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Contributions:

The Editor is happy to consider material, articles, letters and information for inclusion in the *FIBIS Journal*. Receipt of such material does not necessarily indicate that the material will be published.

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Contributors should be aware that as a rule their articles will in due course be posted on the FIBIS website.

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Editorial

As you will doubtless be aware, this year marks the beginning of the First World War centenary. Alongside the wider commemoration, the period provides family researchers with the opportunity to focus on ancestors who lived and died during the events of a century ago. There can be few of us who have looked into our family history who will not have uncovered relatives deeply affected by this devastating conflict. As part of the commemoration, archives and websites are providing wider access to hitherto difficult to access sources of information. These can plug gaps in ancestor's stories or inspire renewed efforts to look into their lives.

The Indian Army and other forces based in India played a significant role in the British war effort, in the European, Middle East and Mesopotamian theatres, as well as at home in India herself. The forthcoming FIBIS Guide *Researching Ancestors in the Indian Army 1858-1947*, written by our Chairman Peter Bailey, includes resources for tracing the careers of India-based military men who served during the First World War. The guide will be published in May this year.

From this autumn, the Journal would like to publish more of your work on ancestors who served during those remarkable times. Do write in if your research has yielded a tale you would like to share with us. Writing an article for publication is a good way to pull together the threads of your research and is perhaps a nice way to commemorate your WWI ancestors during the time that they are foremost in your thoughts.

Finally, thank you to all of this issue's contributors. As usual, the Journal contains stories covering a wide range of periods and events in India and the depth and breadth of the research that FIBIS members undertake is as impressive as ever. I hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as I have and take away a little inspiration for your own research.

Sarah Bilton

Correction

In *FIBIS Journal* 30, the article 'Raising the Hanoverians Regiments: their passage to India' was incorrectly attributed to Mary McPherson. Readers are asked to make note that this article was written and researched by Hilary Sheridan. The error has been corrected in official archived copies.

I offer my sincerest apologies to Hilary for this serious error. I would also like to thank her for all her hard work and meticulous research and for sharing the results with the India family research community. A follow up to Hilary's article can be found in this issue of *FIBIS Journal*, from p49.

The Walsh family and the Cawnpore Massacre

Paddy Walsh

My original objective when I started my ancestor research was to ascertain the Irish roots on my father's side of our family, but I little realised that it would lead me into investigating some of the worst tragedies of the Indian Mutiny in 1857.

Part one: Tracing the Walsh family

My father, John Cecil (Jack) Walsh (1906-1996) was born in Allahabad and went to school at St. Joseph's College in the hill station of Naini Tal. When he left school in 1923 he undertook an engineering apprenticeship with the Bengal Nagpur Railway and stayed with them until the family left India in 1948.

My elder brother and I were both born in Khargpur but grew up in Bedford and my sister was born there. The house contained typical India relics such as a tiger skin with a full mounted head¹ and various odd trophies and oriental ornaments but there was also a portrait-sized black and white photograph which hung in the living room and which now hangs in my house. It was taken in about 1900 and shows my paternal grandfather, Cecil George Coelpy² Walsh, seated next to a younger brother, Terence, and their father, John William, standing behind them.

All are wearing uniforms; my grandfather, Cecil, in the dark (blue) uniform of the Imperial Police, his younger brother in an army cadet uniform holding a Martini-Henry carbine and my great grandfather, John William Walsh, in the lighter shaded (khaki) uniform of the Allahabad Volunteer Rifles. He is wearing the Indian Mutiny Medal, with the Defence of Lucknow clasp, that was awarded to him as a pupil of La Martiniere College in Lucknow during the siege of Lucknow in 1857.

Cecil had been born in Allahabad in 1881. Our family had a certain amount of information about Cecil's father, John William. He had worked at the Allahabad High Court where, on his son Cecil's baptismal certificate, his occupation was described as 'Compiler of Statements'. He died in Naini Tal in 1916 so my father would have met him as a boy when at school. My father once told us that he remembered seeing John William's funeral cortege pass by his school on its way to the cemetery. However, where John William had

¹ The tiger had been shot in 1928 in the middle of the night by my mother's father on his tea estate in Assam, caught in the act of devouring the children of one of his workers.

² His unusual third name Coelpy was to surface in various spellings in documents relating to his father and grandfather. As it was so unusual, it came in useful as an item of corroborative evidence along the way. I have Cecil's original baptismal certificate where it was spelt 'Coelpy' as it also appears on John William's marriage certificate, but it appears as 'Copley' on Jack's baptismal certificate in 1906. On the marriage certificate of Mary Anne, one of William's daughters, it is spelt 'Colepoy'.

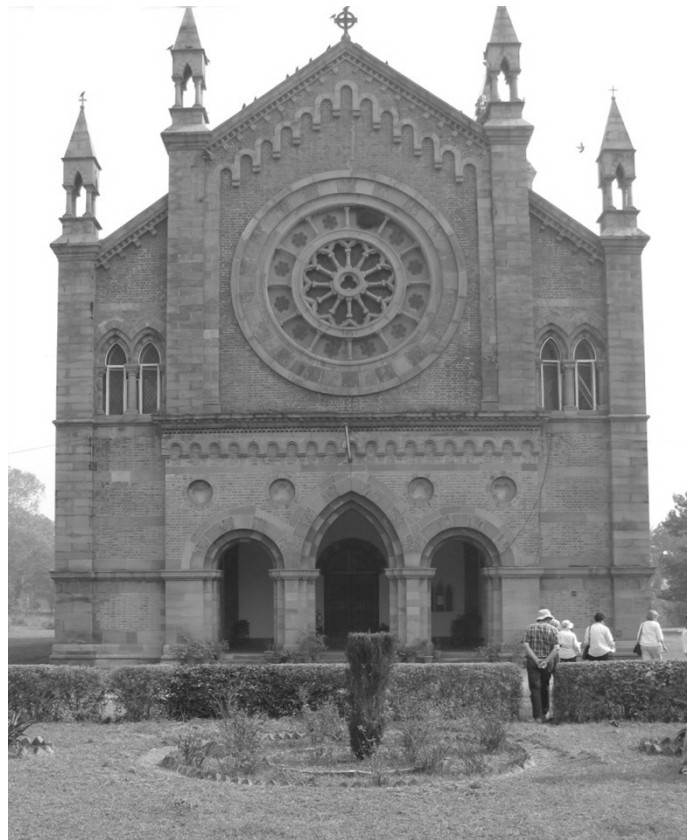
been born, who his parents were, or how he and his brother, Henry, had come to be in India in the first place, was a mystery.

My father had, however, whilst in the process of applying for a British passport in 1949, obtained a letter from the Head Master of La Martiniere which gave some useful, if confusing, information. It confirmed that his grandfather John William and John William's brother Henry had been at the school, that they had previously been at the Cawnpore Free School and that their father was listed as 'Dead'. His occupation was said to be that of 'Railway Inspector'.

This was the first reference to the Walsh family being in Cawnpore. My father had said that a relative had been killed there by the 'Nana Sahib' but had never really expanded on that. However, a 'Walsh (EIR)³ wife and children' appears on memorial tablet number 12 at the All Souls Memorial Church in Cawnpore, where the names (nearly 1000) of many of the known victims of the massacre are recorded. Was my great grandfather connected to this family?

My research into the origins of the Walsh family was not helped by the fact that when John William Walsh married in Allahabad in 1865 there were two entries for the marriage in the records.⁴ The first gave his age as 20 and his bride as, correctly, 17, but gave no details of his father. The second entry, with the same priest and witnesses but dated a week later, shows his father as William Coelpy Walsh and this time records his age as 'full' and that of his bride, incorrectly, as 19. John William's occupation at this time was listed in both documents as 'Supt. of Schools'.

Thackers Directories from 1867 to 1875 show John William Walsh as the Headmaster of the Government School in Bareilly. He is then missing from *Thackers* until 1881 when he reappears as 'Compiler, High Court, Allahabad'.



All Souls Memorial Church, Kanpur, in 2013.

³ East Indian Railway

⁴ IOR Ecclesiastical Returns, N/1/112/106, 11 April 1865 and N/1/119/103, 18 April 1865.

I next visited the V/12 'Histories of Service' and V/13 'Civil Lists'. I found John William in the V/12 series,⁵ which listed his date of birth as 21 September 1846. Frustratingly it gave no place of birth. It stated that he had held a non- gazetted appointment from 1 February 1880 until 13 August 1889 on which date he was appointed Assistant Registrar at the Allahabad High Court. He was eventually promoted to Deputy Registrar and retired about 1906.

The Civil list of 1905⁶ showed that he had been commissioned as Lieutenant in the Allahabad Volunteer Rifles on 2 December 1887.

Without a baptismal record for John William I decided to try and see if I could find any record of his brother, Henry, and was immediately more successful. Amongst the Bengal Baptisms I found a record for the baptism of a Henry Garrett Walsh in Sylhet (Assam, now in Bangladesh) on 24 November 1849.⁷ The place and date of birth were given as Cherrapunjee on 6 April 1849. His parents were shown as William and Catherine Walsh and his father's occupation as Sergeant Major. No regimental details were shown hence I was unsure whether it was an East India Company or British regiment.

I first had to establish that this Henry Garrett Walsh was indeed the brother of my great grandfather, John William. I knew that Henry had a son, Edwin, who died of wounds received in WWI whilst a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.⁸ I found Henry Garrett Walsh's marriage record and four of his children's baptisms, including a son, Edwin William Granville Walsh. Edwin had married and emigrated to Vancouver. In 1916, he had enlisted in the Duke of Connaught's Own regiment in Vancouver and his death was recorded there in 1919. So, I was satisfied that Henry Garrett was indeed John William's brother.

At this point a more methodical approach would have saved me a lot of time: a sister, Jane, was born to the same parents in Cherrapunjee on 28 November 1847 and likewise was baptised at Sylhet on 12 February 1848.⁹ This record showed her father was a Sergeant Major in the Sylhet Light Infantry. I, however, had not seen this and had set off to the National Archives at Kew to research another William and Catherine Walsh who had been the parents of a child in India. This William was a sergeant in HM 98th Foot, which had had long spells in India. After much searching through muster rolls and the like, it was apparent that this couple could not have been the parents of either John William or Henry Walsh.

Then one day, in an idle moment, I entered 'Sylhet light Infantry Walsh' into Google Books. One item came up, which was an extract from the *Bengal Catholic Herald* of 12 October

⁵ IOR V/12/225, United Province, p405

⁶ IOR V/13/587, NWF, 1905

⁷ IOR N/1/76/311

⁸ My father had spoken of him and I have photograph of him together with his uncle and cousins taken in India around 1890. My father said Edwin had been a casualty of one of the last German gas attacks of the war.

⁹ IOR N/1/73/17

1844. The article reproduced a letter that had been sent to the Reverend Dr Carew, Archbishop of Edesa, and Vicar Apostolic of Bengal. The letter, dated 29 September 1844, was from Acting Quarter Master Sergeant William Walsh of the Sylhet Light Infantry in Cherrapunjee. Walsh thanked the Archbishop for sending a priest from Dacca to Sylhet to christen his five children on 19 September 1844 and for 'churching' his wife. There is no record of these christenings amongst the India Office ecclesiastical records.

So it turned out that my great grandfather was one of eight children; the five in the letter, plus John William (born 1846), Jane (b.1847) and Henry (b.1849).

At this point I attended a lecture at the British Library by Peter Bailey and I bought a copy of his invaluable guide *Researching Ancestors in the East India Company Armies*. Without this publication, to attempt to examine the microfilm records at the IOR would have been like looking for a needle in a haystack. Each annual 'Long List' of soldiers in the Bengal Army was in excess of 3000 names.

I first looked at the 'Register of European Soldiers Services 1793-1839' P-Z.¹⁰ From the approximate ages of his children, I deduced that William Walsh would have enlisted in the 1830's. In 1834 I found an entry for William Walsh which gave the following details:

Rank: Gunner 1st Battalion Artillery

Occupation: Labourer

Born: St. Michael's Parish, Limerick, Ireland

Date of Attestation: 9 July 1834, Westminster

Vessel: *George The Fourth*

Remarks: Transferred to Town Major's List 8 October 1844, pension December 1855

I then looked at the Embarkation List¹¹ which gave the following additional details:

Aged: 22

Height: 5 ft 10 inches

Remarks: Wife Catherine

Vessel arrived Bengal 2 March 1835.

So I now knew that William had gone to India as a married man. There is a record at the National Library in Dublin for St. Michael's Parish, Limerick, which shows the wedding of William Walsh to Catherine O'Keefe on 17 May 1834. The father of William Walsh is stated to be John Walsh.

From the details shown on the enlistment and embarkation records I was then able to trace William's career by looking at the Annual Long List of the Bengal Artillery produced by the Town Major's office - these also gave the colour of his eyes(grey) and hair(light brown). Thus in the List dated 1September 1841¹² William is recorded as being 29, a Sergeant in

¹⁰ IOR L/MIL/10/123

¹¹ IOR L/MIL/9/78

¹² IOR L/MIL/10/62 fo.2750

the second regiment, 1st Brigade, Artillery, but no location is shown. In the Muster Roll for 1849/50¹³ William is shown as Sergeant Major in the Sylhet Light Infantry.

In about 1850 William was transferred to the large military station at Cawnpore where he was attached to the Commissariat Department. In 1854 he was subject to an Order of the General Orders of the Commander in Chief (GOCC)¹⁴ as follows:

At the request of the Commissary General, Sergeant William Walsh of the army commissariat department, lately attached to HM 52nd Regiment, is remanded to the regiment of Artillery, and is to be sent to join 1st Company 6th Battalion at Cawnpore, in the grade of gunner.

Whether he might have blotted his copybook or whether this was a precursor to his retirement after the normal 19 years' service is uncertain, but in 1855 he was retired to pension and appears on the pensioners list of 1 September 1856¹⁵ as 'Sergeant Artillery'.

With a large family still to support following his retirement from the army, it seems that William Walsh found work with the railway company. By 1857 the East India Railway (EIR) was in the process of extending the line from Allahabad to Cawnpore (this stretch finally opened in 1859). The records for William's sons at La Martiniere state that he was a 'Railway Inspector', which it seems would have provided him with a fairly comfortable living.

In the absence of any baptismal records of the five children mentioned in the article in the *Bengal Catholic Herald* I decided to see if I could find any trace of the marriage of any of the children in the Bengal marriage indexes. I deduced that the first five children would all probably have been girls as it seemed that my great grandfather John William had been named after his grandfather and father as the first male offspring.

As the first child would probably have been born about 1835 I decide to look at marriages from 1850 onwards. Fortunately the FIBIS database contains a list of Bengal marriages from 1854 that gives the marriages alphabetically by both the wife's and their spouses' surnames. Two of the entries were marriages of William and Catherine's daughters and I was able to trace another two earlier marriages of William's daughters by scanning through the alphabetical index volumes of Bengal marriages (where the marriages are only listed alphabetically by the male spouses' names).

In chronological order they were as follows:

5 July 1852 at St. John's Church, Cawnpore¹⁶

Ellen Walsh, spinster, 15, resident of Cawnpore, (father William Walsh) to William Probett, widower, 39, General merchant, resident of Cawnpore, (father Stephen Probett). Witnesses: William Walsh, Sergeant Commissariat Dept. and Mary Graham. Chaplain R. Panting

23 January 1854 at Christ Church, Cawnpore¹⁷

¹³ IOR L/MIL/10/171 fo.620

¹⁴ IOR L/MIL/17/2/303 no.57 January 1854

¹⁵ IOR L/MIL/10/177

¹⁶ IOR N/1/82/102

Bridget Walsh, spinster, minor, resident of Cawnpore, (father William Walsh) to Garrett Roche, full age, bachelor, overseer DPW [*Department of Public Works*], resident of Ferozabad, (father Patrick Roche). Witnesses: William Walsh, W. Probett [*William*] and E. Probett [*Ellen*]. Chaplain C. Hamilton

5 September 1855 at Christ Church, Cawnpore¹⁸

Margaret Walsh, spinster, 15, resident of Cawnpore, (father William Walsh) to John Young, full age, bachelor, survey dept. (father John Young). Witnesses: John Young and William Walsh. Chaplain Hyacinth Hirwan

21 February 1857 at Cawnpore¹⁹

Mary Anne Walsh, minor, spinster, resident Cawnpore (father William Colepoy Walsh²⁰) to Thomas Henry Goodings, full age, bachelor, Electric Telegraph office, (father John Goodings). Witnesses: WC Walsh and E. Probett [*Ellen*]. Chaplain ETR Moncrieff.

That leaves one other daughter, probably born about 1844, unaccounted for. She would have been too young to have been married by 1857, but might well have been living with her parents in Cawnpore as would their youngest daughter, Jane, born 1847.

Part 2: A family lost in the Cawnpore massacres

All has been burnt-pillaged and destroyed; they and all they had as if suddenly blotted out of existence.²¹

On 10 May 1857 the 3rd Light Cavalry and the 11th and 20th Native Infantry regiments of the East India Company army mutinied in Meerut and killed their British officers. Some 50 European civilians were also murdered. This marked the commencement of the Indian Mutiny which, over the next ten weeks, was to have catastrophic consequences for my 2x great grandfather, William Walsh, and his large family in Cawnpore.

