

# **The Journal of the FAMILIES IN BRITISH INDIA SOCIETY**

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## **Contributions:**

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

Material should be sent via email to [fibis-editor@fibis.org](mailto:fibis-editor@fibis.org) or to 80 Brighton Road, Watford, Herts, WD24 5HW

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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

One of my aims this year is to track back through my family history research and ensure that sources of facts are sufficiently recorded. It can be easy, during the initial excitement of uncovering information, to forget to note document references or page numbers. Editing your society journal has helped impress on me the importance of careful referencing. The detailed footnotes our authors provide allow readers to follow up on points of interest or sources that may be of use in their own research.

A cursory glance through any *FIBIS Journal* will provide an astonishing range of sources to which members have referred in their quest to leave no stone unturned. Amongst the more usual IOR and newspaper references in our first article (p3), Audrey Carpenter has made reference to the *International Dictionary of Library Histories*, probably a first here for us. Audrey has investigated the fascinating life of the entrepreneurial Joachim Stocqueler (her first cousin 5x removed). Stocqueler wrote extensively on his own life in his autobiography, but Audrey has used other sources to fill in the details he chose to leave out and fact check that which he decided to include.

Increased ease of access to information means the keen researcher can happily check facts they come across on television, online or in publications with just a few swipes on a tablet. A rather more involved 'fact-check' was undertaken by Richard Morgan in response to the claim by the US Vice-President Joe Biden that he may have had ancestors in India. The resulting research into the maritime career of one William H Biden can be read from p16 and Richard's sources provide a master class for those with maritime ancestors.

The India Office Records are the most important collection of sources for many of us in FIBIS. While some are now online, many important records can still only be accessed in London. Transcriptions, then, are often a lifeline for those not proximal to the IOR. For Charles Maitland, a transcription on the FIBIS database of the proceedings of a Court Martial was key to completing his ancestor's story (p36). As always, we must thank our dedicated transcribers whose contribution to the family stories of so many of us is greatly appreciated.

Sarah Bilton

### Requiescat in pace

We were saddened to learn of the death of Hazel Craig (née Innes), who passed away peacefully on 3 February 2015. Well known for her book on schools in British India, *Under the Old School Topee* (BACSA, 1990), Hazel attended Mount Hermon Co-Ed School in Darjeeling from 1940-1944 and founded the Old Mount Hermon Students' Association.

Hazel helped many members with research over the years and played a leading part in the British Indian community. Her charming character will be fondly remembered by all.

## From Soldier to Newspaperman: The Varied Experiences of Joachim Hayward Stocqueler in Bombay and Calcutta from 1819 to 1843

Audrey T Carpenter

In 1872 when, as he put it, he had ‘passed the term allotted, in Scriptural phrase, to the ordinary life of man’, Joachim Hayward Stocqueler published an autobiographical account which he called *The Memoirs of a Journalist*.<sup>1</sup> It was expanded from articles written for the *Times of India* and, although it contains undoubted substance and some fascinating anecdotes, it presents an incomplete and decidedly sanitised account of the life of a man who was, frankly, something of a rogue. He first went to India in 1819 and although *The Memoirs* were written long after he had left India in 1843, they do give an idea of his life and achievements there. Other sources, including the FIBIS database, have been used here to fill in more details of this formative part of his life. Stocqueler’s legacy in India includes his involvement in the establishment of public libraries in Bombay and Calcutta, and his work as a newspaper proprietor on many notable titles.

### Stocqueler’s early days and military life in India

Despite his name, Joachim Hayward Stocqueler was British, born in 1801<sup>2</sup> in the City of London to an insurance broker of Portuguese/Italian parentage, Joachim Christian Stocqueler, and his wife Elizabeth Hayward, daughter of a well-known surgeon from Hackney. The young Stocqueler was educated at Brochard’s Academy, run by a French émigré in Camden, and after a spell working as a bank messenger he joined a travelling theatre company for a while. His maternal grandmother was the opera singer Giovanna Sestini and perhaps from her he inherited a love of performing. Nonetheless, in 1818, he enrolled at Chatham for military training with the East India Company and after six months was, he claimed, in charge of 500 men, most of whom were Irish and destined for the army in Bombay. His detachment sailed from Tilbury Fort on the *Lowther Castle*, under Captain Mortlock. Nineteen-year old Joachim had never been to sea in his life and his dreams of ‘trade winds and smooth seas’ soon vanished. He never forgot the miseries of that voyage – ‘the dark recesses of the deck, the filth, the nausea, the corroding indolence, the coarse ribaldry of the sailors, the apprehensions when squalls caused lurches, the screams of the poor women, the evidence of scurvy’.

It was with ‘inexpressible joy’ that they anchored off Bombay on 29 May 1819 and after a couple of days’ freedom the detachment was marched to join a battalion quartered at

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes given in the article, unless otherwise specified, are taken from *The Memoirs of a Journalist*.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Archives, transcript of Catholic records from Portuguese Embassy Chapel, London: baptised 25 August 1801, born Abchurch Lane 21 July

Matoonga.<sup>3</sup> The rains soon began at this 'dismal swamp' and sickness and death were rife, but those who were able were soon put to gun-drill. There was nothing to occupy the soldiers in their spare time, so some became involved in amateur dramatics in a remarkably adequate theatre that had been constructed by the officers in the village. Performances, usually farces, attracted audiences from Bombay and were especially popular as the entertainment was supplemented by a good band, and afterwards a ball and supper in the officers' mess. Stocqueler, with his acknowledged theatrical aspirations was soon involved; in his *Memoirs* he claimed that there was competition among the gunners for parts in the plays as the officers then retained them at Matoonga and so they avoided being sent up country. Stocqueler makes no claim to have been part of any military operation. He did, however, offer his services to the many men who were illiterate but who wanted to send news home. The pile of letters in the same handwriting was noticed and this set Stocqueler, as he put it, on the first rung of the ladder of preferment. Before long he was appointed to a clerkship in the office of Captain (later Major) Kinnersley, the Presidency paymaster.

Stocqueler found Isaac Kinnersley a difficult man to work for, but to some extent excused him on the grounds that he had suffered from being obliged to return from furlough with three nieces. Kinnersley's responsibility in India for these 'handsome and accomplished women' caused him to fall into debt. Although the three Misses Grieve made successful marriages,<sup>4</sup> their uncle withdrew from society, had to live in a couple of rooms in the pay-office and his temper with his clerks was soured. For two years Stocqueler 'did penance' under Kinnersley for a mere 40 rupees a month. He gradually became acutely aware of the prejudices felt in local European society; those with affiliation to the East India Company had little regard for others. He was glad to find some distraction in the small theatre in Bombay<sup>5</sup> where, being extremely thin, he frequently played female roles alongside some good actors of HM 20<sup>th</sup> Foot and the governor's staff.

According to his *Memoirs*, Stocqueler's fortunes changed when one of his aunts<sup>6</sup> wrote to a friend, Colonel Hunter Blair, military secretary to the governor general, Sir Charles Colville, on her nephew's behalf. The outcome was that, much to paymaster Kinnersley's annoyance, Stocqueler was offered a position in the office of Francis Warden, Chief Secretary to the Bombay Government. He found his work in the military and general department at Bombay Castle challenging. Before long he was earning 400 rupees per

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<sup>3</sup> Matunga: now an area of Mumbai city, two kilometres north of Sewri.

<sup>4</sup> Stocqueler's memory served him well as his names of the husbands he quoted in his *Memoirs* agree with the records on the FIBIS database: In Bombay in 1822 Eliza Grieve became Mrs Guy Prendergast, her sister Maria married Surgeon Geo. Oglivy and Sophia Grieve married Capt. Burrows of HM 65<sup>th</sup> regiment.

<sup>5</sup> On the 'green' near the site of the present Town Hall.

<sup>6</sup> It is not possible to be certain which aunt this was, but it may have been his mother's sister Henrietta who married Charles Augustus Hayes in 1803.

month and gaining an insight into the current affairs in India but he realised that Bombay in 1822 had few facilities (for example, no Town Hall, no schools for the natives, no bank, no daily newspaper, no supreme court, poor communications and just one English and one Scottish church). Stocqueler claimed that it was the superiority of those Europeans considered to be in 'society' – the officers of the regiments and certain civilians such as barristers, clergymen and some merchants who were augmented when the great East Indiamen were in port en route for China – that first turned his attention to journalism.

### **A newspaper career begins**

The *Bombay Gazette* and *Bombay Courier* were very much establishment newspapers but Stocqueler began to write subversive material for a small paper called the *Argus*, which he later took over and renamed the *Bombay Chronicle*. He continued as a secretary at the Presidency but was considered locally as a radical (he had dared to quote from Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*) and an embarrassment to Mr Newnham, who had succeeded Francis Warden. Stocqueler could not be sent back to his regiment as he had purchased his discharge from the army, and, according to the *Memoirs*, he resigned his 'lucrative and comfortable post' and returned to England, ostensibly to collect printing materials. It is more likely that he was in fact dismissed, especially as his reputation was such that he admittedly had to pay over the odds for a passage on a ship and the 'bloated aristocracy' of Bombay, he believed, breathed more freely when the *Dorothy* weighed anchor on 8 November 1825.<sup>7</sup>

Back in England after almost seven years' absence, Stocqueler was probably supported financially by his family. His father had died in 1813 and in 1819 his mother remarried, to Henry Till, a city stockbroker. Joachim Hayward Stocqueler again became involved in theatre in London and also visited France and Scotland. His stepfather asked whether the London *Times* had need of an Indian correspondent, but at that time, before India was part of the British Empire, was told: 'They don't eat curry and rice in Cornhill. No one reads about India'. So, after about a year at home, Stocqueler purchased type and printing presses and applied to India House in Leadenhall Street for permission to return to India and reside in Bombay. A bond and covenant was granted with Henry Till and Henry Hayward (Stocqueler's maternal uncle) standing surety for £500.<sup>8</sup>

Stocqueler had pleasant recollections of his second voyage to India, on the *Hythe*, in the company of several army officers and other gentlemen. Two rival 'newspapers' were

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<sup>7</sup> *Bombay Calendar* 1824-27 (FIBIS Database). 'Mr Stoquiler' was one of two passengers on the *Dorothy* sailing for Liverpool. Sources for further sailings noted in the article can be found in arrival/departure transcriptions on the FIBIS database with the exception of the *Hindustan* sailing (p14), for which the *Bengal Directory* does not name Stocqueler as a passenger. However, Stocqueler's *Memoir* described the voyage in some detail and several of the people he mentioned meeting on board are noted as passengers in the listing given on the FIBIS database.

<sup>8</sup> India Office Records Z/O/1/10 No. 5775. Over 12,500 Miscellaneous Bonds can be searched on the FIBIS database.

produced on board to pass the time – Stocqueler's was of course the more liberal. Leaving England on 18 February 1827, they arrived in Bombay on 21 June. Stocqueler carried useful letters of introduction but he needed to make a living. He launched a newspaper called the *Iris*; despite his intention that it should 'be of as many hues as the rainbow', it had a slow start until by chance he published a story on a local dispute over the calendar which gained sudden popularity for the paper.

### **Joachim's family life; the *Bombay Courier***

In his *Memoirs* Stocqueler judiciously omits any mention of his marriages or his children.<sup>9</sup> However, under a year after he was back in Bombay he married Jane Spencer in St Thomas's Church, on 28 January 1828.<sup>10</sup> The witnesses were Nathaniel and Jane Spencer who were almost certainly Jane's brother and sister-in-law, formerly Jane Morin. Joachim Hayward Stocqueler had been a witness at their wedding in 1824.<sup>11</sup>

The Stocqueler's first child was born on 18 November 1829 and baptised at St Thomas's on 31 December. He was given the names Edwin Roper Loftus<sup>12</sup> and in the register his father's occupation is 'Editor of the Bombay Courier'. Stocqueler had been persuaded to take this post (with salary and commission of over 100 rupees per month) on condition that the *Iris*, with its liberal views, would disappear. He claimed that he gave the *Courier* a 'literary turn and encouraged scientific discussion' while initially being mild on politics. The paper was successful and, although he still had outstanding debts from the *Iris*, Stocqueler borrowed money and bought out the share of one of the proprietors.

The *Courier* had a rival, however, in the *Bombay Gazette* and when that publication became the official government paper the *Courier* lost revenue. Undeterred, Stocqueler used his facilities to start up the *Bombay Sporting Magazine* and the *Racing Calendar* knowing that these would appeal to the officers of the local militia. He also became closely involved, with others, in the foundation of the Bombay General Library which opened on 15 November 1829 'in magnificent and airy apartments' and with ample material for both the native and European populations. Nonetheless he was somewhat scathing about the parochial nature of society in Bombay and the way the Europeans failed to adapt to the climate. He claimed to have been sorely tempted when he was approached by the *Bengal Hurkaru*, the principal liberal newspaper of Calcutta, and it was suggested he could

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<sup>9</sup> His personal life was unconventional and he is on record as fathering several children by four women, from 1829 to 1867.

<sup>10</sup> IOR N/3/8/356

<sup>11</sup> IOR N/3/7/20. The baptismal entries of the Spencer's children, born from 1825-33, describe Nathaniel Spencer as a clerk in the Chief Secretary's Office, so it is likely he was a work colleague of Stocqueler.

<sup>12</sup> IOR N/3/9/220. The name 'Roper' was undoubtedly for his father's friend Henry Roper, a lawyer who contributed to the *Iris* and later became chief justice and received a knighthood. The reason for the name 'Loftus' is so far unknown.

become its editor. His refusal on the grounds that it would be to his advantage to see more of the world first may well have been only part of the truth. He was in severe financial trouble and his creditors were pressing. Stocqueler decided to set out on an overland journey across the Middle East and Europe and then to revisit England. He claimed that even with the promise of steam power before too long, the overland route to India might prove preferable to the voyage around the Cape and should be investigated.

Before he left, however, his mother, the recently widowed Elizabeth Till, and his sister, Elizabeth Josephine Stocqueler<sup>13</sup>, had arrived in Bombay, aboard the *Lady Raffles* on 6 November 1830. Probably unaware of his troubles, they would have been keen to see him again and to meet his wife and baby son. But Joachim Hayward Stocqueler left them all on 18 February when he engaged a cabin in a small Arab vessel, or *bugla*, collected a few supplies, and set sail westward. He must have been very eager to leave as he just missed his sister's wedding: Elizabeth Josephine Stocqueler married Robert Anthony William Clarke, of the Bombay Civil Auditor's Office, on 1 March 1831.<sup>14</sup> Mrs Till then left Bombay, sailing for London on the *Bolton* on 17 April 1831. Sadly she never saw her daughter again as Elizabeth Josephine Clarke was buried at Colaba, Bombay on 10 August 1835.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Overland Journey, the *Bengal Herald* and the Calcutta stage**

At some time in 1831 Jane Stocqueler and her son Edwin also sailed for England, where they met up with her husband who arrived in London in May 1832. Joachim Hayward Stocqueler had been on a remarkable journey from the Gulf, in part on horseback and on various river boats, via Persia and Turkey to Odessa, where he was quarantined as he had been in countries infected by the plague. Then he visited several cities of Europe – Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Hanover – before embarking at Rotterdam on the *Batavier* bound for Woolwich. Stocqueler found London preoccupied with the Reform Bill, but his first book was published while he was there. *Fifteen Months Pilgrimage through Untrodden Tracts of Khuzistan and Persia in a Journey from India to England, through parts of Turkish Arabia, Persia, Armenia, Russia and Germany, performed in 1831 and 1832* was published in two volumes in 1832 by Saunders and Otley. He dedicated it to the Duchess of Cambridge, Princess Augusta, as she and the Duke had offered him hospitality in Hanover. The book attracted considerable attention in the press; most reviews were favourable and praised Stocqueler's sense of adventure and courage in adversity but interestingly there were a few comments from writers who knew something of the terrain he had covered and who questioned his account. He was always prone to exaggeration and self-promotion so may well have embroidered some of his stories.

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<sup>13</sup> IOR Z/O/1/10 No. 7735 (Miscellaneous Bonds, FIBIS database). They had obtained permission to visit India with sureties from Archibald Leslie and Richard Till.

<sup>14</sup> IOR N/3/10/99. The witnesses included her mother, Elizabeth Till, her sister-in-law, Jane Stocqueler, and Jane's brother, N Spencer.

<sup>15</sup> IOR N/3/12/350. Robert A.W. Clarke remarried twice in Bombay: to Mary Skene in 1836 and after her death, to Elizabeth Wilson in 1839.

