



CHOWKIDAR

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British Association For Cemeteries In South Asia (BACSA)

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Notes on BACSA

The Association was formed in October 1976 to bring together people with a concern for the many hundreds of European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia.

There is a steadily growing membership of over 1,500 (1993) drawn from a wide circle of interest- Government; Churches; Services; Business; Museums; Historical & Genealogical Societies. More members are needed to support the rapidly expanding activities of the Association - the setting up of local committees in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia etc., and the building up of a Records archive in the Oriental and India Office Collections in the British Library; and many other projects for the upkeep of historical and architectural monuments.

The enrolment fee and subscription rates are obtainable from the Secretary.

The Association has its own newsletter, *Chowkidar*, which is distributed free to all members twice a year and contains a section for 'Queries' on any matter relating to family history or condition of a relative's grave etc. There are also many other publications both on cemetery surveys and aspects of European social history out East.

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A Victorian Murder Mystery

A Hindu widow saved from becoming sati by a Company writer, the revenge of the Brahmins, and a sealed grave at Eltham sound like the makings of a first class mystery story, the kind that Wilkie Collins might have written. Perhaps it is not too late even today, to solve the riddle of Sukey Sukey, the ancestress of Mrs. Bente Arendrup from Denmark. The story begins in 1771 when Joseph Dixon arrived in India to take up a post as Company writer. He is said to have saved Sukey Sukey, a high caste Hindu from a funeral pyre, but her brothers, who were Brahmin priests, 'swore a terrible oath of vengeance on her offspring for seven generations: That none shall prosper, that few sons marry, and that the female descendants be unmarried or widows'. It is not clear where these events took place, but we do know that the Hindu lady subsequently lived with Dixon in Bengal, and bore him two children, a son, Henry, and a daughter, Nancy, who was born in 1778.

Seven years later, Joseph was requesting three years leave from his Company duties, and he sailed for Home with Nancy, leaving his son and Sukey Sukey in Bengal. Perhaps Joseph had a presentiment, for his Will was drawn up shortly after his arrival in England, and only three months before his death in December 1785. It tells a familiar story. Dixon already had a wife, Mary, and he asked his executors to invest money for her. As for his Hindu mistress, he had bought Company bonds for Rs. 10,000 and she was to enjoy the interest from them, and to live in the Bengal house. After her death 'the house and bond shall come to my natural son Henry Dixon, now at Bengal, and my natural daughter Nancy Dixon, now living with me'. Sukey Sukey did not live long to enjoy the provisions that Joseph had carefully made for her. She was killed by her brothers, and Henry is said to have been poisoned while at school.

The surviving daughter, Nancy, was brought up by Joseph's brother, the Rev. Fletcher Dixon, Vicar of Staveley. She was married in 1798 to Samuel Forester Bancroft, by whom she had a daughter. After her husband's death in a riding accident, Nancy later married the Rev. Denny Ashburnham, and went to live at Barn Cottage, Eltham. Because of the vengeance sworn by her uncles, 'Mrs. Ashburnham was kept under constant surveillance, but one day in 1818, when she was alone in their garden [at Eltham], she was stabbed to death presumably by the "strange dark men, who had been seen in the neighbourhood"'. The daughter was not allowed to see her mother's body or to be told how she had died, and was immediately fetched by her guardian, a barrister by the name of Copley, later Lord Lyndhurst. All papers concerning Nancy's death were buried with her in the vault of St. John's Church, Eltham and the whole affair was hushed up. Many years later, in 1883, a grandson, James Mackenzie, tried to have Nancy's grave opened and to recover the packet of papers, hoping to

throw some light on her mysterious death. The necessary permission was obtained and arrangements made, but on examination the grave was found to be filled in with cement and not accessible. And there the strange tale ends, unless, of course, readers are able to suggest further lines of enquiry.