On 5 July 1852 William's eldest daughter, Ellen, had married (aged 15) a widower, William Probett (aged 39) at St. John's Church, Cawnpore. His first wife, Amy Izzard, had died in March 1852. He was another retired artilleryman who was the local Dak agent and appears to have been involved in many business enterprises in Cawnpore. In 1857 there were at least two surviving children from William's first marriage, Charles and Amy. Ellen

¹⁷ IOR N/1/85/99

¹⁸ IOR N/1/88/188

¹⁹ IOR N/1/91/120

²⁰ Another spelling of Coelpy. This appears to be the only time William used it.

²¹ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, p650, footnote 436. These words were written by the brother of the Rev. Frederick Fisher the Anglican chaplain at Fatehgarh, who was killed in the Mutiny, one of nine members of his family lost in the Mutiny.

and William had at least another two children, William Stephen Walsh Probett (b.1855), and Kate Hazell Probett, (b.1856).²²

William Walsh's second daughter, Bridget, also married an ex artilleryman, Garrett Roche, on 23 January 1854 at Christ Church, Cawnpore. He was from Mitchelstown, County Cork, a cooper by trade, and had enlisted in the EIC army in 1846, aged 20. He appears to have subsequently retired or been transferred to the Department of Public Works as a 'road overseer'. They had two children, Edward (b.1853, apparently born out of wedlock) and Eliza Madeline (b.1855). In 1857 the family was living at Fatehgarh, a military outpost about eighty miles upstream of Cawnpore on the Ganges. It was also the location of a Presbyterian Church Mission.

The third daughter, Margaret, married John Young, a Revenue Surveyor, at Christ Church, Cawnpore, on 5 September 1855. There do not appear to have been any children. In 1857 John and Margaret were in Jhansi, where John was conducting a revenue survey, accompanied by some military personnel.

The year 1857 had started well enough for William.²³ On 21 February his fourth daughter, Mary Anne, married Thomas Goodings of the Electric Telegraph office, in Cawnpore. The service was conducted by the Rev. ETR Moncrieff, who was also Director of the Cawnpore Free School. The marriage is recorded in the return of the Register of Marriages at Cawnpore for the quarter ended 31 March 1857. It would be the last return submitted by the Rev. Moncrieff; by 30 June he would be dead.

William's two unmarried daughters, one (name unidentified) born about 1844, and Jane, would both have been with him at Cawnpore in 1857, along with Ellen and Mary Anne and their husbands and children. His two sons, John William (my great grandfather) and Henry, were at school in Lucknow in 1857, at La Martiniere College, having previously been pupils at the Cawnpore Free School. Another pupil at La Martiniere at that time was Ellen's stepson, Charles Probett (b.1847).

News of the mutiny at Meerut and Delhi reached Cawnpore around the middle of May. The commander of the garrison, General Wheeler, almost immediately set about fortifying his entrenchment set up in the barracks towards the outskirts of the city. It was initially expected that it would only be required for a relief force promised to be on its way from Allahabad. However, within a week it had been filling up with civilians from within the city and from surrounding districts as an attack by the rebel forces of the Nana Sahib, the local leader, grew increasingly more likely.

²² A further four Probett children, Emma, Louisa, Nellie and John are recorded as victims of the Cawnpore Massacre but none of their baptisms has been found in the Ecclesiastical records so it has not been possible to confirm their parentage.

²³ Apart from where direct sources are noted, the following narrative has been derived from the sources given in the bibliography.

Meanwhile, in Fatehgarh, concern was growing that the local Native Infantry would mutiny at any minute. On 3 June news came that rebel cavalry were approaching the city. Civilians began to congregate at the ghat on the Ganges, where it was decided to evacuate over 150 of the civilian population downstream to Cawnpore in a flotilla of boats, in the belief that the city was still under the control of British forces. Garrett Roche, Bridget and their two children were in a small boat together with a pensioner, Boscow, another retired EIC soldier, and his wife and two children. The small military contingent remained at the fort.

On the morning of 5 June, news came that insurgents were crossing the river ahead of them. Refuge had been offered by a local man at Dharampur, on the Ramganga River which entered the Ganges a short distance upstream from the flotilla. There was much discussion as to what to do, but eventually the party split into two. The first party, including the Roche and Boscow families, decided to make for Dharampur whilst the remainder continued downstream towards Cawnpore.

This second party of over 100 refugees eventually reached Bithur, the Nana Sahib's home town a few miles from Cawnpore, on 9 June, where they were soon overrun by his forces. The survivors were rounded up and taken to the Nana Sahib's headquarters at the Savada House in Cawnpore where, on 12 June, all the men, women and children were slaughtered.

Garrett and Bridget's party, which had remained at Dharampur, were after some days persuaded to return to their home comforts in Fatehgarh, as it was thought that the mutiny there had now been averted. For the time being they were safe.

In Jhansi there had been no alarm until, also on 5 June, the commander of the garrison and two officers were killed by sepoys who then went into the cantonment to kill any Christians they could find. A Captain Skene gathered all of those he could, 55 in number, and they barricaded themselves inside the fort in the town. Amongst them were John Young and his wife, Margaret.²⁴

The garrison was, however, hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned, so on 8 June, Skene agreed terms with the sepoys for the evacuation of the fort. However, no sooner had the fort been surrendered than all the survivors were tied up and taken to a small garden below the fort, where they were split into three groups of men, women and children and all of them, including John Young and Margaret, beheaded or cut in half.²⁵

The Rani of Jhansi rather disingenuously denied having given the order for the massacre. She had been known to the Nana Sahib since their childhood days. She became one of the leading Mutineer leaders and was famous for escaping over the walls of the fort and down the precipitous slope below on horseback. She was later killed on 17 June 1858 at the battle of Kotah-Ki-Serai.

²⁴ Julian Spilsbury, *The Indian Mutiny*, p330

²⁵ They are recorded as victims in Blunt's *Inscriptions on Christian Monuments in UP*, p155.



Aftermath of the Siege of Cawnpore. Soldiers of the 1st Madras Fusiliers seated amongst the remains of the General Sir Hugh Massy Wheeler's entrenchment at Cawnpore. Felix Beato, photographer, March 1858. © IWM (Q 69827)

At Cawnpore on 5 June, the long expected siege of Wheeler's entrenchment had begun. There were up to 1000 people in the entrenchment. Of these, about half were women and children and there were only just over 200 trained soldiers. Many of the troops normally stationed there had been deployed elsewhere in the years preceding the Mutiny. The entrenchment was a rectangular enclosure of approximately 500 x 1000 feet, protected by a low mud parapet about two feet thick. It contained two unfurnished barrack units that offered little protection against the mutineers' artillery and sniper fire. The monsoon season had not yet begun and the day time temperatures were well over 100 degrees.

Probably as many as 300 soldiers and civilians were to be killed or die there from disease or fever over the next three weeks. The Rev. Moncrieff was said to 'go from post to post reading prayers' and 'was indefatigable in his ministry of mercy with the wounded and the dying'.²⁶ Each night the bodies of the dead were deposited in a deep well, known as the sepulchral well, within the entrenchment.

²⁶ Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, p268

After holding out for three weeks, the garrison was running out of ammunition and supplies and taking ever increasing casualties. Eventually, with no imminent sign of the relief force, General Wheeler agreed a truce with the Nana Sahib, such that the survivors would be allowed to evacuate the entrenchment with their weapons and be given safe passage to the Ganges at the Satichaura Ghat for evacuation by boats to Allahabad.

The date fixed for the evacuation was 27 June. Prior to their departure members of the garrison gathered in small groups at the sepulchral well to pay their last respects to their loved ones, whilst the Rev. Moncrieff 'conducted services a discreet distance upwind from the well'.²⁷ By this time it is possible that William, his wife Catherine, their recently married daughter, Mary Anne, and her husband, Thomas Goodings, as well as William's two young unmarried daughters, had all already been killed in the entrenchment.²⁸ Certainly, their son in law, William Probett, was recorded as one of those killed in the entrenchment.²⁹

However, Ellen Probett and some of her children had survived and were in the party of nearly 700 soldiers and civilians that set out for the Satichaura Ghat expecting safe passage to Allahabad.

None had expected that the Nana Sahib had set a trap. On arriving at the river, the boatmen leapt overboard and rebels started firing on the British from hidden positions on the bank. Many were cut down in the water by the cavalry as they struggled to get back to the banks of the river. One of those killed at the Satichaura Ghat on that day was the Rev. Moncrieff. General Wheeler was also killed following his capture when his boat was overrun by the mutineers. Only four soldiers escaped downstream to later tell their story.

Ellen Probett was amongst the only 120 or so survivors left on the river bank when the ceasefire was ordered. They were taken back to the Nana Sahib's headquarters at the Savada House. The surviving seventeen men were all shot. On 3 July the remaining women and children were transferred to a property known as the Bibighar House, near the Assembly Rooms, where the final atrocity would be perpetrated.

Back at Fatehgarh the position had deteriorated. The local 10th Native Infantry had been joined by mutinous troops from elsewhere and were pressed into uniting with them. The remaining 100 or so soldiers and civilians at the Fort were forced to evacuate the town at midnight on 3 July and attempted to head downstream to Cawnpore once again, in the still mistaken belief that British forces would be in control. There were now only three boats available.

²⁷ Ibid, p307

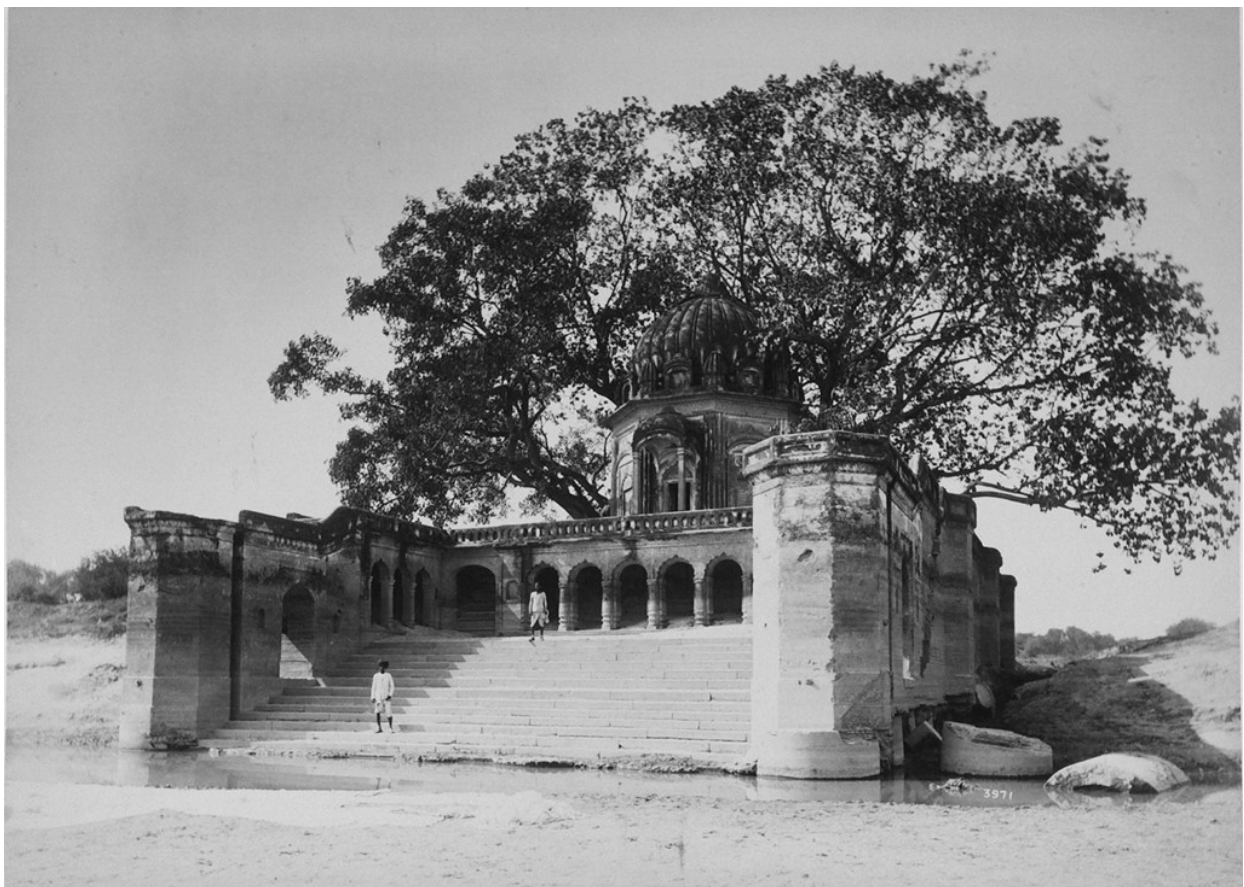
²⁸ Their deaths of William Walsh's family are recorded on tablet number 12 at the All Souls Memorial church in Cawnpore as 'Mr Walsh, E.I.R., wife and family'.

²⁹ The deaths of William Probett and later, Ellen, are recorded on tablet number 11 as 'William Probett, wife and family'.

One boat was hopelessly overloaded with belongings and had to be abandoned as it was overwhelmed by local pursuers. The party then divided into two boats. One became stuck fast on a sandbar and all except two on board were killed by the mutineers or taken prisoner and later returned to Fatehgarh where they were executed on 23 July. The two survivors later recorded the events that had occurred.

One of those survivors was Gavin Jones, an Indigo planter. Although wounded, he managed to float downriver and catch up with last remaining boat which had been temporarily grounded on a sandbar. This last boat also contained the Roche and Boscow families. Soon, he went ashore to get help with his wound in a friendly village but on 5 July the boat was forced to continue without him. He would recover and later became a leading industrialist, setting up famous cotton and wool mills in Cawnpore.

The boat continued as far as Bithur, where it was attacked by the Nana's artillery. After a brief resistance they had no option but to surrender and they were then taken to Cawnpore. On 10 July, the men, including Garrett Roche and his old companion, Boscow, were taken outside the Assembly Rooms and shot.³⁰ Bridget and her two children were then taken to



*The 'Massacre Ghat' at Cawnpore, front view. Unknown photographer, 1891 (PH.1276-1908)
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

³⁰ The deaths of Garrett Roche and Bridget are recorded on tablet 14. Their name is misspelt as Roach.

the Bibighar House, where she would be reunited with her sister, Ellen, for the last time.

By 15 July, the guns of the relief force under Colonel Neill and General Havelock could be heard on the outskirts of the city. The Nana Sahib knew he would have to retreat to Bithur but was desperate to ensure there would be no survivors to recount the atrocities committed under his leadership. He therefore instructed, or at least acquiesced in the decision, that all those in the Bibighar should be killed. At first the task was handed to some Hindu sepoys, but they balked at the cold-blooded killing of women and children and, after firing their muskets into the air, they retreated. The task was left to a Muslim butcher, Savur Khan, and four companions. All those inside were hacked to death.

The relief force entered the city on 17 July. There were conflicting reports of what they saw when they first entered the Bibighar. Some claimed that all the bodies had been thrown into a nearby well, but another reported the bodies of two women found bound to a pillar. It is thought that they had put up a struggle with their attackers. One of these was said to be Ellen Probett.

An account was given by Captain Macrae, one of the first officers of the relief force to enter the Bibighar. He had spoken to a local resident who had identified the women. His account went as follows:

‘...when Khan entered with the butchers some of the prisoners were prepared to resist their murderers... [These were identified as] Mrs. Jacobi, widow of the watchmaker and Mrs. William Probett, widow of the Dak agent. These women were of medium stature, squarely built daughters of gunners of the Bengal Artillery, quite capable of making a stout resistance and holding their own against any single native’.³¹

Andrew Ward, in his book *Our Bones are Scattered*, describes Ellen as the ‘fecund and ferocious Mrs. Probett...the squarely built daughter of an artilleryman’.³²

In all sixteen members of the Walsh family were killed: William Walsh; his wife Catherine; their six daughters and four sons-in-law; and four known grandchildren. One of Ellen’s stepchildren, Amy, also died, as well as the four other Probett children whose names are listed amongst those killed in the massacre, but whose parentage has not been corroborated.

My great-grandfather, John William and his younger brother, Henry, along with Ellen’s stepson, Charles Probett, all survived the Siege of Lucknow. Their names are recorded on the Roll of Honour plaque at La Martiniere College that lists the names of the masters and boys of the school present during the Siege of Lucknow. They were all awarded the Indian Mutiny Medal with Defence of Lucknow clasp.

