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# Waters from Ireland - to Bengal - to New Zealand

By Neville Thomas

## Introduction

I imagine this story is typical of many men leaving home for adventure, serving the British Empire. This enabled travel and achievements perhaps otherwise impossible, through army service, tea planting, teaching, railway and government administration, before emigration to New Zealand. We are fortunate that Hal Waters was a keen photographer leaving us with numerous albums recording his experiences.

## Generation 1: William Waters 1810-1861

William Waters enlisted in the East India Company Army at Liverpool in March 1831<sup>1</sup>. He had been baptized by his parents, Joseph and Elizabeth (Hutchinson), at St Iberius (Protestant) Church in Wexford, Ireland on 4 January 1810<sup>2</sup>. William's father Joseph had also been in the military, his discharge papers showing that he had joined the British Army at age eighteen and served from 1794 through 1814, in the 44th (East Essex) Regiment of Foot, and 13th Light Dragoons.

William embarked<sup>3</sup> on the *Thomas Grenville* on 3 June 1831 and arrived at Calcutta on 16 October. (The thirteenth of its fourteen trips to India and China 1809-32). In 1832 he is listed as an Artillery Gunner in 1 Troop 3 Brigade at Dum Dum<sup>4</sup>. The Bengal Horse Artillery was formed to give quick fire support to the armies of the East India Company. Resplendent in their laced jackets and brass mounted Roman helmets, the Troops of the Horse Artillery would gallop forward with the cavalry and come into action shattering an enemy counter charge with deadly salvoes of case shot

On the 19 February 1839, now a Corporal<sup>5</sup>, he married<sup>6</sup> Isabella Ann Johnson (aged fourteen, baptised at St. Stephens, Dum Dum). By 1843 he was a Sergeant<sup>7</sup>, and in November 1846 is bound for Australia on the *Emily Jane* in charge of horses<sup>8</sup>. (I presume horses were sourced in Australia for the Bengal Artillery. The *Emily Jane* is classed as an opium clipper in 1845). In 1847 he was Sergeant Overseer<sup>9</sup> at the Government Stud, as shown in the Town Major's List, until in September 1852 at completion of 21 years service he was 'pensioned to the GOCC' and attached to the Haupper Stud at 30 Rupees per

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<sup>1</sup> Register of Recruits Liverpool, IOR: L/MIL/9/9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Iberius Parish Register (Ireland).

<sup>3</sup> Embarkation Lists, *Thomas Grenville*, IOR: L/MIL/9/77 and L/MIL/9/100.

<sup>4</sup> IOR: Muster Roll 1832, IOR: L/MIL/10/153.

<sup>5</sup> Muster Roll 1839, IOR: L/MIL/10/160.

<sup>6</sup> Marriages within the Chaplaincy of Dum Dum, IOR: N/1/54/16.

<sup>7</sup> IOR: L/MIL/10/166-7.

<sup>8</sup> Bengal Directory 1847 (FIBIS website).

<sup>9</sup> IOR: Town Major's List.

month.<sup>10</sup> Haupper (Hapur), Saharanpur and Hissar were the three Studs of the North-West Provinces of Bengal. Hapur is some 22 miles South East of Meerut and 40 miles East of Delhi. There is no evidence of any children up to this time.

Then in August 1854 (William is 44 and Isabella 29) a son Joseph Henry 'Harry' was born at Calcutta. At this time William was a Sergeant on Bengal Pension Establishment. Then followed daughter Alice Mima in 1858. No baptism record of these children has been found, but in 1859, with two dependent children, William wrote his will<sup>11</sup> naming wife Isabella as sole executrix, and providing for the education of his children.

In 1861 William Waters was named in the *New Calcutta Directory* as an Assistant Manager on a tea plantation of 1500 acres at Hope Town (Darjeeling Hope Town Tea Association) now known as Kurseong 'the place of White Orchid'. On 16 June 1861 daughter Catherine Hope Waters was born<sup>12</sup> at Hope Town, but exactly six months later William died on the way from Hope Town to Calcutta.

William left wife Isabella with a son aged seven, and two daughters aged three, and six months. Isabella survived another 27 years and is buried in Calcutta's Lower Circular Road Cemetery.

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<sup>10</sup> IOR: L/MIL/17/2/301, p510.

<sup>11</sup> IOR: Supreme Court at Fort William L/AG/34/29/105.

<sup>12</sup> Register of Births at Darjeeling, May-July 1861.

## Generation 2: Joseph Henry (Harry) Waters, 1854-1936

Harry Waters was educated at La Martiniere College in Calcutta, and trained as a teacher. His earliest teaching positions from 1875 were at Doveton and Howrah St. Thomas in Calcutta. In 1880 he was a master at Serampore when he married<sup>13</sup>



Evangeline (Evie) French (a fourth generation French surname family in India) at Simla. In 1884 Harry was appointed headmaster of Rawalpindi European Station School. This school is still operating in 2009. His first child was Henry ('Hal') Vincent Osmond, born at 'Brighton' in Simla in 1885<sup>14</sup>, and a second son Hubert St. Clair was born in 1896. Evangeline died in 1900 and is buried at Rawalpindi. Harry was headmaster of the Station School for over 27 years. During this time he served in the North Western Railway Volunteer Rifles. Later he taught at St. Anthony's High School in Lahore. He died on 30 August 1936 and is buried in the Jail Road Cemetery.

*Harry and Evangeline at the time of their marriage.  
(See also cover illustration)*

Harry's sister Alice Mima married Matthew Pettit, a publisher and merchant, at Calcutta in 1886 and they raised three children. She died in 1930, and is buried with her mother Isabella in the Lower Circular Road Cemetery. Also

buried there is his other sister Catherine (Kathleen) who apparently never married and died in 1927.<sup>15</sup>

## Generation 3: Henry ('Hal')Vincent Osmond (Hal) Waters, 1885-1966<sup>16</sup>

H V O Waters attended Rawalpindi Station School passing the Government High School Examination 1901. In 1907 he joined the staff of the North Western Railway (NWR) as a

<sup>13</sup> Register of Marriages Solemnized at Simla, IOR: N1/173, f170. Information on Harry Waters' career comes from family records.

<sup>14</sup> Baptism Certificate, Simla.

<sup>15</sup> Information on Lower Circular Road burials courtesy of APHCI (Association for Preservation of Historical Cemeteries in India).

<sup>16</sup> Information on Hal's life and career based on personal knowledge, family records and photograph albums (including a collection on the NWR) which contain detailed notes.

Travelling Inspector of Accounts, and for ten years toured many of the lines and stations. This was his most prolific photography period, and he kept meticulous notes and drew a map recording all the lines he worked on.

In 1917 Hal took a new position as Superintendent, Office of Inspector General of Prisons, again touring the various facilities. In 1919 he occupied a house at Rivaz Gardens, Multan Road, Lahore. He was also a member of the Punjab Rifles (IDF) Armoured Train Section. In 1927 he married Sarah Wagge at Rawalpindi, and the following year a son Malcolm was born. However Sarah died just six months later. Malcolm subsequently joined the Indian Navy.

In 1932 Hal married Julie James at Lahore<sup>17</sup> but she died just a year later. Hal's father died in 1936, and in December he married Myrtle Fox at Lahore Cathedral<sup>18</sup>. Daughters were born in 1937 and 1945. Hal became increasingly concerned about the political situation. In 1947 he obtained a British passport, in 1948 he obtained an endorsement 'Valid for New Zealand', and in 1949 a New Zealand Entry Permit. On 18 March 1950 the family sailed to New Zealand and in 1961 obtained New Zealand Citizenship.

In 1959 the author married Hal's eldest daughter.



*Above: two photos of Hal at work as Trav-elling Inspector of Accounts, NWR*

*Note: 50 relevant photos may be viewed at*  
<http://gallery.me.com/nevillejamesthomas#100259>

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<sup>17</sup> Return of Marriages at St. Anthony's, Lahore.

<sup>18</sup> Certificate of Marriage Solemnized at Lahore Cathedral.

## Four Orphan Schools in Calcutta and the Lawrence Military Asylum, Sanawar, Part II: parents, conditions, prospects

*By Maureen Evers (Part I on the history of the schools appeared in the previous issue)*

### Parents<sup>1</sup>

At 31 December 1823 there were 649 children at the Lower Orphan School (L.O.S.), 270 boys and 379 girls. Of these, 264 (41%) were orphans and the remainder 59% had fathers. 120 (44%) of the boys were orphans as were 144 (38%) of the girls. The institution was accordingly more a school than an orphanage.

At the L.O.S. the majority of the children were Eurasian but it seems there was always a substantial minority of children with two European parents, about 1 in 4. In March 1828 there were 491 children with European fathers, the mothers were European 120 (24%), Mixed Race 177 (36%) and Indian 194 (40%). There was a similar percentage with European parents at 13 October 1846 when there was a total of 301 children, 131 boys and 170 girls, of whom 82 (27%) had European parents, being boys 40(31%), girls 42 (25%).

Lawrence Military Asylum statistics, probably mid-1850, show 136 children, 76 boys and 60 girls. 105 (77%) had European parents, being boys 64(84%), girls 41(68%). These statistics predate the arrival of the L.O.S. children in 1855 and 1856, so the percentages would have changed after that. By December 1857 the statistics show a total of 341 children, of whom 131(38%) were entire orphans, 134(39%) were fatherless, 58(17%) were motherless and 18 (5%) had both parents living.

The Upper Orphan School (U.O.S.) always had a higher proportion of Eurasian children, as orphans with British parents were returned to England, provided they had family or friends there who could care for them.

### Deaths, Marriage and Apprenticeships<sup>2</sup>

At 31 December 1820, 1454 boys had been admitted to the L.O.S. since the School commenced, of whom 270 were still in the School, 260 had died and 821 had become employed. The latter category consisted of Drummers and Fifers, 693; writers [clerks], 11; employed in Company vessels, 3; apprenticed, 114. For the same period, 1395 girls had been admitted, of whom 354 were still in the school, 256 had died, 497 had married and 34 were placed as servants.

In respect of Orphans of Officers, for the same period, 360 boys had been admitted, of whom 37 were in the School at Kidderpore, 45 had died and 175 become employed. It is not clear whether these latter figures include those who were sent to England. Eleven had joined the Bengal Military Service, and one the Bengal Civil Service. 390 girls had been admitted, of whom 58 were in the School at Kidderpore, 42 had died, 134 had married and

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<sup>1</sup> For this section: Lushington, App 11, pl; IOR: F/4/1240/40737; Webb, p126; LMA, *Brief Account*, p66; *Calcutta Review*, vol 16, 1851, p71.

<sup>2</sup> For this section: Lushington, App 11, pxlvi; LMA, *Brief Account*, pp58, 66.

3 had left the School on their own application, being of age. Again it is not clear whether these figures relate only to India, or include those in England.

At December 1857, 308 boys had been admitted to the Lawrence Military Asylum since the school commenced, of whom 198 were still in the School, 27 had died and 44 had become employed. The latter category consisted of: Subordinate Medical Department, 13; Electric Telegraph, 10; Soldiers, 9; Clerkship, 7; Schoolmaster, 4; Survey, 1. For the same period 244 girls has been admitted, of whom 143 were still in the School, 13 had died, 9 had married and 6 were occupying situations, including one a schoolmistress in an artillery school, one a salaried assistant to the matron [in the LMA], and one the Institution school mistress.

## Health and Death

Poor health seems to have been very common for the children of the L.O.S. The move of the U.O.S. in 1790 from Howrah was due to irritable skin disease which had become epidemic, as well as ophthalmia, an eye condition which in many cases resulted in blindness. Both diseases were attributed mainly to lack of cleanliness. Ophthalmia, which usually begins in the membrane lining the eyelids and extends over the whole globe of the eye, was very common in India due to the glare of the sun and dust blown about by the wind. It was particularly prevalent in crowded places such as schools, due to both imperfect ventilation and neglect of cleanliness. It was also mentioned as a cause of the move of the L.O.S. from Howrah, but it continued to be a problem after the move to Alipore particularly in 1819 and 1820 when 27 boys and 73 girls were in hospital due to the disease - in December 1819 there were 620 in the L.O.S. (264 b, 356 g). In 1823, seven blind boys were removed from the L.O.S. as pensioners.<sup>3</sup>

In 1810 it was said that 'probably it is owing to reflection [that no certain provision is made for them], as much as to their arriving at puberty, that so many of these unfortunate girls become insane'<sup>4</sup>. The children suffered many other diseases and overcrowding had a significant effect. Dr Allan Webb, a Professor at the Calcutta Medical College, was also surgeon of the L.O.S and of La Martiniere School. In his 1848 book he writes:

Chronic rheumatism, I have seen in children of European soldiers living under the ramparts of Fort William, produce ulceration of the ankle joint, and in East Indian children, ulcerations of the hip joint. Chronic bronchitis or asthma is certainly another consequence, this as well as rheumatism is frequently met with in the girls of the Government Orphan School, who are miserably overcrowded; and hence subjected to the pernicious influence of foul air. Their dormitory is upon the ground floor, which is constructed with a bomb proof-arch, so that there is no ventilation through the roof, and the openings into one side of the arch are fronted by a wall. At the end of the rainy season the girls sometimes faint away, after a night's sleep (which ought to be "nature's sweet restorer") in this impure oven. Diarrhoea and dysentery are ...consequences of this low fever; as well as scorbutus, haemorrhoids, sloughing ulcers,

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<sup>3</sup> For this para: *Calcutta Review*, vol 44, 1866, p179; *Bengal Past and Present*, vol 2, 1908, pp94-95; IOR: F/4/648/17835; Lushington, App 11, pl.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Williamson, *East India Vade-Mecum*, (London, 1810), p459.

ophthalmic affections, spleen, enlarged liver, dropsy, and many other chronic and cachectic affections, most of which I regret to say are very common diseases in the Lower Orphan School. The girls' hospital has always presented during the last six years a preponderance of these affections, although the locality of the school is in my opinion one of the healthiest near Calcutta. On the contrary La Martiniere Institution is situated in a bad locality, but the noble dormitories, very seldom allow me to have many patients in hospital, and there has been only one death among the boys in that Institution during the last six years. This surely is a most striking fact. Owing to over-crowding the sick, and the previous debility from want of pure air, when the measles attacked the Government Orphan schools in 1837 [*in fact probably in 1832 – see table below*], twenty three children died of sloughing and mortification, &c. in one month.<sup>5</sup>

The following table gives mortality statistics for sample years at the L.O.S. (there were of course deaths in other years as well).

	Boys	Girls	Total	
Up to Dec 1820	260	256	516	
1818	13	12	25	included in 1820 totals
1823	7	4	11	
1828	3	4	7	deaths for Jul-Dec in 1829 vol
1829	11	5	17	one name unclear
1832	21	17	38	measles epidemic in Calcutta; 31 children died in 5 months (11 in June the worst month)
1837	2	3	5	
1845	3	1	4	
Sources: Lushington, App 11, ppxlvi and l; Asiatic Journal, vol 10, p589; IOR: Bengal Ecclesiastical Returns, N/1/25, 34, 49 and 68.				

Where did the children find their final resting place? Until 1815, children from the L.O.S. were buried in the Orphan Burial Ground at Howrah situated within the Orphan School grounds, and those from the U.O.S. in the Orphan Burial Ground in the grounds of Kidderpore House. Following the L.O.S. move to Alipore, the burials were initially at Fort William. From 1828 or slightly before (and probably until the school again changed its location in 1861) all the children from the L.O.S. appear to have been buried at the Military Burying Ground (M.B.G.) located at Alipore, near the Alipore Bridge. It was later also considered the old part of the M.B.G., Bhowanipore, but was in fact a separate graveyard a few blocks to the west.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Webb, p238.

<sup>6</sup> John Hawkesworth, *Asiaticus Part the first. Ecclesiastical ... Part the second. The Epitaphs in the different burial grounds in and about Calcutta* (Calcutta, 1803), p67; *Bengal Obituary*, p66. Note also H T Prinsep, 'Table of mortality for ages from birth to twenty years framed from the Registers of the Lower Orphan School' (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol 7, pt 2, 1838, p818), based on registers dating from 1798 to 1835 of every boy and girl who had been admitted to the L.O.S. According to Prinsep they 'show the name of every child, the date of his admission, and the manner of his having been disposed of, [and] are deposited in the library of the Asiatic Society'. It seems possible they are still there.



