THE JOURNAL OF THE
FAMILIES IN BRITISH INDIA SOCIETY

NUMBER 40 AUTUMN 2018

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ISSN 1740-3219

Published by the Families in British India Society
Registered Charity No. 1118885. Ltd Company No. 6034638.
86 New Road, Sands, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 4LG

EDITORIAL

I must begin by thanking the three contributors who responded to my appeal for articles on First World War ancestors. Army surgeon Dr Temple Harris, Captain William Hall and cousins Ned and Freddie Wilsey all saw action at its most confrontational, and their letters and diaries eloquently convey the privations, frustrations and grit of men in front-line service. One feels very close to history reading these accounts, especially since contributor Bill Hall himself served with the Indian Army in the Second World War. Sir Allan Ramsay, too, I must thank for his perceptive review article on Brigadier General John Nicholson, one of the great heroes of British India. Nicholson was larger than life, controversial even in his own day for strong-arm tactics. In calamitous times, though, when British control of India hung in the balance, his combination of dynamism, egotism and ruthlessness uniquely fitted him for command at Delhi, pivotal battle of the Indian Mutiny.

Moving on! It's unusual for an editor to find a niche on a committee, since marketing, IT and accounting are invariably the sought-after backgrounds. I therefore couldn't resist the opportunity to apply for editorship of the FIBIS Journal, which I'd long admired for its focus on ancestors in British India, where my family lived for almost two hundred years. I must thank the FIBIS chairman and committee for not only giving me the opportunity to edit the Journal but tolerating a design revamp which they must have found as startling as did I imagine readers. After many years in the same format the Journal was looking tired and I hope the new typeface and layout have increased readability and interest while conveying a modicum of period flavour.

Unfortunately, long hours at the computer producing the Journal, not to mention the preliminary editorial work, combined with demanding external commitments have meant that I was unable to contribute to activities outside my portfolio in the way most other committee members do. The Journal makeover complete, I now feel it is time to hand over to an editor who is able to make a broader contribution. I wish my successor all the generous support I have received from the FIBIS committee and Journal readers and thank all those who have contributed articles and read them.

VALERIE HAYE

AN IMS SURGEON IN EAST AFRICA

DR TEMPLE HARRIS AND THE BATTLE OF TANGA

ANN CRICHTON-HARRIS

In 1991 my uncle mentioned he had letters from his father, Dr Temple Harris IMS, written during his service in Africa during the First World War. There were seventeen letters, most written during bouts of malaria or dysentery, my grandfather's poor handwriting made even more challenging by illness. I was many months deciphering them but the task was exciting.

Few people, remembering the carnage and eventual victory in Europe, make a connection with the four-year slog in Africa. Even the Bogart/Hepburn film *The African Queen* seems an unconnected exotic incident. William Boyd's novel *An Ice-Cream War*, published in 1982, did much to popularise the story. Boyd generously wrote the foreword to my book S*eventeen Letters to Tatham: A WWI Surgeon in East Africa*, intrigued by the coincidence of his hero having the same name (Temple) as my grandfather.

When the First World War broke out the British Government soon realised that German East Africa and British East Africa, east coast neighbours, would perforce be enemies. One may ask why these colonial outposts were of importance. The so-called 'Scramble for Africa', with land to be farmed, minerals to be extracted, and more, meant that once Britain was at war with Germany we could not allow her colony to flourish. Furthermore, both GEA and BEA had long coastlines facing the Indian Ocean, so keeping sea lanes free was necessary for shipping, both military and trade routes.

In India a force was assembled hurriedly—British officers and Indian soldiers, all to sail from Bombay to Africa in a convoy of thirteen ships: a light cruiser, an armed auxiliary and twelve troopships. On board the troop carriers was a mixture of one all-British regiment, the Loyal North Lancs, and Indian brigades and regiments with British officers commanding: 101st Grenadiers, the 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry, 13th Rajputs, 2nd and 3rd Kashmir Rifles, 3rd Gwalior Rifles, Signal Sections, Railway Sappers and Miners, and more. Then, of course, Field Ambulance men, Clearing Hospital and Medical Store personnel, and three sections of No. 6 Indian General Hospital. My grandfather, Dr E. Temple Harris of the Indian Medical Service, was one of two doctors in charge of Indian Field Ambulance No. 140.

Temple Harris (second back row, right, holding pipe), on board the *Barjora*, off Tanga, 18 December 1914

Temple Harris, born in 1878, trained at the Middlesex Hospital and sailed for India in 1904. He had met his future wife, Eva Christopherson, daughter of the Rector of Falmouth Parish Church, but their liaison was frowned upon by her mother—the Harris family had been fish factors a generation earlier! The marriage took place at St Thomas's Cathedral, Bombay, in 1905, shortly after Eva stepped off the boat. My father, Temple Ben, was born in 1906 in Madras, and his brother Peter in 1913 in Maymyo, Burma. Dr Harris's elder brother, L. Tatham Harris, was already serving as a member of the 'Heaven-born' ICS, and his brother-in-law Herbert Eldon Chappel, married to Eva's sister Caroline, became Chief Superintendant of the Indian Telegraph Department, Punjab Division, in 1907.

So whom exactly was this British–Indian army going to be fighting? It was the good fortune of Germany that when war broke out a brilliant soldier was already in East Africa as commander of the Schutztruppe. Lt Col Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck was an extraordinary man. He came from a professional military family, had fought in the Boxer Rebellion of 1900–01 and later, in 1904–05, suppressing the Herero Rebellion in South West Africa. He quickly grasped the fact that if German East Africa remained neutral, his small force would have to remain inactive. He considered it his duty to engage the enemy and prevent them from bolstering their forces in Europe. Von Lettow was creative, intelligent and understood guerrilla warfare: some found him ruthless. He endured hardship stoically, offering an impressive example, and his men were well trained and loyal. He was fluent in English and wrote a detailed account, *My Reminiscences of East Africa,* published in 1920.

En route from India the commanding officer of the British–Indian force, Maj Gen A. E. Aitken, notoriously predicted: 'The Indian army will make short work of a lot of niggers'. Initially, Aitken was ordered to destroy the port of Dar es Salaam and its wireless station. These orders were shortly changed to: occupy the port of Tanga then the countryside towards Kilimanjaro, Tsavo and Moschi, and having succeeded there to turn to Dar es Salaam, thus bringing the whole of German East Africa under British authority. All this with 8,000 men, many poorly prepared for battle.

Martin Frost, *The Battle of Tanga, 3rd–5th November 1914*

The invasion was delayed by conflicting commands and dithering. Tanga did not surrender as was hoped and the British sailed towards the port, lights blazing, as a young African sitting on top of a cliff watching reported. He was amazed that there was no effort to hide their advance. After their long sea journey the Indian soldiers, poorly trained, short on exercise and suffering from sea-sickness, were in no condition to fight. Despite planning sessions in India and three weeks at sea, the landing on Beach A, Tanga on 2 November 1914 was chaotic: the loaded lighters were left bobbing about in the grilling sun. Some men who collapsed from heat and lack of water were returned to the ships. The landing was complicated by a coral reef, a tangle of mangroves and the ebbing of the tide. Above Beach A was a twenty-foot cliff and above the cliff, set back about thirty feet, a German planter's red-roofed bungalow. Medical supplies were not unloaded for some time as the narrow beach could not accommodate both men and equipment. The Sappers were put to work cutting steps up to the house.

Between the town and the Red House were a railway cutting, a four-foot ditch and dense bush eight-foot high of sisal, with rubber plantations to the left. Hanging high in the trees were hives made from hollow logs, from which the locals collected honey. Once fighting began bullets hit the hives, annoying the bees, who took revenge on many of the soldiers. Some men's faces were stung so badly they could not open their eyes. It was popularly believed that those 'cunning Germans' had trained these 'attack bees' but the Germans were also attacked! Bees were the least of it; 850 of the Indian force fell in the first three days.

The Red House

Dr Harris and four other physicians frantically treated the injured on the kitchen table at the Red House, initially without anesthetic and other unloaded medical supplies. It was carnage. Many of the Indian soldiers—unfit, lost in the six-foot high growth and hearing the guns—turned and ran, dashing through the wide doors of the Red House and out the other side as they headed for the ships. Many couldn't swim and many fell. Three weeks later Dr Harris wrote, in his understated British fashion, to Tatham:

> We arrived at a place called Tanga on the 1st and proceeded to take it i.e. landed troops, fought for 3 days and then retired as gracefully as possible. It was awful jungle and our troops were just done down badly, most had been sea sick etc. and a large number bolted incontinently. We lost heavily about 850 including 20 BO's killed 17 wounded 1 MO killed and one wounded. My actual share was 3 days on shore in or about a planter's house which we used as a hospital. [According to the *Official History*, the full ambulance unit was only landed on 3 November.] When the troops retired I was one of 5 MOs left behind to look after the wounded which were to be taken off later when an armistice had been arranged.
>
> So they trekked off leaving 5 disconsolate medicos standing on the cliff and didn't trouble to let us know that they had arranged an armistice two hours later: a bit of news that would *have been* conducive to peace of mind—a bit of neglect that was to our minds a fitting end to the whole show . . .
>
> I believe the opposition lost heavily too or would have attacked us at the end and we may thank our stars they decided to stay at home while the troops were in the water scrambling for the boats or I should think they would have been wiped out to a man.
>
> I could scrawl on about this for ever but you have the pith of it, now all that remains is to plant the blame on someone. I, for one, & I am not alone, do not put it entirely on the men for a panic is easily started and very

infectious. I felt that myself when some companies tore past me to the beach and a machine [gun] playing Hell's delight about 60 yards behind them. Neither they nor I knew at the time that this was pointing the other way, but I had to hold tight to my pride or [Temple drew an arrow here!].

General Aitken took the brunt of the blame and was recalled to England. It was many months before the news of this initial disaster was disseminated to the British public.

Research for my book, over an eight-year period, unearthed some welcome surprises. Wondering how to make contact with someone in Tanga, I saw a letter in the *Guardian* signed 'Jane Tamé, Tanga'. I placed a phone call to Tanga Information, got the number, and Jane answered. Thus began my relationship with an amazing English-woman who had married a German and ended up distributing the German War pensions to the remaining Askaris (African soldiers).

The late Roderick Suddaby, Keeper of Documents, became my go-to person at the Imperial War Museum. He found the diary of Norman King, British Consul at Dar es Salaam, with its mention of Dr Harris. Sir Norman's son, Vice-Admiral Sir Norman King, and I met at the Imperial War Museum and exchanged information and photographs. He offered one of his father on board the *Barjora* with several others. I recognised Grandfather right away—a magic moment for us both.

In 1999 my husband and I travelled via Dar es Salaam to Tanga. With help from a local German history enthusiast, Dr Jur. Klaus Goebel (introduced to us by Jane Tamé), and using both information from a map pinned up on the wall of Tanga Yacht Club and the official government description of the battle for Tanga, we searched for Landing Beach A. With Klaus we criss-crossed the area around Ras Kasone by car looking for the Red House. We finally found it: a bungalow with a red roof, still standing atop a twenty-foot cliff, mangroves visible at the water's edge, and now with concrete steps down to the shore. There was a flame tree standing at the top of the cliff, old enough to have given scant shade all those years ago. We stood there, exactly where those 'five disconsolate medicos' had watched the British ships sail away, wondering whether they would shortly be prisoners of the Germans. Another kind local took us out in a small boat to see the shore as the British would have seen it. It was exactly as described in the *Official History*: above the lush greenery were a red roofed bungalow, a white house and the signal tower.

In February 1916 Dr Harris was Officer Commanding No. 1 Field Ambulances (IFA 140 and two more units). He wrote to Tatham that he had three doctors under him. One he described as a 'doctor from the Seychelles'. I spent many frustrating months trying to put a name to this doctor. Years later I received an email from someone who had read my book. Sandie Jewell and her brothers were the grandchildren of

Dr Norman Jewell, an Irishman who was living in the Seychelles at the beginning of the war and signed up for Africa. As we now know from Jewell's diary and Harris's letter, both were at the Battle of Maktau in early 1915. After the battle, looking for the wounded as darkness fell, Harris and Jewell heard voices. Harris realised it was soldiers from the 130th Beluchis on guard and was able to assure them in Hindi that they were friend not foe. Dr Jewell always felt that Harris had saved his life on this occasion.

The end of the war found Temple Harris working as a Civil Surgeon back in Maymyo. I have documentation that he was on 'special duty and supdt. of the Jail Alyab from 9th March 1921 to 12th April 1921, then Civil Surgeon and Supdt. of Jail from 13 April 1921 to 31 December 1921'. My mother told me he used to creep out of the house early to supervise a hanging as the idea upset my grandmother. At the same time he was appointed Civil Surgeon Rangoon and Police Surgeon, Rangoon General Hospital. His total service was eighteen years and seven months, ten years of which were under government administration.

Temple Harris wrote to his son Ben on 22 April 1927 that he had been feeling 'seedy'. Four weeks later, at the age of 49, he died in Eva's arms of enteric fever and a burst appendix. The nearest doctor was in Rangoon and arrived too late to help. Dr Harris is buried in the churchyard of All Saints Anglican church in Maymyo. Eva had a Cornish cross erected on his grave.

Note

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's force was never beaten. He claimed he could have fought on for another two years. At the armistice ceremony, when the British actually caught up with him a week or so after the official date, General van Deventer, the commander, sent the following message: 'I will however allow you and your officers and European ranks to retain their personal weapons for the present in consideration of the gallant fight you have made'.