³¹ Amelia Bennett, ‘Ten months Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore’, Part 1 *The Nineteenth Century and after*, June 1913

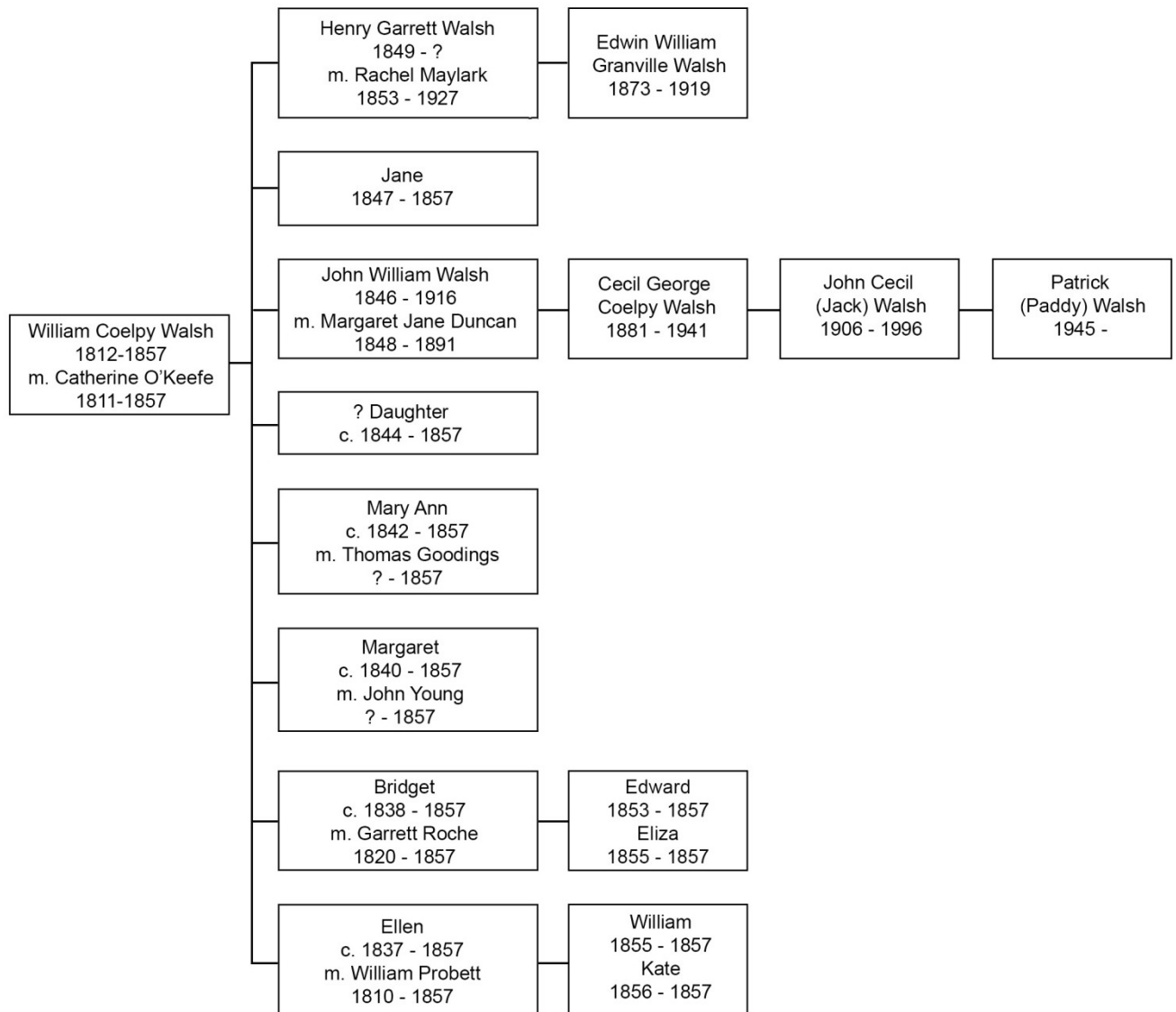
³² Andrew Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered*, p417

They all went on to have families who continued to live in India for the next 90 years until Independence. John William Walsh became Deputy Registrar at the Allahabad High Court and died in Naini Tal in 1916. Both Henry Walsh and Charles Probett went on to work as engine drivers for the East India Railway company.

A great grandson of Charles Probett, Melville Shields-Probett, is a current FIBIS member. We made contact with each other through the FIBIS social network site and I am grateful for the information that he has sent me on his ancestors.

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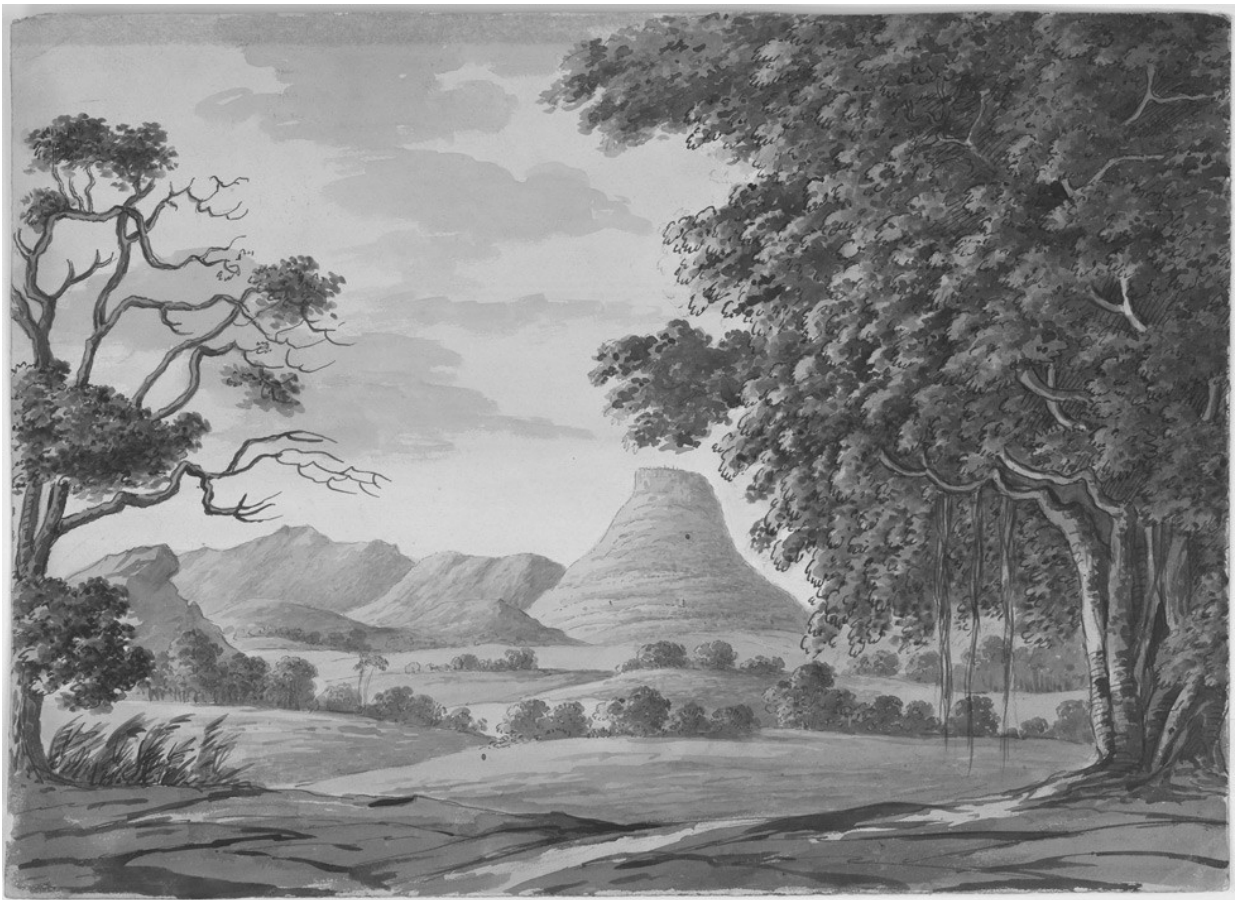


In Search of Gopal Drooge and the Murder of Captain William Richardson

By Tim Willasey-Wilsey

It was late on a winter's evening some years ago that I stumbled upon a memorial in a Scottish churchyard to William Richardson 'Captain in the East India Company Service and Quartermaster General to General Mathews' army [who] was one of the unfortunate officers who suffered by the cruelty of Tippoo when confined in Gopal Drooge 1783'. It was only when coming across my notes again in 2013 that I determined to unravel Richardson's story and find Gopal Drooge.

Tipu Sultan (as he is usually known) was the Muslim ruler of Mysore in southern India. He was the elder son of Hyder Ali who had extended his territories from the west (Malabar) coast almost to the east (Coromandel) coast of the sub-continent and posed a serious threat to the British East India Company and its southern Presidency in Madras (now Chennai). Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were not only effective military commanders and charismatic personalities, but they were also adept at exploiting French colonial aspirations to good effect. For much of the period of their rule France was at war globally with Britain.



'View of Gopaldrug (Mysore)' 22 March 1799, Elisha Trapaud (1799) Watercolour with pen and ink. Shelfmark: WD1413

This much I knew already, but I had no inkling of General Mathews and not the slightest idea of where or what was Gopal Drooge. My researches revealed that Brigadier-General Richard Mathews' campaign against Mysore was one of the least glorious episodes in East India Company history. He was sent to the Malabar Coast to draw the Mysore forces away from threatening the British in the Madras and Carnatic region. Mathews' army comprised troops from the Bombay (now Mumbai) Presidency reinforced by a few regiments of the British Crown. Richardson was in command of the 3rd battalion of Bombay Sepoys (raised in 1769) which deployed with the 5th under Captain Eames and the 15th under Captain MacCulloch from their home bases in Surat and Broach (now Bharuch). There is no evidence that he was Quartermaster-General.

They landed on the Malabar (west) Coast of India near Merjee (now Mirjan) in December 1782 (at the very moment that Hyder Ali died and was succeeded by Tipu) before pushing north to take the port of Onore (modern Honnavar) and then inland to capture the fortress of Bednore (also known as Hydernagur and nowadays as Nagar) which housed much of Tipu Sultan's treasury. This treasure had an immediately disastrous effect on discipline, with Mathews' troops more focussed on their share of the spoils than on preparing the town for the inevitable counter-attack.

This lack of discipline was demonstrated yet again on an operation in February against the town of Anantpore (now Anandapuram) where the troops were said to be responsible for atrocities. By now the incompetent Mathews had spread his forces so thinly in the region that he made it simple for Tipu to lay siege to Bednore and force the surrender of the garrison at the end of April. In the following days Tipu separated the captured officers into two groups. One would be sent to the fortress town of Chitteldroog (modern Chitradurga) and would mostly survive their captivity. The second group including General Mathews himself and Captain William Richardson would be marched in irons towards Mysore's stronghold of Seringapatam (now Shrirangapatana). Their fates would be less fortunate.

Tipu had undoubtedly reneged on a promise to allow Mathews and his men to be escorted to the west coast where they would be picked up by British ships. However he claimed that Mathews too had failed to honour a promise to hand over all the money and jewellery seized from the treasury in Bednore. Mathews' brother William, a lieutenant, was allegedly captured as he tried to flee with his spoils.

I say 'allegedly' because the truth was a particular casualty of this campaign. Just as the British tended to exaggerate Tipu's cruelty there are also some luridly excessive accounts of both Mathews' greed and of the excesses of his troops. The biggest divergence centres on the events after the British capture of Anantpore. There seems little doubt that Tipu's soldiers were given no quarter but the treatment of the women and children is less clear. The curious thing is that some of the allegations emanated from the British side, driven it seems partly by jealousy and rivalry, and they were still being hotly contested in the House of Commons eight years later.



Colonel Baillie's dungeon in Seringapatam.

The march from Bednore to Seringapatam in irons must have been particularly arduous, but there was little respite when they arrived at the great fortress which stands on an island in the Cauvery River. Here Mathews' officers were to join the numerous other British captives of Tipu Sultan. One large contingent of British and Company soldiers had been defeated at the battle of Pollilur in September 1780. Their commander Colonel William Baillie had just died in November 1782 in the dungeon at Seringapatam which still bears his name. A second batch of prisoners under Colonel John Braithwaite had surrendered at Annagudi in February 1782. In all, there were over a thousand British prisoners at Tipu's mercy held in various prisons across his territories.

There has long been a dispute about Tipu's treatment of his prisoners. Some were undoubtedly treated with great cruelty (as we shall see), but others were looked after well, provided with a small allowance for buying food in the market. Much seems to have depended on the humanity of the local commander. Sayyed Ibrahim at Bangalore treated his prisoners so well that the East India Company would later pay for a canopy to be erected over his tomb in his honour.

At the time, much outrage was caused in Britain that Tipu Sultan pressed British and Indian captives into his own army or obliged them to learn skills which would assist his military ambitions. Some of these men were obliged to be circumcised and to become Muslims.

Some modern Indian historians suggest this was purely a matter of individual choice, but the records suggest that there were cases of coercion.

Many British officers and men died in captivity including Colonel Baillie himself, but General Mathews' officers were treated with particular harshness and the main reason seems to have been the events at Anantpore. Many of the officers were to die in extremely distressing circumstances, and some of them at Gopal Drooge.

Researching the whereabouts of Gopal Drooge proved to be the most complex part of this quest. The word drooge, or more properly droog, has disappeared entirely from the modern lexicon. I had to turn to the 1897 Gazetteer for Mysore to find that a droog is a monolithic dome-shaped mass of granite. "These masses have usually one or more of their sides precipitous or at such an angle as to be inaccessible except at few points." These remarkable droogs which are found mainly in the modern Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, were later of considerable use to the British when they came to produce a trigonometrical survey of India, because in clear weather they can be seen from as far as 50 miles. The largest of them is Saven Droog (also known as the Rock of Death) at 4559 ft above sea level.

None of the prisoners in Seringapatam, either in their diaries or in their subsequent memoirs, identified the location of Gopal Drooge. Perhaps they never knew. Furthermore, they used a variety of spellings (which I shall retain throughout this narrative). Frances Robson and Captain Henry Oakes called it Coppul Droog. William Thomson referred to Kaval or Kavel Drook. Colonel Lindsay wrote of Copal-Droog. The British officer James Hunter, who was also a competent artist, produced a watercolour of Gopaul Droog in about 1805 and his colleague Elisha Trapaud painted one of Gopaldrug in 1799.

In modern India, it is virtually impossible to buy a physical map of the countryside showing mountains and rivers. Foreigners are not allowed to buy 'topographical' maps and they are not permitted for export. All you can obtain are 'political' maps which show cities, towns and state borders, or road maps for motorists. This is a throw-back to the days when physical mapping was regarded as highly sensitive and of use to a potential enemy. The Survey of India is still part of the Indian Government just as the British Ordnance Survey was until quite recently. Of course in these days of satellites and Google Earth, this secrecy about mapping is anachronistic, but procedures change slowly in all bureaucracies.

A second problem in identifying Gopal Drooge was that (as I have already indicated), the word droog no longer exists. In most cases it has been replaced by the word durga. This too causes confusion because durg and durgum in most Indian languages means 'inaccessible place' or 'fortress'. But the term durga usually refers to the goddess Durga and to shrines in her honour. As it happens, most of the larger droogs were natural forts and also provided ideal sites for shrines.



Kabbal Durga - Gopal Drooge today (taken 2013).

After much research and help from friends in India, I came to the working conclusion that Gopal Drooge is the modern Kabbal Durga. The 1897 *Mysore Gazetteer* describes Kabbal Durga as a 'fortified conical hill... rising to 3507 ft ... Owing to its precipitous size it would... be almost impregnable. It is accessible only on one side and even there the ascent is very laborious... It was used as a penal settlement... and as the bad nature of the water which appears almost poisonous renders the hill pestilential, ...troublesome prisoners were generally sent there.' However it makes no reference to the events of 1783.

Nonetheless, for reasons that will soon become clear, this description gave this location the edge over the alternatives which included Kavale Durga near Shimoga and Koppal (previously known as Copaul, Kapal and once as Copaul Droog) near Bellary.

So what happened at Gopal Drooge? In early September seventeen officers of General Mathews' army were marched out of Seringapatam to Gopal Drooge. This is a 60 mile trek which (having spent four months in irons) must have been agonising enough, but the ascent of the mountain, in their weakened state, must have been truly appalling. General Mathews, who was left behind in Seringapatam, was obliged to drink poison probably on 7 September 1783. On 16 August he hid a message in a spice box warning of his imminent demise. This was not discovered until 16 years later. He also scratched a similar message onto the bottom of a pewter plate. He resisted taking the poison for as long as he could but finally agreed once it became clear that his guards (who had been sympathetic to him)

would be made to suffer if he refused. It took him six hours to die 'in torment'. Three other officers of his force, Major Rumley, Captain Fraser and Lieutenant Sampson, were poisoned at Mysore. At Bednore, Lieutenant William Mathews (General Mathews' brother) and Lieutenant Wheldon, were taken out into the jungle and 'hacked to pieces'.



One of the reservoirs of noxious water.

On the summit of Gopal Drooge the seventeen officers were taken from their accommodation and told that they were to be poisoned on the orders of Tipu. The following account was provided by an Indian soldier who had formerly served the British and was 'melancholy and cast down' by what he had witnessed. 'The commandant... at the head of most of the troops in the place... repaired to the prison attended by

some persons who held in their hands bowls of green liquid. The prisoners were ordered to advance two by two and the commander informed them that it was the nabob's [Tipu's] orders that they should drink the liquor contained in these bowls... The commandant informed them at once that the drink offered to them was poison... that it was, he assured them, a pleasant and easy death but that, if they persisted in refusing it, they were to be seized and tied and thrown alive down the precipice of Kavel Druk mountain... He... allowed them an hour to determine... They then drank the poison which operated with violence upon some but in the space of one hour the bodies of all were extended lifeless.'

The informant added that two papers had been taken from one of the officers when he lay dead, which appeared to have been written by Captain Richardson. A separate account, albeit unsourced, was provided by the French historian Joseph Michaud in his History of Mysore published in 1809. Michaud had little sympathy for General Mathews' men after their 'reprehensible conduct' at Bednore, but he was appalled by the murders. Michaud says that "Captain Richardson, who was the last to be executed, fell on his knees and implored his executioners to ask for confirmation of his sentence; but they gave no heed to his entreaties. He perished with his companions." Yet another account suggests that some of the officers had to be flogged to force them to take the poison and that after their murder 'the armourers knocked off their irons and their bodies were then thrown into a wood as a prey for tigers'.



