

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

**Number 37**

**Spring 2017**

**Contents**

Editorial	2
Hooghly to Himalaya – A Short Story - <i>Kenneth Miln</i>	3
An Honourable Upright Man: Ralph Henry Sneyd (1784-1840) - <i>Keith Haines</i>	9
The Life of Joseph Knowles - <i>Aubrey Knowles</i>	24
John Brierly in India - <i>Elizabeth Wilde</i>	26
Lieutenant (Assistant Surgeon) R. L. W. Beveridge - <i>Allan Stanistreet</i>	32
Colonel Thomas Barrett and Friends - <i>Ed Storey</i>	33
General The Hon. Sir Henry Ramsay: The Uncrowned King of Kumaon - <i>N. C. Shah</i>	36
Some Unpublished Inscriptions from the Cemeteries of Jaipur - <i>Syed Faizan Raza</i>	47
Notices	52

**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 [editor@fibis.org](mailto:editor@fibis.org)

© Families in British India Society and the individual authors 2017

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

*Where personal opinions are expressed, the opinion reflects that of the author and not those of the trustees of FIBIS or of the organisation.*

## **Editorial**

Welcome to the latest edition of the Journal.

We open with a wonderfully evocative short story or narration of the journey of the Loreto sisters' journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling in 1846, contributed by Kenneth Miln. The sisters were part of a Roman Catholic religious congregation dedicated to education. Kenneth paints a striking picture of the group of women from Ireland who set out on their journey in a foreign land, their freshness and excitement as the boat sets sail contrasting with the menacing atmosphere. They encounter, "The eerie baying from packs of jackals...swarms of flying insects and, more alarmingly, mosquitoes..." and even a tiger which brutally killed one of the men accompanying them. Their resilience shines through, however, as Kenneth describes their enchantment with Darjeeling and "the region's fresh air always with a tang of pinewood smoke, the haunting sound of Tibetan long-horns from distant monasteries, the frequent thunderstorms and the awesome vision of Kangchenjunga at dawn, when crimson rays climb stupendous crags on their perilous route to the summit". Truly an evocative piece, which sets the tone for the rest of the Journal.

In other contributions we learn more about the resilience of British lives in India. We hear about those with glittering military careers – Ralph Henry Sneyd, and Lieutenant (Assistant Surgeon) R. L. W. Beveridge, whose accomplishments are measured through medals awarded to him. Also, Colonel Thomas Barrett, who worked for the Nabob Omdut Ul Omrah as a highly trusted secretary, interpreter and negotiator.

And in his piece on General The Hon. Sir Henry Ramsay, N. C. Shah pays tribute to the many contributions he made to improving the lives of the people of Kumaon while he served as commissioner there.

But it's just as fascinating to learn of the lives of the less feted people, such as Joseph Knowles and John Brierly, who both enjoyed modest military careers, but took something of the a back seat when they left service. Joseph returned to Glasgow, then London, where he carried out missionary work, while John spent the latter part of his life working as a weaver in Bolton.

It seems that every family is a treasure trove of fascinating stories of the ordinary and the extraordinary, and I would encourage you to continue to dig deep to uncover the details of their lives in an exceptional and mesmerising episode of our history.

*Emma Louise Oram*

## Hooghly to Himalaya – A Short Story

*Kenneth Miln*

*Kenneth's short story, or narrative, of the Loreto sisters' journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling in 1846, is based on fact. "I have inserted certain passages," says Kenneth, "to add a degree of authenticity and local colour".*

Calcutta, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1846: the early morning sky was dark with heavy cloud cover, the atmosphere hot and oppressive, as the five young Loreto sisters, headed by Mother Teresa Mons, boarded the gently swaying pinnace at Princes Ghat (ghat being a series of stone steps between roadway and river) for a long journey up the River Hooghly to Kisanganj, a district located over two hundred miles northward.

The sisters had left their native Ireland some two years previously and were under the direction of the Jesuit Bishop Carew of Calcutta with instructions to establish two schools, one for boys and another for girls, at Darjeeling; a newly-created township and sanatorium situated at an altitude of 7,000 feet in the Himalayan foothills. Bishop Carew, known for his authoritarian manner, had insisted that the sisters wore the heavy habit of their order despite the extreme heat and humidity that day. Records indicate that the sisters' surnames, typically Irish, were Casey, Hogan, Doyle, Ryan and Coyle. While conducting themselves as befitted their order, they found it difficult to contain a thrill of excitement as their boat took sail.

The pinnace, a sail boat of around 60 feet in length and fitted with a number of cramped partitioned cabins, was to be their home for the best part of a month. The scene can be imagined as the sisters, with help from the manjis (boatmen), took their baggage and sparse personal effects on board. As regards food and drink requirements, the manjis had already loaded their craft with baskets containing live fowl, fruit and vegetables of the region: cooking to be carried out by a khansama (native cook) on a small clay choola (stove), fuelled mainly by dung pats. The choola would also be used for boiling water to render it potable, as apart from a few bottles of weak wine, a number of earthen jars ensured a supply of fairly clean water for on-board washing purposes. The sisters' main meals were, all too frequently, cooked in pungent mustard oil, certainly an acquired taste for most Europeans.

A hot southerly breeze, together with an incoming tide from the Bay of Bengal, enabled their boat to slide along the oily-brown Hooghly at a rate which was to take them to the township of Chandanagger (pronounced Chandernagore by the Raj) that afternoon. On leaving Calcutta the sisters saw, from their open-sided cabins, the city's fine colonial buildings, exotic temples, mosques and ghats crowded with people washing and praying. Tall palm trees lining the river's banks effectively hid the sprawling suburbs from view. Shortly after tiffin (lunch), the pinnace drew alongside Chandanagger where the sisters glimpsed the beautiful Sacred Heart Church and the well-known convent. The township was part of French India until handed over to the Indian government in 1950.

Leaving Chandanaggar that afternoon as daylight began to fade, the sisters' attention was drawn



*Pinnace on the Hooghly (Picture supplied by Kenneth Miln.)*

skyward as many thousands of crows and giant fruit bats flew overhead to roost in jungle areas to the north. They spied the flickering lights of fishing villages where evening meals were being prepared and from where faint strains of traditional Bengali music carried across the river's surface. The eerie baying from packs of jackals caused the sisters to pull their cowls tighter and to peer into the surrounding darkness while settling down on their sleeping mats. Within a matter of minutes they were besieged by swarms of flying insects and, more alarmingly, mosquitoes, making a peculiar high-pitched keening sound while searching for fresh blood. With malaria and cholera endemic, little-known diseases at the time, the sisters took whatever means were at hand to protect themselves: scented slow-burning tapers together with a deal of swatting provided scant relief from the insidious pokas (insects), but do what they could, it was impossible to avoid the menace altogether. It is recorded that 28 Loreto sisters died of tropical disease in 1846. The manji crewmen fared somewhat better by smoking beedies (small cheroots) which gave off strong-smelling smoke, and by the liberal application of mustard oil over their bodies. Thankfully, illness was kept to a minimum through good hygiene and avoidance of drinking, or even brushing their teeth, with unboiled water. It was at such times that the sisters' thoughts must have turned to their native and far distant Ireland -

fortunately most disquieting imaginings were shortlived. Early mornings were looked forward to when the air was relatively cool and the river's smell more tolerable: while breakfasting on deliciously fresh fruit the sisters witnessed many new and interesting sights – Ganges dolphin surfacing for air, fish leaping from predators lurking below, water buffaloes bellowing loudly while swimming close by and elephants being washed by their mahouts (keepers). Birdlife was also much in evidence with long-legged paddy-birds stalking the shallows while kites soared high above and ready to dive at speed upon some unsuspecting prey.

With a fair degree of fluency in spoken Bengali and Hindustani the sisters had achieved some empathy with manji crewmen, their distinctive Irish brogue, together with a deal of good-natured banter kept relationships on an even keel. Once, while trying to sleep, one of the sisters told the chattering manjis to be quiet: "Hey manji log, chuperao. Hum soni mungta". To which manji replied: "Teek hai, memsahib seester", (*Alright, lady sister*). On another occasion, one of the sisters took charge of the onboard cooking stove to demonstrate how to prepare an Irish stew with goat meat...sans chillies. While the manjis were most attentive, on being handed a plateful and after cautiously tasting a morsel, nodded their approval and reached for some chillies!

Three weeks into their journey and with the monsoon still a full month to run its course, the party experienced a number of torrential downpours which were heralded by lightning and terrifying thunder blasts. At such times the drenched manjis, with surprising alacrity, moored the boat to a lee shore while the sisters battened down the shutters of their tiny cabins and prayed the storm would abate before they all perished in the Hooghly's dark waters. However, as with most monsoon storms, the rain suddenly stopped falling, clouds dispersed and burning sunlight caused hot shimmering mists to envelope the region. In order to gain some relief from these onslaughts the sisters were obliged to loosen their clothing and energetically fan their perspiring faces with bamboo matting fans. At the other extreme, there were times when the boat drifted into the doldrums and when the good manjis had no option but to pole their craft along until overtaken by a southerly wind, at which times the manjis shouted: "Ho memsahib seester log, howah ageehay", (*Ho lady sisters, the wind has arrived*).

Although the days seemed to pass ever more slowly as they sailed into their fourth week, reasonable progress was made and before long they arrived at Plassey, a large town located some 140 miles to the north of Calcutta. History records that the Battle of Plassey took place in 1757 between the British East India Company and the nawab of Bengal, and the battle ended in a decisive victory for the British, extending their rule over Bengal.

Despite certain unavoidable setbacks, there were several predetermined stops at which the sisters were able to exchange their cramped cabins for the welcome, albeit brief, luxury of large, comfortably-appointed on-shore bungalows, these breaks having been arranged with certain European landowners and businessmen, one of whom was a Mr Barnes, to provide hospitality for the sisters during their arduous river journey. The sisters must have given sighs of relief on entering the spacious and relatively cool

rooms, kept so by means of punkas (overhead curtains which were swung to and fro with cords pulled by servants in adjoining rooms). They were able to bathe in large tubs of clean hot water, much appreciated after the crude on-board bucket washing with muddy Hooghly water. The pleasure of dining with their hosts on sumptuous meals during which times they learned of the latest news from Calcutta, and after which the sisters spoke of their mission's objectives to establish two schools at Darjeeling.

After a few days spent in such salubrious surroundings and well-fortified, they were eager to continue the final stretch of their journey up the Hooghly towards Saibganj. On arrival at Saibganj, their final port of call, the sisters hired a number of bullock carts for the long overland haul to Kishanganj, a populous village close to the Himalayan foothills. Two bullock carts were loaded with their baggage, while another three carts, with high-arched shelters, were made ready for the sisters themselves. These bullock carts, basically sturdy bamboo frames fitted with wooden boards and attached to a yoke, were drawn by two bullocks while on the plains and by four bullocks when climbing hill tracks. In charge of each cart was a gharry wallah (vehicle person) who was responsible for arranging basic accommodation at suitable villages en route. This drawn out and cumbersome train of five bullock carts set off from Saibganj at little more than walking pace along rough tracks, flooded fields and numberless native hamlets. The gharry wallahs would draw their carts to a halt an hour before sunset and start off the following day an hour before dawn, a routine which permitted the sisters time to prepare evening meals and obtain a fair night's rest. While passing some villages the sisters were intrigued by the way womenfolk carried out the family washing, standing knee-deep in water and singing loudly, and beating the clothing with considerable force against large stones.

At Kishanganj the sisters were met, once again, by a landowner-businessman with whom they lodged in comfortable bungalows for several days' rest, good food and an opportunity to have their clothing washed, very probably, by the traditional dhobi method already described! While the sisters were taking advantage of their brief sojourn, arrangements were being made for their onward journey by palkee to the remote village of Punkabari: palkees, perhaps better known as palanquins, were essentially wooden compartments supported on four long poles by which the whole contraption was carried along by four or eight palkee wallahs. Always dependent upon weight and gradient, palkees were usually carried for two to three hours, after which a rest period was taken, or fresh palkee wallahs hired. For obvious reasons, travel by this method was undertaken between sunrise and sunset.

Just over a week from their arrival at Kishanganj, the sisters set out in their respective palkees towards Pankabari. During their second day out from Kishanganj and as daylight waned while negotiating a boulder strewn defile, there came a particularly malevolent snarl from nearby, a sound to make even the hardest individual tremble with fear. One of the palkee wallahs shouted, "Bagh," (tiger) and to a man they lowered their burdens and bolted, leaving the terrified sisters to pull down their palkees' blinds and remain silent. The situation went from bad to worse as tearing and cracking sounds were

followed by a series of bloodcurdling screams, surely a fight to the death! A few minutes later all became quiet except for the buzzing of myriad flying insects, and the sisters cautiously lit their oil lamps, at which the palkee wallahs reluctantly returned to their tasks. However, all was not as it should have been when it was confirmed that one of their number was missing and when the bravest wallah, with lantern held aloft, made a hasty search of the surrounding area. Before many minutes had passed the missing wallah's remains were found. Part of the poor man's back had been eaten by a tiger or tigress which had, according to the palkee wallahs, been disturbed while feeding on its original kill. Prior to leaving the ghastly scene, one of the men collected several bone splinters for the dead man's family, as required by tribal custom.

At this juncture, the sisters began to realise that they were entering a virtually alien world far from their 'civilisation'. Regaining a measure of composure and with two sisters walking alongside the palkees to compensate for the lost man, the party continued uphill for about two miles towards the hamlet of Punkabari, at which place they would spend a night in hastily constructed bamboo-framed huts. Although very basic, the huts provided adequate shelter for a single night, after which they were to continue into the mountains. Making themselves as comfortable as possible, and after a hot meal of roasted moorgi (fowl), the sisters took a stroll in the clear cool air. Within minutes they spied hundreds of tiny green lights, their first encounter with fireflies, and they watched mesmerised. On waking early the following morning, they were horrified by the sight of blood on their ankles and hands to which leeches had attached themselves. Although not a serious matter, these small creatures pose a great nuisance only to be got rid of by the application of salt, or a lit beedie (cheroot), should one be a smoker. From Punkabari and while journeying up through the Dooars (foothill doorways of the Eastern Himalayas), the geophysical environment, for most travellers, enhances awareness and sharpens the senses: the region's sheer vastness together with an incredible diversity of both plant and animal life gives rise to profound wonderment.

On reaching the village of Kurseong at an elevation of 4,800 feet, the sisters became aware of subtle changes to their sense of wellbeing, doubtless brought about by the cool, dust-free air, cold clean water and improved appetites. Before departing Kurseong for Ghoom, the penultimate stage of their journey and far removed from 'conventional' society, the sisters had their last views of the distant plains of Bengal far below to the south. On their arrival at Ghoom village, the highest point of their journey at an elevation of 8,000 feet, the sisters were taken aback by a mysterious-looking monastery surmounted with an impressive gilded roof and guarded by garishly painted demonic effigies. As their palkees moved through curtains of freezing mist, the sisters were startled by their first sight of Tibetans, burly heavily-clad men with pigtailed hair and wearing large turquoise earrings (locally crafted from ancient corals formed eons ago when the Himalayas were part of an ocean floor). The Tibetan women, also with their hair in pigtails, wore brightly coloured striped aprons and were bedecked with heavy jewellery, their robust and rosy-cheeked children appeared most cheerful. In the middle distance, where prayer flags fluttered in the wind, stood groups of men twirling prayer

wheels while chanting, “Om Mani Padmi Hung,” (The Jewel Within the Lotus Flower), a prayer chant which was to become very familiar to the sisters. Their departure from Ghoom was significant inasmuch they all felt as though an unseen doorway between the outside world and their newly-entered sanctum had closed firmly behind them.