Further Reading

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AN INDIAN ARMY UNIT IN EAST AND WEST AFRICA 1915–1917

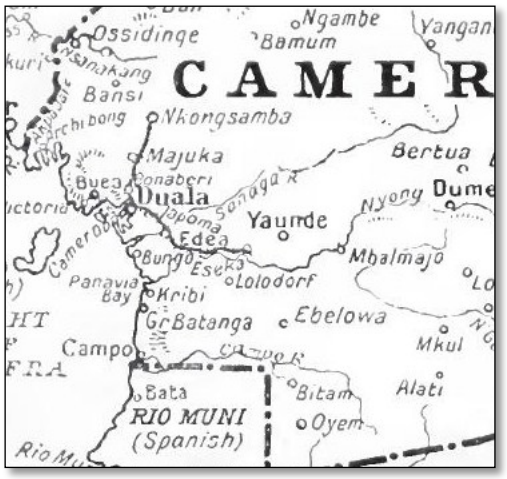
BILL HALL

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the 5th (Bengal) Light Infantry was doing garrison duty in Singapore, quartered at Alexandra Barracks about five miles from the city. The regiment consisted of eight companies, all Muslim, four mainly of Rajput origin (known as Ranghars) and four of Pathan origin. In January 1915 Colonel Martin, the CO, announced that the regiment was to be posted to Hong Kong but pro-German agitators spread rumours that the real destination was Turkey (allied to Germany) and that they were being sent to fight fellow Muslims.

It was unfortunate that three weeks later, on the eve of their embarkation, the GOC Singapore, in a speech at the farewell parade, did not mention their destination. This finally convinced some of the VCOs (Viceroy's Commissioned Officers) and sepoys that they were going to Turkey and sparked a mutiny in which the four Rajput companies were mainly involved. The mutineers killed a number of the camp guards, including one officer, before marching into the town and killing eighteen Europeans and local citizens. The mutiny was suppressed by troops from French, Russian and Japanese warships and a court of enquiry was held.

In this article I intend to recount the exploits of the 5th Light Infantry during the First World War and this account of the Singapore Mutiny, in which my father was much involved, is given to explain why the regiment was suddenly whisked off to West Africa, the only Indian Army unit posted to that theatre of war. The disaffected companies were replaced by Ahirs recruited from Rajasthan and Gujarat.

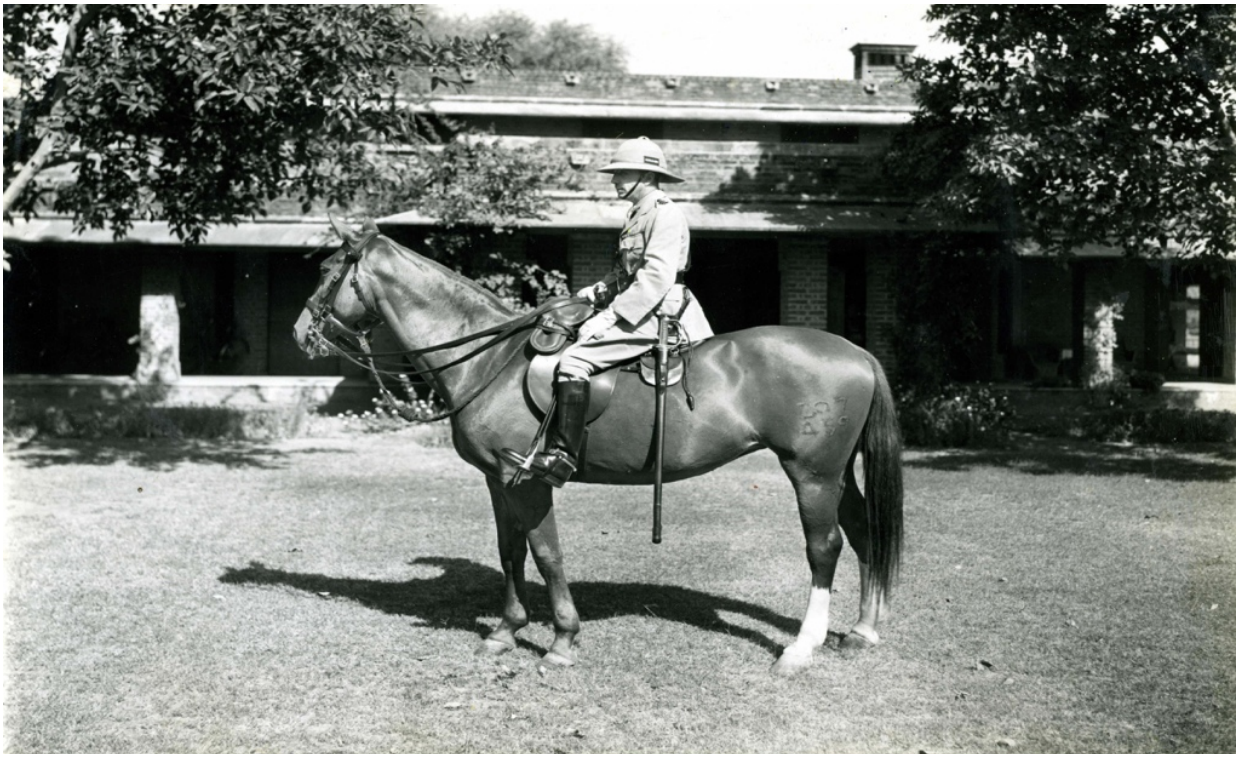
The following account of the regiment's activities in West and East Africa is taken mainly from the regimental war diary in the National Archives, Kew, with additional details from the regimental war diary. The regiment, with Lt Col Cotton in command, arrived on the SS *Bamora* on 10 August 1915 at Douala in German Cameroon, which had previously been captured. No sooner had they arrived than a request for assistance was received from the French, who were fighting the Germans on the southern border of Cameroon, and my father Capt William Hall was ordered to re-embark with his company of 173 men in a local transport and



Cameroon c.1914

proceed with a force under the command of Lt Col Rose to the River Campo (Ntem). (Where alternative names have been given in brackets they are the names currently shown in the atlas so that the progress of the regiment can be followed.) With the war diary of the regiment at Kew there is a separate war diary, written by William himself, which covers most of the time he was detached from his regiment in the River Campo area. It is written on sheets of paper taken from a German account book and shows that the total number of men under his command, including carriers, was 221. The ship taking them to the River Campo proceeded ten miles upstream to Dipikar, where they disembarked and Col Rose established his headquarters. Together with some West African units they advanced thirty miles inland as far as Bipa, where William was given written orders to attack an enemy post. He had to cross the river and take the enemy by surprise. The next morning William, with two lieutenants and thirty-six men, advanced on the enemy outpost, marching up to their waists in swamps for part of the way. They were spotted by a sentry who fired on them but although they returned fire the enemy escaped into the bush. Later, William noted in his report that the men had no hot food or fresh meat for ten days and their *atta* (coarse flour) and potatoes went bad and had to be thrown out.

William's force was withdrawn by the second week in September and on 12 September they disembarked again at Douala and were accommodated in the transit camp at Bonaberi on the opposite side of the River Wuri (Vouri). They then set out on a seventy-mile march to the base camp at N'kongsamba before advancing northwards to flush out the enemy, who were reluctant to join battle. However on 14 October William's company was in action against the German forces holding the left bank of the River Mwu, but the 5th Light Infantry managed to cross the river. The next day they continued northwards across the River Nkam but in the evening the Germans attacked their position. William's troops drove them back, making good use of the Maxim machine-gun. A week later they reached Mbo, on the Nigerian border, where they surprised a German unit. William gave the order to attack and in a running fight the Germans escaped, with William's company losing two men killed. On 24 October the British forces reached Fossong (Bafoussam), where they came under fire from the Germans. With the support of artillery,



Lt Col William Hall, Silver Jubilee of King George V, 1935. In the absence of the Delhi Brigade commander, William as next senior officer took the salute at the march past.

and with the aid of Maxim machine-guns, William led his company in an attack on the Germans, who retired hastily. Later, when the whole British column came under attack from Germans on the opposite bank of the River Merua, William's company lost seven men killed and a number wounded. In spite of the active service conditions under which they were operating, there was a standing order that after every engagement the remaining number of rounds of ammunition had to be reported to headquarters to enable replenishment. In this engagement William's troops expended 2,579 rounds of machine gun and 3,488 rounds of rifle ammunition. Gen Dobell, the British commander, now gave the order to advance north-eastwards to Fumban (Foumban), the chief town of the region, and after further skirmishes with the enemy they crossed the River Nun (Noun) on 30 November. The territory in which they were fighting had tested the stamina of the troops to the utmost but the approach to the Nun was exceptionally difficult. The official report in *Military Operations* states:

The march of five miles took seven hours to complete, the route lying entirely through marshes and along swampy forest paths, where waist deep mud holes abounded and where, while it was dark, the dense undergrowth and low overhanging branches contributed to the difficulty of progress. They crossed in rafts which could hold only three men, and had to paddle one and a half miles upstream where they waded through a swamp before they could reach dry land.

The next day William's troops went into action in support of a West African regiment, which ended with the enemy retiring quickly after abandoning large amounts of stores and equipment. On 2 December they captured Fumban, 140 miles north-east of the base at N'kongsamba, and when the enemy counter-attacked William's men charged them with fixed bayonets. The Germans were pursued for two miles, losing quantities of ammunition, and a number were taken prisoner. This action ended operations in the north-west of Cameroon and the British forces were withdrawn to the base at N'kongsamba. The capital Yaunde (Yaounde) was captured by a separate force shortly afterwards and on 18 February 1916 the German forces surrendered.

After the war most of Cameroon became French territory but a province in the north-west was ceded to the British colony of Nigeria. Throughout this campaign the 5th Light Infantry must have had special difficulties because they were the only Indian unit serving with the Cameroon Expeditionary Force, otherwise composed of British and West African troops. The Indians probably had to go without some of their normal rations.

The next theatre of operations for the 5th Light Infantry was in East Africa when they arrived at Mombasa on 14 March 1916, presumably via Cape Town, as part of the Nigerian Brigade. The Germans had acquired Tanganyika, or German East Africa as it was then known, in 1884 when Dr Carl Peters obtained by dubious means a large slice of the territory. The German government accepted it as *fait accompli* and granted a charter to the German East Africa Company.

On arrival at Mombasa, the 5th Light Infantry was quickly re-embarked in the SS *Barjora* (another small British India Line vessel) for Gazi, a small village on the coast twenty miles south of Mombasa. It says something for the lack of roads that a ship was used to carry the troops and their supplies such a short distance. As there was no harbour and no landing facilities at Gazi, all troops and their equipment had to be embarked in the ship's lifeboats and taken as close inshore as the boats could reach. From there the men had to wade ashore and carry their equipment up the beach. This could only be done at high water when the lagoon inside the coral reef was deep enough for the lifeboats to approach the shore. Their first objective was Mwele, about twenty miles inland, but the 'long' rains had now commenced and the going was very heavy. On the last day of the month William took out a raiding party of 100 men to engage the enemy. The rain was incessant but they located and scattered the German forces before returning to base on 2 May. On 25 May, after a quiet spell, William took out a force of 200 men to Mwamkushi, twenty-five miles south-west of Gazi, but the enemy

melted away before they arrived. In June William's company was in action against the German forces just inside the Tanganyika border at Lushanga, fifteen miles inland from Vanga. According to *Military Operations*, William and two other captains led a force which captured Mwakijembi on 16 June.

On 3 July they embarked once more in the *Barjora* for their next hop southwards, this time to Kwale Bay just north of Tanga. The embarkation took so long, due to the difficult conditions, that the African porters, the men's kit and the officers' rations had to be left behind. Two days later they were in action against the Germans at Mtimbhani, just inland from Kwale Bay, and on 6 July they reached Amboni where they routed the enemy. The next day they entered Tanga, which had been shelled by the Royal Navy. The 5th Light Infantry, with Lt Col Wilford now in command, went on to occupy Pongwe and Ngomeni just outside Tanga* and then attacked the Germans at Kanga before moving on to Muheza, which they captured on 21 July. Col Horden reports that as the regiment was now very weak due to sickness they were sent back to Kenya to recuperate. On 30 July they embarked in the *Barjora* for Mombasa but any chance to recover their strength disappeared when they were ordered on arrival to entrain for Korogwe. The rail route from Mombasa was a roundabout journey via Voi and Kahe before joining the Arusha–Tanga line for Korogwe, where they arrived on 5 August. They were now only about thirty miles from Muhesa, which they had captured a fortnight earlier.

The 5th Light Infantry commenced their southward march from Korogwe on 9 August 1916 for Handeni, where they arrived two days later. They stayed there for six weeks. The deprivations they had already endured, which had prompted the earlier plan to allow them to recuperate in Mombasa, had taken their toll. Climate, shortage of rations and disease combined to make it essential that the regiment be allowed to regain its strength. It would have been far more sensible to have left them at Mombasa. While they were at Handeni, the Germans were pushed southwards until on 26 August British forces entered the important centre of Morogoro on the railway line from Dar es Salaam. A heavy naval bombardment, followed by an attack carried out by a British column 2,000 strong finally forced the Germans to evacuate Dar es Salaam, which was captured on 4 September. A detachment of the 5th Light Infantry, comprising those troops who were fit enough, was included in the assault and on 17 September landed at Kiswere, which was used as another base against the Germans. They rejoined the regiment on

* Lt Col Charles Horden, *Military Operations in East Africa*, vol. 1, p. 321.

German East Africa (south) 1914–1918

1 December. The remainder of the regiment resumed its march on 23 September from Handeni to Morogoro, where it arrived on 8 October. Here they had another halt, this time for four months. During this period William and Major Wilford were admitted to hospital and Capt Ball arrived from Dar es Salaam with reinforcements that he had collected in Mombasa.

On 17 February 1917 the regiment began its last phase in the East African campaign, when it entrained at Morogoro for Dar es Salaam and the next day embarked again in the *Barjora* for Lindi. With the aid of the Royal Navy all the Tanganyika ports, including Lindi, were now in British hands so the landing at Lindi was unopposed. The German forces in the hinterland of Lindi were not part of their main army but in October had been reinforced by a further 600 men and a gun from the Königsberg. This gun caused a considerable amount of damage to Lindi and to the British build-up of stores but was so well concealed that its location was never discovered, even by spotter planes. Although the British troops, known as Lindi Force, were continually reinforced they could make no headway against the Germans, whose defences had been well prepared. The British objective was to advance westwards from Lindi behind the main German front, which was being pushed southwards by the British Kilwa Force further north, but many months were to go by before this was achieved.