Upper: the 'prison' on Gopal Drooge

Lower: inside the vaulted 'prison'.

Richardson's request 'for confirmation of the sentence' suggests that he knew that Tipu Sultan was in negotiation with the British authorities in Madras and that the French had ceased hostilities against the British in July. He may even have known that an armistice was provisionally agreed in early August only a month before the murders on Gopal Drooge. Indeed Richardson was probably the last British prisoner to die. All the others would be released after the treaty of Mangalore in March 1784. As the Victorian historian John Clark Marshman would comment 'Of the prisoners who had fallen into the hands of Hyder and Tippoo, the most distinguished had been taken off by poison, or hacked to pieces in the woods but 190 officers and 900 European soldiers still survived.' Marshman regarded the Treaty of Mangalore as disgraceful.

The lure of the Gopal Droog was now too great for me to resist. At 9am on a foggy November morning I caught my first sight of the massive rock shortly after turning off the Mysore to Bangalore highway at the village of Satnur. A first glimpse told me that this was the correct place, both because it was precipitous on three and a half sides and because it matched almost exactly the watercolour by Captain Elisha Trapaud (although he rendered it narrower than it really is). The ascent was extremely steep and would have been harder still had it not been for the ancient steps, now worn smooth, cut into the rock. These steps cleverly oblige any climber to use a route which is covered at several places by defensive



The precipice from which the corpses were thrown.

positions which still exist 230 years after Richardson's death. On reaching the summit there was ample evidence of the fetid, possibly poisonous, water to which contemporaries refer (some accounts suggest the poison was mixed with coconut milk). There are also two Hindu shrines and an accommodation block, presumably for defenders, as well as traces of defensive walls for part of the circumference of the summit. However my main interest focussed on a well-concealed, windowless, barrel-vaulted structure supporting a thick, heavy roof of masonry and earth.

This building, possibly once conceived as a magazine for explosives, was surely the prison occupied by Richardson and his sixteen colleagues. The two enormous hinges for the entrance through the thick brick walls, suggested there had once been a very heavy door. The structure was but a short distance from a wide expanse of open rock from which the prisoners' corpses may have been thrown to the jungle below.

A mystery remains. There was extensive coverage of these murders in the British press following the Treaty of Mangalore in March 1784. However the whole episode seems to have been almost forgotten over the next few years. As far as I know, there are no memorials anywhere to Mathews and his 22 murdered officers. Certainly I have found none in the obvious places; Seringapatam, Mysore, Bangalore, Bombay or Madras. By contrast there is a splendid memorial to Colonel Baillie in Seringapatam. Perhaps there was a feeling that Mathews' force had disgraced itself. There was also some rivalry between Madras, Bengal and Bombay Presidencies and officers. There was also a sense of embarrassment that the East India Company had felt obliged to sign a peace settlement with Tipu Sultan only a few months after the murders. But even in 1792 when Lord Cornwallis attached to a report some detailed lists of the fate of hundreds of British captives, he referred to only two of those who died on Gopal Drooge "Captains Landrum and McCullough lost their lives, not known how, at Gopaul Droog. It is to be remarked that the water of Gopaul Droog at the top of the rocks is very generally reported to be of a poisonous quality, which in a short time, kills all who drink it; the town below is a good one. They had not heard any particulars of the other Bombay officers who are missing."

So for Captain Richardson his only memorial is in a bleak Langholm cemetery. But the almost impregnable Kabbal Durga serves as a permanent reminder of the cruel events of September 1783 at Gopal Drooge.

A prisoner at Seringapatam wrote a Prison Song of 15 verses humorously comparing their lives to those of their colleagues in comfortable Madras. Recorded in William Thomson's *Memoirs*, the final verse is particularly poignant.

Still thus let's disguise, Our sadness and sighs, Thus chase away chilly despair,
Resign'd to our woes, And the chains of our foes, Submit to the soldier's hard fare;
Let's think each to-morrow, Must shorten our sorrow, Let hope serve instead of a dram,
That freedom once more, May open the door, Of our Jail at Seringapatam,

Appendix

The seventeen officers said to have died at Gopal Drooge in early September 1783 were; Major Fewtrill, Captains Eames (5th Bombay Sepoys), Lendrum (11th Bombay Sepoys), Jackson (Bombay European Foot Artillery), MacCulloch (15th Bombay Sepoys), Richardson (3rd Bombay Sepoys) Gotlich and Clift, and Lieutenants Barnewell, Young (Brigade Major) and Olivier (Bombay European Foot Artillery); Charles Stewart (Paymaster) and Charles Chick (Deputy Commissary). These 13 were all from the Bombay Presidency army. The remaining four were Crown troops of the British Army namely Captain Dougald Campbell (HM's 98th Regiment of Foot), Captains Alston and Fish (HM's 100th Regiment) and Ensign Gifford (Surgeon's Mate of HM's 100th).

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Kheddahs and Epigraphists: miscellaneous appointments in India and Burma in 1909

Bill Hall

Anyone trying to denigrate the administration of the British Raj in India should examine the vast amount of effort put in by the Government to provide all the facilities of a modern society for the population and, although my forebears were connected with India since the 1820s, it was not until I was asked by FIBIS to transcribe the departmental section of the *India Civil List* for 1909 that I realized the range of resources employed. A few of these lesser known positions are detailed below, alongside more general observations on the scale of the government workforce in India.

Before starting on this task I, and I imagine most of us, would not have known what a kheddah (or keddah) was. The word appears in the list of 'Miscellaneous Appointments' for Burma, which in those days was administered from India, and an entry in the list refers to Government kheddahs which required both a Superintendent and a Deputy Superintendent to manage them. An entry in an online article describes them as 'a method of capturing wild elephants, where stockades will be allowed to be built in strategic locations and where herds of wild elephants can be driven into and trapped in such stockades'.¹ I was also surprised to find that the word appears in Chambers Dictionary.

In 1909, the manufacture and export of opium was still an important and, no doubt, lucrative adjunct to India's revenue. Bengal, Bombay, Burma and UP all had their opium departments. Bengal had two opium Agents, one in Bihar and one at Benares, as well as two factory superintendents and 44 British plus seven Asian Assistants and Sub Deputy Agents. Total opium exports from India to China in 1905 amounted to 3,368 tons. This amount was however dwarfed by China's own production of 35,000 tons two years earlier. Opium exports decreased considerably following the founding of the International Opium Commission in 1914 and its efforts to restrict production.²

The following details, whilst only relating to the officer class, give an indication of the size of the operations for which the Indian Government was responsible. Considering the size of India and Burma, the figures are perhaps not large, but no doubt India's constant problems balancing its budget was to some extent caused by the number of staff on the payroll. In addition, as the majority were British personnel employed from the UK, many were entitled to overseas leave which required many additional staff to carry on their work.

In 1909 in the Medical Departments of the Provinces there were 409 doctors and surgeons. Nearly all of these were officers in the army's Indian Medical Service (IMS) although most of them worked in civilian hospitals. For example, the United Provinces had a colonel as Inspector General of Civil Hospitals and under him were sixteen lieutenant colonels and a

¹ Elephant Facts and Information Database http://www.elephant.se/elephant_glossary.php

² Alfred W McCoy, 'Opium History Up To 1858 A.D.' www.opioids.com/opium/history/index.html

large number of more junior officers all appointed as Civil Surgeons. The cost of running the hospitals, added to the staff salaries, must have been enormous. In addition, small stations without hospitals and some of the Political Agents in the Native States and the NWFP's outlying stations, such as Wana and Tochi, had IMS doctors attached. The Punjab employed a Chief Medical Plague Officer who had a staff of twelve Plague Officers under him and the Kasauli Research Institute had four staff working entirely on 'dysentery investigation'. The United Provinces had a Superintendent of the Government Leper Asylum at Naini Tal.

Bombay had a Lt. Col. Childe, IMS, whose appointment was Medical Officer for the African Protectorates. The Mombasa – Nairobi railway had been completed, which had employed several hundred Indians in its construction, but there were still many Indians travelling to East Africa and presumably they were medically examined before they embarked.

The provincial Police departments, including Burma, had 670 officers down to the rank of Assistant Superintendent 3rd Grade who were almost entirely British, which, considering the total size of the countries (over 1.8 million square miles) is no doubt a very modest figure. However, there were of course all the subordinate personnel who would have amounted to some thousands. In addition to normal police work, the Punjab and NWFP police provided some officers for the Samana Rifles which was a corps of tribal police operating in the Kohat District.

The Indian Government had its own Foreign Department which was responsible for relations with Afghanistan and some of the Native States. There was also a Political Department and if minors became rulers of a Native State the Indian Government sometimes took responsibility for their welfare and officers were appointed to become their guardians. In 1909 this was the case in respect of the Maharajas of Indore and Patiala when AC Sells was appointed as guardian to the Maharaja of Patiala and HC Clogstoun to the Maharaja of Indore. The Bengal Political department employed as



'Wild elephants captured in the enclosure or keddah' by Messrs Wiele and Klein, photographers Madras, in Edward Thurston 'Provincial Geographies of India: The Madras Presidency' (1913)

Agent to the Governor-General in Council a Mr FH Eggar who was responsible for the 'affairs of the late King of Oudh and for the purposes of Act XIX of 1887, Calcutta'.

One of the more remarkable appointments was in the Small Cause Court of Bengal at Calcutta. A Mr Thornhill, a Chief Magistrate and Barrister-at-Law, was appointed in 1908 as Judge of the Court for the Trial of Pilots. The Hooghly River was, and is, notorious for difficult navigation with sand banks constantly changing position and many ships came to grief there. One would imagine that the trial of a pilot for hazarding a ship would require something more than a small claims court so perhaps it was used for more minor offences involving his job. The picture below of the Brocklebank Line's Martand, which ran on to a sandbank in 1964 and became a total loss, is a case in point.



The SS Martand, run aground on the Hooghly in May 1964 (photo reproduced with the kind permission of David Jackson)

The Government took considerable steps to maintain and look after India's forests and a total of 208 personnel, nearly all British, under an Inspector General of Forests, were employed in the conservation and management of forests. Each province had its own Forest Department and Burma employed nearly a third of the total workforce, which included those on rubber plantations.

Another large department was the Ecclesiastical Department which included a few Church of Scotland ministers and the Church of Rome amongst the total of 190 clergy in the Provinces, from the Lord Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India and six other bishops, down to junior chaplains, of whom 45 were on leave in 1909. Except for the Bengal Presidency, the rates of pay and allowances are given, so presumably they were on the government payroll and a charge on the tax payer.

The Department of Public Instruction, or Education Department as we would call it today, had 179 personnel in the administration and the senior grades – Directors, Inspectors, Principals, and Professors including eleven British female staff as Lady Superintendents and Inspectresses of girls' schools and colleges. As well as academic subjects, there were specialist college courses in civil engineering, physics, mathematics, chemistry, electric

engineering etc. All this was in addition to the schools such as those inaugurated by Bishop Cotton, which, for modest fees, were set up to educate children of mainly European descent whose parents were unable or unwilling to have their children educated in the UK.

The largest government departmental employer in India was the Public Works Department (PWD) which in 1909 had a superior staff of over 980 ranging from Chief Engineers to Assistant Engineers 3rd grade. Railways which were not privately owned came under the PWD and in some Provinces railway employees formed a substantial part of the workforce. In the Punjab nearly 50% of the 286 Public Works staff was employed on the Railways. Another principal responsibility of the PWD was irrigation and in the north of India a considerable number of engineers were employed in the construction and maintenance of canals. Each province had engineers especially responsible for sanitary works, but those of us familiar with the thunder box will assume that their activities were mostly confined to towns.

A further entry under Miscellaneous Appointments, this time for Bombay, refers to the Mint and the curious thing is that the Mint Master, the Assaye (sic) Master and the Deputy Assaye Master were all ex-Army officers – one from the Royal Engineers and two, curiously, from the Indian Medical Service. One wonders if the qualifications today of a Royal Engineer or a Doctor of Medicine would be acceptable for a job in the Royal Mint. Interestingly, the Mint is referred to as 'His Majesty's Mint' and one is reminded that our own coins up to 1947 were inscribed, adjacent to the king's head, 'Ind. Imp' – Emperor of India.

There were also other departments which were not purely for governing the country. Madras had an Archæological Department which employed eleven officers including a Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent Epigraphist to study ancient inscriptions in the Southern Circle – mainly Kerala and the current Tamil Nadu states. There was a Director General of Observatories at Simla with three meteorologists and a Superintendent of Natural History in the Indian Museum at Calcutta.

The Provincial governments also paid for the upkeep of public gardens including the Royal Botanical Garden at Calcutta which had a Superintendent in charge and the United Provinces had a Superintendent of the Memorial Garden at Cawnpore, which commemorated the massacre of 1857, in addition to Superintendents of Gardens at Lucknow and Saharanpur and other stations. Burma and Madras even had Superintendents of Ethnography and the Imperial Department of Agriculture included a Mycologist.

To conclude, all of the bureaucracy involved of course required administration. The central government had a Controller of Printing, Stationery and Stamps, with a sub-section devoted to printing only, plus a Director of Statistics as well as an Officer in Charge of Records. Bengal had a Collector of Stamp Revenue and Bombay had a Superintendent of Stamps and Stationery. The Provincial departments also had their own accounts sections and examiners.

The origins of Johann Jacob Hoff, my ancestor in the Dutch East India Company

Mary McPherson

I have been trying to discover the origin of my ancestor, Johann Jacob Hoff, for very many years and to this end, have made many visits to the Asian and African Studies department of the British Library, quite apart from many hours searching relevant websites. Johann was my father's mother's grandfather and he died in Calcutta in 1837 aged 70 years. This told me he would have been born around 1767.

I posted a message on an Indian family search site about five years ago and heard from a person in the Netherlands who was also descended from a Johan Jacob Hoff. He told me of PH van der Kemp's book on the Dutch East Indies Government in the middle of 1817,¹ which describes the troubles around the British handover to the Dutch of some former Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, henceforth VOC) trading posts in Bengal, including around the post of Fultha (now Falta) on the Hooghly, south of Calcutta.

Kemp mentioned that the Fultha post was supervised by a Johan Jacob Hoff who was born in 'Gelschausen' in 1762 and who in 1789 had gone to Batavia (the Dutch name for Jakarta) for the Chamber of Enkhuizen² on the vessel *Maria Carolina*. I got in touch with the Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie³ (CBG) in The Hague and they told me there was no such ship as that named by Kemp. Over the following years I made many attempts to definitely identify Johann Jacob Hoff, but without success.

Recently, I went with my cousin to Burma and Malaysia. I had wanted to go to Malacca and Penang, as Kemp had noted that Hoff had been there, and when I discovered there was a Dutch Museum in Malacca, my hopes were high that at last I would find out something about him. We visited as soon as it opened, hoping to find that they had archives for the 1790s, but they did not.

I returned home determined to make one final concerted effort to find out more about Hoff. I contacted the CBG again and at first they repeated that there was no such ship. Then the next day they emailed to say they had realised that the ship was probably the *Vrouwe*

¹ *Het Nederlandsch-Indische bestuur in het midden van de 1817* [the Dutch East Indies Government in the middle of 1817], by PH van der Kemp, published in The Hague in 1915.

² Enkhuizen, in the north east of the Netherlands, was an important port city for the Dutch East India Company.

³The Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie: <http://www.cbg.nl> (nb option in top right corner to translate to English).

*Maria Kornelia*⁴ and records for her 1789 sailing listed a Johan Jacob Hooft and a Fredrik Hooft both of Gellenhausen.⁵ ⁶ This had to be my man.

The ship had been built in Enkhuizen, one of the VOC ports, in 1785 and sailed from Texel on 28 February 1789. It had on board 229 sailors, (of whom three died before they reached The Cape on 22 May 1789) 101 soldiers and six craftsmen. It left the Cape on 7 June 1789, arrived at Batavia on 11 August 1789 and then sailed on to China where it arrived on 26 October 1789.⁷



The Peperhuis, the only surviving VOC building in Enkhuizen.

The CBG gave me copies of the *Grootboek* (ship's ledger), which contains references to Hoff. It has not been possible to get an exact translation of this as the copies are difficult to read and are in ancient Dutch. However, on the Dutch National Archive's VOC Sea-voyagers website, this explanation of the pay-registers is given:

While each VOC Chamber had its own personnel administration, they did adhere to centrally determined regulations. The basis of the salary administration is the ship's pay-register, in which was recorded the [personnel] and salary data from all the paid crew of every VOC ship. The data is noted per employee and the salary account opens on the ship's date of departure. The account closes upon termination of tenure and with the company's final payment of the crewman's or rightful claimant's credit. As soon as all the crew were on board they were registered upon the muster roll. All expenses made on board, and thus to be deducted from the account, were first noted in the journal. Only at the end of the voyage was all the information written in the ship's pay-register.⁸

⁴ Vrouwe = Lady

⁵ Gelnhausen in Germany, about 40km east of Frankfurt.

⁶ A database detailing 655,000 18th century VOC sea voyagers, extracted from pay-registers, can be searched online at <http://vocseavoyagers.nationaalarchief.nl>

⁷ An online database gives details of 8000 Dutch-Asiatic voyages. For the 1789 *Vrouwe Maria Kornelia* voyage see: <http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DAS/detailVoyage/95669> - The Dutch East India Company's shipping between the Netherlands and Asia 1595-1795, details of voyage 4631.1 from Texel to Batavia.

