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### **Presentation:**

Manuscripts should be typed in Century 13.5pt, double spaced.

Quotations should be typed in 11pt, single spaced and separated from the text by a one-line space. References should be given as footnotes, using the 'insert footnote' function, and used sparingly. Illustrations should be supplied as JPEGs and full details of provenance given.

**Front cover:** 'St. Paul's School, Jalaphar'

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**Back cover:** 'Lucknow, 1905'

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# THE JOURNAL OF THE FAMILIES IN BRITISH INDIA SOCIETY.

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 46 and the latest edition of the Journal of the Families in British India Society. I do hope this edition finds you well.

In this edition, we reminisce with Duncan Bamford Stirling Wilkins as we travel with him from Lucknow to Pallavaram, the legacies of ancestors in the sub-continent and we see the first of a series of Kenneth Miln's photos from his childhood in Darjeeling. I hope you find contributors' submissions engaging and inspiring. I have included the instructions on contributing below as we do always want to hear from you.

This piece also includes a report on the 2021 FIBIS Conference by our very own Margaret Murray. After two-years of virtual get-togethers on Zoom, it was fantastic to all be in the same room again. There was a convivial atmosphere and please do remember, you can still watch the presentations at home - the details are on the FIBIS website ([www.fibis.org](http://www.fibis.org)).

I will be taking a short break in the spring as I prepare to submit my dissertation but arrangements have been made to cover my absence and so the next edition of the journal will not be affected.

JACOB BAILEY

### SHARE YOUR STORIES:

The success of the FIBIS journal depends greatly upon your stories and anecdotes. Please keep them coming. The editor is happy to consider all articles submitted for consideration. The right of the editor to edit an article, at his discretion, is reserved, owing to constraints of space, and publication may be delayed if insufficient space is available. Deadlines for receipt of articles by the editor are: 28 February for publication in the Spring journal and 31 August for publication in the Autumn journal. If you would welcome a response from readers, don't forget to add in your email details at the end of your article.

Please also send us a separate, short biopic. UK-based authors may request a complimentary copy of the journal upon publication, therefore please include your postal address. Overseas authors may request a PDF copy.

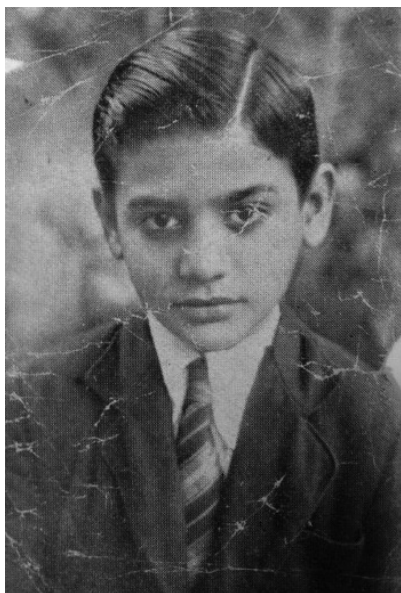
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# FROM LUCKNOW TO PALLAVARAM VIA BANGALORE

## SCHOOL AND CULTURAL MEMORIES IN THE LAST DECADE OF THE RAJ

Duncan Bamford Stirling Wilkins<sup>1</sup>

With Covid-19 tormenting our planet, life has become rather bleak and barren. Nothing but memories to cheer one up. I was born in Lucknow, christened in 'Pindi', studied in Bombay (Cathedral and John Connon School), Jubbulpore (Christ Church), Bangalore (Baldwin's) and Madras (Madras Christian College).



Young Duncan, 1930s (Wilkins family collection)

My parents named me Duncan Bamford Stirling Wilkins, as my paternal grandfather was a Wilkins and grandmother a Stirling. My mother's surname was Bamford. Stirling was also the middle name for my brothers, Ian and Colin. My Dad, Donald Stirling Wilkins (1896-1952), Madras-born and buried in St. Stephen's Cemetery, Pallavaram, served in both world wars. In WWI, he served in Mesopotamia with The Anglo-Indian Force.<sup>2</sup> Dad was a telegraphist, proficient in

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from a set of Duncan Wilkins' memoirs and, with his permission, here edited by his nephew Keith Wilkins with photographs and annotations. Identities anonymous as appropriate. Queries welcome to [keithmcianwil@iprimus.com.au](mailto:keithmcianwil@iprimus.com.au)

<sup>2</sup> See C T Robby, *The Anglo-Indian Force*, ca 1918. By WWII it was the Auxiliary Force (India): A.F.(I).

the Higher Baudot Technique, and transferred all over the north. My mother Gladys (1902-1981) was a teacher, lastly headmistress of St Stephen's School in Pallavaram. She was buried at the Garrison Church cemetery in St Thomas Mount. A predominantly Anglo-Indian area: the Hillside Lanes/European Lines in St Thomas Mount and the Officers Lines, Veterans Lines and Martelli Square in Pallavaram.<sup>3</sup>



Young Donald Wilkins at left and comrades of the Anglo-Indian Force which serviced in Mesopotamia during World War I (Wilkins family collection).

## Jubbulpore and Bangalore School Days

When World War II was declared, I was in Christ Church School, Jubbulpore. My Goodness! What celebrations by those idiots who didn't know what they were in for: a big bonfire and the boys dancing around it singing the "Lambeth Walk. Oi!"<sup>4</sup> It was near the end of term and the fools started throwing their notebooks into the fire. My brother, Ian, and I would rush in and save the books for my mother who would tear out the unused pages and stitch them together to make notebooks.

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<sup>3</sup> There are few Anglo-Indians now left in the Mount and Pallavaram, the Europeans who stayed on long gone. The visible traces 'a shadow of a shade'. The Garrison Church steeple was lopped in the late 1960s due to the airliner landing path. The graves in the cemeteries up for re-use.

<sup>4</sup> Song by Douglas Furber, L Arthur Rose and Noel Gay, 1937.

1637	"	John	18	6	28	Mr. E. B.
1638	"	Mohammad	19	10	25	Mr. Rama
1639	"	John	9	9	29	Mr. Sen
1640	"	Ramchand	12	12	27	Mr. S. J.
1641	"	Wilkins	8	8	30	"
1642	"	Wilkins	19	4	28	Mr. P.
1643	"	Kobli R.	11	11	29	Mr. A.
1644	"	Allen	20	5	28	Mr. A.
1645	"	Young	25	12	31	Mr. A.
1646	"	Abdul Hafiz Khan	25	3	27	Mr. A.
1647	"	Andrews	26	11	25	Mr. A.
1648	"	Paultrip	7	2	30	Mr. A.
1649	"	Satyanathan				

Extract from the admission register, Baldwin Boys High School. Note the 1940 entries of Duncan and Ian Wilkins and Ronald Allen also named in this memoir (Wilkins family collection).

My earliest memories include school days in 1942 in Bangalore, at Baldwin Boys' High School. I was asked by my teacher to his flat, when he was out, to total some marks. Naturally I searched around and found a notebook which had all the question papers for the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Standards. I wrote them down and distributed them to the boys in those Standards. One of them, "M" from Pondicherry, sneaked on me and I got 12 of the best.<sup>5</sup> Usually the score is 4, 6 or 8. 12 switches is a record. Following the usual custom, I pulled down my pants and displayed my red and blue stripes to the admiring boys. The biggest crime in a boarding school is sneaking - which is punished on the last day of the term. When the last day came, the boys tied M's ankles with a rope and hoisted him up to the bar from which he hung. He said sorry and begged for forgiveness. A boy we called "Nash" joined the plea. Nash had earlier walked all the way from Burma to India after the Japanese captured Burma. Walking in the jungle through water-soaked, insect-ridden soil left his feet in a terrible state and he had to be hospitalised. Very often, some naughty boys would shout at night, "Nash, the Jap bombers are coming; take cover." Nash would roll out of his bed and take cover under his bed. We heard Nash's plea and let M. down.

I recall the great scout camps we enjoyed in Whitefield<sup>6</sup>. But what stands out most was the camp we had in a place outside Hosur Cemetery. There was a scruffy old Englishman we called Robinson Crusoe who walked about barefoot, unkempt, on Hosur Road. He used to sleep on his dead wife's grave in the cemetery, waiting for the day when "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" [I Cor 15:52b]. Our scout bugler knew nothing of Crusoe, so we defied him to go at midnight to the cemetery, climb up on a monument and blow the Last Post. He did and was astonished when Crusoe rose from the grave and shouted, "I'm coming, darling." Our bugler was horrified. He jumped down and bolted out of the cemetery, to our great amusement.

<sup>5</sup> 12 strikes/switches of the headmaster's cane!

<sup>6</sup> Whitefield as a place was established ca 1882 as a 'colony' for Anglo-Indians, the key role played by David Emmanuel Starkenburg White, a leading Anglo-Indian of the time; now virtually a memory, see Michael Portillo's *Great Indian Railway Journeys, Part 3*, BBC, 2018.



We had a teacher, Ludowik, who claimed he was German. He looked like a foreigner, but one day when he was teaching us *The Cloister and the Hearth*, he let himself down. There is a line: “He was ready to tear his hair with despair” which he read as “He was ready to teare his heare with despeare”.

“Aha!” we responded, “You are not German; that’s how they talk in Ceylon. You are a Burgher!”

We had a charming lady teacher, Miss Smith, who was teaching us about Robin Hood and his merry men. But when she named the merry men, she committed a Spoonerism with the name of one of them. She ran out of the classroom when she realised her mistake.



3<sup>rd</sup> Bangalore Scout Troop, Baldwin Boys' High School. Duncan Wilkins is seated on ground at outer right, older brother Ian at top is holding the Troop flag (Wilkins family collection).<sup>7</sup>

Strangely, I can't remember what we did on Christmas Day last year but I recall clearly what I sang or recited more than 70 years ago: music and literature were my forte. In 1945, for the Lee Rocky elocution contest, they gave me that stupid balcony scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to recite: “Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon who is but sick and pale with grief”, etc.

When I looked up at the window and recited “It is my lady, it is my love”, the ugliest boy in the school, E, stuck his head out of the window, said “Darling Romeo” and made an ugly face with his tongue protruding. That brought the house down and I could not proceed. Anyway, I won the contest the next year with Cassius instigating Brutus from *Julius Caesar*.

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<sup>7</sup> The photograph here has an identifiable list of all the boys and leaders written at the back.



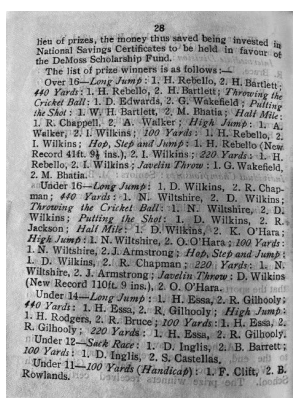
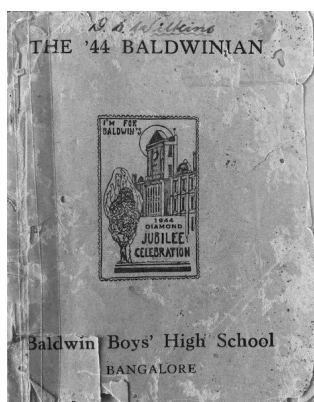
Times were hard then and food was scarce during the War. Due to rationing, we had to eat some awful stinking grub, blocking our noses and shovelling the stuff down the hatch. We were only too glad to raid the school gardens for radish and other vegetables and sometimes bunk to Johnson Market for snacks. The Market was a popular place to visit.

We also used to bunk out to Arab Lines for snacks and a smoke. Once, on the way out, we spotted our master, Ramsay, on his bike. We ran madly to the swimming pool wall and clambered up and ran to the study hall, plucking leaves to chew and rub our fingers, to remove the cigarette smell.<sup>8</sup>

Now the Baldwin Girls' School had its own pool. We would clamber up on benches to see them on the diving board – real beauties, Jean, Yvonne, Pat, Jenny, etc. They would shake their hips, dance a little jig and dive in. Jean beat our champion in a race and we had to hang our heads in shame.