Mail Box

A striking neo-Gothic monument in the New Cemetery, Kirkee, near Poona, has been documented by BACSA member Foy Nissen, writing from Bombay. This miniature 'Albert Memorial' marks the grave of Sir Maxwell Melvill, KCIE, CSI, who died at Poona on 5 August 1887, (see p.123). Sir Maxwell had a distinguished career. Born in 1833, he qualified at Haileybury and went out to India in 1855. He subsequently became Judicial Commissioner of Sind, then a Puisne Judge of the Bombay High Court from 1869 to 1884. He was serving as a member of Council at Bombay, when he died. His monument has the inscribed legend 'Noble he was, contemning all things mean', and was erected 'in affectionate memory' by Augustus and Frances Berkeley Portman. Perhaps Melvill had no family or close relatives in India, but even so, he has been splendidly commemorated by this handsome tomb 'designed so appropriately to match the spirit of the words of affection' as Mr. Nissen says. No sculptor's name has been found, so it is not known whether the monument was fashioned in Britain or locally. A shield shaped heraldic crest on one side has been left uncarved, though the motto 'Ultra Aspicio' is picked out below, and there is a carved monogram on a further shield.

In the same cemetery, handsomely wooded with golmohur, cassia, laburnum and tamarind, stands a modest hexagonal monument, which was erected by members of the 5th Reserve Battalion of the 40th Brigade and 13th Division of the 8th West Regiment (Pioneers). It commemorates officers and men who died in India during 1918-19 as part of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces. From the photographs which Mr Nissen has sent, it is clear that the monument is in excellent condition, with the Regimental badges as sharp as the day they were carved.

'It is a welcome fact that others besides BACSA are concerned to restore graves in South Asia' writes RR Langham Carter, our South African correspondent. He had told us of the proposals to refurbish the grave of Lady Elizabeth Donkin at Meerut (see *Chowkidar* Spring 1989), and happily this work has now been carried out. Professor AJ Christopher of Port Elizabeth University, and his wife, had found the grave much overgrown, with bricks and plaster crumbling. They contacted their local Historical Society in South Africa, who in turn wrote to Mr SC Bhattacharya, the Secretary of St John's Church, Meerut, for an estimate for repairs. This came to about Rs. 1,500 and

the Society enterprisingly got a grant from their City Council, which went towards providing a roof over the tomb, and a coat of water-proof paint over the whole structure. The South African connection comes from Elizabeth's husband, Sir Rufane Donkin, Commander of the Meerut garrison, who subsequently became Governor of Cape Colony.

Immediately after Elizabeth's death on the morning of 21 August 1818, aged only 28 years, Donkin had her heart removed and embalmed and placed in a casket. She was buried the same evening, the service being conducted by Henry Fisher, the Chaplain of Meerut. Not until he reached Cape Town on leave two years later, did Donkin learn that he had been created a Knight Commander of the Bath in 1815, so Elizabeth had been Lady Donkin when she died. She was touchingly commemorated by her husband in several ways. He named the settlement in the Eastern cape 'Port Elizabeth', erecting a sandstone pyramid on the hillside overlooking the port and the Indian Ocean, and declaring the six acre area 'Donkin Reserve'. He gave the name of Markham's Cove to a bay at the mouth of the town's Baakens River, that being Elizabeth's maiden name, and there was soon a Markham's Hotel, as well as Donkin Street and the Elizabeth Donkin Hospital. 'In 1828 Sir Rufane at last found a home for his wife's heart when he built in St. Pancras Churchyard, London, a vault where he buried his two sisters, and the casket, and here he too was interred in 1841. Twelve years later the Midland Railway acquired this part of the graveyard and built an embankment over the vault. St. Pancras Station is now being enlarged to cater for Channel Tunnel traffic and it is possible that in the course of new construction work the Donkin vault will come to light again'.

Although there was a small Welsh colony in Calcutta, the sons of Cymru have not left their mark in the sub-continent, as have the Scots, for example. But the little chapel of St. Davids, at Llanwrtyd, boasts of an adventurous Welshman, who is commemorated at length in a stone above the pulpit. 'Sacred to the memory of John Lloyd, eldest son of Rees Lloyd of Dinas and Captain of the Honbl. East India Company's ship MANSHIP who left this, his native parish, at the age of sixteen, without friends or interest, but by good conduct and perseverance acquired both: and after 32 years of active naval service and 12 voyages to India in the course of which he twice suffered shipwreck and cruel imprisonment in the hands of Tippoo Sultan of Mysore, returned to display the same active and enterprising spirit in promoting the welfare and cultivating the resources of his native country. He died Feby. 1818, aged 70'. We are grateful to David Paul for spotting this inscription.