Meanwhile the 5th Light Infantry was engaged in harassing the enemy, trying to find weak spots in their defences. They were in action several times and sustained casualties from rifle-fire and machine-guns as well as from enemy artillery. On 10 June the regiment was described as being 'as strong as possible' with four British officers, ten Indian officers and 223 Indian other ranks. Towards the end of June operations were stepped up and on the night of 29 June part of the regiment set off from Naitiwi, a few miles from Lindi. At dawn they charged the enemy's camp with fixed bayonets, taking them completely by surprise and capturing

many prisoners. Details of this engagement are included in the second volume of *Military Operations in East Africa* but it was unnecessary for me to refer to it as a copy of the extract on the operations at Naitiwi was in the family records. It records:

A gun from the Königsberg

On 28th June 1917 reports came in from native agents and from the small garrison at Kiswere of German detachments advancing from the north west, and a patrol of the enemy was reported at Lutende Hill (8 miles N.W. of Lindi) which was said to be about 80 strong with perhaps a machine gun. H.Q. at Lindi ordered the 5th Light Infantry, then holding an entrenched position at Naitiwi, to verify this report. Accordingly on the evening of the 29th Lt. Col Wilford marched out with the greater part of his half battalion, about 160 strong with three machine guns, and after a careful advance through the night, reached the vicinity of the German camp.

The enemy, one single company, were taken unawares by the sudden attack and the 5th L.I. rushed the camp capturing three Germans, dispersing the remainder and pursuing them for half a mile. Then, however, fresh German forces came on the scene advancing on either flank and it was learned from prisoners that a considerable force was at hand. Lt. Col Wilford rallied his companies and disposed them for defence in time to meet an attack which developed swiftly from the north and south.

Several German machine guns were brought into action and charge after charge was made with the bayonet only to be met with and driven back by bayonet and bomb. By 0800 hours Lt. Col Wilford and many of his men had fallen; the attacking Germans had worked forwards to within 70 yards, disabling one of the British machines by a direct hit.

After maintaining the defence for another hour, Capt W. D. Hall, on whom the command now devolved, decided that since ammunition was running short, the only way of avoiding surrender was to charge out with the bayonet in the hope of breaking through. Gallantly followed by the remnant of his men, he forced his way through the German lines and drew clear. On reassembling, it was found that 55 in all had escaped with one machine gun. The remainder were either killed or captured.

For this exploit William was awarded the Military Cross. The citation in the *London Gazette* reads:

Captain W. D. Hall

When in action against superior enemy forces at close range his commanding officer became a casualty and he took command and led frequent bayonet charges with great gallantry under very heavy rifle and machine gun fire. He eventually succeeded in extricating the remnant of his force from a most difficult situation. His courage and resource under most trying circumstances were most praiseworthy.

The regiment was still carrying out harassing operations against the enemy when on 29 September William was transferred to the Bharatpur Rifles to replace a company commander who had become a casualty. The Bharatpur Rifles, whose operational role was the same as that of the 5th Light Infantry, was involved in the increasing attacks against the German positions. The Kilwa Force (now called Hanforce, after its commander, Gen Hannynton) was making progress southwards with the intention of linking up with Linforce. As a result the main German army, under the command of Gen von Lettow-Vorbeck, had fallen back to positions adjacent to the Germans surrounding Lindi, who themselves had retired about fifty miles up the Lukuledi River to Mahiwa. This is where the decisive battle of the war in East Africa took place. The fighting commenced on 15 October and lasted for four days. Charles Miller, in his book *Battle for the Bundu*, which gives an excellent account of the war in East Africa, describes it as the most savagely fought battle in the history of African colonial conflict. Two Nigerian regiments, which had been cut off and surrounded by German forces, were sustaining heavy casualties and it is likely that the Bharatpur Rifles were part of Gen O'Grady's force which was sent to extricate them. On 16 October at Mtana near Mahiwa William, receiving a bullet in his wrist, had to be evacuated to the rear and was taken by ship from Lindi to Zanzibar, where there was a military hospital.

The 5th Light Infantry left Lindi on 6 December and escorted a shipload of German prisoners from Tanga to Suez before embarking on 30 January 1918 in the *Urlana* for India. The regiment was disbanded three years later.

Note

For a full account of the Singapore Mutiny, see R. W. E. Harper and Harry Miller, *Singapore Mutiny,* 1984.

‘KNOWING THAT SOME ARE SPENDING THEIR LAST HALF-HOUR ON EARTH’

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO: THE INDIAN ARMY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

TIM WILLASEY-WILSEY

Over a million Indians (both soldiers and non-combatants) served in the First World War and nearly 75,000 died. 600,000 served in the Middle East with 30,000 dying in Mesopotamia alone. For many readers their family history involves a trip to India, researching in hot, dusty libraries, strolling around cantonment towns and hacking through overgrown cemeteries. But for the four years of the War many of our ancestors fought with the Indian Army in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine.

On 29 October 1918 Mrs Dorman of the American College in Beirut wrote to my great-grandmother at 175 Clyde Road, Rawalpindi, India: ‘We’ve just had the pleasure of having with us your son Captain [Freddie] Wilsey who went off in the hospital ship to Alexandria the day before yesterday . . . Captain Wilsey gave my husband a couple of anxious days at first with his wound and Dr Dorman said he had a very narrow escape with his life. You will have heard how the shell entered the right side and passed up into the left lung and for several days the condition was critical’. And so ended my grandfather’s war: one hundred years ago.

Ned and Freddie Wilsey were cousins. Ned was 21 when war broke out whereas Freddie was 16. The difference was that Ned was sent to the hell of Mesopotamia in 1916 where he was killed whereas Freddie, after a brief spell in Mesopotamia in 1917, served in Palestine where a quick and decisive victory was achieved over the Turks. Although seriously wounded he survived.

Ned’s father, Harry, had been born in India and had served in both the British and Indian armies. The family lived in Murree, the hill station for the garrison town of Rawalpindi. Ned was educated at Lawrence College, near Murree, and in early 1916 was sent to Mesopotamia to join the 93rd Burma Regiment. The 93rd was part of the 9th (Sirhind) Brigade of the 3rd (Meerut) Division. All the

Ned Wilsey (left) with fellow officers

operations of the 3rd Division took place on the right bank of the Tigris whereas the other Indian Division (the 7th) operated from the left bank.

Ned left behind no papers, letters or diaries; so I have had to rely on regimental histories of the 93rd, one of which is disarmingly honest both about conditions and senior incompetence. A historian of the 93rd described Mesopotamia as follows:

> Little attention had been paid to roads, especially as the rivers were universally regarded as the best means of travel. It is a treeless country, a few date palms alone relieving the monotony of the landscape. Any small feature such as a tiny hillock or the bed of a dried out stream (a nullah) perhaps only a foot deep became a military objective because of the cover it provided. These features would then be accorded codenames such as K12A etc. Mesopotamia was also a hotbed of disease—plague, small-pox, cholera, malaria, dysentery were all prevalent. To these pleasantries could be added heat-stroke when campaigning in temperatures mounting to 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade.

In March 1916 the 93rd was involved in the failed attempt to relieve General Townshend's forces which were encircled at Kut. In these operations it lost 146 men, almost exactly half of an already depleted battalion. Ned himself was listed among the wounded.

It had been an appalling experience for all involved. Apart from heavy casualties it took place in a most inhospitable country, and in the most inclement weather. For long periods the men were on quarter rations, the misery of the wounded under inadequate medical arrangements was appalling, and the necessities of war, such as bombs, barbed wire and Very lights were deficient. At the conclusion of hostility the regiment paraded for words of consolation from the G.O.C. The strength on parade was 4 British officers and 96 other ranks.

The regiment was reorganised during the summer and was ready for action again in time for the winter weather. Colonel Whitehead returned from the Dardanelles to take command. The first objective for the battalion was to dislodge the enemy from their trench positions near Kut.

> At about 8am [on January 10th 1917] officers collected near the aid post for breakfast—a somewhat cheerless meal. It is unpleasant looking round

a circle of friends, and knowing that some of the number are spending their last half-hour on earth. One wonders if one is among the latter— a thought which recurs persistently, and one which must be as persistently checked. Faces look pinched, and strained on these occasions, there is an unnatural glitter in the eyes, the conversation is forced, and the slightest humour evokes an exaggerated laugh. At last the time for action drew near.

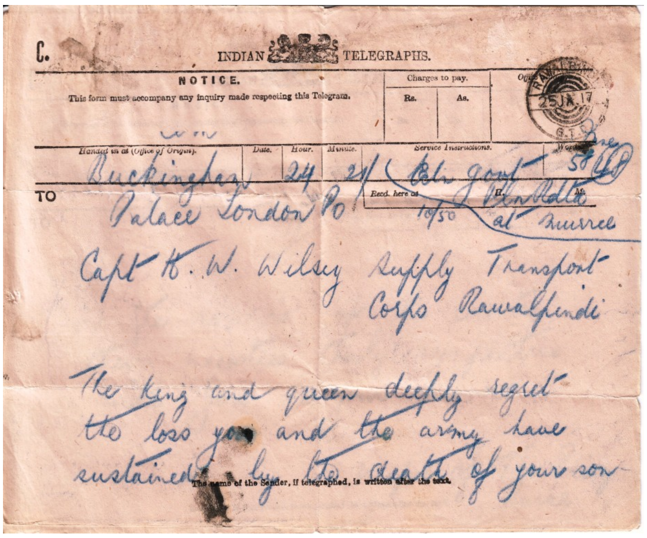
[It was] a beautifully clear day, and B and D Companies [the latter commanded by Ned] were sent forward to occupy the First Brushwood Nullah. The First Brushwood Nullah was about five feet deep, four feet broad, and nearly straight—a fact which brought disaster on us the next day. The front was covered with thick undergrowth, through which the Turkish second line trenches to our front were invisible.

[There followed] a night of alarms and disturbances, bursts of fire and thudding of bombs, all made more awesome by the bright light from the brushwood, which the Turks had lit to show up their front. On 11 January dawn broke on a murky day, and K15A still remained in the hands of the Turks.

[Turkish] guns were firing from the other side of Kut, and so caught us in complete enfilade, and, the nullah being wide and straight, their work of destruction was easy. After a while the nullah had the appearance of a scene of massacre—and one of a particularly brutal character, where most of the victims lay torn and bleeding, but not yet dead. Colonel Whitehead, who had watched the attack from a very exposed position, fell, shot through the body. He knew he was done for, and said good-bye to all officers as he was carried away. It was one of the most inspiring moments of the regiment's history.

Lieutenant Wilsey and Subadar Fazal Dad were both killed by shell fire, and Jemadar Harnam Singh was wounded. The former was buried at the junction of the nullah K15A-K12H with the First Brushwood Nullah, where his grave was recognised untouched eighteen months later.

Ned's remains were transferred after the war to the Amara War Cemetery. He now lies in Plot XVIII, Row L, Grave 16. Whether his grave has survived the depredations since 2003 is unknown.


C.
INDIAN TELEGRAPHS.
NOTICE.
This form must accompany any inquiry made respecting this Telegram.
Charges to pay.
Rs. As.
TO
Buckingham Palace London
Capt K. W. Wilsey Supply Transport Corps Rawalpindi
The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the army have sustained by the death of your son
The name of the Sender, if telegraphed, is written after the text.

Freddie Wilsey was Ned’s cousin. His father Bertie was a captain at Army Headquarters (AHQ) on the Mall at Simla. In November 1912 he walked home for lunch at his rented cottage and was found dead, of a heart attack, in his arm-chair,

Freddie Wilsey

aged just 47. Freddie was 14. He, his mother and sister, 'returned to England' (which they had only ever visited once) where Freddie was sent to Bedford Modern School with some financial assistance from the army.

He won a King's India Cadetship to Sandhurst in November 1915. A year later the family moved back to Rawalpindi with Freddie now an officer in the Gurkha Rifles. He was posted to the 1st/8th Gurkhas in Mesopotamia as part of the 21st Brigade of the 7th Indian Division. The actions in his record of service 'Defence of Samarra 6th June – 30th October; Battle and Capture of Imam ad Daur 2nd November; First Battle and Capture of Tekrit 4th November 1917' were all relatively minor engagements compared to the hell which Ned had endured in January.

At the end of 1917 British troops in Palestine were replaced by Indian divisions from Mesopotamia. The British regiments were urgently needed on the Western Front. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) was commanded by General Edmund Allenby. Allenby would later gain a reputation as a brilliant general, one of the only British generals to have fought a highly mobile war compared to the stalemate in France and Belgium. In fact Allenby had been no more or less creative than any of his peers when he had commanded in Belgium. He was known as 'the Bull' both for his intransigence and his frequent outbursts of anger.

However Allenby made good progress against the Turks from October 1917, winning battles at Gaza and Beersheba and famously entering Jerusalem on foot in December. He had hoped to push on northwards in the Spring of 1918 but the German successes on the Western Front required him to pause.

Meanwhile Freddie and the 1st/8th Gurkha Rifles arrived at their front-line trenches north of Jaffa in early April 1918. The left of their position is largely unchanged today; on the cliffs of Arsuf overlooking the azure blue of the Mediterranean. The next few months must have been gruelling under the broiling summer sun with lack of water a constant problem but Freddie would later write that, compared to the 'arid hell of Mesopotamia, the orange groves and cultivation around Jaffa seemed like paradise'.

To relieve the boredom and to keep in a reasonable state of readiness fighting patrols were sent out to reconnoitre the Turkish positions and, where possible, to seize prisoners. For one such patrol

Freddie’s raid, depicted by Harry Sheldon

Freddie was awarded the MC. Years later the war-artist Harry Sheldon, himself an 8th Gurkha officer, recaptured the scene.