We had very good boxers in our school especially Olly and Kenny O'Hara. But we would not watch them. We preferred to watch their sisters sitting in the audience who would get so excited that they would pummel their poor old father, O'Hara. "Come on Olly" they would shout and wallop the old man.

Another amusing event was the "blind" bout. Six boxers together in the ring, their heads covered with sacks to 'blind' them. Most of their sweeps hit empty air, but now and then they'd connect and send one to the floor. Once the referee was hit out of the ring by a blind blow, to our amusement.



From the school magazine *The '44 Baldwinian*. Note the prize winner in athletics (Wilkins family collection)

<sup>8</sup> The original memoirs spell out other malodorous strategies too!

I used to jump in school with Henry Rebello (“Rab” we called him) in 1945. He represented India in the 1948 London Olympics in hop, step and jump but unfortunately, when he was ready to jump, they stopped him for a medal ceremony and when they gave him the okay, he had cramps in his leg from waiting in the cold weather and could not jump. Henry went on to become a Group Captain in the Indian Air Force and died in 2013.

Brigade Road in Bangalore was an especially favourite place for tipplers. Our school paid us 10 annas for every goal we scored against rival schools, Bishop Cotton’s and St Joseph’s, in hockey, ostensibly to buy milkshakes from Lake View. But who would waste 10 annas on a milkshake when you could enjoy a glass of beer for only 6 annas?



Baldwin's Bangalore Sports mid-1940s: Duncan is seated 2nd from left next to Henry (“Rab”) Rebello, centre. Brother Colin standing 2nd from right (Wilkins family collection).

It was a rather steep ride and if you were cycling there, you had to make sure the brakes were functioning well. One night, I was cycling to All Saints Church, Hosur Road, on an old cycle without brakes or chain guards. My trouser legs got caught in the chain and I could not dismount. I headed for a lamp post, caught it like a long-lost friend and slithered down. I landed on my knees at the feet of a British lady walking her dog and she said “No. I won’t marry you!”

Our School was run by the American Methodist Episcopal Church, so those like me were happy to go to the Anglican All Saints Church, Hosur Road, once a month. We also went to dances at the Church’s institute (on the quiet, since dancing was frowned upon at School). The incumbent of All Saints’ then was the Rev. Noel Nyss.

Another landmark then was Coles Park, centre of the flesh trade. There were no lights in the park but occasionally, a car’s headlights would illuminate the goings-on!

I once spent a lovely holiday in Kolar Gold Fields in 1942.<sup>9</sup> That Japanese lady-pilot bombed Madras, earlier, setting fire to the oil installations and then dived into the sea and drowned, since she had no fuel to fly back to Burma. All Madras downed their shutters and many, on Government advice, fled town.<sup>10</sup>

My mother went off to Saurashtra with my cousin, Vera A. So we had to spend our summer holidays in School. Because of that, my friend, Ronnie Allen, took me to spend the Michaelmas Holidays with his family. His mother was an excellent cook and we enjoyed her dumpling stew and Yorkshire pudding. The old man spent all this time near the wireless, listening to the war news, moving paper flags on pins, on the map of Europe. Sodie, the elder brother, was mischief personified. One day, he called me into his room but his mother cautioned me and gave me a glove to enter. When I entered, I was shocked to see that Sodie had wired the door knob and plugged it into the mains, to give me a shock.

We also used to climb the cyanide dumps and swim in a tank. Our friend from Baldwin's, Austin Chapman, arranged a cricket match. He marched up to the field in his Baldwin blazer and cap, trailed by a team of half-naked boys. We contrived to lose the match by bowling wides and no balls and doing hit-wicket. That pleased them immensely.

## VE Day and VJ Day

The crazy celebrations for VE Day: amazing to see those poor rickshaw-wallahs sitting like lords in their rickshaws, pulled by British Tommies, racing down Brigade Road. After watching the rickshaw races, we went to Green's for a tippie of beer. There was a Tommy there who kept asking us "Are you happy?" We said "Yes. But the Japs are still there." About three months later, the Yanks dropped the atomic bombs to end WWII, thank God. But no ructions on VJ Day. Soon after the war, we settled again in Pallavaram, not far from St Thomas Mount where we also had family and accommodation.

## Anglo-India in St Thomas Mount and Pallavaram

We got along with the British troops stationed in the Mount. We would thrash them in hockey and they would thrash us in football. On Sundays, they would march to our Church (St Thomas Garrison Church) with the band playing for church parades. One Sunday, troops present had to use a Light Infantry regimental band because their own band had to play for a Governor's function. So, at 140 paces to the minute, these chaps landed up in a lather of sweat, cursing a blue streak!

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<sup>9</sup> Another centre for Anglo-Indians and Europeans in Mysore/Karnataka: a bygone era with the end of gold mining. See, e.g., Bridget White, *Kolar Gold Fields, Down Memory Lane*, Milton Keynes, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War, A People's History of India's Second World War*, London, 2016, 115-116.



The Wilkins family at Pallavaram, ca 1950. Standing: Duncan, Ian and Colin. Seated: Donald and Gladys (Wilkins family collection).

What fun we had then, especially in the Pallavaram Recreation Club. The British troops quartered there would join us for whist drive, tombola, dancing, singing, fun and games. At Christmas, we would go to all the houses on Carol Rounds, singing and sampling the tasty tid-bits cooked by the hosts. There was our famous fancy dress hockey match between men dressed in short skirts and blouses and the ladies in men's garb. Men had to play with one hand, but in spite of that rule, we were able to beat the ladies, whereupon they retaliated by pulling up stinging-nettles and walloping our bare legs. The only antidote was to form a circle and empty our bladders on the legs to ease the pain; no help from the ladies.

There were children's games and sports. The lovely wheelbarrow race with the boys moving on their hands, their legs held up by the girls who pushed the "wheelbarrow." Then the boys would carry the girls "piggy-back" to the starting point. We had relay races in long lines (boy and girl) not with wooden batons held in our hands, but with small 8 anna coins in the mouth, passed lip to lip. New Year's Eve: we would sing *Auld Lang Syne* and at the midnight hour, 90-year-old Uncle Ned would be pushed out of the club for the old year and the New Year ushered in by beautiful, young Sheila MacD.

## From Quetta to Pallavaram Via Bangalore

I met my late wife, Shirley, in Pallavaram. She left this world in 2018. Shirley's family<sup>11</sup> were once located in Quetta, Baluchistan, then India's North-West, at the time of the terrible earthquake. Her father, Leslie de Bragança, and his wife Gladys Evelyn (whose father, George Jacob, was of Jewish lineage) and their daughter and son were quartered in a bungalow for non-gazetted officers<sup>12</sup>. Tragically, Leslie and Gladys lost their precious daughter, Audrey, on 31 May 1935

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<sup>11</sup> This information conveyed to Duncan by his late wife and daughter Jacqueline.

<sup>12</sup> In the then-named Indian Army Corps of Clerks.

and she was buried alongside her cousin, Norman Dennis Moore, who was also tragically killed.<sup>13</sup> Leslie, Gladys and son Billy (Aubrey Wilfred) survived collapsed buildings. The de Bragança family moved on from there. Later on, with two more surviving children in tow (Errol and Shirley), they eventually settled in Bangalore then Pallavaram, by which time the Raj days had gone.

## Building Jerusalem in India

Where were you, dear Reader, on 15 August 1947? I was studying in Madras Christian College, Tambaram. I had just closed 17yo on 8 August and went for the flag-hoisting ceremony, there to sing solo an adaptation of William Blake's "*Jerusalem*" ending "... till we have built Jerusalem in ... [India's] green and pleasant Land." The flag was hoisted by our sports and games teacher, Abraham. We did not hear Nehru's "*Tryst with destiny*" speech "At the midnight hour ...", since we could not then afford a radio. Shirley, then only 7yo, witnessed her mother Gladys, serving in the W.A.C.(I)s, march past in Dagshai.

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<sup>13</sup> The Quetta Earthquake of 31 May 1935 recorded 7.7 on the Richter Scale; 30,000 to 60,000 lives were lost. See [https://wiki.fibis.org/w/Quetta\\_earthquake](https://wiki.fibis.org/w/Quetta_earthquake)

# THE CURRIE LEGACY

Derek Turner

Will Barber Taylor's interesting article on Charles Davis illustrates the complex relationship between race and identity, to which I would add class and religious belief. He mentions the Victorian desire to promote Christianity and ensure there was no fraternisation between the British and the native Indians, but these two aims were mutually incompatible. The promotion of Christianity could only be done by close contact with the natives. Charles Davis was genetically an Anglo-Indian. My grandmother, Lucy, fits the historical definition of someone of British descent who lived in India. The issues raised by Lucy's life and work are different. Skin colour was not an issue, but her fraternisation and ambivalent social-standing illustrate the complexities of culture and society around 1900.

Lucy was Scots, descended from the Curries of the Borders, who moved to England and then to India, and from Clan Macrae, hereditary guardians and later owners of Eilean Donan castle. But her religion, the most important determination of her life, was the evangelical wing of the Church of England. Although she lived in India for only two of her eighty decades, her passion for its people dominated her life and work, as did the duty of care instilled into her as the eldest daughter, aged seven, of seven siblings, in an emotional letter to her from her grieving father after the death of his second wife.

Lucy was well-connected, socially, in India. Her paternal grandfather was Sir Frederick Currie, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India and Member of the Supreme Council of India. Her uncle was Fendall Currie, a Major General, judge, and author of the seminal legal work, the *Indian Code of Criminal Procedure*. Her father, Robert, was a Settlement Officer, first grade, in the Bengal Civil Service. Her maternal grandfather, and later her Guardian, was Dr Charles Macrae, who became General Inspector of Hospitals. So, Lucy was well-connected, but not well-endowed, due to a tragic, early family life. Her mother died when she was three, her stepmother when she was seven and her father when she was eleven. Lucy and her seven siblings became parentless, but not homeless. They were shipped back to England and looked after by her stepmother's three unmarried sisters, who moved from Inverness to Ealing, where Robert had bought a house for his retirement. They were known as 'the aunties' and for the next two decades, Lucy grew up in the prim and pious aunties' household.

As a teenager, Lucy was anything but prim, but she fully imbibed the piety with evangelical zeal. A fervent teetotaler, she took the pledge. A born teacher, she taught Ealing's young churchgoers in the Sunday School, overseen by the Reverend Julius Summerhayes. In Julian's household, his nephew Jack, a handsome and dashing young man, was staying while he was a medical student at St Thomas's.

Soon, Lucy and Jack fell in love but Lucy's guardian insisted that formal engagement and marriage should be delayed until Jack was qualified. In the meantime, Jack and Lucy planned their future life, which was to become medical missionaries. Both were committed Anglican Christians, both committed to caring for the souls and bodies of others, Jack as a doctor, Lucy as a nurse and midwife. It may have been Charles who inadvertently added India to the mix. By the early 1890s, by this time retired and living in London, the story goes that he was talking with Lucy about his time in India and the impossibility in Indian culture for male doctors to attend Indian women during childbirth. This resulted in appalling levels of avoidable infant and maternal mortality, as there were so few fully-qualified women doctors and midwives in the Zenana (women's) hospitals. This may have clinched Lucy's decision to become a medical missionary in India.

This project posed social and religious problems for the relations and the couple's future employers, the Church Missionary Society (CMS). In the Raj, missionaries were regarded by many with disdain, not quite 'one of us'. There was disquiet amongst the wider Currie network at the idea of Sir Frederick's granddaughter 'lowering herself' to become a missionary. Her guardian, despite his medical career in India, also had reservations, but Lucy persevered and eventually he agreed. The CMS also had doubts. It was reluctant to accept doctors who were not already ordained, or planning to do so, and had only recently stopped making ordination compulsory. It doubted the suitability of Lucy's background, but once again, Lucy's determination prevailed; both were accepted, but were required to work in separate mission posts until they were married. After the wedding that took place on 19th January 1895 at Tara Taran, where Lucy had been working, a low-key affair, not the kind of wedding expected for a baronet's granddaughter, they started their married life together at Dera Ghazi Kahn (DGK).