### At the Lawrence Military Asylum:

among the children of the Lower Orphan School in 1856 ten died, unable to bear up against the after effect of the successive ravages of whooping-cough and measles, and in 1857 two died of Dysentery. The Cholera in 1857 was however much more fatal among the children of the Asylum foundation, nine of whom fell victims, while only three of the Lower Orphan School children died. The whole number attacked was thirty-five. Not reckoning then the exceptional case of Cholera, and allowing for the effect of the sudden removal of children who had spent all their lives in Calcutta, to the climate of the Hills, the health of the children has been wonderfully good. The large mortality in 1856 among the wards of the Lower Orphan School can be attributed only to the cause assigned, the want of constitutional tone to resist infantile diseases; which are more virulent in the hills than in the plains.<sup>7</sup>

For the period 1847 to 1859 'the most singular fact, however, in the medical history of the little community is the great prevalence of ophthalmia'<sup>8</sup>.

### Marriage

The decision to move the Upper Orphan School from Howrah in 1790 was influenced by the desire to move it to a locality closer to Calcutta to facilitate the marriage of the female wards. 'There is every prospect,' wrote Major Kirkpatrick, 'that the unmarried girls would become a burden to the Funds, and the Orphan House an Hospital for old women as well as an Asylum for infants'. Another Manager recorded that several of the young ladies had already attained the ripe age 'of 13 years, and yet had received no proposals of marriage which the Managers could approve of! However, the ballroom at Kidderpore House, with its glittering chandeliers, was not used regularly until the first Monthly Dance was held on 7 September 1796, 'the Management being of Opinion that it might promote the Establishment in Life of the Elder Girls of the Upper School'.<sup>9</sup> According to the *Calcutta Review*,

When European ladies were afraid to face the climate of India...Kidderpur was a harbour of refuge, where men in want of wives made their selection in an evening, at balls given expressly for that purpose, travelling often a distance of 500 miles down the country to attain that object.

One description of evenings at a ball, known locally as the Kidderpore hop, available on the Google Books website explains that

The Government, who, to their great honour be it said, were ever prompt to spread the shield of their protection over the orphan daughters of their officers. In proof of which, it is affirmed, that on more than one occasion, when enamoured youths made off with the young Helens... forgetting certain necessary preliminaries, they had the pleasant alternative of marriage or dismissal offered them.

However some in authority did not approve, as this quote from 1800 shows:

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<sup>7</sup> LMA, *Brief Account*, p60.

<sup>8</sup> W W Ireland, M.D., 'Notes and Remarks on the Medical Topography of Sanauer [sic] etc' in *Annals of Military and Naval Surgery and Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, vol 1, 1863, p342.

<sup>9</sup> *Calcutta Review*, vol 44, 1866, p179; Rev W K Firminger, *Thacker's Guide to Calcutta* (Calcutta, Thacker, Spink & Co, 1906), p116; Grace, *Continuation*, p355.

The scholars are young ladies of colour, but many of them form very good connexions, in spite of the endeavours of the present Governor-General to prevent marriage between them and young men in the service.<sup>10</sup>

Those holding this view increased in number as times changed, with more European women coming to India, leading to the cessation of the balls, probably in the early 1830's. In 1833 it was said:

Formerly it was the practice to give balls at the establishment at Kidderpore, to which vast numbers of beaux were invited; but this undisguised method of seeking husbands is now at variance with the received notions of propriety, and the Female Orphan School has assumed, in consequence of the discontinuance of these parties, somewhat of the character of a nunnery. In fact, the young ladies immured within the walls have no chance of meeting with suitors, unless they should possess friends in Calcutta to give them occasional invitations, or the fame of their beauty should spread itself abroad. Every year, by increasing the number of arrivals educated in England, lessens their chance of meeting with eligible matches. The prejudices against "dark beauties" (the phrase usually employed to designate those who are the inheritors of the native complexion) are daily gaining ground, and in the present state of female intellectuality, their uncultivated minds form a decided objection.<sup>11</sup>

However it was always a very different situation for the girls of the Lower Orphan School as this quote shows:

The girls are sent to service, or married, as may be, to the European privates of the service. The courtships in the latter case are strangely, and of necessity, very hurriedly conducted. In the moral government of the school it would be practically impossible to allow suitors to come indiscriminately, and in any numbers, or even frequently, to the young females. Thus, a soldier wishing to marry one of them, obtains a character for sobriety and steadiness, without which he would not be permitted to become a holy Benedict. He goes to the school—is admitted to the head mistress. She is closeted with him for a few minutes, and attempts to see what kind of personage the new bridal applicant may be; she forms her opinion, returns to her young scholars, tells one of them she has a fine, handsome, worthy—or steady, or staid, or respectable, as the case may be—husband for her! The girl's consent is asked,—she perhaps takes a peep at the swain through the Venetian. The young damsel is introduced, and a few minutes are sufficient (the good old matron probably standing by) for the ratification of the first term of a contract of happiness or misery for life. The man is asked to return to a quiet cup of tea in the evening, he buys a present of some cloth for a gown, and, after the delay of a few days, the anxious candidates for matrimony are made one, and sent off to learn at leisure the wisdom of the step they have been taking, and the good or bad qualities of the object each has been linked to for ever!<sup>12</sup>

In 1825, Charles Prinsep, a Barrister (later Advocate General) in Calcutta proposed that children from the L.O.S. of European parentage should be transferred to New South Wales

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<sup>10</sup> *Calcutta Review*, vol 18, 1852, p275; *Asiatic Journal*, vol x, 1820, p455, and vol 35 (new series), 1841, pp45, 47.

<sup>11</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, vol 10 (new series), 1833, p30.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Barkley Henderson, *The Bengalle* (Calcutta, 1843), vol 2, p275.

or Van Diemen's Land where conditions were more favourable. The proposal was rejected by both Management and Government, one of the reasons being that

a diminution of the supply of females of pure blood would infallibly lead to the increase of illicit intercourse with the lowest description of Native Women and in a corresponding increase to the propagation of the mixed races.<sup>13</sup>

It appears that, at least in the early decades of the nineteenth century, virtually all marriages of soldiers to spinsters of European or Eurasian background would have taken place in Calcutta, as all the female children of EIC soldiers, and the orphans of British Army soldiers, were sent to the L.O.S. Those soldiers' marriages taking place outside of Calcutta, would have mainly involved women who were widows, daughters of living British Army soldiers, and Christian Indians. Civil marriage did not exist so the only legitimate marriages for Europeans were those in a Church, or by a minister, when it was necessary that both parties be Christian. My ancestor William Hannah, Apothecary, was married 12 February 1827 according to two Journal entries, but there was no entry in the Ecclesiastical Records held by the British Library. One of the Journals stated that he was married at Alipore. I feel certain that he was married at the Lower Orphan School. The Ecclesiastical Records for 1827 contained no entries for the L.O.S.<sup>14</sup>

In 1818 at the L.O.S., there were 13 marriages (8 girls were orphans, 5 had fathers) and in 1823, 18 (11 were orphans, 7 had fathers). For the year 1831, the Ecclesiastical Records show 30 marriages took place at the L.O.S. all performed by Rev. Hovenden, chaplain of the Military Orphan Schools (M.O.S.), in the presence of Henry Bowser Head Master and S Butler Head Mistress. 11 of the ceremonies, all on a Monday, were in the five weeks period 25 July 1831 to 29 August 1831, with 3 on 8 August 1831. The ages of the girls ranged from 14 to 18, with 15 the most common, and the grooms ranged from 20 to 42, but only 4 were older than 27. One groom was a Coach Maker, one an Assistant Steward (Subordinate Medical Department) and all the rest were in the Army, including some musicians, both Company and HM regiments. (Sophia Butler, the Headmistress was married to Charles Cornish, merchant, at the L.O.S. on 13 November 1836.) Prior to marriage, and from probably quite a young age

those girls who have made a sufficient progress in writing and reading are principally employed in needle-work, and only occasionally in reading and writing; and twenty four of the elder girls are to be selected to learn embroidery. Work is executed for the public by the girls, at certain fixed prices.<sup>15</sup>

At the Lawrence Military Asylum, according to its own *Brief Account* and to the famous Crimean journalist W H Russell:

The elder girls are all most usefully employed in the management [of the Asylum], and marry advantageously when so disposed. They learn to do plain needle-work, and in the hours of leisure knitting and crochet. Their domestic employments give them opportunities of learning the

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<sup>13</sup> IOR: F/4/1240/40737.

<sup>14</sup> IOR: N/1/18.

<sup>15</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, vol 10, p589; Lushington, p262 and App 11, pl; IOR: N/1/30 and 45.

proper management of young children, and of the sick ... [Rev] Mr. Parker [the Superintendent] told us he did not encourage them [the girls] to go out into service, as he found, by experience, they were apt to lose character and situation very soon; and he therefore preferred letting them indulge in their natural ambition to become "wife of a full sergeant;" and the full sergeants were by no means indifferent to the young ladies, and came up to select them as fast as they could be married.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the brides were in their teens and the grooms often in their late twenties or thirties, probably a reflection of the age of a 'full sergeant'.<sup>17</sup>

## Apprentices

Initially the management of the M.O.S. found it difficult to find suitable apprenticeships for the boys. In 1797 it was said 'the only thing wanting to complete its purpose seems to be suitable employment for the youth of both sexes, after they have finished their education. There has not hitherto been in India any middle class of society between the Europeans and natives, and of consequence few employments open for them to occupy'. The Military Orphan Press was proposed in 1796 as a plan for providing some permanent employment for the boys of the Upper School who had been apprenticed to printers and had no prospects of advancement, but did not commence until 1803. For a few years it was a hard struggle for existence so it may not have actually employed many. The [Harbour] Pilot Service was unfortunately unpopular. It was said that the pilots were so cruel to the boys, that half of them deserted, and several absconded altogether. Some boys were apprenticed to the Mint, a few to Surgeons or Dispensaries. Some were trained for Government positions in unexpected ways as this 1797 journal entry by Captain Hiram Cox who travelled to Rangoon as E.I.C. Resident mentions 'two boys from the orphan school at Calcutta, who had accompanied me for the purpose of making themselves masters of the Burmhan [sic] language; that they might eventually be useful in some of the public government offices'. These two boys from the U.O.S., Horatio Bird and James Chalcraft, had accompanied him since August 1796 at the request of Government. However, as a rule, the supply greatly exceeded the demand, especially as there was a M.O.S. policy that apprentices were not returnable if they were considered unsatisfactory.<sup>18</sup>

It was easier to place boys from the L.O.S. General Order of 7 April 1788 stated that all drummers and fifers for the European or Native Corps were to come exclusively from the

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<sup>16</sup> LMA, *Brief Account*, p58; Sir William Howard Russell, *My Diary in India, in the year 1858-9* (London, 1860), vol 2, pp139-40.

<sup>17</sup> [Register of marriages maintained at Holy Trinity Church, which is the Chapel of the Lawrence Royal Military School \[1849-1948\]](#) (Sanawur, 1949), photocopy on IOR open shelves. This contains details of 208 marriages, all of which should in theory appear in the Bengal Ecclesiastical records. However, there may well be new information, particularly from the 1930s when the Ecclesiastical Records contain fewer entries.

<sup>18</sup> William Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, vol 1 (London, 1804), p70; *Calcutta Review*, vol 45, 1867, p299; Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire* (London, 1821), p85; Grace, *Continuation*, pp355, 369, 370.

L.O.S. The majority of boys in the L.O.S. became drummers and fifers, 693 in total in the period to 31 December 1820. In 1818 there were 53 and in 1823, 22. When they joined a Native Regiment, 'they live entirely as the Native Soldiers do; and, from mixing so constantly and exclusively with the Natives they generally forget the English which they learnt at school'. This also applied to Musicians in the Band. By about 1810, it was generally less difficult to find employments. Several obtained situations in Government offices in Calcutta; some were apprenticed to the Government of Prince of Wales Island (now Penang Island, Malaysia); and others found employment in Amboyna (Ambon) and Java (both now Indonesia). John William Ricketts, the eminent campaigner for Eurasian rights in the 1820's was educated at the Upper Orphan School. He left the school in 1807 and after a five years apprenticeship, went as a clerk first to Bencoolen (Sumatra, Indonesia), where his child Amelia was baptised 7 January 1812, and later to Amboyna. At the Free School in the early years 'Boys were placed at the age of 14 as assistants in Indigo Factories, apprentices to Pilots and Tradesmen, and servants to gentlemen. There were many instances of girls sent out at the age of 12, to take service with ladies or with milliners. They were in much demand as wives'.<sup>19</sup>

A formal scheme to train boys as apothecaries to work in Bengal Army Regiments was commenced in 1812. They began as compounders and dressers, and could rise to become apothecaries and even sub-assistant surgeons. Apothecaries were of warrant officer rank, and this profession became one of the highest to which a Eurasian boy could aspire. By 1824 boys were placed as 'apprentices in the Commissariat or Stud Departments, as Musicians for Bands [*cf. back cover illustration*], in the Pilot Service, &c. or they are apprenticed to private individuals'. In 1839 four boys of the Lower Orphan School were placed on board Her Majesty's ship *Conway*, under an engagement from the commander, Captain Bethune, that so far as he had the power, they should be kept in Her Majesty's service until old enough to choose a profession. This experiment was successful, so far as was known to the managers. It was believed the boys went to England with the ship. In 1849 a School of Industry was established at the Free School. Printing, Tailoring, Shoe-making, Carpentry and Book binding were all taught. The Carpenter's and Shoemaker's shops were closed in 1857 as they entailed considerable loss to the School and the others followed later, printing alone surviving till 1895.<sup>20</sup>

At the Lawrence Military Asylum there was 'an Electric Telegraph the instrument and materials for which have been given by the Government. It is worked by the pupils daily.

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<sup>19</sup> Grace, *Code*, p377; *Asiatic Journal*, vol 10, 1820, p589; Lushington, App 11, pl; Church Missionary Society, *Missionary Register for 1816*, (London, 1816); *Calcutta Review*, vol 11, 1849, p76 and vol 45, 1867, p316; LDS film 0498606; Christopher Hawes, *Poor Relations* (Richmond, 1996), p167; Free School Society, *A Brief History of the Calcutta Free School* (1921), p3.

<sup>20</sup> General Order by the Governor-General, 15 June 1812 in *Calcutta Gazette*, 3 July 1812; Lushington, p263; *Parliamentary Papers*, House of Commons, East India, vol xxxiv, 1845, p152. More details about Apothecaries, who were part of the Subordinate Medical Department, may be found on the FIBIS Fibiwiki webpage 'Apothecary'.

Statistics at the end of 1857 show 10 boys had entered this occupation. A limited number of the most promising boys were trained as pupil teachers from the age of 14 or 15 with the view to becoming qualified to enter, at age 18 or 19, the Normal [Teacher Training] School, established by Government in connection with the Lawrence Military Asylum, which provided trained Schoolmasters for the European Army in Bengal. There was also a similar Normal School for the girls. At the end of 1857 4 boys and 3 girls had been trained. The largest number of boys, 13, had joined the Subordinate Medical Department as trainee Apothecaries. Other occupations were Soldiers 9, Clerks 7, Survey 1. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the expansion of the railways and large numbers of apprentices for the workshops and running crews were recruited from the European Orphanages.<sup>21</sup>

In 1866 it was said of the Free School:

The education given is of a plain practical character, and the boys generally become signallers in the Telegraph department, assistant apothecaries, writers in Government offices and mercantile houses, overseers of plantations, or obtain employment on Railways and in printing establishment's, printing being an art successfully taught in the School.

It seems likely that the boys from the Lawrence Military Asylum pursued similar occupations with the addition of Army careers, including Regimental Schoolmasters. In 1882 six boys in the band at the L.M.A. were recruited by the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment which was then stationed nearby, to play in the band. A Cadet Corps was formed at the Free School in 1875, so from that time it could be expected some boys from the Free School also joined the Army. From 1859 onwards, boys who joined the Army, including Army Schoolmasters, joined the British Army. They were moved frequently and could be to be posted to many localities in Asia or Great Britain, including Ireland. They frequently ended up living in Great Britain.<sup>22</sup>

## Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Joss O'Kelly, Peter Bailey and Dr John Roberts for a number of references. Dr Roberts also advised about the location of the Military Burying Ground.