Just over an hour later the sisters arrived at Darjeeling on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1846. It was very cold and banks of dank mist effectively blocked out any views of the township and the eternal snows. Leaving their palkees at Chowrasta, the town’s main thoroughfare, the sisters were shown to their temporary living quarters, which turned out to be a large bamboo and wattled hut furnished with a table, chairs and bamboo-framed beds: their meals were to be prepared by a locally employed khansama working in a small borchikhana (kitchen).

Within a few days of their arrival the sisters were welcomed into the community by the town’s few European residents with whom they formed long-lasting, happy relationships. The sisters were, of course, also welcomed by many adult natives along with their cheerful offspring, some of whom may well have known the reason for the sisters coming to their town. The sisters soon became enchanted by Darjeeling, the region’s fresh air always with a tang of pinewood smoke, the haunting sound of Tibetan long-horns from distant monasteries, the frequent thunderstorms and the awesome vision of Kangchenjunga at dawn, when crimson rays climb stupendous crags on their perilous route to the summit. During the months and years following their arrival at Darjeeling, the sisters were to complete their mission with the establishment of two highly successful convent schools, extended examples of which remain fully attended to this day. Sadly, none of them ever returned to their native Ireland. The Loreto sisters’ remains lie at peace in a beautiful little cemetery overlooked by the mighty Himalayas.



## An Honourable Upright Man: Ralph Henry Sneyd (1784-1840)

Keith Haines

Although Ralph Henry Sneyd will never have read the *Shahnameh* – the Persian literary classic, widely known in contemporary India – he would have been familiar with its themes and leitmotifs; popular episodes such as that of Sohrab and Rostam demonstrated that, no matter how great and powerful one might become, life can ultimately and callously prove humbling and unjust.<sup>1</sup>

Few places exemplified this better than India. In the early nineteenth century it offered the dignity of opportunity and employment but – despite the colossal fortunes acquired by a handful of men - travel volumes forewarned of the perils of debt, the threat to personal morality, and debilitation by disease and climate. In his guidebook, one officer warned the new arrival that “the gaieties of Calcutta may not only lead him to superfluous expenses, but will perhaps give him a relish for dissipation”; yet another revealed in a volume of advice – published just as Sneyd took up his command at the headquarters – that the intensity of the Indian climate could be gauged from “the fact of meat having been broiled on the cannon mounted upon the ramparts at Fort William”.<sup>2</sup>

Death was so commonplace on the sub-continent that one of Sneyd’s fellow officers complained that, “There is no country in the world where the demise of one of a small circle is regarded with so much apathy as in India ... and the memory of the departed ... scarcely outlives the week”.<sup>3</sup> Although he avoided this fate, Sneyd’s health also fell victim to the alien environment; a memorial plaque in St Michael’s Church at Heckfield (Hampshire) records that in his final years he suffered “a constitution shattered by climate and active service”, and that he lingered “for some years in a state of most severe trial, which he bore with patient resignation”.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The *Shahnameh* was edited by Sneyd’s brother-in-law, Turner Macan (Persian Interpreter to the Commander-in-Chief in India), and published in four volumes in Calcutta in 1829 – shortly after Sneyd had departed from India. Versions of the poem often ran to well in excess of 50,000 couplets, and even Macan conceded that, “The work is always praised but seldom looked at”: Keith Haines, *The Persian Interpreter: the life and career of Turner Macan*, (Donaghadee, 2015), pp.317-356.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Williamson, *The East India Vade-Mecum*, (London, 1819), II, 1-2. A Lieutenant of the Bengal Establishment (Henry Cary Vigo), *The Cadet’s Guide to India*, (London, 1820), p.26. The dangers of the Indian climate are well exemplified by a regimental memorial plaque in Exeter Cathedral, which lists over 120 men who died during the Indian Mutiny – two-thirds of whom had succumbed to the effects of the climate.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Godfrey Charles Mundy, *Pen and Pencil Sketches, being the Journal of a Tour in India*, (London, 1858), p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Much of this article was greatly facilitated by access to the material available on the FIBIS website.

## The Sneyds

The Sneyd dynasty can trace its ancestry back to Alfred the Great.<sup>5</sup> Ralph Henry - the eldest child of six of Revd Wettenhall Sneyd (by his first marriage) – was baptised on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1784 at St Paul's Church (next to the barracks) in Bray, Co Wicklow. His father, a member of an Irish branch of the family, after serving in a number of parishes, appears to have been partly based during the 1790s in Co. Fermanagh, where he was curate of Belleek and chaplain to the extravagant First Earl of Belmore at Castle Coole.<sup>6</sup> For unspecified reasons, he moved in 1800 to become successively curate (1800-1816) and vicar (1816-1840) at Newchurch on the Isle of Wight, where he spent the rest of his life. There is no record of further contact with his elder daughter, Marianne (born c.1786), who was the only one of the six children not to travel to India, who in 1804 married local landowner (later Sir) Arthur Brooke of Colebrooke. Whilst her husband was preoccupied in the conflict with America in 1814, the future Lady Marianne gave birth to two children by the Second Earl of Belmore!

As the offspring of a poor Irishman, there was a degree of inevitability that Wettenhall's children would seek military careers in India. Ralph and Edward served in the Bengal contingent; William was based at the Madras Presidency; and Nathaniel originally enlisted in the Crown forces. Their youngest sibling, Harriet (probably born in Dublin in October 1794), eventually travelled out to Calcutta to stay with Ralph until she married Turner Macan, Persian Interpreter to the Commander-in-Chief in India, at St John's Church on 14 November 1822.<sup>7</sup> The burden of debt incurred by the clergyman in providing careers for his children must have been considerable: passage on board a ship to the sub-continent cost at least £50, and the purchase of 'necessaries' could run into several hundreds of pounds for each cadet.<sup>8</sup> Once the aspiring soldier reached officer rank his expenses began to escalate.<sup>9</sup>

## Ralph's Early Career

<sup>5</sup> See the entry for the lineage of Sneyd of Basford Hall in *Burke's Landed Gentry*.

<sup>6</sup> Wettenhall Sneyd married Margaret Cullen in Dublin on 12 July 1777. His second son, William Thomas, was born in 1788 in Willsborough, Dublin. His third son, Edward Carncross, was born in 1790 in Belleek.

<sup>7</sup> *Asiatic Journal & Monthly Register (AJMR)* (January-June 1823), XV, 528.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Taylor, *Storm and Conquest: the Battle for the Indian Ocean, 1809*, (London, 2007), p. 57. Henry Rawlinson, later celebrated for deciphering cuneiform inscriptions, sailed for India in 1820; his father spent £100 for a passage and £500 for his kit and supplies: Lesley Adkins, *Empires of the Plain: Henry Rawlinson and the Lost Languages of Babylon*, (London, 2003), p.10. For a list of recommended 'Necessities', see India Office Library & Records (IOR) at the British Library (BL): W/7732 (5).

<sup>9</sup> Mundy, p.8. Haines, pp.154-155, 268-269.

Very shortly after the family settled on the Isle of Wight, on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1800 Ralph received a nomination as a Cadet in the Bengal Cavalry from East India Company (EIC) Director, William Devaynes (a London, banker and former MP, who was chairman of the EIC on five occasions). A year later Ralph's father provided proof that his son had reached the requisite age of 16, and one suspects that he crossed The Solent to bid farewell to Ralph when he boarded the *Earl Howe* at Portsmouth on 22 April 1801.<sup>10</sup>

It probably proved an eye-opening, educational voyage via Madeira for the teenager. Three soldiers (including a fellow cadet) died and two men were lost overboard; one soldier was given twelve lashes for striking an NCO, and the ship's quartermaster was placed in irons for drunkenness and another crewman for mutinous language. Any youthful apprehension cannot have been eased as the vessel arrived on 15<sup>th</sup> August, accompanied by miserable and unsettled weather, at Kedgerree (now Khijri), 65 miles to the south of Calcutta at the entrance to the River Hooghly.

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1802 he was appointed an ensign (or cornet) 'doing duty' with 11<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry. Ralph was probably fortunate to avoid training at the notorious Baraset military college established near Barrackpore (15 miles north of Calcutta) later that year, where his brother Edward trained upon his arrival in 1806.<sup>11</sup> The behaviour and ethos at Baraset was exemplified by Turner Macan's older brother, Thomas, who was posted there shortly before Edward's arrival. Thomas became involved in 'an affair of honour' with a fellow officer and they agreed to settle their disagreement with a duel. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1809 Thomas was shot through the heart on the second exchange of bullets. He died, however, with the complete respect of his brother officers who erected a plaque at his grave which asserted that 'he was endeared [to them] by every social virtue'.<sup>12</sup> Baraset was closed a couple of years later.

Ralph's arrival in Calcutta coincided with the expansionist ambitions of the Governor-General, Richard Wellesley, and by the end of 1802 Ralph was serving in 1<sup>st</sup> Native Cavalry in the Doab district during the Second Maratha War. It proved a baptism of fire for the young Irishman. In early January 1803 he was camped before the fortress of Sasni. One of his colleagues later wrote:<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> For Ralph's application, see IOR: L/MIL/9/257/103. For an outline of his military career, see Major VCP Hodson, *List of the Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834*, (London, 1946), IV, 145; also see Lieut VCP Hodson, *Historical Records of the Governor-General's Body Guard*, (London, 1910), pp.267-268. For the journey to India, see the log book of *Earl Howe*: IOR: L/MAR/B/203C.

<sup>11</sup> For Baraset, see Major V Hodson, 'Baraset Cadet College, East Indies', *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research* (1923), II, 130-136. Haines, pp. 122-128.

<sup>12</sup> *Asiatic Annual Register* (AAR) 1809, Bengal Occurrences for June 1809 (17 June 1809), p.60. IOR: L/MIL/17/2/268 and L/MIL/10/103 (Part 1 for 1809). Haines, pp.129-131.

<sup>13</sup> John Pester, *War and Sport in India 1802-1806: an Officer's Diary*, (London, 1913), pp.32-33.

*During the night we had a heavy fall of rain which made the water nearly knee-deep in the trenches. Owing to the flat situation of the ground about us, it was impossible to hit upon any plan to draw it off, so that we stood up to our knees in mud and water all this day with a scorching sun beating upon our heads, which made it not very pleasant, especially as we could get no rest, and we had been all night on our legs. It was impossible to sit down even in the trenches, and a man could not step out of them but with a certainty of being shot from the rampart of the fort.*

Ralph was also present at the battle of Laswari in November 1803 which was sufficiently dangerous for the commander, General Lake, to have two horses shot from under him!

Ralph appears to have demonstrated some talent, however, within a very limited space of time. On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1803, whilst still only a cornet and not yet 20 years of age, he was appointed regimental quartermaster – a position which he held (with the exception of a few months) until 12<sup>th</sup> February 1813. He was promoted to lieutenant on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1805 and was to be involved in other occasional campaigns until granted furlough to England on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1814.<sup>14</sup> Such leave, described as being ‘on private affairs’ was granted to those who had served for 10 years and who wished to take it for up to three years. Lieutenant Ralph Henry Sneyd determined to take full advantage of the opportunity.

On his return to England it is more than probable that he would have visited his father on the Isle of Wight, to discover (if he had not already learned) that he now had three half-siblings.<sup>15</sup> The eldest, Emma Sophia, was to travel out to India when, as did so many young women, she reached the age of 15. Her sister and brother (Caroline and Clement) appear, uncharacteristically, to have spent their lives on the island.

On 29 May 1817 at St George’s Church, Hanover Square in London – shortly before the end of his leave – Ralph married Jane Robina Dunbar.<sup>16</sup> It is not known how or why the couple met, but the death of her parents in 1800 and 1815 may have provided her with greater freedom as a daughter was born probably just before their marriage! This is revealed by the existence of a bond for £400 which was authorised in June 1817 for passage for Mrs Jane Sneyd and her daughter, Harriet, as passengers to Bengal.<sup>17</sup>

As illustrated by the activities of Ralph’s sister, Marianne, the age appears to have adopted a far more liberal attitude towards sex than became evident in Victorian times – especially with regard to India. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, when there were very few British or European women on the sub-continent, it was inevitable that the bureaucrats and

---

<sup>14</sup> Hodson, *List of the Officers*, IV, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Revd Wettenhall Sneyd, having become a widower, married Harriet Cleader on 24 September 1801 on the Isle of Wight.

<sup>16</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, June 1817, p.562. *AJMR* (July-December 1817), IV, 104.

<sup>17</sup> IOR: Z/O/1/8 (Miscellaneous Bonds 1814-1821), no.1221, 24 July 1817 (for £400 for passage to Bengal).

soldiers of the East India Company would consort with the native women. To the credit of the fathers, there was a general readiness to acknowledge and provide for the offspring which resulted. One example of this was Ralph's brother, Edward, who fathered a child by a native woman before his marriage, as indicated in his will in which he designated "20,000 Rupees [about £2000] which I leave to a natural child of mine by a native woman".<sup>18</sup>

The Sneyds were fertile and prolific. Ralph's great-grandfather (also Revd Wettenhall Sneyd, Archdeacon of Kilmore & Ardagh, d.1745) fathered 21 children. Ralph's brother, Edward, as well as his illegitimate half-caste offspring, had six other children between 1821 and 1825 (including twins, one of whom died within the year). Ralph himself was to father 12 children. In addition to Harriet, six of them were born in India – although the first two, a girl and a boy, died very young; one daughter was born at sea on the way back to England; and four were born at Yateley (in Hampshire) after his return.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Governor-General's Body Guard**

Ralph, his wife Jane, with their daughter Harriet, arranged private passage to India on board *Lord Hungerford*, which departed from England in June 1817 and arrived in Calcutta on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. On board he formed a very close friendship with a Scottish doctor (born on the Isle of Skye) named James Ranald Martin.<sup>20</sup> Martin became a celebrated and highly-respected medical figure in India who recognised the close connection between environment and disease, and the Governor-General, the Marquis of Hastings, accepted his recommendations with regard to sanitation in the barracks in Calcutta in 1821. Martin dedicated much of his life to the improvement of the health of soldiers and army hospitals.

On his return to duty, in February 1818 Ralph was asked to raise and command a unit which was technically listed as the 4<sup>th</sup> Rohilla Cavalry, but was popularly known as Sneyd's Frontier Horse, and which served in the Pindari and Mahratta Wars. On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1818 a daughter was born to the Sneyds in Dr Martin's house at Gorruckpore.<sup>21</sup> The following month Ralph was to be found fighting at Ajmer in the company of his two brothers,

---

<sup>18</sup> The National Archives (TNA): Probate 11/1828 (25 February 1824).

<sup>19</sup> Harriet (b.June 1817), a daughter (b.June 1818), Wettenhall (b.December 1819), Charles Metcalfe (b.November 1820), Nathaniel Robert (b.March 1822), Samuel Edward (b.July 1823), Jane Robina (b.July 1824), Charlotte Biden (b.May 1826), John Thompson (b.May 1828), Elizabeth Emma Margaret (b.October 1829), Ralph Henry (b.1832), Emma Katharine Julia (b.c. 1833).

<sup>20</sup> 'Biographical Sketch of James Ranald Martin', *The London Lancet*, II no.1 (July 1852), 71-72. Hodson, *Historical Records*, pp.289-290, 330-331.

