deals with Constitutional matters, since 1914, and has been head of the office since 1942. He ... has been in the close confidence of Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell. He has more than once been to London for discussions with the Viceroy.

¹⁴ Hodson, p298.

¹⁵ TP, vol 10, p767.

He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of everything to do with the Indian Constitution, and his knowledge and judgement are often more [*sic*, ?most] valuable. Up to recently he knew everything in connection with high policy that was going on between the Viceroy and the India Office. Lately he has been rather less closely in confidence because he is a Hindu, and is inevitably under pressure from Congress to tell them what is going on. Often he can be most valuable with his information of Congress reactions and intentions, but there is a danger that for such information he may pay a price in revealing some of the secrets of the Viceroy, though I do not think he would do so consciously. At any rate, one finds that Indian officials now are in an extremely difficult position. The feelings between the communities are much the same as though a civil war was going on. An official, if he tries to be impartial, is merely suspected on both sides, so he tends to take shelter with one side or the other, according to his community. Mr Menon now is genuinely convinced of the rightness of the Congress view on the general political position.

Thus, though he is an old friend of mine, and one of the people I like best in Delhi, I am convinced that it is not possible to take him into confidence as fully as has been done in the past.¹⁶

Menon himself records that 'it was at Simla that, for the first time, I had an opportunity of explaining my point of view to the Viceroy in person'.¹⁷ It may be that the credit for his admission to the inner circle should go to Lady Mountbatten to whom Menon confided his unhappiness at his lack of access to the Viceroy; she thereupon spoke to her husband who brought him into the discussions.¹⁸ He immediately proved his worth. As Ziegler says, it was only when V P Menon, 'the subtle and experienced Reforms Commissioner and confidant of Sardar Patel' joined his circle of close advisers that they obtained 'any real

¹ ⁶ Ibid, pp26-27. Menon was born in 1894. According to Hodson (Menon's predecessor and former boss as Reforms Commissioner), p299, he 'had run away from his home ... to spare his family the strain of his further education'. French, p300, agrees that his family had fallen on hard times. Thereafter they and others give differing accounts of his early employments before joining government service in 1914, but there seems to be agreement that at some point he worked at a gold mine in Mysore [as a clerk?]. French shrewdly points out that Menon's appointment to head the Reforms Office in 1942 (he was the first Indian to do so) was probably thanks to the fact that the vacancy arose when constitutional change was on the back burner.

¹ ⁷ Menon, p363. Until then he appears to have been consulted by Mountbatten's staff but was not included in their meetings with Mountbatten himself.

¹ ⁸ With both Ismay and Abell in London and only the somewhat ineffective Miéville of Mountbatten's senior staff to 'mind' him, and in the more informal atmosphere of Simla, Menon would no doubt have had more opportunity for personal contact with Mountbatten in any case. However, Lady Mountbatten's intervention on Menon's behalf may well have been decisive. The evidence for it rests only on my recollection of something I distinctly remember reading or being told by a reliable source but alas I cannot now trace the reference. It seems to me to be quite probable. If true, Edwina's human touch certainly served her husband well on this occasion.

insight into day-to-day Indian thinking'.¹⁹ It was of course those very contacts with Congress which had made Menon suspect in the eyes of orthodox ICS members like Abell that now enabled him to solve the problem because he *knew* the Congress mind and hence could present the plan in a guise acceptable to them. Menon's admission to the talks occurred a day or so before the Nehru's *volte face*, and indeed the ideas that Menon put forward during them probably contributed to Nehru's mind veering away from the plan Ismay had taken to London which Menon had in fact opposed when consulted by Mountbatten's staff, not least because of its provincial independence option aspect.