In the early autumn of 1832 Stocqueler and his wife and son sailed again for India, via the Cape, on the *James Pattison*. They arrived in Bengal in January 1833. Stocqueler probably did not feel it would have been politic to be seen in Bombay, but was dismayed to learn that there was a financial crisis in Calcutta and that, due to the long time he had been out of India, his promised post at the *Bengal Hurkaru* was no longer available. He was obliged to accept the editorship of a weekly literary journal, the *Bengal Herald*, at a salary much less than he had expected.

Undeterred he made his way into Calcutta society, not least by becoming involved in the ambitious amateur theatricals at fashionable Chowringhee, led by Henry Meredith Parker.<sup>16</sup> Stocqueler played, among other leading roles, Cassius, Iago, Pizarro and Falstaff. The principal actress in the company was the talented Esther Leach, the wife of a garrison sergeant-major, who always drew a good audience. When in 1837, her husband having died, she announced that she was to return to England for her health, she gave a valedictory address in verse which is said to have been written for her by Stocqueler.<sup>17</sup> Esther Leach returned to Calcutta two years later to find that the Chowringhee theatre had burned down and she set about collecting funds for a new theatre. Stocqueler was but one of many among those active in this project, although to read his own account it would seem he was the prime instigator! Before



'Touch me not so near', JH Stocqueler as Iago, lithographic sketch by Colesworthey Grant, published 1850, © The British Library Board, W 4769

<sup>16</sup> Parker was a senior civil servant in the liberal ideas. In 1858 he wrote a *Plan for*

<sup>17</sup> Shaw, Denis, 'Esther Leach, "The Mrs Siddons of Bengal"', *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol 10 1958 pp304-310.



long the impressive new Sans Souci Theatre<sup>18</sup> was opened. Another project in which Stocqueler was involved was the foundation of the Calcutta public library. Remembering the success of the Bombay library, he mooted the idea at a meeting in Calcutta Town Hall in August 1835, which resulted the following March in the opening of an establishment 'to supply the wants of the entire community in every department of literature'.<sup>19</sup>

### Acquiring *The Englishman*

Back in 1833, Stocqueler had soon found that he needed to find a way to supplement his income. It is unclear where he found the funds -18,000 rupees - but he bought a struggling daily newspaper called the *John Bull*. It was a Tory paper with fewer paid-up subscribers than he had anticipated, and Stocqueler's liberal sympathies were opposed to the ethos of the paper. He decided to rename it *The Englishman* and change its focus. Stocqueler lost several old subscribers – one declared that he would not submit 'to be dragged through the mire of radicalism by any insolent innovator' – but gradually he attracted new readers and as the circulation increased this led to useful advertising revenue.

In the days before telegraph there was competition, in particular from the *Bengal Hurkaru*, in getting news from Europe before it was too outdated. On one occasion Stocqueler realised that a scoop from a Frenchman he had befriended, and who unexpectedly brought him important news from Bordeaux, greatly benefited *The Englishman's* finances. These were, however, never secure, and Stocqueler, remembering what he had done in Bombay, set up the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* which became popular both with military men and up-country civilians. He recalled working all hours in the difficult Bengal climate to keep up with work on all his publications, which also included a weekly literary journal, the *Oriental Observer*.<sup>20</sup>

Stocqueler's *Memoirs* recount an interesting aside at this point, as it was also in 1833 when, to everyone's amazement, North American ice first arrived in Calcutta. The *Memoirs* describe how Stocqueler hardly believed his servant when early one morning the man insisted there was a ship laden with snow in the harbour, but he went to see the crystalline cargo from Boston for himself. The American businessman Frederick Tudor had found that ice cut from frozen lakes could be transported and sold as a luxury which helped to ease life in hot climates. Lord William Bentinck, who was then Governor General of India,

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<sup>18</sup> The impressive porticoed building stood at 30 Park Street, which is now part of St Xavier's College. Contemporary European plays were popular as well as Shakespeare, but tragedy struck in 1843 when Esther Leach died of burns sustained when her costume caught fire.

<sup>19</sup> Stam, David H., (ed.) *International Dictionary of Library Histories* (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001) Vol 1, p515

<sup>20</sup> In *The Bengal Directory and Annual Register* for 1838 the Englishman Press (proprietor J H Stocqueler) was in Vansittart Row in central Calcutta. It offered 'all descriptions of printing' as well as publishing the daily newspaper *The Englishman*, weekly miscellaneous journal *The Oriental Observer*, monthly periodical *The Bengal Sporting Magazine* and monthly magazine *The East Indian United Service Journal*.

arranged a subscription fund to build an ice-house in Calcutta so that future consignments of the precious commodity could be stored. Similar stores were set up in Madras and Bombay.

### Jane and Edwin Stocqueler; further business ventures

Stocqueler mentioned in the *Memoirs* many notable residents of India, some of whom he worked or socialised with, including Thomas Babington (later Lord) Macaulay, but nothing was written of his own family. A second son had been born to Jane Stocqueler on 7 November 1833 in Chowringhee and baptised Mountford Harvey in early December at the Old Church of Calcutta. Like so many young children he did not survive and was buried at Fort William on 6 April 1835.<sup>21</sup> Then in January 1836 Jane Stocqueler and her elder son Edwin departed Calcutta for Liverpool on the *Bombay Packet*. It is unlikely that either returned to Calcutta, but they spent time in London. In June 1841 the England and Wales census listed eleven-year-old Edwin Roper Loftus Stocqueler as a boarder at the Rev Dr Nicholas's well-regarded Rectory House School in Ealing, to the west of London. It is quite probable that his fees were paid by his grandmother Elizabeth Till. In January of that year, Edwin's mother Jane had sailed from London on the *Louisa* bound not for Calcutta



Portrait of Joachim Hayward Stocqueler 'Editor of The Englishman', lithograph by Colesworthey Grant, 1839. Reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum (BH/FF10/Portraits British CVII P5).

<sup>21</sup> Baptism: IOR N/1/35/254; burial: N/1/43/47. The baby's father, J H Stocqueler, was named as 'editor etc.' and 'editor and proprietor' of *The Englishman* newspaper in the respective registers. A Mrs, Miss and Master Stocqueler had departed Calcutta on the *St George* in January 1834, for the Cape. This was presumably Jane and her two children (with one given the incorrect gender) -- was she taking them away from their father for some reason? They must have returned, though, as little Mountford died in Calcutta.

but for Bombay, where her brother and his family lived. Although there was no official divorce, her marriage to Joachim Hayward Stocqueler was over. Later she and her son, who became an artist of considerable repute, were in Australia during the gold rush in the 1850s. They then returned to Bombay where Edwin married in 1861 and Jane Stocqueler died in 1870.<sup>22</sup>

It was while Jane Stocqueler was in London that her husband set up J H Stocqueler and Co's East India Army and General Agency there, with offices near Charing Cross and in the City. It is not known whether Jane was involved with this, but Stocqueler did send a manager from India. An advertisement in 1838

suggested to parties proceeding to India that they will do well to negotiate their passage through this agency where every assistance will be afforded in the shipment of their baggage, the fitting up of the cabins etc.<sup>23</sup>

A year later 'in consequence of the rapid expansion of their Business, and the increase of their Subscription List to upwards of 1,200 names' the Agency had moved to new premises in Pall Mall,<sup>24</sup> so it appears to have been useful to both civilians and military families en route for India. Although he only served briefly in the army, Stocqueler maintained a lifelong interest in matters military. In Calcutta in 1838 he proposed a scheme for a Bonus Fund to be set up to provide retirement pensions for officers. Over 50 regiments were said to have been in favour, whereby contributions would be transferred to an Agency in London for distribution when appropriate.<sup>25</sup> Stocqueler was referred to as army agent for the Bengal Infantry,<sup>26</sup> so may have had some financial interest in the scheme; it is unclear whether it ever came into being.

Stocqueler claimed to have been on reasonably good terms with other members of the press in Bengal, but this was certainly not always the case. When the *Hurkaru* merged with the *Indian Gazette* in 1835 and announced its commanding position vis-à-vis *The Englishman*, Stocqueler not unnaturally responded, and this led to accusations on both sides concerning his arrival on the Calcutta newspaper scene. There were further exchanges the following year when Stocqueler was accused of insulting remarks to certain members, notably Colonel Lumley, of the influential Bengal Club, in his paper's column 'Military Mouth-Piece'. Considerable controversy was caused and in a vote Stocqueler's membership of the club was only just upheld. Later, however, he resigned when 'some of his friends at length succeeded in convincing him that his being a member is injurious to

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<sup>22</sup> Although this is not the place for the story to be told, Edwin Roper Loftus Stocqueler had an interesting life as an artist; he died in London in 1895.

<sup>23</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 27 April 1838

<sup>24</sup> *Morning Post*, 3 September 1839

<sup>25</sup> *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, 1838 New series Vol 27, p151

<sup>26</sup> *Morning Post* (London, 18 October 1838; Calcutta dateline 18 July)

[the Club's] prosperity'.<sup>27</sup> As several others resigned in sympathy and their subscriptions were sorely missed, this was not perhaps strictly true.

Stocqueler was a well-known resident of Calcutta – for example, he served on the vestry committee and proposed the toast to the Chairman at the Calcutta Free Press dinner – but he was always a controversial figure, largely because of his liberal views and he faced several charges of libel. There was a Captain Biden who felt the way a speech he made was reported in the *Englishman* amounted to insult and although Stocqueler was eventually vindicated it was an unpleasant affair.<sup>28</sup> A notable case against a Mr Osborne involved the *Oriental Observer*. In 1838 Mr Oldfield, the civil and sessions judge upcountry at Tirhoot, considered he had been libelled by Stocqueler in the *Bengal Sporting Magazine*. It was reported that Oldfield had appropriated comfortable houses belonging to natives for the civil staff at minimal rents. Oldfield was awarded damages and Stocqueler published an apology, but he did manage to point out that the practice of using native accommodation in this way was widespread. He also supported the local surgeon, Dr Mackinnon, who transpired to have been his informant and had been threatened with loss of his job.

### War correspondence and insolvency

In the autumn of 1838 Stocqueler joined the military expedition to Afghanistan to obtain first-hand impressions as a journalist. He kept a colourful diary which was sent back to Calcutta by the December and January Overland Mail. The first instalment of 'The Army of the Indus' began on 30 October 1838 at Kurnaul where the regiments rendezvoused, and the second on 23 November at Loodianah and then covered the meeting at Ferozepore of Governor General Lord Auckland and Maharajah Runjeet Singh.<sup>29</sup> Later Stocqueler collected many documents relating to the British occupation of Afghanistan, which were published, in Calcutta in 1843.<sup>30</sup>

On his return to Calcutta in 1839 Stocqueler blamed the depression caused by the Afghan conflict for a drop in circulation of newspapers, a decline in theatre attendance and 'other mishaps'. Personally he was in severe financial difficulty. *The Englishman* was eventually proving profitable, but he owed money borrowed to maintain his publications and his lifestyle and, although he had won some contentious court cases, he had on several other occasions suffered damages for libel. He claimed that he was owed money in several quarters (including from his London agent) but in 1840 Stocqueler was involved in

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<sup>27</sup> *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, 1836 New series Vol 21, p229

<sup>28</sup> This was Christopher Biden, the brother of WH Biden. See article by Richard Morgan, p16.

<sup>29</sup> *Parbury's Oriental Herald and Colonial Intelligencer* (published by Madden & Co, Leadenhall Street, London), 1839 Vol 3 pp171–76 and 276–86.

<sup>30</sup> Stocqueler, J. H., *Memorials of Affghanistan: being state papers, official documents, dispatches, authentic narratives, etc. illustrative of the British expedition to, and occupation of, Affghanistan and Scinde, between the years 1838 and 1842* [sic] (Calcutta, Ostell and Lepage, 1843)

insolvency proceedings and was held in the debtors' prison in Calcutta<sup>31</sup> for several months until he applied for discharge in February 1841.<sup>32</sup> Court appearances continued, often concerning contentious material in Stocqueler's publications, although one notable instance was when he was a witness at the inquest that April into the suicide of Captain Cox.<sup>33</sup> In early 1843 there was a charge of forgery brought against Stocqueler concerning a financial bill. Although the Chief Justice declared the case groundless, the Supreme Court refused to release Stocqueler's bail, presumably because he still had many creditors. He finally admitted that his situation was hopeless and he decided to quit India. *The Englishman* was now an influential and oft-quoted newspaper and Stocqueler sold it for, he claimed, £13,000.<sup>34</sup>

### Life after India

Maybe it was some of the profit from the paper that permitted Stocqueler to afford a comfortable passage on the P&O line's *Hindustan*, sailing on 22 April 1843 in quite distinguished company, to Suez. After a stay in Cairo he sailed from Alexandria on the *Oriental* to Malta where he spent three weeks profitably writing while he was quarantined. He then travelled back to London through Italy, Switzerland and France, where in Paris King Louis-Philippe complimented him on his French accent. He admitted that he had left India with a heavy heart but hoped that he had made some contribution to the press there. He never returned, but did make considerable use of his experiences. He soon published *The Handbook of India: A Guide to the Stranger and the Traveller and a Companion to the Resident* which in some 600 pages gave an account of the history and government of British India, detailed advice on travelling there, and descriptions of its various regions and cities. It was published by W H Allen in London in 1844 and a review suggested<sup>35</sup>

there is little doubt, that it will find its way into the hands [...] of every one of the numerous young writers, cadets and assistant-surgeons – not to mention that far more interesting tribe of passengers to India, the fair spinster-crew, of which every ship brings a goodly portion to India in the cold weather.

The *Handbook* was supplemented by *The Oriental Interpreter and Treasury of East India Knowledge* in 1848, and a second edition in 1854 claimed its further usefulness 'to all who may have business with or appertaining to India'. Soon after his return to London

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<sup>31</sup> Stocqueler wrote in his *Handbook of India* (p312) that the Great Jail in Calcutta was a large, airy and healthy building situated upon the eastern side of the racecourse, with the debtors accommodated in lofty apartments.

<sup>32</sup> *London Gazette*, 6 August 1841, p2025 (Reports from *Calcutta Gazette*)

<sup>33</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, 1841, Vol 25, pp194–96

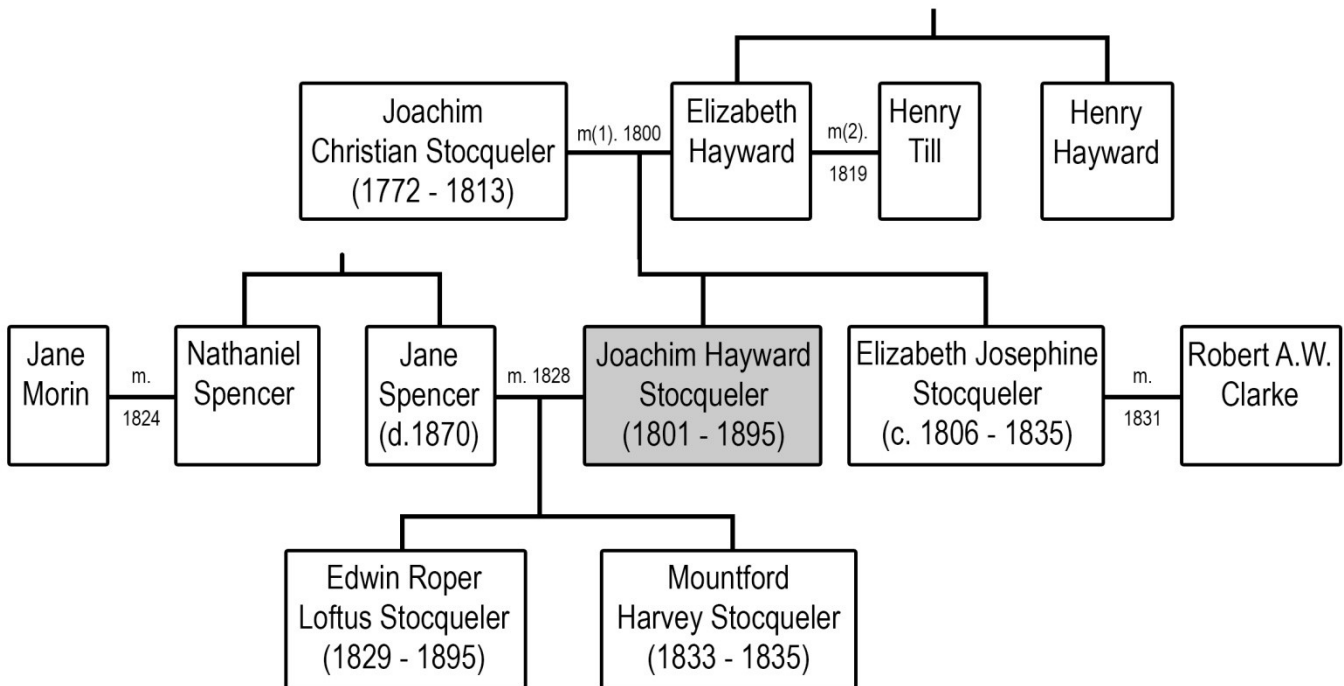
<sup>34</sup> *The Englishman* carried on under various editors until it merged with *The Statesman* in 1934.