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1896, Lucy began to keep a diary, from which, together with the extensive CMS records, one can learn much about the daily life of the young married couple and their relationship with both the British and native communities. Their arrival must have put the local British in something of a social quandary. The bush telegraph would most likely have informed them of her distinguished relations. On the other hand, the wife of a missionary was near the bottom of the social pecking-order. In practice, Lucy and her handsome husband, of respectable stock, seem to have fitted in quite well, gaining quite a wide circle of acquaintances. Relations with the local natives could be more strained, but for religious and cultural, rather than any social or class differences. A good command of the local languages was essential for both medical reasons. The diary extracts illustrate Lucy's daily life as a young mother, preacher and teacher.



*Friday 7th February*

*Mrs Dames and sister came to call. Teaching school in morning, went to Mrs Yates for tea wearing Na's new hat for 1st time. On to tennis courts & saw the new regimental ladies, such a dressed-up painted set.*

*Monday 10th February*

*Taught 1st class & heard lessons. Went to call on Mrs Dames to ask her to hold a meeting for me. She very kindly consented. Wrote home letters. Went to Mrs Dames after tea with Lois, all the clerks' wives and families there.*

*Wednesday 12th February*

*GQ took an age over prayers – I taught children lessons & 2nd class Bible class. Mr Winter & Mrs Field came to call! Children's sewing class – L and I went to tea with Mrs Davidson – met Dr Spenser & Mrs Winter again.*

*Monday 17th February*

*Baby slept finely – teaching School & Jessie all morning. Jessie told of Nahali's parents' bad treatment & plan of night marriage. I kept her, spoke to both parents - Mrs Davidson and children came to tea. Colonel and Mrs Vousden called. I saw a Nawab who wanted me to foreshadow for him – walk with L to Z hosp: home to find Nahali hiding in my room, rowed with her parents and sent them home. N sleeps in Lois room.*

*Tuesday 18th February*

*Lois off early to meet her brother. After prayers I spoke to Jewan about his daughter before all the Xtens & Nahali bravely said she would stay with Xtens. Nahali living with Jessie.*

The summer was spent in the hills at Fort Monroe (FM), about 50 miles east, two hours today by car, but at least two days travel then – if everything went to plan....

*Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April*

*Began packing in real earnest. Jack came back having passed his [language] exam. Train broke down so he slept at Ghazi Ghat. Servants go tomorrow, we on Tuesday [sic]. H Khan absolutely no use this time - I did all silver and cutlery myself. China mostly at F.M. Wrote short letters home.*

*Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April*

*Busy from morning till night. Got J's clothes packed somehow. Ayah wanted the day off and Jessie as usual not equal to the occasion. So baby on my hands 1/2 the day & more. At last about 4 A.M. all the camels started.*

*Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April*

*Packing away all that was left behind – taking care of Baby & enduring Jack's cracked ideas for me to mend his clothes on the eve of starting.*

*At 5 we left D.G.K. all Xtens assembled to say good bye, reached Aram Shar at 7.30.*

*Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April*

*Stayed at Aram S all last night and all today till 5 with a sort of sand storm blowing. Then came on with only one wretched rat of a pony to pull us through the desert instead of the pair Jack had ordered. Met all Xtens and servants at Sakki Salwar. Shamull ill and Sarah too.*

*Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April*

*Stayed at Sakki S all night & today till 5 & then went on to Ra Mach: Saraina & Co had much trouble in coming, camels so bad.*

*Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April*

*Jack got breakfast & I dressed Baby & we had no servant. Started about 8 came through a herd of hundreds of camels going back into Afghanistan – one ran away, throwing its load.*

*After a nice rest at Gadai we got to F.M. at 12, was nearly famishing. Stayed all day with the Thompsons who were so kind but I was so tired and headachy & cheeks burning & Baby would not go to anyone else & wouldn't be good with me.*

*Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April*

*Ayah and Khan: came at last. 1 camel ran away, 1 man ran away. Hence delay.*

Life at FM was not very different from DGK; weekends were relaxed – normally.

*Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April*

*Jack and I went to see Thomson's baby. I taught School & prepared for Munshi & looked after Baby. Then translation with Munshi after tiffin, busy till 4 when went with Jack to Thomsons. After tea walked down to Kir with Jack and rode straight back. Preached to Postmaster's wife, talked also to him, promised a Bible, shewed him baby – undressed baby and bathed her, studied after dinner and taught Sais (Xt's baptism).*

*Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June*

*Went & developed photos all day and they were all too faint & indistinct. Then J & self went down to golf & preached to Salantris people in Zenana*

*Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June*

*Service in morning & Sunday School then taught women. Went & had Eng: service, met a Mangi [terrorist] coming down the hill. Mrs Gambier fled & we all stood our ground. J went down to the Hosp: was 2-3 hours dressing wounds of a Bilhooch, 12 wounds – 2 men killed, he escaped. 2 others wounded in killing an old man.*

Not an average, quiet weekend. By mid-October it was time to return to DGK. A similar trauma ensued and Lucy was six months pregnant.

*Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October*

*Baby with me all day. Jack packing china & glass & getting off camels. I packed his book box & looked after Kitty & gave Xtens tea before they started. At 4.30 the long line of camels & men & women straggled across the sky line. I gave Sarah careful instructions about the Ayah in case – Deelho cooked our dinner. J & I washed Kitty.*

*Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October*

*Up early, baby asleep. Got Chotki Hazari & her food. Put the innumerable last things together. Quite exhausted, toiled up the hill to breakfast at the Thompsons. Seldom been so done up but a good breakfast & a long lie down on my face & a lunch set me up & when Pathans at last came I was much better. Had a fairly good journey alternate dandy & cart to Rocky Muh.*

*Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October*

*Left Rocky Muh early. Another camel dead. Having dined went on to Aram Ghar. Kreeman keeping us waiting half an hour in the moonlight in the desert.*

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

*Awful night at Aram Ghar & suffered so much that nearly fainted on way in last 14 miles. On arrival I disappeared to my room in agonies from piles. I gave me opium & I got some relief. House all in carpenters' and painters' hands.*

The diary ends on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1897. From this time on, Jack and Lucy's life can still be told through CMS documents, memoirs – and an officer's letter. In 1898 the CMS moved Jack to Quetta in Baluchistan. By then the family had grown to three children and four more were to be born there over the next eight years. The surviving records give only occasional glimpses of how Lucy managed to juggle her work and her family, especially as Jack was often away, sometimes as far away as Kerman in Persia, but more often touring the medical outposts.

In 1901, the Reverend Ball reported:

*"I must begin with the expression of the earnest and admirable work of Dr and Mrs Summerhayes, the Sunday congregation of about 120 and the remarkably good singing of chants and hymns, thanks to Mrs Summerhayes". A view confirmed by a visiting bishop: "The singing struck me as particularly good – better I think than I have ever heard in a native service."*

But it was not all sweetness and light. The Reverend Walker describes the typhus epidemic of 1904:

*"I cannot attempt to portray the anxieties and troubles which met Dr and Mrs Summerhayes during this time. But you will realize what it must have been to them with their four little ones in the bungalow, while typhus was raging actually in the compound. Dr Summerhayes is not the kind of man who would ever consider himself or even his family in the discharge of his duty and he even went so far as to assist putting Dr Daniel's body into his coffin with his own hands, though he had died from that most infectious disease, typhus."*

Very soon after the move to Quetta occurred the incident that best sums up Jack's character. It is described in a letter from a Royal Artillery officer. Jack was on his way home to Quetta probably from the outstation at Dadar (Dhadar today). The letter, dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 1899, takes up the story.

*"This afternoon, at 5pm, we bury another of our men. He was murdered by a 'Ghazi' (Mohammedan fanatic) yesterday morning. Our man was employed on the railway, learning the duties of a 'guard'. At a station called Mach, just at the entrance of the Bolan Pass, he was attending to some luggage in the van at the end of the train. A Native came behind the train and on to the platform from the rails and fired point-blank at the gunner when his back was turned. The bullet entered the centre of his back and came out at his chest, his clothes having been singed. He died about one hour later. The murderer dropped his gun and drew his sword, and prepared to cut his way out of the station. Dr Summerhayes, C.M.S. medical missionary, happened to be on that train, returning to Quetta. He saw everyone running for their lives into refreshment rooms and carriages, so he drew the sword of a policeman and ran after the Native. Seeing he was pursued, the Native turned round and fought a duel with Dr Summerhayes, but the doctor managed to cut him down without being wounded himself. Dr S. then went and attended to the dying gunner. He died on the way to Quetta, Dr S. praying with him before his death."*

About 1906, Jack decided to resign as a missionary and return to England. Lucy was bitterly opposed but forced to give way for the sake of her family. In 1907, Lucy and her children set off for England. Lucy's Indian dream may have been shattered but her commitment to missionary work in India was as strong as ever. Only now it had to be carried on from Thame, where her husband became a GP, and later from Newhaven, over 4000 miles away. Her lifelong commitment to the cause was recognised by the CMS, who in 1925 made her an honorary governor for life, then in 1943 a vice-president and wrote a glowing appreciation of her work after her death in 1957.

Only one of Lucy's eight children, Robert Currie Summerhayes, Bob, worked in India and that was in an entirely different role, as an employee of Burmah Shell Oil Company. The Currie legacy and its impact on India became history, but was not forgotten. Hilary Shaw, Lucy's eldest but unmarried granddaughter, never visited India where her mother had briefly lived at the start of her short, married life to a member of the ICS, but she was interested in the family's Currie contribution to it. She was a member of FIBIS and inherited family photos and documents which passed to me, including the diary.

As a well-born missionary, Lucy may have been something of a social anomaly in the Raj, but her story illuminates one small corner of British rule in India. Beyond the solid histories of the various missionary societies, there is very little, either in the FIBIS publications or elsewhere, about missionaries and their relationship with the native and British communities. Many, then and now, would disapprove of her and Jack's religious imperialism, but might commend their complete lack of racism and the education and health care they provided for those willing to consider contact with Christians, for whatever reason.

At the end of the day, the differences in culture and belief between the British and Indians perhaps remained unbridgeable. Let Jack have the last word:

*"I was called up about 1am by a man who particularly wanted to see me. Kabuli Afghan, quite a stranger to me, said he wanted to become a Christian. I asked why. He amazed me by answering 'I have just cut off my wife's nose and, if you will hide me from the police, I will become a Christian'."*

Postscript. My interest in British India has now shifted from British missionaries to road-building and way-markers in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. If anyone has information about these please contact [derek.turner@europemail.org](mailto:derek.turner@europemail.org)

# MY GRANDPARENTS' TIME IN INDIA

Helen English

My grandparents, Fane Sewell and Frances (née Sharp), met on board ship in 1910. He was returning to India, aged 21, following further training for the Indian Police, and she, aged 23, was going out to do missionary work at the YWCA in Bombay. Frances was one of the early 'bluestockings', having read Modern Languages at Newnham College, Cambridge. I imagine she felt a need to do something meaningful with her life after university, before finding herself a suitable husband.

I know that for certain it was 'love at first sight' for my grandfather, but not so much for her. Frances returned to England when her six months in Bombay were up, and they corresponded regularly for the next four years by letter. We have in our possession literally hundreds of letters written between 1910 and 1923, which begin with that initial voyage by sea and end just after they came back to England for good in 1923, with two small boys in tow. They are written mainly from Frances to her parents and later her widowed mother and also to Fane, of course, sometimes from Fane to Frances or his mother, known as 'Madre', and to his eventual mother-in-law, known as 'Mither' (his moniker for her, I believe).