⁸ <http://vocseavoyagers.nationaalarchief.nl/achtergrondinformatie.aspx>

The copies of the pay-register that I have certainly conform to this. They have all been written in retrospect and Hoff paid his dues (192 Guilders) in full in 1793, which was when his contract expired. The website explains the nature of the debts a voyager may owe the VOC:

Depending upon his occupation, a VOC employee could sign a debenture or forward transfer up to a maximum of 300 guilders. The debenture was often made in name of the signer, but was transferable and payable to the bearer...The pay-register mentions only the existence of a debenture and the repayment if indeed that has taken place.

By the end of the 18th century the VOC also recruited manpower with the help of a recruiting-officer. These sea-voyagers earned nothing during the home and away voyages, but their kit was looked after. They were not permitted to sign a debenture, which was often used to pay for the expenses of kit and accommodation.⁹

I contacted a German friend and fellow family researcher and asked him to try to find records of a Johan Jacob Hooft/Hoff born in Gellenhausen in 1767. He found a JJ Hoff born in June 1767 and even found the record of the marriage of his parents, Johann Jacob (a carpenter) to Anna Maria Tropfhauser in 1746. There were six subsequent baptisms for the couple, although there was no Fredrik amongst them. The Fredrik who was on board the *Maria Kornelia* has remained a mystery.

Meanwhile, I had made contact with another descendant of Hoff, Roger Crabb, who has proved to be excellent at finding relevant details on the internet. Incorporated below is some of the information he found.

Over half a million servants of the VOC travelled to the East Indies in the years after 1730. More than a quarter would die in the Inner Hospital at Batavia, which had earned itself the nickname 'murderers' den'.¹⁰ The death rate was so high that setting sail was regarded as a one way ticket by Dutch parents, who were reluctant to let their sons go there. As a result the VOC had to recruit from other countries nearby, including Germany. In the 18th century, what we now know as Germany was a deeply fractured set of states, each with a large employment problem.¹¹ So that may well explain why Johann was recruited into the VOC. But if this was indeed my ancestor Johann Jacob Hoff, how did this VOC servant in Batavia come to be in Calcutta? The answer lay in the fraught international relations of the era.

The Dutch possessions in the East were of great interest to the British, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars. Concerned by the effect that a French conquest of Malacca (and thus control of the Straits of Malacca, that important trade route between India and China,) would have on trade, the British set about taking the Dutch town in 1795, with orders to

⁹ <http://vocseavoyagers.nationaalarchief.nl/UitlegMaandSchuldbrief.aspx>

¹⁰ 'Javasche Bank, the Old Dutch City Hospital of Batavia-Jakarta and the Mandiri Bank Museum' by drs (MSc) Dirk (Dick) Teeuwen. p15

¹¹ Information from Nick Balmer, IndiaRoots Web

gain Malacca peacefully or by force. After only a 'frivolous and token resistance against British troops by the people of Malacca, the town was captured by the combined British naval and military expedition on 26 August 1795'.¹² The Dutch garrison offered such weak resistance in the defence of Malacca that the Dutch governor, Abraham Couperus, was suspected of treason. However, after some twelve years exiled to the Coromandel, he was finally given the chance to put his defence to his superiors in Batavia.¹³ In line with what is now generally held, DK Bassett's assessment finds in Couperus's favour, indeed the governor had earlier appealed for reinforcements in the knowledge that his garrison was vastly weak in number against the British forces.¹⁴

In December, Admiral Peter Rainier arrived from Penang with a small British fleet. De Witt explains that Rainier 'dissolved the Dutch counsel, lowered the Dutch flag and ordered an inventory to be made of the VOC's property in Malacca, as well as of the church and orphanage funds.' Rainier decided that as Malacca was a military conquest, he was entitled to the spoils of war, so 'auctioned off the VOC's properties, stores and opium at such low prices that it caused the business of many Dutch Free-Burghers in Malacca to be ruined.'¹⁵

The British wanted to recruit the Dutch personnel rather than take them prisoner. Kemp says that Hoff had been transferred to Malacca as a 'second chirurgien',¹⁶ where he was taken prisoner by the British, together with the garrison, and sent to Bengal.¹⁷ There is no indication that Hoff was in any way qualified to be a 'second surgeon', but in those days it probably did not matter. Perhaps he just held down patients whilst they underwent operations. The records provided by the CMG at The Hague say that Hoff's service ended in August 1793. According to DK Bassett in 'The Surrender of Dutch Malacca 1795', the foreign troops (of whom all the NCOs and privates were reportedly German) had not been paid for a long time and many of their contracts had expired.¹⁸ So the 1793 date may simply reflect the end of his contract, the reality being that he was still in service.

The captured Dutch were read a letter (one of the 'Kew Letters') from the London-based stadtholder William V, Prince of Orange, indicating his alliance with His Britannic Majesty George III. It was decreed that the same respect and deference was to be paid to the

¹² Dennis de Witt, 'History of the Dutch and Dutch-Eurasians in Malaysia from colonial masters to the forgotten people' (2008). Paper presented to the Netherlands-Malaysia Association.

¹³ Graham Irwin, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. 29, No. 3 (175) (August, 1956), pp86-133 (p91)

¹⁴ DK Bassett, (1961) 'Surrender of Dutch Malacca 1795', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 117, pp344-358.

¹⁵ De Witt (2008)

¹⁶ An archaic name for a surgeon.

¹⁷ Kemp, p216

¹⁸ DK Bassett, (1961) p352

Dutch officers as to the British¹⁹ and the Dutch soldiers were offered the chance to enter the British service.²⁰ Some of the townspeople in Malacca began to show hostility towards the Dutch and so the company officers and most officials and soldiers were taken to India.²¹

That same year, the British took Chinsurah and other Dutch possessions in Bengal. It seems quite possible that following events along the Straits in 1795, Hoff was used to help oversee these further British acquisitions. It would be quite logical to use captured Dutch speakers who had now sworn loyalty to the British Crown, to oversee the newly taken Dutch speaking areas in India. Kemp says that Johann was chosen to take over the piece of land at Fultha.

As for the VOC, its days were numbered. Corruption was a problem for all European companies operating in the East Indies and the VOC suffered particularly badly. With low salaries and private-account trading banned, the company was not popular with its personnel and corruption was widespread. By the 1790s, as the company began to lose its possessions, the phrase *Vergaan Onder Corruptie* (perished by corruption), also abbreviated as VOC, came to summarize the company's future. The Company became defunct on 17 March 1798.²²

Here the story returns to the subject of PW van der Kemp's book and the handover of Dutch settlements after the Napoleonic Wars. In 1817, while Johann was at Fultha, JA van Braam, a Dutch Commissioner, ordered him to come to Chinsurah as soon as possible.²³ He arrived there on 1 September and on 26 September 1817 he was ordered to take over the territory of Fultha, to make a flagpole and to hoist the Dutch flag every Sunday.²⁴ Hoff consulted the Magistrate of the 24-Purgunnahs (the region of administrative sub-districts south of Calcutta), CR Barwell, who demanded that the exact borders of the territory be determined.

At the beginning of November 1817, Hoff was able to inform the Resident, DA Overbeek, that the borders were now established and 'that the [current] owner was willing to lease the

¹⁹ Thomas John Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in The Straits* (1839)

²⁰ Irwin, p91

²¹ Ibid.

²² Wikipedia, 'Dutch East India Company'.

²³ Hoff had in fact been living there a few years earlier, as in the 1813 *Calcutta Annual Directory* Johann is listed as a Dutch resident at Chinsurah.

²⁴ Kemp p216; In 'Gold Leaf Flattery, Calcuttan Dust, and a Brand New Flagpole: Five Little Known VOC Collections in Asia', (*Itinerario* / Volume 36 / Issue 01 / April 2012, pp 91-106) Lennart Bes notes that the *Buitenland* Collection in the National Archives of Indonesia holds papers detailing orders given to van Braam and JJ Hoff concerning the takeover of the possessions in India from the British.

area of four biggas²⁵ for three Rupees per bigga a year and for a period of 100 years.²⁶ On the 3 November 1817 van Braam authorized the Resident to order Hoff to rent the terrain for four Rupees per annum, with the proviso that the Dutch Government would have the right to end the contract prematurely.

In the meantime, Hoff had admitted that he did not enjoy his stewardship that much anymore and van Braam noted on the 17 September 1817 that the Resident had informed him 'that J.J. Hoff residing at Fultha wished to be released of all duties'.²⁷ Having tried to earn a living as a slaughterer and innkeeper, Hoff had to leave Fultha through bankruptcy. In 1819 he applied for a monthly support, which the Resident, by missive of 31 December 1819, forwarded with an assenting recommendation.

Having tried his luck for a second time in Calcutta as an innkeeper, Hoff moved back to Fultha in 1823 where the Resident favoured him in his attempts at making a living.²⁸ However, Kemp states that in 1824 it was reported that Hoff was 'a good for nothing' and 'neither his person, neither his lifestyle, neither his seniority, nor his capabilities made him preferable for holding whatever services'. It was considered that he could, however, still be used for the modest job of flagman at Fultha, where he lived anyway and was self-supporting.

Johann's wife was a Charlotte Dorothea. She died in Calcutta in 1818. No record of their marriage has as yet been found, nor that of the baptism of their first child, Johan Jacob Louis Hoff. A Masonic memorial to him states he was born at Chinsurah on 10 June 1802. He was one of two sons (prominent Freemasons who were employed in government offices) and two daughters.

Johann died in Calcutta on 31 August 1837 in Fort William, Calcutta and his burial record described him as a Townsman.²⁹ He was buried in the Military Cemetery at Alipore in Calcutta now known as the Bhowanipore Cemetery.³⁰

Hermione May Hoff, Johann's granddaughter (born 1861) married my grandfather, Donald William McPherson, in Simla in August 1878. They had six children. In the 1880s, while Hermione and the children all came to the UK, for their education, Donald remained in India to continue earning to provide for them all, where he died in 1903.

²⁵ A bigga (more commonly spelled bigha) is a traditional land unit measurement in India. Its size varies, but for these purposes may be imagined as roughly 1/3 acre.

²⁶ Kemp p217

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ India Office Records, Ecclesiastical returns N/1/49/135

³⁰ Information courtesy of Rosie Llewellyn Jones, Honorary Secretary of the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA).

Captain Hunter: researching a memorial in Durham Cathedral

Geoffrey Fox

Like many places of worship in the United Kingdom, Durham Cathedral has close spiritual and historical links with the local county regiment. Memorials dedicated to soldiers of the Durham Light Infantry (formerly the 68th Foot) who died on campaign began appearing in the cathedral from around the time of the Crimean War (1854 – 56). However, the oldest military memorial does not commemorate a soldier of the Durham's, but an officer of the Honourable East India Company's Army: Captain Robert Mackellar Hunter, of the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry, who was killed in action during the First Anglo-Sikh War on the 21 December 1845.

His memorial stone, a black granite tablet, is set in the nave floor below the north-west tower. The epitaph inscribed on it, although brief, offers some interesting biographical information as well as a short account of the circumstances of his death (see transcription, inset box). The inscription has intrigued me for many years; however, as the cathedral library could provide no information relating to Captain Hunter, and as few records relating to the HEIC are held locally, the opportunity to explore further the life and career of this man only arose when I relocated to London.

Recent editions of this journal (*FIBIS Journal* 29) have shown how personal letters and journals can provide a fascinating insight into the lives of those who served in the East India Company's Armies. This article, however, aims to demonstrate how it is possible to construct a surprisingly detailed picture of a soldier's life in India using official records and other secondary sources held at the British Library and the National Army Museum, as well as material which has been digitised and is now available online.

Early Life and Cadetship

Robert Mackellar Hunter was the fourth son of Major General Martin Hunter, GCH, GCMG, of Medomsley in County Durham, and his wife, Jean Dickson, of Antonshill, Berwickshire. He was born at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, on the 16 March 1807¹ where his father, a Regular Army officer and colonial administrator, had been posted in 1804 as Colonel of the New Brunswick Fencibles (a regiment raised solely for service in North America).² In 1812, Martin Hunter was promoted to Lieutenant-General by seniority, making him too senior for the post he held, and consequently he left Canada for the United Kingdom with his family on the 15 June 1812. On his return, Hunter took up residence at Antonshill and Robert was sent to the Royal High School in Edinburgh to be educated.³

¹ IOR L/MIL/9/334 - Addiscombe Military Seminary: Registers of Seminary Cadets Aug 1819 – Feb 1836

² J Philippart, *The Royal Military Calendar* Vol II (London, 1820) p234

³ J Banham, *Durham and the Empire: the Journal of General Sir Martin Hunter* (Taken from a paper written by Dr. John Banham for the Durham County Local Historical Society) p18

After leaving school in 1821, Robert, like his father, chose to pursue a military career. However, owing to post-Waterloo retrenchments, obtaining a commission in the King's Army had by 1821 become both difficult and costly. For example, an Ensigncy in a Line Regiment officially cost £450, while in one of the Regiments of Foot Guards it was three times that at £1200.⁴ Consequently, Hunter, who had himself served in India between 1783 and 1793 with the HM 52nd Foot, turned to the Honourable East India Company to find suitable careers for several of his younger sons.

Unlike the King's Army, commissions in the Company's forces were granted at the discretion of its directors. The system was based entirely on patronage and only those who were fortunate enough to have sufficient 'interest' among the Court of Directors could entertain any hope of obtaining a post within the Company, either in the civil or military service. After being recommended by his father, Robert was nominated for a cadetship by Mr Campbell Marjoribanks, a prominent member of Berwickshire's county elite and an influential member of the East India Company's Court of Directors.⁵ After being examined at East-India House, the Company's London Headquarters, and producing the requisite documents (i.e. a birth certificate and medical certificate), he was sworn in as a cadet on the 30 May 1821.⁶

Unlike his father, however, Robert hoped to pursue a career in one of the technical branches of the Company's forces, and was therefore required to attend the East India Company's military seminary at Addiscombe, Surrey.

IN MEMORY OF
CAPTAIN ROBERT MACKELLAR HUNTER
CAPTAIN IN THE 73RD REGIMENT
OF
BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY.
FOURTH SON OF
GENERAL SIR MARTIN HUNTER,
G.C.M.G. AND G.C.H
OF MEDOMSLEY
IN THE COUNTY OF DURHAM,
GOVERNOR OF STIRLING CASTLE:
AND OF
JEAN DICKSON
ONLY CHILD AND HEIRESS
OF THE LATE JAMES DICKSON,
OF ANTONSHILL, ESQUIRE,
IN THE COUNTY OF BERWICK.
HE WAS KILLED
ON 21ST OF DECEMBER 1845,
AT THE MEMORABLE BATTLE OF
FEROZESHAN,
IN THE 39TH YEAR OF HIS AGE,
WHILE GALLANTLY LEADING
THE REGIMENT TO THE ATTACK
OF A SIKH BATTERY.
THIS MONUMENT IS
ERECTED
BY HIS BROTHER OFFICERS,
TO RECORD
THEIR SORROW FOR HIS LOSS,
THEIR ADMIRATION
OF HIS CHARACTER
AND THEIR HOPE OF HIS
RESURRECTION
TO ETERNAL LIFE,
THROUGH THE MERITS OF HIS
REDEEMER.

⁴ APC Bruce, *The Purchase System in the British Army, 1660–1871* (London : Royal Historical Society, 1980) p492

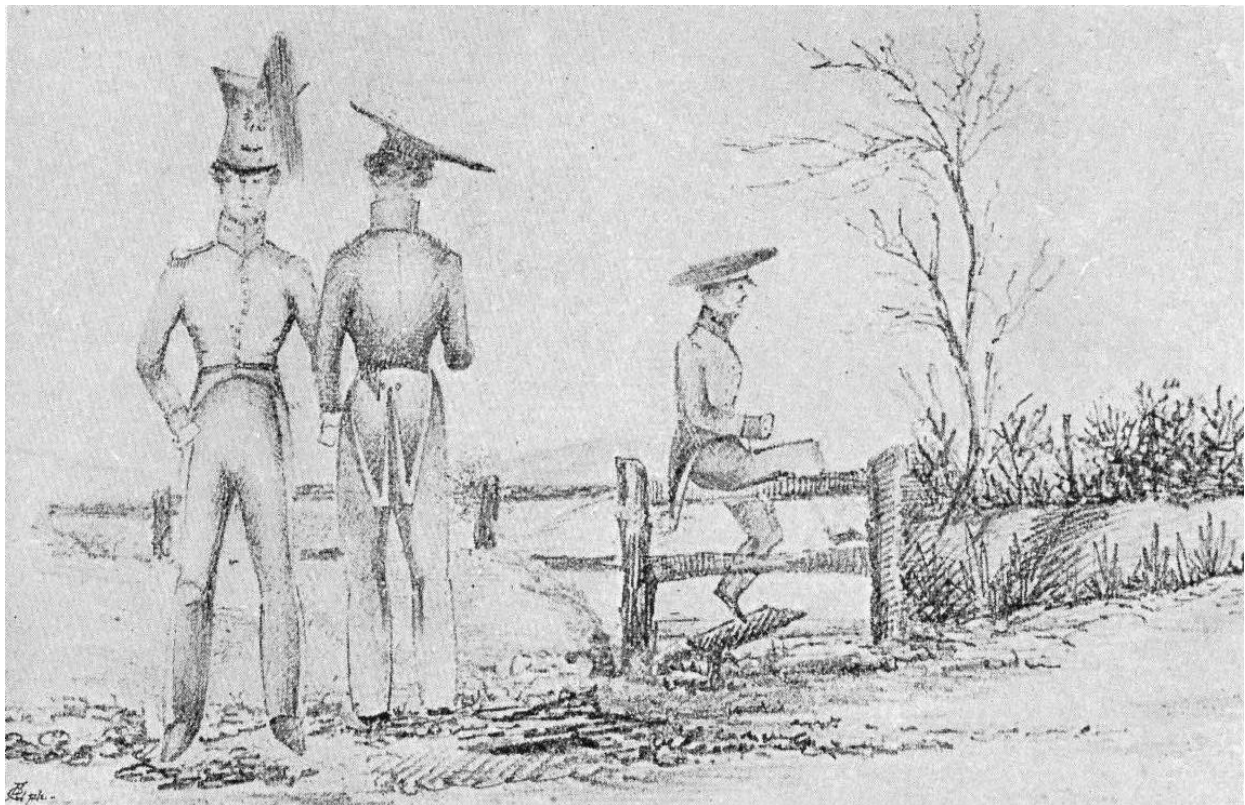
⁵ IOR/L/MIL/9/144/526-28: Cadet Papers (1789 – 1860)

⁶ Ibid.