<sup>21</sup> *AJMR* (January-June 1819), VII, 198. The name given to the child, who appears to have died shortly after birth, is unknown.

Lieutenants Edward and Nathaniel.<sup>22</sup> The latter had been appointed Ralph's second-in-command and, like his brother Edward, received praise for his service. Edward had been commended for his actions at a previous engagement at Bareilly in April 1816, for which he was rewarded with pistols and a sword, which his will bequeathed to his only son, Henry. Edward received further praise during the events at Ajmer when Brigadier Knox notified the Governor-General that "In the judicious and successful application of the labour of public servants and cattle ... Lieutenant Sneyd ... has established an additional claim to that approbation on the part of Brigadier Knox, which his former conduct had so justly excited".<sup>23</sup>

In September 1818 Ralph was in action at Udaipur, and he was promoted to captain on the first day of 1819. Nine months later he was given command of the so-called Najib Battalion (composed of Punjabi muslims) at Agra Fort, and it was here on 2<sup>nd</sup> December that his first son was born. He was named Wettenhall in honour of his grandfather, but the child only survived five months.<sup>24</sup> A happier occasion was held in his house in the Fort on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1820, when Edward married Elizabeth Halhed of Yateley House.<sup>25</sup>

On 14<sup>th</sup> October Ralph – in succession to William Henry Rainey<sup>26</sup> – was elevated to the prestigious command of the Governor-General's Body Guard based in Calcutta, in which he was to distinguish himself.<sup>27</sup> In early 1821, however, family tragedy struck again when his brother Nathaniel died on 26<sup>th</sup> May in Ralph's home at Ballygunge, which remains a desirable residential district of Calcutta. Nathaniel had taken leave offered after 10 years' service, and had obtained a three-month extension but, whatever he did to occupy his time, he died suddenly of "a bilious fever".<sup>28</sup> Ralph did, however, at this time, renew his close

---

<sup>22</sup> For a summary of the careers of Edward and Nathaniel Sneyd, see Hodson, *List of the Officers*, IV, 144-145. Nathaniel enlisted in the Crown forces (8<sup>th</sup> or King's Royal Irish Dragoons), and a footnote in Hodson p.145 observed: 'As he never actually held a Commission in HEICS he should, perhaps, not be included in this List'. See also see Hodson, *Historical Records*, pp.267-268.

<sup>23</sup> *AJMR*, VII, 431. Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 3 August 1819, p.1389.

<sup>24</sup> *AJMR* (July-December 1820), X, 95. Wettenhall was born on 2 December 1819; his death was announced in the same volume; he had lived 5 months and 4 days: *AJMR*, X, 614.

<sup>25</sup> *AJMR* (January-June 1821), XI, 61.

<sup>26</sup> Rainey's name is still preserved in the Ballygunge district of Calcutta (Kolkata) in the locality known as Rainey Park. For this, and a summary of Rainey's career, see Hodson, *Historical Records*, pp.263-264.

<sup>27</sup> *AJMR*, XI, 497. By an odd coincidence, Ralph was a brother-in-law to the Persian Interpreter, Turner Macan (who married Ralph's sister, Harriet), as was William Henry Rainey (who married Margaret, one of Macan's sisters)!

<sup>28</sup> *AJMR* (July-December 1821), XII, 279, 584.

friendship with Dr Ranald Martin who was given medical charge of the Governor-General's Body Guard.

Some of Captain Ralph Henry Sneyd's duties were ceremonial. There were close links between India and its northern neighbour, Persia, at this time. A number of dynasties, such as that at Lucknow, originated from Persia, and Persian was the diplomatic language of India. The Zand dynasty based in Shiraz was one of the more powerful families in Persia in the late eighteenth century, but by the early 1790s it was defeated by the Qajars who were to rule Persia throughout the subsequent century. The last Zand ruler was brutally tortured for three years before being put to death; his wife was dishonoured, his three daughters were forced to marry "the scum of the earth", and the young son - Fath Ali Khan Zand - was castrated and imprisoned. About, 20 years later, the latter had been reprieved and the Qajar Crown Prince sent the Zand heir to India with a letter of introduction. The Marquis of Hastings, who acted as both Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, sent his Persian Interpreter, Turner Macan, to the quayside in Calcutta to greet the young man and escorted him to Government House (which Wellesley had built at exorbitant expense).<sup>29</sup>



*Pen and ink drawing of the south-west gateway of Government House, Calcutta, by Lady Sarah Elizabeth Amherst, 1824 (British Library Online Gallery, Asia, Pacific & Africa Collections.)*

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 1822 Hastings paid a courtesy visit in two carriages to the house prepared for the former prince, "escorted by a squadron of the Body Guard commanded by Captain Sneyd". The account continued:

*The cavalcade which proceeded at a brisk rate and had a very imposing effect soon reached His Highness the Prince's residence in Royd Street. His Lordship attended the grand staircase at the top of which he was received by the Prince ... The refreshments*

---

<sup>29</sup> For this episode, see *AJMR* (January-June 1823), XV, 412-414.

*consisted of dried fruits and coffee ... The servants who passed round the coffee were clothed in shawl dresses and wore richly embossed daggers with curious handles and sheaths formed of Shiraz enamel. After remaining about twenty-five minutes, his Lordship rose to depart. The Prince rose up also and said he would accompany His Excellency downstairs; this, however, His Lordship good-humouredly declined and His Excellency's departure was announced with a flourish of trumpets.*

Three weeks later Hastings gave a dinner at Government House for the visitor, which was attended by both Ralph and Turner Macan, his official escort. Three days later a trip was arranged to the country residence (and main barracks) of the Governor-General at Barrackpore, 15 miles north along the river Hooghly, with Sneyd and Macan again present. Whilst both men were there in their official capacity, they had become well-known to one another, for a month later on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1822 Turner Macan married Ralph's younger sister, Harriet, who had been residing with her brother in Calcutta.

## Burma

By 1823, following the departure of Hastings, Lord Amherst had become the new Governor-General and in 1824 war was declared on the Burmese. Paget was the new Commander-in-Chief, but he developed a profound dislike of the Indian climate and, declining to go to Burma, despatched troops under the command of Brigadier Sir Archibald Campbell. In September 1824 a unit of 300 men of the Body Guard, under Sneyd's command, was placed at Campbell's disposal and directed "to be held in readiness to embark for foreign service as soon as transports shall be reported ready for receiving them on board". During his preparations Sneyd showed his regard for his men by recommending that additional allowances be granted for such overseas service – which was agreed and paid in advance.<sup>30</sup>

The Irishman, accompanied by Dr Martin, sailed for Rangoon (now Yangon) to join his advance units in early December 1824. He arrived off the coast of Pegu near the mouth of the River Irrawaddy on Christmas Day. It did not prove a festive arrival. The ship swung round during the night and turned over on its beam end. Water poured into the hatches, flooded the decks and drowned horses on the submerged side; they also lost their tents and a large consignment of their regimental and medical stores. Several of the Body Guard, camp followers and crew were swept overboard. Sneyd and Martin refused to lower the boats, partly because it was not practicable, but also because it was likely to result in capture by the Burmese, which would have involved a cruel death. In very difficult circumstances, amongst deranged horses, they managed to find hatchets to cut away the masts, which enabled the ship to right itself sufficiently. Once on land, Sneyd resumed command of the Body Guard contingent.

---

<sup>30</sup> For details of the campaign in Burma: *AJMR* (January-June 1825), XIX, 465; (July-December 1825) XX, 602, 724-726; (January-June 1826) XXI, 17-22 (especially p.21). Hodson, *Historical Records*, pp.92-106, 111-112. *The London Lancet*, pp.73-75. Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 25 October 1825, pp.1970-1971.



The Burma campaign proved to be testing, fearsome and deadly, costing the lives of 20,000 men. The climate proved particularly insalubrious and between May and September 1825 the rainy season was to cost the army one-seventh of its forces. Sickness and disease were prevalent, and the men were not helped by poor subsistence; Campbell reported that, "Such is the debilitating effect produced by the prevailing disease that when men do recover from an attack of fever they are left in the emaciated state, as to forbid the hope that they will be fit for service under many months". Dr Martin later recounted that during the first year of the Burma campaign three per cent of the soldiers died in battle, whilst 45 per cent perished as a result of disease. The unsympathetic terrain made any advance very laborious. The Burmese stockades were described as "dirty beyond description, and composed chiefly of paltry huts", and their weaponry tended to be fairly primitive - but their resilience, organisation and fearlessness aroused the admiration of the invading forces.

Around April 1825 Ralph was reported to be "actively and beneficially employed from headquarters". He was engaged in the attack on Donabew. The troops were camped within 1,000 yards of the stockade and had used up their supplies without any sign of reinforcements. A long period of silence was followed by the incessant "noise of tom-toms and drums, and the repeated sounding of gongs in the fort", and the defenders put up stout resistance. On 27<sup>th</sup> April the British flotilla was bombarded by 50 pieces of cannon and the Burmans prepared to attack the trenches with huge numbers backed up by 17 elephants. Eventually they moved towards the British camp, so "Sir Archibald Campbell directed Captain Sneyd with the Body Guard to charge: a measure which was carried into effect with the greatest success and gallantry". Campbell recorded:

*In one of those sorties, a scene at once novel and interesting presented itself in front of both armies. Seventeen large elephants, each carrying a complement of armed men, and supported by a column of infantry, were observed moving down towards our right flank. I directed the Body Guard under Captain Sneyd to charge them, and they acquitted themselves most handsomely, mixing boldly with the elephants; they shot their riders off their backs and finally drove the whole back into the fort.*

A few weeks later, Ralph was also involved in bringing in a band of marauders from the Prince of Surrawaddy's army who were plundering the area, travelling with between 600 to 800 carts. He captured almost 300 of the carts which had two buffaloes each. The army was, however, at this time, beset by a shortage of grain, which had an adverse effect upon the horses and in June Ralph was given three months leave to return to Calcutta to procure remount horses. He boarded the *Sulimany* which had been due to carry the Great Bell of Rangoon to India, but the latter sank while being floated from the shore. He arrived in Calcutta on 31<sup>st</sup> July. In November he re-embarked with 49 mounts. Peace was signed in mid-February 1826.

Any pleasure he may have felt at the end of the campaign would have been considerably dampened by the news of the death of his brother, Edward, on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1826.<sup>31</sup> The death occurred on the western coast of Burma at Akyab in Arracan province. This usually boasted a fairly healthy climate but, during the campaign, it was reported that, “The sickness in Arracan has been most extensive. Almost the entire force had experienced its effects, and in many cases it has proved fatal to the British officers ... The cause of the disease is traced to the unusual sultriness of the sea, the humidity of the place, and the miasmas arising from the stagnant water”. One report to Amherst in May 1825 noted “the deplorable sickly state of the Army in that quarter”.<sup>32</sup>

Following his marriage Edward had been appointed a Brevet Captain in 1821 based in Benares and then in 1823 at Berhampore. He was appointed a Deputy Assistant Commissary General (2<sup>nd</sup> class) in Calcutta towards the end of 1823 and in September 1824 was raised to 1<sup>st</sup> class status.<sup>33</sup> His wife and five surviving children were sent back to England early in 1826,<sup>34</sup> and they never saw Edward again. It was probably as a consequence of the influence of Ralph with the Governor-General that he had been posted to Akyab. His death was not the result of climate or ill-health, but most probably carelessness. He drowned while bathing in the sea.

Ralph had sent his wife, his daughter Harriet and his four surviving Indian-born children home with Edward's family on board *The Princess Charlotte of Wales*,<sup>35</sup> captained by Christopher Biden,<sup>36</sup> which left Calcutta on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1826. It proved a fairly eventful journey. One crewman died two days into the sailing, and two soldiers died, one from “Dropsy and a complication of disorders”. In mid-March they encountered a French vessel and a Captain Walker, who was on board as an insane patient, jumped overboard in an effort to reach it, and drowned. Two seamen were given 48 lashes for theft and another received 12 for disobedience. The ship berthed at St Helena for the first 12 days of April. They suffered the tail end of a monsoon and gales forced them to batten down the hatches, and in April they were hit by torrents of rain, thunder and lightning. During the voyage, Jane Robina Sneyd gave birth to her eighth child at 7am on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Ten days later it was

---

<sup>31</sup> *AJMR* (July-December 1826), XXII, 445. For Edward's will, see n.18. Ralph administrated Edward's estate: *Quarterly Oriental Magazine, Review & Register* (1826), V, clxxxii.

<sup>32</sup> IOR: H/666, pp.525-526, 537. *AJMR* (January-June 1826), XXI, 244.

<sup>33</sup> For Edward's career; *AJMR* (January-June 1824), XVII, 554; XVIII (July-December 1824), 513, 617; XIX, 280.

<sup>34</sup> They travelled with Ralph's wife and children on the *Princess Charlotte of Wales* – see n.34.

<sup>35</sup> *AJMR*, XXII, 125. Harriet appears to be listed as ‘Mrs H Sneyd’. For the passenger list and log book of the *Princess Charlotte of Wales*, see IOR: L/MAR/B/53G.

<sup>36</sup> For Biden and his brother, see Richard Morgan, ‘Captains Outrageous: tracing the career of William Henry Biden’, *The Journal of the Families in British India Society*, (Spring 2015), no.33, pp. 16-27.

baptised Charlotte Biden Sneyd, thus receiving the names of both the ship and its captain.<sup>37</sup> At the end of the month the augmented Sneyd family disembarked at Gravesend.

On 11<sup>th</sup> April 1826 the Governor-General had expressed his gratitude for the contribution of his Body Guard in the Kingdom of Ava: "The detachments of Bengal Native Troops employed in Ava, consisting of a portion of the Governor-General's Body Guard commanded by Captain Sneyd ... have been animated throughout by the noblest spirit of gallantry and zeal". Later that month Ralph returned to Calcutta on board the *Enterprise* which had arrived in Calcutta from Falmouth on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1825, becoming the first steam-ship to sail from to India from England.

In his capacity as Commandant of the Body Guard, Ralph was given little time to rest as the Governor-General determined to undertake a lengthy and arduous tour of the Upper Provinces.<sup>38</sup> Amherst left the residence on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1826 by flotilla along the Hooghly and Ganges for the lengthy journey to Patna and Benares, and on to Allahabad, where Ralph's eldest daughter (Harriet) was to marry 11 years later. By mid-November he was at Cawnpore and awaited the arrival of the ruler of Oudh. On 20<sup>th</sup> November the monarch crossed a bridge of boats and, under the command of Ralph, "the whole of the troops were drawn up on parade". Amherst and his entourage, including Ralph, were mounted on elephants to meet the king at breakfast and exchange presents. On the following day the King returned the compliment. Three days later they departed for the most entrancing city in Oudh, its capital, Lucknow, which was probably the most impressive and spectacular city in India.

The official report revealed that for the entry into the city, "The Governor-General marched from the camp in full state and was met at the suburbs by the King of Oudh with the principal officers of his court and an immense retinue of elephants", all cheered on a by a massive rent-a-crowd. The compliment was again returned at the residency on the next day. This was followed by an ever-spectacular firework display. The visitors were also treated to the nautch, or dancing display. Correctly displayed with attractive females, it was agreed that this could be evocative and even erotic. However, throughout much of the 1820s British guests suffered the king's "favourite nautch woman", described as looking like "a large bloated toad [who] made such a noise as no-one who has not heard her can fancy"; one other recalled "one fat old woman [who] was very obstreperous; moreover she was awfully ugly".<sup>39</sup>

Additionally Amherst and his retinue had to witness the inevitable and generally unvaried drawn-out animal fights. The first event was a herd of buffaloes pitted against tigers, but it seems on this visit the latter refused to show any interest. Rhinoceroses could be set

---

<sup>37</sup> See the entries in Biden's log, 5 & 25 May 1826.