Fane returned to England for further training in 1914, and he and Frances, whom he'd nicknamed 'Noggs', for some reason, met only a couple of times before he was ordered back to India at the outbreak of the First World War. After about a year he couldn't contain himself any longer and wrote to her with a proposal of marriage, which circumstances had prevented him from making in person. At first Frances hesitated:

*"Your letter was a tremendous surprise & I don't feel as if I'd [sic] had time to think it over properly. My first impulse was to say no – but at the present moment I feel in a complete fog – Will you think me very horrid if I ask you to wait a bit for a definite answer? I feel its rather tiresome of me not to be able to answer promptly but truly I had never thought of you in that light before – It has been a frightfully busy week & I'm a bit tired & run-down & don't seem quite to know my own mind. And then suppose I go & say no finally, I shall feel a beast for not having done it at once! But I hope you will understand. I'll try hard to think it out as soon as I can. There are so many things to take into consideration – I'm not what one calls "in love" with you, you know – though I'm very fond of you & we've been very good friends for a longish time – & I don't know if that's enough. Then it would be a terrific wrench to go such a long way from my people & I think they would mind a good deal. Also I'm 2 years older than you are! On the other hand. I can imagine enjoying life in your company very much – So you see I'm in rather a state of vacillation! Please forgive me for this undecided rigmarole!"*

He persisted, and one day he received a telegram from her stating simply 'Accept. Noggs'. That was in 1915. Her only brother, Alban, was killed in the trenches at Festubert, in May that year. There is a dreadfully sad letter from Frances to Fane describing his death, but they bravely picked themselves up again, and that

autumn, she set sail once more for Bombay, aged 28 by then, to marry a man she barely knew. Her description of that journey shows no trace of fear about travelling through the Mediterranean in the midst of a world war.



Fane and Francis on their wedding day, November 1915

They were married in Balaghat Church in the Central Provinces and from then on moved around the area because of Fane's Police work, never settling long enough for Frances to make a real home.

At first, she writes enthusiastically about her new life, but as time goes by and she has her first child, my father Jack, she grows less enamoured of the heat and the boredom, punctuated only by going into Camp and often on 'shikar'. There are desperate letters to her mother telling her about my father's bout of dysentery when he was still just a baby. He miraculously survived, though so many didn't.

In 1921 a little brother, Tom, arrived for him. My grandfather wrote to Mither, describing his birth:

*Seoni. C.P.  
India.*

*19th. Aug. 1921*

*Dear old Mither*

*You will want to know all about Tom & Frances. Thomas --- --- Sewell (his full names are still under discussion & depend on whether Uncle Arthur has any suggestions to make) – Born at Seoni C.P. at 10.50 p.m. on the 18th. Aug. 1921.*

*Jack's début has been described as precipitate, but Tom's fairly exceeded the speed limit. 50 minutes was all his business occupied, barring the shouting. The nurse, whom we had arranged to get here, with astonishing sapience, exactly 48 hours before, was of course hors de combat with malaria & 104° temp. Frances' nurses are proverbial – When Jack arrived, you remember, she had no less than three & finished by nursing the last one herself. Well, last night Frances left for bed about 10 o'clock – (I was already in p.j's.) She said she wasn't feeling at all well & that it wd be just like Tommy to choose to make his début just when the nurse was ill & the doctor busy with cholera cases. We tried to pretend it was imagination, but it was no good & Frances sent me to call Mother – Then it was a question whether the doctor & nurse shd. be routed out, malaria & all – We were all longing to bustle but each tried to pretend there was nothing to get excited about & that it might be only the castor oil after all. However Frances was soon pretty sure it was something more than just the castor oil – So Mother & I carried Jack's bed into Mother's room – a severe effort for Mother as she is by no means fit herself – then we sent the orderly off with a note to Dr. Grant.*

*I proceeded to fill carbide into the acetylene table lamp while Mother bustled around & routed up the nurse who staggered into the arena scarcely [sic] knowing whether she was standing on her head or her heels. The orderly came back & said the doctor wanted a tonga. As the town is a mile away the idea of a tonga was dismissed. Hasan Ali, the orderly, was sent to get some water boiled in the cook house. The big Ferrostat is always kept full of hot water at night but even that great water tank was, for once, inadequate. Mother lighted her spirit stove & the Primus.*

*After I had done a bit of bustling about inconsequentially & expressed the opinion that the tonga would take some waiting for, it was suggested that I shd. do something useful & biff round for the doctor in the bus. I slung on a few garments & biffed. We were none too soon. The doctor was hardly by the bedside before it was apparent that Tommy meant business. Frances had carefully arranged everything in the boxes so that we should have no difficulty, but in the general excitement, everything got turned upside down in the scrimmage – Soap, socks & safety pins would obtrude themselves when articles of more immediate utility were required.*

*"Hurry up nurse," cried the doctor. "Baby's coming & I haven't even sterilized my hands" – But Tommy wasn't going to wait for anybody – I drew the cork of the Cyllin bottle & weighed in alongside with a basin, precisely at the moment when Tommy with a Hoop La! bounded on to the stage of life in all his pristine glory. Finding his carburettor free, he opened his throttle & yelled. "Here it comes" – was all the doctor had time to say "– and a bonny boy too!" as she skilfully fielded him in the slips*

*Tommy was then laid aside, alone in a cold hard world on a cold hard camp bed (mine by rights) & passed into a being of only secondary importance while his Mummy, proud, & radiant with smiles at the good work accomplished, received the bulk of attention & congratulations.*

*The nurse, being of no further use, returned to her room where she said she fainted. She rolled up of her own accord at 5 a.m. when the fever had left her & has been very attentive ever since. I think Frances finds her very careful & capable, though a bit old-fashioned – & very slow – & deaf.*

*Today is the 21st. & Frances is getting on splendidly. Dr. Grant is very satisfied. Tommy is a most placid individual & sleeps nearly all the time, as though it were a solemn business to perform & he was determined to see it through, regardless. He is quieter than Jack was & hardly ever cries.*

*He is very well covered, has a good grip & firm neck & his head doesn't roll about like an apple on a hat pin. He's so fat that he can hardly open his eyes & he's got a double chin & a putty nose. His profile is consequently most comical – Frances says that when she has him close to her she has feelings of motherly respect for him, but when she sees him at a distance she feels almost provoked to mirth – Poor wee Tommy. It's a shame to laugh at him. I ought not to have sketched the above libellous portrait, but as its done from memory & not really like him (not now at any rate!) you mustn't*



*pay any attention to it. We'll send you his photo presently. The room has no clerestory windows so it's no use trying to take them indoors, as we did in Jack's case.*

*It was a blessing to have Mother here to look after things – She is running the house & looking after Jack & getting all Frances' meals & a hundred & one other things – Jack was so funny – Frances wanted me to be the first to bring him in to see Tommy. I told him we had a surprise for him – When he came in, he saw the cot standing where his own bed had been the night before. Then he looked at his Mummy & such a grin as you never saw stretched across his face. "My new little baby" he said, & was invited to step across & have a peep at it. He was delighted. I told him afterwards it was a little boy, his little brother & asked whether he was glad & whether he wanted his little new baby to be a boy or a girl & he tactfully replied that he wanted a little boy – so he's pleased. I won my bet with Frances – It was funny how "it" was almost invariably referred to beforehand as Tommy. It's much better for Jack to have a young brother who can punch his head for him & restrain his swank.*

*Today is the 23rd. All going excellently – (Stitches to be taken out tomorrow) 2 stitches only – due to Tom's extreme haste in arriving. Tommy's profile is already belieing [sic] my caricature. His skin is fast losing its ruddy hue & his eyes are opening a little wider. The nurse says he's got an unusually fine skin, without any patches like my – I mean to say no, er – well, patches – Jack the once (& still) incomparable, even had some marks on his forehead & elsewhere but this kidlet has none. He is still extraordinarily quiet – long may it last – The missionaries came over to see Frances & the kidlet this afternoon. One of the missionaries gave Tommy a rupee for luck. It will form the nucleus of his P.O. savings, when he has been given some names to open an account under. They were delighted with him, as he was the smallest baby they or one of them had seen.*

*Your parcel for Frances arrived this morning & caused her great joy - Jack seems extraordinarily grown up beside Tom. He is already required to be on his best behaviour for fear of corrupting Tom. In course of time, he'll begin to feel that Tommy's rather a beastly nuisance. I'm looking forward to the time when they'll be punching each other's heads –*

*Well, I wish we were all Home with you. If we get the chance of retiring on a proportionate pension it is more than likely we'd take it – though what on earth we shd. do to supplement it goodness only knows. I have nothing up my sleeve – or I wouldn't be in the I.P.*

*Heaps of love to yourself & all. Tom, by the way, weighed just over 7 lbs. & was 20½ ins. long. Please send Auntie Margaret some account of the event as I've exhausted all my time & energy on this scrawl –*

*Cheerio –  
Yours affectly*

*Fane*

*Letters of 1. Aug. arrived safely – & lots of papers & mags from the family – Am keeping your envelope (book?) for Jack for his birthday. Your parcel came yesterday – satin coat etc. Ever so many thanks – all well – 24th. Aug. F.*

In the year 2000, my daughter Cat and I went to India to re-trace our family's footsteps. We found St. John's Church in Secunderabad, where my father was baptized and Nagpur Cathedral, where my Uncle Tom was baptized. Sadly we didn't make it to Balaghat, to see the church where my grandparents were married, but we did get to Seoni by train and car and we found the Mission where Scottish doctor, Jeannie Grant, had lived and worked. Mr. Singh, retired principal

of the secondary school there, welcomed us in and told us he'd known Dr. Grant when he was a boy and had some amusing anecdotes to tell us about her. She must have been an amazing woman. It was wonderful to find such a personal connection. Mr. Singh invited us to stay at the Mission, which was also an orphanage, and did his best to replicate a visit from my Uncle Tom, to see Dr. Grant at the end of the Second World War when he was stationed in Burma, showing us the Clubhouse (including the billiard table my grandparents would have played on), the church, the hospital and the lake. He apologized for not being able to offer us marmalade, as Dr. Grant had done for Tom, but he had some jam to give us instead.



The 'bus' is how Fane referred to his motorbike and sidecar.

From there, we travelled up to Chhindwara and found what was left of my great-grandfather's grave in a derelict cemetery. Also in the Indian Police, he had died of cholera in 1908. Everywhere we went, the local people were unbelievably kind and generous, and, more often than not, most intrigued by our quest, and India had got under our skin. I have learnt so much in the last few years, transcribing over half a million words from the letters into my laptop about a colonial life led a hundred years ago, about their hopes and fears, the heat, the tiger shoots, the worries about disease, their attitudes towards the people and culture of the country – some of it difficult for our modern sensitivities to stomach – but all in all, a fascinating social history of the time.

# FROM RUABON TO RANGOON

## THE 61 INDIAN REPRODUCTION GROUP IE

Ian Jacobs

In early September 1942, his captain asked Gunner Ronald Waddams whether he would like to draw a cartoon. Ron explained to his parents that “A.A. Command were asking for specimens of drawing”. Apparently, they were looking for a draughtsman. The chance of doing a job connected with drawing, of course appealed to me, so I drew the cartoon and it was submitted. The result of this little drawing has just come through. On Tuesday of next week, I am to be at Wrexham in Wales, for an interview, with the view of me becoming a Lithographic draughtsman in the Royal Engineers.”<sup>14</sup> Ron had spent a year at Ealing School of Art and had then worked for a sign company and a lettering studio in London<sup>15</sup>, so his records told his captain that he might be just the kind of man who was needed. Ron’s cartoon turned out to be his ticket to Ruabon and on to South Africa, India and Burma.