## Records for tracing your ancestors

The principal sources are listed in Part 1 (*FIBIS Journal*, no 22, p12). To them may be added:

- The *Register of Marriages* at the Lawrence Military Asylum (see note 17 above).
- A card Index at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, relating to the Bengal Pilot Service and to Bengal Orphans 1780-1840. NMM ref: Percy Smith Collection MSS/88/006, part of item 29. The index is arranged alphabetically by name of orphan, with details such as date of birth, baptised, name of father and occasionally more details such as where apprenticed, etc. A cross reference card at the front of the index reads 'see also Alipore schools' which may possibly refer to further material in one of the Percy-Smith collections held in other institutions.

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<sup>21</sup> LMA, *Brief Account*, pp33, 66, and App p x; David Arnold, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol 7, no 2 (1979), p112.

<sup>22</sup> *Calcutta Review*, vol 43, 1866, p62; John Mackenzie-Rogan, *Fifty Years of Army Music*, (London, 1926), p88; *Calcutta Free School*, op.cit., p8.

## Main Sources (other sources are cited in full in the footnotes)

- Bengal Military Orphan Society 'The Bengal Military Orphan Society', *Calcutta Review*, vol 44, pp151-182, and vol 45, pp296-316 (1866-67). Google Books. Several other volumes of the *Calcutta Review* have useful material as shown in the footnotes.
- Free School Society *A Brief History of the Calcutta Free School up to 1920 in Collection of Pamphlets on Anglo Indians* (1921). My copy from the University of Pennsylvania.
- Lawrence Military Asylum *Brief Account of The Past Ten Years of the Institution Established in the Himalayas by Sir H.M. Lawrence for the Orphan and Other Children of European Soldiers Serving, Or Having Served in India* (1858). Google Books. [Cited as LMA, *Brief Account*]
- Lushington, Charles *The history, design and present state of the religious, benevolent and charitable Institutions, founded by the British in Calcutta and its vicinity* (Calcutta, 1824). Google Books
- Grace, Henry *The code of military standing regulations of the Bengal Establishment* (Calcutta, 1791) particularly pp311-25, and 377; and *The Continuation or supplement of the Code of Bengal military regulations* (Calcutta, 1799), pp350-98.

## How People May Live and Not Die in India

By Florence Nightingale<sup>1</sup>

[Florence Nightingale was a passionate advocate of improved sanitation and barrack accommodation for troops stationed in India; and indeed urged that the benefits of better sanitation, and also of irrigation, should be extended to the Indian people generally, partly on the grounds that disease and ill health could not be eradicated in cantonments while it remained endemic in the surrounding country. She had lobbied for the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of the Army in India to which she refers in the first sentence below, and urged sanitary and other reforms on successive Viceroys from Sir John Lawrence appointed in 1864 to the Earl of Elgin appointed in 1894. On the publication of the Royal Commission's report in 1863 she wrote a paper on it which was read for her to a meeting of the Social Science Association and published under the above title. It was reprinted in 1864, this time with the Preface which is reproduced here because of the interesting picture it gives of the army life of the ordinary soldier – though perhaps somewhat idealized even for those enjoying the improved conditions which she describes. Ed.<sup>2</sup>]

### Preface

The report of the Royal Commissioners on the sanitary condition of the Indian army was signed on May 19th, 1863. The following short abstract of some of the leading principles in that Report was read at the Edinburgh meeting of the Social Science Association held in October of the same year. It is now reprinted in consequence of many applications made

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<sup>1</sup> London, Longmans, 1864. BL ref: Mic.A.11040(15). Original in Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> I have based these remarks on Patricia Mowbray, *Florence Nightingale and the Viceroys, A Campaign for the Health of the Indian People* (London, Haus Books, 2008).

for copies, on the ground that the paper had been found useful for soldiers and others interested in the Indian health question. Since the inquiry of the Royal Commission was begun, several great measures advocated in the Report and urged in the following pages, have been carried out. A Commission of Health has been appointed for each Presidency. And one of these Commissions, that for Bengal, has given public evidence of the zeal with which it has entered on its work. These authorities have been put into communication with the Barrack and Hospital Improvement Commission at the War Office, which now contains members representing the India Government. And by this time the India Commissions have been put in possession of all the more recent results of sanitary works and measures which have been of use at home.

The military authorities in India have also been actively engaged in improving the soldier's condition. And several of the worst personal causes of ill-health to which the soldier was in former times exposed have been or are being removed. The introduction of soldiers' gardens, trades, and workshops, which was begun in India a number of years since, has seen its happy results. The men have begun to find out that it is better to work than to sleep and to drink, even during the heat of the day.

One regiment marching into a station, where cholera had been raging for two years, were "chaffed" by the regiments marching out, and told they would never come out of it alive. The men of the entering battalion answered, they would see; we won't have cholera, they think. And they made gardens with such good effect that they had the pleasure, not only of eating their own vegetables, but of being paid for them too by the Commissariat. And this in a soil which no regiment had been able to cultivate before. And not a man had cholera. These good soldiers fought against disease, too, by workshops and gymnasia.

At a few hill stations the men have covered the whole hill-sides with their gardens.

Government gives prizes to the best gardeners. And means of employment and occupation for the troops are being everywhere extended.

As for trades, I have seen the balance sheets of 82 battalions of infantry, and of five regiments of cavalry in Bengal, for six months ending June, 1863; and these brave fellows are actually making money. The wages paid to men for working in the half-year were £28,237.

The balance from preceding half-year	£3,203
Amount realised for work last six months	£55,426
Value of stock on hand	<u>£17,216</u>
	<u>£75,845</u>

That this money goes not to canteen or bazaar is shown by the savings banks. One battalion returning to England took £7,000 with it in its savings bank. Of 26 other infantry regiments, none had less than £3,000, nine had £4,000, five had £5,000 and up to £6,000 in theirs.

But want of accommodation in barracks for workshops has, alas, fettered this great progress.



At gymnastics the men get strength to bear the heat, though Highland regiments cannot quite rival themselves at games in the Highlands. The men are paraded for gymnastics at first, but like the exercise so much that they continue it of their own accords. Again, however, want of cover for gymnasia in barracks puts a stop to what otherwise might be done.

Cricket is general; fives, single-stick, and other manly games are common.

In short, work and all kinds of exercise cause sickly men to flourish. One regiment, sick of scurvy, and not recovering even at one of the healthiest stations, was cured by working at a mountain road in the rains, with only temporary huts for shelter.

Soldiers' libraries are everywhere supplied by Government. Bengal regiments generally manage to have some kind of reading-room; but reading rooms specially constructed for their object are few.

Better cook-houses, cleaner cooking, are being introduced; and soldiers are taught to cook.

In the mean time, the regulation two drams have been reduced to one. The one dram is to be diluted with water. A Legislative Act imposes a heavy fine or imprisonment on the illicit sale of spirits near cantonments. Government supplies good beer, and plenty of it. Where there are recreation rooms, refreshments (prices all marked) are spread on a nice clean table. This the men like very much. And decrease in drink may be very much attributed to increase of useful work and of play, as the Commander-in-Chief in India himself says.

The practical result of these reforms is, then, that the soldier's time is more profitably occupied than formerly — and that intemperance and crime have visibly diminished.

So far for the soldier's habits.

But the main causes of disease in India, want of drainage, want of water-supply, for stations and towns, want of proper barracks and hospitals, remain as before in all their primitive perfection. Of this there is no doubt.

The above-mentioned improvements have removed several of the causes of disease enumerated in the Report of the Royal Commission. And they have also, happily, taken away some of the point in this paper.

Nevertheless it has been thought best to reprint it as read, because there are stations where little or nothing has been done in improving the soldier's habits, and because the great work of civilization in India has yet to be begun. It is moreover to be feared that little amendment has taken place in the self-indulgent eating and drinking habits of the European population generally.

While thankfully acknowledging the excellent beginning made, since the advent to power of the present noble Governor-General of India\*, enough remains to justify this reprint.

F.N. *August, 1864*

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\* Sir John Lawrence who had reached India in January of that year. Before leaving he had visited Nightingale and the interview had gone well.

## Two Unusual Accidents on the Eastern Bengal Railway

By Miles Macnair

The idea of a railway from Calcutta to Dacca was originally suggested in 1855, the main motive being to provide a route for transporting soldiers into Burma without a sea voyage, which 'implied pollution for the higher caste troops'.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Bengal Railway was formed in 1857, and by 1862 just over 110 miles of standard broad gauge (5' 6") track had been laid from the Calcutta terminus at Sealdah to Kustia on the Ganges.<sup>2</sup> The railway had an excellent pedigree. The consulting engineer in London was no less a figure than Isambard Kingdom Brunel; this was one of his last contracts and he charged £750 for his services to the English board<sup>3</sup>. The prime contractor was the equally distinguished Thomas Brassey.<sup>4</sup> For motive power, the company turned to Sharp Stewart & Co. of Manchester who delivered twenty neat little tender locomotives of the 2-4-0 wheel configuration.<sup>5</sup>

One of the first civilians to benefit from the building of the railway was my great-great grandfather, James Hills. He had made his first fortune as an indigo planter in the years after 1821 and had built an imposing Palladian style mansion for himself and his large family at Neechindapore, about 80 miles north-east of Calcutta in what is now Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the railway opening, the journey from Calcutta took four days by river boat; after 1862 it could usually be done in a few hours. But not on one particular day in 1864. The tale is told by my great-grandmother, Veronica Harriet Pugh, in her journal, a fascinating record of her family history and her own early years in India between 1844 and 1881.

"We were there in the great cyclone of 1864. Tottie (*Veronica's sister*) and William Cubitt, with their little son Willie Martin, had come to stay with us [*at Circular Road*] on their way to Neechindapore where we were all going for the Durga Pooja holidays in October. We were to have started by the 7 a.m. train and a great discussion took place the night before as to whether we should take provisions for the journey. Tottie, who always did things very comfortably, said 'certainly', so tiffin [*lunch*] baskets were ordered and everything got ready for an early start.

The weather was threatening but we thought nothing of it till next morning when any thought of starting was an impossibility, and all our energies were required to save our house from being blown away. It was a curious house with 5 rooms all facing south, both

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<sup>1</sup> J N Westwood, *Railways of India* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> An excellent summary of the history of the railway is available on the Fibiwiki.

<sup>3</sup> R A Buchanan, *Brunel* (London, Hambledon and London, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> The original contract and specification accepted by Brassey, Paxton, Wythes and Henfrey on 31 Dec 1858 can be seen on an IOR file: L/AG/46/10/2; and photographs of EBR engines are available in IOR: Mss Eur F290/132.

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Hughes, *Indian Locomotive*, Pt 1 *Broad Gauge 1851-1940* (Harrow, Continental Railway Circle, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> A photograph of the house, portraits of his children and brief details of his life were published in *FIBIS Journal* 21, Spring 2009.

upstairs and down. The centre one on the ground floor was the dining-room with the drawing-room above, and two others on each side. Room after room of these we had to relinquish, dragging the beds and furniture into the drawing-room and barricading the windows and doors. About mid-day it was at its worst, but it gradually subsided about 3 o'clock and the servants were able to light fires and get us some food.<sup>7</sup>

I don't remember how we managed to spend the night or how we slept, but we were glad enough next morning to start our journey and get away from our dilapidated house. We were due at Neechindapore for 'tiffin', but alas, the train due to start the day before had been blown right over on its side and it took the best part of the day to clear the line. So it was midnight before we reached Chuadangah. We had demolished the contents of our tiffin baskets early in the day, Willy having given a portion to the poor guard and engine driver who had not had food for thirty hours and who were hugely grateful.

At Chuadangah there were no palkees or horses, so Lewis (*Veronica's husband*) went on ahead to the Glassfords while my brother-in-law was left in charge of us at the station. Mr Glassford had gone to bed, when Lewis walked straight in and woke him up and explained our predicament. He at once got up and got hold of coolies etc. and had us conveyed to his house, where the furniture and accommodation were scanty and primitive, but we were thankful for the shelter and our supper. He was very relieved when Tottie and I said we much preferred beer to tea.

Next morning, after being entertained with the greatest kindness and hospitality, we proceeded on our way to Neechindapore, a very tedious journey but nothing to that of the night before from the station to Mr Glassford's, as the road was blocked by fallen trees. My father was extremely relieved to see us as he had hardly expected that we could have started at all."

I found this incident so eccentric and so charming that I commissioned an artist friend Robin Barnes to reconstruct the moment of 'sharing the tiffin basket' with the crew of the derailed train. The scene may be entirely imaginary but the details of the locomotive are strictly accurate, Robin having unearthed the original plans of the Sharp Stewart engines from the archives of the National Railway Museum in York.

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<sup>7</sup> The house was rendered uninhabitable by the storm and Veronica and her husband moved to 9 Elysium Road on their return.



Chuadangah station would be the scene of another bizarre accident a few years later, when a Roman Catholic priest was attacked and mauled to death by a tiger.<sup>8</sup> The station-master, with a strange attention to topographical precision, telegraphed Calcutta as follows:

TIGER KILLED POPE. NUMBER 2 PLATFORM. WIRE INSTRUCTIONS

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<sup>8</sup> *Memoirs of Lewis Pugh Evans Pugh* (1865-1920). Unpublished. The author was Veronica and Lewis's son.

## **For the Sake of a Hyphen: in search of the Flower-Mellings**

*By Tina Davies*

My father, who died in 1996, was Ronald Maurice Flower-Melling and the following is as much as I know about the family so far. Some may say I shouldn't be researching them at all as my father was adopted and, as yet, I have no way of knowing whether or not he was actually a Melling, albeit an illegitimate one. Shortly before he died he told me his mother's name was Agnes Whitehead but unfortunately I am not sure where he was born and have not been able to locate his birth certificate which, according to my brother, my father destroyed. Having obtained his service records from the Royal Air Force, I had hoped this would show some detail, but no such luck. I assume that as he enlisted whilst in India, the usual checks were not carried out. However, I spoke to an 'expert' at the Society of Genealogists who assured me that I must consider the Mellings as my family in the absence of any other and as my father was brought up as a Melling. Hence my subsequent research.

'What Colour was her hair? What colour eyes did she have? How tall was she? Was she nice?' So it went on until patience wore thin and I was told to go and do something else. I must have been eight or nine at the time and this is one of my earliest memories of quizzing one or other of my long suffering parents about their forebears. I was never quite satisfied as sometimes the answers, especially from my father, were less than complete, but thus began my lifelong interest in history generally and family history particularly, and over the years I made notes of any bits of information I managed to glean.

One of the first things I learned and which has been evident again and again, was how many stories are told within families and how many of them are either altogether untrue or only contain a small shred of truth. This applies not just to the Melling side of my family but also to my mother's family, the Dunbars.

I always had the intention of pursuing my roots but it was many years before I had the time to do any serious research and I started with the three Flower-Melling ancestors I knew of: my gt-grandfather Samuel, his son Maurice, and Maurice's wife Diana Vale and I decided to look for Samuel first. I knew nothing about him except that he had been in the Pilot Service in India, but not where, and as I didn't know his place of birth I started with the UK BMDs but didn't find a single Flower-Melling before myself. I then started looking at just 'Melling', and there were hundreds, almost all of whom were in Lancashire and indeed I found that there is at least one and possibly two places named Melling. There were dozens of Samuels and as I had no way of knowing which was 'my' Samuel or what sort of age he had been at his son Maurice's birth, I decided I would have to change tactics and find Maurice first, so trekked up to London to make my first foray into the records at the 'India Office' of the British Library.

I had known for a long time that there were records at the British Library although I was uncertain as to what these might be. I imagined they were mainly dry civil service notes and letters until in 2003, I went to a Family History event in London's Westminster where I

came across the FIBIS stand. A few minutes later I was talking to Peter Bailey who promptly signed me up as a member and enlightened me quite a bit as to what I might find at the BL. My first impression of the IOR was that it was fairly intimidating and for several minutes I had no idea where to go, where to look, what *to do*, but fortunately just as I was about to panic, I remembered Peter had mentioned the biographical card index so I anxiously looked round for these and was fairly relieved when I eventually focussed on the little drawers.