<sup>35</sup> *Calcutta Review*, 1844 Vol 1 p251

Stocqueler published an interesting article 'On the Health and Vital Statistics of Calcutta'<sup>36</sup> which compared the conditions of the natives and the British, and gives detailed descriptions of the symptoms and treatment of several local ailments.

Joachim Hayward Stocqueler continued his colourful life in England – he wrote more books and also plays, and lectured widely, making use of his Indian and military experiences. He was in demand to give the commentary on the dioramas which illustrated, for example, the Overland Mail from Southampton to Australia, via India. But despite his undoubted charisma he still failed to succeed financially. He resorted to taking the pseudonym James H Siddons when he fled from an insolvency court and escaped to America. He claimed to be the illegitimate grandson of the actress Sarah Siddons and his alleged father would have been George Siddons, who joined the East India Company in 1802, but that story is beyond the scope of this article!

***Family tree of Joachim H Stocqueler, showing those mentioned in the article***



<sup>36</sup> *Simmond's Colonial Magazine and Foreign Miscellany*, 1844 (Jan – Apr) Vol 1 pp471–81 (Published by the Foreign and Colonial Office, London). Attributed to 'Author of The Handbook of India' but indexed as by J.H. Stocqueler Esq.

## Captains Outrageous: tracing the maritime career of William Henry Biden

Richard Morgan

A chance remark by US Vice-President Joe Biden got me interested in William Henry Biden and his brother Christopher, who both served in the East India Co's Maritime Service.<sup>1</sup> I shall return to Joe Biden and his ancestry at the end of the article.

### William Henry Biden's origins

William Henry Biden was born 15 March 1790 and baptized at Houghton, Huntingdonshire, 6 Feb 1791, the son of John and Anne Biden.<sup>2</sup> The Bidens had married at Houghton 20 Mar 1780, she being the daughter of Richard Beaumont. William Henry was their 7<sup>th</sup> child and 4<sup>th</sup> son. His father John was a miller at the splendid water mill at Houghton now owned by the National Trust.<sup>3</sup>

John Biden died and was buried at Houghton 28 Jan 1796 when William Henry was only five.<sup>4</sup> John's will expresses the hope that his widow may be able to continue the milling business with the help of her father Richard Beaumont, though this seems not to have happened.<sup>5</sup>

William Henry's older brother Christopher, aged only 14 years, had entered the Honourable East India Company (HEICo)'s Maritime Service as a Midshipman on *HCS Royal George (4)*<sup>6</sup> in 1802. He was required to produce a signed copy of his baptism record. It was signed by the Vicar and shows that Christopher was born 31 Dec 1788 and baptized at Houghton May 13 1789<sup>7</sup>. The date of birth does not appear in the Register so must have been supplied by the Vicar from other sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Those interested in W H Biden may like to know that another article by Richard Morgan about different aspects of W H Biden's career appeared in *Family Tree* Nov 2014 p30.

<sup>2</sup> Houghton Registers, Huntingdonshire Archives and British Library (BL) India Office Records (IOR) L/MAR/670 Part 5 No 1321 (certificate of baptism).

<sup>3</sup> Houghton Registers; Will of John Biden Proved 1797, TNA PROB 11/1286/266.

<sup>4</sup> Houghton Registers Huntingdonshire Archives.

<sup>5</sup> The National Trust booklet about Houghton Mill (Philip G M Dickinson *Houghton Mill* 1971) records that in 1797 it was owned by Stafford, Pashellor and Lindsell and the tenant was William Brown. Stafford and Pashellor are the names of two of John Biden's executors. So was John Biden a tenant or a part owner?

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Farrington *A Biographical Index of East India Company Maritime Service Officers 1600- 1834*, British Library 1999 (Open Shelves in the APAC room). H.C.S means Honourable Company's Ship, the Honourable Company being the HEICo. The number (4) signifies in Farrington's *Index* that this is the 4<sup>th</sup> ship of that name used by the HEICo.

<sup>7</sup> India Office Records L/MAR/C/670 No 1307b



*Houghton Mill in 1966, photograph by Bessel Dekker (public domain, Wikimedia Commons).*

Christopher did well in his career. He rose through the ranks, Midshipman till 1807, than 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate 1809-10, 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate 1811-12, 1<sup>st</sup> (or Chief) Mate 1813-19, and finally Captain 1820. He commanded *HCS Princess Charlotte of Wales* 1820-29 and from 1839 became a Member of the Marine Board at Madras.<sup>8</sup> He was the author of two books which we shall notice. He founded the Bidden Home for Destitute Seamen on the North Beach at Rayapuram (now Royapuram).<sup>9</sup> He died in 1858 and was buried in Madras Cathedral.<sup>10</sup>

It seems likely that William Henry was destined from an early age for a similar career since his certificate of baptism for the HEICo was copied by the Vicar at the same time as his brother's (1811), although William Henry was still only 11 at the time. Again the date of birth included cannot have been taken from the Register, but probably came from his family.

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<sup>8</sup> *East-India Register and Directory* 1839 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. The Marine Board was concerned with the HEICo's warships, pilot vessels, etc – not the merchant ships which were the concern of the Maritime Service.

<sup>9</sup> This is mentioned in Cotton – see next note. It was on the north side of Madras, one block north of Rayapuram Railway Station (map of the city in Anon *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* new edn Vol XVI 1908 opposite p378).

<sup>10</sup> IOR N/2/39/38. Julian John Cotton List of Inscriptions on Tombs and Monuments in Madras providing historical or archaeological interest Madras 1905 p80.



## Biden's first Voyages

The actual record of Biden's HEICo appointment seems to be missing.<sup>11</sup> However, he began as 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate of *HCS Midas* in March 1810 at the HEICo's docks at Blackwall in London. The *Midas* was a small ship – only 414 tons at a time when several ships exceeded 1,000 tons. His Commander was Charles Otway Mayne.<sup>12</sup> The journey via Madeira to Madras and Calcutta and back via St Helena and Ascension Island was uneventful. They travelled for the most part in convoy because of the Napoleonic Wars, escorted by a Royal Naval Frigate, *HMS Phoenix*. The protection afforded by the *Phoenix* did not prevent it from press-ganging six men from the *Midas*'s crew.

Apart from naming Biden in the crew list, the Journal (ie ship's log) does not mention him by name.<sup>13</sup> This is perfectly usual. Most of those noticed in a Journal had either died or offended the Commander in some way.

The *Midas* was back at Blackwall in May 1811. In December of that year Biden joined the *HCS St Vincent (1)* as 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate, his Commander being William Larkins Pascall. The *St Vincent* was a much bigger ship and Capt Pascall was a member of the influential Larkins family, well-known ship owners and HEICo officers.<sup>14</sup>

Again the voyage was largely without incident from Biden's point of view.<sup>15</sup> They left London early in 1812 and travelled out to Madras in a convoy of eight East Indiamen and other ships, escorted out by *HMS Antelope* and back by *HMS Horatio* and *Sir Francis Drake*. The numerous passengers included several soldiers, whom it seems some of the crew took advantage of. A seaman called George Creighton ingeniously converted a soldier's hammock into a pair of trousers, while his colleague Jacob Johnson, Carpenter's Mate, bought a soldier's frock coat off him. On this occasion the Court of Enquiry established by the Captain and including all the officers let them both off with a promise of future good behaviour. However Capt Pascall was not squeamish about discipline and a few months later awarded three dozen lashes to Johnson for stealing water.<sup>16</sup> By May 1813 Biden was back at Blackwall.

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<sup>11</sup> The Volumes of appointment have a gap 1810-14 between BL IOR L/MAR/C/660 and L/MAR/C/661.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Farrington, *Catalogue of East India Company Ships' Journals and Logs 1600-1834*, (British Library 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Journal of the *Midas* at IOR L/MAR/B/271A.

<sup>14</sup> For the Larkins family and their ships see Jean Sutton *The East India Company's Maritime Service 1746-1834: Masters of the Eastern Seas* (The Boydell Press 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Journal of the *St Vincent (1)* at IOR L/MAR/B/209H.

<sup>16</sup> Water was a precious commodity. In many Journals (including that of the *St Vincent*) the Captain recorded how much water was aboard so as to show it was being husbanded wisely.

Biden's third voyage was in 1814 on the *HCS Warren Hastings* (3) 1,000 tons, under another of the Larkins clan, Thomas Larkins.<sup>17</sup> Biden was still 3<sup>rd</sup> Mate, though as it was a bigger ship that could be seen as promotion. Two of his colleagues from the *St Vincent*, the surgeon Thomas Brown Horsley and the purser James William Pears, also joined the *Warren Hastings*.

There were many passengers including the newly appointed first Bishop of Calcutta (Thomas Middleton) and his family. In the ship's Journal we find:

Thu 11 Aug At 7 past 2 AM Mary Wife of W<sup>m</sup> Wiseley H.C. Recruit was safely deliver'd of a Son

Sun 14 Aug At Noon the Infant born on the 11<sup>th</sup> Inst<sup>t</sup> was Christened by the name of Larkins Hastings<sup>18</sup>

The journey was again via Madeira to Colombo in Ceylon and Madras and back. The isolation of life at sea is shown when on 3 Aug 1815, past St Helena, an 'American Schooner from Portugal out 12 days, informs us that "the allied Armies were in Paris, Buonaparte absconded".' The ship finally got back to England in October 1815.

### Biden's later HEICo Voyages

Young Biden (he was still only 25) had been lucky in his voyages and his commanders but that was about to change. His next ship was *HCS Sovereign* (2) 627 tons under Captain James Alexander Telfer, a Scot. Biden was now Chief or 1<sup>st</sup> Mate. It was also Capt Telfer's first and indeed only HEICo command.

There were more than the usual number of floggings, and one senses desperation in the crew when they got to Batavia:<sup>19</sup>

Sun 27 Oct [1816] at 7 P.M. Mr D McKinly Boatswain, and the five following men being ordered by Mr Fullarton [2<sup>nd</sup> Mate Foulerton] to go on board of the *Barkworth* for one of our People, Pulled close to the *Barkworth* and then directly out to Sea with the Gig. Viz Daniel McKinly Boatswain, Henry Young, Quarter Master, John Beadle, Edward Jones, James Reed, James Pendergrass Seamen. Chased them in the Jolly Boat, but being quite Dark lost Sight of them, Gave immediate information to Mr Marteze the Dutch Resident of their Desertion, and to seize the Boat if Found

The boat was later found abandoned. The deserters seem to have got away.

Then:

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<sup>17</sup> The voyage is described in Sutton pp236-8. The Journal is at BL IOR L/MAR/B/9M. Thomas Larkins was first cousin of William Larkins Pascall (Sutton pxi).

<sup>18</sup> Was the Christening performed by the Bishop? The child was buried at Dum Dum 21 April 1819 (IOR N/1/11/209).

<sup>19</sup> Capital of the Dutch East Indies, now Jakarta capital of Indonesia.

Tue 31 Dec At 4 P.M. Held a Court of Enquiry on James Causey for Insolence and disobedience of Orders, and Sentenced him to the Punishment of two Dozen lashes, but in consequence of his refractory and Mutinous Conduct, when tied up, extended the Punishment to four Dozen Lashes.

Meanwhile Captain Telfer was progressively falling out with his officers. The 3<sup>rd</sup> mate had fallen sick and as a result left at Batavia for treatment. This must have put additional strain on Biden as 1<sup>st</sup> Mate, Robert Foulerton 2<sup>nd</sup> mate and William Symes 4<sup>th</sup> mate.

Mon 16 Dec At 10 A.M. Suspended Mr W<sup>m</sup> Symes fourth Officer for most Insolent, Abusive, and Mutinous Language to me as Capt<sup>n</sup> of the Ship. J. A. Telfer

Then at Whampoa (on the Pearl River, China) on the same day as the flogging of Causey:

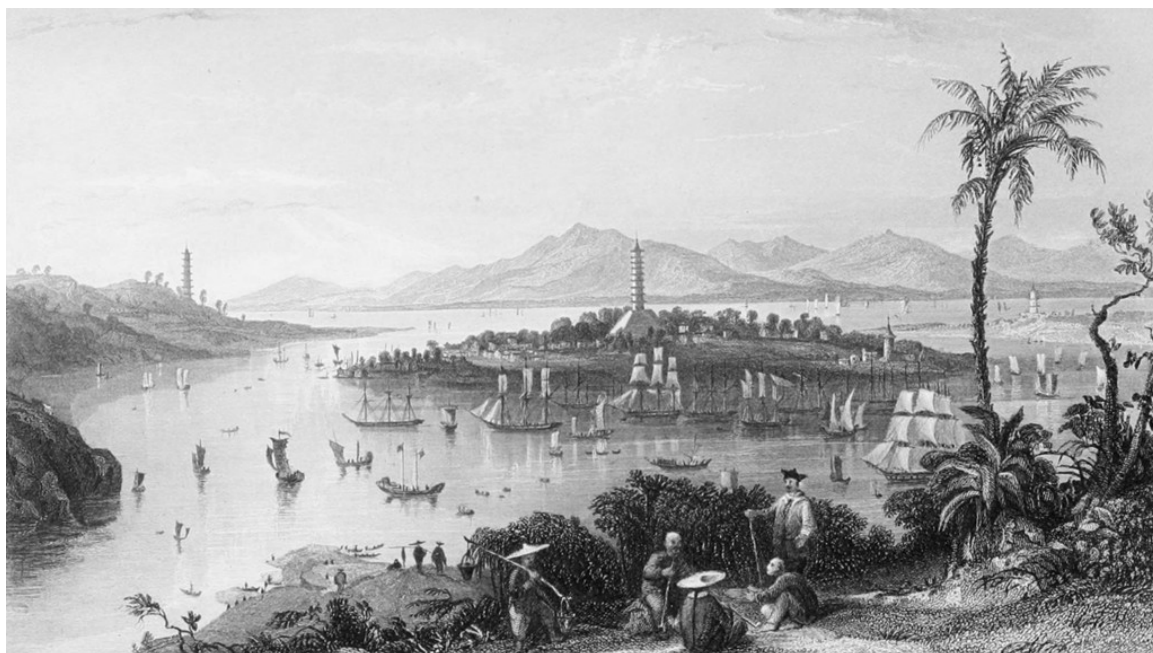
At 5 P.M. I was under the Necessity of Suspending Mr R Fullarton [sic] 2<sup>d</sup> Officer from his duty. For Neglect of duty, disobedience of Orders, and disrespect. J. A. Telfer

This effectively left the ship with Biden as the only other officer apart from Captain Telfer. Telfer reported Foulerton and Symes to the more senior HEICo officers (the Super cargoes<sup>20</sup>) at Whampoa and

Fri 10 Jan Received intimations from the Select Committee of supercargoes that they had Ordered a Court of Enquiry to be held on board on Mes<sup>rs</sup> Fulerton [sic] and Symes.

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<sup>20</sup> A Supra cargo (or Supercargo) was an officer handling the selling of a ship's cargo and hence came to mean an agent. In the present context it means the senior HEICo officers at Whampoa who negotiated the selling of all cargoes with the Chinese authorities.



*'Whampoa, from Danes Island' showing the Whampoa anchorage, drawing by Thomas Allom, c.1843.*

Mon 13 Jan The Members of the Court of Enquiry on Mes<sup>srs</sup> Fullarton [sic] and Symes came on board

Tue 14 Jan The Members of the Court of Enquiry finished their Proceedings, and returned to Canton

Mon 20 Jan At 4 P.M. Capt<sup>n</sup> Simpson of the *H.C.S. Lady Castlereagh*, the President of the Court of Enquiry, on Mes<sup>srs</sup> Foulerton and Symes the 2<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Officers, came on board, and read the Sentence of the Select Committee, on those Officers, before the Ship's Company: Viz Mr Foulerton to be Dismissed the Service, until the pleasure of the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Court [of Directors] is known, and Mr Symes to make an Apology which Mr Symes refused to do. N.B. (Mr H. A. Gravely (late 5<sup>th</sup> Officer of the *HCS Marquis of Ely*) Joined the *Sovereign* as 3<sup>rd</sup> Officer, being duly sworn in for that Station at Canton

Fri 24 Jan Mr James Dudman (late 3<sup>d</sup> Officer of the *H.C.S. Barkworth*) joined the *Sovereign* as 2<sup>d</sup> Officer, being duly Sworn in at Canton for that Station, in the Room of Mr Foulerton.