Ron arrived at Wynnstay Hall,<sup>16</sup> Ruabon, North Wales on 22 September. He wrote home: “Tomorrow I am having a drawing test, if I do not pass this, I shall be returned to my unit. As the test consists of a little lettering, I have every hope of succeeding. On passing, I shall be trained as a Litho draughtsman, this will be entirely connected with map work; everything points to an interesting job. ... I have made several pals already. They all seem excellent fellows, and all connected with painting and art. I should be very happy.”<sup>17</sup>

Ron passed the test and was now Sapper Waddams. On 30 September, he started a course which “normally takes nine weeks to complete, though now it is being crammed into about a month. This means quite a lot of hard work and studying. Consequently, every night after tea we have gone back to the class room and done an extra hour and a half’s work.”<sup>18</sup> The course began with “a lecture this morning on the principles of lithography. After this we were given a [zinc] plate each to practice on. I should like to know why they put Gum Arabic on the plate when the drawing is finished. We were given a reason but it was not very clear. The book Dad gave me on survey will be most useful, even the instructor has borrowed it.”<sup>19</sup> His father responded “Gum Arabic is used because it can hold moisture. If it

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<sup>14</sup> RH Waddams, Fort William, 18 Sept 1942.

<sup>15</sup> RH Waddams, biographical notes.

<sup>16</sup> For the history of map training at Wynnstay Hall see WN Saunders, ‘Wynnstay Hall and the School of Military Survey’, *Sheetlines*, 106, 21-23.

<sup>17</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 22 Sept 1942.

<sup>18</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 16 Oct 1942.

<sup>19</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 30 Sept 1942. Ron’s father, Bert Waddams was a draughtsman at the well-known Arts and Crafts printer Emery Walker Ltd. One of his specialities was drawing maps. Several of Ron’s letters ask his father to explain something he had not fully understood in class.

happens to dry, the plate can easily be sponged all over (with a gummy sponge) without injuring the work.”<sup>20</sup>

By 5 October, the trainee mapmakers had “completed the map [they were] working on, it has turned out quite successfully. Much of our time has been taken with the study of scales and their construction; these have given us severe headaches. To achieve this end, we have been delving into the forgotten mysteries of decimals and geometry. For Dad’s technical ear, I can now reduce the Representative Fraction to a graphic scale or to a written scale. At first, I found it a little difficult to grasp the figures, but I have soon picked it up again.”<sup>21</sup> A week later, while continuing to practice on plates, the class was learning “about grids. This meant more headaches, but through a mass of information, daylight is dawning. Our work is restricted to army grids or the Modified British Grid System. During this coming week, we are going to draw some grids for ourselves. Last week we had a little test. We had to construct a map from instructions given, showing necessary contours and conventional signs. My drawing was correct in all ways.”<sup>22</sup>

By 16 October, the class had progressed to “working on a very fine map. The work on this is extremely delicate and calls for much painstaking. The lettering too, calls for the utmost skill, it is tiny stuff, mostly Bodoni italic; you can imagine it is very tiring to do, especially after so long a time without practice. Working on a zinc plate adds more difficulties, the main one being the correcting of mistakes. Later on, I may be able to have a proof taken of my work, so that I shall be able to show you.” The study of grids had “progressed to the construction of a sloping grid.” One class “dealt with the permanent offset on the plate, that makes it possible to draw each colour separately on each plate. To do this, they have a special process, which has not yet been released for general use. As Dad knows, the offset that is usually obtained is not permanent. I will explain this new idea when I see him. Another lecture was on the Helio[type] process, and the Gum reversal or Vandyke process.”<sup>23</sup>

The following week, “We have passed quickly onto the study of projections in their various forms and complexities. A brief outline of latitudes and longitudes has been given to us; with an even briefer description of grid north, magnetic north and true north; to say nothing of all the little odds and ends that have been thrown at us. The trainee mapmakers also visited the presses of “the mobile printing unit, I had better not say anything about them here, as they are pretty secret. But you can take it from me that it is a most excellent outfit. I also watched a Crabtree Rotary

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<sup>20</sup> HC Waddams, Lithography, October 1942.

<sup>21</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 5 Oct 1942.

<sup>22</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 11 Oct 1942.

<sup>23</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 16 Oct 1942. The Vandyke process, invented by Ordnance Survey, involved a light-sensitive layer on the zinc plate. ‘Gumming out’ was used on zinc plates to achieve effects such as stipple: personal communications Rob Wheeler 06 April 2021 and Richard Oliver 9 April 2021.

machine working. The opportunity was also given me of following the gum reversal process through its various stages.”<sup>24</sup> In early November, the students were sent “into the grounds, with paper; scales; protractor; and prismatic compass; and have surveyed and constructed a map of the lake here.”<sup>25</sup>

Outside the classroom, the men at Ruabon had plenty of activities to fill their days. Army duties included fire picket, 15 minutes of PT each morning, and every Tuesday there was bath parade. The troops took the train eight miles to the Whitehaven colliery baths. They were also prepared for combat: a week of gun drill and a week of firing. In November they were taught battle tactics, “showing how we should defend ourselves if ever the need arose,” and staged an attack on the railway station. The week ended with manoeuvres with the Home Guard. The lorry transporting Ron and his colleagues broke down, obliging them to walk. At Greenfield, on the estuary of the River Dee, the cartographers found themselves under attack. “[A] lorry load of Home Guards came streaming across a field towards us. We immediately scattered and went to ground. We had some little crackers to give the effect of fire, but this did not impress the guardsmen, who came pouring down and captured us, although we tried to explain that we had shot them, but they would not have it.”<sup>26</sup> Free time was spent at dances, in the camp or in the village, the chief attraction being the local girls, or at the cinema in Wrexham.

Ron’s training finished at the end of November and by 3 December he had been “mustered as an A2 tradesman, and my total wage is five and three a day.” “The No 1. Reproduction Group, is a small company just being formed, and it is this my pal and I have joined. Until it has been properly formed and equipt (I think that word is misspelled) we are attached to another company ... Our quarters are in the house of the Duke of Bedford, in Ampthill Park. It is quite a large house from what I have seen of it. I am sleeping in a room that must once have been one of the servants’ rooms, at the top of the house.”<sup>27</sup>

A few days later, Ron was able to tell his parents more about his unit: “I can now define my position more clearly. The No.1. Group, to which I belong, comprises of about thirty men, printers and draughtsmen. This is a complete little production unit, or one little firm, if you like. And when we have the necessary equipment, we shall be drawing and producing maps. This is about one of the best jobs I could get into. For unlike the ordinary field survey units, we are not mobile. Our job will be to produce stock maps, so if ever we go abroad we will be stationed at some base or depot. You may remember me explaining the work of men in the field survey, who print new information on maps that is obtained from the Topo surveyors or from

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<sup>24</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 24 Oct 1942.

<sup>25</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 3 Nov 1942.

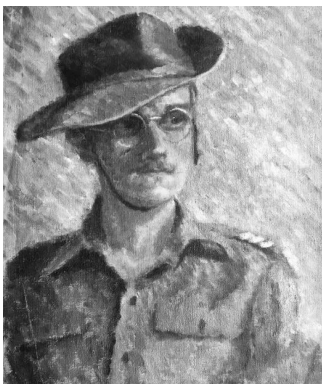
<sup>26</sup> RH Waddams, Survey Training Centre, Ruabon, 29 Nov 1942.

<sup>27</sup> RH Waddams, No.1 Reproduction Group, Att. 14th CFS Company R.E., Ampthill, Bedfordshire, 3 Dec 1942.

Air Survey. When I was with you, I knew nothing of the Reproduction Group idea, as it is quite a new thing. Imagine how cushy and enjoyable it is going to be, just working with a few men. I am certainly in luck again.”<sup>28</sup>

By 18 February 1943, Ron knew that his unit was to be sent overseas. “Naturally, I am very excited with the prospect of my future, for I can see extremely good and interesting times ahead of me. When I return, I shall never regret going. I expect to go to one of two places, and neither of these is an active front. Judging by the nearness of the end of war, I should not be away for longer than a year.”<sup>29</sup>

The fortunes of war proved Ron to be much too optimistic. He would not see home for three and a half years. As he prepared for his departure, the commanders of allied forces that had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Japanese and their Thai and Burmese Allies in 1942, were preparing the Burma campaign. His unit, now the 61 Reproduction Group IE (Indian Engineers), would be called upon to produce the maps used to plan battles in Burma. Ron was to be in Rangoon on Friday 10 August 1945, when news of the Japanese surrender arrived. On 26 August, he witnessed Spitfires escorting two Japanese planes carrying Lieutenant General Takazo Numata to the formal ceremony of surrender of Japanese Forces in Burma. Ron’s unit printed a leaflet in Japanese, to be distributed to enemy troops still in Burma, to encourage them to stop fighting: “Special Notice. Lieutenant General Numata, Chief of Staff of the Southern Expeditionary Army General Headquarters, arrived in Rangoon on August 26 to discuss the withdrawal of the Japanese Army from Burma. The photo on the reverse side is of Lieutenant General Numata signing the treaty in the presence of the Chiefs of Staff of the Allied Forces.”<sup>30</sup>



Ron Waddams (1920-2010), self-portrait, oil on canvas, probably painted in Rangoon in 1946. He wears the army glasses issued to him at the Survey Training Centre in Ruabon in October 1942, and the Australian-style hat issued to the 61 Group in January 1945, before entering Burma.

<sup>28</sup> RH Waddams, No.1 Reproduction Group, Att. 14th CFS Company R.E., Ampthill, Bedfordshire, 7 Dec 1942.

<sup>29</sup> RH Waddams, No.1 Reproduction Group R.E., 18 Feb 1943.

<sup>30</sup> The leaflet is in one of Ron’s photo albums.

At the time of the surrender, Ron was busy designing a booklet, *Finale*, published by his unit in September 1945, to record their “travels & trials”.<sup>31</sup> They had sailed from Greenock in February 1943 and after brief stops at Dakar, Sierra Leone and Capetown, reached Durban, where they waited in Clarewood Camp for a ship to take them on to Bombay. They arrived in India on 11 June. From June 1943 to January 1944, they were stationed at the headquarters of the Indian Survey in Dehra Dun, in the Himalayas. February to August 1944 found them in Thondebavi, just north of Bangalore. In August, a long journey by train and river boat took them closer to the front line at the 14th Army HQ in Comilla. In February 1945, they arrived at Imphal on the Burmese border, where until late April they worked 24 hours a day, to produce the maps used by commanders to direct the successful campaign to defeat the Japanese in Burma. On 28 April 1945, they entered Burma. In *Finale*, Colonel C. A. K. Wilson of the 14th Army noted: “When we heard that 61 Rep Group was coming to join Fourteenth Army in August 1944, we made a few discreet enquiries and were told that it was a first class, efficient unit. It has certainly lived up to its reputation. It stepped straight into high production, and maintained it until the end of the campaign. The first rate standard of quality has never been lowered. With the other Rep Groups, it efficiently defeated the prognostications of our pessimists by successfully taking its heavy equipment and plant 1500 miles overland, from Comilla to Rangoon.”

The histories of the Burma campaign do not mention the part played in victory by the cartographers of the Rep Groups, but the first thing General “Uncle Bill” Slim did, when he was appointed to command Allied forces in Burma in, was to take a map of Burma and reduce it in his mind “to a rough diagram with the distances between the main places marked”. A map of the current situation was permanently available in the War Room of his HQ and Slim’s “practice [was] to visit my War Room every night before going to bed, to see the latest situation map”. Maps captured from Japanese units were also a valuable source of intelligence concerning enemy intentions.<sup>32</sup>

Ron Waddams preserved 20 maps from his years in the 61 Rep Group. For example, *Situation Sep. 1944*, illustrates the beginning of the offensive that would lead to the defeat of the Japanese army in Burma (figure 1). It shows the positions and numbers of enemy troops (principally Japanese, but also the Burma National Army led by Aung San). Notes provide additional information, for example: “2 Div[ision] moved to Salween Front end Aug 44, for counter offensive ordered by Gen. Kimura on Kawabe’s relief by Gen. Kimura in Sep 44. This operation was cancelled, and main body 2 Div moved to reserve in Lower Central Burma.” Another note stated that the “Japanese Air Force [had] 80 aircraft in Burma. Total

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<sup>31</sup> *Finale*, Rangoon, 1945. The centre spread is a map of the 61 Group’s travels.