Addiscombe – the East India Company Military Seminary

Founded in 1809, the principal purpose of the seminary was to train the Company's artillery and engineer cadets, although from 1816 onwards cadets destined for the infantry were also admitted. As aspiring artillery or engineering cadets, it was considered indispensable that young men wishing to join the academy should sit a formal (if somewhat cursory) examination in order to demonstrate that they could 'write down a sentence from dictation by the Head Master', 'read and construe Caesar's Commentaries' and were 'proficient in vulgar and decimal fractions'.⁷ Robert passed the examination on the 12 September 1821 and officially entered the seminary two days later at the age of fourteen and half years.⁸

Opinions on how effective Addiscombe was as a military seminary are divided, particularly for its early years. Some considered the college to have provided 'a perfect model of military education',⁹ while others have suggested that it was little more than 'a militarised public school'.¹⁰ Cadets attended the seminary for a maximum of two years and studied a curriculum which was 'heavy on arcane mathematics and light on idiomatic Hindustani



'Cadets at Addiscombe Military Academy' sketched by Gentleman Cadet George G Channer, 1826-27 (source: Wikimedia Commons)

⁷ *The East India Register and Directory* (1821) page lxxix

⁸ IOR/L/MIL/9/334: Registers of Seminary Cadets Aug 1819 – Feb 1836

⁹ HM Vibart, *Addiscombe: its Heroes and Men of Note*, (Westminster, 1894) p313

¹⁰ JM Bourne, *The Civil and Military Patronage of the East India Company 1784-1858* (Unpublished thesis submitted for Doctorate of Philosophy, University of Leicester, 1977) p294

(taught by men who had never been to India).¹¹ Other subjects included military drawing, geology, and fortification, based on Vauban, which were, in the opinion of some, 'largely obsolete and irrelevant to Indian conditions'.¹² Nonetheless, 'the strict discipline, and continuous work and study', enforced at the seminary were 'good training' for young men who were often placed at an early age in positions of great responsibility.¹³ At the very least, it provided them with some exposure to military life, which was considerably more than the majority of cadets (around 80%) who were sent directly to India with little or no preparation.

Cadet Hunter's ambition of entering into a career as a gunner or engineer proved to be short lived, however. For reasons that are unclear, records show that in December 1821 he was 'removed' to the infantry.¹⁴ This may have been at his request, but it may also have been because the Seminary Committee considered that Robert, 'either through want of talent or diligence', was unlikely to pass the examination for the artillery or engineers. Whatever the grounds, he remained at the seminary for a further twelve months and completed a slightly truncated and less rigorous, syllabus for those young men destined for a career in the infantry. Standing orders permitted infantry cadets to leave the seminary after a year's residence (provided they could arrange their own passage to India) and Robert was evidently in a position to do so as he proceeded to India as one of the approximately 60 infantry cadets allocated to the Bengal Army for the season of 1822.¹⁵

Hunter, along with six other cadets, sailed for India onboard HEICo ship *Minerva* from the Downs with a number of other private passengers on the 16 June 1823.¹⁶

1823 – 1834 A Sepoy Regiment of the Line

After a relatively uneventful five month voyage, the *Minerva* arrived at the New Anchorage on the 18 October 1823,¹⁷ and Hunter reported his arrival at Fort William on the 20 October.¹⁸ As a cadet (or griffin as new arrivals in India were called), he joined the one hundred-and-fifty or so other infantry cadets at the Presidency who were also waiting to be appointed to a corps.

¹¹ P Stanley, *White Mutiny*, (New York, 1998) p30

¹² S David, *The Indian Mutiny*, (London, 2003) p35

¹³ Vibart, pA2

¹⁴ IOR L/MIL/9/334

¹⁵ Mortality rates among the Company's officers in the early nineteenth century were incredibly high, and cadets joining the Bengal Army were highly unlikely to see a return home after a full 25 year career. For example, between 1796 and 1820, only 201 officers retired to Europe on pension while 1,243 were killed or died in service. (P Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army Its Officers and Men*, Middlesex, 1976 p174)

¹⁶ IOR L/MAR/B/14/P: *Minerva* Journal

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 - 1843

Robert, however, was evidently well connected and had been gazetted ensign on the 11 July 1823 - two months before his arrival in India. Initially, as was the practice, he was attached as a supernumerary to a detachment of the Bengal European Regiment at Dinapore for instructional purposes on the 29 October 1823.¹⁹ Three months later he was attached to the 2nd Battalion 7th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry (later renumbered the 10th BNI) at Seetapore,²⁰ before being permanently posted on 1 July 1825 to the 5th Extra Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, one of twelve additional regiments raised as part of the Company's general reorganisation and augmentation of its armies in 1824.²¹ It was formally absorbed into the Line in 1828 and subsequently renumbered the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry. He would officially remain with this regiment for the rest of his career.

In 1828, there were 74 Bengal Native Infantry regiments of the line (abbreviated to BNI) which formed the backbone of the Bengal Army; each regiment consisted of twenty-two European officers (including a surgeon and his assistant), sixteen Indian officers and two European senior non-commissioned officers, the Regimental Sergeant Major and Quartermaster Sergeant. The rank-and-file were composed of approximately 740 sepoys recruited mainly from Bihar and Oudh and who were predominantly high castes Brahmins. They were drilled, dressed and armed in the same manner as the British Regular army (albeit with some distinctively Indian items of uniform and accoutrements) and had gained a reputation for being brave, loyal and dependable soldiers under Wellington and Lake during the Maratha Wars.

Robert, however, joined his regiment at a time when the Bengal Army was the focus of intense criticism over a perceived decline in its overall efficiency. King's officers in particular were critical of the paucity of officers in the sepoy regiments, the lax discipline amongst the Company's troops generally, and the loss of confidence and respect between the officers and their men.²² Records show that Robert's regiment evinced many of these shortcomings. When Walter C Erskine joined the regiment as an ensign in 1829, a third of its officers were absent, either on extra-regimental employment or furlough,²³ while those who remained were in his opinion mostly substandard. Privately, he considered the commanding officer 'a weak man and miserably bad officer', and the adjutant an 'illiterate ignorant fellow...addicted to drinking'.²⁴ Unsurprisingly, the regiment was in 'a shocking state'.²⁵ These sentiments were echoed by Brigadier GR Penny in one of the regiment's annual inspection reports when he expressed 'his sincere hope that a considerable change'

¹⁹ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XVII Jan. to June 1824 p659

²⁰ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XVIII July to Dec. 1824 p213

²¹ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XXI Jan. to June 1826 p77

²² J Jacob, *The Views and Opinions of Brigadier-General John Jacob C. B.*, (London, 1858) p103

²³ *East India Register and Directory* 1830

²⁴ NAM 1971 – 06 – 24, Extracts from Diary of WC Erskine

²⁵ *Ibid.*

would be 'speedily affected in the discipline and general appearance of the 73rd regiment', an unequivocal indication that the regiment was indeed in a poor condition.²⁶

During the next six years, Robert's career followed what was a typical pattern for many junior officers in the Company's service. He was gazetted Lieutenant in May 1825 and subsequently rotated tri-annually with his regiment through several stations in Bengal, including: Benares (1825-1826), Jubbulpore (1827 – 1830), and Banda (1830 – 1833). He would very quickly have gained valuable experience of commanding troops in the field, either on escort duty or in the guarding outstations, which few of his counterparts in the King's Army would have experienced at that time.²⁷ By the 1830s, however, service in a sepoy regiment was becoming increasingly unpopular. The tedious, stultifying routine of regimental life (particularly in the more isolated cantonments) left many young officers disillusioned, bored and discontented, and it was widely considered that 'the road for an ambitious British Officer led away from the regiment'.²⁸ Political employment or service in an irregular corps was highly sought after; it was better paid, more interesting and crucially allowed officers to circumvent the slow, frustrating regimental system of promotion by seniority. Thus, many officers came to consider their regiments as mere stepping stones to more lucrative extra-regimental posts, on 'the staff' or with an irregular corps.²⁹ By good fortune, good connections, or a combination of both, Robert Hunter obtained an extra-regimental appointment in 1833.

The North East Frontier 1835 - 1837

Now a relatively experienced officer with ten years service, Hunter was appointed to the 7th Company of Pioneers on the 16 October 1833.³⁰ Like the Bengal Native Infantry, these units were composed of Indian soldiers under the command of British officers, usually drawn from the Bengal Engineers but also occasionally by officers seconded from the infantry. Hunter, having spent a year at Addiscombe, would have been an obvious candidate. His posting to this corps, however, was relatively short as he was soon afterwards attached to a newly raised irregular unit, the Assam Sebundy Corps, stationed on the Company's restive north-east frontier.³¹

Assam had been under the nominal control of the East India Company since 1765, but the territory did not come under formal administration until after the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826. Efforts to govern the territory, however, proved difficult. The climate was insalubrious to outsiders and the region was covered in dense jungle-covered hillocks,

²⁶ Mss Eur D597/12 Miscellaneous notes and papers concerning the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry

²⁷ P Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army Its Officers and Men*, (Middlesex, 1976) p189

²⁸ Ibid. p178

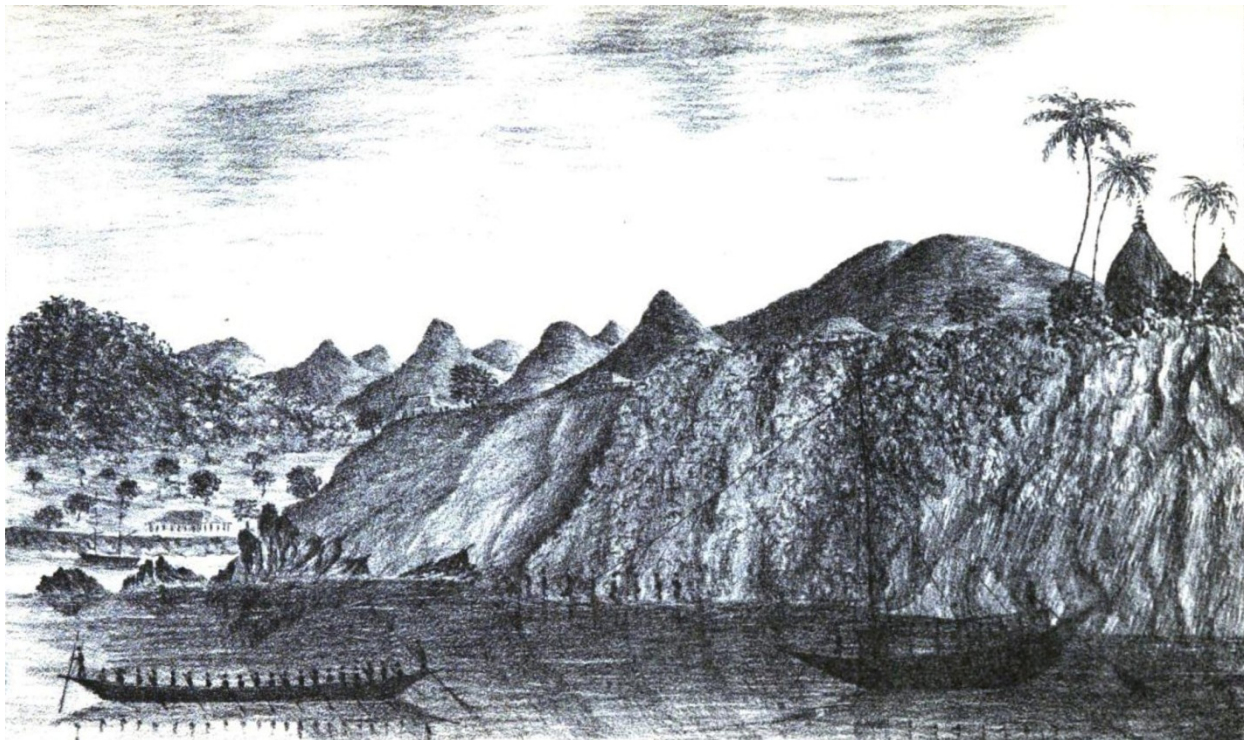
²⁹ David, p36

³⁰ IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

³¹ Ibid.

populated by a number of indigenous, martial, tribes which were often at war with one another. Initially, efforts to establish links with the local tribes proved fruitful, but relations deteriorated when two British officers were murdered in 1828, which resulted in a state of perpetual, low-level but savage fighting between the Company's forces and the local tribesmen, who resented the East India Company's encroachment into their territories. Experience gained in Burma showed that the regular Bengal Army units were ill-suited to operating in jungle conditions so the Company formed several irregular units recruited locally to secure its territory and suppress insurgents.

The Assam Sebundy Corps, a paramilitary police unit, comprised a small staff approximately four British officers and 750 sebundies.³² With its Headquarters at Gauhati and outstations located throughout Assam, the unit was commanded by Captain W Simmonds whose military correspondence with the Presidency provides us with some insight into Robert's character. Having joined the corps in July 1835, Lieutenant Hunter evidently evinced the attributes required for duty with an irregular unit, which often involved operating in remote, isolated out-stations many miles from the nearest British officer. Records show that he was 'an excellent Persian and Hindoostani scholar' (a prerequisite for staff appointments) and possessed a good 'general knowledge of the Native character and languages'.³³ On a personal level, Simonds considered his conduct and habits to be



'Gohatti', sketch by John M'Cosh from his 1837 'Topography of Assam'.

³² The Assam Sebundy Corps would later become the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles. According to one Anglo-Indian glossary, the term *sebundy* is a Hindi word used to describe irregular troops used for revenue collection or police duties.

³³ IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

‘unexceptionable in every respect’, and that his attainments should be brought to the attention of the Governor General.³⁴ He was temporarily appointed 2nd in Command of the Assam Sebundy Corps in February 1836 by Simonds; however, in spite of his conduct and qualifications, the Governor-General refused to confirm his appointment.³⁵

This was a crucial juncture in Robert’s career. If he had been confirmed in his post, he would have in all probability remained with either the Assam Sebundy Corps or a similar unit. In the event, for reasons that remain unclear, his promotion had been declined, and he subsequently submitted his resignation and elected to leave Assam. He had been in India for over thirteen years (longer than he had resided in the United Kingdom) and was entitled to return to Europe for a period of three years on paid furlough. His resignation, however, was withdrawn soon afterwards at his own request when he learned that the only other British officer in Assam not in a staff position, Lieutenant J Millar who was attached to the Assam Light Infantry, had been dangerously wounded during an assault on a heavily fortified stockade.³⁶ To his apparent credit, Lieutenant Hunter stayed in post until September 1836 when he again requested and was granted permission to visit the Presidency. From there, in January 1837, he proceeded on furlough to England, reporting his arrival at India House on 10 May 1837, after an absence of nearly fourteen years.³⁷

While in Europe, he received two significant pieces of news from India. Firstly, he was gazetted Captain by brevet, and secondly he also learned that his younger brother, William, who had arrived in India in 1828 as a junior writer, had been tragically killed in a riding accident at Ghazeepore on the 7 May 1838.³⁸

At this point in their careers many officers resigned from the Company’s service either due to ill health, poor promotion prospects, or, as one officer confessed, simply because they could not face a further ten to fifteen years exile in India’s alluring but ‘destructive and justly dreaded climate’.³⁹ Robert, on the other hand, appears to have had sufficient prospects and interest in India to induce him to remain in the Army and was permitted to return to Bengal by the Company on the 4 September 1839.⁴⁰ A few weeks later, Captain Hunter returned to India onboard the HEICo ship *Vernon*⁴¹ (the first of the Company’s ships to be fitted with auxiliary steam engines), arriving at Fort William in 27 January 1840.⁴²

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XXVII p208

³⁹ I Gordon, *Soldier of the Raj: The Life of Richard Fortescue Purvis 1789-1868*, (Pen & Sword, 2001) p183

⁴⁰ IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

⁴¹ *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XXX pg. 168

⁴² IOR L/MIL/10/25/465: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

The First Anglo Sikh War 1845 - 1846

Shortly after his arrival, he was temporarily appointed to command the 6th Company of Sappers and Miners, before being directed to return to his parent unit, the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry, which was stationed at Sylhet.⁴³

When he rejoined his regiment, it was in a very different condition than it had been when he left it in 1833. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel S Swinhoe, an officer with over thirty years' service, the regiment had been transformed. Described as a 'good, intelligent officer', Swinhoe was also evidently a martinet who was considered to be 'sometimes harsh in the exercise of his authority'.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, his strict regime galvanised the regiment's officers and brought about 'a very great change...in the dress and appearance of the regiment', a point that was remarked upon by several senior officers.⁴⁵ The regiment's annual inspection report for 1840 shows that it was in 'excellent order', both in 'the precision and regularity of its field movements' and 'the soldier-like appearance of the men', who were in target practice the best in the Eastern Frontier.⁴⁶ The following year, the inspecting officer again noted the 'superior state of discipline and efficiency of the regiment'.⁴⁷ He also confidently anticipated that should the regiment 'ever have the good fortune to meet an enemy in the field...they would add fresh laurels' to the glory of the Bengal Army.⁴⁸ That opportunity came four years later when hostilities broke out between the East India Company and the Sikh Empire in the Punjab.