The floggings continued:

Wed 23 Apl At 10.30 AM Held a Court of Enquiry on W<sup>m</sup> Carraway Ship's Steward for an Attempt to steal liquor, which (tho' very obvious to the Court, that was his intention) could not be proved, in Consideration of which, and his former bad Conduct, Sentenced him to be turned before the Mast.

The phrase 'being turned before the mast' is clearly a punishment and may mean that Carraway was reduced to being an able seaman. Whatever it was, it is manifestly unfair to inflict it if a prisoner's guilt cannot be proved. The case is in no way helped by imputing unspecified bad conduct which has never been noted in the ship's Journal till now. Give a dog a bad name...

Tue 17 Jun At 10 A.M. Held a Court of Enquiry on W<sup>m</sup> Carraway for disobedience of Orders and Mutinous Conduct, which being proved and being an old Offender, sentenced him to three dozen lashes, as an example to the Ships Company.

Wed 18 Jun At 2 PM Punished the Prisoner W<sup>m</sup> Carraway with three dozen lashes and released him from Confinement

Everyone must be heartily glad to be back at the East India Docks<sup>21</sup> by Sept 1817.

If Telfer was a dreadful Captain, unfortunately for Biden he was not alone. Biden's next voyage was again as 1<sup>st</sup> Mate, this time on *HCS Apollo* (2) under Captain George Tennent in 1818-9.<sup>22</sup> Tennent was an Ulsterman, born at Carrickfergus in 1784. Again this voyage was Captain Tennent's first and only command of an East Indiaman.

The ship arrived at Whampoa and anchored there. Captain Tennent was absent most of the next few weeks, apparently consulting (or perhaps carousing) with other Commanders. It is clear he had complete confidence in Biden who remained in charge of the ship. Biden handled the unloading of the cargo including Captain Tennent's own private cargo, received the Mandarins on board, and kept the carpenter and other tradesmen busy repairing the ship. Biden also handled discipline. All seems to be well.

Among other ships at Whampoa there was *HCS Vansittart*.

Fri 15 Oct Hoisted the Colors half mast (with all the Fleet) upon the death of Mr J Foulerton Cheif [sic] Officer *HCS. Vansittart*.<sup>23</sup> At 7 P.M. rec[eive]d an order from the Comm<sup>r</sup> to send a Boat with 6 hands to attend the remains of Mr Foulerton

Sat 16 Oct Mr Biden attended the interment of the late Mr Foulerton

Biden continued to run the ship while Tennent was away:

Fri 22 Oct At 2 P.M. Confined in Irons Tho<sup>s</sup> Phipps Boatsw[ai]<sup>ns</sup> Mate for disobedience of Orders and Mutinous Conduct, wrote up & informed Capt<sup>n</sup> T. of the Circumstance

Sat 23 Oct Recd Orders from Capt<sup>n</sup> Tennent to try the Prisoner & punish him accordingly.

Mon 25 Oct Held an Enquiry upon the Prisoner & punished him pursuant to the Sentence with 3 dozen lashes<sup>24</sup>

Fri 29 Oct At 2 A.M. The *Bannerman* Country Ship came athwart Hawse of us - sprung our Jib Boom, Bowsprit [?] slightly, & carried away part of our Jib Geer [sic] with the Dolphin Striker, veered away upon the Bridle & cleared her with some difficulty. At daylight hove to our Moorings wrote up to Capt<sup>n</sup> T. & informed him of the above circumstance.

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<sup>21</sup> The docks opened in 1805.

<sup>22</sup> Journal at IOR L/MAR/B/159E.

<sup>23</sup> A curious coincidence, but apparently nothing to do with Fullarton/Foulerton, Biden's fellow officer on the *Sovereign*.

<sup>24</sup> This same malefactor had been confined on 13 Sep and released on promise of good behaviour on 21 Sep.

Mon 1<sup>st</sup> Nov Capt<sup>n</sup> Tennent visited the Ship

But all was not what it seems between Biden and Tennent. Something odd had already happened on 27 Sept, for in the Minutes of the Committee of Shipping (a Committee of the Court of Directors of the HEICo) we find:<sup>25</sup>

Minutes of a Court of Enquiry held on board the Ship *Marquis Camden* at China on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1819 to investigate the cause of the suspension by Capt<sup>n</sup> Tennent, of Mr Biden, from the Station of Chief Mate of the *Apollo*, were read, as were also the opinion of the Court and a letter from the Select Committee of Supra Cargoes at Canton to Capt<sup>n</sup> Tennent – and the Committee

Resolved That the above documents be referred to the Committee of Private Trade for their Information

Now 27 September is during the long period when Tennent left Biden completely in charge of the ship, visiting only intermittently. There is nothing whatever in the Journal about this. The crime Biden is accused of seems to be to do with 'private trade' – that is to say the use of Company ships to sell non-Company goods. Presumably Biden was accused of trying to sell his own goods which he had smuggled onto the *Apollo*.

Unfortunately we do not have Tennent's letter, the Minutes of the Private Trade Committee do not survive, and the matter is not noticed in the Minutes of the Court of Directors,<sup>26</sup> so we do not know the outcome of this. However it is tempting to think it may not have been too serious, because Biden was not dismissed, but transferred to a new ship – the *Vansittart*, to take the place of Foulerton who had died. His rank was set at 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate which may look like a demotion, but the *Vansittart* was a much bigger ship (1273 tons against 652 tons).

As Biden's visit to the *Vansittart* to attend Foulerton's funeral was also about a fortnight after Tennent's bombshell, did Biden expressly ask Captain Dalrymple of the *Vansittart* to find him a job away from Capt Tennent?

Whatever the facts, the *Apollo's* Journal shows

Sat 20 Nov Capt Tennent & Mr Gibb came on board with the H. C. Despatches

P. M. Mr Fox joined the Ship as 2<sup>d</sup> Officer,<sup>27</sup> when Mr Biden left to join the *H.C.S. Vansittart*

Biden seems to have served on the *Vansittart* without drawing any attention to himself.<sup>28</sup> The Captain, Robert S Dalrymple, died in China 15 Jan 1820 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Mate Harry Cowan took over and brought the ship back to England. Presumably Biden then fulfilled the role of Chief Mate.

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<sup>25</sup> L/MAR/1/9 p36 26 Apl 1820.

<sup>26</sup> The Minutes of the Court of Directors are in IOR L/B series.

<sup>27</sup> Gilson Reeves Fox later became Capt of *HCS Marquis Camden* and *HCS Bengal Merchant*. *Apollo's* existing 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate Charles Bell had been promoted to Chief Mate in place of Biden.

<sup>28</sup> IOR L/MAR/B/46L.

## William Henry Biden's new career

After leaving the *Vansittart*, Biden never again sailed with the HEICo. Quite apart from any black mark against Biden's name, the HEICo's Maritime Service was in trouble. Its monopoly of trade with the far East was crumbling. In 1813, the HEICo's Charter was renewed on condition that trade with India be thrown open to competition. Trade with China, which at that time was the more lucrative, remained an HEICo monopoly.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile there was a haemorrhaging of HEICo maritime officers, exacerbated by a press campaign of vilification against Company officers as being unnecessarily brutal, following reports of a mutiny aboard *HCS Inglis*.<sup>30</sup> So Biden (like his brother Christopher) joined the Country Trade – ships in the Far East not sailing under the Company's colours.

The January 1823 *East-India Register and Directory* (the twice-yearly handbook of India and the Company) notes William Henry Biden as captaining the *Anna Robertson*, 437 tons, built at Calcutta in 1815 for Palmer & Co. Palmer's was the largest and best known Agency House in Calcutta, providing financial and other services (banking, investment, shipping, etc). Its head John Palmer was described as 'the Richest East India Merchant',<sup>31</sup> so Biden's new career would seem to be assured.

The 1822 *Bengal Directory* includes details of shipping arrivals and departures and shows the *Anna Robertson* under Captain Biden arriving from London via Madras in Sept 1821, with several passengers including a Mr P Palmer. (John Palmer is known to have had several sons but I cannot find one with the initial P.<sup>32</sup>) The *Anna Robertson* must have left London in 1820, in which case Biden's job with Palmer's had started as soon as he left the Company.

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<sup>29</sup> Eventually in 1833 at the next renewal of the Charter the HEICo lost that too. The full story is excellently described in Anthony Webster *The Twilight of the East India Company* (The Boydell Press, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Details are in two books by Biden's brother Christopher: *Naval Discipline: Subordination contrasted with Insubordination or, a view of the necessity for passing a law establishing an efficient naval discipline on board ships in the merchant-service comprising a valuable record of occurrences on Various merchant ships; evincing the advantages arising from good order on the one hand, and the disasters attending the want of it on the other* (London 1830) pp2, 371 and his *The Present Condition of the Merchant Service with suggestions for the amendment thereof by the enactment of a Maritime Code of Laws that shall effectually provide for those glaring evils which involve in great danger and difficulty the commercial interests of the British Empire* (London 1835) p76. These books give a lot of detail about HEICo voyages between about 1785 and the 1830s.

<sup>31</sup> For John Palmer's career and Agency Houses generally, see Anthony Webster *The Richest East India Merchant* (The Boydell Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> *The Richest East India Merchant* p66 lists John Palmer's 12 known children.

In the 1823 *Bengal Directory*, Biden is listed as Captain of the *Ganges*, a 628 ton ship (so slightly bigger than the *Apollo*) belonging to Palmer and Co. The *Ganges* was not only much bigger than the *Anna Robertson* but also newer, built in Calcutta in 1818. Palmer & Co's vessels were usually jointly owned by Palmer's and the individual Captains.<sup>33</sup>

Biden remained Captain of the *Ganges* in 1824, but in 1825 the *Ganges* had gone and Biden seems to be out of a job. In fact Palmer & Co was not a sound company and eventually went spectacularly bust in January 1830. It had overinvested in shipping in the 1820s, reaching a high point of 23 or 24 vessels in 1823 which reduced to just 8 by 1828.<sup>34</sup> There is also evidence that Palmer, who was in many ways an easy-going man, allowed himself to be defrauded by his Captains.<sup>35</sup> Of course there is no evidence either way as to whether this was the case with Biden.

By 1825, Biden had a new ship called the *Thalia*. On 19 Nov 1825 the *Thalia* under Captain Biden left Calcutta for Rangoon.<sup>36</sup> On June 26 1829 'the *Thalia* (Captain Biden)' arrived at Portsmouth having left Bengal on March 5.<sup>37</sup> On 5 January 1830 he is still Captain of the *Thalia* sailing from Madras to Calcutta.<sup>38</sup> *Lloyds Register of Shipping* 1834 also records the *Thalia* and tells us it was 671 tons, registered in London.<sup>39</sup> W H Biden captained the *Thalia* from London to Calcutta, arriving in Feb 1833. From there he went to Mauritius and returned via Madras to Calcutta, arriving in April 1833 and leaving again for Madras in September that year.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile from 1826 to 1837 Biden is listed in the *East-India Register and Directory* as 'W H Biden mariner' in the list of Calcutta 'European Inhabitants' - ie British people living in Calcutta but with no official post under the HEICo.

Christopher Biden's book about *Naval Discipline* has already been referred to. Among its anecdotes about discipline, or the lack of it, on Company and other ships, is one anecdote relating to W H Biden and the *Thalia*. Unfortunately the date is given only as

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<sup>33</sup> *The Richest East India Merchant* p56.

<sup>34</sup> The *Ganges* is no longer in the Bengal list of merchant Vessels (*East-India Register and Directory*). *The Richest East India Merchant* pp114, 120.

<sup>35</sup> *The Richest East India Merchant* p42

<sup>36</sup> *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* Vol 21 May 1826 p636. Rangoon had been captured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Burmese War as recently as May 1824 (Google Books).

<sup>37</sup> *The Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* (Vol 22 No 56) published in London for July 1829 has some Shipping Intelligence on p191 (Google Books).

<sup>38</sup> IOR L/MAR/C/674 – an HEICo list of "Seafaring Europeans" (ie Free mariners captaining ships outside the HEICo's fleet). Such people were encouraged to register with the HEICo.

<sup>39</sup> No 63 in the Supplement of Foreign and Additional Ships at the end of the main Register.

<sup>40</sup> The 1833 voyages in the *Bengal Directory and General Register* for 1834 (BL APAC Room OIR 954.14).



14 Oct with no year – perhaps it means ‘14 Oct last’ in which case it would be 1829 or 1830.

The episode involved W H Biden finding his men swimming in the sea. He was concerned about sharks, so ordered them aboard. A man called Rogers disputed the order and was backed by others. Biden, being near Calcutta, took the men before the Magistrates there who, however, declined to take any action on the ground that Biden could himself have had the men flogged while at sea.

By about 1836 W H Biden had moved to Rangoon in Burma. We next hear of him and the *Thalia* arriving in Calcutta in April 1836 from Moulmein,<sup>41</sup> the British capital of their newly acquired territories in Burma.<sup>42</sup> He is listed in the inhabitants of Rangoon in 1838.<sup>43</sup> While there, he also purchased a strange two-hulled ship called the *Original*, built there by an eccentric Rangoon merchant called May Flower Crisp,<sup>44</sup> though I have yet to find reference to any voyages he made on it. Crisp describes it:

I built an experimental schooner called the “Original”, on the double canoe or fallen floor principle, length 45 feet, breadth 9 feet, depth forward 5 feet, after 6 feet, to sail 3 feet by the stern. She proved to be a fast sailing fine sea boat; she traded during the S. W. monsoon between Rangoon and the Tenasserim Provinces for several years.<sup>45</sup>

This seems to be the first twin-hulled ship built by a western designer for some centuries. The *Original* was only 18 tons so could not have carried much, but she must have been fun for Biden to sail.

In the *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce* for 13 May 1843 we find

At Rangoon on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, of Apoplexy, Captain William Henry Biden in his 52<sup>nd</sup> year. He had served in the Honourable Company’s Maritime Service and subsequently commanded the ships *Anna Robertson Ganges* and *Thalia*.<sup>46</sup>

Rangoon in Burma was not yet part of Bengal. So there is nothing in the IOR Ecclesiastical Returns as to his death or burial. He left no will, but a Bengal Administration of his estate was granted on 10 July 1843, with the balance of his property £375 6s 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d going to his sister Mrs Anna Smith.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Bengal Directory and General Register* for 1836 p526. (BL A&AS OIR 954.14)

<sup>42</sup> The British acquired a strip of coast from Burma after the First Burmese War 1824-6.

<sup>43</sup> B R Pearn, *A History of Old Rangoon*, (Corporation of Rangoon 1938) p136

<sup>44</sup> Pearn, pp136, 303. Crisp was born in Kings’ Lynn, Norfolk in 1792. For his career see Pearn pp134, 136, 143, 147, 159, 178, 305.

<sup>45</sup> May Flower Crisp, *A Treatise on Marine Architecture* (Maulmein, 1849) p94

<sup>46</sup> FIBIS database. A briefer account adding nothing new also appeared in *Allen’s Indian Mail* for 3 Aug 1843.

<sup>47</sup> IOR L/AG/34/132 f187, L/AG/34/27 f131, L/AG/34/27/1344 f196.

He appears to have been buried in the grave of the family of May Flower Crisp in the old English Cemetery in Rangoon. This was recorded in Pearn's book. Part of the inscription refers to:

Capt Bidan [sic] died in Rangoon age about 55 years.<sup>48</sup>

This monument has been erected in memory of the persons above named who are buried in 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Block E3 Rangoon, where now stands a memorial lamppost with their names recorded thereon<sup>49</sup>

It seems likely that this inscription was destroyed during the Japanese occupation.

### Joe Biden and Mumbai

Biden is not a common name. The best-known Biden is the US Vice-President. On 24 July 2013 he gave a speech in Mumbai, noting that in 1972 he received a letter from a Mr Biden of Bombay, suggesting they were related:

"our mutual great, great, something or other worked for the East India Trading Company [sic] back in the 1700s and came to Mumbai".<sup>50</sup>

There are several Joe Biden family trees on Ancestry. I have made no attempt to check them except to look at the most recent ancestor who was anywhere outside the USA. All the family trees I have seen on Ancestry agree this was William Henry Biden supposed to be born about 1790 in Huntingdonshire, son of John and Ann; some pedigrees specify the parish of Holywell cum Needingworth. By 1822 he was said to be in America where he got married. His son Joseph was born in Baltimore in 1829.

In the Holywell Registers in the 1780s-90s, there were no Bidens,<sup>51</sup> but I found William Henry Biden, son of John and Ann, born about 1791 in Houghton<sup>52</sup> about 4 miles from Holywell, and he is the subject of this paper.

On his entry into the HEICo service, the certified copy of baptism, already mentioned, shows that he was the HEICo Maritime Officer and his continued career in the far East from 1823 till his death in 1843 makes it clear that the East India officer and Joe Biden's ancestor cannot be one and the same.