<sup>38</sup> For details and itinerary: *AJMR* (January-June 1827), XXIII, 524-525, 668-669; (July-December 1827), XXIV, 233-235, 487-489. Hodson, *Historical Records*, pp.113-114.

<sup>39</sup> For the nautch and wild animal diversions in Lucknow, see Haines, pp.282-287.

against tigers, and an elephant took on a leopard or even a rhino. So obsessive were the native rulers about such displays that even quails were trained to fight at the breakfast table! Ralph and his companions departed from Lucknow on 5<sup>th</sup> December, travelling to Shajehanpore where, during the Indian Mutiny 30 years later, two of Edward's offspring were to suffer a harrowing experience, and then on to Bareilly where Edward had been awarded his pistols and sword.

On 8<sup>th</sup> January 1827 they reached Ralph's former haunt of Agra where they were to camp for several days, receiving a 19-gun salute as they crossed the River Jumna. They visited the Taj Mahal and the fort and its arsenal, then kept in the Diwan-i Am. It was the last occasion on which Ralph Henry Sneyd would be there and, had he lived long enough, he would have learned that a tomb would be erected in front of the audience hall for John Russell Colvin, the last Lieutenant-General of the North-West Provinces, who died there



*Taj Mahal,  
watercolour,  
anonymous, 1800  
(British Library  
Online Gallery, Asia,  
Pacific & Africa  
Collections.)*

from cholera during the Indian Mutiny in September 1857. Colvin's wife was Ralph's own half-sister, Emma Sophia, born to Revd Wettenhall's second wife on the Isle of Wight in 1807, and who resided with Ralph in Calcutta when she arrived about 1822. Ralph missed the wedding on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1827, as he had departed two months earlier.<sup>40</sup>

Amherst held a durbar in tents before moving on the five miles or so to Secundra, where the Maharaja entertained them on the sands of the Jumna with illuminations and fireworks. Leaving behind the tomb of the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, at Secundra the massive procession travelled to his abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri and then on the massive fortress of Bharatpur, famed for its endless illuminations, which had fallen to the British one

---

<sup>40</sup> *AJMR*, XXIV, 605.

year earlier,<sup>41</sup> an event which had persuaded the Burmese to come to terms with the British.

The procession was to continue on to Delhi, where Ralph's great friend, Charles Metcalfe was the Resident, then wound up to Simla in the hills, but Ralph must have left it at some time before this as he sailed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1827 from Calcutta on the *Coromandel* with his sister, Harriet Macan and her three children.<sup>42</sup> Pausing for a few days on St Helena in July, they arrived at Plymouth and Devonport on 6<sup>th</sup> September, handily enough for Ralph and Harriet to call on their 75-year-old father in Newchurch. Ralph was elevated to the rank of Major on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1828, but officially retired on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1829 and, primarily as a result of his enduring ill-health, never returned to the sub-continent.

## Retirement

The Sneyds were a close family and it is probable that Ralph decided to retire where he could be close to his father. The decision to live in Hampshire had been taken before he left India; a military colleague, Captain Dawkins, wrote to his own grandfather, General Sir Henry Clinton, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1827 (whilst Ralph was *en route* to England):<sup>43</sup>

*I must introduce you to Captain Sneyd who is likely to become a neighbour of yours, at least ... living in a small village near Southampton. He has long been in command of the Body Guard, was in the Burman Territories with them and has since been up country with Lord Amherst, and I think you would like him and to hear a good deal about India from him. He has now resigned the Body Guard ... I think you will like Captain Sneyd.*

By mid-1828 he appears to have moved into Mattingley Lodge (at an annual rent of £100), advertised as a good dwelling house, with detached cottage, coach house, stables, lawn and garden with 12 acres of meadow land, "fit for occupation by a genteel family or sportsman".<sup>44</sup> Ralph became quickly integrated into the local social scene, as in the month in which he returned game (or shooting) certificates were issued to his half-brother, Clement Sneyd of Newchurch, and to himself at Southampton.<sup>45</sup> The memorials to the family in St Michael's Church at Heckfield indicate that they quickly became respected members of the community and congregation. Rural Hampshire was presumably much quieter and more intimate than the cacophony of life in India. Distances were certainly

---

<sup>41</sup> Ralph's brother-in-law, Turner Macan, had been chief negotiator during the siege: Haines, pp. 295-315.

<sup>42</sup> *AJMR*, XXIV, 529. *Exeter Flying Post*, 13 September 1827.

<sup>43</sup> IOR: Mss Eur D 920, pp.99-100.

<sup>44</sup> *Reading Mercury*, 20 & 27 February 1841.

<sup>45</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, 8 October 1827.

more relaxed than the hundreds of miles covered on the sub-continent. Mattingley and Heckfield were part of the same parish until 1894 and, although he lived in the former, the parish church, St Michael's, was in Heckfield – but being only two or three miles apart, the distance may barely have registered with him.

Ralph may have taken an interest in the annual fairs which took place at Mattingley and Heckfield, and perhaps even the cricket team and hunts which assembled at the New Inn at Heckfield and the Leather Bottle at Mattingley.<sup>46</sup> Thefts were not uncommon in the locality, and on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1833 the *Reading Mercury* reported that at some time between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June “a large and valuable stock of bacon, ham and pigs’ faces were stolen from the premises of Major Sneyd, Mattingley Lodge, Hampshire. A reward of £10 is offered for the discovery of the villain”.

A biographical note indicates that in October 1840, very shortly before Ralph's death, his close friend Dr Ranald Martin met acquaintances in England before his return to India, and it may be that Ralph was amongst those. The Sneyds were a close and sociable family and appear to have made a conscious effort to stay in touch with one another. When his brother-in-law, Turner Macan, departed from Cowes for India in May 1835,<sup>47</sup> it is probable that Ralph met him and his sister, Harriet, also taking the opportunity to visit his father.

The wider Sneyd family also maintained its links with India. In 1851 his sister-in-law from Yateley returned to the sub-continent with three daughters who were evidently unable to find suitable husbands in England. One of Elizabeth's three daughters died from a fever but the other two did find husbands. One eventually died in Bristol, but tragedy struck the other daughter (and her husband), and also her brother, Henry (who had inherited the pistols and sword of his father, Edward), when they were betrayed and brutally murdered by native soldiers during the Indian Mutiny on 10 June 1857.<sup>48</sup>

Ralph's first child, Harriet, clearly did not find the dubious circumstances of her birth a handicap. In 1836 she was sent to India and was placed in the care of her aunt, Ralph's half-sister, Emma Sophia Colvin. In 1837 the Colvins accompanied the tour of the new Governor-General, Lord Auckland. The latter's sister recorded that Harriet started out as rather shy, but became increasingly friendly with a civil servant on the tour, Cecil Beadon. The two of them were married on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1837 at Allahabad.<sup>49</sup> She died in August 1855 before Beadon was knighted when he became Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, but her mother (Ralph's wife, Jane) continued to keep in touch with Beadon, who was one of

---

<sup>46</sup> For the fairs and cricket matches, see for instance *Reading Mercury*, 16 March 1829, 25 May 1829, 1 June 1829, 1 November 1830, 9 May 1831.

<sup>47</sup> Haines, p.396.

<sup>48</sup> IOR: L/MIL/10/64, p.397.

<sup>49</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1838, Vol.163, 421. Emily Eden, *Up the Country: letters written to her sister from the Upper Provinces of India*, (OUP, 1937), entries for 5,8 & 9 November and 7 December 1837.

the executors of her will. Jane Sneyd died in London on 15 December 1878 almost 38 years to the day after Ralph – having outlived 10 of her 12 children.<sup>50</sup>

At the other end of the dynasty, Ralph's youngest daughter, Katharine, born in Yateley in 1833, married itinerant British diplomat, George Glynn Petre, in the British Embassy in Paris on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1858 and, following her husband's knighthood, became Lady Katherine Petre.<sup>51</sup> Her death took place in December 1916 – which was almost 100 years after the untimely death in India of the brother and sister she never knew.

Ralph's eldest surviving son was named Charles Metcalfe Sneyd in honour of Ralph's close, eminent acquaintance in India, who was to be one of the executors of his will and guardian of his children.<sup>52</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> March 1848 Charles drowned in the Ganges near Rajmahal "when endeavouring to reach shore to procure assistance for suffering fellow passengers on board the Benares steamer when on fire".<sup>53</sup> The next son, Nathaniel Robert followed a similar career path and was also Commander of the Military Police in Chandernagore. He eventually became a Lieut-Colonel and died at Ryde in December 1867. The subsequent one, Samuel, trained as an engineer, but died after only one month in India. His youngest son, named Ralph Henry after himself, was born at Yateley in 1832, but died in London at the age of 12, and lies buried alongside his father in St Michael's churchyard.

It would be surprising if Ralph did not visit his father at Merston on the Isle of Wight shortly before the latter's death on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1840 – but he was to outlive his father by only three weeks, passing away at Mattingley Lodge on 16 December.<sup>54</sup> One suspects he knew that he would not live too much longer when he made his will on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1839, leaving everything to "my beloved wife Jane Robina Sneyd".

The passing of such men as Ralph Henry Sneyd generated extravagant praise, which was not necessarily unjustified. Ralph's brother-in-law, Turner Macan, died in 1836, and around 1839 his wife, Harriet, erected a marble memorial to him which still stands in Armagh Cathedral, revealing that, "His mortal remains repose in the East, the scene of his laborious and distinguished life, and of his lamented death. He lived in the exercise of Christian

---

<sup>50</sup> Entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) for Sir Cecil Beadon. *The Morning Post*, 7 February 1879.

<sup>51</sup> Entry in ODNB for Sir George Glynn Petre. Entry for Kate Sneyd in *The Court Album of the Female Aristocracy engraved by the best artists from drawings by John Hayter*, (London, 1852). In a letter to a friend in Florence in 1862, the poet Robert Browning noted meeting 'a beautiful Miss Sneyd'.

<sup>52</sup> For Ralph's will: TNA: Probate 11/1940 (4 March 1839).

<sup>53</sup> IOR: L/MIL/10/45, p.362.

<sup>54</sup> Three of Revd Wettenhall Sneyd's sons pre-deceased him. Ralph survived him by only three weeks, and half-brother Clement outlived his father by only a few months!

virtues ... This tablet was erected by his attached and bereaved widow, the witness of his exemplary life".<sup>55</sup> Ralph's widow did likewise, encompassing other members of their family. In St Michael's Church at Heckfield you can read that Ralph Henry Sneyd "was amiable in all the relations of life: a pious Christian, a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, a loving husband, a kind father, a warm friend and an honourable upright man. He lived beloved by all who knew him and died lamented by an afflicted widow and numerous family".

---

<sup>55</sup> James Stevens Curl, *Funerary Monuments & Memorials in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh*, (Whitstable, 2013), pp.85-88. Haines, pp.409-410.



## **The Life of Joseph Knowles**

*Aubrey Knowles*

“My grandfather was born in 1824” – when I say this I see the disbelief on people's faces. But it is true, Joseph Knowles was born in Quebec in 1824. His early life is a mystery: his father was probably a soldier serving in the Quebec Garrison. In 1841 Joseph was in Liverpool and on 9<sup>th</sup> April signed up for the HEIC Army. He described himself as a ‘confectioner’- possibly this is how he worked his passage from Canada? He was sent to Chatham on 14<sup>th</sup> April and sailed to Madras on the SS Northumberland on 24<sup>th</sup> May. I am curious to know how the recruits travelled from Liverpool to Chatham: it has been suggested that they were marched down, but Peter Bailey (FIBIS’ Life President) thinks this unlikely as they would lose too many by desertion, and so they would have to be sent down by sea!

He served as a private with the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Light Infantry based at Fort St. George, and in 1843 married Barbara Caroline MacDougal. He was 19 and she was 14 years old. She was born in Jalna and so her father was probably with the HEIC, though so far I have not been able to find any information about him or his marriage. Barbara became pregnant and John was born in Trichinopoly in 1846. Robert was born 14 months later in 1849. They were then stationed in Secunderabad where Elizabeth and Adelaide were born. Sadly all four children died in infancy in India. Joseph was promoted to Corporal in 1848 and to Sergeant in 1851. In 1853, having served 12 years, he re-enlisted for a further five years.

Joseph was probably in the south of India during the Mutiny, was not involved in any of the battles and did not receive any medals. Afterwards left the HEIC Army to become a sergeant major as an effective supernumary in the 1<sup>st</sup> Nagpur Irregular Infantry, which was based at Seetabuldee. He signed on in 1858 for a further three years and then returned with Barbara to Glasgow where he left the army with a pension of 2s. 6d. per day, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1860. They appear in the 1861 Glasgow census. While he was in India he took an interest in religion and joined a non-conformist group. In retirement he planned to do the Lord's work, and so in the census he described himself as a Chelsea Pensioner and

### **Missionary**

They then moved down to London where he embarked on missionary work in the East End. He returned from India with enough cash to build himself a house in Stoke Newington and his own chapel in Sclater Street, north of Liverpool Street Station. It was a cheap building with a corrugated-iron roof – known as an ‘Iron Room’, and the shell of it is still in existence today. It is said that he marched around the streets there wearing his dress uniform and sword, saying that he was fighting for the Lord. A family story is that he knew William Booth and gave him the idea for the Salvation Army. In the 1891 payment of his pension there is a note saying that beyond his pension of £6.10s.0d. per annum, he had other income making a total of over £150 p.a. He thus returned from India with a considerable nest egg, probably accumulated through part-time trading.

Barbara died in June 1878, and shortly after, in January 1889, Joseph married Sarah Clements, my grandmother. He was then aged 54 years and she was only 19 years. Her first child was born in December 1879 and they went on to have a family of seven children, of whom the youngest was my father. Joseph died in 1913, but I have not been able to locate his grave. It is likely that as a non-conformist living in Stoke Newington he is in Abney Park Cemetery, but I have not managed to find him in their records.



*Joseph Knowles and his family circa 1902. Aubrey's father is at the right end of the top row. (Picture supplied by Aubrey Knowles.)*

My father was born in 1893, and I was conceived when he was 42 years old – hence the spread of the generations.

## **John Brierly in India**

*Elizabeth Wilde*

I have spent more than the last 15 years researching the Dutch ancestors, relatives and friends of my son-in-law's Van Someren Van Vrijenes family, who began life as eighteenth century V.O.C. employees on the Coromandel Coast of India, but who later became very British HEIC civil servants, wealthy Eurasian Madras merchants, Indian army officers or European missionaries. I had no idea that my own family had any connection with the sub-continent other than the tantalising information that my maternal great-great-grandfather, John Henry Brierley (or Brearly) of Bolton in Lancashire gave his place of birth in each of the UK censuses from 1841 to 1881 as Bombay, East Indies. From his given age in the various censuses, I presumed John Henry had been born around 1818. In the 1881 census he was recorded as a widower, aged 62, born in the East Indies, a farm labourer and an inmate of the Bolton Union Workhouse, Fishpool, Farnsworth, Lancashire, where he died aged 68 in September 1886.