On 19th September the Battle of Sharon (part of the wider Battle of Megiddo) began with a cavalry advance to cut off the Turkish retreat. It was a remarkable success as the Turkish Army rapidly disintegrated. The 8th Gurkhas fighting with the 2nd Black Watch took their objectives by 0730hrs and then marched northwards. One surviving map of Freddie’s shows Turkish positions at Zerkiye Crossing and Birket Ramadan, which are both below the modern Israeli city of Natanya. Freddie later wrote:

Hour after hour the march continued. No-one had had any food since the previous night and by 10am the water-bottles were empty and remained so since there was no water in the vicinity. At midnight, having covered some 36 miles, to say nothing of the battle that had been fought, the remnants of the regiment halted in the foothills west of Samaria.

The following day they found ‘some pools of water, buffalo wallows for the most part, but nectar for troops who had marched and fought for three days on one water bottle. The next day rations arrived and the men had their first decent meal for nearly 4 days’. From then onwards they were marching north. ‘Often the Regiment marched 12 hours a day to cover only some 15 miles. It was reminiscent of a nightmare. Finally, having passed through many historic and biblical places such as Caesarea, Haifa, Acre, Tyre, Sidon and Beirut, it arrived at Tripoli. We had covered some 300 miles in 27 days.’

Damascus fell on 1 October, Homs on 16 and Aleppo on 25 October. The Ottoman Empire capitulated on 30 October 1918 with the signing of the Armistice of Mudros. But, as we know from Mrs Dorman's letter, Freddie did not quite make it to Tripoli. According to Huxford, historian of the 8th Gurkhas:

> At the last halt before Beirut, an incident, which might have considerably reduced the British officer strength, occurred. A bomb exploded near to the sentry on beat in front of the British Officers' Mess bivouac. The sentry was very severely wounded, as was Lieutenant F. W. Wilsey. A few minutes earlier all the officers had been seated at the dinner-table, close to the sentry's beat.

It has never been clear who or what was responsible for this incident. Was it a Turkish shell, a bomb thrown by a local or a grenade accidentally detonated by an allied soldier? From Beirut Freddie was sent to the 17 British General Hospital at Alexandria. There he was tended back to full-health by a young nurse, Eleanor Margerison, whom he would later marry. A postcard of the hospital amongst her possessions enabled us to find it, almost unchanged but restored to its pre-war role as a school, in April 2018: a hundred years after Freddie reached the front line at Arsuf.

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BACSA AND THE CEMETERIES OF BRITISH INDIA

STEPHEN McCLARENCE

On busy days something like 60,000 people flock to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. Barely a handful, however, take a taxi a few miles across the city to the Roman Catholic Cemetery. They're missing a treasure. The sprucely maintained cemetery boasts an intriguing monument: the so-called Red Taj. Like a scale model, it duplicates the Taj's dome and minarets in warm red sandstone. And there's another, more touching parallel. Where the Taj was the emperor Shah Jahan's memorial to his wife Mumtaz, the Red Taj was Anne Hessing's memorial to her husband John, a soldier who died in 1803 and left her a 'disconsolate widow', as the inscription says.

The whole site, the oldest European cemetery in North India, is a haven of quiet in a city of hectic bustle; only the squawking green parakeets disturb the peace. It dates back to the seventeenth century and houses the tombs of scholars, journalists, adventurers, missionaries and diplomats, including John Mildenhall, an English merchant who was Elizabeth I's envoy to the Mughal Court.

The cemetery encapsulates the social structure of India's colonial past and is just the sort of place that might figure in a new joint venture by tour company Indus Experiences and BACSA, the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia. The aim is to use cemeteries as a way of increasing awareness of Britain's contribution to the subcontinent's heritage—and at the same time to help travellers and tourists connect with their own family histories.

BACSA, which currently has more than 1,100 members, has been pursuing similar aims for forty years. It brings together people interested in the many hundreds of European cemeteries scattered across South Asia. There are more than 800 of them in India alone, the last resting places of perhaps a million Britishers, including some who died in polo accidents, or after being attacked by bears, or even from exploding soda bottles. Yet most organised tours of India ignore them. The nation's British history is all too often regarded as off-limits, apart from an afternoon tour of Lutyens' New Delhi or a couple of journeys by rail, one of Britain's great legacies to the subcontinent.

South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta

Locating old family bungalows, the churches where ancestors were christened or married, and the graveyards where they were buried can be a challenge. Cemeteries may be vandalised or submerged in jungles of undergrowth, with the monsoon taking its annual toll. Walking round them is often like exploring the evocative remains of a vanished civilisation.

This is where BACSA has special expertise, raising awareness of cemeteries' importance and funding preservation work. Not all are as well preserved as South Park Street Cemetery in Calcutta, perhaps the grandest cemetery in South Asia. With its pyramids and obelisks, it offers a fascinating insight into European life in India. Here are the first British envoy to Tibet, a British Major General who converted to Hinduism and a former MP who died 'due to an inordinate use of the hookah'.

South Park Street opened in 1767 and was already full by the early nineteenth century. There was much demand for graves. Two monsoons was then regarded as the average life expectancy of Europeans newly arrived in India.

At midday in Delhi's Nicholson Cemetery, the sun blazes down on grieving stone angels and cherubs, some marking the graves of army wives who died in their early twenties and children who died tragically young. One small grave is dedicated to 'Mercy, our darling infant, who died aged two months: Our second little bud in heaven'. 'India's cemeteries tell of Britain's long involvement in the subcontinent', says Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, an authority on colonial India who edits BACSA's newsletter *Chowkidar*, its name

Nicholson Cemetery, Delhi. John Nicholson's grave in foreground.

taken from the Hindi word for the watchman or gatekeeper who looks after cemeteries). 'There's an affection between India and Britain, an underlying bond that can't be broken', she says. Over many visits to the subcontinent, she has noticed a growing interest in the visible remains of what older Indians sometimes call 'British times'—'rather like us having Roman remains in Britain and adopting them'.

Yasin Zargar, Managing Director of Indus Experiences, confirms this bond and counters suggestions of Indian resentment about its former colonists: Raj-rage, as it has been called. 'Once there was a sort of thought about India: "We are British and shouldn't go there; it will hurt the people." But today's India is a changed country; it's better educated.' As a result, clients on family history tours often find local Indians 'really keen to help them'.

Peter Boon, BACSA's Honorary Secretary, can trace his family history in India back 200 years. His great-great-uncle served with the British army in India and died in the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845. Other ancestors were involved in tea planting and the indigo business. Some years ago Peter, born shortly before Partition in the hill station of Mussoorie, joined a family group to trace ancestral graves and have them restored. 'When the graves were covered in undergrowth it was sad to see them', he says. 'But once the area was cleared and the headstones were repaired, there was a great deal of satisfaction. We felt we'd done right by our ancestors. We'd come to look after them.'

Thanks to this new venture, others will now find it easier to follow suit.

Agra Cantonment Cemetery

AGRA CANTONMENT CEMETERY
Supported by BACSA. Dates from 1806, after Agra's annexation by Lord Lake in 1803. The city became a major military base and the seat of government of the North West Provinces. **Lieut William *Turner***, 4th Regt Native Infantry, 1806; the oldest identifiable grave. **Capt Hastings E. Harington**, Bengal Artillery, winner of the Victoria Cross at the second relief of Lucknow, 1857. Apothecary **Henry Watson**'s family: of twelve children by three wives only two survived infancy. **John Newton O'Brien**, late jailer of Agra Central Prison, who 'departed this life . . . leaving a disconsolate widow and four children to bemoan this irreparable loss'. **Dorothy Rhoda**, wife of Staff Sergeant Instructor **Buckley**, aged 22. 'Ah, she was but a twelve months bride, not half her love and sweetness tried, a mother who had scarcely smiled, ecstatic welcome to her child, rest then in thy narrow bed, no ill can come to thee most blessed dead.'

ALLAHABAD CANTONMENT CEMETERY
What is the connection between the 1964 epic *Zulu* and this cemetery? In the film, Michael Caine portrayed **Major Gonville Bromhead**, who won the Victoria Cross in 1879 at Rorke's Drift. Bromhead later served in India, where he died in 1891; BACSA conserved his grave in Allahabad in 2010.

AGRA ROMAN CATHOLIC CEMETERY
The oldest European cemetery in north India. The Mughal Emperor Akbar's Court was at Agra in the seventeenth century. Buried here is **John Mildenhall,** self-styled ambassador of Queen Elizabeth I. 'Here lies John Mildenhall Englishman who left London in 1599 and travelled to India through Persia reached Agra in 1603 and spoke with the Emperor Akbar. On a second visit in 1614 he fell ill at

Lahore died at Ajmere and was buried here through the good offices of Thomas Kerridge merchant.' Also **John Hessing**, 'late colonel in the service of Maharaji Daulat Rao Sindia . . . departed this life 21st July 1803 . . . native of Utrecht . . . came out to Ceylon in the military service of the Dutch East India Company'; and **Jeronimo Veroneo**, famous Venetian jeweller who worked on the Taj Mahal (1640).

SOUTH PARK STREET CEMETERY, KOLKATA (CALCUTTA)

BACSA for many years has supported 'The Great Cemetery', opened in 1767. The architecture of the mausolea recalls the grandeur of Europe at the time of Beethoven and Nash. Its 'residents' represent a cross-section of the European population of the time. The greatest of all Orientalists **Sir William Jones**. Scholar, lawyer, linguist, naturalist and author, he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1785. His discovery of a Hindu classical age was sensational. Commanding HMS *Sybille*, **Captain Edward Cooke** attacked the powerful French raiding frigate *Forte* in February 1799, in the Bay of Bengal. He was struck by grape shot and died in May in Calcutta after an agonising three months. BACSA supported the conservation of his tomb. A memorial stands in Westminster Abbey. **Mrs Elizabeth Jane Barwell**: 'The celebrated Miss Sanderson'. A famous beauty who set Calcutta society alight.

CEMETERY OF THE BRITISH RESIDENCY, HYDERABAD

BACSA and the Deccan Heritage Foundation are conserving this graveyard dating from 1807. Readers of William Dalrymple's *White Mughals* will be familiar with **James Achilles Kirkpatrick**, the East India Company's Resident at the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad. He had the palatial Residence built and married a Mohammedan princess. Kirkpatrick lies in Calcutta but four successors and some wives are buried here. **Lieut Col Sir Alexander Pinhey**, Resident, whose funeral in 1916 was upset by bees that sent the crowd and horses flying in all directions. **George Bushby**, Resident. Frances, the 19-year-old wife of the Resident **Thomas Sydenham**.

Cemetery of the British Residency, Hyderabad

MEERUT CANTONMENT CEMETERY

Sir David Ochterlony's tomb, Meerut Cantonment Cemetery

Meerut became a significant garrison town in the nineteenth century. BACSA supports the cemetery, dating from 1807. **Captain Donald Macdonald** of the 20th Regt Native Infantry and **Mrs Louisa Macdonald** and other victims of the insurrection on 10 May 1857. **Sir David Ochterlony**, victor of the Nepal wars, whose 165-foot high monument stands in the centre of Calcutta. Whilst British Resident to the Mughal Court at Delhi, he every evening took his thirteen Indian wives or concubines on a promenade around the Red Fort, each on the back of her own elephant. **General Sir Robert Rollo Gillespie**. In the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814 he led a column attacking a fort at Khalanga where, shouting 'One more shot for the honour of Down', his county of birth, he was shot through the heart. His monument is but fifty feet high.

ST MARY'S CHURCH CEMETERY, CHENNAI (MADRAS)

The Hope Family monument, St Mary's Cemetery, Chennai

Opened in 1680 St Mary's is the oldest Anglican church east of the Suez Canal. One of the oldest garden cemeteries in India, St Mary's dates from 1763. **James Anderson**, celebrated Scottish botanist, who was largely responsible for the introduction of cochineal, silk, sugar cane, American cotton and English apples to India. **Gilbert Pasley,** Surgeon-General of the Madras Presidency, 'a skillful physician'. **General Sir Eyre Coote**, three times commander-in-chief, the decisive influence at Plassey, ranking with Marlborough and Wellington as one of the greatest commanders who ever lived. His body was later exhumed and taken to England. **Nicholas Morse**, great-grandson of Oliver Cromwell and Governor of Madras, who in 1746 surrendered the town to the French led by de La Bourdonnais.

Kacheri Cemetery, Kanpur

KANLOG CEMETERY, SHIMLA (SIMLA)

Opened in 1850. **Herbert S. Harington**, chief engineer of the Simla–Kalka railway. The Muslim spouse of **Lieut Col David Colyear**, 'a good mother and a firm friend who lived in the service of her god'. Three children of Field Marshal **Lord Roberts** of Kandahar, Commander-in-Chief India. The seven wives of **Mr Hogan**, Head Clerk to the Commander-in-Chief's military secretary. Four teenage Italian musicians of a touring nineteenth-century pop group, crushed to death by a rock slide *en route* to Simla. **Lieut Ralph Broughton**, killed on the eve of his marriage in 1885, when his pony bolted frightened by rattling kerosene tins carried by a coolie.

KACHERI CEMETERY, KANPUR (CAWNPORE)

Dates from the time when the first European troops arrived, following a treaty with the Nawab of Oudh in 1765. Here lie military officers and civil servants of the East India Company, merchants, traders, adventurers and their wives and children. **Major General Sir John Horsford**, who never took home leave in forty-five years. **Matilda**, wife of **William Dickson** of the Cawnpore Farm, married at 13 and died aged 23 in 1827. **Robert Home**, painter to the Nawab of Oudh. His paintings can be seen at the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, and in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. **John Jones**, merchant and trader. **Ann O'Brien**, aged eighteen months. 'Oh, the tempest was unkind, and stern the shower, and cruel was the wayward wind, that wrecked so sweet a flower.' **Lieutenant General Sir Dyson Marshall**, who died in 1823 after fifty-three years' service, leaving his Bebee Mindoo, 'my faithful companion for near forty two years and mother of all my natural children'.

This article is an edited version of 'India and the British: They Came Never to Return', published by BACSA and Indus Experiences.