Editor's note: Members with maritime ancestors will find much useful information in Richard Morgan's *FIBIS Research Guide 2: An Introduction to British Ships in Indian Waters – Their Owners, Crew & Passengers*, available through the FIBIS bookshop (<http://www.fibis.org/store/>).

<sup>48</sup> His age was in fact 53 years. The transcription is most readily accessible in R E McGuire *Burma Register of European Deaths and Burials* (BACSA, 1983) pp1.1-1.2.

<sup>49</sup> This sentence is presumably not part of the MI, but rather Pearn's comment, in which case 'now' means 1938, when Pearn wrote his book.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/24/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-us-india-partnership-bombay-stock-excha>

<sup>51</sup> Holywell Registers Huntingdonshire Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Houghton Registers Huntingdonshire Archives.

## The Melvill Family – Three Generations of Commitment to India (Part 2)

David Williams

In part I (J32) we read about the service of Philip Melvill (1760-1811), who had lain injured on the battlefield at Pollilur, and that of his sons, important figures in the East India Company at home. Here<sup>1</sup> we see that Philip's grandchildren, by his sons James Cosmo, Philip and Henry, also had many connections with India and meet his grandson 'The Muslim Melvill'.

This article is an edited version of a case study that David Williams produced for the East India Company at Home project, run by University College, London. The full version, including more information on the family's pedigree and details of family members for which there is sadly no space here, can be found on the EIC at Home website at <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah>

### A. James Cosmo Melvill's children

A									
James Cosmo I					Hester Jane Frances SELLON				
1792-1861					1789-1864				
Henrietta	Philip III	Fanny	James C II	Hester	Jean III	Marion II	William H	Rachel	
1816-1900	1817-54	1819-94	1821-80	1823-1911	1823-1911	1826-1914	1827-1911	1831-1913	

We saw in *FIBIS Journal* 32 that James Cosmo Melvill (1792-1861, 'JCM I') was the last Chief Secretary of the East India Company. Philip Melvill (1817-54, 'Philip III') was his second child and eldest son. Born on 3 October 1817, he was educated at Harrow, Peterhouse College, Cambridge<sup>2</sup> and the EIC College at Haileybury, graduating from the latter in 1839 as a writer.<sup>3</sup> He arrived in India in February 1840; his first posting was as the agent to the Governor General of the North Western Provinces and by 1854 he had risen to be secretary to the Punjabi government. He died of cholera in Lahore on 14 July 1854.<sup>4</sup> On 15 July 1845 he had married Emily Jane Hogg (1828-64) in Calcutta;<sup>5</sup> they had two daughters and one son, all born in India.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As before, much information in this article comes from the biographies of the Melvill family in EJ Joubert de la Ferté's *The Melvill Family, A Roll of Honour of the descendants of Philip Melvill and their immediate connections by marriage in the years of the World War 1914-18* (London, 1920)

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Alumni database entry, <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/Documents/acad/search.html>

<sup>3</sup> Writer's petition at IOR J/1/57 ff 164-74, including baptism certificate

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 22 September 1854

<sup>5</sup> *Allen's India Mail*, September 1846, via FIBIS database <http://search.fibis.org>

<sup>6</sup> Their son, Philip Lawrence Melvill (1850-79) joined HM 97th (Earl of Ulster's) Regiment in 1870 as a lieutenant (*London Gazette*, 2 September 1870), was promoted to captain in 1878 (*Ibid*, 28 July 1878) but died shortly afterwards at the young age of 29.

James Cosmo Melvill (1821-80) ('JCM II'), James and Hester's second son, was born in London on 8 August 1821. He was educated at Totteridge School and joined the EIC office in Leadenhall Street, aged 16, in 1837. His advancement seems to have owed much to his father. William Foster relates the story of a clerk, who kept being promoted quickly and unexpectedly and without particular merit or influence. He discovered that the clerk below him was the son of the Secretary who had devised the stratagem of promoting the clerk immediately above him to create a vacancy his son could fill.<sup>7</sup> While the Melvills are not mentioned by name, it almost certainly relates to them, given JCM I's long tenure as Secretary and JCM II's advancement during that period.

After the transfer of EIC power to the British Crown in 1858, JCM II became Under-Secretary of State for India, a post he held until retirement in 1872. In 1844 he had married Eliza Jane Hardcastle (1822-1904) in Camberwell. After his retirement they went to live in Augusta Road in Folkestone where, judging by the address and the fact that in the 1881 census return they had six servants, they lived in some style. They had four sons and five daughters. Their eldest son, another James Cosmo Melvill (1845-1929), was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1874 he married Bertha Dewhurst (1853-1933) of the cotton trading family; he became a director of Geo & R Dewhurst Ltd, East India and China Merchants of London. He was also an acclaimed amateur botanist and zoologist and a fellow of Linnean and Zoological Societies.<sup>8</sup> In his retirement, when living at Moele Brace Hall in Shrewsbury, he corresponded with family and friends on the origins of the Melvill family; copies of many of his letters are in the British Library.<sup>9</sup>

## B. Philip Melvill II's children

B							
Philip II 1796-1882				m 1826	Eliza SANDYS 1805-1890		
Philip S 1828- 1906	Emily 1830- 1913	Caroline 1832- 1916	Mary A 1833- 1917	Eliza A 1828- 1923	Claudia 1839- 1925	Teignmouth 1842-1879	Also: Eliza M 1829-31 Helen 1836-86 Elizabeth 1844-1935 Georgina 1847-47

Philip II (1796-1882) rose, as we saw in Journal 32, to be the Military Secretary to the East India Company. His eldest son Philip Sandys Melvill (1828-1906, 'Philip III') was educated at Rugby and Haileybury, where he received several prizes for Sanskrit and Persian.<sup>10</sup> He arrived in India in 1846 and entered the Bengal Civil Service as an assistant to Sir Henry

<sup>7</sup> William Foster, *The East India House: its history and associations* (London, 1924), p228.

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge Alumni, *ibid*; Obituary in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 56, No 2, August 1920, p150

<sup>9</sup> British Library, 'Melvill Papers', Mss Eur Photo Eur 071, pp187-98.

<sup>10</sup> IOR J/1/68 ff 50-65 - Writer's petition, including baptism certificate. These papers show that Philip was recommended for the service by his father and his uncle James Cosmo Melvill (JCM I).

Lawrence, the Resident at Lahore as well as Agent to the Governor-General for the North West Frontier. Lawrence governed the area with the help of his officers such as Philip, who were known as 'Henry Lawrence's Young Men'. Philip became commissioner of a division of the Punjab after an exceptionally short service of thirteen and a half years. He was the Financial Commissioner of the Punjab before becoming a Judge of the Chief Court in the Punjab. He established a reputation almost unrivalled for an intimate acquaintance with the peoples and their languages. He was then agent to the Governor-General at Baroda until retirement in 1882.<sup>11</sup>

In 1851 Philip III married Eliza Johnstone (1832-1920) in Jullundur.<sup>12</sup> They had two sons and six daughters, some of whom died in infancy in India. Their eldest daughter, Eliza Jane (1853-1942)<sup>13</sup> married Charles Joubert de la Ferté (1846-1935) a colonel in the India Medical Service in Jullundur.<sup>14</sup> It was Eliza Jane who, under her married name, wrote the book on the Melvill family referred to in footnote 1. The de la Ferté's second son, was Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Bennet Joubert de la Ferté KCB, CMG, DSO (1887-1965), a senior commander in the Royal Air Force during the 1930s and the Second World War.<sup>15</sup>

At least two more of Philip III and Eliza's daughters married in India; Harriot (1854-1937) to William Warburton (1843-1911), another officer in the Indian Medical Service,<sup>16</sup> and Helen (1856-96) to Rowland Bateman (1840-1916), a minister of the church.<sup>17</sup> The couple's eldest son, Philip James Melvill (1858-1935) was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst and returned to India in the Bengal Light Infantry. He married Jessie Ross (1867-1900) in Bushire<sup>18</sup> in what was then Persia and had a long career in the army, including service in the Persian Gulf, until he retired in 1908. During his time in India he had strongly supported the cause of Christian missions with personal support and financial aid and after retirement was involved in the Church Missionary Society in London.

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<sup>11</sup> C.E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography* (London, 1906), p285

<sup>12</sup> IOR N/1/79/125

<sup>13</sup> Baptised 14 June 1853 (born 16 April) at Umballa, IOR N/1/83/90

<sup>14</sup> 'Feb 15th at Julundhur by the Rev TR Wade CMS Charles Henry Joubert esq Bengal Medical Service to Lizzie eldest daughter of PS Melvill esq Civil Service ', *Times of India*, 23 Feb 1875 (FIBIS database)

<sup>15</sup> ODNB entry, Edward Chilton, rev. Christina J. M. Goulter.

<sup>16</sup> 'Feb 15th at Baroda, by the Rev A Polehampton, Chaplain, William Place Warburton esq, HM's Bengal Army Medical Service, to Harriett Emily, daughter of PS Melvill esq, Bengal CS', *Times of India*, 18 Feb 1876 (FIBIS database)

<sup>17</sup> 'Nov 25th at Baroda by the Rev CH Bacham the Rev Rowland Bateman MA CMS Amritsur to Helen Mary daughter of PS Melvill esq CSI', *Times of India*, 27 Nov 1876 (FIBIS database)

<sup>18</sup> 'June 29 at Bushire Persian Gulf Captain Philip James Melvill Bengal Staff Corps son of PS Melvill Esq CSI to Jessie Adele third daughter of Colonel EC Ross CSI Political Resident in the Persian Gulf', *Times of India*, 17 Jul 1889 (FIBIS database)

### C. Henry Melvill's children

C								
Henry I 1798-1871				m 1830	Margaret Alice JENNINGS 1805-78			
Clara	Henry II	Maxwell	Richard	Francis	Margaret	Elizabeth	Isabella	Edith
1831-1900	1832-1908	1833-87	1834-1920	1835-81	1837-96	1839-1920	1842-1920	1845-65

The Rev Henry Melvill (1798-1871, 'Henry I'), principal of Haileybury College, was the third child of Philip and Elizabeth Melvill. His four sons were all involved in India, although one, Richard Gwatkin Melvill, had a rather different experience to the others, becoming somewhat notorious in the process.

Henry (1832-1908, 'Henry II'), the eldest son of Henry I and Margaret joined the Bengal Cavalry in 1849 and retired in 1891 with the rank of Lieutenant-General. He was involved in the mutiny of 1857 and the subsequent fighting. He married Elizabeth Curling (1833-1913) at Peshawar in 1853<sup>19</sup> and they had six children, three of them boys who all became army officers. One, yet another Henry (1856-1901), was a staff officer in the Indian Army.

Maxwell (1833-1887) was the second son of Henry I and Margaret. He was educated at Tonbridge and Trinity College Cambridge before going to Haileybury College in 1853 where he was a prize-winner in classics, mathematics, law, and history and political economy.<sup>20</sup> He had a brilliant career in the Bombay Civil service from 1855 to 1887, serving in the Bombay Revenue and Judicial Departments as Assistant Collector and Magistrate, as Assistant Judge at Konkan from 1858 to 1860 and as Assistant Commissioner in Sind from 1862 to 1866. He was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1866. He then rose through the judiciary, becoming a Judge at the High Court at Bombay in 1869 and then a member of the Council of the Bombay Presidency from 1884 until he died, unmarried, of cholera near Poona, in August 1887.<sup>21</sup> He was described by one historian as the '...most brilliant member of the Bombay Council'.<sup>22</sup>

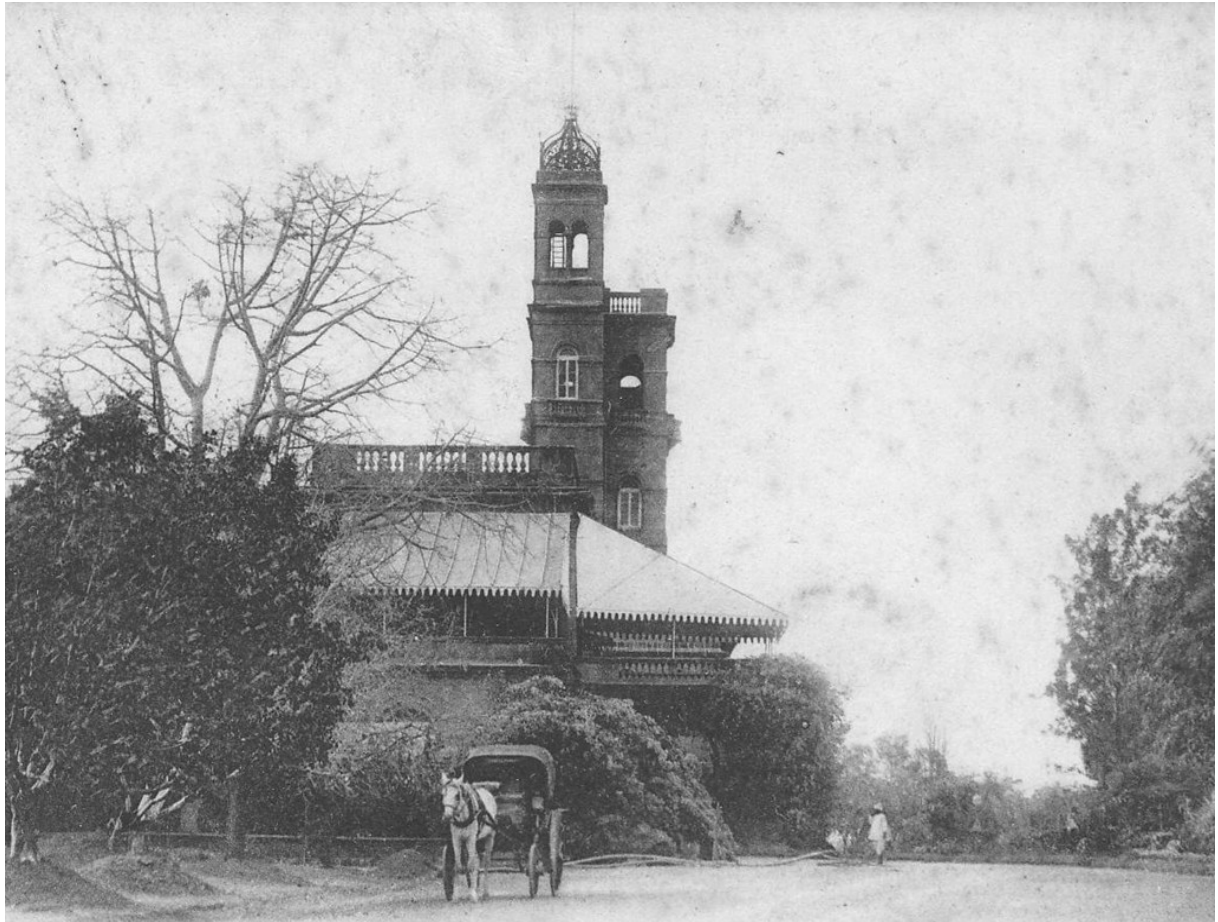
Francis Melvill (1835-1881) was Henry I and Elizabeth's youngest son. He entered the Bombay Civil Service in 1855. He married Minnie Hayes (1842-1878) in 1875 in Dublin. Most of his career was spent in Sind, where he rose to Chief Commissioner.

<sup>19</sup> IOR N/1/84/114, 1 Sept 1853, when Henry was a Lieut in the 7th Bengal Lt Cavalry.

<sup>20</sup> Cambridge Alumni, *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> 'Aug 5th at Ganesh Khind House Poona the Hon'ble Sir Maxwell Melvill KCIE CSI Member of Council Bombay aged 53 years', *Times of India*, 8 Aug 1887 (FIBIS database)

<sup>22</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *Bombay, 1885 to 1890; a Study in Indian Administration* (1892), p64



*'Government House, Ganeshkhind' (detail), the summer residence of the Governor of Bombay and likely the identification of 'Ganesh Khind House', where Maxwell Melvill died. From a postcard owned by Sylvia Murphy, with kind permission.*

### **Richard Gwatkin Melvill (1834-1920)**

Henry I and Margaret's third son Richard also had a career in India but with a very different outcome to those of his brothers. His early life was conventional; he was one of the last graduates of Haileybury College before it closed and was a prize winner in Persian.<sup>23</sup> He joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1855. He married Gertrude van Cortland (1837-1918) in Umballa in 1858<sup>24</sup> and they had six children in India, two of whom died in infancy. He worked at various stations during the next fifteen or sixteen years, excluding a three-year furlough from 1867. When he returned in 1870 he was appointed as Deputy Commissioner in Sirsa which is in the Punjab about 150 miles west-north-west from Delhi and about 80 miles from what is now the Pakistan border. His youngest daughter was born in Sirsa, in Haryana, in 1871.