A note on animal graves has uncovered two more examples of faithful friends buried in the sub-continent. Jonathan Addleton from South Africa tells us that as a child, growing up in Shikarpur, Pakistan, he visited the nearby tomb of

John Jacob's horse. 'As I recall, it was in the shape of a pyramid and was located either in the Christian cemetery or in the Police Commissioner's garden'. Jacob gave his name to the town of Jacobabad, one of the few such names in Pakistan which have not been changed. Two Indian correspondents sent in a note about the grave of Coonah, a bloodhound buried in a Simla garden in 1851. Coonah belonged to Lady Gomm, wife of General Sir William, the Commander-in-Chief, who lived in the house known as Barnes Court. 'It is said that Coonah once saved the life of Lady Gomm from a marauding assailant and was given a Christian burial. The phantom of the dog answering Coonah's description was often seen in moonlit nights on the grounds of Barnes Court, and when his name was called out a fierce bark would be the answer.' It is hard to believe that animals were either given a Christian burial, or buried in a Christian cemetery, but it is touching to know how they were regarded by our forebears.

With Christmas approaching, a footnote from a century ago seems appropriate. Published in 'Letters from Mandalay' by J.A. Colbeck, the heading reminds one of Beachcomber at his best - 'Distribution of Christmas Puddings to Young Officers in the Jungle'. Mr. Colbeck continues 'I have a nice piece of duty to do here today, that is, to distribute a number of Christmas puddings. The Bishop and Mrs. Strachan have had 100 made in Rangoon, and are sending them about to young officers on detachment duty, far away from the regimental messes, so that these young fellows will not feel utterly forgotten on Christmas Day.'

Timothy Goggs, GM

Although BACSA is primarily concerned with pre-1947 graves in the subcontinent, we are occasionally notified of later memorials to Europeans there. A letter recently came in, with a story of heroism and tragedy which readers will find particularly moving. Quentin Goggs, a BACSA member told us of the death last year of his son Timothy, in Afghanistan. Timothy had turned down a place at Sandhurst to continue working for the Halo Trust, a British charity dedicated to clearing mines laid during the Afghan War. On 8 July 1992 he was working near the Salang Highway, north of Kabul, using a Russian-made mine clearing tank. The vehicle detonated a mine, and caught fire. Timothy was thrown clear by the initial blast, but went back into the flaming vehicle to rescue two trapped companions. All three men subsequently died from their injuries. In July this year Timothy was posthumously awarded the George Medal, which ranks second only to the George Cross for civilian acts of valour. A simple stone memorial has been erected at the site of the tragedy (see p.123) which bears the inscription 'Halo Trust/in Memory of/Timothy Goggs/Julian Gregson/Shah Muhammed/fatally injured on this road/whilst clearing

mines/July 1992' A single sapling shades the memorial and in the background lies the remains of the vehicle in which these brave men lost their lives.

Can You Help?

The Calcutta Will of Robert Stuart, who died in 1863, was mentioned in the last *Chowkidar*, with an enquiry as to whether his grave still existed in the Lower Circular Road Cemetery there. This brought a detailed response from Mr. C Spanos, the Honorary Secretary of APHCI, our sister organisation in India. The stone monument, for which Stuart had willed the sum of Rs. 1,500, is still standing, and in good condition. The tablet which commemorates him also records the death of his wife, Sarah, née Tottie, who died on 20 January 1867. Two other burials are recorded on the same stone, those of Mrs. Amelia Parsick, died 7 August 1867 and Caroline Harris, died 26 July 1886, though their relationship to Robert Stuart is not clear.