A LIFE WELL LIVED

JOHN SEELY, SURVEYOR AND AUTHOR

BARBARA FRANKL

When you first start researching your family history you hope that you will uncover some exciting, courageous and worthwhile lives. My 3x great-grandfather, John Benjamin Seely, met all those expectations. His short life was packed with adventure, exploration and discovery. He was born in St Pancras, London, in 1786, the son of John and Lucinda Seely. I know little of his parents. They must both have been educated, as John Senior was a lawyer and his mother literate (she produced the necessary paperwork for John to join the East India Company) but they do not seem to have had any significant influence or status. What I know about John comes from the EIC records held at the British Library but also from the autobiographical details in two of his books, *The Wonders of Elora* and *The Road Book of India*, which add flesh to the bare bones of the researched narrative. Most of the quotes in this article are taken from these books.

In 1804, when he was 18, John went as a midshipman to China. Unfortunately, I know nothing more about this journey. I do know, however, that in 1807 he joined the East India Company as a military cadet. The EIC was set up in 1600 to develop trade in the East Indies, mainly in the Indian subcontinent and China. For the first century of its existence, trade was its focus and it operated in this period largely independently of the British government. By the 1700s, however, competition with the French East India company and the opportunity offered by the decline of the Mughal Empire proved too much and the company's interests turned to political control. The Battles of Plassey in 1757 and Buxar in 1764 left the company in control of Bengal and gradually its control was extended to cover most of India. By the height of its powers, in 1803, the British East India Company had a private army of 260,000; twice the size of the British Army.

This, then, was the army that John joined as a cadet. He was nominated as a cadet by John Bebb, a director of the company, and went initially to the small island of Versovah or Isle de Mer, fourteen miles from Bombay (now Mumbai), where the cadet establishment was located. There:

we had every amusement and comfort men could require: an excellent mess, good houses, a number of books and newspapers, a billiards table, cricket, quoits &c. Our station was also made more agreeable by a constant intercourse with Bombay; the journey to which place, both by land and water, was very agreeable, and rendered cool by the sea breeze. It was, in fact, while I was unmarried, the happiest period of my life.

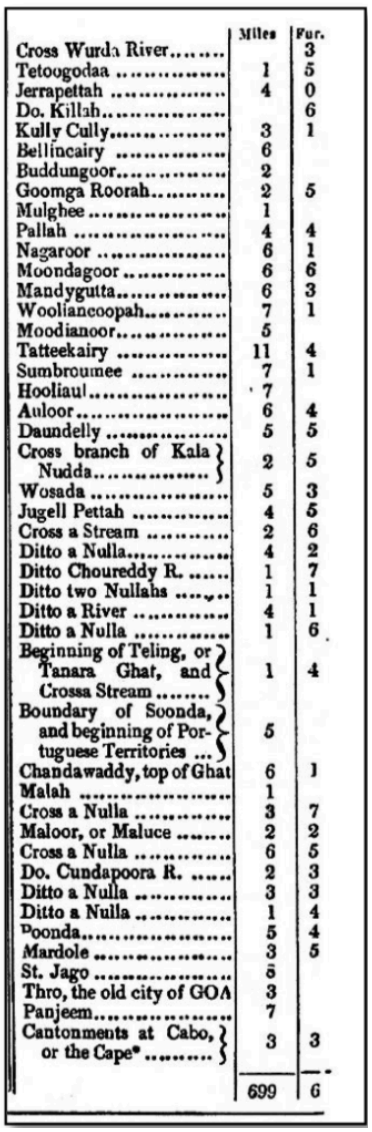
The island of Bombay itself had twenty-one miles of rides and drives. A causeway linked it to the neighbouring island of Salsette, and the Colaba isthmus extended along the bottom of the island. This whole island group, including Versovah, where John was based, was littered with the ruins of Portuguese convents and monasteries, Hindu temples, mosques, old Mahratta forts and grand European houses—all with the magnificent backdrop of the Ghats, the range of mountains which runs along the coast of India.

Clearly, John must have stood out from the other cadets, either because of his (self-defined) 'Native energy of character and indistinguishable determination not to remain in the background' or because he had a lively interest in, and an open mind about, the customs of the country in which he now lived. Seeley, one of his friends said, 'would rather go cave hunting or have a tête-a-tête with some old Brahmin' than go on a hog hunt. Though even going on a cave hunt could be dangerous:

I was once accompanying a native Portuguese priest into a rather gloomy cave on Salsette and had proceeded some distance, when we discovered a tiger lying asleep. The poor padre was horror stricken and instead of quietly turning around and sneaking away, he putting the hollow of his hand to his mouth, was beginning to cry out when, for our mutual preservation, I was obliged to give him a kick, by way of rousing him and silencing his vociferation, dragging him away by his cassock at the same time.

Whatever the reason, in 1809 while still only a cadet he was asked to complete a survey of the route from Madras to Goa. This 699-mile journey was carried out in circumstances of considerable difficulty:

We marched in the heavy periodical rains, and a more harassing and fatiguing march (in a time of peace) perhaps a corps never experienced. We had little or no baggage left—all our supplies were consumed—scarcely a domestic servant but what had deserted or fallen sick. We had worn out two or three reliefs of cattle, latterly procured 'vi et armis'. The last month of the journey was through an uninhabited and primeval wilderness, every day encamping in jungle, mud and water. The brave faithful and active coast Siphanees never uttered a complaint, though often without rice, and they deserve the character so long attained of the best troops in India.



	Miles	Fur.
Cross Wurda River		3
Tetoogodaa	1	5
Jerrapettah	4	0
Do. Killah		6
Kully Cully	3	1
Bellincairy	6	
Buddungoor	2	
Goomga Roorah	2	5
Mulghee	1	
Pallah	4	4
Nagaroor	6	1
Moondagoor	6	6
Mandygutta	6	3
Wooliancoopah	7	1
Moodianoor	5	
Tatteekairy	11	4
Sumbroumee	7	1
Hooliaul	7	
Auloor	6	4
Daundelly	5	5
Cross branch of Kala Nudda	2	5
Wosada	5	3
Jugell Pettah	4	5
Cross a Stream	2	6
Ditto a Nulla	4	2
Ditto Choureddy R.	1	7
Ditto two Nullahs	1	1
Ditto a River	4	1
Ditto a Nulla	1	6
Beginning of Teling, or Tanara Ghat, and Crossa Stream	1	4
Boundary of Soonda, and beginning of Portuguese Territories	5	
Chandawaddy, top of Ghat	6	1
Malah	1	
Cross a Nulla	3	7
Maloor, or Maluce	2	2
Cross a Nulla	6	5
Do. Cundapoora R.	2	3
Ditto a Nulla	3	3
Ditto a Nulla	1	4
Poonda	5	4
Mardole	3	5
St. Jago	5	
Thro, the old city of GOA	3	
Panjeem	7	
Cantonments at Cabo, or the Cape*	3	3
	699	6

In anyone's terms this was an epic journey. John travelled across India from Madras to the cantonments at the cape just above Goa. The whole journey of 699 miles is described minutely with each crossing of a river and nullah (or stream) being noted. The longest stage on the route is forty miles but largely the journey is divided into stages of one to five miles long. Many of the existing maps were wildly inaccurate, the whole area had been little explored and parts of it were virtually unknown. John's aim in preparing the route was that 'the traveller might see his way by having a continuation of actual roads, those usually travelled, and on which there are villages or stations where supplies &c. can be obtained. Some of the descriptions are to modern eyes rather odd. Five miles into the journey, for example, there is a waypoint called the Nabob's Garden. One hundred and thirty-four miles later there is the Nabob's House. Presumably different Nabobs but also, presumably, well enough known to have been a useful description in its time and place. John received the personal thanks of the Adjutant-General, Colonel R. Gordon, for this work.

Then, in 1810, the Commander-in-Chief General Abercrombie granted John leave to visit the Temples of Elora. This was a shorter journey of about 300 miles. Although it was thought 'a serious and difficult journey, particularly as we were not then on very amicable terms with the Mahratta chief Holkar in whose territories the Temples then were', this seemed to him a minor problem, as 'if a man has health and a good stock of patience he may surmount more difficult journeys than mine promised to be'.

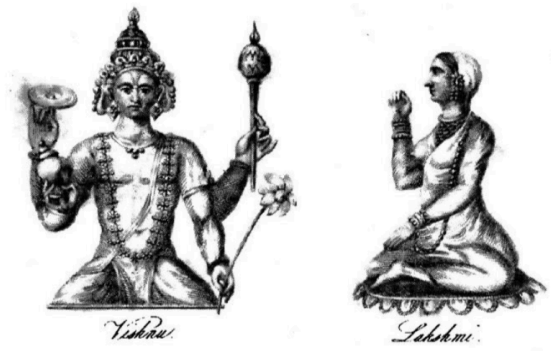
The party that he led consisted of:

3 bullocks to carry the tent
3 bullocks for clothes provisions and books
2 porters for the camp cot and writing desk
1 porter for cooking utensils
4 personal servants (with 3 ponies between them)
6 Siphanees and a corporal

The writing desk gave me pause for thought but as the aim of the trip was to record both the journey and the full details of the temples it was, I suppose, a necessity. Several native travellers also travelled with them for their own protection.

The journey itself proved to be safe but laborious. The roads were poor, the mountain range had to be crossed, there were dangers ranging from scorpions to tigers and there was rain and extreme heat. Despite this they met other groups on the road. Once there was a lady from the Poona Court who was travelling to the fort of Bassein with a large suite, including several females, which was guarded by thirty horsemen and ten 'matchlock' men. Her baggage was carried by two elephants, eight camels and several horses. Another time there was a convoy of bullocks, carrying goods, guarded by watchmen and their dogs, the *brinjarrees*, which were a cross between a wolf and a domestic dog. Throughout the journey he finds things of interest to enjoy and describe.

When John eventually arrived at the Temples of Elora he was not disappointed. 'It is totally impossible to describe the feelings of admiration and awe excited in the mind upon first beholding these stupendous excavations.' He is credited to this day as one of the very first Europeans to recognise, and to judge on its own merits, the achievements of this native Indian construction. He compares it to that of St Peter's at Rome, the Parthenon and St Paul's, and finds it beyond belief that men should attack a solid mountain, equipped only with chisels, and carve out this vast temple with its 'mass of sculpture and carving in endless profusion. The Temples of Elora far surpass in labour design &c any of the ancient buildings that have impressed our minds with admiration'. After a negotiation between Nulla Rao, who was a Brahman and Pundit in his team, and the Brahman in charge of the Temples, John was given permission to sleep in the temple. However, sleep proved elusive; the 'gloomy solemn silence' drove it away and eventually he retreated to his tent. Whilst in the temples, he restricted himself to a vegetable and milk diet out of respect for the beliefs of the Hindu and Buddhist religions represented there. When John finally returned to Bombay, there was considerable interest in his journey and in the temples themselves. His findings and the subsequent publication of his book influenced the European view of Indian culture for many years.



John's sketches of sculptures at Elora

Ellora, Kylas. Lithograph by James Fergusson and Thomas Dibdin, 1839.

By 1812 John was a student at the College of Fort William. This was set up in 1800 by Lord Wellesley, elder brother of the Duke of Wellington, as a centre for Oriental Studies. It taught British officials the languages and cultures of India and thousands of books were translated from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Bengali, Hindu and Urdu there. The College was in Fort William, on the banks of the Hooghly river in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

It was during his time in Calcutta that John must have met his wife, Maria Dowdeswell, and they were married at Fort William by the senior chaplain of the Presidency in 1813. Maria was the daughter of George Dowdeswell (almost certainly his illegitimate daughter from a relationship with a local Indian woman). George was related to the Dowdeswells of Pull Court, Worcestershire, and he came to India in 1783 as a writer. He rapidly advanced and eventually became a member of the Supreme Council. Whatever form George's relationship with Maria's mother took, it must have been founded on affection and respect, as throughout his life George retained an interest in and cared for Maria and her family. He was a witness at her wedding and on at least one occasion took her daughter Emily, my great-great-grandmother, to England with him. When he retired to England he married but when he died he left £1000 to Maria 'for her own absolute benefit'. He also stated that were Maria to die in his lifetime this sum should devolve to her children. In 1840, when Maria's son George Bebb Seely applied to the EIC for appointment as assistant surgeon, George nominated

him and was happy to declare that their relationship was that of grandfather and grandson. I suppose I will never know for certain but I like to think that George's relationship with Maria's mother was based more on love than convenience and his continued support of his daughter does imply that this was the case.

At the time of his marriage John was a lieutenant on the EIC's Bombay establishment but George seems to have used his influence to appoint him temporarily as his military secretary during his time in Calcutta. A couple of years later John had become the barrack master in Gujarat, Bombay. The oldest of John and Maria's children, Emily, my great-great- grandmother, was born in Colaba, Bombay, as were two of her siblings, George Bebb and Richard Seely. Eventually John advanced to the rank of captain and second-in-charge of the 7th Regiment Native Infantry in the service of the Rajah of Nagpure. Much of his EIC service was spent on furlough, during which he indulged his interests in a variety of subjects. As well as the route from Madras to Goa described above, he surveyed over 4000 miles of the Indian countryside.

India was not kind to the British. John wrote that in 1821, just fourteen years after they had all come to India, 'out of 15 officers only myself and three others (Captains Barton, Wilson and Wilkins) are now alive' and they were all 'healthy, young, abstemious men'. He was himself by then in bad health. He had suffered a protracted bout of ophthalmia or inflammation of the eye and had become 'quite blind in both eyes'. His wife and two of their children were also affected. In fact:

> the population of the country, European and native, were labouring under the same disorder. My eldest child now a very fine girl was given over; and my youngest, not a year old, had leeches on both eyes every four or five days. Dr West who attended us could not himself distinctly see, for ophthalmia.