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<sup>23</sup> Writer's petition, including baptism, at IOR J/1/8 ff 146-155

<sup>24</sup> IOR N/1/94/270

However, by 1873, his wife and children were no longer with him and he had some sort of breakdown. The press reported that he had gone native, changing his name to Shaik Abdool Rahman and was known as 'The Muslim Melvill'.<sup>25</sup> He was described as a 'pervert' who had 'married a Moslem bride. Unfortunately he had a Christian wife to start with'. A letter from a J.M. Machan dated 20 October 1873 confirms the report that on 18 September Richard had made 'a profession of Mohammadism' in the Sirsa town hall before witnesses and married 'according to the rites of the Mohammeden religion' Kureshi Brynon, the daughter of Hydari Brynon, the mistress of the female school in Sirsa.<sup>26</sup> He went on to say that after the marriage Hydari Brynon (aged 30), her sister aged about sixteen (her husband is an absentee) and her brother took up their residence in the Melvill house.

The same letter says that 'the girl is said to be 8 years of age'... and the marriage was... 'designed to cover an intrigue with the mother'. The writer went on to say that Richard invited him to dinner but refused to talk of the marriage saying that he would rather give up the service than his present mode of life and that 'nothing but superior physical force should tear him away from those who were now drawn to him than anything else in this life'. While this kind of behaviour had been quite usual in the early days of the EIC in India, by the middle of the nineteenth century it was not approved of and was regarded as a form of insanity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Melvill Papers (ibid) p177-86 contain newspaper cuttings and letters on the subject of 'the Muslim Melvill'. Unfortunately the cuttings are not dated nor does it say which newspapers they are from. It is not clear as to which Melvill some of the letters are addressed and the signatures on the letters are not clear.

<sup>26</sup> Melvill Papers (ibid), p179-81

<sup>27</sup> See William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: love and betrayal in eighteenth-century India* (New York and London: Viking, 2003) and Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India: the making of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



However, the furore did not last too long. Further press cuttings debated whether he should be prosecuted under British or Islamic law and the consensus was that his Muslim marriage was not recognised under western law, while a second marriage was not illegal for Muslims. So, he was not prosecuted, but was dismissed from the civil service in 1874.<sup>28</sup>

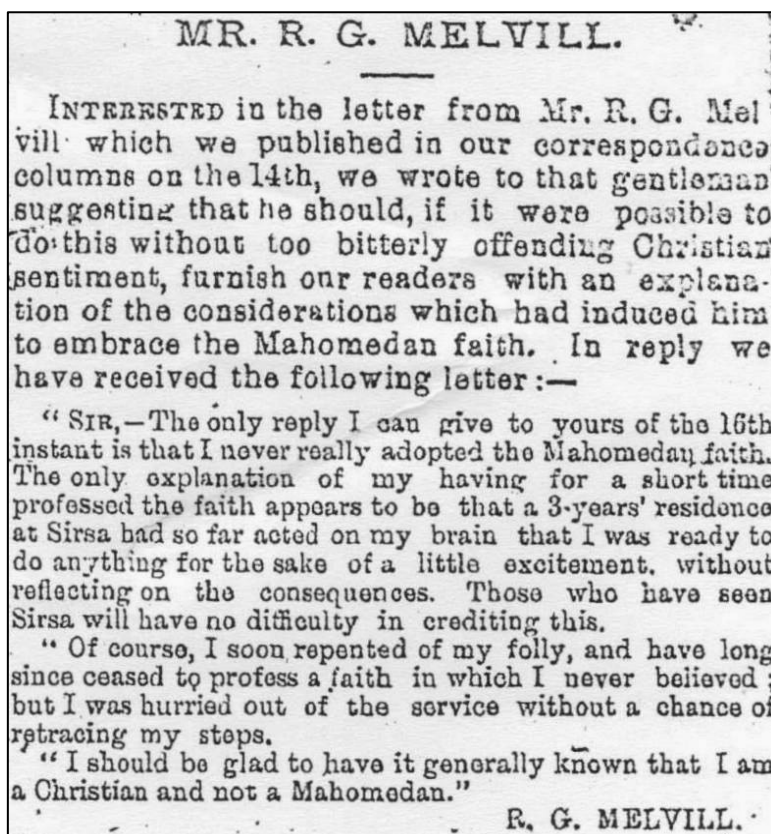
On the 1891 census returns in England, Richard's first wife Gertrude is recorded with three of her children on the Isle of Wight - her status is 'widow'. In 1901 she still describes herself as a widow, but in 1911, which asks for more details about

marriages than the previous return, she is boarding with a family and the head records that she is married, has had six children of who three are still living, but the return does not give her age or the number of years she had been married.

Meanwhile, in India, Richard had seemingly come to his senses and there is a letter to a newspaper in the Melvill Papers (right), unfortunately not dated, in which he apologises for his actions and blames the fact that living in Sirsa is enough to drive anybody mad.<sup>29</sup>

In 1885 Richard married Emily (1869-1942), the daughter of Bishunauth Mathias, in a Christian ceremony in Dehra Dun, to where he had retired.<sup>30</sup> There is no sign in any documentation that he had divorced Gertrude and the marriage documentation refers to him as a widower.

Richard and Emily had two boys born in 1888 and 1895 and seemingly continued to live in Dehra Dun, presumably surviving on his pension from the Bengal Civil Service, until Richard died there in 1920.



<sup>28</sup> Danvers et al, *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (1894) No. 1018 (FIBIS database)

<sup>29</sup> Melvill papers (ibid), p178

<sup>30</sup> IOR N/1/19/78

## **Conclusion**

The Melvill family showed a commitment to the East India Company (and its successor administration) and India from the last years of the eighteenth century well into the twentieth century. They were a good example of those Scots who after the Act of Union took up opportunities with the British Army and in the overseas empire to make their careers. By virtue of their EIC service, this Scottish family became increasingly English by marrying into established English families and settling in England. In the early years of the EIC, few employees were university educated but the increasing bureaucratisation during the nineteenth century is illustrated by the number of Melvill men who went to universities, especially Cambridge, as the century progressed. Those Melvills who did not follow the EIC/India route were usually successful in other spheres, whether in military or civilian life. Many of their daughters married military men or into other, Indian-orientated families.

When the Company was disbanded in 1858 following the Indian Mutiny, of the sons of Philip I there were two (JCM I and Philip II) in very senior positions in the London office, a third (Henry I) was principal of the EIC college at Haileybury and the fourth (Peter) had recently retired as Secretary of the Bombay Presidency. Seven of the men of the next generation were starting out on their careers with the EIC and another joined the army and would be awarded a VC; of the women of this generation, five would marry civilians or army officers based in India.

While never achieving the highest offices of state, several of the Melvills were knighted and most seemed to live comfortable lives both while working and in retirement. The family's wealth and status derived from their association with the EIC in turn enriched diverse aspects of English culture in these and successive generations, including religious life, arts and sciences and architecture. In 1914, the effect of having large families and good survival rates combined with a tendency towards public or military service to result in over 60 of the Philip Melvill I's descendants being directly involved in the First World War, with at least 50 helping as nurses, medical orderlies, in factories or as other volunteers.

Back in 1780, the chivalrous action of the Frenchman Colonel Lally, who was fighting with Hyder Ali at the Battle of Pollilur, in saving the life of a badly wounded twenty year-old lieutenant in the 73rd Highlanders was to have wide-ranging and significant effect on the history of the East India Company and India and greatly assisted the British war effort from 1914.

## **Assistant Apothecary Charles Maitland versus East India Company Justice**

*Charles Maitland*

It seems to be a general truth that once you start researching your family history you should always be prepared for the unexpected. I knew that my grandfather, Percy Edmund Maitland, was born in India in 1862,<sup>1</sup> had studied medicine at Madras Medical College and then completed his training as a doctor at London University. He joined the Royal Navy as a Surgeon and retired as a Surgeon Captain just after the First World War. In 1858, Percy's father Charles William Maitland married Julia Wilson,<sup>2</sup> whose family had links with a Hathaway Estate near Hyderabad.<sup>3</sup> The couple had two sons followed by a daughter who died at 18 months in January 1866. Sadly, Charles William died only a month later, of heart disease, aged just 32, leaving his widow with two sons to bring up on her own.<sup>4</sup> There is a letter of condolence from his brother Masons in Madras,<sup>5</sup> so perhaps the family had help from that quarter with the costs of further education in England. Charles William Maitland had worked for the Public Works Department having joined at the age of 17. He was a Sub Engineer at his death in charge of No. 3 Range Madras District and correspondence to his superiors show that he was highly frustrated as he had been passed over for promotion on numerous occasions and was being paid less than his contemporaries.

My grandfather Percy's Indian origins had been airbrushed by his family and the word 'Anglo-Indian' was never mentioned. However, they were not easy to hide. My father went to the Royal Naval Colleges Osborne and Dartmouth before the First World War and was known as 'monkey' Maitland. I doubt it was just because he was good at climbing ropes, as my mother explained to me in all seriousness.<sup>6</sup> So, I joined FIBIS to help unravel the next part of the puzzle – what were Charles William Maitland's origins?

### **Charles Maitland's family**

Baptismal records show that Charles William's father was another Charles Maitland who, at the time of the baptism in 1833,<sup>7</sup> was a shopkeeper in Bangalore, then a newly

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<sup>1</sup> India Office Records N/2/43/198; baptised 23 July 1862, Vepery, Madras.

<sup>2</sup> IOR N/2/39/186; N/2/C7/3; married 15 Sept 1858, Combaconum (Kumbakonam), Madras.

<sup>3</sup> I have not been able to discover any further information regarding this estate, what it grew or exactly where it was.

<sup>4</sup> IOR N/2/47/33; buried 22 Feb 1866, Combaconum, Madras.

<sup>5</sup> His lodge was the Lodge Universal Charity no. 273. This letter and the correspondence referred to later in the paragraph are from family-held records.

<sup>6</sup> My mother, Alison Kettlewell, was also born in India in 1904 and her great grandfather founded Kettlewell Bullen & Co in Calcutta in the 1840s but that is another story.

<sup>7</sup> IOR N/2/15/107; born 13 Apr 1833, bapt 10 July 1833, Bangalore

established British Cantonment. In 1831, the capital of the Kingdom of Mysore had moved to Bangalore from Mysore. Charles Maitland had married Margaret Miller of Mysore (described in the records as 'Indo Briton') in Bangalore on the 15 May 1832.<sup>8</sup> Following their son Charles William's birth in 1833, the couple had a further three daughters in quick succession but their happiness was short lived as Margaret died on 7 May 1837 (probably in childbirth) and was buried in Seringapatam.<sup>9</sup> Charles died the following year at Mysore, aged just 31.<sup>10</sup> History doesn't relate who brought up their children.

Looking into Charles Maitland's background was the next task. Recently, the British Library made many India Office Records available via [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk) and these included Charles' baptismal records:<sup>11</sup>

Madras 12 June 1811

Charles born March 1806, son of Colonel Maitland in England and Cawery, the mother, a Gentoo woman, baptised by the Rev'd Kottler, Protestant Missionary.

Sponsors: Dr and Mrs Goldie

It was then fairly easy to pinpoint Lt Colonel Alexander Maitland as the father. He had retired from Madras in 1808, aged 46, after service with the East India Company, and returned home to Galloway in south west Scotland to marry his first cousin and build himself a large country house called Chipperkyle, near Dumfries. Alexander had four surviving children from his Scottish marriage and named his youngest daughter, Helen Goldie Maitland, after Dr Goldie who had been one of Charles' baptism sponsors. The Maitlands were an old established family and had been prominent in south west Scotland for many centuries.<sup>12</sup>

### **An Assistant Apothecary in Penang**

What was Charles Maitland doing prior to his marriage in Bangalore? Nothing had prepared me for the events in 1827 and 1828 concerning him that were reported in both the *Asiatic Intelligence* and *Oriental Herald*. The internet is a marvellous tool and these reports popped up onto my screen courtesy of Google Books, where digitised copies are available.

A correspondent writing from Madras on 2 December 1828 and published in the *Oriental Herald and Colonial Review* summarised the case:

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<sup>8</sup> IOR N/2/39/69

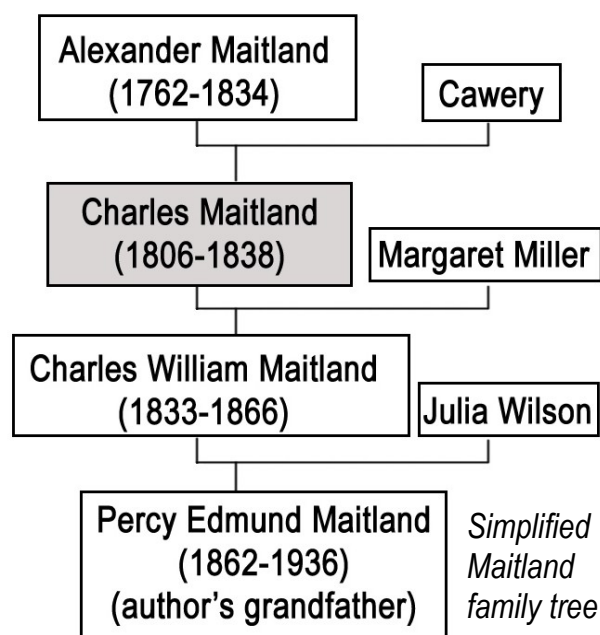
<sup>9</sup> IOR N/2/18/309

<sup>10</sup> *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, Volume 27 New Series (1838), p38

<sup>11</sup> IOR N/2/4/491

<sup>12</sup> Alexander's younger brother, Adam, married an heiress and inherited the Dundrennan Estates and his descendants still live at Cumstoun House near Kirkcudbright. The senior branch of the family are Earls of Lauderdale.

A great deal of sensation and animadversion has been created here since the last five weeks, relative to the conduct of high military and law authorities, towards a man named Charles Maitland, an individual holding a subordinate situation in the medical department. He is, it appears, the natural son, by a native Christian woman, of a Lt Colonel, an Officer, formerly of this establishment, but now in Europe. The man imagined himself a British subject, and military authorities decided he was not, tried him by Court Martial of native officers, and ordered him to be flogged. The whole particulars will be forwarded you for publication.



The story began in Penang in 1827. The Straits Settlements (Malacca, Dinding, Penang and Singapore) had been established the previous year, and were under the control of the East India Company. Charles Maitland, a young man of just 21, had been posted to Penang to serve as an assistant apothecary in the hospital. The *Asiatic Journal* reports the early part of the case:

A question of some interest occurred in the Recorder's Court of Judicature.

An application was made on 12th November 1827 on behalf of Charles Maitland, an assistant apothecary of the Madras Establishment attached to the general hospital of this presidency for a writ of habeas corpus<sup>13</sup> to bring up to that court the said Charles Maitland, then under arrest by order of the commandant of the garrison, and about to be tried by court martial, although it was alleged, he was not amenable to military law...

Col. Snow, the commandant...had placed Maitland in military confinement on the complaint of Surgeon Conwell, and had directed a native line court-martial to try him on charges of disobedience of orders, insolence, and disrespect to Surgeon Bell of H.M ship *Hind*, a patient in the hospital, the prisoner being amenable to military law.<sup>14</sup>

So, after an incident with a patient at the hospital, Maitland was to be tried by native military court. Prior to this, he had 'done all in his power to be discharged' from the Company's service, which he disputed ever having joined, and so he believed he should not be liable to military arrest. The unfortunate young man tried every argument to avoid being court-martialed, including that 'being a Protestant Christian he did not conceive himself liable to those laws which peculiarly attach to native soldiers' and that the

<sup>13</sup> A court order that forces an authority to bring a prisoner before a court or release them. The intention is to prevent that prisoner being held indefinitely without trial.

<sup>14</sup> *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Its Dependencies*, Volume 27, (1829), p228-30

commissioned officers who were to hear the court martial were 'native officers who were sworn on the Koran'.

### Politics in Penang

The authorities then seemed to be in a quandary as to what action to take next. They appeared to be waiting for communication on the case from the Commander-in-chief in Madras which had been delayed by the loss of the ship *Security*.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the cause of the delay, the next we hear of the case are further hearings in August 1828, nearly nine months after the original incident. The *Asiatic Journal* reported a hearing on 4 August as follows:

This day there was a special meeting of all the judges of the Court to hear the demurrer<sup>16</sup> by the Company's law agent to the petition filed by Charles Maitland against the Hon. East India Company for an assault on and false imprisonment of Maitland by some of the Company's servants. When after a most patient hearing of a very long address from Mr Trebeck on behalf of the petitioner, the Court did not think that the petition could be supported in law and therefore dismissed it, allowing the demurrer to stand, with costs.<sup>17</sup>

Mr Trebeck also spoke of the 'unwarrantable length of confinement under great severity' which Maitland had endured. Despite this, the court had found for the Company.