It is not possible in a short article to outline in detail Mountbatten's reaction to Nehru's bombshell, and how with Menon's help he produced a new draft plan and persuaded Nehru and Patel to accept it.²⁰ The most important changes they made were of course the elimination of the provincial independence option whether for whole provinces or half-provinces: their choice was now limited to joining India or Pakistan. The reference to possible independence for the Princely States was also deleted. And it should be noted that the new plan took it for granted that the hindu-majority provinces would continue to participate in the Indian Constituent Assembly. There was no shadow of an independence option for them, and the Constituent Assembly's work would continue without interruption. To this extent the historical continuity between the old India and the new which was emotionally so important to Nehru – a fact which Menon had doubtless understood – was tacitly affirmed. And it is worth noting that the British Cabinet subsequently decided that the new independent India did indeed inherit the international personality of the old, the UN endorsed that view, and thus India continued as a member of the United Nations whereas Pakistan was deemed a new State and had to apply to join that body. The bombshell had gone off on the morning of 11 May. By the evening of the same day Menon had recast the plan into a form acceptable to Nehru. While at Simla he had also kept in touch with Patel and could therefore be confident of that key figure's agreement. With Nehru and Patel both on board there could be no doubt of Congress party acceptance of the plan. As for Jinnah, the new plan made no practical difference for him. Like the original plan, it still assured him of achieving Pakistan, albeit a moth-eaten one, and Mountbatten and his staff continued to work on the basis that, when push came to shove, he would grudgingly accept that he could get no more. And so it proved. Incidentally, the fact that Jinnah did not hold out for the version taken to London is itself some indication that the original plan was no more harmful to Congress interests than the one Congress ultimately agreed to. It was mostly just a matter of presentation.

¹⁹ Ziegler, p371.

²⁰ For detailed analyses of the events at Simla see the articles by Moore and Tinker cited in the List of Sources. Both writers assign less importance to Menon's role than I do. Their interpretations differ from each other in some respects particularly on the extent to which Nehru was justified in seeing a substantial difference between the draft he was shown on 30 April and the redraft received from the Cabinet.

A striking addendum to the new plan was that it provided for a transfer of power on a Dominion status basis which meant not only continued membership of the Commonwealth but also the acceptance of the British monarch as Head of State, something to which Congress in general and Nehru in particular had been opposed since their resolution in 1930 demanding '*purna swaraj*' - complete independence, i.e. a republic. However, Menon saw a number of advantages to Dominion status as a transitional device: it would please the British and ensure their goodwill towards the fledgling independent India; it would encourage British members of the ICS to be cooperative at the time of the actual handover and make it more likely that some of them would stay on; it would also enable British Army officers to serve the new government without resigning their commissions in the British Army which of course very few would have been willing to do. Crucially, Menon argued, there could be a much earlier transfer of power since, under Dominion status, India could continue to be governed under its existing constitution as laid down by the Government of India Act of 1935 with a few amendments, thus obviating the need to hammer out a complete new republican constitution before the transfer date.²¹ This argument had obvious appeal to the Indian leaders. Menon had been pointing out its advantages to Patel since early in the year, and in the Simla discussions prior to receiving the Cabinet's redraft of the plan, he had broached the idea of a transfer of power on a Dominion status basis and Nehru had been receptive. At the same time Lady Mountbatten may have helped by softening Nehru's attitude to Commonwealth membership during their informal conversations.²² Mountbatten had always hoped that somehow he would be able to keep India in the Commonwealth, and had gone some way in his contacts with Indian leaders to lure them into acceptance of the idea, but was far from having been able to clinch an agreement. Menon's contacts with Congress, Patel in particular, now enabled him to do so. Though India was not to remain a Dominion for long – Nehru had not given up on his ultimate objective of '*purna swaraj*' - the interim Dominion status solution devised by Menon gave sufficient breathing space for the 'Republic within the Commonwealth' idea to emerge. Returning to Delhi on 14 May, Mountbatten had further consultations with the Indian leaders and secured the near certainty of acceptance of the new plan by both Congress and the League. Then on 18 May he flew to London whither he had been summoned by a Cabinet somewhat bewildered and put out by the rejection of their redraft of the earlier plan. Once there he was able to secure their agreement to the new plan without any unhelpful refinements. He also used the Dominion status feature to secure Churchill's

²¹ I have never understood why an Indian republic could not equally well have been governed for a transitional period under an amended Government of India Act. Nevertheless the view that only Dominion status could obviate the need for a new constitution was also the conventional wisdom in Whitehall and seems never to have been questioned then or since.