John was badly treated with Goulard's extract, a mixture of lead acetate and lead oxide used as an astringent, and only treatment from Dr Wylie at Nagpure, he believed, saved him from severe disability or even death. In about 1821 ill-health forced John to return to England with his family. He had nearly lost the sight of his right eye and had a partial paralysis of the right arm. Initially he was on half pay but after two years this pay ran out. Even on half pay it was difficult to support a family in England, especially one accustomed to a life in India. He had some financial assistance from his father-in-law but, to support his family at a decent level, he started to think about how to capitalise on his experiences in India. It was for this reason that he wrote and published *The Wonders of Elora*, produced an 'Improved Map of India', with its accompanying

Road Book of India, and wrote a third book, *A Voice from India*. Whilst in England he had two more children, Elizabeth Anne in 1822 and John in 1824. Then in 1824 the family returned to India. Possibly with the aim of writing another book, he wanted to take an artist with him to record what he saw on the journey. At that time the route to India was to sail round Africa. This took four to six months but the only alternative was to travel, as John describes, via the Nile then overland to the Red Sea. The trip down the Red Sea by sailing boat was hazardous as there was only a narrow safe route between coral beds. In 1830 the EIC started to look at the feasibility of using a steamship on this route and in 1837 they eventually did so. At this stage though it must have been a risky and hard journey, especially for someone only just restored to good health. Nevertheless, John made it to India to meet up again with his family, who had travelled by the safer African route, and his health cannot have suffered too much as a sixth child, Maria Bebb Seely, was born after their return to India. On 1 December 1826 John was made captain of the 25th Native Regiment. Sadly, twenty days later he died. He was forty years old.

John's wife Maria returned almost immediately to England with her children to live near her father, who had by then retired, and she outlived John by many years. The last reference that I can find for her is in the 1861 census, when she was living in Southampton with her widowed daughter Elizabeth Anne de Richmont. They were both described as 'Lady' under the heading of Rank, Profession or Occupation and it is therefore likely that they were living, at least in part, on the income from the £1000 left to Maria in her father's will. Her daughter Emily, my great-great-grandmother, married George Cracroft of the Lincolnshire Cracrofts. Of the other children, Richard died at two years old in Calcutta and Maria Bebb died at eight months in Bombay. John Seely died in 1853 in Norfolk when he was 29 and I can find no evidence of his having married.

George Bebb Seely was the only one of the children to return to India. He was recommended to the Company by his maternal grandfather and was appointed in 1840 as an assistant surgeon. He seems initially to have gone to Burma (now Myanmar) and in 1843 arrived in Calcutta. He married and had two children, Emily and Elizabeth Mathilda, who married J. G. Mengens and W. B. Pemberton respectively.

There the trail runs out and I can find no further details about George Bebb's family. None of the other children, with the exception of my great-great-grandmother Emily Seely, themselves had children. Emily however had three children, six grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren so the line has not died out.

ENCOUNTER WITH A FILM STAR

DAVID RAILTON

This is about a film star. This is about Gloria Graham. No, not that Gloria Grahame, not the 1950s American film star; I have led you astray already. Different film star, different Gloria Graham.

It was in June 1950 that 14-year-old Gloria Graham and her mother Kate started their second attempt to leave India and settle in England. The first was in very different circumstances. Gloria's father, a civil engineer on the railways, had died when she was 2. Three years later, in 1940, Kate married a soldier in the British Army. In 1944 his regiment was called back to England to prepare for the invasion of Europe. So Kate and Gloria travelled with him in a convoy of troopships from Bombay. It was a difficult voyage especially through the Eastern Mediterranean. German U-boats were still active in the area and life on board was a daily round of either attacks or drills for attacks.

Kate's second marriage did not work and a life of relative poverty in England came as a shock after the world of servants and afternoon tea in the Taj Hotel. Three years later she and her daughter escaped back to India and the relative peace and luxury of her sister's Bombay apartment. Life post-1947, however, was not as it used to be in India and Kate eventually decided that it had to be England, but England without a husband.

Kate obtained an emergency immigration certificate from the British Deputy High Commissioner's office, financial assistance for the voyage for herself and Gloria, and Indian Exchange Control permission for them each to take five pounds sterling out of the country. Five pounds was not much to start a new life with, even at 1950 value. However, it was not by chance that Kate decided that June 1950 was just the right time to leave.

Gloria's intermittent schooling had been going through a more settled phase at the Cathedral School and Kate had been doing various nursing jobs in Bombay, including at times working as part of a nursing team looking after the handicapped daughter of a member of the Sassoon family. The Sassoon family were leaving for England hoping to find medical help for their daughter. Travelling with them were two nurses to look after her. They needed a third and Kate was asked to help. It was an ideal opportunity as wages would be paid for the three-week voyage, a little to add to the five pounds exit allowance.

Ruby and Gloria

Jacob Ezekiel Ezra Sassoon, a Bombay merchant, his wife Annie and daughter Dorothy were remembered by one of their close friends in Bombay, whose mother 'had many fond memories of time spent with the Sassoon family'. Jacob particularly was recollected as being very caring of his handicapped daughter.

Kate was kept busy helping to look after Dorothy for the duration of the voyage and had little time to spend with Gloria, who was left to her own devices among a large group of adult passengers. Although there were many around her Gloria was lonely, but not for long. She was befriended by a good-looking, dark-haired woman in her forties whose clothes were maybe past their best. She introduced herself as Ruby Mayers. Gloria and Ruby were to spend the rest of the voyage in each other's company. Ruby Mayers was the real name of the 1920/30s Bollywood film star Sulochana. Born in Pune in 1907, she was from the community of Baghdadi Jews in India and was working as a telephone operator when she was approached to work in films. She initially turned down the offer; acting was regarded as quite a dubious profession for women at that time. However she finally agreed, despite having no knowledge of acting whatsoever.

Sulochana was not only a film star; she was the premier film actress of her time: the most famous, the richest and the most notorious. Her partnership in film after film with Dinshaw Billimoria was matched by their real-life relationship. They were the Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton of their time and place.

> Sulochana, by the early 1930s, was reified as the queen of India stars, self-evidently and unquestioningly understood as the most popular Indian star of the silent era.
>
> She was easily the most beautiful woman to adorn the Indian screen. She was the cameraman's delight. Her chiselled features were such that they could be photographed in perfect proportion from any angle. And there was magnetism in her eyes—nay, seduction.
>
> Sometimes she comes smiling, sometimes sobbing—and the effect is terrible. When she weeps is impossible that you may not feel sorry; when she laughs you begin to smile; when she walks, you also feel to walk.

These are just a few of the many descriptions of her by film critics. Sulochana's beauty was, apparently, far more than just an invention of the film studio and the writers of fan magazines. A cousin of Ruby's once told me that she remembered her aunt talking of her good looks. She also said that her grandmother was very keen for Ruby to marry her son—first-cousin marriages being not uncommon among the Jewish community there—but it was not to be as he had already decided to marry another.

With the coming of sound, Sulochana suddenly found a lull in her career, as actors were now required to be proficient in Hindustani. Taking a year off to learn the language, she made a grand comeback to the talkies. It was not to last. First her relationship with Billimoria ended and then her film contract with her studio quickly followed. Sulochana now found work hard to come by, although it did continue as did her notoriety. In 1947 one of her films was banned by Moraji Desai as 'morally reprehensible', although today we would wonder what the fuss was about.

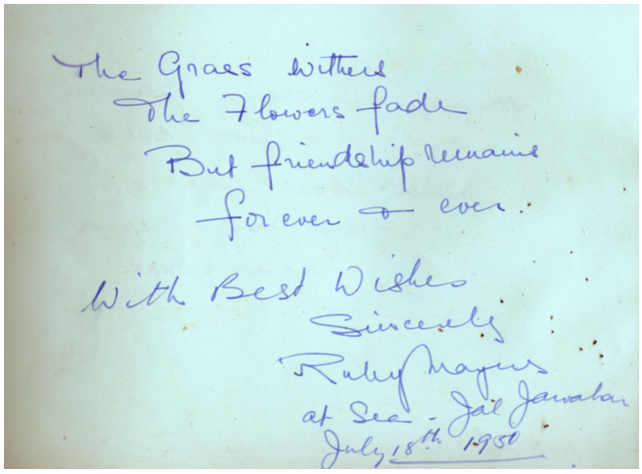
Apart from her affair with Billimoria, little is known of Sulochana's private life. She supposedly married in 1937. The *Times of India* of 8 September 1937 reported:

> Miss Sulochana (Miss Ruby Meyers), the well-known Indian film star, left Karachi by air for Gaza in Palestine, accompanied by Dr R J Weingarten of 14, Wodehouse Road Bombay. It is stated that they will be married there and return to India in November.

Dr Richard Jizchak Weingarten was one of a small number of Jewish doctors who had been assisted to come to India in the 1930s to work and to escape the increasingly difficult conditions in Germany. He was appointed principal medical officer at Bikaner. The fact this marriage took place was confirmed by a number of sources linking back to the doctor, including the ADC to Maharaja Ganga Singhji of Bikaner. There is, however, something that is not right about the *Times* report. A marriage of Jews in Gaza in 1937 would have been completely out of the question. Although the British were the controlling power in Gaza at that time, fifteen years earlier the small Jewish community had been threatened by a lynch mob and left, never to return. Weingarten would have known this and can only have been diverting reporters from their true travel intentions. It seems that there was a marriage, somewhere, but it cannot have lasted.

What did Ruby talk about in her conversations with Gloria? She must surely have told her something of her life as a film actress? Did she say anything about her private life? Perhaps she considered that Gloria was too young to hear about that! Fifty years later when Gloria was asked about this she had little memory of the details,

only remembering her teenage excitement that a film star should spend time with her. Ruby must have been a great attraction on board ship. Although her youthful looks had faded, she was still a beautiful woman and the prospect of meeting her most likely attracted many of the male passengers and crew. Maybe it was Ruby who introduced the shy Gloria to all the ships' officers who then went on to sign her autograph book. Gloria may never have seen her films, which were aimed at an Indian audience. Gloria's autograph book shows that in 1950 she and her friends were more interested in Errol Flynn, Alan Ladd and one Ronald Reagan.



The autograph book also shows an entry by Ruby with the words: 'The Grass withers, The Flowers fade, But friendship remains, for ever and ever. With best wishes, Sincerely Ruby Mayers, at Sea. Jal Jawahar, July 18th 1950'. Poignant words, considering the decline in Ruby's fortunes. And, friendship did not remain for ever. Ruby and Gloria were never to make contact again. In 1983 I, the writer, married Gloria. A few weeks later Ruby died in poverty at her Bombay apartment.

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David Railton would be interested to hear from anyone with any knowledge of Ruby Mayers or the Sassoons referred to in this article and their family ties to the descendants of David Sassoon (1792–1864). He can be contacted at railton.david@btinternet.com.

BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEW ARTICLE

VICTORIAN HERO

Stuart Flinders. *Cult of a Dark Hero: Nicholson of Delhi.* Foreword by Sir Mark Tully. I. B. Tauris, 2018. 256 pp. Hb. £25. ISBN 9781788312363.

'The higher you go the harder you fall.' No man's life illustrates the truth of this axiom better than that controversial figure Brigadier John Nicholson, the victor of Delhi, whose example helped turn the tide in British favour at the crucial battle of the Indian Mutiny. Until Delhi was taken the future of Britain's tenuous hold on the subcontinent was in doubt. Thereafter it remained 'theirs' for another eighty years, until independence in 1947. Nicholson was undoubtedly a hero for his times and for two or three generations thereafter, though even then, in an epoch given to hero worship of a macho kind, he was a very controversial one. He is as indisputably not a hero for our own times (except perhaps for the people of Lisburn) but the controversy about his legacy is still very much alive, embracing the whole of our Indian history and its consequences for our own islands and for India itself.

In telling Nicholson's story the author exposes something of the complex national psychology of his times and of our own. Nicholson's intervention at Delhi was decisive but against the wider scheme of things it was just one illustration—though a particularly dramatic one—of the ambivalence underlying the three hundred years of our tenure of India: never complete, always contested, its motivation often hypocritical, cynical and confused, its evolution into something morally more defensible, largely impelled by the Mutiny itself, remarkably quickly accomplished, its apotheosis tragic. The book is very well written. I. B. Tauris are to be congratulated on the quality of production and editing, though the book is rather let down by the maps: the one small one of the North-Western Provinces doesn't do justice to the scale of the back-drop and the equally small map of Delhi might have been more conveniently placed.

Nicholson was an Irishman. More to the point he was an Ulsterman. Ireland and Ulster, in particular, have given the British Army some of its greatest generals and the courage and fighting qualities of Irish soldiers are beyond dispute. Ulstermen are stubborn or 'stiff-necked', as Churchill put it. When combined with a strong evangelical faith this stubbornness endows the Ulsterman with

unshakable moral rectitude, enviable to some, anathema to others.

Nicholson came to embody precisely those qualities the nation then looked for in its heroes. 'Frank,' 'fearless' and 'manly', these were the attributes the public grew to admire. They became the benchmark for those who assumed the burden of empire after him. Whatever distortions they might have created in the national psyche they spelt trouble for more cautious people like bureaucrats, concerned with the wider picture. For Nicholson the wider picture was invariably seen through the prism of his own powerful character, as a sphere of action not of procrastination. He was action man incarnate. He looked the part of hero too, over six feet tall at a time when such a height would have been exceptional, with a full black beard, strong, erect, stalwart figure and grey eyes which grew black when he was in a rage. He always led by example, careless of risk.

His reputation for exceptional courage was quickly earned. His sphere of active service, short though it was, ensured that he had every opportunity of demonstrating it. From the moment of his arrival in India in 1840 at the age of 17 to his death in 1857 he was rarely out of action: from the First Afghan War, followed by the Second Sikh War and finally the Indian Mutiny. Between these major engagements he acted as an administrator in the newly conquered Punjab, under the Lawrence brothers, where his duties included peace-keeping and suppression of local dissident movements among a far from pacified local Sikh and Pathan population. He had plenty of opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of his own brand of decisive personal intervention.