On this maiden visit I spent a large amount of time looking through the cards and still remember the excitement of finding the first bit of information – the only thing was, it wasn't new information as it was a record of my parents' marriage. However, this 'find' buoyed me up and kept me going for the next several hours during which I found the births of two of my siblings and also my cousins. And so it began. Towards the end of the day I decided to be bolder and started to explore the N/1 series (i.e. the Bengal baptisms, marriages and burials) as I believed most of my family, on both sides, had lived in Calcutta. Again, I only found the births of my siblings. Disappointed, I was wondering what to do next when I remembered that gt-grandfather Samuel had worked as a ship's Pilot in Bombay, thus his children may have been born there, so with great anticipation I took out the N/3 (Bombay bmb) volume for 'M' and started looking for his son Maurice's birth.

As I had no idea when he was born I started from twenty years before my own father's birth and found a likely entry which I noted down before looking for the corresponding microfilm. The next hurdle was mastering the technique required to operate the viewer! Fortunately one of the staff showed me what to do and I rather clumsily got the thing going. I was thrilled to find Maurice's birth in 1879 and to know at last who his mother was, as well as the when and where, and took a copy of the baptismal entry, again assisted by one of the staff. An interesting discovery from this entry was that Maurice was baptised '*Maurice Melling*', not Flower-Melling as I had expected and 'Flower' was not part of his name at all. Before I could get much further time ran out and I had to leave to catch my train back to Wiltshire. Although I didn't uncover a lot of information on that first visit, I determined to make regular visits in the future and one thing I had learnt was that I needed to be prepared with a list of specific items to research, rather than spend the time randomly looking through the records in the hope of coming across some piece of relevant information.

I knew Maurice had been a civil engineer working on bridges and roads and according to my father he worked mainly in northern and central India - often employed by local princes, sometimes working in areas both remote and largely unexplored. From time to time during school holidays my father accompanied him, camping out in jungle areas. I particularly looked for both my grandparents, Maurice and Diana, as I knew for sure they had lived in Calcutta but could find no further record for either of them in N/1. I also looked for Diana's birth in India, again to no avail. Meanwhile, I contacted the Institution of Civil Engineers in London and although the archivist searched the records for me, there was no trace of Maurice so perhaps he never joined the Institution or officially qualified as a civil engineer. Of Maurice's death, my father told me he had not been notified until about six months after the event and he never knew where he was buried. Not finding Maurice Melling in the N/1

records I looked in N/3 and eventually found that he had died from pneumonia in 1938 at the age of 59, had 'no occupation' and was buried in Sewri Cemetery in a suburb of Bombay (Mumbai).



*Maurice Melling and his son Ronald Flower-Melling.  
Both taken about 1931 by Bourne & Shepherd, Calcutta.*

My grandmother, Diana, died of tuberculosis when my father was about 21 or so, around 1931, but searches for a 10 year span around that date revealed no burial record and despite searches in all the 'N' series, no death entry has come to light. I then remembered that my grandmother's real name was not Diana but Daisy which she disliked enough to change, so I looked for Daisy Melling but still without success. I then

spent a major part of yet another visit to the British Library looking for her birth details, again to no avail. Finally, I searched the UK BMDs and did indeed find her birth in 1885 in Bermondsey, East London. Her father, William Henry Vale, was a bottle blower and her mother was Frances Ann Johnson, or possibly Starnes, one of those annoyingly indistinct names which has been written incorrectly and the writer has corrected the error by writing over the original word. Feeling I was making real progress I looked for the marriage of Daisy and Maurice which I found had taken place in Camberwell, South London in 1907.

At a much later date, whilst searching the Incoming Passenger Lists at the National Archives I came across Maurice and Daisy Melling returning to England from Bombay on the P&O ship *Maloja* on 9 May 1913. Maurice's occupation is listed as 'Engineer' and they have with them their 'infant son Donald'. Working out the dates, Donald would have been about two years old, but to my knowledge their only child was my father, Ronald. Could the person recording the details have misheard Ronald for Donald? Perhaps, but it raises another question as my father, Ronald, was supposed to have been born in 1909 or 1910 depending on which of my parents I was talking to at the time.

There are no other undisputed records of journeys to or from India, although I know my father went to boarding school in Shillong when he was seven years old so they must have returned at some time. However, according to the Outgoing Passenger Lists at [findmypast.com](http://findmypast.com) three Mellings travelled to Bombay on the P&O ship *Persia* in March 1909; a male and female both listed as married and another male who was single. Unfortunately there are no first names or ages recorded so it is impossible to know if this is Maurice and

Daisy with one of Maurice's siblings, or are they with a young child, or are they nothing whatsoever to do with me?

Now I turned my attention back to Maurice's father Samuel, but during subsequent visits to the British Library could not find a birth for him in India. I did however find that Maurice's mother, Jane Maria Ellis, was born in Bombay in 1861 and married Samuel in 1877 also in Bombay. She was the daughter of Thomas Ellis, Captain of the ship *Tiptree*, and Alexina Bremner-Ferguson. Samuel and Jane had a second son, John, born in 1880. I then found six other children of Samuel's but with another wife so searched for Jane Maria Ellis' death, which occurred in 1882 when she was only 20. Her parents had lived in Colaba, Bombay which coincidentally I had visited myself some years ago. They were married in 1859 when Alexina was 20 and Thomas was 38 and, although I found Thomas's death in Bombay in 1877 at the age of 57 – from 'chronic morbus brightii'<sup>1</sup>, I have not yet traced Alexina's death.

As to Samuel and Jane's second son John, apart from his birth details I have found almost nothing except that he too was baptised without 'Flower' as part of his name. John, I had been told, had emigrated to Australia at some point and although there is a record in the [findmypast.com](http://findmypast.com) Outgoing Passenger Lists of a John Melling sailing from London to Fremantle, Australia on the ss 'Osterley' in April 1915, I am not convinced this is 'my' John Melling. Through FIBIS I have been contacted by someone who lives near Sydney, Australia and after some to-ing and fro-ing of emails we have established that we are in fact distant cousins and that she is a Dunbar, sharing the same grandfather, gt-grandmother and possibly gt-gt-grandfather all on my maternal side, and she has sent me details of the birth of what she believes is John's son, Eric Maurice Melling – I hope to verify this and because of the coincidence of the middle name it is certainly an avenue worth exploring.

Still looking for more details on Samuel, I now at least knew his age from the baptismal records of all his children and, having failed to find his birth in India, searched again in the UK BMDs. This time, being able to be more specific about the year of birth, I was able to identify that he had been born in 1851 in Toxteth Park, Liverpool and that he had been registered with the forenames Samuel *Flower* and surname Melling. His father was Thomas Melling, a Blacksmith and his mother was Catherine. I have not discovered when he went to sea or when he emigrated to India, but he must have been in Bombay by 1877 when he married for the first time.

I decided my next research would be to follow up Samuel Melling's six other children by his second wife. She was Eliza Fanny Williams, daughter of John Williams and Anna Maria, born 1859 in Bombay. She and Samuel Flower Melling were married in 1883, just fifteen months after the death of Samuel's first wife Jane Maria. My father had always said that Samuel had 'married the governess' and possibly this is the case as he already had two very young sons to look after. Eliza's father was a Conductor Engineer<sup>2</sup>, but I have not yet found births, deaths or a marriage for him and Anna Maria.

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<sup>1</sup> Bright's Disease – a type of dropsy caused by kidney disease.

<sup>2</sup> For the army rank of 'Conductor' see *FIBIS Journal* 18, Autumn 2007, p33.



Samuel and Eliza's children were May Flower in 1885, Annie Clare in 1886, Frederick Richard in 1887, William Frank in 1888, Edith Louise Flower in 1892 and Charles Flower in 1893. I discovered from the 1911 UK Census that there had been one other child who had not survived and for whom I shall now search. I had not found a record of the deaths of Samuel or Eliza at the British Library, or in the FIBIS database which records both of Samuel's marriages, so I looked in the UK BMDs and found that Samuel had died in Eltham, South London, in 1926 and Eliza in 1937 – recorded as Elizabeth Fanny Melling. I now needed to know when they had returned to the UK and searched the Incoming Passenger Lists in the National Archives database, to no avail.

What I did find, however, was the departure of Samuel and Eliza's son William Frank Melling (b 1888) to Bombay from London on the P&O liner *Egypt* in August 1908, so the family must have returned to England prior to that date. At the Library again I looked for a marriage for William Frank without success. In an idle moment I looked through the N/3 (Bombay) deaths and found that William had died in 1915 at the age of 27 of enteric fever being employed at the time as an Executive Engineer by Forbes Forbes Campbell & Co - I have yet to discover what is an Executive Engineer. Not being sure whether all the family had returned to the UK, I looked for all the others – marriages and deaths, in all three 'N' series in case they had moved away from Bombay but found no records. I felt I had come to what I hope is a temporary block at the British Library so started to search the UK records for information and found that Samuel and his family had certainly returned to England by 1907 because their youngest son, Charles Flower, had attended Dulwich College from 1907 until 1910. But more of him later.

Frederick Richard (b 1887) went to the High School for Boys at Panchgani, one of the hill stations north of Bombay (Panch meaning five, and Gani meaning Hill). I think I can assume that all the boys went there and that the girls went to the Girls' High School in Panchgani but I have not yet been able to verify this assumption. Frederick must have enjoyed playing soldiers as he joined the Poona Volunteer Rifles at Panchgani High School, the Bombay Volunteer Rifles and finally, back in England, the University of London Officers' Training Corps before he signed up for the Territorial Force in 1911 and then the Wireless Signal Corps in 1915. Searches at the National Archives have not turned up his service record, possibly because he was an ordinary soldier and many of their records have been lost or destroyed. Frederick died very suddenly in 1925 whilst he was working on a chicken farm in Hampshire and the Coroner's verdict was that he was 'found dead, death being attributed to syncope<sup>3</sup>, accelerated by exhaustion and exposure'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fainting caused by inadequate flow of blood to the brain.

<sup>4</sup> He had never married nor made a Will and in Letters of Administration issued by HM Court Services, York Probate Sub-Registry in York, his estate of £132.18.11d (£3,984.39 today) was awarded to his father Samuel Melling, but as Samuel died within six months further Letters of Administration were issued in favour of his widow, Frederick's mother, Eliza Melling.

Meanwhile, what of the girls in the family? May Flower (b 1885) the eldest, never married and lived with her parents in Eltham, South London, until they died. She was still living in the house when I was born there after the war, my father having been posted to the UK from the Middle East in 1944. In the 1911 Census her occupation is given as Art Student at Camberwell School of Arts. I contacted the archivist there who kindly allowed me to inspect their registers for that period and the Minutes of the College's Governing Body, dated 7 March 1910, recorded a recommendation that an applications should be made to the Board of Education for the award of free studentships to a number of students including M F Melling. Unfortunately the records in the College Library do not go further than 1911 and the Librarian advised that the admission records, which may have revealed what subjects May pursued, were probably with the London Metropolitan Archives – yet another avenue to be explored. May died in the family home in Eltham in 1950.

Annie Clare (b1886) the middle sister, was a complete mystery for a long time, but I at last found her in 1911 UK Census - what a marvellous source of information - alive and well in the house at Eltham, and she too was recorded as being an Art Student at Camberwell College of Art! There was no record of her at the College so I turned my attention to possible marriages, either in the UK or back in India – none. I concluded she must have died at an early age so then started searching the UK BMDs and eventually found she had in fact died in 1925 at the age of 39.

The youngest daughter was Edith Louise Flower (b 1892) whom I know more about than her siblings mainly because my elder brother and sister lived with her at Eltham whilst I was in India with my parents and two other sisters. She was quite elderly by then but told them about her days as a suffragette, and also as a matron in a hospital in Hertfordshire. I found her in the 1911 Census, aged nineteen, working as a governess to the three small children of a vicar in Suffolk, and presume she trained as a nurse after she became 21. In 1952, at the age of 60, Edith married a 69-year old widower and they continued to live in the Melling family home in Eltham. At some later date, her husband having died, Edith moved to Dartford in Kent, where she died in 1972.

Now to Charles Flower (b 1893). Charles was also a student at Panchgani High School for Boys and, having returned to England in or before 1907, attended Dulwich College in South London until 1910. In the 1911 Census he is recorded as living at home with his parents, sisters May and Annie and his brother Frederick. Charles' occupation at the time was as a Probationer with the Ocean Assurance Co Ltd. In letters written by his mother, Eliza, to the School in 1921 and 1922, she says that life in an insurance company did not suit Charles and he left to 'take up life on the stage'. After training it appears he joined a repertory company and toured around England until 1914 when he signed up with the Army. The National Archives have a lovely fat file on him and I spent a very happy afternoon reading through his records. His Short Service Attestation lists his personal statistics together with religion, birthmarks (on left arm but shape unspecified) and vaccination marks. Judging by the two references required, he had 'attained a fair standard of education and was of good moral character'. Initially he joined the Royal Fusiliers, later being posted to the Lancashire Fusiliers in France. He was wounded at La Boisselle in 1916 and was awarded the Military

Cross 'for conspicuous gallantry', an account of which appears in the London Gazette dated 19 August 1916.

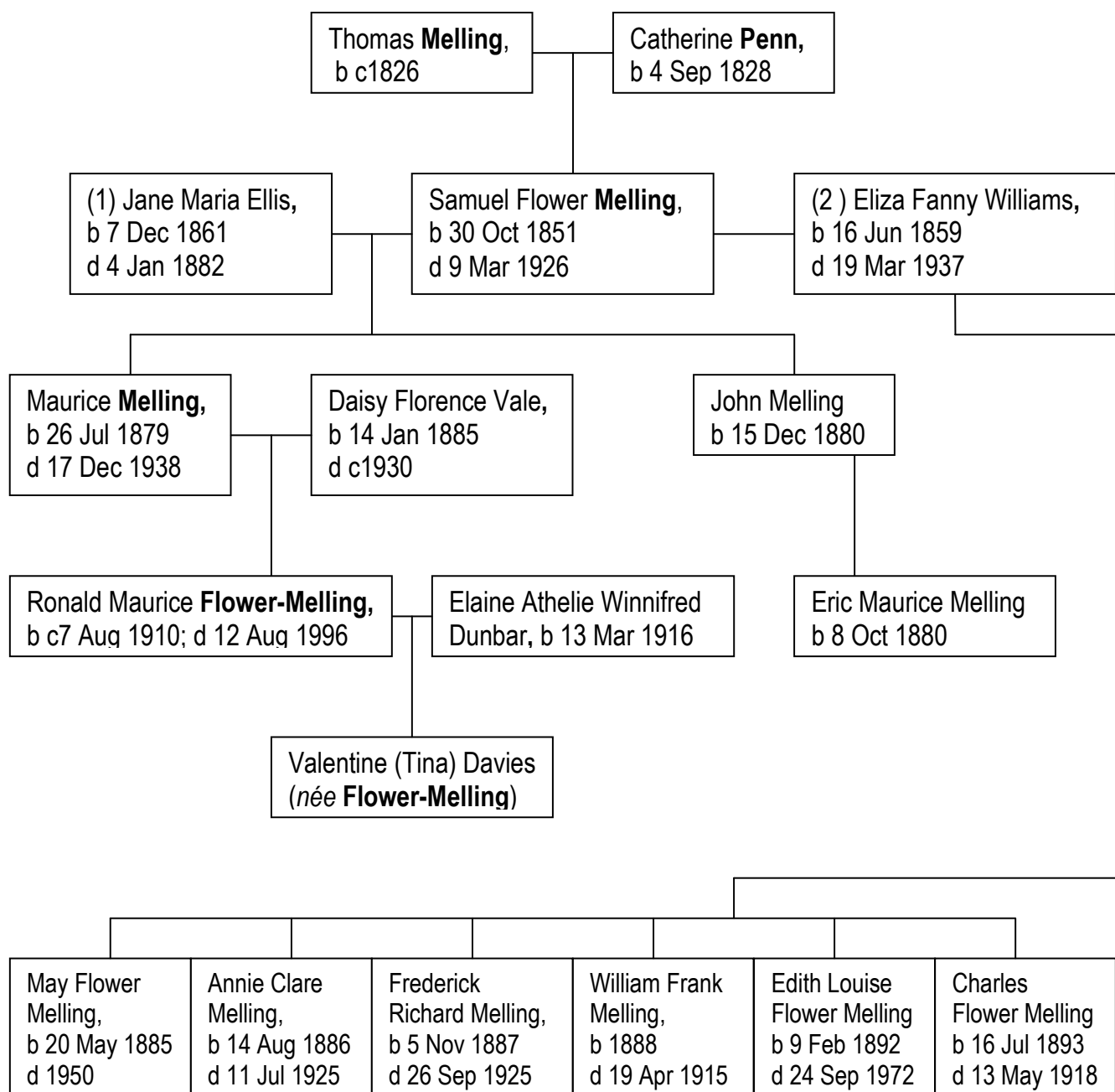
Charles was wounded again at Passchendaele in October 1917 and was sent home to recover. Again, in one of his mother's letters she says that although he was not fully recovered from his wounds he 'expressed the opinion that he "ought to be there" ... he had no particular desire to return but felt as though he were "loafing", lying up when so many others were "in the thick of it".' So, in May 1918, he returned to the Front and wrote home on 5 May saying 'Just going up the Line, cheerio'. In his last letter dated 10 May he wrote 'Just a line to say "Goodbye". If anything happens to me, don't worry' and in a postscript adds 'I am in the dumps, will be better just now'. Captain C F Melling, MC, died on 13 May 1918 but his death was not confirmed until 1922 after receipt of information from the Red Cross in Berlin saying his Army book and other items had been recovered. The file has details of a statement by his batman giving his version of the events surrounding Charles' death. The full details are not known but it is clear he did not die in battle, but was doing a 'recce' on his own after dark, having ordered his batman to return to camp, and was most likely killed by a German sniper. He is commemorated in Ploegsteert Memorial cemetery in Belgium. He is also mentioned several times in *The History of the Lancashire Fusiliers 1914-1918* by Maj-Gen. J C Latter, the relevant pages of which the Curator of The Fusilier Museum in Bury, Lancs, was kind enough to send me but the book itself, unfortunately, is out of print.