²² At any rate Menon credited her with doing so according to her biographer. However, it should be noted that it was not until a second visit to Simla almost exactly a year later that the friendship between Edwina and Nehru really blossomed. See Morgan, pp400, and 427-28 *et seq.* Incidentally, the evidence presented by Morgan suggests that the relationship though intense, and lasting till Edwina's death in 1960, was not physical. On the Edwina-Nehru relationship, see also Pamela Mountbatten, *India Remembered* (London, 2007), pp20-23.

acquiescence to a transfer of power to which he would never have agreed if it had been to two completely independent republics. Churchill even assured Mountbatten that if both India and Pakistan accepted Dominion status the Conservatives would help to rush the necessary legislation through Parliament (which indeed they did). Returning to India on 30 May, Mountbatten showed great skill in two meetings on 2 and 3 June with the Indian leaders in securing their final agreement to the plan which was publicly announced on the evening of 3 June. At the second meeting, immediately they had all signified assent, he announced that the handover date would be not later than 15 August (thus fulfilling the promise of an earlier transfer date), and threw down on the table an enormous document entitled 'The Administrative Consequences of Partition' in order to concentrate the leaders' minds on the nuts and bolts of what was to happen and thus divert them from harping on their antagonisms. He remarked in his Personal Report to the Cabinet two days later that 'the severe shock that this gave to everyone present would have been amusing if it was not rather tragic'.²³



V P Menon

Mountbatten was to encounter further squalls before the two new Dominions came into being on 14 August, but the major storm was now over, and it was Vapal Pangunni Menon, or 'V.P.' as he was affectionately known, who had piloted him through it. Abell, who as we have seen was responsible for his initial exclusion from Mountbatten's inner circle, remarked on 11 June in a private letter to a senior India Office official that the 3 June plan 'really is a triumph for the Viceroy and to a considerable extent for V.P. The fact that the more sane elements of the Congress, and especially Vallabhbhai Patel, were at this stage prepared to do business enabled the Viceroy to use V.P. and his influence with Patel to a remarkable effect.'²⁴ Thereafter Menon became one of Mountbatten's closest advisers, indeed often his key adviser. He designed the policy by which the Indian Princes were cajoled into joining the new India²⁵; he led for the Government of India in amending the India Office's draft of the Indian Independence Bill; and he helped to solve a row between Congress and the League in mid-July over the continued participation of the League in the Interim Government of India. More controversial was his dexterity in securing the accession of the Maharaja of Kashmir to India rather than Pakistan which of course was to create a problem which is unsolved to this day. With the death of his patron Patel in

²³ TP, vol 11, p163.

²⁴ Ibid, p279.

²⁵ He became Secretary of a newly created Indian States Department headed by Patel.

1950, his influence with the Congress high command faded. He was very briefly Governor of Orissa May-July 1951, before becoming a member of the Finance Commission 1951-1952. This conclusion was perhaps only a modest reward for his immense contribution to Indian independence, but nevertheless his career was a fine achievement for a man who had started as a lowly clerk. In retirement he fulfilled a promise to Patel 'our revered Sardar' to write two books, one on *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, the other on *The Transfer of Power in India* published in 1956 and 1957. He died in 1966.

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Review Article

***The Way We Were - Anglo-Indian Chronicles*, edited by Margaret Deefholts and Glen Deefholts (CTR Inc. Publishing, 2006), pp240 ISBN: 97809754639-3-2**

Obtainable from Jean Chambers, Solent Breezes, Warsash, Southampton, SO31 9HG.

Price £10, postage extra.