Stuart also willed some money to 'The Additional Clergy Society' and we had asked if any readers could tell us more about it. Our plea did not go unanswered, and BACSA member Christopher Hawes was able to throw some light on the subject. The Society was set up in 1843 by Daniel Wilson, the first Metropolitan Bishop at Calcutta, 'to provide clergy for stations considered too small to justify official Company chaplains. The East India Railway Company made considerable donations - presumably because it employed Anglo-Indian and other Christians at out of the way locations.' Although by 1860 the Society has substantial funds, it had done little with them, in fact only eight additional clergy had been appointed. Bishop Cotton, the second Metropolitan was subsequently able to get the number of clergy increased to 20, just six years later, by putting pressure on the Society.

It was during the late 18th century that charitable Europeans began to consider ways of caring for the children of 'dead or indigent officers' in the Presidency towns. One of the first institutions to be inaugurated was the 'Orphan School', which by 1790 was located at Kidderpore (a suburb of Calcutta). It became known as the 'Upper Orphanage School' because it took only the children of officers, while the 'Lower Orphanage School' in nearby Alipore, catered for the children of NCOs and Privates. At the Upper School, passages Home were sometimes provided for the boys, while the girls got a dowry on marriage, which was sometimes as early as the age of 12. The orphanages boosted their slender incomes by the sale of needlework and clothes made by the girls, and an embroidered sampler dated 1797 has found its way to the Antique Shop of Mr. & Mrs. Jarrett in Witney, Oxfordshire. It was worked by 'Anne Jennings at The Orphan School. near Calcutta. East Bengal, under the direction of Mistress Parker', and the owners wonder if anything more is known either about the little sempstress, or her teacher.

William Faulkner was a drum major in the 24th Regt. Madras Native Infantry during the 1850s, having been born in Vellore about 1829. He was married to Anne (or Hannah) and the couple had two children, David Nathaniel and Henry Albert, both baptised at Saugor in 1852 and 1854 respectively. William became 'overseer' at Port Blair, in the Andamans, possibly in the jail but did not long survive this 'hardship' posting, dying in 1871. His two sons subsequently worked as clerks in the Chief Commissioner's Office at Port Blair, and Henry became jail overseer in turn, dying about 1900. William Faulkner's great great grandson, BACSA member David Faulkner, is hoping to find more information about his family and would welcome letters at: 143 Lonsdale Drive, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, MEB 9HX.

Charles Dickins joined HM 22nd Light Dragoons in 1804 at the age of 17 and was sent to Bangalore, seeing action in South Africa, Java and the Mahratta Wars. After the 22nd disbanded, he joined the 13th Light Dragoons, eventually becoming Troop Sergeant Major before his retirement in 1833. He subsequently became Court Gaoler at Cuddalore, and died there in 1859, aged 72. He seems to have married twice, to Mary Ann, and after her death, to Susannah Dorothea Reily, herself a widow. His son William, from his first marriage, joined the 12th Regt. Madras Native Infantry, and was married in 1835 to Cecilia Furburgh, the couple producing nine children. Our enquirer, Mrs. Yvonne Carr, great great great granddaughter of Charles, has the details of most of this extensive family, but would like to know if she still has Dickins cousins in India.

Hugh Richardson from Scotland is seeking information on Captain Alexander Hamilton, who accompanied George Bogle to Tibet in 1774/5, and was later sent by Warren Hastings to Bhutan in 1775 and again in 1777. A descendant of Hamilton was alive in the 1950s, and Mr. Richardson would also be interested to know if the line still survives.

The Staley Family are being researched by John Staley, who himself has worked in India and Pakistan since Independence. Evelyn Staley was Chief Justice in Mysore for a short time at the beginning of this century 'and family tradition tells that he had a "pretty wit" - but nothing more is known of him'. Another cousin was Mildred Staley, an early woman doctor who is thought to have worked in Lahore. Other Staleys have been found, like Henry, who was Principal of the College of Science, Nagpur, and who retired to Jabalpur, but it is not yet clear if he was a direct relation. Information on these and other Staleys in India would be appreciated.

Hermione Ravenscroft has set herself the delightful task of tracing British nannies who worked in pre 1947 India, and has already found and interviewed

two. She is particularly interested in contacting anyone who may have worked in Delhi as a nanny.