Despite all the information I had uncovered about the Mellings, I was still puzzled about the name 'Flower' which Samuel bore, and which he gave to several of his children, and why some but not all? I had determined that I must follow the trail to Liverpool when, out of the blue my nephew, who is not particularly interested in genealogy but is a computer whizz and looks at all and every site known to man, contacted me to say he had found a message on the Ancestry message board from someone wanting to contact anyone with the surname Melling but also with the name Flower as part of their name. I located the message on the Ancestry site, replied, and after several exchanges we swapped email addresses. It turned out that we are related and that my gt-grandfather, Samuel, and her gt-grandfather were brothers and after many friendly communications she sent me details of her own research which showed that the 'Flower' came from Samuel's maternal side: Samuel's mother was Catherine Penn, daughter of Richard Penn and Catherine Flower – one mystery solved!

I feel I have uncovered all the basic details of the Mellings in India, but there is still much further research to be done on Samuel and Maurice and possibly also William. Peter Bailey has been very helpful in steering me towards other sources of information at the British Library and I am working up the courage to search through some of the other documents there although I find, and perhaps others do also, that just looking at the rows of shelves with their great tomes is extremely daunting! Perhaps I shall take a leaf out of Gt Uncle Charles' book and stop loafing around as I too feel I ought to be there.

Something I will never know for certain is how the Melling surname was somehow turned into *Flower*-Melling. My father must have done this at some point but as he is no longer here to ask and I cannot trace his birth details I can only speculate. Perhaps Maurice and Daisy gave him 'Flower' as one of his forenames which, after destroying his birth certificate, he then added to his surname to form the double barrelled version. Or perhaps not; but - for the sake of a hyphen ... much time was lost.

## Melling Family Tree



## M.I.C.E. in the branches: a family history work in progress

*By Hugh Wilding*

When Peter Bailey, FIBIS Chairman, asked me at the November 2008 AGM if I would be prepared to talk about Indian railways at the May 2009 FIBIS Open Meeting, I knew, *inter alia*, that this was the spur I needed to get to grips with my great-grandfather's career as a civil engineer with the Public Works Department in India.

The fruit of almost fifteen years of research, albeit on a hobby basis, I already had a fairly good idea of my ancestor's life. Bernard William Cantopher<sup>1</sup>, the son of William Edwin Cantopher and Louisa Theresa (Jones), was born at Ryland Place, Birmingham on 14 February 1853, and 10 days later was baptised a Roman Catholic at St. Peter's Chapel, Broad Street, Birmingham. Two sisters followed but sadly Bernard's mother died shortly after giving birth to her fourth child early in 1858. With two sons and two daughters to look after, it is no surprise that William re-married quickly although not before the youngest, John Philip, had also died.

Family notes have it that Bernard was educated in the Preparatory School at Lytham, Lancashire and then at Mount St. Mary's College, Chesterfield, but I have been unable to verify either statement. I do know that he boarded at Stonyhurst College, Clitheroe, Lancashire between 1868 and 1871 and that he passed his 'London Matric' examination in June 1871. Two months later, Bernard entered Glasgow University to study Engineering under Professor Rankin, but stayed only for two years and so did not formally graduate.

Bernard's father, William, was a 'certified' teacher who had been born in Calcutta in 1825 and whose three siblings still lived and worked there. Two of them were involved with Catholic schools in Bengal and perhaps it was they who encouraged William to return to Calcutta with his new wife and start out afresh. Precisely when is not clear although I have been unable to identify William as present for the UK 1861 Census. Eventually, William was to become Headmaster of Hooghly Collegiate School before retiring and returning to the UK in 1892. He died in London in 1899.

It is possible that in due course Bernard received similar encouragement to 'look east' because in 1873 he proceeded to India to take up an appointment as a civil engineer in the Public Works Department of the Government of India. However, friendships made as a student in Glasgow must have endured: on 30 October 1876 he married, in St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Glasgow, Mariquita Engracia Marguerita López Guibara<sup>2</sup>, the second daughter of Richard López Guibara, a Gibraltarian who had established himself as a Commission Merchant in Glasgow.

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<sup>1</sup> Cantopher, probably Dutch in origin, is an unusual surname that is possibly unique. The earliest (c 1790) reference that I have come across is to Manuel Cantopher, HEIC printer at Calcutta, who undertook the first printing and publishing (on a subscription basis) of the *Asiatic Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> The Anglicisation of the Spanish Guevara, this is a unique surname when encountered in British civil registration in the C19 and C20. The surname is now extinct in the UK.

The same family notes gave the children of the union as:

<b>Table 1</b> Children of Bernard Cantopher		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Where born</i>	<i>Date of birth</i>
William Joseph	Ahmednuggar, Deccan, India	19 Apr 1881
George Herbert	Berhampore, Bengal, India	16 Dec 1882
Mary Muriel	Calcutta, India	25 Nov 1885
Hilda Mary	Glasgow, Scotland	05 Jun 1890
Sybil Mary	Pegu, Burma	14 Aug 1892

but from elsewhere in the family came photographs taken of entries in a family bible. These showed a further two children who had been born and died (in India) as infants. Bernard himself died in South Norwood, London from bronchitis on 4 February 1911, aged 57. His widow, Mariquita, died in Ealing, London on 15 January 1937, aged 81.

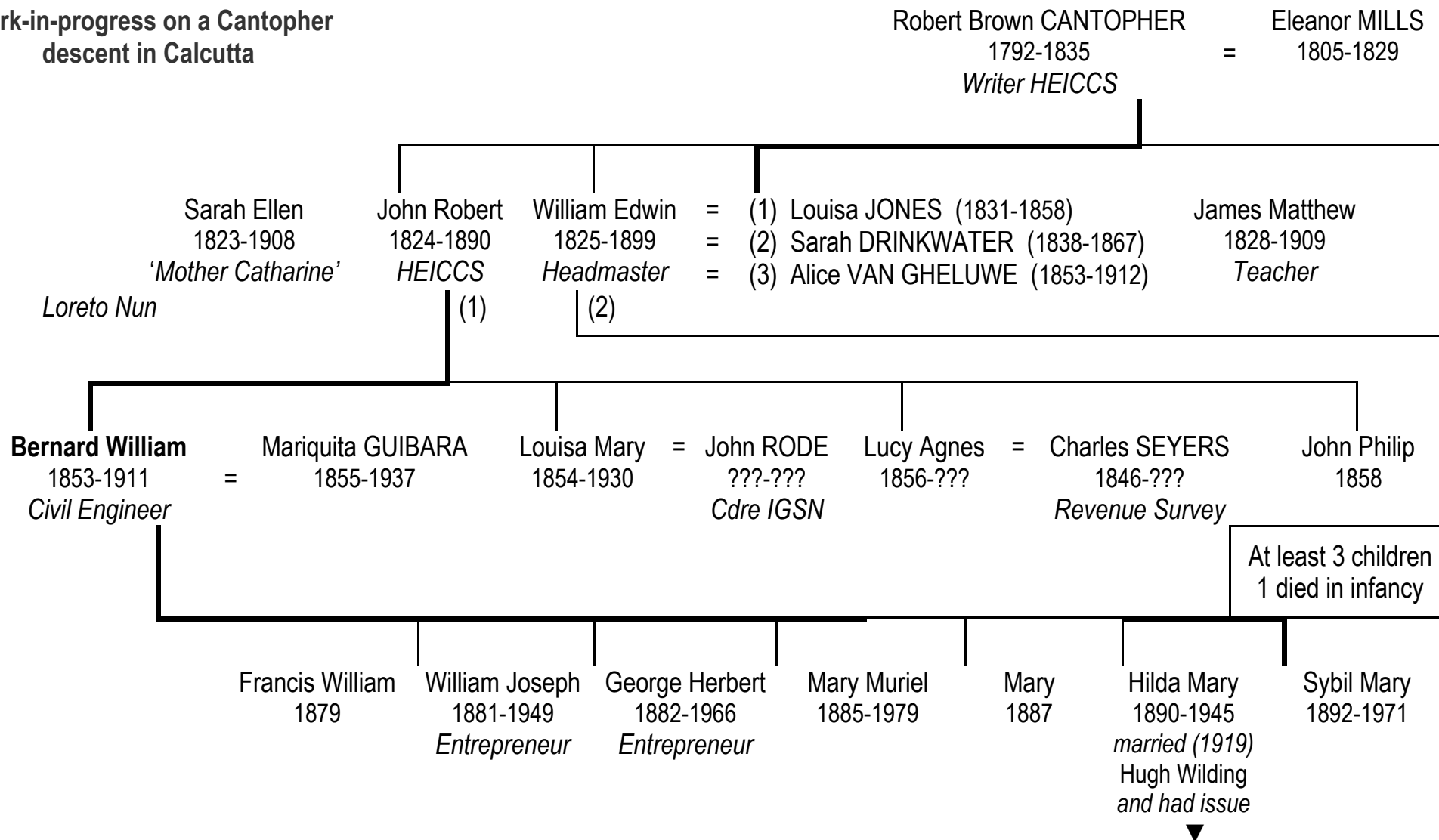
My first forays to the British Library, to delve into the mysteries of the India Office Records, must have coincided with the setting up of FIBIS itself, 10 years ago, and were, as I recall, timorous affairs in which I confined myself to the biographical index cards, *Thacker's Directories* and the *India List*. Later, encouraged to 'have a go', I began systematically extracting Cantopher entries from the BMB Indexes to the Ecclesiastical Returns, and later still, began to spin the microfilm reels and transcribe the all-important entries that I found. Yet, for some reason, I still held back from any serious exploration of my great-grandfather's career as a civil engineer on various Indian railways.

That is not to say, however, that I did not enjoy success: the biographical index cards<sup>3</sup> had information about other and earlier Cantophers which was invaluable in its own right. Being Catholic inevitably meant that coverage in the Ecclesiastical Returns was patchy. Catholic priests in and around Calcutta seemed to be more conscientious about their civil duties than those out on the Deccan plateau who perhaps tended to face Goa rather than London when rendering unto Caesar. I also found *Thacker's* to be extremely useful. There is little point in describing blow-by-blow how I proceeded since Richard Morgan has splendidly covered this recently in *FIBIS Fact File No 3 Indian Directories*. Suffice it to say that I adopted a technique of extracting all Cantopher entries at five yearly intervals. For Bernard, I ended up with the following table of movement:

<b>Table 2</b> Entries in Thacker's Directory		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Full entry in List of Residents</i>
1875	Mhow	Cantopher, B.W., asst. engr., Holkar & Neemuch S. ry., Mhow.
1880	Barnagore	Cantopher, B W, asst engrn, H and N S ry, Barnagore divn.
1885	Bengal	Cantopher, B W, CE, exe engr, tempy ry br[an]ch, Bengal
1890		Cantopher, B.W., C.E., exe. engr., on leave.
1895	Rangoon	Cantopher, B.W., Rangoon.
1901	Rajiberi	Cantopher, B.W., exe.-engr., E.B.S. ry., Rajiberi

<sup>3</sup> The information on these cards has now been uploaded into the India Office Records Family Search database: [indiafamily.bl.uk/](http://indiafamily.bl.uk/).

Work-in-progress on a Cantopher  
descent in Calcutta



Not only does this provide a basic employment history but there is also a useful correlation between the dates and locations in this table and those of the births of Bernard's children.

One source that I recall stumbling across during this period of my research was the 'Record of Service', generally to be found at the back of the *India List* from about 1886 on. This section by 1905 amounted to 230 pages and contained brief career summaries of some 4,500 'Officers of the Home Establishment of the Secretary of State, Officers of the Covenanted Civil Service, and those appointed under the Native Civil Service Rules, other Officers in Civil Employment in India whose substantive pay is at least Rs. 1,000 a month, and with a few exceptions, all Officers of those classes who have retired since 1886.' Basically this means that most senior and middle-ranking public servants will be there, but not the more lowly ones. Leafing idly through the 1905 *India List*<sup>4</sup>, as one does, I was astonished to find:

CANTOPHER, Bernard William, M.I.C.E., late India Public Works Dept. – Apptd. to the dept., 29th Aug., 1873, and posted to state railways; transfd. to Bengal, Aug., 1881; again employed on railways, from Nov., 1883; exec. engr., May, 1884; services lent to Mahratta railway co., 1888-89; offg. engr.-in-chief, Burma state railway, Sept.-Dec., 1893; retd., Oct., 1901.

By using this information and that gleaned from *Thacker's*, I was beginning to see a picture emerge of my great grandfather's career which had spanned 28 years from 1873 to 1901; which had mainly been spent on various Indian state railways – Holkar & Neemuch, Mahratta, Burma and Eastern Bengal being those specifically mentioned; which had involved a period of leave (probably in the UK); and which had seen him achieve a reasonable financial position<sup>5</sup> and professional recognition in his chosen career.

In one of those curious coincidences that ancestral research so often throws up, Bernard Cantopher left his pregnant wife with her family in Glasgow (where she was to give birth to my grandmother, Hilda Mary) and returned from furlough in June 1890, being posted to the State Railway in Burma. By that time, the British had annexed Upper Burma but were plagued by bands of rebels and *dacoits* (brigands) based in Wuntho, a native state. Eventually in 1891 a force of 1,800 British troops under General Sir George Wolseley occupied Wuntho in a police action and the state was annexed in 1892. Among the soldiers was a young subaltern, Charles Arthur Wilding,<sup>6</sup> who had been in Burma since 1889 on secondment from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. I have no knowledge of whether Engineer Cantopher ever met Lt Wilding but the latter's second cousin once removed (my grandfather) was to marry the former's baby daughter (my grandmother) in 1919.

Do not, however, confuse 'Record of Service' with 'History of Service' as I did. The Record

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<sup>4</sup> *The India List and India Office List for 1905* (London, Harrison & Sons, 1905), p 456.

<sup>5</sup> By extrapolation, an annual salary of at least Rs 12,000, approximately £1,000 in 1901.