By this time the case was attracting international interest as the next report was copied to the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*.<sup>18</sup> It reports a hearing in the Court of Judicature, Prince of Wales Island (Penang) in the matter of Charles Maitland, heard by the President (Governor Fullerton), Recorder (Sir John Claridge), and the Penang Resident Councillor (Robert Ibbetson). Robert Fullerton was a life-long servant of the Company and had been Governor of Prince of Wales Island and then the Straits Settlements since 1824. Claridge had been appointed Recorder for Prince of Wales Island, the senior judge, by His Majesty's Government and had arrived in the Straits in mid 1827. Tensions had quickly arisen between the Recorder and the Straits executive and by the summer of 1828 they were reaching a crisis point. Maitland's case was heard on 13 August 1828.

According to Maitland's affidavit (reprinted in the *Sydney Gazette*) he was now in a state of 'unlawful imprisonment' under guard in the sepoy lines of the cantonment despite being 'entitled...to be one of His Majesty's free subjects'. He stated he was about to be moved away, beyond the jurisdiction of the Penang Court and

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<sup>15</sup> The *Security* was wrecked at Madras, en route to Penang.

<sup>16</sup> A demurrer is a formal statement objecting, usually on a point of law, to the complaint filed by the opposing party.

<sup>17</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, op cit. p508

<sup>18</sup> 'India Extracts: Law Proceedings', *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 7 May 1829, p2. (Trove Digitised Newspapers, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2192383>)

...imprisoned under pretext of some sentence alleged to have been passed against [him], the nature and particulars of which have never been duly made known to [him].

Apparently, on about 19 April, Colonel Snow had received orders concerning the removal of the prisoner to Madras and the ship *Hastings* was soon expected in Penang. Mr Trebeck once again appeared for the Maitland requesting 'that he might be prevented from being put on board a ship to any place beyond the jurisdiction of the Court.' Governor Fullerton gave his opinion that

..no motion can be entertained or admitted for the release or discharge of [Maitland] from military custody. He is under sentence of a Court Martial and ordered by competent authority to be sent to Madras. It is impossible for this court in my opinion legally to interpose.

However, Charles Maitland was not without his supporters. Although he was outvoted, the Recorder Sir John Claridge disagreed with the Governor, noting that he thought a writ of habeas corpus should issue, but that before the case commenced the Governor had stated one could not, rendering Claridge's own opinion useless. The *Penang Register*, whose report appeared in the *Sydney Gazette*, agreed with Recorder Claridge, stating that

there does not appear any proof of Maitland's having been enlisted, but the contrary has been constantly urged and supported by affidavit... [Further,] there is no reason why the Court cannot legally interpose when an individual who swears that he is not amenable to Martial Law appeals to the law of the land, to afford him the opportunity of proving his assertions.

The difficulties of Fullerton and Claridge's relationship are noted in relation to the Charles Maitland case in an academic treatise by Ong Wei Zhong entitled 'The Straits Settlements Sans Court: Law, Company Rule and Colonial Society 1830 -2':

The problem of the Executive overruling the Recorder occurred in the case of habeas corpus concerning the detention of a Charles Maitland by the military in Penang. On August 13<sup>th</sup> 1828, Claridge reviewed the case and ordered Maitland's release after judging his detention to be illegal. Governor Robert Fullerton rejected Claridge's ruling and proceeded to collude with the Penang Resident Councillor, Robert Ibbetson, to rule against Claridge's order during that particular court session. In the face of executive opposition, Claridge allowed the ruling to pass but later proceeded to sit as a sole judge in a separate court session where he repealed the previous ruling using his individual authority.

Apparently, Fullerton never forgot the challenge Claridge made to his authority and the case was levelled as a charge against him when he was impeached the following year.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> By the end of September 1828, the Company were requesting Claridge's removal. The following year, Claridge was recalled to London.

## Maitland is moved to Madras

The story then moves onto Madras in October 1828. Whether or not he was released by Recorder Claridge in Penang, Charles Maitland was still in military custody and, as he had suspected, had been taken to Madras. The *Asiatic Journal* notes that the *Madras Courier* reported a case in the Supreme Court ‘which produced a very crowded attendance’, of a ‘writ for habeas corpus which had issued, directed at Colonel Pearse’ for Maitland, who was ‘about to be tried by a court-martial.’<sup>20</sup> It was a rerun of the Penang hearing, with the same outcome: ‘the prisoner was remanded to the custody of the military guard which had escorted him to the court-house.’

The following day an application was made to the same learned judge for a writ of prohibition against the carrying out of the sentence of the court martial...which was refused. It was decided that Maitland was not in the jurisdiction of the court but in the military service of the Company and subject to martial law. Despite all his best endeavours or perhaps because of them, Charles Maitland was to be tried by court-martial.

The FIBIS database contains details of one court-martial for Charles Maitland, under ‘General Orders of the Commander-in Chief’, as follows:<sup>21</sup>

Surname:	Maitland	Alleged Crime Date:	9 <sup>th</sup> October 1828 [sic]
First name:	Charles	Finding:	Guilty
Rank:	Assistant Apothecary	Sentence:	500 lashes
Regiment:	Madras Medical Establishment	Outcome:	200 lashes
Charge:	Disobeying Orders (3)	Trial date:	25 <sup>th</sup> October 1828
Place:	Madras		

You would think that after a year’s imprisonment and numerous court appearances, that this would be the end of the story. However, the *Asiatic Journal* goes on to report a further twist:

Some ulterior proceedings in the case of this individual. Maitland, it appears, was arrested for debt by a *capias*,<sup>22</sup>... The consequence of this was that he was taken out of military custody. On 7 November, the Advocate-general moved Mr Justice Comyn, in chambers, to discharge Maitland on the ground that the arrest had been collusive [and therefore false]. ...Major Hitchins, deputy adjutant-general, [supporting the application, stated] that Maitland was in the military service of the Company and subject to martial law and that he believed the affidavit to have been obtained collusively to deprive the Company of his services...The learned judge granted the order; Maitland was forthwith discharged [from civil custody] and was tried by court-martial for desertion.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, op cit., vol 27, May 1829, p625-6

<sup>21</sup> Data transcribed from IOR L/MIL/17/3/415 p.8224

<sup>22</sup> A writ demanding an officer take a defendant into custody.

<sup>23</sup> *Asiatic Journal*, vol 27, p625-6



Whatever the truth of these claims from either side, Maitland had again been ruled subject to military justice. Presumably, at this point he endured his reduced sentence of 200 lashes. There were further court appearances on minor legal points, but the last we hear of the Maitland in these accounts is that he 'had been marched up the country', presumably still in custody.

## Conclusion

One has to remind oneself that the original cause of complaint took place well over a year before in Penang and had been due to a young man's alleged insolence to a ship's surgeon. It was certainly in Governor Fullerton's power to grant him a pardon at some point, particularly after a lengthy imprisonment under harsh conditions. No doubt the 21 year old was really being punished for daring to stand up to the authorities in a much more brutal age when, to paraphrase the *Oriental Herald*, he made the mistake of imagining himself to be a British subject, while the authorities decided he was not.

It was probably more a matter of skin colour than illegitimacy. Maitland likely would not have known that his Scottish family were very much part of the British establishment; two of his first cousins were at the time prominent Edinburgh lawyers who would become Solicitors General in the Scottish Government and as law lords would take the titles of Lord Dundrennan and Lord Barcaple after his Uncle's and Grandfather's estates. Apart from his father, Colonel Alexander Maitland, did the Scottish family even know of his existence? Perhaps they did, as another first cousin, John Maitland, was a cadet in the Madras Army in 1828.<sup>24</sup> It would be interesting to know who funded Charles Maitland's numerous court appearances.

Charles had another ten years to live before his death in 1838, in which he managed to escape the military, start a business in Bangalore, get married and have four children. Hopefully he managed to put the traumatic events of Penang behind him. He would have been gratified that his grandson, my grandfather, became a Doctor and served with great distinction in the Royal Navy, while his two great grandsons, having served with the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War, were founder members of the Royal Air Force.

My father, (Percy) Eric Maitland, by a strange coincidence, during the record-breaking RAF Far East Flight<sup>25</sup> landed in Penang in February 1928, totally unaware of his great grandfather's difficulties there exactly 100 years before. He was Officer Commanding 205 Squadron in Singapore, also part of the Straits Settlements, in 1937 and, after a distinguished career, he retired in 1950 as an Air Vice Marshal (CB CBE MVO AFC), whilst his brother, another Charles Maitland, achieved the rank of Group Captain.

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<sup>24</sup> He also died early at the age of 26 in 1835.

<sup>25</sup> See Wikipedia: RAF Far East Flight

## **The East India Company: some snapshots of its history (Part 1)**

David Blake

*This is an extended version of a talk given at the FIBIS AGM on 1 November 2014.*

### **The First Hundred Years**

Cardinal Borgia is notorious for his womanizing, but as Pope Alexander VI he should also be remembered for two papal bulls issued in 1493 dividing the world, or at any rate the as yet unexplored parts of it, between Spain and Portugal. The dividing line ran north south down the middle of the Atlantic – new lands to the west were to be Spain's, those to the East to be Portugal's. This reminds us that over a century before the English East India Company was founded, the Portuguese had ambitions to open up the East Indies to European trade, and Vasco da Gama had reached India in 1498. In the reign of Elizabeth, the English may have been good traders but they were also keen pirates especially when plundering Spanish galleons. Portugal had the misfortune to be under Spanish rule from 1580, and it was the capture of a Portuguese merchantman in 1592 that at last woke up the English to the possibilities of the East Indies trade – its cargo was stuffed with oriental luxuries, jewels, silks, porcelain and above all spices. To begin with, English activities along the trade routes to the East continued to be piratical as much as commercial, but eventually a group of merchants decided to put the trade onto a more sensible, if monopolistic, commercial footing and on the last day of the year 1600 they secured a charter from the Queen granting to the 'Company of Merchants of London trading into East Indies' a monopoly of trade in any lands between the Cape of Good Hope to the straits of Magellan.

The Company's first Governor<sup>1</sup> was Sir Thomas Smythe, and for some years its headquarters were simply a few rooms in his house in Philpot Lane. Its first fleet comprised four ships plus a small store ship and was commanded by James Lancaster. He had previous experience of the eastern seas as he had been one of those engaged in piracy against Portuguese ships and indeed he engaged in a bit more on the side during this voyage. He left Woolwich in February 1601, suffered various delays *en route* to the East, plundered a Portuguese vessel when he got there, did some legitimate trading (chiefly at Bantam in Indonesia) and finally returned home in September 1603 with all four ships. The voyage made a handsome profit and he was knighted.

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<sup>1</sup> For its first hundred years the Company's boss was called the Governor rather than Chairman, and its Directors were called 'Committees', i.e. persons to whom its business was committed.

One thing Lancaster did not do was visit India, and the main destination of the next eleven voyages between 1604 and 1613 was still Bantam which was then a great *entrepot* for the Asian trade. It was not until 1608 that the Company ships started touching at Surat (some way north of modern Mumbai) and not until 1615 that the Company was able to establish a permanent factory.<sup>2</sup> It also obtained a Firman (a decree) from the Mogul Emperor Jahangir granting it, not a monopoly, but at any rate trading privileges in India. These events followed a naval victory against the Portuguese off Surat which showed the Emperor that if he needed naval assistance against pirates in the Arabian Sea the English would be more useful allies than the Portuguese. The Surat factory remained the Company's headquarters in India until 1687.



'Sir James Lancaster, 1554/5-1618', artist unknown, English School, 1596.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (under CC BY-NC-SA license), BHC2828.

The Company concentrated initially on Bantam and other ports in the spice islands for the obvious reason that its focus was on the immensely profitable spice trade. But its operations never became as extensive in East Asia - the East Indies - as it had hoped. Why not? Simply because the Dutch had got there first. While Lancaster and his like had spent the 1590s plundering Portuguese vessels, the Dutch, though they had not set up a Company, had methodically set about ejecting the Portuguese from the spice islands, setting up a trading network, and signing treaties with local rulers by which they were able to exclude European rivals. So really by default the English Company began to focus more on India where spices were also available though not of such good quality. The Dutch were there too, but they could not shut out the English from a sub-continent. As Percival Spear puts it: 'the Dutch dog in the East Indian manger turned the English horse to Indian pastures'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A factory, of course, did not have its modern meaning, but connoted a place where factors – agents of merchant companies – could live, trade with the locals, and warehouse their goods.

<sup>3</sup> Spear, p166.

Apart from getting a head start the Dutch could also outbid the English in negotiations with local rulers. They deployed far greater resources, both in ships and in capital, than the English. The English Company's start-up capital was £68,373 (about £8 million in today's money) raised from 218 subscribers. In 1602 the Dutch, perhaps as a rejoinder to the English, set up their own East India Company: the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC for short. Its start-up capital according to Antony Wild was around £540,000, getting on for £60 million and nearly 8 times greater than the English Company's. We should also compare Lancaster's four ships with upwards of 60 Dutch vessels that had already sailed to the East Indies between 1595 and 1602. Rivalry with the Dutch continued to be a *leitmotif* of the Company's history well into the third quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and was a major contributory cause of the three Anglo-Dutch wars between 1652 and 1674. In 1657 Oliver Cromwell granted the Company a charter confirming its monopoly with a capital of £739,782 - about £81 million in today's money, far greater than its initial £7 million but not all that much more than the Dutch had boasted in 1602. The Dutch Company's *commercial* operations were probably always greater than the English Company's at least until the last years of the eighteenth century when the Dutch Company went bankrupt.

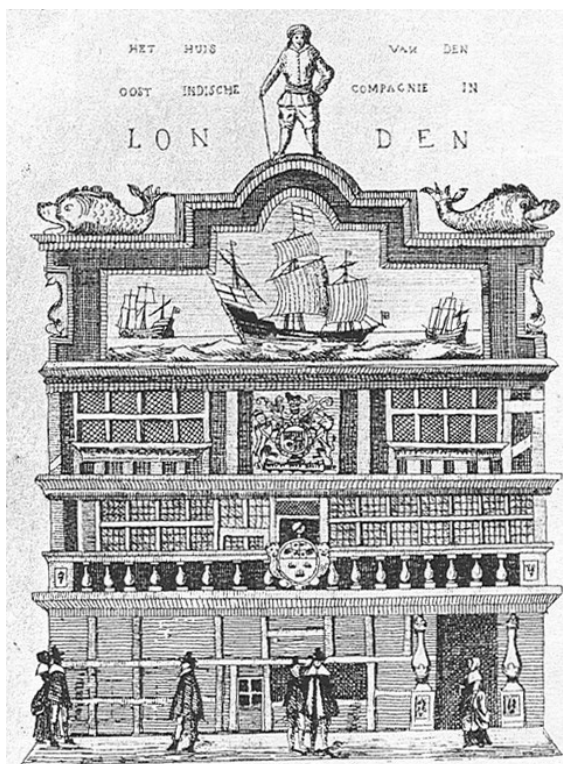
Cromwell's charter ushered in a very prosperous period for the Company. Charles II confirmed the charter, and better still in 1668 he transferred Bombay (which he had received as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza his Portuguese wife) to the Company in return for a nominal annual rent of £10; the India Office Records still hold the Exchequer tally sticks acknowledging receipt of the first payments.<sup>4</sup> Bombay had an excellent harbour and by 1687 it had grown sufficiently to take over from Surat as the Company's Headquarters or 'Presidency' on the west coast of India. On the east coast the Company had had small settlements since 1611. Madras, or Fort St George, was founded in 1640, and despite its non-existent harbour was raised to the status of a Presidency in 1684. In Bengal, the Company's factors had been stationed on and off at various places since 1632. In 1686 they were thrown out of Hooghly (near Calcutta) by the Moguls and it was not until 1690 that, led by Job Charnock, they settled permanently at Calcutta, and not until 1700 that Calcutta achieved the status of a Presidency as the Presidency of Fort William.

By the end of the seventeenth century the East India Company was clearly a success. It had its ups and downs but it had traded profitably for a century, and had well-established footholds in India. But it was unpopular in some quarters partly because of its need to export bullion and more importantly because its monopoly of English trade with India was resented by would-be competitors, and throughout the century it had to beat off attempts by 'interlopers' to break into the India trade. In the 1690s it was particularly vulnerable because, under its domineering Governor Sir Josiah Child, it had just engaged in, and lost, a foolish war with the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb. In 1690 it had to

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<sup>4</sup> British Library Mss Eur G136, 'Exchequer tallies issued to the East India Company'

sue for peace, to obtain which its envoys had to prostrate themselves before the Emperor. It also had to pay a large indemnity in return for which the Emperor restored its trading privileges, allowed it back into Bombay which it had lost after a year long siege, and to set up its new factory at Calcutta.