The causes of the First Sikh War (1845 - 46) are beyond the scope of this article; however, a brief over-view of events is necessary to provide some context.

Between 1809 and 1839, the Sikh Empire, under the reign of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, and the East India Company had enjoyed cordial relations. A treaty had been signed in 1809 outlining the boundary between the two states and committed both parties to a pact of 'perpetual friendship', which was for the most part adhered to by both sides. However, following the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, relations between the two states deteriorated as the Sikh ruling elite entered into a period of bloody and protracted infighting for political power which saw the Sikh Army, the Khalsa, emerge as the dominant body in the Punjab. The civilian government in Lahore was unable to control the army and believed that their only hope of retaining power lay in its destruction; it encouraged it in its desire for a contest with the East India Company in the hope that it would ultimately result in the army's defeat and dispersal.⁴⁹ As a result, on the 11 December 1845, in defiance of existing treaties, a

⁴³ *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* Vol. XXX p371

⁴⁴ IOR L/MIL/10/21/35: Bengal Service Army List c.1770 – 1843

⁴⁵ Mss Eur D597/12 Miscellaneous notes and papers concerning the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Mss Eur D597/12 Miscellaneous notes and papers concerning the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ FG Cardew, *The Bengal Native Army* (1903) p222

Sikh Army of 50,000 men under the command of Sirdar Lal Singh crossed the Sutlej close to Hariki and took up a defensive position at Ferozeshah, triggering the First Anglo-Sikh War.⁵⁰

When the campaign began, Robert Hunter's regiment was stationed at Ludhiana, approximately 80 miles further up the Sutlej River from Ferozeshah. The 73rd BNI had arrived at this station via Delhi in November 1844 as part of a general redistribution of the Bengal Army, partly for sanitary reasons and partly in response to the threat from across the Sutlej. At this point, Captain Hunter, owing to the 73rd's commanding officer being appointed to command the 5th Brigade, was temporarily in command of the regiment, which was ordered to proceed to Bassian to join the main body of the army where it arrived on the 18 December after several forced marches. Once there, it was brigaded with HM 9th Foot and the 26th BNI, forming the 5th Brigade of the 3rd Division under the command of Major-General Sir J M'Caskill.⁵¹ However, within hours of arriving at Bassian, Robert's regiment, still exhausted from its recent march, went into action for the first time at the Battle of Mudki.

Under the command of Sir Hugh Gough, the British forces, numbering around 10,000 men and composed predominantly of sepoy regiments, deployed to meet a Sikh force of around 20,000 men advancing from Ferozeshah. The battle commenced late in the evening and much of the fighting took place well into the night. Robert's regiment, which was positioned on the left of the British line, fortunately suffered few casualties: 1 dead and 6 wounded.⁵² After the battle, the army was rested for two days, before advancing on Ferozeshah, leaving the wounded behind at Mudki.

The Battle of Ferozeshah 21 December 1845

Often considered the severest test of British arms in India, the Battle of Ferozeshah took place on the 21 December 1845. The Sikh Army, approximately 40,000 strong with 88 guns, was positioned behind a formidable, well-prepared defensive position centred on the village of Ferozeshah. The British, after being reinforced on the 19 December, numbered around 16,700 men and 69 guns, organised into three divisions.⁵³ Hunter's regiment was situated in the centre of the British line and was part of the 3rd Division which was composed of four regiments which had been temporarily formed into two brigades – HM 9th Foot and the 26th BNI formed the left brigade while the 73rd BNI and the 2nd BNI (Grenadiers) were positioned on the right.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ RG Burton, *The First and Second Sikh Wars: An Official British Army History*, (Pennsylvania, 2008) p19

⁵¹ Ibid. Appendix II

⁵² *Allen's Indian Mail* Vol 4 p107

⁵³ Cardew, p226

⁵⁴ C Gough & AD Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, (London, 1897) p94

The battle commenced with an intense artillery duel that saw the British guns both outnumbered and outgunned by the Sikh batteries. For reasons that remain unclear, General Littler, prematurely launched his division, led by HM 62nd Foot, in a poorly co-ordinated frontal assault against the Sikh position which was repulsed with heavy losses, primarily amongst the 62nd Foot.⁵⁵ The division would pay no further part in the battle.

In the meantime, Robert's regiment had been ordered to advance. Initially dense jungle and scrub provided some cover but as the distance to the Sikh positions closed, the enemy's artillery began to find their range. Private Baldwin, who was serving with HM 9th Foot (which was positioned to the left of the 73rd) recalled how as they:

'...advanced to within range of the enemy's long shots, which came rolling down amongst us, though with half spent velocity, and being very large we could perceive them as they bounded along, in time to open out, and let them pass through our ranks.'⁵⁶

However, as the 3rd Division moved forward, the firing intensified and the cannon shot, 'bounding over by hundreds' began to take effect. The men were at one point ordered to lie down to minimise casualties, but not 'before wide gaps had been made in their ranks by chain-shot'.⁵⁷

As the 73rd BNI emerged from the undergrowth led by Captain Hunter, the order 'to charge' was given by Brigadier Wallace. The two brigades then advanced over several hundred yards of

H.E. Genl Sir H. Gough, Bt, G.C.B. Comm^d in Chief

Major Gen^l Gilbert

Lieut.^t Gen.^l Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B.

Major Gen^l Sir J. Littler, K.C.B.

[illegible]

Major Gen^l Sir Harry Smith, K.C.B.

The British Army as drawn up at the commencement of the Battle of Ferozeshah at 3.30pm on the 21st Dec 1845

⁵⁵ The repulse of the 4th Division was in no small part due to the fact that the 8th Brigade (composed of the 33rd BNI, 44th BNI and 54th BNI) appears not to have joined in the attack as ordered. HM 62nd Foot alone suffered a total of 95 dead and 171 wounded while the entire 8th Brigade lost fewer than 20 dead and 62 wounded.

⁵⁶ JW Baldwin, *A Narrative of Four Months Campaign in India*, (Norwich, 1853) p26

⁵⁷ NW Bancroft, *From Recruit to Staff Sergeant*, (London, 1979) p49

open ground in the face of a galling fire, which saw both Wallace and Brigadier Taylor cut down. On the left of the line, Private Baldwin recalled how:

‘Our loss in the charge was considerable,...scores of poor fellows were cut down by discharges from this prodigious battery, in the same manner as the richest flower (wheat) in England falls from the scythe.’⁵⁸

As had been the case at Mudki and with the 4th Division’s attack, some of the sepoy regiments broke in the face of such intense fire. On the right of the line, where Hunter’s regiment was advancing, the 2nd BNI broke and fled. Ensign WSR Hodson, who had been in India for just two months, later wrote how:

‘On the evening of the 21st, as we rushed towards the guns, in the most dense smoke and dust, and under an unprecedented fire of grape, our sepoy again gave way and broke...The Colonel, the greater part of my brother officers, and myself, were left with the colours and about thirty men immediately in front of the batteries!’⁵⁹

Although this would have left the 73rd’s left flank exposed, it appears to have held firm and advanced together with the HM 9th Foot and the 26th BNI. The assault wavered and stalled for a short time, owing to the intense fire from the Sikh batteries, but resumed after the arrival of HM 80th Foot, which had been held in reserve. Together, these regiments stormed the Sikh batteries, capturing many of the guns.

As far as can be ascertained, it was at this point that Captain Hunter fell. We know from the information on his memorial stone that he was ‘leading the regiment to the attack of a Sikh battery’, and secondary sources suggest that the 73rd BNI shouldered its fair share of the fighting, a fact which is supported by the regiment’s casualty return: 21 dead and 32 wounded – the highest number of fatalities of any Bengal Native Infantry regiment.⁶⁰ He was one of three officers from the 73rd BNI killed during the assault: the other two being Lieutenant Colonel Wallace and Subadar Shaikh Kadir Bakhsh.⁶¹ The battle continued for a further 24 hours before the Sikhs withdrew across the Sutlej, leaving behind an estimated 2000 dead and most of their guns. It was a British victory, but it had been dearly bought. Of the British and Indian troops engaged, 2,877 were either killed or wounded; fatalities amongst the senior officers were particularly high.

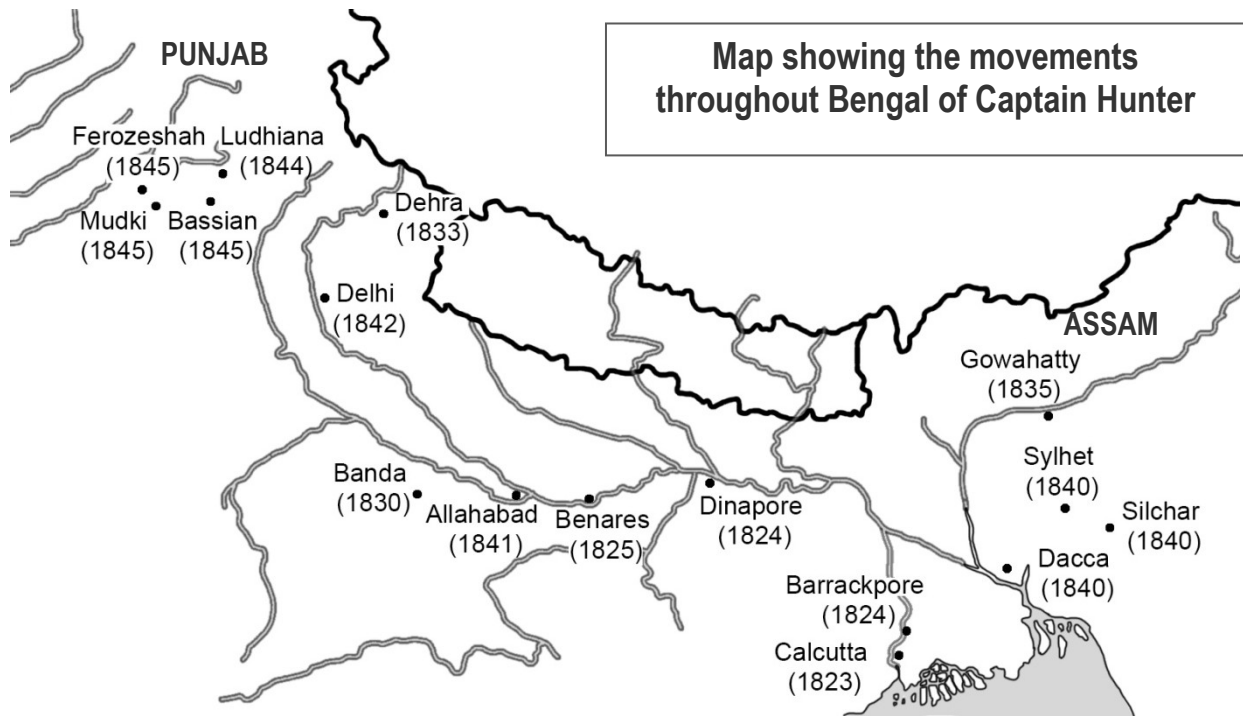
The whereabouts of Captain Hunter’s final resting place is unknown. As an officer, he would probably have been buried separately from the rank-and-file, although operational circumstances may have made this impracticable. Consequently, like many thousands of British soldiers who were killed or died in India, the location of his grave is now unknown and probably unmarked.

⁵⁸ Baldwin, p29

⁵⁹ GH Hodson, *Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India*, (London, 1859) p13

⁶⁰ *Allen's Indian Mail* Vol. 4

⁶¹ Cardew, p228



Conclusion

The main aim of writing this article was to learn more about the life of Captain Robert Mackellar Hunter, while simultaneously demonstrating how (in the absence of personal papers) it is still possible to gain a detailed insight into the lives of those who served in India. By accessing a range of records (many of which are now available online), I was able to trace Captain Hunter's movements across the length and breadth of the Bengal Presidency, from Assam in the north-east to the Punjab in the north-west, from his arrival in Bengal as a sixteen year-old cadet, to his death as a senior captain at Ferozeshah twenty-two years later. And, although many of the sources used were official records, there are snippets of information contained within them which enables us to form a vague impression of his character and temperament.

More broadly, however, it has also drawn attention to the officers and men who served in the armies of John Company. The East India Company's rule in south Asia forms a fascinating but controversial and emotive chapter of the nation's history, which has come to be characterised by maladministration, corruption, and conquest. As a result, it has understandably become increasingly impractical and impolitic to commemorate those who participated in its colonial wars. Nonetheless, men like Captain Hunter are worthy of remembrance. They endured great hardship and fought and died bravely, if not for their country, then for their comrades and their regiments. Those regiments have long since been disbanded and the men who served in them are today invariably overshadowed by those who fell in later conflicts, or are simply ignored. In Captain Hunter's case, however, the memorial stone in Durham Cathedral will ensure that his service will not be entirely forgotten.

More on the Hanoverian Regiments in India: using online newspapers to further research

Hilary Sheridan

Further to my article, 'Raising the Hanoverian Regiments: their passage to India' in *FIBIS Journal* 30, Autumn 2013, a review of the newspapers on findmypast (digitised using optical character recognition), covering the period 1781-1792, confirms some of the reports, occasionally adds clarification, and also identifies some new events. Most of the newspapers available for searching were local papers, though they frequently incorporate extracts from the *London Gazette*.

1781

Whilst the invasion of the Carnatic by Hyder Ali is reported in the *Ipswich Journal* in February,¹ it is not until the end of July in the *Leeds Intelligencer* that the raising of the Hanoverians is mentioned.² In August, in the *Hampshire Chronicle*,³ letters from Switzerland told of an English nobleman (presumably Col. James Francis Erskine) raising men, principally in the country of Thurgaw, and English officers also raising men in a number of German provinces – all for the service of the English East India Company (EIC).

On 19 November, the *Reading Mercury*⁴ reported the orders from the Hanoverian Office in London for the immediate embarkation of the troops in Hanover and on 24 November the *Caledonian Mercury*⁵ reported their arrival, 'all safe in the Downs'. They had sailed from 'Bremer Lake' on 29 October and because of very bad weather there were fears that they would not arrive. The Hanoverian troops, along with English soldiers, were to proceed to India with the next fleet. This powerful reinforcement was to be 'the largest naval and military arrangement that ever were in India at one time on account of government.'

On the same day (24 November) the *Newcastle Courant*⁶ reported that the *Grand Duchess of Russia* transport, with Hanoverian troops from the Elbe, bound for the Nore (an anchoring ground in the estuary of the Thames), having separated from the convoy, arrived in Newcastle. The remainder of the transports had arrived in the Downs. They sailed from 'Brunshausen' on the 29 October, under the command of Sir Richard Bickerton.

The same edition of the *Newcastle Courant*⁷ notes the speedy raising of the 15th Regiment of Hanoverians - attributing this to the generous pension allowed if a soldier (not officer) is

¹ *Ipswich Journal* Sat. 24 Feb. 1781, p2 col 4

² *Leeds Intelligencer* Tues. 31 July 1781, p3 col 1

³ *Hampshire Chronicle* Mon. 13 Aug 1781 p1 col 2, foreign news 'Franckfort on the Main July 26'

⁴ *Reading Mercury* Mon. 19 Nov 1781, p2 col 2

⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, Sat. 24 Nov 1781, p2 col 3

⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, Sat. 24 Nov 1781, p4 col 2, under 'Newcastle'

⁷ *Ibid.* 'Hanover Oct. 15th'

rendered incapable of serving and has to return home. It reported that the invalids were to receive a ducat (gold or silver coin used as a trade coin in Europe at that time) of Holland per month for the rest of their life.⁸ They reported the raising of the 16th Regiment was ongoing and believed to be near completion.

Shortly after, the *Northampton Mercury*⁹ reported 'an accurate account' of the forces intended to be sent to India, totalling 5400 men including 1000 Hanoverian troops. They were to go in the East Indiamen, and not in His Majesty's Ships of War, and were to be conveyed in the proportion of 200 men to each ship.

1782

In January, the *Northampton Mercury*¹⁰ reported a revolt amongst the Hanoverian troops being raised in Hanover for service in America.¹¹ Apparently there was a similar revolt, earlier, by the 15th Regiment of Hanoverian Infantry (by then on board the English Transport the *Polly*, sailing to England), after which several troops had been put to death as an example. The newspaper presents the view that these events prove that only British troops should be engaged for service abroad.

In June the *Hereford Journal* reported that his Majesty's ship *Belle-Paule* arrived in 'Burnt-island roads, near Leith', with five transports from the Elbe that were carrying Hanoverian troops.¹² This, and the report of the *Grand Duchess of Russia* arriving in Newcastle the year before, shows that some of the Hanoverian troops saw more than one area of Britain before sailing to India. Presumably they were transported to Portsmouth, possibly via Gravesend, before embarking on the East Indiamen for sail to India. From the dates, it seems that the Hanoverian troops who arrived in Newcastle were part of the 1st fleet and those who arrived in Burnt-island were part of the 2nd fleet.