Amin Jaffer is writing a thesis on 18th century Anglo Indian furniture, especially the delicate ivory inlay and veneer furniture made at Vizagapatam. He has already traced no less than 153 cabinet makers, joiners and carpenters, but unfortunately has found few details on them, other than their names. Perhaps BACSA members may be able to suggest some leads?

Why was it called 'John Company' enquired Brigadier Pringle in the National Army Museum newsletter this Spring. Why indeed? Everyone used this nickname for the Honourable East India Company, but where did it come from? Suggestions range from the Dutch East India 'Jan Kompanie' to the rather fanciful Company Jehan, i.e. 'the 'World of the Company''. The more prosaic explanation is that it came from 'Joint Stock Company', but I would be interested to hear what readers think.

The 'Infidel Cemetery' of Jeddah

Christian cemeteries in strict Muslim countries can provide problems other than the normal ones of decay, vandalism or lack of maintenance. Many foreigners, including Christians, work in the Middle East and Arabia, and some, unfortunately, will die there. Space must therefore be provided for burials, even in countries where Christianity is not officially permitted. Recently the Editor had the opportunity of going to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and was able to visit, discreetly, the old European cemetery that lay originally outside the town walls of the ancient trading port. The rapid expansion of this fascinating city, known romantically as 'The Bride of the Red Sea', means that the cemetery is now in the heart of the bustling souk, although it appears to be safe. As early as 1762 the cemetery was recorded in its present position, lying on what were then desolate salt flats, and the plot seems to have been gifted by the Sherifa of Mecca, then ruler of the Hejaz. It is known variously as the 'Infidel Cemetery' (i.e. non-Muslim) or the Maqbarat al Nazreni (the graveyard of the Nazarenes).

Unfortunately, although the site is surrounded by a solid, high wall, with a sturdy gatehouse, there is little of interest inside, and certainly no reflection of the odd European flotsam and jetsam that came to rest at this maritime crossroad. Obviously a massive clearance has taken place, possibly as recently as the 1970s, and the majority of tombs are flat, uniform slabs with only the names picked out in black, and sometimes not even that, for one records poignantly 'An Unknown Englishman', and another 'A Chinese Girl'. The oldest stone I found was to C.H. Huber 'mort pour le Science. Juillet 1884'. The inscriptions which remain testify clearly to the international character of Jeddah, past and

present. There are a couple of Jewish burials, one recording in Hebrew and German '.....Sachs 26 June 1912 killed with his wife and small children. Friede seiner Asche', and a Greek inscription on a small pedestal, below the bust of a bearded man (this is the only attempt at funerary architecture). Curiously two stones, some distance apart, commemorate Cyril Ousman MBE British Vice Consul b. 16 October 1903 d. 16 November 1951 and there is the even odder inscription nearby which says bafflingly 'Memo for Late H.C. Ballard "Opener of this road" 1936'.

Faced with the dilemma of an increasing number of Christian deaths, and no proportionate increase in burial land, the local Cemetery Committee is contemplating disinterment and the relocation of existing stones around the walls, to provide more space. They also plan to beautify the cemetery with palm trees, welcome in an arid land, but perhaps not wise here, as it could lead to later problems with intrusive roots. Whatever the future, BACSA is fortunate in having a comprehensive dossier on the site, which was carefully surveyed in the 1980s by Executive member Merilyn Hywel-Jones.

Notice Board

The largest collection of photographs of pre-Independence India is not in the sub-continent, as one might expect, but in the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library, London. A quarter of a million photographs lie tucked away in boxes and albums, and finding particular items has, in the past, been rather a hit or miss affair. Now, with the aid of a Getty grant for the next three years, the whole collection is being catalogued on computer. BACSA member John Falconer, the photographic historian leading the project, believes that many treasures not seen for decades will come to light. Because both Indians and Europeans were quick to exploit the newly developed art of photography, Falconer believes that images from as early as the 1840s will be found. There is a wealth of pictures of all kinds, from tiger shoots, architecture, tribal peoples, durbars, tea-parties, interiors of colonial bungalows, street scenes, maharajahs, and the aftermath of the 1857 uprising. Descriptions of all these photographs are being input onto a sophisticated database (a real treat for computer buffs!) and the result will provide a goldmine for historians, picture researchers and writers. Curiously, the collection is thinnest in this century, although Falconer hopes to receive more private collections in time.