<sup>6</sup> The elder son of Rev Charles James Wilding and a great-grandson of James Wilding, Master of High Ercall Grammar School, our common ancestor. A career soldier, he commanded 10th Infantry Brigade on the Western Front in 1915 and 1916. He emigrated to South Africa where he died in 1953.



of Service can be brief to the point of obscurity but the Histories of Service, published annually from 1879, are far more informative, and are to be found in the V/12 series. Here is Bernard's last entry<sup>7</sup>, edited for the sake of clarity:

CANTOPHER, Bernard William, M.I.C.E. – . . . Holkar State Railway, September 1873. – Neemuch State Railway, and Survey Division, March 1875. Extension Survey Division, September 1876. Dhond-Manmad Railway Survey, March 1877. – Eastern Deccan State Railway, October 1879. – Marmagao-Hubli Railway Survey, April 1880. – Dhond-Manmad State Railway, July 1880. Passed Departmental Standard Examination, July 1880. Transferred to Bengal. Nuddea Rivers Division, August 1881. – Temporarily in charge, Jalpaiguri Division, September 1883. Northern Drainage and Embankment Division, October 1883. Temporarily in State Railways. Charge, Ranaghat-Bhagwangola Railway, November 1883. – Sonapur-Diamond Harbour State Railway Works, in charge, December 1883. Ranaghat-Bhagwangola State Railway, December 1883. Calcutta and South Eastern State Railway charge, April 1884 – Eastern Bengal State Railway, July 1884. – Bengal-Assam Railway Survey, January 1886. – State Railways, permanently. Bellary-Kistna State Railway, October 1886. Charge, Guntur Division, December 1887. Lent to Southern Mahratta Railway Company, January 1888. Furlough, June 1889 to June 1890. On return from furlough, Burma State Railway, June 1890. – Officiating Engineer-in-Chief, Burma State Railway – Furlough from February 1897 to February 1899. On return, Eastern Bengal State Railway, February 1899. Leave on private affairs, 3 months, 21 days, from 11th June 1901.

Having noted that Bernard retired in 1901, I decided that my next step was to track down his pension record. Had Bernard remained in India then I would have been disappointed<sup>8</sup> but as his name disappeared from *Thacker's* shortly after 1901 and he died in London in 1911, I felt it safe to assume that Bernard returned to the UK and made arrangements for his pension to be paid to him here. Re-reading *Baxter's Guide*<sup>9</sup> carefully, I came across the following on p14: 'Service pensions paid to retired uncovenanted servants in the UK ... [between] 1860-1968 see the series IOR: L/AG/21/9, which sometimes gives addresses.'

The three ledgers that I ended up with (L/AG/21/9/22, 25 and 29) were large, thick and dusty, covering the years 1899-1915. At the front of each was an alphabetical index which soon confirmed that I was looking at the right ones for my great grandfather. In fact, there was an extra bonus for me in that the first volume contained details of Bernard's father, William Edwin, who was also in receipt of a pension. As far as I could tell, one page was allocated to each pensioner with over 2/3 of the available space taken up listing successive monthly payments. At the top of each page was information pertinent to each pensioner e.g. Bernard William Cantopher, born 14 February 1853, late Executive Engineer 1st Grade, Eastern Bengal State Railway, pension of Rs 416 / 10 [annas] / 8 [pies] payable

<sup>7</sup> *Histories of Services: India, 1901*, IOR/V/12/52, pp 29-30.

<sup>8</sup> For the simple reason that the pensions of those who stayed in India were paid in India. Records of these were therefore created and maintained in India where they remained after 1947 and do not form part of the *India Office Records* at the British Library.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Baxter, *Baxter's Guide : Biographical Sources in the India Office Records*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London, FIBIS, 2004).

monthly from 7 October 1901, paid on Absentee Allowances up to and including 6 October 1901, left India 9 April 1901 arrived England 15 May 1901, resident in England firstly at 1 Alexandra Road, Gypsy Hill [London], then at Beauchamp Cottage, Crown Hill, Upper Norwood, [London] S.E.

### **Remote ordering of material at the British Library**

I decided to try my hand at remotely ordering material to await my arrival at St Pancras. First of all, I needed to establish which pieces in L/AG/21/9 were likely to be of interest. To do this, I had to log onto The National Archives' website<sup>10</sup> so that I could access the *Access to Archives* (A2A) database. From there, I chose the Advanced Search option from which I selected the 'British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections' as the Repository to search before entering 'L/AG/21/9' in the 'Exact wording or phrase' search field. This then gave me 173 results from which I selected 'Overseas Services: Civil Pensions Payments.' In turn this led me to a further screen from which I was able to review L/AG/21/9 as a series. I noted three items as being potentially of interest – pieces 22, 25 and 29.

Next I went to the British Library catalogue and logged on as a Reader Pass holder. Ignoring the Basic Search fields, I clicked on the 'Request list' option before selecting the 'Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections' link at the bottom of the screen. Now I chose the 'India Office Records' as the catalogue to work with and then entered 'L/AG/21/9/22' as the Shelfmark. I clicked on 'Request list' again to verify that I had entered the shelfmark correctly. This being so, I was able to click on Request in the Action column before finally selecting 'Asian and African Studies' as my reading location. Phew! I only had to repeat this palaver twice more . . .

The whole process is counter-intuitive and clunky, and its replacement cannot come soon enough!

The subsequent ledgers continued listing the regular payments with any adjustments or variations. The last entries recorded Bernard's death on 4 February 1911, the date of probate and that his widow was the executrix of his estate. In addition to the personal data, there was also a clipping of each individual's signature pasted at the top of each page. Disappointingly, the British Library was unable to supply me with personal photocopies of these records as they have not been microfilmed and the ledgers are too heavy to be placed on the back office scanning equipment. Fortunately, my final source of information was to be even more spectacular and also included several signatures.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Early in 2009 I contacted the Archivist at the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and made arrangements to visit. On arrival, I recall being told that I was 'in for a treat' and I was not disappointed. Bernard, according to his application for full Membership in 1889

Served as Pupil, under the late Mr. Edward Johnston, M.Inst.C.E., and, afterwards, had charge under him of a sub-division of 14 miles of construction work on the Holkar (State) Railway, being appointed by the Government of India as Assistant Engineer, 3rd-grade, in the Railway Branch of the Public Works Department. Was, at his instigation, admitted as a Stud.Inst.C.E. – this was from October, 1873, to March, '75. Served next on the surveys of the Neesuch (State) Railway, under Mr. Paul Dangerfield, M.Inst.C.E., the whole party being under the charge of Mr. F. B. Walker, M.Inst.C.E. This was up to 1877 . . . ' [and so the narrative continues up to the start of Bernard's leave and furlough in June 1889 when we find him at work on the] Bellary-Kistna (State) Railway, [having] held sub-divisional charge of works (23 miles) under construction on the Guntur Division, firstly, under Mr. W. B. Taylor, Assoc. M.Inst.C.E., and then under Mr. B. P. Milsom, Assoc. M.Inst.C.E. – this was up to December, 1887. Succeeded the latter in divisional charge as Executive Engineer of the Guntur Division,<sup>11</sup> a district of 78 miles, the works in progress being:- Earthwork, bridge work, level crossings, ballasting, permanent-way (both laying and maintenance), and the usual work in connection with stations, buildings and offices. Is still in charge of this division, working directly under Mr. H. C. D. La Touche, M.Inst.C.E., who is the Engineer-in-Chief.

### **The Institution of Civil Engineers**

The ICE is the oldest professional engineering body in the world with a current membership of about 80,000 individuals. Membership is signified by the post-nominals, AMICE (Associate Member), MICE (Member) and FICE (Fellow), often expressed as AMInstCE, MInstCE and FInstCE in publications such as *The India List*.

Its archives are extensive and, *inter alia*, contain the applications (*Candidate Circulars*) of members dating back to its foundation in 1818. Records prior to 1870 are on microfilm; those between 1870 and 1960 are available in printed form. Many of the original proposal forms on which members supplied details of their careers in their own hand, are extant (a fresh application was usually made on transfer from one grade of membership to another). Membership lists were published annually which can be used to track changes of address and dates of death or resignation. The ICE has a complete run of the lists but there are runs held at the British Library and elsewhere. Contemporary obituaries of members were published in the ICE *Proceedings* and these are catalogued in the ICE Publications Database available online as the *Virtual Library*.

Contact the ICE Archivist for further details and a printed guide to the ICE Archives by e-mail to [archives@ice.org.uk](mailto:archives@ice.org.uk) or at 1 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AA..

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> This correlates to the information in Bernard's *History of Service* (see above) that he had charge of the Guntur Division of the Bellary Kistna line in December 1887 and was then lent to the Southern Mahratta Railway (a privately-owned metre gauge system) in January 1888. The division probably ran eastwards from Guntur to Tadepalli on the south or right bank of the river Kistna, at the head of the latter's delta and opposite the town of Bezwada.

**Website** – follow *Library* link for information about the Archives [www.ice.org.uk](http://www.ice.org.uk)

**Online library catalogue** [www.ice.org.uk/knowledge/knowledge\\_library.asp](http://www.ice.org.uk/knowledge/knowledge_library.asp)

**Online *Virtual Library*** – abstracted obituaries, 1836-current [www.iceknowledge.com](http://www.iceknowledge.com)

This information was printed in full in the relevant *Candidate Circulars* but I was also able to inspect Bernard's original applications, in his own hand, for both Associate Membership (1879) and full Membership (1889). In fact, as his application for full membership was dated 19 September 1889, it is possible that he submitted it in person while on furlough from India. Unfortunately, the main limitation of *Candidate Circulars* is that the personal story stops at the moment of application and, unless there is a subsequent Obituary in the *Proceedings*, there is no further narrative.

The following table highlights Bernard's service from his arrival in India in 1873 to his application for full Membership of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1889.

<b>Table 3</b> Career summary – personalities, locations and scope of works					
<i>Date</i>	<i>Assistant to</i>	<i>Superintendent</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Work</i>
1873-1875	Edward Johnstone MICE		Holkar State Rly	Central Provinces	14 miles track construction
1875-1877	Paul Dangerfield MICE	F B Walker MICE	Neesuch State Rly	Central Provinces	Survey
1877-1879	G E Moore MICE	Alexander Izat MICE	Dhond and Manmad State Rly	Bombay	Survey; 30 miles track construction
1879-1880		Alexander Izat MICE	Eastern Deccan State Rly	Bombay	40-50 miles track construction
1880	C H Croudace MICE	E E Sawyer MICE	Marmagao-Hubli Rly	Bombay / Goa	Survey
1880-1881		Alexander Izat MICE	Dhond and Manmad State Rly	Bombay	35 miles track construction
1881-1883			Nuddea Rivers Dvn	Bengal	River training
1883		? Vertannes MICE	Julpoigori Dvn	Bengal	Roads and buildings
1883-1885		? Vertannes MICE	Diamond Harbour Ext	Calcutta	Track construction
1883-1885		? Vertannes MICE	Calcutta and S E Rly (tfr to Eastern Bengal Rly)	Calcutta	60-70 miles open line work
1883-1885		H C Levinge	Ranaghat-	Bengal	Construction

		MICE	Bhugwangole Rly		works
1883-1885		H C Levinge MICE	Howrah and Ampta Rly	Bengal	Survey
1885-1886	W H P Sherman MICE	J W Buyers MICE	Bengal and Assam Rly	Assam	Survey of line across North Cachar Hills
1886-1887	W B Taylor AMICE / B P Milsom AMICE	H C D La Touche MICE	Bellary-Kistna State Rly	Madras	23 miles track construction
1887-1889		H C D La Touche MICE	Southern Mahratta Rly	Madras	78 miles track construction

On his return to service in 1890, Bernard was appointed to Burma where he remained until 1897, his longest posting by some margin. In February 1897, Bernard took two year's leave and furlough, not returning to duty until February 1899 when he was appointed to the Eastern Bengal State Railway, a position he retained until he retired in 1901. The two tables below provide a useful contrast in how the subject's view of career progression can occasionally be at variance with the official view, the latter formed by having recourse to the *minutiae* of the *Gazette of India* (GOI).

<b>Table 4a</b> Promotion in Government Service <i>per ICE Candidate's Circular</i>			
<i>Date</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Status</i>
Sep 1873 – Mar 1875	Assistant Engineer	3rd-grade	Permanent
Mar 1875 – Mar 1878		2nd grade	Permanent
Mar 1878 – Jun 1880		1st grade	Temporary
Jun 1880 – Jun 1882			Permanent
Jun 1882 – May 1884	Executive Engineer	4th grade	Temporary
May 1884 – May 1885			Permanent
May 1885 – Aug 1886		3rd grade	'sub pro tem'
Aug 1886 – Jun 1889			Permanent

<b>Table 4b</b> Promotion in Government Service <i>per GOI History of Service 1901 (V12/52)</i>				
<i>Date</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Monthly salary (per table in V13)</i>
29 Aug 1873	Assistant Engineer	Probationary		
Dec 1874		3rd grade	Permanent	Rs 250
05 Mar 1875		2nd grade		
22 Apr 1878		1st grade	Temporary	
01 Jun 1880			Permanent	
July 1880	Passed Departmental Standard Examination			
17 May 1882	Executive Engineer	4th grade	Temporary	
30 Jan 1883	Assistant Engineer	1st grade	Permanent	
11-20 Mar 1883; 23 Mar 1883	Executive Engineer	4th grade	Temporary	
20 Nov 1883	Assistant Engineer	1st grade	Permanent	
28 Nov 1883	Executive Engineer	4th grade	Temporary	

<i>Date</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Monthly salary (per table in V13)</i>
04 May 1884			Permanent	
01 Jan 1885		3rd grade	Sub <i>pro tem</i>	
01 Aug 1886			Permanent	
27 Aug-13 Sep 1890; 23 Sep 1890		2nd grade	Sub <i>pro tem</i>	
01 Jul 1892			Permanent	
Sep-Dec 1893	Officiating Superintending Engineer, 3rd class, Burma State Railway			
18 Oct 1893	Executive Engineer	1st grade	Permanent	Rs 950
02 Oct 1901	Retired			Rs 1,000

The information relating to Bernard's monthly salary is drawn from a further series (V/13) of records to be found within the India Office Records, often referred to as *Civil Lists*. According to *Baxter's Guide* the civil lists 'cover posts of all grades from the ICS down to quite low-level staff ' and those for the Public Works Department and (from 1905) the Railway Board include 'artificers and mechanics'. In fact 'civil list' is a bit of a misnomer – those for the PWD are titled *Classified List and Distribution Return of Establishment up to [dd mmm yyyy]* and consist firstly of lists of names by grade and whether 'Imperial' or 'Provincial', and secondly similar by establishment. There is generally an index of names, supporting tables of grades and salary levels and lists of abbreviations in use, state railway companies and of provinces in which engineer and subordinate establishments were based.

I have not yet looked at all the returns covering Bernard's service (the PWD lists were published at three monthly intervals so there are over 100 for me to inspect) but those from 1873 and 1874 contain information identifying any proficiency in a vernacular language, the province (or railway) where an individual was employed, dates of appointment to grade and to PWD, total service expressed in years and months within the PWD, and remarks such as whether on probation or on leave. By 1901, an individual's date of birth had been added to the data being recorded.

So my research continues (and I have still to investigate Bernard's periods of leave as recorded in the Furlough books, series L/AG/20/1) but the curtains that previously hid Bernard's career from his family's gaze have been drawn back sufficiently to reveal much of interest. Time consuming, yes, but difficult, no – so why not you?

### Sources

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Overseas Services: Civil Pensions Payments of all Presidencies	IOR/L/AG/21/9
Histories of Services: India, 1898-1904	IOR/V/12/52
Civil List for India: Public Works Dept, 1871-1874	IOR/V/13/198
Civil List for India: Public Works Dept, 1875-1874	IOR/V/13/199
Civil List for India: Public Works Dept, 1901-1902	IOR/V/13/212

### Christmas in Burma – 1895

*Bernard Cantopher's eldest daughter, my great-aunt, was Mary Muriel, always known within the family as Muriel, and the longest-lived of all his children. One of her grandsons recently shared with me the following which he had come across in some of his mother's papers. This piece is one of several drafts which Muriel had worked on and probably the most complete. Presently, to my knowledge, it is the only memoir of Burma that exists within the family.*

Christmas will soon be with us. I sit in my arm chair, an old woman now, and I let my mind wander over the years. My thoughts go to one Christmas I spent as a very tiny child, in Burma. My father was an Engineer on the Burma State Railways, and, for that post, had the privilege of a private railway carriage, which he could hook on to any train he chose and go anywhere he wanted on the line

At that time the Railway ran between Rangoon and Mandalay. It had not at that time been continued further north. We lived in a small township [probably Pegu] on the line about a day's journey from Mandalay. During this last war [WW 2], all these places, I remember so well, were devastated by the Japanese. My brothers were at school in England, but there were three of us, all girls, with my Mother and Father in Burma.