<sup>32</sup> Field Marshal Viscount Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, London, Pan Books, 2009, pp.25-26, 161, 396, 478-479





Ron also brought home four large, detailed maps, printed on sturdy textiles, of Burma and the wider area; India, Siam, French Indo China and China and a map

of Burma printed on red silk, because, Ron explained to me, paper maps disintegrated in the monsoon season. These were E & E (escape and evasion) maps given to air crew in case they had to land in enemy territory. Ron's collection also included "tactical maps" used for military planning (e.g. Burma. Northern and Southern Shan States, printed in Rangoon, April 1946).

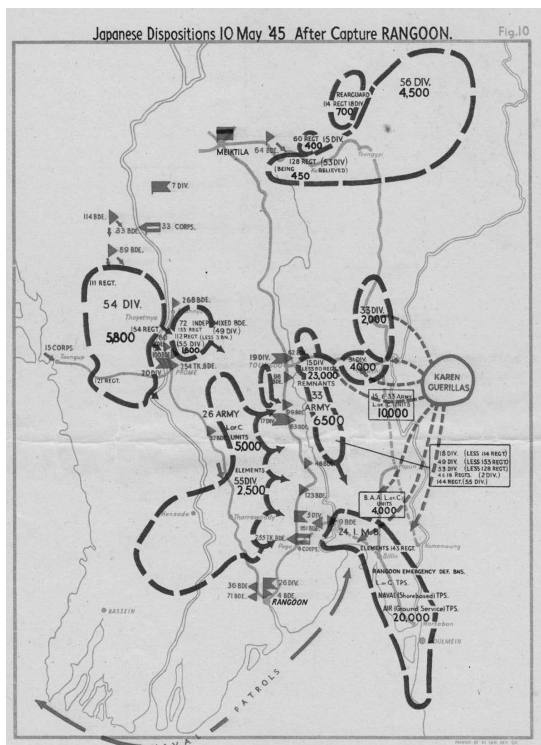


Figure 2

A photo of the Group, taken in Rangoon, shows 64 men, British and Indian.<sup>33</sup> The programme printed for Christmas celebrations in 1944 and *Finale* identifies 37 British members of the Group.<sup>34</sup> The non-combatant Indians included tradesmen, while others took care of "the common fatigues of ordinary army life", such as washing and sweeping, and drove the trucks.<sup>35</sup> Some of the British contingent had been with the Group since Ruabon, others had replaced those who had been promoted to other duties. A humorous piece in the Christmas 1944 programme, when the Group was working in Comilla, in the hot lowlands of East Bengal,

<sup>33</sup> In one of Ron's photo albums.

<sup>34</sup> *Christmas Programme 1944 Souvenir*, Comilla. *Finale*.

<sup>35</sup> *Christmas Programme 1944 Souvenir*, RH Waddams, 61 Ind. Reproduction Group, 31 July 1944; 31 June 1945.

indicates how the unit was organized. The commanding officer was Captain Edward ('Eddie') Baker. The orderly, Les Wilde, started the day with First Parade and, with Stan Ward, managed the office. Jobs arrived as base maps on Kodatrace, produced by Indian colleagues, which were passed to the Photo Department, manned by Jack Charlesworth and 'Tookey', operating in a trailer. Here, faults ("pin-holes") in the negative were corrected with 'semi-opaque'. In a basha, a large thatched bamboo hut, where the negative was examined with a 'shiner', or light box, some nine draughtsmen worked. One of them was "Young Wads", Ron Waddams. The basha also housed the generators. Plates were made and scrubbed with sulphuric acid for reuse in the trailer where about seven plate-makers worked. There were ten printers working on at least two machines. Andy Howe was the maintenance man of the printing department, always ready with his "hammer, wire and pliers". Ted Carigeit was the senior of the four men who ran the stores.

These men made maps in the cool of Dehra Dun in the Himalayas, the tropical savannah climate of Thondebavi, the intense heat and humidity of Comilla, humid subtropical Imphal, where production ran 24 hours a day<sup>36</sup>, and tropical Kalewa. In Comilla, the men lived in a basha roofed with thatch, where rats made comfortable homes and would descend at night to gnaw the clothing of anyone careless enough not to keep his clothes in bed under the mosquito net.<sup>37</sup> To produce accurate maps in these conditions, in less than luxurious accommodation, under the pressure of deadlines imposed by military exigencies, required team-work and considerable professional skills. Clearly, the Ruabon course had trained the 61 Group to a very high standard.

*(Ian may be contacted by e-mailing: [ianjacobsipswich@gmail.com](mailto:ianjacobsipswich@gmail.com))*

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<sup>36</sup> *Finale*

<sup>37</sup> *Finale*

# MEMORIES FROM ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL, DARJEELING

Kenneth Miln



Dining hall at St Paul's School, Darjeeling circa 1940:

The Rector, Mr Leslie Goddard, and senior masters sat at a raised table, with turbaned bearers in attendance. Dinner usually consisted of veggie cutlets, followed by bread and butter pudding:

Sundays we often had tomato soup, Kofta-curry and ice-cream. Most of us kept tins of Kraft cheese, Vimto and bars of Kit-Kat in our lockers, to supplement our daily food intake. Weekday lunch sessions were, at times, supervised by senior house-prefects who were responsible for handing out mail; a prefect would hold up an envelope and shout the boy's name. Our house prefect was one Fatty - and I clearly recall him calling out - "Miln, come and collect your mail and you have a choice: you can open your mail-envelope in front of me or take the bell and take your envelope unopened."

*Taking the bell* involved having a heavy, brass-bell dropped on one's head from a few inches above. Although not dangerous, it was usually quite painful. Fatty well knew that most envelopes contained a five rupee note for pocket-money, which he would confiscate and keep for himself. However, there were good prefects who would look to the welfare of the boys and force chaps like Fatty to return the money to its rightful owner.

*The view which Kenneth enjoyed from St. Paul's school can be seen on the front cover.*

# BEYOND THE BRICK WALL

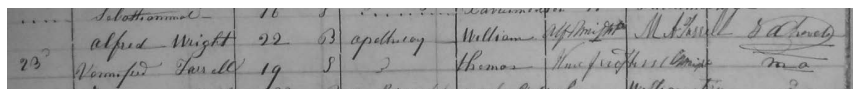
## YET MORE QUESTIONS AND MYSTERIES ABOUT THOMAS

FARRELL

Harper Wright

In 2014, having achieved a fair understanding of my easier-to-research American and Australian families, I decided to have a crack at the “Indian” family on my father’s side. I had found a few bits and pieces taking the story back to 1860, but nothing beyond that. There were also a few bits of contradictory family lore. Therefore, I joined Families in British India Society (FIBIS) and went to the first conference at Meriden.

My first breakthrough was when I was introduced to the records available on *Findmypast*. Searching through *Findmypast*’s online records from the India Office, I found the marriage register of my great-grandparents, Alfred Arnold Wright and Vennifred (sic) Farrell. Family documents show her as Winifred, but that is how Father Chevalier at St Patrick’s Church, Bangalore, must have heard her name. In 2015, I was fortunate to see the original register when I visited the archives of St Patrick’s Church while on the FIBIS tour of Southern India. The register also showed that the bride’s father was Thomas Farrell, and that her sister, Mary Farrell, had been a witness at the wedding. Here, at last, I thought had some solid leads.



St Patrick’s Church 1860 Marriage Register

While *Findmypast* failed to produce any results when I searched for Winifred’s birth, a search of the FIBIS database produced a result. Peter Bailey had translated and transcribed a record from St Thomas’ Mount Portuguese Mission Church, which showed that Winny (sic) had been baptised in December 1841, and she was the daughter of Thos (sic) Farrell and Mary Anne Manderson. An online search for any marriages of Thomas Farrell produced 2 results. One record showed that he married Mary Anne Manderson, daughter of John Manderson, on 7th February 1844, within the Archdeaconry of Madras. Thomas was aged 53, widowed and a “Pensioned Sergeant Major of Artillery”. His father was shown as Peter Farrell. Mary Anne was much younger, aged just 21 years. She was the daughter of John Manderson, who I later found out was also serving in the Madras Artillery.

The other result recorded that Thomas Farrell had married Mary Anne Eliza Lampry on 19 November 1826, at St Thomas Mount. At that time, Thomas was a

“Quarter Master Sergt. of the 3rd Battn Artillery”. She was a spinster, but his marital status is not given.

These two marriage records presented a number of questions, including when did Mary Anne Eliza die, and why did he marry Mary Anne Manderson 2 ½ years after their daughter Winifred’s birth? To answer these questions and to gain a fuller picture of Thomas Farrell, I used 3 digital sources, *Findmypast*, *Ancestry* and *FIBIS* websites, and the more traditional hard copy books and records at the British Library. Each of these sources provided some details that were not available from the other sources. Over time, it also became clear that repeating searches at intervals was very beneficial, as new records/details are regularly added to the online sources.

The East India Company Army records at the British Library and on the FIBIS website revealed that Thomas was from St Nicholas Parish in Dublin and had enlisted in 1811. He embarked on the *Winchelsea* in January 1812, for a 4½ months voyage to Madras. He must have thrived in the difficult conditions in India, and by 1827 had risen to the rank of Quarter Master Sergeant, as stated on the 1826 marriage register. His enlistment was for an “unlimited” term. After 1830, the records indicate that he arrived on the Thames in 1829. The FIBIS transcription, again by Peter Bailey, of the Embarkation Lists of EIC Recruits to India, shows that he returned to England in 1828-1829, and then came back to Madras as the acting senior sergeant in charge of new recruits for the EIC Army. After more than 20 years of service, in September 1835 he was removed to the Effective Supernumeraries as a Sergeant Major, and then pensioned as Sergeant Major- European Pensioners on 28 February 1842.

I was unable to identify any campaigns in which he served, either in India or even in the Burma and China campaigns. It was even more difficult to piece together his private life. Just over a year after his arrival in Madras, Thomas Farrill (sic) of the detachment of Artillery married Mary Tudor, a European woman at Fort St George, on 11th December 1813. She was the first of three Marys that he would marry. Their daughter, Mary Elizabeth Farrell, first married William Crawshaw in 1832 and remarried in 1846 after his death. On remarriage, she was 30 years old, by which we can calculate that she was born in 1816. Mary Tudor Farrell must have died before Thomas married Mary Anne Eliza Lampry in November 1826. However, no such record has come to light as of yet. Nor is there any evidence of Mary Anne Eliza’s death before Thomas married Mary Anne Manderson in 1844. A hint on Ancestry.com yielded a record of the birth, on 29th September 1838 at Fort St George, of Thomas Farrel (sic) and his baptism on 29th October 1838, at “Bangladesh, India”. The parents of baby Thomas are shown as Thomas Farrel and Anne Farrel. OK, but which Anne – Mary Anne Eliza Lampry or Mary Anne Manderson? The latter didn’t become Mary Anne Farrell until 1844.



On *Ancestry*, there is a record of a baptism of Mary Anne Farrell on 11th December 1844. No parents are listed but the Baptism Age is shown as “22y 6m”. Therefore, this must have been an adult baptism of Mary Anne Manderson, after her marriage to Thomas Farrell. This age is consistent with the age shown on the marriage register 10 months earlier. On the other hand, some hints on *Ancestry* are simply dangerous. For example, one publicly shared tree on *Ancestry* attributes to Thomas seven daughters born between 1814 and 1832, all of whom were born in Ireland while he was serving in the Madras Army! The same tree attributes two sons, born between 1843 and 1848 in Staffordshire, while he was a pensioner in Madras. Another hint on *Ancestry* was for a boy born in Bengal in 1806, just five years before Thomas was recruited into the EIC Army. Extreme skepticism needs to be exercised before accepting hints on genealogy websites.