No searches of FIBIS, the India Office Family Records or the IGI produced any record of his birth, although through his 1840 marriage certificate I found John Henry's father was named John Brierley and his occupation was 'weaver. Using that information, and with the help of members of the Bolton Surname List, I discovered his possible parents in the 1841 Bolton census, John Brierley, a weaver and wife 'Jonah' (I presumed a mis-spelling of Joanna or Johanna – in the 1861 census her name is written as Joe Hannah) living a few doors away from the newly-married John Henry Brierley in Bolton-le-Moors. But nothing to explain the birth of John Henry Brierley in India unless his father had served in the British army there in his youth.

As the subsequent descendants of the Brierley family were mainly semi-skilled iron foundry or cotton mill workers in Bolton, I knew it was very unlikely that John Henry's father, John Brierley, had been anything other than an ordinary soldier in India, if he served at all, and so was hardly to be found recorded in East India Registers or Military Lists, although I searched in every India resource I had covering the period up to 1820.

I had almost given up hope of ever finding anything more about him, or discovering whether or not John Brierley had been in India until findmypast.co.uk began providing searchable Chelsea Pensioners' records online.

Although at first I could find nothing on a John BRIERLEY in the records, by experimenting with different spellings of his surname I found the discharge papers for a John BREARLY, which fitted roughly with the age and exactly with the occupation of weaver for John Henry's father as listed in the 1841 census and gave his place of birth as Walmsley, Manchester. Walmsley is actually part of Bolton-le-Moors, and searching the parish birth records I found a John Brierley, christened on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1778 at St Peter's, Bolton-le-Moors, the child of Sarah Brierley, no father named, so presumably illegitimate. Perhaps this is him, as it is the only child found christened in the right area at about the right time and with the right name, but there is no proof so it is just a wild guess.

DISCHARGE PAPERS (Chelsea Pensioners - findmypast.co.uk)

**John BREARLY** b. 1779, Walmsley, Manchester

Enlisted : on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1797 aged 18 years. Served with the 86<sup>th</sup> (Royal County Down) Regiment of Foot, (formerly the 86<sup>th</sup> Leinster Regt of Foot)

Discharged : 6 Jun 1820, having served 23 years, most of them in India. Rank at discharge : Quarter Master Sergeant Conduct : Very Good Description : Brown hair, grey eyes, fair complexion Height : 5ft 11 inches Occupation : Weaver

Age at discharge : 41 years

Reason for discharge : "Has sickness of his extremities, particularly his left leg. Is also nearly worn out from lengthy service in India" Signed Regimental surgeon.

I then went to the (then) newly available IGI website <http://pilot.familysearch.org/recordsearch> and tried looking for variants of the surname BRIERLEY and was delighted to find the following marriage to a Johanna, and three births to the couple in India, including the birth of my great-great-grandfather, John Henry Brierley.

John BEARLY [sic] married Johanna O'Day on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1814, Masulipatam, Madras (IGI M000573)

Carolina Brearly [sic] born 22 Jun 1815 & chr. 16 Jul 1815 at Masulipatam (C000673) (C000668) Elizabeth (Elisa) Brearly [sic] born 11 Aug 1816, chr. 11 Sep 1816 Masulipatam (C000669)

Buried 11 Aug 1817 aged 1 year, Masulipatam, ( B002001)

John Henry Brearly [sic] born 22 Jun 1818, chr. 13 Sep 1818 at St. Thomas Mount, Madras (IGI C000670)

I also found transcripts and images of the births of Carolina and John Henry on British India Office Ecclesiastical Returns Births & Baptisms on findmypast.co.uk which stated John Brearly was a Sergeant in HM 86<sup>th</sup> Regt.

"St Thomas's Mount 13 Sept 1818.

*John Henry, son of John Brearly Qtr. Mstr. Serjt.in HM 86<sup>th</sup> Regt and Johanna his wife born 22 June 1818 was this day fully baptized by me. Signed Chas Ball, Chaplain" "Masulipatam 16<sup>th</sup> July 1815,*

*This is to certify that Carolina Daughter of John and Joannah Brearley born on 22 Jun 1815 was publickly baptized by me according to the form of public baptism as set forth in the rubric of the Church of England. Signed by Thomas Gahagan, Asst. Magistrate."*

Clearly, from this, John Henry was born in the Madras Presidency rather than Bombay, and left India as a baby, with his parents and oldest sister, his other sister Elizabeth having died in infancy.

The next child of John and Joanna, Sarah Brierley was christened on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1821, at St. Peter, Bolton-le-Moors, Lancashire (IGI: P007154) where the family settled in 1820 after they returned to England and John Brierley left the army. This birth was the first instance of the name being spelled BRIERLEY, which it remained from then on. By coincidence, this was also the name of the possible unmarried mother (Sarah Brierley) of John Brierley and the same christening place.

John Henry's mother, Johanna O'Day Brierley gave her place of birth as Liverpool, Lancashire in the 1861 census, but I have so far found it impossible to trace her, as I was not sure whether or not O'Day was her actual birth surname, whether she was one of the few women who travelled to India with a soldier husband, or was the daughter of another soldier serving with the 86<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. However, one thing is sure – she was born in Britain. Reading *Poor Relations – The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India 1773-1833* by C. J. Hawes, the author states that no Eurasian or Indian born wives or children were allowed to accompany their British soldier husbands when their regiments returned to the UK, only wives born in Britain. Joanna, Carolina and John Henry went back to England with John Brierley, so all three must have been classed as British by birth.

In 1841 John Brierley's age is given as 55 and Joanna's as 45, but as census enumerators were told to round down the ages of all adults over the age of 15 to the nearest five years, the ages in that census are not reliable. Also in the 1841 census there is no record of place of birth, other than a Y or N to state whether or not the person was born within that county. Interestingly, by Johanna Brierley's name there is neither Y nor N, but in the final column the letter I, which might indicate her birth in Ireland. From his birthdate in 1779, John Brierley was actually 62 years of age in 1841. In 1861, his widow Joanna Brierley states her birthplace as Liverpool and gives her age as 70, suggesting her birth was around 1791, making her about 12 years younger than her husband, and aged about 23 at their 1814 marriage, when John was about 35. This made me more convinced that she was probably the daughter of an Irish soldier in the 86<sup>th</sup> regiment who had accompanied her family to India where she had married another soldier and been widowed.

I also found the death of a first wife of John Brearley, but nothing to indicate who she was or where she came from, but it proved that the 35 year old John Brearley was a widower when he married Johanna O'Day, and remarried rather quickly after just three months.

**Martha Brearley** wife, buried 26 Jan 1814 (IGI B00200-0)

"Masulipatam 26 Jany 1814

*This is to certify that the remains of Martha Brearley late a wife of Serjeant Brearley HM 86<sup>th</sup> Regt were decently interred and the funeral service of the Church of England read over him[sic] by me. Signed J O Todd Magistrate"*

findmypast.com British India Office Ecclesiastical Returns – Deaths & Burials Images

"Masulipatam 1<sup>st</sup> May 1814

*This is to certify that John Brearley and Johannah O Day were united in holy matrimony according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England on this*

*1<sup>st</sup> day of May 1814 Signed J O Todd Magistrate. Witnesses John Williams and Richard Roberts” findmypast.com British India Office Ecclesiastical Returns – Marriages Image*

*Married :1 May 1814 Fort St George Madras John Breavley[sic] & Johannah O'Day (IGI M000573)*

*Married : 1 May 1814 Masulipatam Madras John Bearly & Johanna O'Day (IGI M000578)*

Finding the following information convinced me that Johanna was the young widow of a fellow soldier of John Brierley.

I found the birth on the IGI (C00066-8) on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1814 at Masulipatam, Madras, of a male child to James O'Day and wife Johanna or Joannah. I then found two written records on the findmypast.com British India Office Ecclesiastical Returns of Births & Baptisms, both of which carried the same information, but the second, showed that James O'Day was listed as a Private in HM's 86<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, the same regiment as John Brierley.

*Masulipatam 17 April 1814*

*This is to certify that James, son of James and Johanna O'Day born on 11 April 1814 was publickly [sic] baptised by me according to the form of publick baptism set forth in the rubric of the Church of England. Signed J.O. Tod, Magistrate.*

I then found the following information listed on ancestry.co.uk.

*Canada, British Regimental Registers of Service, 1756-1900 ancestry.co.uk*  
**John Brearley:** *Size at enlistment 5ft 3 1/2 inches; Size at age 24 5ft 11 inches; Complexion Fair; Eyes Grey; Hair Brown; Visage Round; Where born County*

*Lancashire; Parish, Walmsley; Trade, Weaver; Attestation, Manchester; Period of service, Unlimited: Enlisted by, Capt. Grant. To Corporal 17 Aug 1803; To Sergeant 25 Nov 1804 ; to Quarter Master Sergeant 1807; Discharged 17 June 1820, Chelsea; Outpensioned; Unfit for further service; Very good character.*

**James O'Day:** *Height 5ft 4 1/2 inches; age at enlistment 20. Fresh complexion, round visage; grey eyes; fair hair, born Limerick county & city; Parish St Mary's. Occ. Victualler; Rank Private; Volunteer from the Limerick Militia; enlisted 12 Aug 1811; Died in Camp, 29 Sep 1813.*

If James O'Day died in September 1813, Joanna would have been left a pregnant widow. John's wife, Martha Brearley died in January 1814, so a marriage between the two on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1814 is highly possible.

Evidence shows that soldiers' widows in India, particularly those of British origin, married again very quickly on the death of a husband, as they were paid a small pension only for one month after the death of a spouse. The famous, if perhaps apocryphal story of the weeping widow being consoled after her soldier husband's funeral, and explaining to the concerned friend that she was weeping not from grief, but because she had foolishly, and

far too quickly, accepted an offer of marriage from a corporal at her husband's graveside, only to have to turn down a second, much better offer from a Sergeant Major a few hours later, was probably very true to life for regimental widows of that period.

Unfortunately I have been unable to find a record of James O'Day's marriage to Johanna which might show her birth surname. From her ages in various later UK censuses, it is likely she was born around 1791 in Liverpool or Ireland, and so was probably the daughter of yet another soldier in the 86th Regt. of Foot and travelled to India as a child when the regiment moved there in 1799.

Marriage for soldiers in most infantry regiments was limited to a very small percentage of the men and dependent on the permission of their Commanding Officer, which was given to only a few, mainly NCOs with a record of good conduct and savings in the bank.

Women "married with permission" were listed as being "on the Strength" of the regiment and were granted a small sum of money as pay and some rations. Many of them worked as cooks, washerwomen or seamstresses, or as maids and nursemaids in the homes of officers. There was no accommodation provided, so they lived in the barracks with the men, usually in a curtained off corner. Sergeants and other senior NCOs sometimes had a room for themselves, but it was still hardly congenial accommodation for bringing up a family.

*Life in the British Army 1760-1913 (findmypast.co.uk)*

*Marriage was discouraged as it was seen as a distraction from duty but six women were allowed per 100 men by the first half of the nineteenth century. This ratio was strictly enforced for foreign assignments. These women would comprise selected wives of the soldiers and would live usually in a tented-off area at the back of the barracks in return for doing chores.*

I checked the FIBlwiki site for details of the 86<sup>th</sup> Regt. of Foot, and discovered it was the third regiment of that name raised in Shropshire, Lancashire, and the West Riding by Colonel Cornelius Cuyler. It served first as a marine corps, and after many naval engagements was sent to Madras in 1799. In 1881 it was amalgamated (along with several other regiments) into the Royal Irish Rifles, which later became the Royal Ulster Rifles. In an attempt to find if there were any records that might have Muster Rolls or names of married soldiers for the regiment in the early 1800s, I contacted the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum in Belfast, but unfortunately they had no such information available.

**86<sup>th</sup> Regt. Of Foot**

1793 raised as Sir Cornelius Cuyler's Shropshire Volunteers at Shrewsbury from men of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire as a volunteer corps.

1794 became the 86th (the Shropshire Volunteers)  
Regiment of Foot 1795 absorbed personnel of 118th  
Regiment of Foot

1806 became the 86th (The Leinster) Regiment of Foot

1812 became the 86th (Royal County Down) Regiment of Foot

However, again using FIBlwiki, I was able to read and search the Historical Record of the 86<sup>th</sup> or The Royal County Down Regiment of Foot, 1793 to 1842, and discovered that John Brierley was mentioned twice in the account, albeit very briefly, on pages 23 and 26.

**Service in British India** information taken from the Historical Record of the 86<sup>th</sup> (Fibis) 1799 17 May, landed at Madras upward of 1,300 men, but stayed there only 1 month.

**Page 13** “a splendid body of men whose appearance excited much admiration”. 1799 22 July arrived in Bombay

1800 Ceylon - 3 companies sailed for Ceylon, but returned almost immediately to join the force going to Egypt.

1801 Egypt

1802 Bombay

1803 2<sup>nd</sup> Maratha War,

**Page 26** “Captain Maclaurin....was wounded and made prisoner, but he was rescued from the Arabs by **Private John Brierly.**”

**Page 23** “....and **Private Brierly** was promoted corporal, and afterwards serjeant.” 1806 Bombay and Goa

1810 Mauritius Campaign and Madras

86<sup>th</sup> Regt of Foot. Regimental Muster. 25 Dec 1814- 24 Jan 1815. Brierly John, On Duty. Colour Sergeant. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

1819 England – 23 Oct Regiment landed at Gravesend after an absence of 23 years & 4 months.

John Brierley, who had reached the rank of quarter master sergeant resigned from the army in Chelsea on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1820 shortly after the regiment returned to England.

By the 1841 census John and Johanna were living in Halliwell Road, Little Bolton, near their eldest daughter Carolina or Caroline, who had married William Reeve on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1836 at St Mary the Virgin, Deane, and their newly married eldest son, my great-great-grandfather, John Henry Brierley and his bride, Mary Fallows.

John Brierley spent the rest of his life in Bolton working as a weaver, dying in October 1851.



## **Lieutenant (Assistant Surgeon) R. L. W. Beveridge**

*Allan Stanistreet*

Readers may recall my article on this officer in *FIBIS* Journal 29 (Spring 2013), in which I recounted how I came by his India General Service Medal and gave a brief résumé of his career. I also lamented the fact that he clearly had other medals and these had been split up after his death.

It is unfortunately not uncommon, upon the death of a recipient, for his surviving relatives to apportion individual items in a group to various family members, although some unscrupulous dealers in the past have also been known to split groups and sell the individual items on their own, hoping to raise more money thereby. Uniting split groups is a 'holy grail' of most serious collectors and researchers.

In one paragraph of my article, I expressed the view that Mr Beveridge had probably been entitled to the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, also missing, and this enables me to bring readers up-to-date with the story so far.

Once in a while, a chink of light pierces the gloom and this happened very recently when I was contacted by a member of the Orders and Medals Research Society who is also, probably, a member of *FIBIS*, who remembered reading my original article on Mr Beveridge. She drew my attention to an item in a medal dealer's online catalogue which advertised for sale a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to, wonderful to relate, 1<sup>st</sup> Class Assistant Surgeon R. L. W. Beveridge of the Indian Medical Department. The medal was described as "rare", though the majority of Assistant Surgeons who served for the required period of time received this medal. Indeed, I have five in my collection from King Edward VII to King George VI.

Of course, this item was a 'must have' and I contacted the dealer straight away to see if he still had the medal. He did and I immediately reserved it. I simply could not let this opportunity pass and it now remains to track down his Naval General Service Medal (which is rare to the IMD) and his two World War One medals. I live in hope. Onwards and upwards!