*East India House, 1646-1726  
Depicted in 1690*

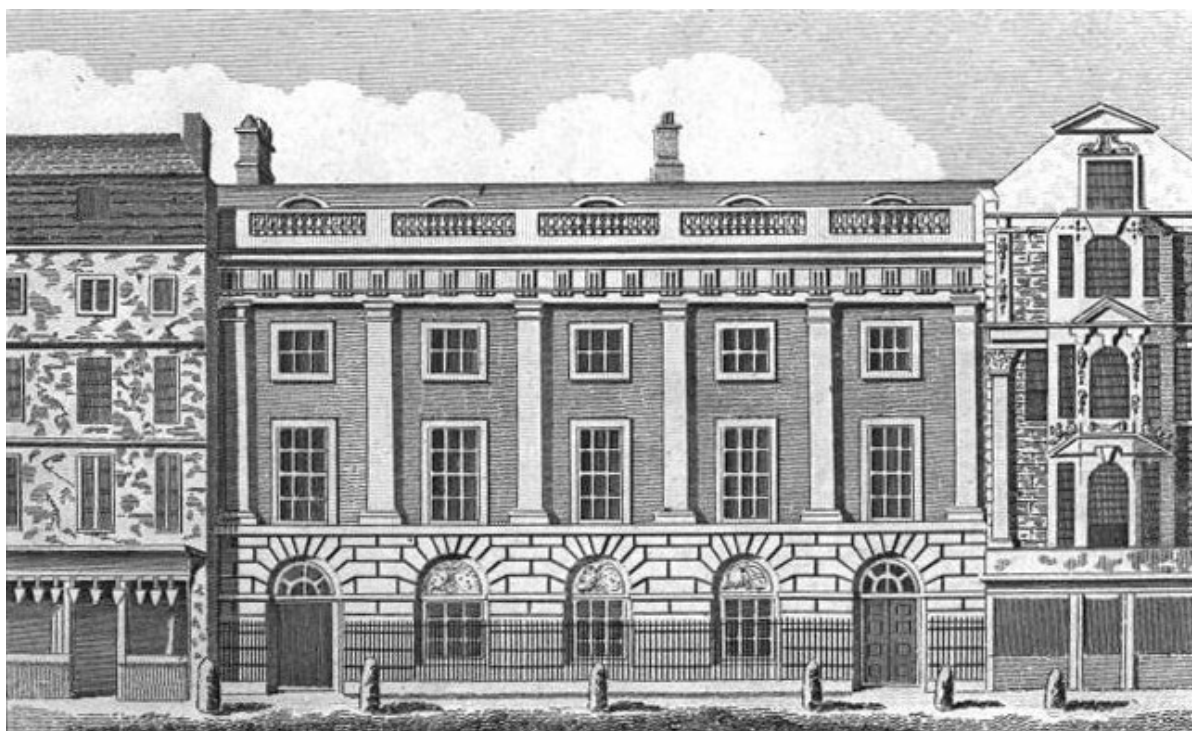
Against this background of arrogance at home, and humiliation and incompetence in India, the Company was in a weakened position to face the most serious threat yet to its monopoly. In 1691 its enemies formed an Association and allied themselves with the Whig party in Parliament. Child managed to get the Old Company's charter renewed in 1693 by a Tory-inclined administration but only through large scale bribery which backfired when it was uncovered by a parliamentary enquiry. Then in 1698 the Association provided the Exchequer with a massive loan of £2 million in return for which they were granted the exclusive trade to India except that the Old Company could continue to trade until its rights expired. There now followed a rancorous struggle between the Old and New East India Companies. At home this merged with the

party struggle between Whigs and Tories, in India it meant that the servants of the two companies were in bitter rivalry with each other, attempting to carry on their parallel trades to the detriment of both. Eventually, in 1708, an agreement was brokered by the Earl of Godolphin, Queen Anne's Lord Treasurer. Essentially, this involved a merger between the two Companies which henceforward would be known as the 'United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies'.

### **The Eighteenth Century: prosperity and problems**

The more modern terminology of the New Company was adopted for the management of the United Company, so the Governor and Committees (see note 1) became the Chairman and Directors. However, they made their home in the Old Company's building which it had rented from the Earl of Craven since 1648. In 1710 the United Company purchased the house and some neighbouring properties enabling it to pull them down and build a new and enlarged East India House in a modern restrained classical style completed in 1729 and very different from the previous rather ramshackle Tudor/Jacobean structure. The United Company also adopted a new coat of arms with a motto which, like its new building, reflected the rational ethos of the eighteenth century rather than the religious fervour of the seventeenth. The old Company had put its faith in

divine protection: its mottoes on its coat of arms were *Deus Indicat* – ‘God points the way’ (*indicat* perhaps intended as a pun for the Indies) and *Deo Ducente Nil nocet* – ‘With God leading no harm will come’. The United Company by contrast preferred to rely on the State: *Auspicio Regis et Senatus Angliae*: ‘Under the Auspices of the King and Senate of England’.<sup>5</sup> Ironically these secular auspices were to prove a mixed blessing. Initially however the omens were good and the Company was now to enjoy thirty years of prosperity and relative tranquillity both in India and at home. The growth in its trade may not have been spectacular but it was steady, and steady enough for its stocks and bonds to be considered a very sound investment. It was a useful source of loans to the Government which by 1740 had tapped it for £4 million (about £440,000,000 nowadays). It was, in short, a financial pillar of the State, up there with the Bank of England.



*East India House, 1729-1799*

We saw earlier that the Company had largely been excluded from the East Indies spice trade by the Dutch and therefore had little alternative but to concentrate on India. This had important and in fact beneficial consequences for its trade. Although spices were available in India they were not as plentiful, nor of such good quality, as supplies from the spice islands. The Company therefore was forced to look for a wider range of goods to take home: indigo, calicoes, cotton piece goods, saltpetre, sugar and yarn. These commodities, especially textiles, were less valuable than spices but luckily turned out to have a much more rapidly expanding market both in England and in Europe. However a

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<sup>5</sup> A representation of these Arms dominates the Asian and African Studies Reading Room at the British Library. It once hung above the entrance to East India House.

problem that dogged the Company throughout its history was how to finance the purchase of Indian imports, the 'investment' as it was called? Britain's main export commodity was still cloth – not easy to sell in India's climate. One solution was to export silver bullion which indeed the Company did to some extent, but this was contrary to prevailing mercantilist economic theories and therefore aroused opposition both from public opinion and in Parliament.<sup>6</sup>

There was however another source of finance for the investment and this was profits made by the Company's own servants in India on their own private account by participating in intra-Asian trade, the 'country trade' as it was called, which they did with gusto, often acting in conjunction with free merchants, ships' captains, foreign merchants both European and Asian, and even rival European Companies (the Dutch, Danish, French and Ostend Companies). And for once, the English had an advantage over the Dutch, because the English Company, unlike its Dutch rival, had always given its servants considerable latitude to engage in the 'country trade'. In doing so, it was acting out of weakness rather than strength because, whereas the Dutch Company at least at first had the capital resources to engage in the country trade itself, the English Company did not and therefore had little option but to leave it to its servants. Furthermore their profits from the country trade could make up for the fact that the Company could not, or did not, pay them a decent salary. In fact the English servants came to enjoy a dominant position in the country trade. The Dutch servants, by contrast, banned from overtly participating in the country trade, could only do so by smuggling, in which they were aided by English country traders who thus found yet another source of profit. The country trade was a burgeoning growth area, not least because of the export of opium to China. By the 1790s there were 575 country ships based in Calcutta alone, and some of them were large: over 1000 tons, nearly equalling the largest Indiamen.

The private traders out in the East Indies were therefore doing very well but they had a problem: how were they to remit their profits back home to England where they hoped to enjoy a comfortable retirement? The answer was to lend their money to the Company in India which enabled it to purchase oriental goods in India and China without the need to export bullion. A win-win for both parties you might think. Not quite, because the Company still had to repay its servants for their loans and they wanted repayment by bills of exchange in London. Initially, this posed no difficulty, but by mid-century the Company's underlying commercial position was weakening for various reasons including competition from private traders. Profits from its London sales barely covered its various obligations not least its debts to its own servants, which thus became a contributory cause of its growing insolvency in the mid-eighteenth century. Matters came to a head in 1771/72 when the Company was faced with bills of exchange totalling over £1½

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<sup>6</sup> The belief that the Company's commercial operations damaged England's balance of payments may have been unfair because its re-exports to Europe probably more than covered its export of bullion to India.

million (about £165 million today) which it could not meet without a loan from the Government: a bailout in other words. And from time to time thereafter it had to seek further financial support. From being a Government creditor in the first half of the century, in the second half it became a debtor.

In 1765 the perennial problem of financing the investment seemed to have been solved when Robert Clive acquired for the Company the *Diwani* – the right to collect the revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It was assumed that this new source of income would provide all the money needed to purchase Indian goods, but such optimism soon proved illusory. For a year or two the scheme worked. But only for a year or two, for the Company soon found that the cost of administering Bengal and above all the cost of its wars absorbed pretty much the whole of its Bengal revenue. As early as 1768 the Directors were becoming uneasily aware of this disappointing fact and in a despatch of 16 March to the Bengal Council they worried that they had 'only exchanged a certain profit in Commerce for a precarious one in Revenue.' As Huw Bowen comments 'the Company's transition from trader to sovereign had been uncomfortable and, in many respects, unsuccessful.'<sup>7</sup>

Another important feature of the Company's 18th century operations was its trade with China which grew steadily in the first half of the century and exponentially in the second half, and in this too the private traders played a crucial role. The steadily growing taste for tea in England and Europe offered the Company a major sales opportunity, and for once it could offer an Asian market something which it really wanted: opium. The Indian opium crop was a Company monopoly but it did not itself take the risk of openly defying the Chinese ban on its import. Instead it was sold to the private traders. They imported (or smuggled) it into China and then lent the profits from its sale to the Company's supercargoes (agents) at Canton who used the loans to buy the tea to be carried home in the Company's ships. Again the private traders were repaid by bills of exchange payable in London but now, thanks to healthy profits from sales of tea, honouring these bills was less of a problem. Opium, tea, and private trade were something of a devil's brew but they were crucial in keeping the Company afloat as a trading concern until 1833. By the end of the century, the Company's trade with China was far larger and far more valuable than its trade with India. Indeed, in some years it made an actual loss on its Indian trade. This decline was partly due to the rise of mass produced British textiles with which the hand-made Indian cottons could not compete. So the partial loss of its monopoly on trade with India in 1793, and its complete loss in 1813, were of only minor importance.

*Part II of this article, in FIBIS Journal 34, shall look at snapshots of the Company in the 19th century, to its demise in 1858.*

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<sup>7</sup> Bowen, 1991, p118, where the despatch of 16 March 1768 is also quoted.



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### **Lt-Col David Richardson**

Readers may be interested in the following article by Tim Willasey-Wilsey:

'Of Intelligence, an Assassination, East Indiamen and the Great Hurricane of 1808'

which can be read at <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/empire/india/37.html>

Tim is the author of 'In search of Gopal Drooge and the murder of Captain William Richardson' published in *FIBIS Journal* 31 and is Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, London.

The article concerns the life and tragic death at sea of William Richardson's brother, Lt-Col David Richardson of the Bengal Army, his wife Violet Oliver and their children. Richardson was friends with the scholar and travel writer Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, set up the cadet college at Barasat and also served as military secretary to Acting Governor-General George Barlow.

## Reviews

***The Nicholas Brothers & A. T. W. Penn: Photographers of South India 1855-1885* by Christopher Penn, Quaritch 2014 hardback £45 ISBN 978-0-9563012-6-0 £45.**

In Spring 2009 *FIBIS Journal* (No 21 p48) I reviewed Christopher Penn's book about his photographer ancestor A.T.W Penn, *In Pursuit of the Past*, and remarked in an otherwise enthusiastic review that his illustrations were of high quality but frankly too small to get much out of. The present book is a triumphant corrective. There are 115 smaller pictures in the text, but in addition 116 plates are reproduced for the most part each on a large (27cm x 24.5cm) page, with admirable detail and clarity: landscapes, genre scenes, temples and other monuments, ethnographical scenes (mostly the Toda people of the Nilgiris), cloudscapes, social gatherings, portraits, etc., all with marvellous response to the strong light of South India and subtle use of shade and shadow. Many landscapes have figures introduced to one side of the foreground to "draw the viewer into the picture" (p56) – often, I suspect, Penn's servants who carried his photographic equipment.

The text describes A.T.W. Penn's career with one or two updates on the earlier book, such as on p47 the astonishing trial of Penn's children's Ayah accused wrongfully of poisoning one of Penn's children.

So who are the Nicholas brothers? When Penn arrived in Madras in 1865, he joined a photographic studio run by John and James Perratt Nicholas. He soon ran the Ootacamund studio on his own but still in partnership with the Nicholases. For much of this period it is not clear whether pictures were taken by Penn or the Nicholases. After the dissolution of the partnership Penn annotated many of his photographs with *oeuvre* numbers, which tells us which ones he claimed, but 50 of the plates are still ascribed to the Nicholas Brothers. It is likely that many are by Penn – especially views of Ooty.

Christopher Penn has plenty of memorabilia about Penn which fill out the portrait. By contrast the Nicholas Brothers remain shadowy, and perhaps more might have been done to trace their tale. For example from 1868-73 they had a partner called Curths. In 1873 we are told the partnership had been under strain, but no authority is given for this. In fact Curths died within the year of "Disorder of the Heart". Might not his departure have been due to ill health?

The book has a brief introduction on British India, Ooty in particular, and the relevant developments in photography, with a glossary of photographic terms. The notes to the text are unfortunately placed after the text and illustrations – turning the large pages back and forth is a bit tiresome. The notes identify sources but also contain gems: on p207 note 23 we find "...Mr Webster, whose horse seemed to be undecided as to whether his head belonged to himself or his neighbour..." You need to see the picture (7.7, p78) to get the point!

*Richard Morgan*

***The Brewing Storm – 1939-1941* (pp208, paperback, 2013) ISBN 978-0-9918324-2-2 and *Burma Invaded – 1942* (pp330, paperback, 2013) ISBN 978-1492979586, both by Major C.M. Enriquez, published By Margaret P. Stanford**

These two books are transcriptions of the diary religiously kept from 1939 to 1942 by Major Enriquez, throughout the impending and the actual invasion of Burma by the Japanese. The diary commences in 1939, at the start of the Second World War, in a remote outpost in Upper Burma to which the widowed author had retired with his daughter Alice. The author gives an excellent commentary on the progress of the war in Europe and then, from December 1941 in the Far East from the perspective of this remote and as yet uninvolved part of the British Empire.

Enriquez had considerable experience in Japanese culture, having previously spent a year in Japan. He had studied the language to the extent that he could offer his services to the Burmese authorities as a translator when an attack on Burma eventually seemed likely. However, frustrated by the reaction of the authorities, he decided to work with the Military Police instead. He never doubted his conviction that Britain and her allies would eventually win the war, despite his sincere criticisms of the inefficiency and inactivity of the British command. He particularly deprecates the way in which the French 'gave away' their possessions in Indo-China to the Japanese, thereby freeing many of their troops to invade Siam, and eventually Burma, significantly earlier than they had planned.

The second book deals with the Japanese invasion of Burma. It makes frustrating reading but is most difficult to put down. Despite initially having fewer troops than the incumbent British, the Japanese army successfully infiltrated Burma using far better techniques and planning than the British, who should have been better organized and prepared. The local population were neutral towards the British at best and at worst even supported the invaders. It is a sad reflection on the situation to read of the chaos and disorganization of the British administration that resulted in one major city after another falling into Japanese hands whilst no serious attempt was made to resist– even when three divisions of the Chinese Army came across the border to assist them.

Finally, the second book ends with two descriptions of the infamous trek out of Burma to the borders with India. I have often heard of this before and wished to know more of it. The book provides similar but separate accounts of the sufferings of the trek by the author, together with his son, and his daughter who separately made it via a series of jungle tracks through the Chin Hills and Naga villages, eventually to the Indian border. Sadly, however, their reception in India left something to be desired. How the elderly Enriquez survived is a great tribute to his tenacity. His daughter, Alice, similarly succeeded in making it through to India despite her being three months pregnant. Ultimately she gave birth to a healthy baby girl.

These books provide an excellent first-hand account of life firstly in expectation of and later in the realization of the loss of Burma in 1942. I can thoroughly recommend them.

*Peter Bailey*