Every year in the U.K. the many European boarding schools set up during the days of the Raj hold old school reunions when their now mature ex-students foregather for a curry lunch and a nostalgic natter about student days in their beloved other home, India. Apart from these particular reunions, there is also a gigantic get-together held in Alperton (London) going by the name of 'The Hill Schools Reunion' when over 140 hill schools are represented. The guests are made up of people of many different nationalities, most of whom were schooled in the India of the Raj, including pre- as well as post-partition Indian ex-students.

When I was 'evacuated' from England to school in Darjeeling during WW2, I was fortunate enough to have a wide spectrum of school-mates, English, American, Parsee, Indian, 'Domiciled European', and, particularly, Anglo-Indian. There was a warmth and humour about the latter that will remain forever in my memory, and I loved the way a few of them would say, 'Come on my girl' to me, just as their mothers used to say to them. It was so heart-warming and very comforting to a little homesick boarding school wallah. Happily for us, there was little or no discrimination between the various nationalities, and we were blessed to have such a rich selection of friends. But elsewhere, how hurtful it must have been for some of them to have been looked down upon by posh and prejudiced Brits.

To-day we still meet those Anglo-Indian friends of our youth, but they were the lucky ones whose fathers had well-paid jobs or professions and could afford to send their children to good schools, giving them a high standard of living and later emigrating with their families to Britain, Australia, New Zealand and America. Their unlucky compatriots remained in India after partition, and many are still struggling to keep their heads above water. Living in poverty in India's larger cities, particularly Calcutta, they eke out a living with no help from any government social security source as is available in the UK.

There is, however, one group of people who have the interests of those Anglo-Indian survivors at heart. This is an organisation called CTR. - 'Calcutta Tiljallah Relief' - dedicated to looking after indigent Anglo-Indians in Calcutta. Its founder is Blair Williams, himself an Anglo-Indian and a chartered engineer trained in London, who emigrated to the US in 1976. Blair was appalled to discover the terrible plight of so many aged Anglo-Indians during a visit he made to Calcutta in 1998, and as a result his not-for-profit charity, CTR, was born.

'The Way We Were' is the title of a well-known Barbra Streisand song that fills the bill admirably as the title of a book written by Anglo-Indians about their past lives in India before many of them had emigrated to the UK, Oz, NZ and the States, when Indian Independence and partition forced them to think seriously about their future status in the

land of their birth. Each chapter points up a particular aspect of being an Anglo-Indian and I was struck by the cheerfulness and kindness displayed by people who had every reason to bemoan their fate and to hate some of the British people who gave them such a bad time. Many were party animals who loved to entertain friends and strangers alike, and it must have been so hurtful when they were rebuffed by some of the less sensitive British.

The book deals with so many aspects of Anglo-Indian life and should be compulsory reading for anyone who has lived in pre-Independent India. Several bells will be rung and there will be many revelations, as there certainly were for me, one in particular being the wonderfully matriarchal stance of mothers and grandmothers! One learns, too, about the meals produced in Anglo-Indian kitchens, as well as the disciplines practised by the older generation in bringing up the young, all of which were closed books to me during my time in India. Why couldn't we have all mixed and learned from each other? Thanks to *The Way We Were* we are learning at last.

As a follow-up, CTR is to publish later next year *The Way We **Are*** – an anthology of articles reflecting how Anglo-Indians or persons of Anglo-Indian heritage live **today**. It is a truly wonderful charity and needs all the help it can get for the unfortunate 'have nots' of Anglo-India living in poverty in Calcutta – 'there but for the grace of God'.¹

Hazel Craig

¹ Useful addresses: Blair Williams, President, CTR, 3B James Buchanan Drive, Monroe Township, NJ 08831, USA (CTR website at: <http://www.blairrw.org/ctr/index.php>); Paul Dickson, Hon. Sec., Hill Schools Reunion, 4 Gilman Crescent, Windsor, SL 4YN. Another of CTR's publications *Voices on the Verandah* was reviewed in FIBIS Journal 13, Spring 2005, p52.