In Calcutta, INTACH (the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) have restored the historic Prinsep Ghat on the Hooghly to its original glory. Built in honour of Dr James Prinsep, secretary of the Asiatic Society from 1832 to 1838, the ghat was the landing place for many important people, as they came upriver, including the future Edward VII and the Prince of Wales in 1905.

A Meeting With Captain Skinner

Mrs. KG Lethbridge from Devon was particularly interested in a note about the Skinner family in the Spring *Chowkidar* because she has the journal kept by her father, Herbert John Maynard, in which he recorded a memorable meeting with one of the Skinners, over a hundred years ago. It is such an interesting account, not least for its attitude to Anglo-Indians, that it is reproduced here in full. On the morning of New Year's Eve, 1887, young Mr. Maynard, a Commissioner at Hissar, was handed a card with the inscription 'Alexander van Cortlandt Skinner - Captain, 1st Bengal Cavalry'. 'I was a trifle surprised' he wrote, 'knowing that no troops are quartered near here, but my surprise was increased when I saw the owner of the card. He was the most complete mixture of native and Englishman that I have ever seen. His colour was jet; his features were massive and like those of a European; his legs were cased in the neatest of hunting boots, and his clothes were of the English pattern, his head was covered by a gorgeous turban. He spoke English perfectly and with obvious knowledge of the slang and conversational expressions and for part of the time he discoursed of hunting and shooting like a young country gentleman. Then he announced that he had come to pay his respects to me, and this was native all over. He is the son of a native woman but of a partly English father. His grandfather, Colonel Skinner served under the English, after having been employed by some native prince, and received large estates as a reward for work done before the Mutiny. This man lives on a part of these estates, in a fine house at Hansi, with a native wife. His commission is an honorary one, given him by the Prince of Wales. I took him out to see him off. He mounted a fine camel and rode off out of the gate towards the city. He is by far the strangest anomaly I have ever come across. The two races now keep so apart that the mixture in him is almost unintelligible. I heard afterwards that Captain Skinner has a good deal of the brutal Saxon about him. He married an English wife first, but ill-treated her and drove her away and now lives with a native woman'.

Books by BACSA Authors

[These can be ordered via BACSA, at no extra cost to the purchaser]

Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the 17th to the 21st Century

S L Menezes

This book is the latest in a long series purporting to describe the history, functions and characteristics of that unique body of men we know as the Indian Army. What, however, distinguishes it from the others is that, unlike them, it ranges much wider, for it covers not just the 250 years of British rule culminating in 1947 in the two-fold partition of the Indian Empire and its wonderful army, but also the succeeding 46 years to date when the old style Indian Army became a truly national force. Stanley Menezes is well qualified to undertake this formidable task for his military career began during the last War when he was commissioned as a young officer in the Bombay Grenadiers, a unit of the Army which the British had created, officered and administered. In 1947 after five years under the old dispensation, the imperial link was severed, but Menezes continued his career as a member of the new military machine. In course of time, he rose to high rank under successive Indian Commanders-in-Chief (12 in all) until he retired in 1980 in the rank of Lieutenant General. Uniquely he had owned to two allegiances: first to the Crown alongside and under British officers, and then to the present day Army of independent India commanded and administered by his own countrymen.

He has divided his narrative into three periods. The first, the story of the three Presidency armies (Bengal, Madras and Bombay) of the East India Company which were amalgamated after 1857 into a unified Indian Army under the Crown. This second period (the last 50 years of British rule), is perhaps the most glorious in its annals, embracing as it does two World Wars and countless brilliant feats of arms on the frontiers of northern India. Menezes' final period following the partition of the unified India and the simultaneous partition of its traditional army into two fighting forces, brings his story right up to date. It is indeed ironic that these very same two disparate entities emanating from the same illustrious source should, since their separation, have remained actively hostile to each other; if not in actual conflict, but nevertheless facing each other across the common frontier in warlike posture for fear of attack by the other. Throughout this last phase the vexed problem of the sovereignty of Kashmir has constituted a veritable 'casus belli'. There are bound to be differing views about the role of the Indian Army. Menezes' book will surely command a ready sale in this country amongst its many erstwhile members of that unique institution, which has always engendered feelings of great pride and nostalgia. They will remember and treasure its wonderful and enduring regimental associations and the mutual loyalty and affection that prevailed between the offi-