This particular Christmas that I am thinking about, somewhere in the 1890s, my father put us all into his carriage, and together with a couple of native servants took us to spend Christmas in Mandalay.

We were invited to stay with a doctor and his family. The English Club at Mandalay was the Old Palace belonging to King Thebaw and I can just [recall] what a lovely place it was. The English people met there in the evenings to play games and enjoy a *chota-peg* together. On Christmas Day, they all decided to have a picnic on the Irrawaddy – we drove in bullock carts and then took a launch down the river some little way. I can just vaguely remember alligators [*sic*] lying on the banks. To my childish mind they were very large and I believe actually ten or twelve feet long. We landed at a place where there was a beach of beautiful yellow sand. The moon rose over the mountains like a great big yellow ball. As it grew dark, great bonfires were lit on the sands.

Everyone seemed merry and happy. There was no evil war lurking in the shadows, in those days of peace and security. My mother had a guitar and everyone sang beautiful carols and songs – 'O Liebe nacht' [*sic*], 'Way down upon the Swannie River', 'O come all ye faithful' – and many, many others. Whenever I hear these carols and songs now, it brings back vivid memories of that wonderful night.

As it grew late, we children were sent back to our home with our nurses. The grown ups stayed on to watch the sun rise on the hill tops.

The next day a pantomime was arranged for the children by the English Community. Although there was no snow or Christmas tree, I look back on this as the most glamorous Christmas I have ever spent, in my very varied career.

**Mary Muriel (Cantopher) Keily (1885-1979)**



## Life in a British Cantonment in India: Nasirabad, 1929-1930

*By John Sworder*

Between the end of World War I and Independence in 1947 the British Army was still much in evidence in India, and a large proportion of it was composed of Brigades of the Royal Regiment of Artillery. At that time, of a total of 28 Brigades (today Regiments) of Royal Field Artillery in the British Army, 11 (almost 40%) were stationed in India. In addition there were seven Mountain Brigades equipped with Screw Guns, immortalised in verse by Rudyard Kipling: 'An' never a beggar forgets that it's only the pick of the Army that 'andles the dear little pets', and 'we fancies ourselves at two thousand, we guns that are built in two bits', namely carried, stripped down, on pack mules. But the charismatic Screw Gun was primarily for use on the NW Frontier and other difficult terrain and so the backbone of the Artillery was the Field Brigade with equipments firing shells rather further than the Screw Guns could manage.

Nasirabad (pronounced as though spelt with double 'ss', not a 'z'), despite its Muslim-sounding name, today lies in India, separated by the great waste of the bleak Thar desert from Sind and the West Punjab, both of which in 1947 became part of the new Pakistan. This little-known Cantonment, where I was born in 1930, is now occupied by the Indian Army and remains little changed today. My father, Wilfrid Sworder, first came to India in 1924. He had seen 3½ years' active service on the Western Front, reaching the rank of Major in Command of a Battery, aged 23. In 1918 he rode into Germany with his Battery as part of the victorious British Army (which became the first BAOR – the British Army Of the Rhine). He decided to avoid the risk of being jobless post-war, so did not resign his Commission and volunteered for imperial soldiering, first in Nigeria, then India. After three years with 14 Brigade in Hyderabad in Sind, then Quetta in Baluchistan, he was posted 'up the line' to 23 Brigade at the large army base at Nowshera, in the NWFP (North West Frontier Province) near Peshawar and the Swat Valley – the latter, in the 21st century, infamous as a hotbed of Islamic militancy. Both of these Brigades were equipped, not with the Screw Gun, but with the successful field gun from the War years, three Batteries with the 18 pounder and one of heavier 4.5" howitzers. It is worth recalling that, as recently as 1920, the Brigade had been in action repelling an Afghan invasion of the NWF.

As a boy, Bill had hankered after a life in India, having originally planned to join the IP (Indian Police). This ambition was thwarted in August 1914 by Kaiser Wilhelm and, in September that year, shortly after leaving school, where basic military experience was gained in the OTC (Officers' Training Corps), he joined the Army. Indian connections were strong throughout his wider family. His mother was the eighth of nine children of Major-General George Phillips of the Madras Cavalry who had commanded the Equitation School at Saugur. Her next eldest brother, Herbert de Touffreville Phillips (the French name from a forebear connected with the military of the Compagnie des Indes in Pondichéry, south of Madras) rose to become a Brigadier-General in the Royal Artillery in 1917, involved in the Italian campaign. In his early career he served in Baluchistan (where Bill later served), the Himalyas, Burma and Hong Kong. He probably helped steer his nephew into the same

Regiment, perhaps unwittingly increasing Bill's chances of surviving WW1, although Bill's Military Crosses, the first awarded as an Observing Officer when in the line with his infantry, the second, as an acting Major when commanding his Battery, showed that there was almost as much chance of death on an Artillery gun position as of an Infantry officer going 'over the top'. All but one of Bill's other uncles also remained involved with India, joining the Indian Civil Service (ICS) or the Indian Judiciary, one becoming a High Court Judge in Madras. His mother-in-law too had Indian links, her father born in Bombay to William Butcher, an architect and surveyor involved in the construction of the Calcutta-Bombay railway; his wife the daughter of Charles Mendham, an opium dealer for the East India Company who later joined the ICS. Although Bill came from generations of Hertfordshire farmers, the experience of his father's market gardening and mushroom-growing venture, bankrupted in 1912 when Bill was 18, left a deep impression, so one can understand the lure of a new beginning in the East.

After a year at Nowshera, finally attaining again the rank of Captain, Bill was invalided home with severe appendicitis which the British Military Hospital (BMH) at Peshawar was apparently unable to treat. For a Class 'A' invalid it must have been a painful, long return journey by troopship, the voyage via Suez lasting usually three weeks. Six months later, having taken privilege as well as sick leave, he returned to India minus his appendix – but



*Joan and Bill, probably Nov/Dec 1928  
before sailing to India*

with a wife. Five years earlier, in 1923, on return to England from his tour with the West African Frontier Force in Nigeria and before first setting out for India, he had met the two Butcher sisters, Meg and Joan, then aged 18 and 16. He was entranced with the younger girl. Back in England again, in April 1928, he sought out Joan, wooed and married her in London, she now 21 and he 34.

The *Tuscania* brought them to India in February 1929, Joan enchanted by the fabled places the ship passed on the voyage. Although their route for Nowshera should have been via the port of Karachi, they were diverted to enter India through Bombay port's famed marble gateway to set off for the long 1,500 mile train journey to the North West. But the newly weds were not stationed there for more than a few weeks, for 23 Brigade was moved to Jubbulpore, in Central Province, less Bill's 89 Battery, which was detached to Nasirabad. Here they relieved 15 (Assaye) Battery, taking over their horses and guns. One assumes this changeover

was standard practice, to save unnecessary freight movements, but it meant having to get to know the habits and wiles of a completely new set of horses, and for the departing

gunners to say goodbye to their now well-known and loved artillery 'hairies'. Bill was now the Battery Captain, acting as second in command to the Battery Commander.

Nasirabad, a roughly oval shaped area measuring about 4½ by 2½ miles at the widest points, lies about 14 miles south east of the nearest town, Ajmer, to which it was connected by road and the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway (BBCIR). This, like much of the rail network in India, was of metre gauge. Bill's 1" to 1 mile military map of the area, first published by the Surveyor General of India in 1876, is updated to 1927. With this it is therefore not possible to establish when either the Cantonment or the BBCIR were built. But, according to the FIBIS website, the latter was started in 1855 and largely completed within ten years. Perhaps the military establishment is similarly dated.

In 1998, when I and my wife visited Nasirabad, the Anglican priest of the Garrison church was unable to produce the church registers. These, unhappily, may now be lost, but would have indicated, from the earliest burials, the date of the cemetery and probably also the cantonment. The six acre cemetery, set just outside the cantonment beside the railway station, had broken walls and thick unchecked undergrowth at the time of our visit, denying inspection of most monumental inscriptions. There are hundreds of graves, most with largely unapproachable headstones, on which any legible inscriptions bear witness to the terrible toll of not just soldiers, but their wives and infants, who succumbed to India's climate and diseases. One such, reported in 89 Battery Orders, noted the case of a Sergeant's seven year old son who died in Nasirabad's BMH of paresis, which is apparently paralysis caused by some nervous disorder.

Being detached and 400 miles from the Commanding Officer's constant attention must have had its attractions for the officers, with his visits to Nasirabad financially restricted,



*89 Battery RFA entraining for Mhow*

apparently, to one a year – which was always timed to coincide with the duck shooting! But the downside for the wives was that there was a smaller pool of womenfolk from which one could strike up friendships. Not that the Battery was there on its own, for

Nasirabad housed two infantry Battalions, at that time the 1st Battalion the North Staffordshires and the 10th/6th Rajputana Rifles (colloquially the RajRiffs), the latter locally recruited and British officered. Artillery based in Nasirabad had to travel elsewhere for gunnery practice and photographs of 89 Battery loading guns and horses on to a train must have been the 1930 artillery concentration at Mhow for Annual Practice. Mhow is not far from Jubbulpore where the remainder of the Brigade was quartered, so was also about 400

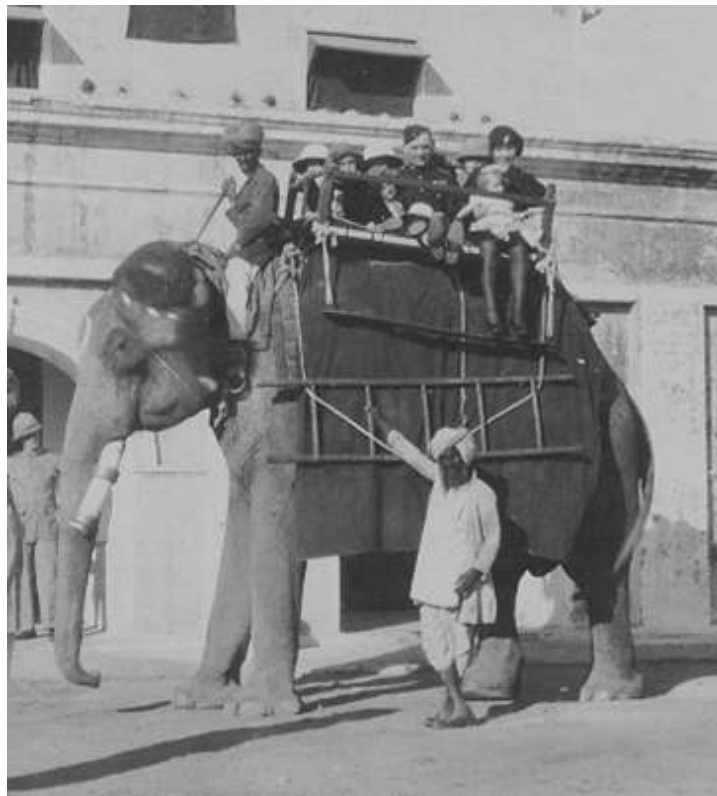
miles from Nasirabad. Here the Brigadier Royal Artillery wrote that 89 Battery performed best of his whole command, and even beyond the standards of the elite RHA (Royal Horse Artillery). A Gunner myself 30 years later, I was never quite sure whether to believe stories from old India hands that gunnery ranges had to be constantly watched before and during shooting to ensure that there were no Indian wives positioned in the impact area by husbands wanting to claim recompense from the Government! Twenty five years later, on artillery firing ranges in Cyprus during the 'Emergency', there was a similar problem of range safety, but the sacrifices put out for litigious claims were then only for sheep.

Concerning family life in Nasirabad, Joan noted that there were only nine officers' wives, but of course an Army wife is expected to assist with the welfare of the soldiers' families. This was useful in reverse for, when she started child-bearing, she received much appreciated advice and help from the wife of the Battery Farrier Sergeant, who was certainly experienced, having seven children of her own. Seven months after arriving on station, Joan's first child, Ann, was born and, barely a year later, I first saw the light of day, both of us being delivered by Army doctors in the BMH situated at the northern end of the cantonment. Because Bill and Joan had enjoyed an idyllic holiday on a houseboat, *Mah-Jong*, on Lake Dal in Kashmir early in 1930, I thought that perhaps that this was where my life had been conceived. But later I discovered, regretfully, that their holiday dates did not quite match the embryonic calendar. Sadly, I have no evidence on whether my birth occasioned a holiday for 89 Battery, as did that of my sister, 89 Battery Orders proclaiming that 'There will be a whole holiday on Monday 7th October in honour of Miss Sworder', born two days previously. One assumes that this privilege may only have been accorded for the births of officers' children, else there might have been quite a few days off.

Life for an Army officer's wife on stations such as this was comfortable and not too demanding, once one had become accustomed to the climate. All the tasks of the household were undertaken by various local staff – the *bobajees* (cooks), *dhobis* (washermen), *ayahs* (nurses), *malis* (gardeners), *chowkidars* (caretakers) and *syces* (grooms), with clearly defined and never overlapping roles, who were grateful to have employment which gave them a higher standard of living. The month after arrival in Nasirabad, Bill wrote to his elder sister Dorothy, then living as companion to their widowed father in Malaya: 'Joan finds this all very new and interesting. She rides in the mornings and we get tennis or riding in the evenings. Tonight we are going to a large picnic and motoring party by the lake at Ajmer'. Joan later reminisced about a boat ride on the lake, when the danger was from *muggers*, the large short-snouted crocodiles venerated by Hindus. His letter continued by reporting that he was able to take a reasonable amount of exercise again as his post-abdominal operation recovery was complete. Other social outings included invitations to dinners with local Indians, when etiquette demanded that a guest belch to indicate satisfaction with the meal, something Joan tried hard, but failed, to achieve. Photographs show that an elephant ride was an occasional outing, but whether this was a joy ride or necessary transport to a function such as a meal with one of the local Rajahs, Gunpati Singh, is not known. Joan wrote once a week to her parents, living in Brussels, noting that these letters were her diary, which she wanted kept for herself for

later: sadly these were allowed to deteriorate and were eventually, without her knowledge, burned. What a marvellous record these would have been, and how much they would have interested social historians – and her son.

Members of an Indian household staff became very supportive and concerned for their Memsahib's wellbeing. Her husband's bearer (manservant) ran after her as she set out



*Elephant rides: Joan at back with daughter Ann*

with Bill for a Mess party, firmly insisting that she must change out of her fashionable shoes, which matched her blue dress, and wear 'boots' which would protect her feet from snake bites (the shoes were part of Joan's trousseau of seven long dresses, much envied by the other, older, wives). After Joan had returned to England with the babies, he wrote several times, on behalf also of Rugga the *bobajee* (there is mention of another cook, Balu Ram) and Mangoo, noting in one that 'we all became very glad when we saw the photos of babies, and your dear *ayah* Manglai (or Manga Tai?) too became very happy and wept much, remembering that time'. Snakes were quite a hazard: one was discovered in time in the bungalow's

bath. On another occasion Bill took Joan on to the golf course to give her practice in using the pistol that he had given her after she had been stoned by a nationalist supporter near the houseboat in Kashmir. In a sudden dust storm, she found herself frighteningly confronted by a cobra. Frozen to the spot, she could not shoot, but Bill grabbed the pistol and killed it with a single shot.