## Colonel Thomas Barrett and Friends

*Ed Storey*

In the autumn of 2003, Lawrie Butler (primary writer) and I wrote an article for the Journal<sup>56</sup> about my ancestor, Joseph Storey. In the article was a brief mention of the wife of his son, George. Her name is listed as Mrs. E. H. Storey (née Barrett). Since then, I have worked to uncover more about her ancestors and found another military man with a story at least as interesting as Lt. Col Joseph Storey. Elizabeth Hester Barrett was born 7<sup>th</sup> November 1816<sup>57</sup> and married GMA Storey 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1836<sup>58</sup>. Hester seems to be a family name, although I have yet to find its provenance.

Barrett, however, is the name with the story behind it. Elizabeth was the daughter of James Barrett and Elizabeth Goldie, married 4<sup>th</sup> May 1814<sup>59</sup>, in Madras. Elizabeth Goldie might have been born about 1796. She died 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1820, when Elizabeth and her sister were both very young. I have been unable to find any definitive record of the death of James, except that his will was executed in 1824<sup>60</sup>. Goldie is another name that is still unknown to me although it is likely Scottish.

In the will, James references his aunt, Ann Simpson. Ann is a pivotal person in this tale, in part because she left a long and detailed will of her own<sup>61</sup>, written in 1823. In it she mentions James and his siblings; as well as her brother, Colonel Thomas and her own son, Henry Chapman. Sadly, the given names of neither of her husband's nor the wife of Thomas are mentioned. In the death notice Ann's husband states he was the baggage master for the Duke of York on the continent. We will temporarily switch the story to Thomas, although Ann will not be forgotten.

Little is known about the Barrett family. There are occasional references to a Portuguese origin, although Ann left something to a Methodist mission in her will. The family seems to have lived near Madras, in St Thome', site of a Portuguese mission church and Thomas is referred to, disparagingly, as being Portuguese in some English government publications<sup>62</sup>. There is some speculation that the name Barretto could have been changed to Barrett, but

---

<sup>56</sup> FIBIS Journal Number 10, Autumn 2003, page 11.

<sup>57</sup> India Births & Baptisms 1786 to 1947

<sup>58</sup> India Marriages 1792 to 1948

<sup>59</sup> India Deaths & Burials 1719 to 1948

<sup>60</sup> Available on FindMyPast.com

<sup>61</sup> Available on FindMyPast.com

<sup>62</sup> Marriages at Ft St George, Madras reprinted from *The Genealogist*, Exeter 1907 pg. 72. Also on Family History film #506956

I have found no evidence. The only son of Henry was on the board of a Portuguese charity at some later time in Madras.

In their marriage record, both Henry and his wife, Augusta Matilda Hall, were referred to as “natives.” This likely means they were born in India, but it could imply other nationalities than English. The record is not clear on this. In Ann’s will, there are several properties and sums of cash to be distributed. It is clear that the family was fairly well to do. I have not been able to find out anything substantial about Augusta’s family.

What is fairly clear is that Thomas worked for the Nabob Omdut Ul Omrah of the Carnatic from about 1790 until his death in 1802. Not only is he mentioned in official records in the UK<sup>63</sup> for some time after his death; family members are described by their relation to him in their own obituaries. The fact that the Colonel was successfully able to communicate with the Nabob might make one to think he was born in India, so he had time to learn the Persian language. I could not find him in the Printed Army Lists of officers with any certainty.

There is a 1799 document<sup>64</sup>, wherein the Colonel is referred to as “our principal, confidential secretary and English interpreter.” From this and other documents it seems clear not only was the Colonel highly trusted by the Nabob; he also was effective in negotiations on the Nabob’s behalf. How he came to be in this position is not clear. Perhaps either the Crown or the HEIC put him forward, about 1790.

The HEIC seems to have gained ground in India by making agreements with local leaders and seizing their lands when there were breaches to the agreements. There were two primary avenues utilised. The Nabob agreed to allow, and pay for, military support. When payments were not forthcoming, the land was forfeited. In another approach, money was loaned to the Nabob and not properly repaid. By most accounts the Nabobs were good at spending but poor at raising funds. Colonel. Thomas was valuable because he helped negotiate in these times of financial stress.

From the perspective of the Nabob, or his heirs, Colonel Barrett’s demise came at a poor time. There were several ongoing disputes. As the accounts of these were published, the colonel was not implicated in any malfeasance, but representatives of the crown did not seem to treat him with much respect. Sadly, in spite of having children, but no living wife, Colonel Barrett did not leave a will.

In Ann’s will, there is a reference to “my brother Col Thomas Barrett became possessed of certain lands which were granted by the said Nabob to him & his heirs forever by way of Jageer as a reward for his long and faithful service”. These were left to her son and the children of Thomas, without any more specific information.

From my perspective the story was dormant for about 75 years. Otago is a region on the south island of New Zealand. The local newspaper, *The Otago Times* carried a story in

---

<sup>63</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Papers, pub 1812, pg. 225

<sup>64</sup> Indian Decisions Old Series V5, pub 1912, pg. 6

1902 about these lands<sup>65</sup>. Herein was evidence that the inheritance was not paid to the family of the Colonel. A mother and daughter, Mrs Cook and Mrs. Felton were mentioned as having become the inheritors of the property, defined as “41 villages”. There was a detailed account of the property and their efforts to obtain compensation from the British Government; unsuccessful up to that time.

It was clear from the article that no one was about to budge. The British Government was not forthcoming with compensation and Mrs. Felton had been employing some legal counsel to assist in her efforts. As the article ended, there was a need to go to London, from “down under” to hire local counsel.

Mrs Felton and Mrs Cook had no first names in the article, making their connections to the Chapmans difficult. Henry had six daughters, with Augusta Matilda Hall. Since he died in 1825, the youngest would have been at least 77 by 1902. My next step was to find the married names and the daughters of these six women. I found that Augusta Matilda Chapman’s daughter married a Cooke and moved to New Zealand. Her daughter, Sophia Augusta, married George Felton. Even though the spelling of Mrs. Cook’s name was different, the family seems to be the same.

I did not find this out by myself. I had recently joined Ancestry, for a six month trial. They have a feature, called “Public Member Trees” (and another called Private Member Trees). I am allowed to view the trees others have posted. I can send a note to anyone who seems to have the same family members posted and ask to share information. My overall response rate is somewhat below 20 per cent but I got lucky in this case. The responder was not directly related, but knew someone had a connection. In any case, I received some confirmation of the Cooke-Felton connection. In the 1911 UK census Sophia was living in Surrey. I was told she died in Victoria, Australia in 1936, although I do not have documentation. In 1911, she had given birth to nine children, four of whom were still living. I have not yet found anyone with clear information on the outcome of the dispute.

There is another 100 year gap, to the present. Sophia’s great grandchildren might be alive today, but I have not been able to follow the tree to them. This is in part because of privacy issues that make more recent records less accessible.

As an aside, Ann Simpson’s will mentions portraits of her and her son, Henry that were to be given to Henry on her demise, which was 1824. I have been unable to find a clue to the location of the portraits. If they can be located, they will provide a glimpse into the people of the past.

The story had an interesting start, but an unclear conclusion. I have not yet found out if any compensation for the 41 villages was forthcoming. Since the colonel was born about 1755, without knowing what country, it is hard to find his birth record, especially since his name might have changed. Perhaps my best hope is that some other relative of Colonel Thomas will read this and shed some light on the missing details. I am a direct ancestor of the

---

<sup>65</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 April 1902, New Zealand, pg. 10

Colonel, through James, but it would surely be interesting to learn more about the descendants of his sister, Ann.

## General The Hon. Sir Henry Ramsay: The Uncrowned King of Kumaon

N. C. Shah

*The author is a retired scientist and freelance writer, based in Lucknow.*

### Introduction

The British ruled India for more than 140 years, including Kumaon, then a small independent state consisting of Kumaon and Garhwal. In the beginning they appointed their best and ablest administrators there. But among these, Ramsay was one of those larger-than-life characters who flit across the pages of history of British administration in India, who served for a period of 47 years from 1837-1884, in Kumaon, in different administrative capacities and finally served as Commissioner of Kumaon for 28 years. He won the hearts of the natives, the Kumaonies, by his charismatic personality and kindheartedness. Even after his retirement in 1884 he stayed in Kumaon for more than eight years and finally left, unwillingly, in 1892. The people of Kumaon regarded him as a holy spirit and called him *Ramji Sahib* after their deity the Lord Rama. This article describes the services rendered by Henry Ramsay to the people of Kumaon, who gave him their utmost respect, more so than any of their past kings or even to any politicians of the present day. Not only this, he was also honoured by the British government as well as by the people of Kumaon by having a number of roads and institutions named after him. In total, he lived and served in Kumaon for a period of 55 years.

### History of Kumaon

Kumaon had been an independent state of India ruled by the Khasas, said to be the Indo-Aryans, from the eighth to the twelfth century AD. They were known as the Katyuris, and ruled from Garhwal to Kumaon as a single-state kingdom. Their capital was originally at Joshimath, then later Karetikeyapur, the present-day Baijnath (Almora). The last Katyuri king was Bir Dev and after his death, the Khasiya chieftains established their own kingdom in the region of Askot, Doti, Kali-Kumaon and Almora, while Garhwal got separated from Kumaon. The chieftains of Garhwal constructed forts and fortresses on hilltops known as *garh* and *garhi* hence from that time this region became known as Garhwal and their history began to separate. Later, Kumaon was ruled by the Chanda dynasties (953-1780 AD) and their capital was Champawat. During the reign of Raja Laximichand in 1639, the capital was moved to Alamnagar, named in honour of Alamgir, the king of Delhi.

Records further state that the name Almora was the corruption of the word Alamnagar. In fact, this was not the main cause of the name change. It is well-known that at this place a plant called as almora or bhilmora was found in abundance and collected by the people of Katarmal temple, near Almora, for cleaning the big copper utensils used there.

After the downfall of the Chanda dynasty in 1790, Kumaon and Garhwal were captured by the Gorkhas of Nepal, who ruled here from 1790-1815 and again both Kumaon and Garhwal regions became a single state under this rule.

## **British Invasion and Rule**

In 1814, the British, as part of the East India Company, declared war against the Gorkhas and captured Kumaon and Garhwal. The following year at Sigauli the Anglo-Nepalese Treaty was signed and Kali river was fixed as the eastern boundary line of Nepal. Kumaon and Garhwal came under British control as a single state, and as such they ruled over Kumaon along with other states for 132 years.

## **Kumaon Commissionery**

In the year 1819, Kumaon Commissionery was founded, which included only two districts, Kumaon and Garhwal. In 1839, Kumaon divided into three districts; Almora, Terai Bhabar and British Garhwal (Tehri, now in Kumaon, was then an independent state) and up to this time, Nainital had not been discovered. Later, in the year 1892, the districts of Kumaon Commissionery were renamed as Almora, Nainital and British Garhwal. From the beginning the East India Company appointed their ablest British administrators in Kumaon: Edward Gardener, G.W. Traill, C. T. Lushington, J. H. Batten, Henry Ramsay and Percy Wyndham. Ramsay served for a period of 47 years from 1837 to 1884 in different administrative capacities such as Junior Assistant Commissioner, Senior Assistant Commissioner, Senior Assistant Commissioner Kumaon Proper and Deputy Commissioner, and finally served as Commissioner of Kumaon for 28 years. He won the hearts of the natives, the Kumaonies, through his benevolent and charismatic personality and kindheartedness.

## **Henry Ramsay's Past History**

Ramsay was born to a martial family at Arbirrlot on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1816 in Scotland, the son of Lt. Gen. Hon. John Ramsay. He was the cousin of Lord Dalhousie, then Commander-in-Chief in India.

He was recruited in England into the army of the East India Company and started his duties on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1835 in the 7<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry of Bengal at Madras and was first posted as Lieutenant in Calcutta, where he remained until 15<sup>th</sup> August 1837. He had had a great wish to visit and see Almora, then the capital of Kumaon, and luckily he was posted there as a Junior Assistant Commissioner under Mr Batten, Commissioner of Kumaon. He is believed to have met the legendary retired Commissioner of Kumaon, G. W. Trail, who was staying at Hawalbagh, a place eight miles from Almora, after his retirement from the services. This meeting left quite an impression on the young officer. Mr. Trail encouraged him to stay at Almora, and may well have advised him that if he were to stay in the civil service in Kumaon he would also enjoy the benefit of the army, as it was only possible in British Kumaon, where the regulations current in other parts of India were not implemented. He would therefore simultaneously enjoy two posts, one of army and the other of civil administration, and both would run together.

## **Posts and Promotions in the Army and the Civil Service**

In August 1840 he was appointed Junior Assistant Commissioner. In 1848 he joined the Punjab campaign and the following year he was promoted to the post of Captain. In 1851 he was promoted to Senior Assistant Commissioner, Kumaon, and then Senior Assistant

Commissioner, Kumaon Proper; in 1855 to Deputy Commissioner, Almora; and in 1856 to the Commissioner of Kumaon, in which role he served for 28 years until his retirement in 1884. In 1857 he was promoted to Major, in 1861 he became Lt. Colonel, in 1866 Full Colonel; in 1877 Major General, and in 1880 Lt. General, and after his retirement from the civil services in the year 1889 he was promoted to the rank of general.



*Henry Ramsay as Commissioner*

### **Honours**

Ramsay was also honoured by the British Government as Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India (KCSI); Companion of the Order of Bath (CB), and in 1874 he was designated by Queen Victoria as Hon. Ramsay.

He was a very kindhearted person, who wholeheartedly and honestly served the people of Kumaon and won the heart of the natives. His main works in brief are described below.

### **Establishment of Leprosy Asylum**

When he held the post of Junior Assistant Commissioner, Kumaon, he saw lepers visiting the town of Almora to beg for alms and food. They used to live in caves far away from the town, and leprosy was regarded as a punishment of sins committed in past lives and were treated as untouchable, presuming the disease to be contagious. In 1840 he established stone houses for 25 lepers at

Ganesh ki Gair in suburb of Almora. In 1848 a cottage was rented to accommodate 31 patients, most of whom had become blind by the disease. The money for this purpose was collected by him from local people and from Europeans. In 1850 the Almora Leper Asylum was handed over to the London Missionary Society. It is currently known as The Leprosy Mission Hospital and Home.

In 1854 a hospital and the asylum were moved to the eastern edge of the city, earlier known as Kori-khan (The place of lepers). In 1864 Ramsay secured the transfer of a government tea garden, *Hawal bagh*, to the asylum as an endowment.

### **Settlement of Tarai and Bhabar**

One of the most important projects he undertook was to settle the people of the Tarai and Bhabar region. Bhabar at that time was a waterless belt beginning immediately after the foothills of Kumaon, and its climate was unsuitable for inhabitation. The region was marked with beds of boulders, gravel and silt brought by the Himalayan streams, and the water



level was very low. The adjacent Tarai area was characterised by springs and swamps, receiving average annual rainfall of 60-70 inches.

Every year a large number of Kumaonies used to migrate from the neighboring hills, where there used to be snowfall during the winter. Here they would carry out temporary cold weather cultivation mostly near their sheltering places, where they used to put up small, thatched huts in Bhotia parao (Haldwani) and in Chilkia village (Ramnagar), which were not well developed at that time. Migrant people from the hill regions grazed their cattle there. During Ramsay's time the area was very unhealthy as it was rife with diseases such as malaria and bowel complaints. The area was full of water-filled ditches and swamp, a suitable breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes, and as such there was no habitation. However, Almora, Nainital and other places were directly connected by bridle road from this region being on the routes to Bareilly and Moradabad.