At this point, I returned to the more understandable military records. I noted in the *“Madras- Register of European Soldiers in H.C. Service 1786-1839 A TO K”*, that the death of Thomas was recorded as 19th November 1849. Searches on *Findmypast* and at the British Library produced official copies of his will. The Casualty List of European Pensioners dated 1 January 1850 recorded that the estate was valued at 28,000 rupees, together with “landed properties and farms”. This estate was considerably larger than most other estates in the Casualty List. I was relieved that he had been able to provide for the young family that survived him. However, as I started to read and transcribe his will I was in for a few surprises. Thomas had declared:

*In the name of God Amen. I, Thomas Sammon alias Farrell now a Pension Sergeant Major on the Madras Establishment /late Sergeant Major of the Artillery in the Garrison of Fort Saint George, being of bodily health and of a sound disposing mind memory, and understanding, but mindful of my mortality, do make and publish this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following, that is to say, I will that all my just debts and funeral charges be paid and discharged by my wife herein after named.*

*I further will and desire that the whole of my Real and personal property be disposed of to my wife, and that the proceeds thereof, together with what may be due to me on any account whatever either pay from the date of my Enlistment in the Service of the Honorable East India Company Vizt from the 27th day of June 1811 up to the present period together with the amount of two Bills which I forwarded to the Court of Directors of the Honorable East India Company in the year of 1842 for Rupees about 28,000/ Twenty Eight thousand and all Other money which may be due to me from the Said Company on any account whatever shall be paid to and handed over and assigned to my wife herein after named, and I further will that all money's Houses, Landed property, Tenements and Farms, and all other property, whatsoever which now belong to me or shall become due to me hereafter either in India or in Europe, Shall in like manner be paid to and handed over and Assigned to my Wife Maryanne Sammon alias Farrell and all that may be due to me from other Services, or from any Other Cause, matter or thing whatever, or of which I am now or may be hereafter become possessed or entitled to be by my Wife Sole executrix herein after named invested or secured in some safe Fund or Funds, and the produce and profits thereof be by her disposed of in the manner following Vizt:*



*To my Four Children and their Mother for their equal support and maintenance either from the interest or in Case that is not Sufficient from the Principal -*

*3 \_\_\_\_ I will and desire that the Executrix herein after named be also Guardian of mine and her children. -*

*4 \_\_\_\_ That from and after the time, and on, in account before my youngest child shall have attended the Age 21/ twenty one years, all my children shall immediately be made entitled to receive in equal portions, such portion or portions of my property as may remain in the funds. Landed property ??? standing to the Credit of my Estate for their absolute use and benefit providing always that my daughter Mrs Mary Simpson/ wife of Sub Overseer Samuel Simpson of the Commissariat department be excluded from all such benefit except in the event of her being a widow at the time. \_*

*That my wife \_\_\_\_ Maryanne Eliza who was sent away from this Country for misconduct by His Excellency the Commander in Chief be excluded from all and every participation or benefit in my Estate or in any property whatsoever I may be possessed of at the time of my decease, except Ten Shillings which my Executrix is authorized to pay her in full of all demands upon my Estate.*

*That the Officer Commanding or in charge of the Pensioners at Madras or the Town Major of Fort Saint George, for the time being or any other Officers Civil or Military who may be appointed or according to the Regulations of the Service see that the adjustment of my Estate are hereby requested authorized and empowered to use all lawful means in their power for the recovery from the Honorable East India Company or from their Government on the Madras Establishment the money or moneys due to me on various accounts as are above specified and enumerated in the bills above alluded to, forwarded to the Honorable the Court of Directors in the year 1842 and that in the event of such Officer Officers Civil or Military failing or neglecting so to do / within a reasonable time/ for the recovery of such money or moneys according to Acts of Parliament, Articles of War, and Regulations of the Service, that then and in that case my Executrix herein after named is fully authorized and empowered to proceed sue for and recover and receive by all lawful means in power from the said Honorable East India Company or from their Government in the Madras Presidency such money and moneys as may be due to me on any account whatever and that my Executrix do place the full amount of money so recovered and received together which such other money as may belong to my Estate in safe and secure funds and hold the same in trust as before mentioned for my children and herself now name Vizt:*

*Sons Thomas and John – Daughters Winifred and Maryanne - Wife Maryanne Sammon alias Farrell. And I do hereby ordain nominate constitute and appoint my wife Maryanne Sammon alias Farrell my sole Executrix of this last Will and Testament hereby revoking all former and other wills and testaments by me at any heretofore made.*

*In witness whereof I have to this my last will and testament set and subscribed my hand seal this twenty fourth day of July in the year of Our Lord one Thousand Eight hundred and forty [hidden by tape].*

*Seal*

*Signed Thos Sammon alias Farrell*

After reading and transcribing this last will and Testament, I realised that there were more questions and mysteries about the life of Thomas Farrell than ever before. Since then, I spent many interesting, but fruitless hours, in the British Library looking for answers to the following questions:

- Why did Thomas Sammon enlist in the Honorable East India Company Army using the alias Thomas Farrell? Was he guilty of some crime in Dublin? Or was he a deserter from the British Army or Royal Navy?
- What had Mary Anne Eliza done to deserve banishment by the Commander in Chief? When was she sent away and to where?
- How had Thomas managed to amass a small fortune as an NCO in the EIC Army? Clearly it was in an acceptable manner, as he had forwarded bills for 28,000 rupees to the Court of Directors in 1842.
- Was his father Peter Farrell, as stated at his 1842 marriage, or Peter Sammon as implied by his will?
- He acknowledged 5 children in his will, but none of them appear in the *Findmypast* online records of British India Office Births and Baptisms. John is still unidentified.
- Over the next 15 years, his widow and children continued to use the surname “Farrell”. Why didn’t “Sammon” catch on as a surname?
- Was Mary Anne shocked by the contents of the will, or did she have prior knowledge?

We may never know the answers to some of these questions. In the foreseeable future, my quest for answers will need to be online, as the current global situation will not allow a quick return to the British Library. Finally, I believe that Thomas’s daughter, Winifred, must have benefited from her father’s estate because in the 1880s and 1890s, she and her husband were able to afford UK medical educations for 3 of their sons. She disappears from the records after the death of her husband in 1890. I believe she died in 1912, but I have no evidence of this. My only link to Winifred, my great grandmother, is the one photograph we have from India.



Winifred Farrell Wright in Bangalore

If you have any comments, questions, or, even better, some answers, please feel free to contact me at [crhwright@gmail.com](mailto:crhwright@gmail.com)

## BOOK REVIEWS:

*Dragon: Penang Chronicles I*, by Rose Gan, Monsoon Books, 416pp. 2021, ISBN 9781912049882, £9.99

Rose Gan's novel *Dragon* is a rare example of writing about the important but lesser-understood country trade that existed alongside of the East India Company and, since 1661, was increasingly independent of it. This well-crafted narrative has clearly been written following extensive historical research and, better still, is the first of a planned series following the life of Francis Light.

In real life, Captain Francis Light [c.1740-1794] was the founder of Penang, Malaysia and its capital, George Town. His son, William, would later do the same for Adelaide, Australia. Francis Light's origins were obscure and little is known of his life before his arrival in Madras on the EIC ship *Clive*.

Gan imagines Light's early life. I was kept engaged from the beginning. Each episode was just long enough to build a picture of the influences on his later life. I found the characters in his life convincing, as was his career in the Royal Navy. Frustrated with his lack of progress, he resigns and arrives in India with high hopes of being accepted into the East India Company. He gains employment with the Madras country trading firm of Jourdain, Sullivan & Desouza but the circumstances of his birth, past actions and injudicious decisions result in his finally burning the last of his Company bridges. With no further options other than returning home in ignominy, he joins the growing community of Englishmen settled in the ports of the East Indies, determined to take their opportunities wherever offered.

To this author of the biography of a real-life East Indies country trader, the character of the fictitious Francis Light rings true: both mavericks having an ambiguous relationship with those in authority in the Company. *Dragon* should be read by anyone wishing to understand the context into which British India was created and globalization was born.

As the book ends, the opportunity Light is about to grasp was the unspoilt island of Pulau Pinang, Penang ...

Sue Paul

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A Road To Extinction: Can Palaeolithic Africans Survive in the Andaman Islands? by Jonathan Lawley, Envelope Books, 191pp. 2020, ISBN 978-1-8381720-1-5

The Andaman Islands form a remote and often-forgotten part of India, lying in the Bay of Bengal, some 400 miles off the coast of Burma. Together, they form a wonderland of fast-flowing streams, hills, jungle, forests and dense undergrowth. Still largely unspoiled, they were taken over by the British in the 1850s and used primarily as a penal colony, to keep under lock and key convicted criminals, following the Mutiny in 1857. Only three of the original seven prison wings remain today. The population of the islands is now a mix of various nationalities. As convicts were eventually released from gaol, some stayed and their numbers were swelled by immigrants, mainly from Bangladesh, India and Burma.

The author's Pre-Independence childhood in India was spent on the North West Frontier and at boarding school in Kashmir, but he listened with awe and wonder to the tales his mother told and discovered that his grandfather, a forester named Reginald Fendal Lowis, affectionately known as Reggie, had transferred to the Andaman Commission and eventually acted as Commissioner to the Islands. This established the family's long links which lasted through several generations and engendered an abiding interest in the welfare of the indigenous tribes living there. Grandfather married the niece of his best friend in 1898, young Bessie Coldstream, and they raised four children in these idyllic surroundings. Reggie wrote books detailing the history and geography of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and supervised the censuses of the population in 1911 and 1921. Bessie was also a writer, producing several articles for magazines, such as *Ladies' Field*. Today, the British Library holds photographs and government reports of the islands, with details of its farming and population and the regiments which served there. However, Grandfather was eventually posted to other parts of India and the family's link with paradise was interrupted.

The remarkable thing about the Andaman Islands is the origins of the twelve original tribes, which are thought to date back 100,000 year. They came, not from neighbouring Bangladesh, India or Burma, but from farther afield – Africa. Not all of the tribes arrived at the same time, nor are they related. In the 1990s, DNA evidence pinpointed the origins of the tribespeople to Botswana. Today, their numbers have been decimated and only remnants of three tribes remain. The Jarawa tribe, which remained steadfastly war-like and isolated, has been the most successful at preserving a viable population and culture. But a general decline has been caused largely by disease and well-intentioned interventions, such as education, made in the name of progress. The book reveals how and why extinction is now a real threat. The death knell sounded following the building of a trunk road by the Indian government across the main island in the 1970s, without

consultation with the tribespeople, who reacted by killing several construction workers, attacking settlements and mounting robberies and attacks with bows and arrows. They simply wanted to be left in peace. A degree of reconciliation was eventually reached when a native boy, Enmi, broke his leg during one such raid and was successfully treated at the hospital in Port Blair.

The road brought in its wake a regular influx of tourists, who wanted to glimpse these primitive tribespeople and swapped biscuits and small treats for photographs, arrows or spears. The end result was the demise of the tribes' fierce independence, which was replaced by the encouragement of a culture of dependence and begging. The Indian government ordered the closure of the road, but this edict was ignored and the damage continued. Worse was to follow. Local entrepreneurs quickly spotted the opportunities for business and profit. Hotels, shops, eateries, taxis and tour buses are now in evidence along roads and tourism is big business. Access from India, formerly exclusively by sea, is now possible by a direct air-link. Strict regulations for driving along the ATR apply, as well as a check-point near the Jarawa Reserve. Visitors' permits are required, driving must be in convoy, gifts and photography are officially banned. But the genie is out of the bottle. Only tighter control by the Indian government might help the indigenous tribes to cling onto their precarious existence. But is there sufficient political will to save their future? Jonathan Lawley certainly hopes so, and his book raises the profile of a way of life and of people on the brink of extinction. But time is fast running out.

Margaret Murray

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**DUNCAN BAMFORD STIRLING WILKINS** was born in 1930 in Lucknow. With his own family, he has mostly lived in and around Pallavaram and St Thomas Mount, Chennai (Madras). He worked in private industry, in administration and communication, retiring in 1988. His chief interest remains music and singing and he has been a part of or has led church and other choirs for many years. With Covid restrictions impacting, he was finally convinced to chronicle his rich fund of memories.