Bill's younger sister Marion was also in India, living at Hyderabad in Sind, married to Charles Hawes, a hydrological engineer who was helping to design and construct canals, dams and other methods for maintaining vital water supplies and providing new ones. So she and Bill were able to see each other from time to time. There is a photograph of Bill with Marion and her family at her bungalow outside Hyderabad. Later, when married, Bill noted that Joan also planned to visit his sister, 'during the hot weather in May' and, as he did not state 'we', it seems likely that duties then prevented him accompanying her. Marion could also give helpful advice on motherhood, having one daughter aged five and being pregnant with a second. Families throughout India generally tried to escape to the cool of the hills during the hot season. Before marriage Bill also took two long leaves to visit their father, then a District Officer at Kuantan and Kota Baharu in Malaya, the second of which was partly to

try, unsuccessfully, to persuade elder sister Dorothy not to marry a man whom father thought unsuitable! This shows that travel and escape from Army duties was possible and affordable, even on a Captain's pay (his wartime rank of Temporary Major had ended in 1919 and he reverted to being a Lieutenant).

Army stations in India were provided with very adequate bungalows, with temporary holding accommodation available in a 'dak' bungalow, or lodge, whilst awaiting availability of an allotted officer's bungalow. But with marriage then strongly discouraged for younger officers, so not many wives, there was generally no waiting. After a short while in a *dak*, Bill was allotted (he stated) Bungalow 15. There are however discrepancies about the actual bungalow number, my superstitious mother believing that it was really 13 instead of 12a (in the sequence of 12 to 14). This also happened to be the number later listed on the probate document. But as Bill noted that it was 'very conveniently situated next door to the Club' and number 15 still stands almost opposite, the actual number will remain unsolved. We noted that in 1998 number 15 had become a Montessori school. The Club of course was the hub of social life for the British families.

With Bill's effects, Joan kept a small booklet entitled 'Rules of the Nasirabad Club', dated 1926, printed by The Duke of Connaught's Printing Press, Brigade Area Office, Nasirabad. This throws some interesting light on the Club's purpose and activities. The full name was the Nasirabad Officers' Gymkhana Club. The two definitions of Gymkhana in the 2004 Concise OED are either the original Indian 'a public place with facilities for athletics', or 'an event comprising competitions on horseback, typically for children'. The Nasirabad Club's activities, listed as 'Golf, Polo, Tennis, Dancing and the Library' seem to have been rather more diverse. It was run by a committee of six: the Station Commander; representatives of 'Staff & Department'; the three units serving there (RA, British and Indian Infantry) and an elected Hon. Secretary. Sub-Secretaries were appointed for each of the activities listed above. They could make their own rules for their respective sports or institutions. It was noted that other sports could be instituted if requested.

Membership was available to all serving Civil or Military Commissioned Officers on payment of a fee and annual subscription: 18 rupees for single members – reduced to 15 for penurious 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants – and 24 rupees for family members. A 1960s glossary suggests that a rupee was worth 'about 1/6d'. Family members were male relatives under 18 years staying in a member's house, or any lady relative, the latter deemed eligible 'under the same conditions and rules as gentlemen candidates, but who will not attend at Committee or General Meetings'. A case of 'We can't have the ladies involved with such important matters'! Also interesting is that lady family members were not, unlike men, barred after age 18. Children were not allowed inside the Club buildings, or on the verandah, but could make use of the Badminton Court and Lawn *if* accompanied by a member. Dogs were allowed in the buildings and grounds, but only until 4.00 pm. Owners infringing this rule were fined. A place was provided where dogs could be chained up outside. Dances and other functions were permitted 'whenever the Committee consider it fit'.

The life of a BOR (British Other Rank) in the barrack rooms must have been mundane and the daily routine likewise, but it was at least steady and, barring misdemeanours, guaranteed employment. Accommodation was reasonable, and although they would be unlikely to have had *punkah wallahs* to keep them cool indoors as had the officers and families, they used a form of hung straw mattress, '*cuscus tatty*' which, doused with water, produced cool air indoors. So they were mostly content. The Battery Orders of 89th Battery RFA for Friday 14 November 1930 suggest how repetitive this life must have been. The day started with Reveille at 06.00 and ended with Lights Out at 23.15. Roll Call occurred twice, at 06.30 and 22.00, to ensure that nobody had disappeared elsewhere. After an hour's Exercise for all the horses, probably ridden on blankets without saddles in the cool of the early morning, came the first of four Water and Feed, at 07.30, 12.30, 17.00 and 19.00, plus an intermediate Water and Hay at 10.30 (if this appears rather frequent feeding, one has to remember that 'little and often' is vital for horses). As one's animals always come first, the soldiers ate their three meals a day after the horses were fed, at 09.00, 13.00 and 17.30. There were two hour-long Stables sessions, grooming and caring for the horses, at 07.45 and 16.00, each soldier generally being responsible for at least one. Harness likewise needed constant care, especially in the Indian climate, with at least



*Bill at Nasirabad Racecourse 1930*

an hour spent every afternoon on Harness Cleaning. Finally, because these orders were for a day in Nasirabad's second Racing Week, there were morning and afternoon sessions of Racecourse Fatigues. Overall security and overnight horse care were covered by the Guard and Stable Picquet which mounted at 18.00. Each consisted of five men, the Picquet comprising not British soldiers, but an Indian NCO (Naik) and four Indian Drivers.

Racing was a popular activity, organised 'for the purpose of providing entertainment for the troops of the Garrison' – on the flat, not over jumps – on a course laid

out at the southern end of the cantonment. It was out of bounds to visitors in 1998, being then an Indian Army helicopter base, at a time when the two components of the previous British India were again making threatening noises at each other, so I could not visit the grandstand from where, on 13 November 1930, my mother watched her husband of less than two years knocked from his 'fast, young and flighty horse' (a description in 1960 by Alec Coldstream, one of Bill's subalterns), which ran uncontrollably off the course during the final race of the day, a three furlong Polo Pony Scurry, and under a low tree.

The Court of Enquiry into his death, six days later, unforgivably did not call enough relevant witnesses, such as grooms and NCOs, and only the Race Secretary, the Starter, the Assistant Starter and the duty Medical Officer gave evidence.<sup>1</sup> They could have taken statements from various other witnesses such as the soldier who claimed that broken glass had been scattered on the track by supporters of the independence movement, Swaraj, and an Indian who insisted that Bill's rein had broken, about which a very experienced rider could do nothing. Knocked out of the saddle, his skull was fractured by the fall and he died four hours later in the BMH. Joan was allowed to travel with him in the ambulance, but barred from being with him as he was dying. She agonised over the fact that he had forgotten to bring his skull cap and, when she offered to fetch it, told her not to bother. The summary by the President has been deleted from the Court's record of the Proceedings – one wonders why? The Battery Commander, Marshall, concluded merely that 'Captain Sworder received the injuries which proved fatal while on duty'. As the Court was convened to 'investigate the circumstances which caused the death of the late Captain W. Sworder MC', one cannot help but conclude that they failed signally to do so. They recorded, but did not *investigate*. A babe aged only four weeks at the time, I was hardly in a position to challenge the Proceedings.

Pig sticking was another popular activity on the station, the introduction of which was largely Bill's initiative, but it seems unlikely that a Nasirabad team was large enough and sufficiently established to enter the annual Kadir Cup held at Meerut, just beyond New Delhi. Polo was also much played, both in Nasirabad and on the grounds of other teams in the area, including those of Rajahs and well-to-do Indian civilians. Here again danger was present if one fell on to the rock-hard ground. In 1931, a year after my father's death, the junior subaltern of 89 Battery, John Strong, who had agreed, as was customary in such distant stations, to become my godfather, and who was very supportive of my young widowed mother, was playing on the polo ground at Ajmer. A collision with another horse knocked him to the ground and he also died, again of a fractured skull. Both men lie close to each other in the Nasirabad cemetery, separated only by the grave of a young Medical Corps officer who died of some (unstated) illness. It may well have been he who supervised the births of my sister and me. The Battery Commander's small command, as a result of these tragedies, became known in India as Mossy Marshall's 'Unlucky Battery'. I have a strong suspicion, from remarks by Joan decades later that, if John Strong had returned with the Battery in 1933, to be stationed in Exeter, she might have agreed to allow him to be, not my godfather, but instead stepfather.

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<sup>1</sup> Service Records for those who saw service after 1920 (other ranks) and 1921 (officers) are held at the Army Personnel Centre, Civil Secretariat, Historical Disclosures, Mail Point 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX. If you are 'the service person or their widow/widower', you can request the relevant record without charge. If you are not, you pay a fee of £30 (in 2005 anyway), and need to have the consent of the next of kin. 'Family interest' enquiries have lesser priority than immediate family, and may take up to 8 months to receive. I had to pay the £30, but it was certainly worth it for me, and the Proceedings of the Court of Enquiry a totally unexpected nugget of evidence.



Customarily every Sunday there was a church parade in the Anglican church of St Paul set beside the main north-south road that runs through the middle of the cantonment. This is a building of considerable size, equivalent in dimensions to, and replicating, a large English parish church. It was here that my sister was baptised. Despite rumours before our visit in 1998 that the Indian Army had turned it into a cinema, this was not the case and a small Christian congregation still worshipped there. The pastor-in-charge, who had the resonating Biblical name of Samuel Daniel, came from Kerala, previously Travancore (the latter, coincidentally, another of my Indian connections, my first, deceased, wife having been born at Munnar, daughter of a tea planter). During our brief visit he arranged a simple service 'in honour of the two English visitors', with about 15 of his congregation present, then led us to the cemetery for a blessing and scattering of petals on Bill's grave.

With the structure seeming very empty with such a small number, it was intriguing to imagine hundreds of British troops in the 1920s and 1930s being marched, noisily with boots clattering on the stone-flagged floor, almost certainly reluctantly, and filing to their allotted chairs. But it must at least have been cooler than in the barrack huts. The front rows would of course have been reserved for officers and their families. Soldiers would have carried their weapons and ammunition inside because political unrest, fanned by Gandhi, was simmering and could be ignited at any time. In 1998 there was no church organ, and this was probably no different from around 70 years earlier, for the heat would cause considerable problems for such an instrument. Instead, the band of one of the Infantry Battalions would have provided the music, blaring out the tunes for hymns most likely to be known by all.

Bill's and John Strong's deaths are recorded on plaques in the church and on their headstones in the cemetery. Joan would not have seen them, for she returned to England as soon as passage could be arranged, which took time, and she embarked at Bombay exactly three months after Bill's tragically early death. So ended their two year married life together, eighteen months of which were spent in Nasirabad. Having now seen the adjacent cemetery and railway station, I can visualise her appalling anguish and disbelief as the train for Bombay drew away and she looked out from the carriage towards where Bill lay in the hard Indian soil, and here she was, taking her and her two babies away to a bleak, uncertain future without him.

*This article covers some of the story of my father, Bill, whose fuller life is related in his biography, 'Just My Bill', published in 2006, a few copies of which are still available from John Swarder at £7.50 including p & p. Write to Thorpe House, Fordcombe, Kent TN3 0SH if interested.*

#### **A Distinguished 'Castaway': from the *Gentleman's Magazine***

9 March 1765, p143.. The East India company received letters from the *Kent* Indiaman, on board of which is Lord Clive, and several other officers, who were all well the 25<sup>th</sup> of October off Rio de Janeiro. They had lost their passage, and met with a violent gale of wind, in which the ship lost her masts, so that it is probable they could not arrive at Bengal before January.

*Contributed by Steve van Dulken*

## Reviews

***Izzat – Historical Records and Iconography of Indian Cavalry Regiments 1757-2007*, by Ashok Nath (Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi, 2009), 828pp ISBN 978-81-902097-7-9 £100.00 inc UK p&p, obtainable from Tom Donovan, Flat 4, 22 Florence Rd, Brighton, BN1 6DJ (cheque to be made payable to Captain A Nath)**

This enormous tome is effectively an encyclopedia of anything which can be described as an Indian cavalry regiment. Its purpose of the book is explained in the opening paragraph:

This book attempts to record the regimental iconography of Indian Cavalry regiments in the armies of India from circa 1750 to present times including Pakistan. Since the evolution of regimental iconography or the regimental badges would be incomplete without its history, the lineage, battle honours, ethnic composition, highest awards won, as well as highlights from the respective histories are included.

It is divided into three sections: 1750-1921, 1921-1947; and post 1947. In each section each regiment is described in detail – first the ones which survive in some form until today and then those which have been disbanded. In the first section to 1921, the only survivors are the Irregular regiments usually called after their founders: Probyn's Horse, Gardner's Horse, etc. The choice of 1921 as a natural break point – rather than say 1858, 1861, or even 1903 when the separate Presidency armies were finally amalgamated – is sufficiently explained by a substantial post-World War I review which reduced the then 39 Indian cavalry regiments to only 21. It is also significant as the time when the Indianisation of the officer ranks began, with a stream of officers passing through the newly-founded Prince of Wales Royal Military College at Dehra Dun. The post-1947 regiments include not only Indian ones, but Pakistani ones also, both of course building on foundations in the old Indian Empire and descended from pre-1947 regiments.

Within each section, the regiment is described in terms of the date and circumstances of its being first raised; what the author calls its lineage (that is any mergers with other regiments in its composition), its battle honours; its ethnic composition; a very brief description of its uniform (eg 13<sup>th</sup> Duke of Connaught's (Watson's Horse) Uniform Blue Facings Scarlet), highest gallantry awards, and finally its iconography – that is to say the details of buttons, shako badges and so forth which identify the regiment.

It must be admitted that some of these sections are brief. However the completeness of the coverage of all regiments is impressive. It even includes short-lived volunteer corps such as the Bengal Yeomanry Cavalry, which lasted for about a year during the Mutiny. It was said that the majority of its members were indigo planters who could ride.

The iconography section does not show uniforms – only the buttons and badges, sabretaches and a few shakoes. As such this will appeal to the collector of militaria. It must be regretted that there are no illustrations of picturesque uniforms – Madras remained reasonably close to the French blue worn by all the pre-1858 cavalry regiments, but Skinners' Horse originally wore gamboge yellow, and the post-1858 Bombay regiments

affected a deep green colour. Inclusion of these would have enhanced the book (though no doubt adding substantially to its cost). A fair number of portraits survive which show a good selection of these and the mid-19th century mess jacket of Capt Samuel Goad of the 1st Bengal Light Cavalry even survives at the National Army Museum.

Nevertheless the more limited objectives that the author has set himself have been realised very thoroughly. This is not a book to find out about individual family ancestors, but it is a book to find out about something of what sort of regiment they served in and about its 'iconography' (to use the author's word). *Izzat* means respect or renown, and this is a work of love and piety to a great tradition, and is available for reference on the open shelves of the Asian and African Studies Reading Room at the British Library.

*Richard Morgan*

***Soldiers, Saints and Scallywags – stirring tales from family history* by David Gore (Newbury, David Gore, 2009), pp 188, numerous illustrations. ISBN 9780 9530912 32. pbk. £15.00. Available from Hungerford Books, tel 0044-(0)1488 683480, email [sales@hungerfordbooks.co.uk](mailto:sales@hungerfordbooks.co.uk)**

On discovering a nineteenth century Mayne ancestor with social pretensions who had manufactured a pedigree containing some accurate information but also much that was spurious, David Gore embarked on a 'one-name' study of the Mayne name in order to disentangle the true from the false in this deceptive family tree. Along the way he has studied numerous interesting bearers of the Mayne name, and indeed has widened his researches to include other persons and places connected with them. The fruits of his labours are collected in this volume of short essays which include biographies of (among others) a Catholic martyr and saint, a cavalier, a protestant regicide, the distinguished Byrd family of Virginia, the first Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, an artist and conscientious objector during World War I, and a founder member of the SAS during World War II.

There are four articles of Indian interest: 'Death on the Pale Horse' chiefly about William Mayne (1818-55) of the Bengal Cavalry, but covering other Maynes as well, 'Faith and Family in South India' about the missionary Robert Caldwell (1814-91), 'My God – Maiwand!' – a detailed account of this British military disaster of 1880 during the 2nd Afghan War based in large part on an eye witness account by Capt Mosley Mayne (1845-1910) of the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry, and an in-depth assessment of the action by Gore himself. Versions of the first two have been published in *FIBIS Journals* 17 and 19 (Spring 2007 and 2008).

The book is an easy read – David Gore has a ready pen – and provides a series of small treats. And it prompts your reviewer to reflect that one of the attractions of family history is how it can offer those with an enquiring mind any number of fascinating byways to explore.

*David Blake*