### **Tarai and Bhabar Project**

In 1851, when he was Senior Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon Proper, Ramsay submitted a proposal to the Commissioner Kumaon and to the Board of Revenue for a grant of 10,000 rupees per annum. The proposal was duly granted to him and he was assigned a number of staff. One of his aims was to check malaria and other diseases by eliminating the breeding grounds of mosquitoes such as ditches and swamps, which were emptied and levelled. He also sought to make roads, replace thatched houses with houses made of stone, clear trees for cultivation, build a network of canals and establish new towns and villages.

As a result Tarai became well-connected and accessible.

### **Ramsay's Canals Policy**

Ramsay recommended that the canal system should always remain under the charge of Bhabar officials and should only be handed over to the Irrigation Department on the condition that the people should be supplied with water tax-free, reflecting his affection for the people of Kumaon.

During the colonization of Tarai and Bhabar, Ramsay imposed a nominal tax on the watermills for the supply of medicine which was beyond the normal reach of dispensaries.

At the time of his retirement around 137 miles of canals were in existence in the Tarai and Bhabar region. In 1897 the total length of canals had increased to 151 miles. It is stated that to develop the canals in Bhabar and Tarai region of Kumaon, Ramsay would live three to four months a year there supervising the work himself. The Bhabar and Tarai region is currently among the most prosperous part of Kumaon.

### **Ramsay as Commissioner of Kumaon**

In the year 1856, he became the commissioner of Kumaon and was entrusted with the departments of Revenue, Police, Forest, Horticulture, Agriculture, Irrigation and Public Work. In this way Ramsay was a magistrate, policeman, forest officer, horticulturist, agriculturist and engineer and, above all, a great server of the people of Kumaon.

## Establishment of Two Important Townships in the Tarai and Bhabar Region

In 1873, Ramsay further developed the township of Haldwani. Although Haldwani had existed from the time of Gardener, the first Commissioner of Kumaon, at that time there was nothing except a forest of haldu (*Adina cordifolia*) and a weekly bazaar. It was then developed into a township in the area with stone houses and was named after the haldu tree, thus Haldwani. The bazaar is still held every Tuesday, as it was in those days.

The new township which Ramsay established near the village Chilikia is now known as Ramnagar. At that time, the public proposed the name to be *Ramsay-nagar* but Ramsay declined this honour and named the township after Ram, the well-known Hindu deity.

## Efforts Made to Develop and Save Nainital

Nowadays, Nainital is among the foremost tourist hill stations in India with millions of tourists visiting the place every year. The beautiful Nainital lake was discovered in 1839 by an Englishman known as Barron and he revisited the place in 1842 and built the first house there, Pilgrim's House. By 1845 there were six houses and the first foreign tourist to visit this place was the Prince Waldemar of Prussia with his assistant Hoffmeister. Nainital rose in importance when Ramsay as Commissioner Kumaon wanted to develop it into a hill station resort and as an educational centre for the children of British officers and businessmen living in neighbouring districts. In 1862 it became the summer seat of the North Provinces and in 1902, of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, now known as Uttar Pradesh. According to A. S. Rawat in H.R. Nevill's 1916 Gazetteer on Nainital, the first Methodist Church of India was established in Nainital in 1860 with the support of Ramsay. It is now a heritage site.

## Landslides in Nainital



*The disastrous landslide of Nainital which took place in 1880, and took 151 lives, dead or missing, 43 of those Europeans*

In July 1867 Nainital experienced a heavy land slide, when a part of the hillside above Mallital Bazaar came tumbling down. As a consequence, a committee was constituted by

Ramsay as commissioner to consider the safety of the hills surrounding the lake. The committee decided that a proper drainage system should be constructed on the slopes of the hills to prevent any future landslides.

Again, a deadly landslide occurred in 1880, on 18<sup>th</sup> September, which would be remembered in the history of Nainital as the most disastrous one, resulting in 151 dead or missing among which 43 were Europeans and the rest Indians. This tragic catastrophe led Ramsay to think again, and he suggested constructing stone drainage throughout the hill slopes of Nainital. Between 1880 and 1885 12 miles of stone drainage was constructed, between 10 to 12 feet wide, which is still in use today to safeguard Naintal against landslides.

### **Forest Management**

While the Forest Act was not introduced in India until 1878, mainly for the purposes of conservation, Ramsay initiated the same principles in Kumaon as early as 1855, when there was huge demand for the railway sleepers. Sal (*Shorea robusta*) trees were felled without restraint for this purpose, mainly in the Tarai and Bhabar region. In 1860, Ramsay was also appointed as an *ex-officio* conservator of the forest in the Kumaon region. He immediately took steps to control the felling of trees and initiated the practice of hammer marking of trees prior to their felling for conservation and for rotational felling of trees. He inspected every forest himself and demarcated the different forest boundaries in Kumaon.

In 1868, management was handed over to the newly-formed Forest Department.

### **Ramsay's Other Contributions**

There are many other of Ramsay's works, relating to the promotion of agriculture and horticulture and restructuring of land revenue.

These include the introduction of the potato in Kumaon. While it had been claimed that the potato was first introduced into India in 1615 either from Spain or England, it was Henry Ramsay who encouraged the inhabitants of Kumaon and Garwhal to adopt its cultivation as a food crop as well as a commercial crop.

He also encouraged the plantation of tea in Kumaon, providing villagers with work. The tea plantations were well connected with the bridge road with Almora, from where all produce was marketed to other parts of the country. And Ramsay adopted a novel system for maintaining the bridge roads, dividing them into different parts, each under the charge of a certain village for its maintenance.

Village maps were prepared during Ramsay's time as a source of land revenue. For the facility of the field officers under him, the inspection bungalows, which were known at that time as dak bungalows, were established at many places such as Ranikhet, Ramgarh, Bhimtal and Peora by Ramsay.

### **Construction of Roads and Bridges**

Ramsay constructed a number of roads, to respond to the urgent need for them for the purposes of trade and development. The first cart road constructed by him was the

Ramnagar-Ranikhet road. It was an important road to transport troops and their rations as Ranikhet had been developed as a new cantonment town. When the railways reached Kathgodam, the main cart roads constructed by Ramsay from 1871 to 1872 were Kathgodam to Nainital, Kathgodam to Ranikhet, Ranikhet to Almormora. These and the main bridges in between them were much used.

Earlier, the roads were connected with bridle roads and people would either reach them on foot or by horse. When the cart road was developed people would then travel by tonga and bullock cart. Ramsay also constructed a total of 27 suspension bridges on the bridle pathways connecting the villages throughout Kumaon.

### **Honour Paid by the people of Kumaon to Ramsay**

The local people were so moved by Ramsay's sincere work that in return they named various roads, institutions and places so that he could be remembered. These included The Ramsay Mission School, set up in Almora in 1844 with the help of Ramsay by missionaries from England. It was renamed The Ramsay Mission School in 1871. This was a great achievement as there were only a few high schools then in the north-west provinces.



*Ramsay Hospital,  
Nainital, about 1920*

The Ramsay Hospital, Nainital, was completed in 1892 and was established by donations which Ramsay and others collected from the public and the Europeans, and dedicated as a memorial to Ramsay. Unfortunately, the hospital was officially renamed as Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital after his death. Mr. Pant was a Congress leader and when he died was the Home Minister of the Government of India, who had connections with Nainital. However, nowadays locals ignore the name and it is commonly known as the Ramsay Hospital.

A township developed by Ramsay in the Tarai and Bhabar region in Chilikia village was originally named as Ramsay-Nagar but Ramsay himself raised an objection and named it after the Hindu deity Lord Rama as Ram Nagar.

The road from Ram Nagar to Kotdwar, which Ramsay constructed, was known as the best road in Kumaon and was officially known as Ramsay Road but people have forgotten its name.

The road which leads from Tallital to the Commissioner's office in Nainital is known as Ramsay Road.

### **Moving the Summer Capital and Courts to Binsar**

Ramsay was so enchanted with the natural beauty, serenity and climate of Binsar, a place 20 miles away from Almora, that he purchased about 26 acres of land on behalf of the government from his friend Shri Jai Sah Thulgharia, Treasurer, and built a bungalow as the office of the commissioner, and for the staff and their quarters. He declared Binsar as the summer capital of Almora, and the commissioner's office and staff would be moved to Binsar. He also established summer civil and criminal courts at Binsar. He introduced Devanagiri script as a court language, in spite of government orders. Binsar was only functioned as the summer capital during his service, though and after he retired in 1884, Binsar ceased to be the summer capital of Almora.

Ramsay was the only officer who ruled arbitrarily. After his retirement in 1884 the unlimited rights of the Commissioner of Kumaon were checked and withdrawn. Up to 1894, the Commissioner of Kumaon had the power of even awarding death sentences, and the High Court used to recommend it.

### **His Love for Binsar**



*Ramsay House, 1905. (Photo courtesy Nicholas Wilson.)*

In 1884 when Ramsay retired from service he purchased land for himself at Binsar to build a bungalow and an orchard. He wanted to settle in Binsar and spend his life in a cool and peaceful place. However in 1892 his son Henry Lushington Ramsay took him forcibly back to England. It is said that he wept bitterly before leaving Kumaon, where he had passed 55 years of his life. It is recorded that he died on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1893 in Norwood, England at the age of 77 years. Later, his estate known as Khali Estate, along with his bungalow known as Ramsay House and orchard, was sold to the sister of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru,

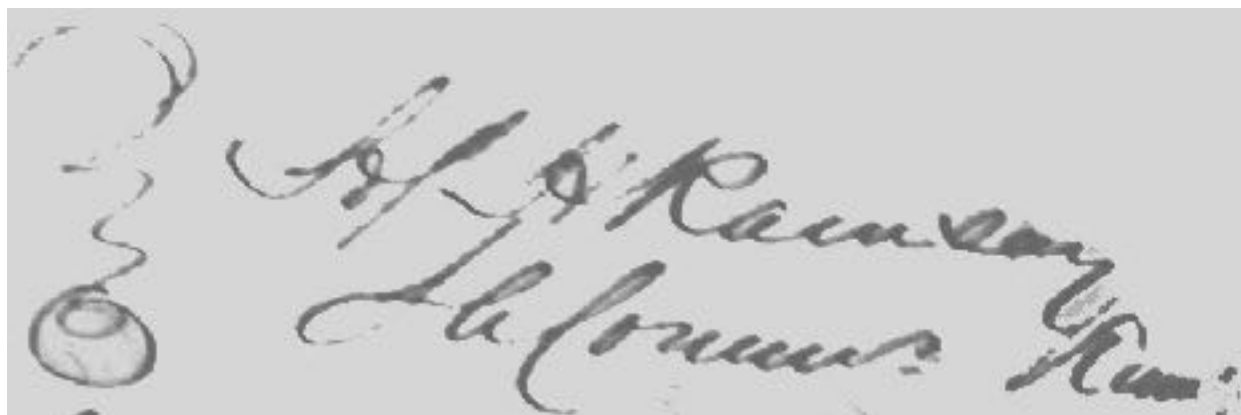
who became the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who later became the Foreign Minister of India.

### **Ramsay and the Law**

At the time it is recorded that he disliked the principles of fixed rulings on points of customs and often referred to follow his own decisions, preferring to settle each case on its merits as seemed equitable to him

Sometimes it is said that Ramsay was for all purposes a dictator and ruled Kumaon firmly with scant respect for rules and regulations. His authority was unquestioned and limitless, but from all accounts he used that authority for whatever good he was capable of doing for the people.

He did not appreciate the presence of lawyers in Kumaon as he believed that a rich man by paying more to a good lawyer, could win his case. A story goes that once he was hearing a revenue case in which a rich landlord and a poor tenant were fighting over a piece of land. Lawyers represented the landlord but the poor tenant had to plead his case himself, and his appeal was based mostly on the plea that Ramsay was his godfather or messiah. During the hearing of the case a large number of rulings were quoted on behalf of the landlord. Ramsay listened to all the proceedings very patiently being a judge, and at the end he told the lawyers pleading the case for the landlord that he was the law in Kumaon, and in open court tore up all the rulings and decided the case in favour of the poor tenant.



*Henry Ramsay's signature when he became Commissioner of Kumaon.*

### **Ramsay and Education Policies in Kumaon**

Speaking on educational policy in Kumaon once Ramsay wrote, "There is a great difficulty in bringing education within the reach of all, though we do not attempt to teach more than to read and write and do arithmetic of the simplest kind. Under present circumstances this is sufficient for the mass of the people and for a sharp boy who wishes for higher education which his father cannot afford, he can obtain a scholarship at Almora School (Ramsay School), where a boarding house for outside pupils has been established...It is considered more beneficial to impart to many the useful knowledge of reading and writing, sufficient

for their everyday use, than to gather a small number a better education by employing qualified but more expensive teachers”.

### **Ramsay and the Press**

Ramsay helped to establish a press in Kumaon and a newspaper, for the diffusion of general knowledge and the day-to-day events of the Kumaoni. Thus *Almora Akhbar* came into existence in 1870 and Shri Sadanand was its first editor.

### **Anecdotes Relating to Ramsay in Kumaon**

Ramsay is often remembered in the form of many anecdotes by the people of Almora and Nainital.

He used to take his court to the villages for judgment. Once there was a land dispute with the complainant being an old lady whose land was taken forcibly. The arguments from both sides were conducted in the Kumaoni language, with the participants all sitting on the ground. The decision was made in favour of the old lady, to whom Ramsay referred as *Eeja* ('Mother' in Kumaoni). The old lady was so touched that she blessed Ramsay in Kumaoni saying, "Bhagwan tera bhal karo to jalda patwai hai jaie," ("God bless you, you will soon become patwari). The patwari were the lowermost revenue officials, who were given police powers in Kumaon. She was very correct as Ramsay was the real "patwari" of the whole of Kumaon.

Another interesting incident which shows the innovative style of Ramsay's administration relates to Bhawani Dutt, the *chaukidar* (guard) of Almora jail. It was falsely reported that he was negligent in performing his duties. One night Ramsay made a surprise visit to the jail when Bhawani Dutt was on duty. When he arrived at the gate, Bhawani Dutt immediately came to stand to position and pointed the rifle towards Ramsay. He then asked him his name and the whereabouts. When Ramsay did not reveal his identity, he slapped him on the face and told him to leave the place immediately as it was the commissioner's orders that no one should enter the jail premises at night without due permission from him. Ramsay said nothing to Bhawani Dutt at that moment, but the next day he called him to his office. Bhawani Dutt started trembling with fear when the jailer told him that the visitor in the night was Ramsay. Bhawani Dutt thought that his attitude was harsh and repented for his act. But when he met Ramsay he did not believe his eyes and ears. Ramsay was anxiously waiting for him on the lawn and as soon as Bhawani Dutt reached him, Ramsay patted his back and appreciated his sense of duty. Then, Ramsay asked him what he would like to become. Bhawani Dutt replied that he was interested to become a patwari and immediately he was promoted.

It is stated that there were five brothers in Salam Patti, who were very rich and wicked. It was believed that they had committed a murder but the police was unable to find any clue since the villagers were scared of these brothers. And, no one had the courage to lodge a complaint against them. When Ramsay came to know about the state of affairs, he went to the village in disguise and spent the night in an old widow's house. While hobnobbing with the old lady in Kumaoni language, he intentionally, referred to the murder-case and about the terror of the wicked brothers, who had committed murder. The old woman thinking

Ramsay to be a poor villager revealed the truth to him. Soon the culprits were apprehended and punished, (Rawat, 2016 personal communication).