Many of Ulster's greatest soldiers came from landed families of long lineage but few acres. Nicholson was an exception which, as the British Empire expanded, became more generally the rule. He was middle class. He was born in Dublin, in 1822, where his father was a doctor in charge of the Lying-In Hospital. After his death, while John was still a schoolboy, the family returned to their Northern Irish roots at Lisburn. At that time the children numbered seven, five boys and two girls. Money was always short but a family connection with the Board of the Directors of the East India Company made it possible for the sons to secure cadetships in the EIC army or enter Addiscombe, the EIC Sandhurst. The eldest, John, set sail for India at the age of 16 after four years at the Royal

School Dungannon, during which he appears to have made little mark apart from his 'cool conduct' in a fight.

He landed at Calcutta, just as the British were beginning their ill-judged attempt to depose the Emir Dost Mohammed in Afghanistan, the opening salvoes of what would become known as the First Afghan War. From Calcutta he went to Benares, before being ordered to join his regiment of 27th Bengal Native Infantry (NI) at Ferozepore in the west of the Punjab. The journey, on horseback and still new to the climate, took him across the breadth of northern India, during which he was twice robbed of all he possessed. Nothing he saw of the locals impressed him, so it might be said that his prejudices were formed early. Shortly afterwards the 27th NI were ordered to Afghanistan to relieve the 16th NI at Ghazni, where they were soon besieged by the supporters of Dost Mohammed. After protracted fighting the garrison surrendered. Nicholson and his fellow prisoners were kept in appalling conditions until released after the arrival of Major General Pollock's relieving force. His experiences of their deceit, treachery and cruelty towards their captives, especially towards the sepoys, left him with an all-consuming hatred for the Afghans, made the more intense by the sight of the naked and mutilated body of his younger brother Alexander, found on the route of the army's retreat into India.

These early experiences, so formative for a young man still under 20, were to colour his attitude towards India and all Indians. For the peoples as a whole, and for the Afghans in particular, he grew to have only contempt. He believed that the aptly named 'Army of Retribution' had not done enough to punish the Afghans in the sacking of Kabul and Istalif and was 'sorry to leave Kabul while one stone remained on another'. The fact is that the British had had a bad fright for which their own incompetence and misjudgement were largely to blame. Awareness of their failings added an edge to their vengeance. Disregard for local sentiment, indecision, vacillation and complacency were all part of the mix that led to the army's humiliation. 'I could eat my fists in vexation', the Duke of Wellington is said to have remarked on hearing of the retreat. The sufferings of all, including women and children, were acute but none suffered more than the wretched sepoys and the unfortunate camp followers, often left unprotected. The Hindus among them were

Afghan foot soldiers

especially bestially treated by their Muslim tormentors. If one can draw any conclusions with regard to Nicholson himself it would be unsurprising if the experience did not leave him with a conviction that to rule successfully one needed to be ruthless. It was a sentiment echoed by many, then and later. 'The natives respect only strength', was a widespread conviction. Nicholson was a man of very strong feelings and possessed an almost Old Testament belief in right and wrong. For him the Mutiny of 1857 must have been the ultimate treachery, the massacre of women and children at Cawnpore something for which no retribution could have been sufficient. There was not much of magnanimity, charity or forgiveness in his evangelical readings, such as they were, and his conception of duty was absolute: it was for the strong to protect the weak, not to prey on them and India was full of predators.

After a brief but discontented period of service in Kashmir under its new ruler, the self-proclaimed Maharajah Gulab Singh, Nicholson was transferred to the North-West Frontier Agency under the newly appointed Resident Henry Lawrence, one of two legendary brothers who were to make their names in the administration of the Punjab. (A third had been a fellow prisoner of war in Ghazni). The Punjab had only recently fallen to the British administration after the First Sikh War. Loath to move to outright annexation, the East India Company opted for an arrangement which depended on cajoling rather than coercing local rulers. British advisers would be at their side to guide them. It would not amount to compulsion because we lacked the means to compel but the threat was there, nevertheless. Nicholson was one of those who made sure they remembered it. There was no alternative, given the few resources at British disposal and the vast size of the place. Distributed throughout was a vast accretion of tribal antipathies, zero infrastructure and a traditional morality devoid of any common interpretation of basic rights and responsibilities. Not even the Sikhs had attempted to resolve these intractables, beyond mounting punitive missions against the most recalcitrant.

Nicholson worked hard to prevent the situation in the Punjab degenerating into war, foreseeing that spasmodic outbreaks of rebellion would become widespread unless vigorous action was taken. Precisely as he feared, the Sikh leaders and others succeeded in settling their differences sufficiently to challenge the British and hostilities broke out again in what came to be known as the Second Sikh War. It was once again General Gough who defeated them, after first a drawn and quite exceptionally bloody battle at Chillianwallah, and finally a decisive second one at Gujarat. Nicholson, as a staff officer, was employed throughout the campaign as General

Gough's aide-de-camp, carrying messages to subordinate commanders, criss-crossing the battlefield in the thick of the fighting. He did not think much of Gough as a commander, accusing him of 'timidity . . . and irresolution' (sic) and resented his sometimes peremptory manner: 'he speaks to me like a schoolmaster'. Gough was by then more than twice Nicholson's age, an experienced commander with a long list of tough campaigns behind him. Gough's failure to mention Nicholson in his final despatch disappointed him but Gough's opinion that Nicholson was particularly suited to irregular duties was more resented because it appeared to Nicholson to typecast him, thereby prejudicing his future career. Nicholson seems to have been unusually pettish and thin-skinned. Personal ambition was not the least of the motives which drove him forward.

Gough was right, of course; it is almost impossible to imagine Nicholson operating within the constraints imposed by orthodox chains of command. If such constraints tried Gough's patience think what they would have done to Nicholson's. And in fact he made his name after the campaign exactly where Gough thought he should, as administrator of the most turbulent of the ten districts of the new Punjab, that of Bannu, which lay at the extreme western edge of the new province along the border with Afghanistan. The population consisted of a sub-stratum of Hindu cultivators with upper layers of drop-outs, usurers, fugitives from justice, adventurers and others whose livelihood consisted of exploiting the others and fomenting the many divisions which already existed. Malefactors—about three-quarters of the population—simply disappeared when pursued into the Tribal Territories behind them, as the Taliban do today. It is almost impossible to imagine a territory less likely to respond to attempts at peaceful administration and respect for the rule of law. Yet that is what Nicholson succeed in doing, by sheer force of character. The challenge was grist to his mill. An officer, a relatively junior officer at that, who doesn't hesitate to kick another into battle if he thinks he is shirking is exactly the man to ride off alone at night in pursuit of a murderer and decapitate him.

The secret of Nicholson's success, his personal courage and charisma apart, was, as one contemporary remarked, his ability to absorb the ethos of the people he administered. Perhaps it was their very simplicity of outlook that appealed to him, something in his character which responded to a code of absolutes where no finer shades of meaning existed? Who can tell, but the two things that mattered most were *izzat,* an individual's sense of personal honour, and, second, his sense of justice or, more accurately, his belief in a fitting retribution, a life for a life. So when a native spat in Nicholson's presence he had the man forced down to lick up his own spittle.

British justice, with its notions of a fair trial based on evidence and aversion to summary execution, seemed to plaintiffs perverse. Nicholson understood only too well the effectiveness of just retribution as a means of settling disputes. He believed that to be credible the British had occasionally to adopt the most effective means to hand, ones which were recognised by the local population. Nicholson's other priceless advantage was a well-founded reputation of being able to smell treachery. In this he was like Saddam Hussein. Whether or not either actually possessed the gift is immaterial; it was enough that men should have believed it.

Moral dictates being what they are there were many who refused then, and refuse today, to acknowledge that a choice exists between ruthlessness and compassion. Nicholson's successors did not find it necessary to employ his methods. Bannu was never to be transformed into a haven of enlightened and peaceful coexistence but it became possible after Nicholson to administer the place within the parameters of what the British considered good administration. His predecessor at Bannu, Herbert Edwardes, the second of the triumvirate of Lawrence's administrators after Nicholson (the third being James Abbott in Hunza) wrote: 'Nicholson has reduced the people (the most ignorant, depraved and bloodthirsty in the Punjab) to such a state of good order and respect for the laws that in the last year of his charge not only was there no murder, burglary, highway robbery but not an attempt at any of these crimes'. More perceptively perhaps, another colleague wrote: 'Nicholson found it [Bannu] a hell on earth and left it probably as wicked as ever but curbed to fear of punishment'. It was the Hindu cultivator who benefited most from the change. It is precisely what Nicholson himself would have intended and has been the goal of every conscientious administrator before or since.

There followed perhaps the unhappiest period of Nicholson's career during which he quarrelled with his close friend Chamberlain and all but alienated his superior at Peshawar, John Lawrence, Henry Lawrence's brother. The two brothers proved to be each other's equal as administrators though quite different in character. With Henry (who later died at Lucknow) the relationship with Nicholson, both personal and professional, worked well. Nicholson's admiration for Henry amounted at times to veneration and Henry understood Nicholson in a way John never did. What Nicholson missed in John Lawrence was a degree of compassion, something Henry, with his acuter perception of the underlying insecurity of Nicholson's character, had been able to provide. John Lawrence liked to follow the rules: 'One's [sic] life is taken up with oiling the machinery of government, and trying to keep things straight', he wrote on one occasion. As he explained to Nicholson, he

had to retain the confidence of the Governor General, Dalhousie. 'I know that Nicholson is a first rate guerrilla leader', Dalhousie wrote in 1853, 'but we don't want a guerrilla policy'. This was essentially the precept that governed John Lawrence's approach to the administration of the Punjab and explains his reservations about Nicholson. The bureaucratic grip was tightening throughout India. It would become even tighter after India passed to the crown. Public accountability—a phrase of which the East India Company appears never to have heard—placed an ever-increasing burden on the consciences of its administrators.

John Lawrence

Nicholson's resentment about John Lawrence threatened to become persecution mania. His sense of victimisation became so acute that it appears to have affected the balance of his mind. It was evident too that even Nicholson's exceptional physique was beginning to break down under the physical strains imposed by the administration of Bannu. The 'guerrilla leader' who was such an inspiration to his contemporaries also had to deal with much more mundane but equally important matters of practical administration, build roads and forts, dig wells, reclaim land, adjudicate over competing land claims, administer justice, provide clinics, settle disputes that threatened at any moment to break out into factional war in conditions where summer temperatures reached over 40 degrees in the shade in summer and fell to minus 20 degrees in winter, amid the extremes of dust storms and blizzards, drought and flood, spiced by frequent cross-border raiding, every moment alert to the constant threat to his own life.

Nicholson's presence became an indispensable part of his success. He was not good at delegation; he rarely trusted another's efficiency so much as his own and he knew that his personal intervention was an essential ingredient to success. He worked relentlessly, at a pace which would have killed a lesser man, in conditions that beggar the imagination. He was lucky if he had four mud walls and a thatched roof over his head. More often than not he worked from a tent, constantly on the move in conditions of rudimentary or non-existent sanitation, irregular meals often eaten on the move, a deplorable diet, germ-filled water, and only the most basic medical supplies. He often rode 30 miles before breakfast, usually no more than a greasy chapatti and swallow of brandy. On the march to Delhi he was on horseback for 70 hours at a stretch. One wonders how his wretched mounts stood it. He was always highly visible and visibility came at a price, for them as for him.

Leave in England and a second posting to Kashmir—which he found almost as distasteful as the first—helped restore his health but he remained dissatisfied. He wanted to leave India, to see action in the Crimea, or to join the army being assembled to repel a Persian threat to Herat. He was becoming frustrated. For a man with so few friends—and only one or two close ones, like Chamberlain and Herbert Edwards, by then Commissioner in Peshawar—no social life and none of the lighter diversions outside work, such as his successors found, the strain must have been almost intolerable.

Marriage might have been an answer, as Edwardes suggested (though with caveats) but there's no evidence that Nicholson ever contemplated marriage. Indeed, as he told his mother, he categorically refused even to contemplate taking an Englishwoman west of Calcutta. There is no record of casual affairs or recourse to prostitutes, not even in the relatively lax atmosphere of Kashmir. Of scholarly pursuits there were none; Nicholson did not read widely—he quickly ignored his mother's injunctions to keep up with his evangelical reading and had as little patience with the Edwardes' missionary zeal. Nor, though he mastered Urdu, did he, as others did, take his studies in the language any further than his work required. Yet there was another and gentler side to his character in the solicitude with which he chose presents for his friends, including Kashmiri shawls for Edwardes' wife, the only woman apart from his mother and sisters who might be described as a confidante, and in his affection for children. 'Bye the bye', he wrote once to Edwardes, 'if there are any humming tops, jews harps or other toys at Peshawar which would take with the Wuzzeeree children I would be much obliged if you would send me a few'.

Whatever the complexities of his character, it is difficult not to believe that Nicholson was the right man in the right place at the right time. Though he might chafe, and in spite of his collisions with higher authority, the value of his reputation alone was incalculable. The end when it came, while still young and in the thick of the fighting at Delhi, seems with hindsight to have been the only possible one. The Mutiny was the greatest crisis to confront the British in India. Its outbreak was timely for Nicholson since it saved him from the necessity of confronting the problem of his own future.

The history of the Mutiny, the reasons for it, the spasmodic early outbreaks, the confused and uncoordinated British reaction in the early stages, which helped the rising to spread like wildfire throughout the Ganges and upper Indus valleys, is well documented. Nicholson shared none of the sentiment that clouded the judgement of some regimental officers who refused to believe that 'their' sepoys would ever mutiny. He had been critical for some time of the state of the Bengal Army, the morale of its sepoys, the

poor quality of officers and their failure to deal severely with acts of insubordination. In his experience no native troops could be trusted. His answer to the outbreaks across the Punjab was to persuade Lawrence and Edwardes to allow him to form a well-armed mobile column to nip insurrection in the bud. It became known as the Moveable Column. Among its components was Nicholson's irregular cavalry, the Multan Horse, a prototype of those which were to form a part of the reconstituted Indian Army after the Mutiny.