**DEREK TURNER** – a former history teacher and school inspector, now a volunteer at the local museum and honorary archivist of the local school, whose 450-year history he has recently co-authored. He is currently the holder of the family archives and his long-in-preparation history of his grandparents' missionary work in India will shortly be published.

**HELEN ENGLISH** - I live in North Dorset having retired from a lifetime of working with adults with learning difficulties. My paternal ancestors were in India for generations, in military and police service during the Raj, up until 1923. For the past eight years or so I have been transcribing literally hundreds of letters written by my grandparents, mainly from India between 1910 and 1923, onto my laptop where they will hopefully be preserved for the family and anyone else who might be interested to appreciate the fascinating social history contained within them.

**IAN JACOBS** is the author of books about the history of Mexico, and a publisher of books on art, music, archaeology and history. His father-in-law, Ron Waddams, was a member of a map-making unit of the Royal Engineers from 1943 to 1946. Ron left an archive of letters, watercolour sketches, photographs, maps and memorabilia describing his time in India and Burma.

**KENNETH MILN** - My parents were jute-wallahs who left their native city (Dundee) for India, where my late father was employed at Megna jute-mills, West Bengal, for over 30 years. I was born in Durban, South Africa, where my parents took their first long leave from India. They decided on Durban because my mother's sister and family had settled there, having emigrated from Scotland some years previously. My primary education was undertaken at Chandernagore, India. I lived on a jute-mill compound with my jute-wallah parents and was cared for by my good Ahab Bhutia,

who taught me to speak Hindustani. My schooling took place at St Paul's Public School, Darjeeling, India, and at Beckenham Grammar School, Kent, England. I then served a five years' engineering apprenticeship with a Scottish manufacturer of textile-processing machinery. From 1960, I began a progressive career in the textile industry: from technical management to general management and consultancy. I have completed consultancy assignments on behalf of The Commonwealth Secretariat, British Executive Services Overseas, The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) plus a number of private clients. Now retired, I live with my lady wife in Monifieth, Angus. My wife, Patricia, has accompanied me on many expatriate assignments overseas, she now enjoys playing bridge and meeting old school friends.

**HARPER WRIGHT** - My father's family were in and around Madras, Mysore and Bangalore from 1812. At least three of them were NCOs in the Madras Artillery, and another was an assistant apothecary. Although my mother was American, one of her ancestors had a few encounters with Warren Hastings, who put him on trial for murder on the high seas. My wife Janet, my brother Vernon and I were fortunate to be part of the fabulous FIBIS tour to Southern India in 2015. Janet and I retired to New South Wales in September 2020.



## NOTICES

### DO YOU HAVE IRISH ANCESTORS?

Audrey McKeown, the editor of the Northern Irish Roots family history society's journal, is starting a series of articles about Irish ancestors (whether from the north or south of Ireland, it makes no difference) who may have spent time serving in India. If you have Irish roots and would be willing to submit an article, please contact the editor and send an outline of your story, in the first instance. In return, plenty of help is available if you need it (to insert any images etc.) and a template for guidance with details of length of article etc will be sent to you. Please email: [NRoots@ifhs.org](mailto:NRoots@ifhs.org)

## THE FIBIS CONFERENCE 2021

Margaret Murray

On the last weekend in September, the FIBIS clan gathered in Oxford for two jam-packed days of social activities which were both informative and enjoyable. The conference had been two years in the planning and during that time, Covid made its presence felt. We were not certain until August that all of our carefully-laid plans would come to fruition. But optimism and hope triumphed and the FIBIS planning team, ably led by Penny Tipper, went into over-drive. The pandemic and travel restrictions meant that fewer members than usual felt able to join us at this conference, but the other side of the coin was that those who did make the journey were able to spend more time with experts and speakers, to ask questions and chat, than might otherwise have been possible.



All speakers had remained on stand-by, and what a show they produced, all facilitated by the IT wizardry of Paul Middleton. An array of topics was covered by enthusiastic and skilled historians, ranging in scope from the workshop/talk on railway ancestors, smoothly delivered by Noel Gunther, to railways in India by the acclaimed writer, journalist and broadcaster, Christian Wolmar. Senior staff from the British Library, Hedley Sutton and Tom Harper, attended to talk about tales from the archives and the Antiquarian map collection held in the library. Historian Richard Morgan, helped with individual research advice and delivered a comprehensive overview of the Dutch East Indies, while the exigencies of the Burma campaign in WW2 were brought to life in a very lively presentation by Mike



Tickner. Sue Paul, writer and historian, entertained us with tales of a dubious, jack-the-lad character, an EIC employee whose exploits appear in her book, *Jeopardy of Every Wind*.

There were also delightful glimpses of old postcards, collected over decades by Omar Khan and included in his book *Paper Jewels*. Omar joined us via Zoom from San Francisco. Professor Margot Finn, who is engaged in a research project at University College London, was present on Sunday to outline some of the influences of the East India Company which prevail, even today. Harry Smee entertained us with tales of derring-do from his book, *Gunpowder and Glory*, about his ancestor, pyrotechnist and British spy Frank Brock. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones spoke about the valuable, ongoing work of BACSA. As you can tell, the programme offered something for everyone. Saturday night's gala dinner, followed by a light-hearted quiz, brought the day to a pleasant and convivial close. But Sunday got off to another early start with Geraldine Charles': *"A Walk on the (slightly) Wild Side"*, followed by Professor Margot Finn's talk about her research project at University

College London, outlining some of the influences of the East India Company which prevail, even today.

Throughout the weekend, delegates had the opportunity to ask face-to-face questions of the FIBIS experts and facilitators present, special thanks here go to Noel Gunther, Geraldine Charles and Beverly Hallam. If you were unable to attend in person, you certainly missed a treat - but don't despair, details of how you can catch-up with the conference on You-Tube or Zoom can be seen on the



FIBIS website. Any comments or questions, clearly designated for individual presenters, may be sent to FIBIS and will then be forwarded to the person concerned.

Peter Bailey, President of FIBIS, was unable to attend the conference due to ill-health, but was very much with us in spirit. Peter has been researching more of his roots during the lockdown and has managed to trace his Bailey ancestors to Ireland in the 1850s. Not only that, but the trail led him to Bailleul and Baliol ancestors and then, through the wonders of DNA tracing, to King John Baliol of Scotland. Peter hopes we will all feel inspired by his success to take a fresh look at our own ancestors and brick-walls. Who knows what the next find will be? Perhaps our next conference will include a presentation on royal heritage within the FIBIS ranks!

We send a huge thank-you to all those whose contributions supported the conference, especially our generous and kind-hearted sponsors, our hard-working FIBIS team on the ground, our trusty delegates and the presenters who, with their infectious enthusiasm, gave of their time and expertise to entertain and inform us. We owe you all a debt of gratitude, for it is only through your enduring support that we can be the society we are today.

# **SOCIETY INFORMATION**

## **GENERAL ENQUIRIES:**

Enquiries, by post or email, should initially be sent to the Membership Secretary: Libby Rice, 71 Manor Lane, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex, TW16 6JE. Email: [membership@fibis.org](mailto:membership@fibis.org).

## **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION:**

The cost of membership is £15 for the UK, £16 for Europe, £18 for elsewhere abroad or £12 for worldwide paperless membership. Cheques (in Sterling) should be made out to 'FIBIS' and sent to the Membership Secretary (address above). Subscriptions can be paid/renewed online with a debit or credit card or by PayPal at [www.fibis.org/store](http://www.fibis.org/store). For special arrangements for payment by Australian members see below.

## **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND:**

For liaison with FIBIS members and with India-related family history activities in Australia or New Zealand contact: Mary Anne Gourley - [aus@fibis.org](mailto:aus@fibis.org). Members may pay subscriptions in Australian dollars (A\$35). Cheques should be made payable to 'Families in British India Society' and sent to PO Box 397, Doncaster, Victoria 3108, Australia; or can be paid direct to FIBIS Westpac Account No.15-0975 BSB 032-636; quoting your surname as the Reference; or by PayPal via the FIBIS website.

## **WEBSITE:**

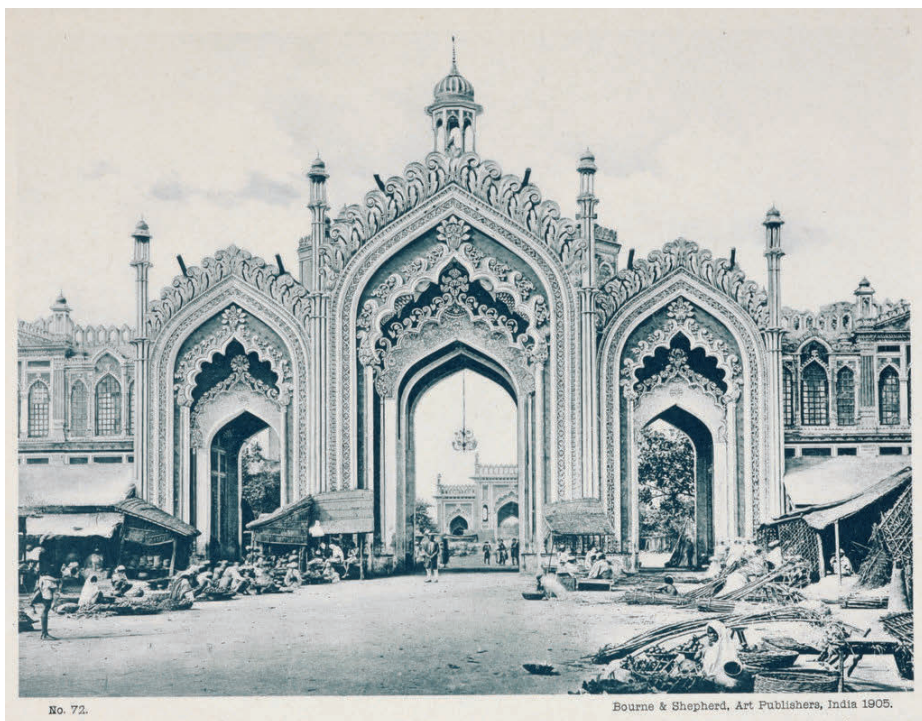
The FIBIS website [www.fibis.org](http://www.fibis.org) includes nearly 2 million entries of Europeans or Anglo-Indians who lived or saw civil or military service in India. Many of these names were collected thanks to transcriptions undertaken by FIBIS volunteers (see below), and many have been incorporated from the website of Cathy Day, to whom we are greatly indebted. The FIBIS website also includes an area for members' own material: for example, the results of their own researches or interesting documents or photos in their possession. Contact the Website and Social Media Manager, Valmay Young ([valmay@fibis.org](mailto:valmay@fibis.org)), if you would like to contribute.

## **RESEARCH FOR MEMBERS:**

Members are encouraged to place enquiries in the members' area of the FIBIS website, the FIBIS Facebook group 'British India Family History', as well as using online searchable databases. Alternatively, members should use the India Office Records, to which the best introduction is Baxter's Guide: Biographical Sources in the India Office Records (3rd edition, FIBIS, 2004). Members requiring further assistance should contact our Research Coordinator, Beverly Hallam, 32 Broughton Road, London, W13 8QW (email: [research@fibis.org](mailto:research@fibis.org)). FIBIS members seeking research assistance should quote their membership number.

## **TRANSCRIPTION PROJECTS:**

Thanks to the cooperation of the British Library, and many individual contributors, large quantities of biographical data and photographs of memorials from the India Office Records and other sources have been transcribed and uploaded to the FIBIS website. These projects are ongoing. If you would like to volunteer as a transcriber, please contact the Transcriptions Coordinator: (email: [transcriptions@fibis.org](mailto:transcriptions@fibis.org)).



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**Lucknow, 1905**