In August, the *Stamford Mercury* published an extract of a letter from Rio de Janeiro, dated 23 May.¹³ Although it does not say who wrote the letter it appears to be a senior officer who sailed with the fleet. He wrote that they had arrived there safely and were about to sail to India, but the men were not fully recovered. There had been a great sickness in the fleet. The *Anne-Amelia* alone had buried 57 men before they arrived, and eight since. There were 140 sick Hanoverians in hospital on a very small island 'less than half a mile round'. The Portuguese prohibited the crew from entertainment ashore and only a few principal officers were allowed to sleep there – although some of the cadets used stealth to go

⁸ Note that IOR E/4/870 p56-76, article no. 3, provides the sick and wounded (not officers) with four months full pay and pension paid every six months, of 4d 3 farthings a day.

⁹ *Northampton Mercury*, Mon 26 Nov 1781, p3 col 1, under 'London 24th Nov'.

¹⁰ *Northampton Mercury*, Mon 28 Jan 1782, p3 col 1, under 'London 26th Jan'.

¹¹ Whilst Hanoverian troops were serving in India there were also a considerable number of them serving elsewhere for the English, including Gibraltar, Minorca and America.

¹² *Hereford Journal*, Thurs 27 Jun 1782, p3, col 3

¹³ *Stamford Mercury*, Thurs 8 Aug 1782, p1 col 2, extract of a letter from Rio de Janeiro May 23.

ashore. The provisions were very indifferent, and not plentiful; but they had an abundance of oranges, limes and the water was good. Many seamen had deserted and it was not known how to stop this. The Viceroy of Brazil had apparently disapproved, as he had chased after the *Sceptre* to return some deserters as soon as they were discovered. The *Sceptre* had arrived a month earlier than the author of this letter and set sail with the *Medea* a week before he had arrived. He reported that they were to initially go to Bombay, and afterwards to Madras.

Later in August, the *Stamford Mercury* carried an extract of a letter from Gibraltar. This reported the injury of a Hanoverian corporal - with a splinter in his left eye and despite great pain he had carried on.

The Hanoverians are excellent soldiers to maintain a siege; they submit to the greatest fatigue; and so regardless are they of danger, that they obey all orders, with as much sang froid as is possible to conceive; in fact they appear like machines in the hands of their officers, who turn them as they please; so trained are they to discipline. They can bear fatigue infinitely better than the British; and it is common to see many of them, after having been on guard twenty-four hours, offer to mount in the new guard, for half a pint of rum or brandy: The British used to take them at their word, until the Governor heard of it, who fearing that from too much watching the men might fall asleep upon their posts, made an order that no soldier should be employed on guard two days successively.¹⁴

The *Hampshire Chronicle*¹⁵ reported in September that the demurrage of the EIC's fleet that year had been extremely expensive, as several of their ships had been at Portsmouth since the previous April. This was presumably because of the great sickness that the Hanoverians experienced and their subsequent hospitalisation in Portsmouth.

1783

In May, the *Manchester Mercury*¹⁶ reported that Commodore Bickerton had taken more than '4000 effective men' in the fleet with him to India. This included 1000 Hanoverians under the command of de Bruygyerfe. That same month, the *Derby Mercury*¹⁷ reported Sir Richard Bickerton's arrival at Bombay from Madras on 28 November, with the *Gibraltar*, *Cumberland*, *Defence*, *Africa* and *Inflexible*. Later on, it reported, 'the *Alfred*, *Warren Hastings*, *Ganges* and *Anne* and *Emelia*, were to proceed to Bengal, and the *Blandford*, with the remaining ships of Bickerton's convoy were to follow as soon as possible'.

With the exception of a few, it has not been easy to establish exactly which ships carried Hanoverian troops from their embarkation in Germany to their arrival in Madras via England. Further investigation is needed, especially as some Hanoverian troops arrived later, being delayed by sickness.

¹⁴ *Stamford Mercury*, Thurs 15 Aug 1782, p2 col 2, extract of a letter from Gibraltar July 25th

¹⁵ *Hampshire Chronicle*, Mon 16 Sep 1782, p1 col 2

¹⁶ *Manchester Mercury*, Tues 20 May 1783, p4 col 3, under 'London May 17th'

¹⁷ *Derby Mercury*, Thurs 15 May 1783, p2, under 'East India House May 15th'

In October, the *Stamford Mercury* reported that 'although there will be no reduction of the Company's land till peace is completely established with all the country powers, all the King's troops are to come home (the artillery only excepted)...and one regiment of Hanoverian'.¹⁸ As yet, this is the only reference discovered for the return of a Hanoverian regiment during this period.

1784

All reports for 1784 concerning the Hanoverians in India related to their involvement in the Battle of Cuddalore (British vs French, 13 June 1783). On 15 January, the *Hereford Journal* carried an extract of the dispatch from James Stuart, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's and the EIC's forces on the coast of Coromandel, dated 'Camp, one mile south of Cuddalore', 27 June 1783, relaying victory at Cuddalore with some details of events.¹⁹ This incorporated an extract of a letter detailing the events of 13 June 1783 (4am to 2pm):

The reserve, which consisted chiefly of the remainder of His Majesty's 101st, and of the detachments from the 15th and 16th Hanoverians, with five companies of Capt. Muirhead's battalion of Sepoys, advanced in the best order imaginable, under the heaviest fire of musketry, round and grape, from the enemy, that I ever beheld. The greater part had got within the enemy's entrenchments; many of our officers fell there. The detachment of his Majesty's Hanoverians, under Lieutenant Colonel Wangenheim and Major Varennius, behaved most remarkably well. The Major fell in the attempt.

Two days later, the *Caledonian Mercury*²⁰ reported Stuart's gratitude and asked the principal Secretary of State to convey this to His Majesty and recommend this 'brave army' to His Majesty's favour – particularly the 15th and 16th Regiments of the Hanoverian troops and Colonel Wangenheim who commanded them. The paper also reported that James Stuart had written 'to Major General Burgoyne to give orders...that 200 Hanoverians, with all the recovered men and recruits belonging to His Majesty's troops, now at or near the Presidency, be sent with the utmost dispatch to us by sea; and I have recommended to order the same, regarding the recruits and recovered men of the Company's Europeans.' This appears to be a call for additional troops to replace those lost at Cuddalore.

The *Mercury* then gave a list of those killed and wounded at Cuddalore:²¹

Killed: Major Varennius, Capt. Brunswick, Lieutenant Rlussmand, Ensign Muller, 2 serjeants, 60 rank and file

Wounded: Captains Drocgi, Schamhorse, Westernhagen, Zelle. Lieutenants Brandt, Notto, V. Hennubar, Ensigns Gerber, Jambart, Bert, Werniche, Adjutant Chevalier, 1 serjeant, 2 drummers and 141 rank and file.

¹⁸ *Stamford Mercury*, Thurs 23 Oct 1783, p2 col 2, under 'London Oct 18th'

¹⁹ *Hereford Journal*, Thurs 15 Jan 1784, p2 col 1, under 'Whitehall 10th Jan'

²⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, Sat 17 Jan 1784, p1 col 1

²¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, Sat 17 Jan 1784, p1 col 3. Note this list is easier to read in the *Norfolk Chronicle*, where it was also published on 17 Jan.

Again on 17 January, the *Oxford Journal* recorded the General Orders of Major General James Stuart, including his desire 'that Lieutenant Colonel Wangenheim will inform the Officers and Men of the Detachment composed of His Majesty's 15th and 16th Hanoverians, how much he was satisfied with their behaviour on that day, and that he will not fail, on the first occasion, to represent it to his Majesty'.²²

On 22 March, the *Hampshire Chronicle* published an extract from the journal of an officer of the 101st Regiment giving a detailed account of the action at Cuddalore.²³ On the evening of 12 June the first line (1600 men) under General Bruce - which included 600 Hanoverians of the 16th Regiment - were ordered in front of the camp where they spent the night with their arms. Early in the morning, Lt Col Kelly moved the whole detachment forward 400 paces, then halted and stayed until 10 o'clock. At this time the General ordered the 'grand attack' – the Hanoverian troops were to storm on the right. Approaching the enemy at the front of the march, the Hanoverians sustained considerable fire; 'they were raked from front to rear'. They marched close but were forced to retreat and with the confusion the whole detachment retreated. Seeing this, the French left their redoubts, so General Bruce attacked from the rear. The French made their way to the fort and General Bruce tried to cut them off, but the French gave heavy fire. However, the British gained the victory, but at great cost: 'There never was such a day known before in India'.

1787

Two years elapse before the Hanoverians in India are in the papers again. In January, the *Stamford Mercury* reported the outward-bound East Indiamen taking on board a number of troops, including several from the Hanoverian army.²⁴ The utmost secrecy was used in the embarkation and each ship was to have on board from 150 to 200 men with a total of up to 2000 men to be sent. The paper continued that on Saturday 30 Dec 1786, 'a desperate and alarming affray broke out on board the *Royal Admiral* Indiaman, at Gravesend, between the seamen and Hanoverian troops. The scuffle grew outrageous-and no less than six sailors were thrown through the port-holes overboard and were with extreme difficulty saved from death. The reasonable interference of the officers at length quieted the tumult but not before several men were desperately wounded'.

On 11 January, the *Derby Mercury*²⁵ reported that the Hanoverian Soldiers - which had recently embarked on board the EIC's ships at Gravesend - had their own officers, of rank no higher than Captain; and of these the number contracted was below the usual Military Establishment of troops on actual service. All the other officers were to be supplied from the Company's own establishment in India, for the troops arriving at the different settlements. The soldiers were also not to be distinct, but intermingled with the other white

²² *Oxford Journal*, Sat 17 Jan 1784, p4 col 3

²³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, Mon 22 Mar 1784 p2 col2

²⁴ *Stamford Mercury*, Fri 5 Jan 1787, p2 col 1

²⁵ *Derby Mercury*, Thurs 11 Jan 1787, p2 col 2

troops, serving under the Company's standard in India. Besides those already embarked, and others expected daily from Stade, a further negotiation was ongoing for more auxiliaries to go out in the autumn fleet.

The following day's *Stamford Mercury* noted that the foreign troops engaged for the EIC's settlements in India were all Hanoverians - half of whom had already arrived from Stade, where they were embarked.²⁶ As the transports arrived in England, the troops boarded the following Company ships that were at Gravesend:

Chesterfield, Capt. Boswell; *Thetis*, Capt. Nutt; *Lord Camden*, Capt. Dance; *Locko*, Capt. Baird; *Melville Castle*, Capt. Dundas; *Britannia*, Capt. Cumming; *Princess Royal*, Capt. Horncastle²⁷

These ships were to convey them to St Helena, Bombay and Bengal. There was another detachment from Bremer Lech, which was expected to be detained in the River Aller by the frosts which had been so severe in Germany. The report also mentions a disturbance on board the Company's ships caused by foreigner's expectations of better quarters than could possibly be assigned to them. The trouble that might have developed from their complaints was quelled, at least for a while.

The *Oxford Journal*²⁸ reported the same as the above, adding that seven Captains had sought authorisation to join their ships to set sail – these were the *Royal Admiral* for Coast and China; *Lascelles* for Madras and China; *Rodney* for Madeira and Bengal; *Osterly* for Coast and China; *Barrington* for China; *Henry Dundas* for Bombay and *Atlas* for Bengal.

1788

In July the *Caledonian Mercury*²⁹ reported that the *Henry Dundas* had arrived at Weymouth from Madras. One of the passengers, Major Horn of His Majesty's Hanoverian troops, had died whilst on passage. In September the *Caledonian Mercury* reported,³⁰ the *Princess Amelia*, carried two Hanoverian officers as passengers - Captain Harling and Lieutenant Waaker.

1791

The recall of the Hanoverian regiments was reported in February by the *Newcastle Courant*.³¹ They were to be replaced with British soldiers, enabling a saving of £3000.

In October the *Caledonian Mercury*³² reported the Warren Hastings had arrived carrying 5 officers and 14 privates of His Majesty's 14th and 15th Hanoverian regiments and in

²⁶ *Stamford Mercury*, Fri 12 Jan 1787, p2 col 1

²⁷ *Oxford Journal*, Sat 13 Jan 1787, p1 col 1, under 'London Jan 9th'

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, Mon 14 July 1788, p2 col 3

³⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, Thurs 4 Sep 1788, p2 col 3, under 'London Sep 1st'

³¹ *Newcastle Courant*, Sat 26 Feb 1791, p2 col 2, under 'House of Commons Feb. 15th'

³² *Caledonian Mercury*, Sat 8 Oct 1791, p2 col 3

December the *Hereford Journal* reported 150 Hanoverians, who had finished serving in India, had arrived in the Leopard Man of War.³³

1792

In February the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that the EIC had received a letter from Madras telling of a mutiny on board the *Foulis*.³⁴ The Hanoverians had incorrectly believed that they were not to sail to Europe and, because of this, Captain Blanchard had to run the vessel ashore causing great damage to the ship and cargo. In April, the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*³⁵ reported that people were killed in the incident.

These newspaper articles add further detail to the EIC records, sometimes supplying new material and usually reporting things from a different angle. The records kept by the EIC tend to slant towards the troubles of the Hanoverian soldiers, perhaps a limited perspective. The newspapers report both aspects of the troops, the mutinous *and* the well trained soldier, although the former may have been inflamed by communication problems and/or as a result of poor treatment.

It has not been easy to establish exactly which ships carried Hanoverian troops from Germany to Madras via England. There is now scope for further investigation at the India Office Records which may uncover new information, including more soldiers' names and possible places of origin. Discovering where an individual is from could open up a whole new avenue of family history research. As with any research, often more questions are found than answers. Yet that is often the thrill of it all.

Review

***When the Tiger Fought the Thistle – The Tragedy of Colonel William Baillie of the Madras Army*, by Alan Tritton, (The Ratcliffe Press, 2013) pp416, Hardback, £27.50, ISBN: 9781780764375**

Alan Tritton is quite right to complain that most people are quite unfamiliar with the Anglo-Mysore Wars of 1767-1799 and that their story deserves to have wider publication. Many casual observers of this period recall that they are characterized by 'the most discreditable campaign in British Military History'. This was the defeat of Colonel William Baillie's army by Hyder Ali's overwhelming forces at Pollilur in 1780. Although, this was to be followed by the final conquering of his son, Tipu Sultan, by British forces at Seringapatam in 1799, the stain remained. A few more will have read that Baillie's disastrous defeat would almost certainly have been avoided if the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hector Munro's nearby army

³³ *Hereford Journal*, Weds 7 Dec 1791, p2 col 3, under 'London Sat Dec. 3rd'

³⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, Thurs 23 Feb 1792, p3 col 2, under 'London Feb. 20th'

³⁵ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, Thurs 5 Apr 1792, p1 col 1 under 'London Fri Mar 30th'

had been able to come to his rescue in time. The assumption is that he had been hell bent on trying to do so but could not make it in time.

For reasons of determination of the truth, and nobly to salve the reputation of his mother's Baillie ancestor, Alan Tritton has located and researched hitherto hardly known original papers and letters of the time. These throw a rather different light on the situation. As well as providing excellent insight to the confused politics of the day, the long term background to the local wars, and the various players involved, they carefully analyse William Baillie's military experience and his army's march towards Madras from the Northern Circars. They also largely establish the character and experience of William Baillie. They show him to be a man fully respectful and trustful of his superiors, which sadly led to his undeserved reputation as the cause of this humiliation of the East India Company's Madras Army. This believably unbiased account of the battle itself indicates that Munro could with some ease, have arrived to support Baillie before the action took place at Pollilur and so, almost certainly, have saved the day.

Munro's despatch of the devious and ambitious Colonel Fletcher with supplies must have helped, but the delay in Baillie's progress, urged by Fletcher - it is implied for reasons of jealous reputation - may or may not, have contributed to the loss of the day. However, sadly, the ignition and explosion of some tumbrils of gunpowder during its distribution in the panic of war was, no doubt, the last straw. Despite the outstanding bravery of Baillie's forces, their running out of ammunition and being forced to rely on their bayonets, Baillie was eventually forced to show the white flag and to be taken into captivity. His savage treatment and eventual death in the dungeon of Hyder Ali at Seringapatam [a photo of Baillie's dungeon appears on p18 of this *FIBIS Journal*] was deprecated by all, particularly by the latter's French military advisors, who were generally used to European standards of behaviour and honour.

Alan Tritton's chatty style of presentation helps in many ways to establish the character of William Baillie. His discovery of fresh and pertinent material in the Scottish and Edinburgh Archives would be of great help if it had been classified and reported for future interested researchers. Further, the map of Southern India is not helpful in that neither Pollilur nor the associated local villages of Conjeveram and Perambacum are marked on it, and the journeys of the armies towards the battle are difficult or impossible to follow. The necessary reduction in size of the map of the battle makes it very difficult to follow the progress of the battle itself.

That said, I very much enjoyed reading this book and learned a lot from it. I can thoroughly recommend it to all those interested in the early days of the Madras Army. However, I must declare a minor interest. DNA analysis has shown that I am distantly related to the Baillies of Dunain. I am descended from the Baillies of Lavington, who left Scotland in the early 17th century for the plantation of Ulster.

Peter Bailey