### **A True Tribute**

A true tribute was paid by The Times (London) in his obituary and he was eulogised as, “A man, keenly observant, sagacious, of cool, clear judgment and strong will, tempered by Scotch caution with a singlehearted desire for the wellbeing and prosperity of the people over whom he was set in authority, he was trusted alike by them and by his official superiors He is regarded as one of the great soldier-administrators of British India and was dubbed, ‘King of Kumaon’<sup>66</sup>”.

### **Death and Family of Ramsay**

General The Hon. Sir Henry Ramsay had married Laura Lushington, daughter of the then Commissioner of Kumaon, Mr. C. T. Lushington, in 1850. He had five children, the eldest son being born in 1854 and named Henry Lushington Ramsay (1854-1928). He breathed his last at 4, Turnham Road, Gypsy Hill, Norwood, England on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1893.

---

<sup>66</sup> The Times Digital Archive, page 4, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1893.



## Some Unpublished Inscriptions from the Cemeteries of Jaipur

Syed Faizan Raza

Syed has kindly contributed these unpublished inscriptions and photographs from the cemeteries of Jaipur for the benefit of FIBIS members.

1. Sacred to the memory of Dr. John Elliot, I/C. Dist. Jail Dispensary, Jaipur. Born 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1877, died 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1923. *Thy will be done.*
2. Joseph Henry died 1<sup>st</sup> September 1927. *Asleep in Jesus.*
3. In sad memory of Alfred Osmond, the beloved son of J. P. Osmond. Born 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1899, died 19<sup>th</sup> Decr. 1924. *Thy will be done.*
4. In ever loving memory of Emma, the beloved wife of J. P. Osmond. Born 15<sup>th</sup> Decr. 1864, died 20<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1922. *Requiescat in pace.*
5. In sad and loving memory of Laura Edith, the beloved daughter of Emma & J. P. Osmond. Born 1<sup>st</sup> April 1898, died 29<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1921. *Rest in peace.*

<b>Note</b>	Inscriptions 1 – 5 are extant and available at St. Andrew's Church cemetery, which is located near <i>Peetal</i> Factory, on the <i>Jhotwara – Chandpole</i> road. It was opened in 1918 and further details regarding cemetery could be obtained from the archives of the British Library (F 370/514).
6.	In memory of Leopoldina - beloved wife of S. M. Pereira - died on 26 <sup>th</sup> April 1922.
7.	Elizabeth Porter, relict of Frank Porter, died 26 <sup>th</sup> August 1922, aged 84 years. <i>A loving mother you have been; and many troubles you have seen; you sacrificed and did your best; God grant you now eternal rest.</i>
<b>Note</b>	The memorial was erected by her only daughter, Cecilia Alexander.
8.	Mr. O. (?) Porter, aged 36 years, died 31 <sup>st</sup> March 1905.
9.	In cherished remembrance of our darling parents: Mrs. Bebiana Castelino, born Aldona, Goa, 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 1900, died in Jaipur on 7 <sup>th</sup> June 1973; and Mr. Caitan F. Castelino, born Aldona, 27 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 1892, died in Jaipur on 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 1924.
<b>Note</b>	The tomb was erected by the grandchildren of the couple, and Fr. Francis Michael.
10.	Felicitas Clara, relict of William Koech, died 13 <sup>th</sup> June 1896, aged 48 years.
<b>Note</b>	She was deeply mourned by her numerous relatives, the inscription states.

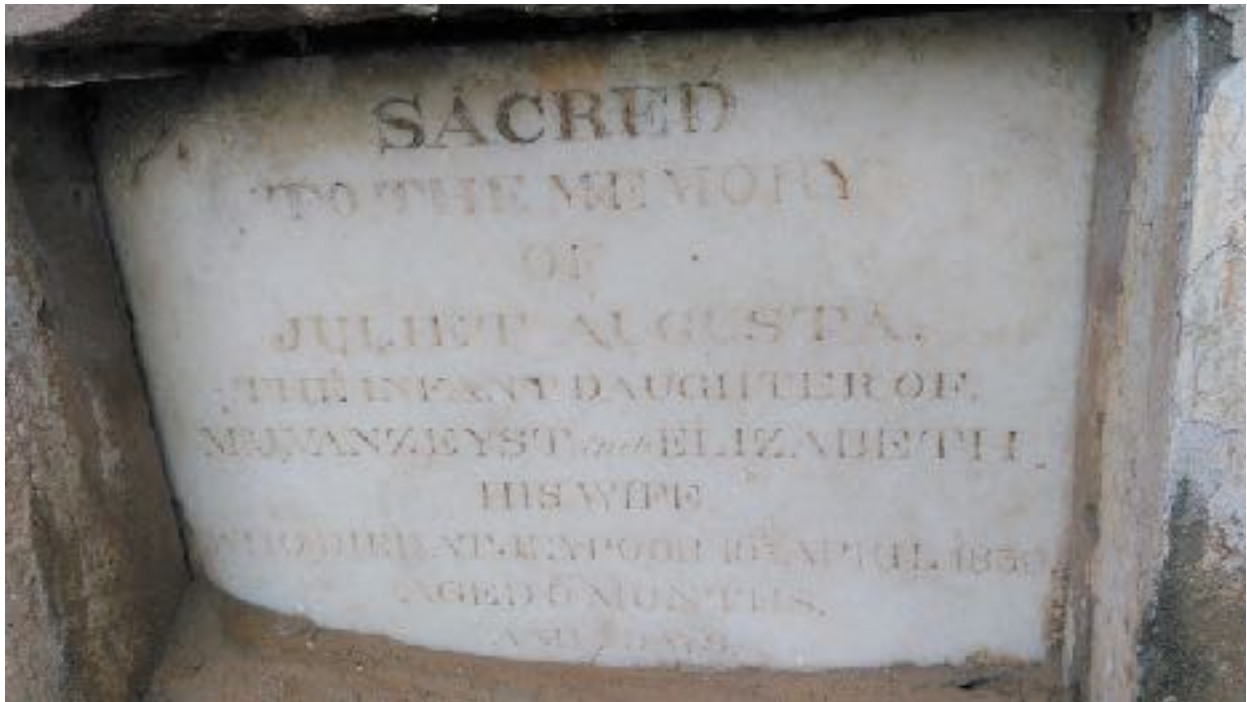
11.	Fulbertus, a Monte Gualterii, born on 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1875, died 11 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 1900.
12.	Sister Sophie Lewis died on the 26 <sup>th</sup> May 1950, in the 24 <sup>th</sup> year of her religious life; and Sister Margaret, of Mission Sisters of Ajmer, died aged 26 years, in the 9 <sup>th</sup> year of her religious life.
13.	In loving memory of Mrs. Rebecca Rubens, wife of Albert Rubens, born on 1 <sup>st</sup> August 1911, died on 25 <sup>th</sup> June 1965. <i>Rare is a diamond, so precious as you, farewell till we meet again. May your soul rest in peace. Amen.</i>
<b>Note</b>	The tomb is marked with the Hebrew alphabets too.
14.	Fulbertus, a Monte Gualterii, born on 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1875, died 11 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 1900.
15.	In loving memory of the five children of St. Angela Sophia Boarding who died of accident on 6 <sup>th</sup> November 1927: 1. Evelyn Anthony, 2. Myrtle Mac Dermite, 3. Violet Mac Dermite, 4. Lily Tailor and 5. Josephine Francis. <i>Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.</i>
16.	In the loving memory of our dear mother, Mrs. Alice Gardener, wife of C. W. Gardener, born 20 <sup>th</sup> June, 1917, died 9 <sup>th</sup> July, 1995. <i>May God grant her eternal rest and let perpetual light shine upon her.</i>
17.	<i>A rose is a rose is a rose:</i> In loving memory of <i>Daddy</i> , Barry Joseph Toomey, 1 <sup>st</sup> May 1929 – 5 <sup>th</sup> January 1996.
<b>Note</b>	He was a loved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, uncle and friend, the inscription appends.
18.	In Memoriam Victor A. Lobo, born Dec. 23 <sup>rd</sup> 1891, died Dec. 29 <sup>th</sup> 1966.
<b>Note</b>	The memorial was erected by his wife and children.
19.	Mrs. Annie Lobo, born 12 <sup>th</sup> April 1904, died 27 <sup>th</sup> August 1970.
<b>Note</b>	The tomb was raised by her children.
20.	<i>"With Christ which is far better"</i> . Sacred to the memory of Anama Ayah, wife of Joseph Francis (Cook). She died as a patient in suffering at Jaipur on 26 <sup>th</sup> December 1903. The stone is erected as a mark of esteem and regret by Lt. Colonel Sir Curzon and Lady Wyllie with whom Anama lived for 13 years as faithful and valued servant. Also in memory of Joseph Francis (Cook) who was a faithful servant of Lt. Colonel Sir Curzon....

<b>Note</b>	The New York Times, dated 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 1909, had carried out a report, <i>Sir William Wyllie Murdered by Hindu</i> , regarding the assassination of Lt. Colonel Sir Curzon. <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> presents a brief account of the life and feats of Curzon. Viscount John Morley ( <i>Recollections</i> ) and Stanley A. Wolpert ( <i>Morley and India, 1906-1910</i> ; and <i>Gandhi's Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi</i> ) have also written about Sir Curzon. Archival sources - <i>Letters and government reports, L/PJ/6/901, L/PJ/6/903</i> , India Office Records, Asian and African Studies Reading Room, British Library, St. Pancras; and <i>Morley Collection, Mss. Eur. D573</i> , Asian and African Studies Reading Room, British Library, St. Pancras - shed important light on Sir Curzon.
21.	In Memoriam Mrs. Adeline Lobo (?), born 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 1883, died 10 <sup>th</sup> December 1962 and of her grand children, Matilda, aged 48 days, Francis and Christine - 3 days.
22.	In cherished memory of my dear mother Margaret Phillips to whom I owe everything. Born 4 <sup>th</sup> May 1908, died 5 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 1968.
<b>Note</b>	The tomb was raised by Phillip V. D'Souza.
23.	In loving memory of Noreen Daniells, born 15 <sup>th</sup> March 1911, died 20 <sup>th</sup> September 1965; and Kathleen Daniells, born 27 <sup>th</sup> July 1943, died 5 <sup>th</sup> October 1996. <i>To live in hearts we leave behind us is not to die.</i>
<b>Note</b>	Inscriptions 6 – 23 survive to this day and can be seen at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Cemetery, near <i>Ghat</i> Gate, Jaipur.
24.	Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth, relict of the Late Assistant Commissary, John Luckstedt, who departed this life on the 26 <sup>th</sup> April 1836, aged 61 years.

<b>Note</b>	The tomb was erected by her affectionate sons. O. S. Crofton ( <i>List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in Rajputana and Central India</i> , Delhi, 1934) had included this inscription in the appendix but he had not reproduced the contents as they are written on the extant White marble slab. He replaced the word 'relict' with 'widow' and paid no heed in writing that John Luckstedt had already died when his wife departed. John Luckstedt is perhaps J. G. Luckstedt to whom one finds a reference in <i>The Bengal and Agra Annual Guide and Gazetteer, for 1841</i> (Volume 1, Third edition, pp. 417, Calcutta, 1841) as "Head Clerk to the Agent of Governor General of Rajpootana and Commissioner for Ajmere". Literary historian Ram Babu Saksena also refers to one Mr. Luckstedt (obviously not the aforementioned) who had supplied him information on some Indo-European poets when the former was engaged in writing <i>European and Indo-European Poets of Urdu and Persian</i> (Lucknow, 1941).
25.	Sacred to the memory of Juliet Augusta, the infant daughter of Mr. J. Vanzeyst and Elizabeth, his wife. She died at Jeypoor (Jaipur) on 16 <sup>th</sup> April 1839, aged 6 months and 7 days.
<b>Note</b>	The tomb was erected by his disconsolate widow. This inscription is not incorporated in Crofton's book.
26.	Sacred to the memory of Joseph Vanzeyst, Head Clerk in the Jyepoor (Jaipur) Political Agency Office, who departed this life on the 28 <sup>th</sup> July 1842, aged 23 years, 5 months and 7 days.

<b>Note</b>	<p>Not published in Crofton's list. Inscriptions 24, 25 and 26 are lying in the shambles at the Old Residency Cemetery, which is situated at <i>Sardar Marg</i>, between Crystal Palm Tower and Hotel Rajmahal Palace. The Cemetery has one more extant inscription (published by Crofton) dedicated to Lieutenant E. B. Wimberley (d. 1864), who was associated with the Bengal Staff Corps and Assistant to the Agent of the Governor General of Rajpootana. Besides aforementioned two published inscriptions, Crofton had published the details of headstones (all lost now) dedicated to Charlotte Catherine Raper (d. 1825), Martin Blake (d. 1835), Dr. Joseph Harris (d. 1846) and infant daughter (d. 1862) and wife (d. 1862) of Captain G. Hamilton (Assistant of the Agent to the Governor General of Rajputana). A little north of Hotel Rajmahal Palace, across the road and at the junction of <i>Jamnala Bajaj Marg</i> and <i>Dwarkapuri Marg</i>, lies the All Saint's Church Cemetery, which is also known as the Jacob Road Cemetery. Perhaps, this is the same cemetery which Crofton has referred as the New Cemetery. He had published the inscriptions of the following deceased who were buried in this graveyard: Emma Caroline Brooke (d. 1869), Frederick Currie Knyvett (d. 1869), Alexander Young Sinclair (d. 1871) and Geoffery Durrell Pank (d. 1904). Unpublished inscriptions of the cemetery would form the subject my next paper. Near the Residency was also a grave of Patrick d. Courcey (d. 1825), who was a Staff Sergeant of 1<sup>st</sup> Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Artillery, and died during service at Jeypore (Jaipur) on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1835, aged 37 years (Crofton, pp. 45).</p>
-------------	---





*Pictures supplied by Syed Faizan Raza*

## **Notices**

## BIBLE SEEKS DESCENDANTS

*Colin Downes writes:*

I have had in my possession for many years a large bible that originally belonged to the Sylvester family. The inscription *C. F. Sylvester Agra 1880 AL5884* bearing the name of the original owner is written in the front of the book. There are also family pages showing births and deaths.

Apparently an old gentleman gave it to my late grandmother (Marie Thornton) who was a nurse in the hill station Murree. According to my 88-year-old mother, he had no one to pass it to and so gave it to my grandmother. This was just before she came to England in 1950. It has been in our family possession ever since.

My family were also brought up in India (army and railway) but left in 1950. My parents attended Lawrence College reunions in London for many years.

I would like to pass the bible on to descendants of the said C. F. Sylvester.

*Can you help Colin by reuniting the bible with its rightful owners? If so, please contact him via the details below:*

Colin Downes  
43 Ufton Crescent  
Birmingham  
B90 3SA  
colin\_downes@hotmail.com

## **INDIA, LEATHERHEAD AND THE FAR EAST**

When FIBIS member John decided to write a book on family history, he had no idea that there would be over 400 main characters, their families, friends and careers to research. His book takes in many locations in India and beyond, and is available on the Leatherhead and District Local History Society website:

[www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk/Leatherhead-and-India-by-John-Morris-web.pdf](http://www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk/Leatherhead-and-India-by-John-Morris-web.pdf)

## **MISSION TO CHINA**

John Holliday's article comprising research into his newly-published book *Mission to China: How an Englishman Brought the West to the Orient* appeared in the Journal two years ago.

The book is now available for sale, and may well be of interest to FIBIS members as the half the story takes place in India and the East Indies.

See [www.amberley-books.com/mission-to-china.html](http://www.amberley-books.com/mission-to-china.html) for more details.