Peshawar and the belt of country west of the Indus valley up to the Afghan frontier were considered to be the 'anchor of the Punjab'. So short were the British authorities of troops that Lawrence at one instance even suggested that Dost Mohammed, reinstalled as ruler of Afghanistan and now declaring himself a 'faithful ally' of the British, should be invited to take over Peshawar as means of preserving the neutrality of the surrounding tribes, thus freeing troops for the relief of Delhi. The proposal, which included the rider that Peshawar should be handed to Dost Mohammed in perpetuity afterwards, received short shrift from Nicholson and Edwardes and was turned down flat by the new Governor General, Canning. Effective as the firm action by Nicholson and others proved, in stabilising the situation in Peshawar and the surrounding countryside, the real problem lay in Delhi. The longer it remained in rebel hands the bigger it would become. The decision of the frail and elderly Mughal Emperor to endorse the rising was of great symbolic importance. In Indian eyes it legitimised it, as nothing else could, and made it a national movement. The nature and scope of the British reaction would almost certainly affect native opinion in the other two Presidencies, Madras and Bombay, hitherto very much in the balance.

The story of the efforts of Nicholson and his abler lieutenants, who included the future Field Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar, in recapturing Delhi from the mutineers is an exciting one and extremely well told by the author, who makes good use of the diaries and letters of the participants. Nicholson dominated the situation from the outset, leading the forced march to Delhi, crushing all opposition in his path, in chivvying the faint-hearted on arrival at Delhi itself, converting the doubters, encouraging the engineers in their vital and dangerous work of surveying the walls of the city and constructing the approaches to them, directing the artillery fire and organising the attacking columns. His nominal superior, General Archdale Wilson, resigned himself to taking a back seat. Nicholson had been promoted from the substantive rank of captain to the temporary rank of brigadier general to give him the necessary authority. There was some carping among the senior British Army regular officers as a result, who now found themselves outranked,

Storming of Delhi, 1857

but they were told that they might apply for indefinite leave if they wished. That silenced the critics without dispelling the resentment over Nicholson's vigorous and often overbearing methods.

His compelling example was heightened by the dramatic manner of his death. Nicholson was shot in the chest while trying to rally troops during the storming of the Kashmir bastion, as the first impetus of the attack faltered under fierce opposition. The ball shattered his ribs and perforated a lung. His brother Charles was wounded at the same time, losing an arm which later had to be amputated. Nicholson lingered for nine days in great pain before dying on the morning of 23 September, two days after the city had capitulated. He was buried the following morning. Among the mourners were the men of the Multan Horse. One contemporary describes them as 'horrible looking bandits and cut-throats'. Yet, as another noted, 'they sobbed and wept as if their very hearts were breaking; and be it remembered that these men held the creed that a man who sheds tears was only fit to be whipped out of his village by the women'. Such a tribute helps one realise what a formidable enemy Nicholson would have made had he been born among those whom it was now our responsibility to administer. Ironically that might have been the only metier in which his talents could have been given full rein, that of the autocrat ruling by the sword.

Charles Nicholson, the only survivor of the five brothers, collapsed and died in 1862 while in command of a Gurkha regiment. Their mother outlived all her children, dying in 1874, aged 85. So long as she lived, she fought hard to promote her eldest son's reputation. The over-sentimentalised adulation of his admirers, especially Herbert Edwardes, was in tune with the times but might have done it more harm than good among more sceptical generations, who preferred to look for their heroes elsewhere than

in war and conquest. The apogee of Nicholson's posthumous reputation was the period 1857–1900, its nadir the period from 1970 to the present. Public perceptions of the Empire, already affected by the steady decline of our place in the world, needed to take greater account of liberal opinion as well as nationalist opinion in India and Pakistan. Nicholson began to be judged, not by his military prowess alone but by more demanding standards of public accountability.

It is impossible to categorise Nicholson. If one accepts as a starting point the division of Indian administrators in *Anglo-Indian Attitudes,* Clive Dewey's study of the Indian Civil Service, into two camps, those who extolled the Gospel of Uplift and those who espoused the Cult of Friendship, Nicholson falls into neither. He was *sui generis,* never one of a caste, an enigma even among those who knew him best. He rarely unbuttoned except when feeling sorry for himself. He believed in no 'great cause' and found no consolation in religion. Herbert Edwardes and his wife—who, though devoted to him, described Nicholson as a 'sinner'—prayed for his conversion while he lived and persuaded themselves after his death that their prayers had been answered. Since he was never intimate with any woman and lived in almost exclusively male society, the inference today is that he must have been homosexual and his propensity for violence psychopathic. Mass tourism, soft-focus teledrama and films and documentaries about 'the Raj' have significantly changed English perceptions of India and British rule there. In reality it was a pitiless place, its endemic cruelty exacerbated by caste and religion, with refinements perfected over centuries in which the conception of society as a generic whole never existed. That was still the world in which Nicholson lived, one which might help us to understand his own violent behaviour, though it does not excuse his cruelty. As to his sexuality, it is possible that some people are not especially interested in sex nor spend much time thinking about it. Sex needs time, leisure, energy and, for its proper enjoyment, refinements of a kind Nicholson never wished to possess. He was a man with too many urgent demands on his time and no leisure. His superabundant energy was fully committed to his work. If he sublimated what sexual drive he possessed to action he was supremely successful: no man has packed more into thirty-four short years of life than he did in situations of such violence and danger. But it is nonetheless significant that the statue erected to him in Delhi and standing now in the grounds of his old school should have had its sword removed. War is full of sexual innuendo and a sword is a phallic symbol. Nicholson might still be worshipped on the North West Frontier but his countrymen have cut him down to size.

SIR ALLAN RAMSAY

FIBIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

More than one hundred people attended FIBIS's twentieth anniversary conference, where they listened to lectures from experts in fields including DNA, the First World War and Newsreel, and enjoyed talks by actor Diana Quick and TV personality Jan Leeming. Delegates also took the opportunity to share their family history and seek advice on how to continue their research. Alongside the varied programme of lectures there was a series of supplementary activities, including a bookstall, one-to-one research surgeries and displays of photos from both the British Library and participants' personal collections. 'We were delighted to welcome so many interesting speakers and hope the conference lived up to people's expectations', said FIBIS events manager Penny Tipper. 'What made it particularly rewarding for the trustees was the enthusiasm for our shared interests that delegates brought to the occasion and which contributed greatly to the congenial atmosphere across the weekend.'

Following the inaugural event in 2014, the second FIBIS conference was held at the Hawkwell House hotel in Iffley, Oxfordshire, from 28 to 30 September. It began with an open forum hosted by Richard Morgan, in which he advised delegates about their own family history research. President Peter Bailey then gave the introductory lecture, 'What Was So Special About India Anyway?'. In this he shared the excitement of his discoveries from investigating ancestors in the Indian military.

Debbie Kennett, a research associate at University College London, talked about how DNA analysis can complement traditional genealogical research. She introduced some of the many commercial sites that analyse DNA, whose matching databases are growing as public interest in the technique increases. After dinner Jenny Mallin spoke about her book *A Grandmother's Legacy*, based on a collection of recipes compiled by five generations of women in her family, going back to late 19th-century Madras. She brought with her the original document and talked about some of the recipes that resonate: some familiar, others less well-known.

On the second day, David Edge explained his project to transcribe births, marriages and deaths in the *Bombay Times* and *Times of India* in the 19th and 20th centuries, before historian Hedley Sutton talked about how the British Library can help people research ancestors in the Indian

Opposite: The FIBIS Team

Left: Diana Quick and Jan Leeming

Below: Carol Turnham, Ailsa Stewart and Anne Svard.

Army during the First World War. FIBIS trustee Geraldine Charles then gave a wide-ranging talk, commemorating those who served from Undivided India, on medal records, war graves, websites and much else.

The afternoon sessions took delegates behind the scenes at *Who Do You Think You Are?,* courtesy of Gill Blanchard, an expert on family, house and local history. Major General (Ret'd) J. Craig Lawrence, a military historian, author and lecturer on strategy at the Royal College of Defence Studies, then spoke about Britain's Gurkhas, from their recruitment in 1815 to their service in today's armed forces. Later, Philip Woods of New York University in London shared his work on how Partition was depicted in contemporary newsreel and photography, and Mary-Anne Gourley updated the conference on the active profile FIBIS maintains in Australia.

After Saturday's gala dinner, Jan Leeming gave an illustrated talk about her roots in British India and her experiences of travelling to the country as part of the *Real Marigold* TV series, before answering questions from the audience about her television career. Author Jean Ellis's family left Burma when the Japanese invaded during the Second World War. She talked about researching her book *Goodbye Burma*, in which she follows family members as they travel to India, using family documents and anecdotes alongside detailed research to reimagine this chaotic moment in history. The weekend dedicated to family history was appropriately rounded off by actor and writer Diana Quick, who captivated the audience with spellbinding tales of her father's mysterious India connection.

The FIBIS trustees would like to thank everyone who attended and helped make the conference a success, and look forward to welcoming you again at a future event.

SALLY TIPPER

BOOK REVIEW

Jean Ellis. Goodbye Burma. Charlcombe Books, 2017. 250pp. Pb. £9. ISBN 978 0 9568510 9 3.

This book brings wartime Burma to within touching distance. It is full of remarkable insights into life in Rangoon before the Second World War began—the sights and smells, so evocative of a comfortable life in the tropics, for those privileged and wealthy enough to enjoy it to the full. For this family there were lavish homes beside the lake with servants galore; parties, friends and family nearby; the yacht club with its convivial hierarchy, and the day-to-day urban hullabaloo of markets and crowded streets. When the city found itself under attack by the Japanese, just before Christmas in 1941, initial shock and disbelief quickly gave way to practical concerns. Life was turned upside down. As servants fled, thoughts turned to one's own family's preservation and escape to a safe haven.

The book exposes the harsh realities of life under threat. Ruthless authority figures gave orders for essential workers to stay put, whilst simultaneously organising their own escape routes. There was a stampede towards the exit, with all available seats on aircraft and ships selling at exorbitant prices but only to those with official documentation. Indian nationals found it almost impossible to leave legally. As the Japanese invasion forces pushed closer, transport routes were gradually closed and thousands left to trek to India. The author describes very well the ham-fisted attempts by the authorities to control the flow of refugees by holding them for days at various points along the route, in camps which were filthy, lacking in basic sanitary provision, food and water. Disease, especially cholera and dysentery, were rife. Many suffered and died simply by being confined within the filth in what had been originally intended as places of temporary refuge and rest.

For anyone with an interest in Burma, especially at this point in history, the book makes a fascinating read, for it tells of life in the raw along the refugee trail. This is not limited to the trials and tribulations of trying to survive against the odds when all one's worldly goods, including food supplies, had to be carried on one's back. There are heart-warming incidents of true friendship, loyalty and compassion, as well as rivalry, tragedy and odd touches of humour. But what makes this book stand out from its genre is its sheer craftsmanship. Threads of the story are cleverly woven, using contemporary diary accounts to provide the facts, to produce a work of art which engages the interest of the reader from start to finish. Jean Ellis is a master of her craft.

MARGARET MURRAY

OBITUARY: SYLVIA MURPHY

I first met Sylvia Murphy some thirteen years ago, after I had joined the India List and later FIBIS. Following the diagnosis of her illness in 2011, Sylvia stepped aside from representing FIBIS but still maintained her interests in India, especially those connected to her ancestor Jules Schaumberg, the artist. In 2012, when I took over as FIBIS's Australian representative, Sylvia was very supportive, answering my many queries and questions. We both attended the FIBIS conference in the UK and the AFFHO Congress in Canberra. We represented FIBIS in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Sylvia also spoke at a genealogical conference in New Zealand. At our last meeting in March, we represented FIBIS at Congress 2018 in Sydney. Sylvia was much frailer but determined to carry on and enjoy meeting up with old friends and acquaintances.

Sylvia was a mentor to many people researching British India. She was a fountain of knowledge and always happy to help with queries, no matter how small. Her knowledge of the non-official community was exemplary. Much of the material she contributed to FIBIS, including the 1840 Serampore Census, now appears in the database. She undertook research requests from FIBIS members worldwide. She frequently responded to queries appearing in FIBIS social network, the India List and, more recently, the British India group established on Facebook. Sylvia also wrote articles and answered queries for *Who Do You Think You Are* magazine. Her last article for FIBIS, 'Walter Williams, A Private Soldier in India 1878–1888', was published in the *Journal* in 2016.

Sylvia was born in Leicestershire in 1947. Her early childhood was spent in West London. She emigrated to Australia in 1973. Before retiring in 2007, Sylvia worked for the General Synod of the Anglican Church.

Mary-Anne Gourley,
FIBIS Representative, Australia

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Monday 3 December
Claude Martin: An Enlightenment Figure in 18th-Century India
Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones MBE, author of *A Very Ingenious Man: Claude Martin in Early Colonial India*

Monday 14 January
Empress: Queen Victoria and India
Professor Miles Taylor, University of York, author of *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (2018)

Monday 11 February
Dark Hero: Nicholson of Delhi
Stuart Flinders, BBC journalist and author of *Cult of a Dark Hero: Nicholson of Delhi* (2018)

Monday 11 March
End of Empire
Alex von Tunzelmann, author of *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire*

Monday 8 April
Scotland's Empire: The Scots in British India
Sir Tom Devine, Professor Emeritus in History, Edinburgh; leading authority on the Scottish diaspora

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ANN CRICHTON-HARRIS is a writer interested in medical history, social history and the British Raj. In an earlier life she worked in theatre and television in the UK and Canada.

BARBARA FRANKL is a retired airport manager whose family history research has revealed a cornucopia of previously unknown Indian connections.

BILL HALL is a retired shipping agent from East Africa who served in the Indian Army during the Second World War with PAIForce.

STEPHEN McCLARENCE is a travel writer specialising in India and contributing to the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph*.

MARGARET MURRAY is a keen genealogist and FIBIS Trustee.

DAVID RAILTON is a retired port administrator living in Cheshire with interests in family and aviation history.

SIR ALLAN RAMSAY is a retired diplomat living in France.

SALLY TIPPER is a freelance editor and journalist based in Belgium.

TIM WILLASEY-WILSEY is a senior visiting research fellow at King's College London and a former British diplomat.

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