*Above: The Salang Highway memorial, Afghanistan, 1992
(see p.116)*



Left: The Gothic grave of Sir Maxwell Melville (see p.114)

cers and their 'jawans'. But it must not be forgotten, and Menezes brings this out very ably, that there have also been many episodes and occurrences which have disturbed the even tenor of the relations between the two races. He is to be congratulated that, without rancour or animosity, he has painted the whole picture 'warts and all'.

Successive chapters deal in great detail not only with the causes and effects of the uprising of 1857 but also with numerous other minor mutinies, some occurring, even after Independence, in the new model army, showing that officers and soldiery often failed to see eye-to-eye. The General writes knowledgeably and trenchantly of this periodical use of the army in aid of civil power to enforce law and order. But, in this context, it should not be ignored that the judicial and impartial use of the mailed fist contributed materially to 200 years of the maintenance of the 'Pax Britannica', which many Indians still look back to with nostalgia. The General also has much to say on what he calls 'The Myth of the Martial Race Dogma' which led sadly to the demise of many old and gallant units of the old Madras Army. Nor can one quarrel with his criticisms of the lamentable behaviour of the British and Indian Governments in delaying for so long the Indianisation of the officer cadre.

These and other headings in Menezes' review treat of many aspects of the development of the Indian Army under the British Raj, some of which may not commend themselves to British readers, especially ex-officers in this country. But what I (the reviewer) have found to admire in the General's grand design is the strict adherence to the truth in the judgement he forms on many controversial issues. The astonishing 13 page bibliography at the end of the book is a striking tribute to the depth and range of his research as a military historian. I sincerely hope that the author will have no difficulty in finding a reputable publisher in this country. (JC)

1993 Penguin India obtainable from BACSA at £22.50 plus postage pp626

Thangliena: A Life of T.H. Lewin: Amongst Wild Tribes on India's North-East Frontier John Whitehead

This biography of Lt Col TH Lewin, Bengal Army (1839 - 1916) is another splendid book by this prolific author, who served with the Mahratta Anti-Tank Regiment in the latter stages of the Burma campaign, and thereafter was posted as Training Officer to the Chin Hills Battalion, then being converted to an artillery regiment, in which capacity he remained in Burma till 1948. Subsequently he travelled extensively in the Chin-Lushai Hills, and elsewhere in the region. His affection for these tribes is abundantly manifest in his writing.

One of his earlier evocative books was *Far Frontiers: People and Events in North-Eastern India, 1857-1947* (BACSA, 1989), in which two chapters were then devoted to 'Lewin of the Lushais'; the present work is now not only the definitive biography of Tom Lewin ('Thangliena' to the Lushais), but also a well-researched genealogical study of the Lewin family. Tom Lewin became a legend in the Lushai Hills as the 1921 memorial to him at Demagri (Mizoram) records:- 'He came to this people in 1865, and worked among them and for them for nine years, when loss of health compelled him to return to England. The people trusted him and loved him for his sympathy and sense of justice, for his untiring interest in their welfare and for his intrepid and dauntless courage... He was the first to interpret and write down their language, preparing the way for schools and progress... The people... honoured him as a chief.... Their children now have voluntarily brought stones here, near where his house once stood and have helped the one who knew him best of all and who knew how his heart was ever with this people to build up the stones to the memory of Thangliena.'

In *Far Frontiers*, the author had poignantly recounted that this monument 'may also serve to perpetuate the memory of the Lushai girl who for a while shared Lewin's life and characteristically preferred to remain anonymous.' There are interesting vignettes of the Lushai Expeditionary Force's operations (1871-1872) for the recovery of Mary Winchester, the five year old abducted daughter of James Winchester, of Alexandrapore Tea Garden who was killed by Lushais in 1871, as also of her subsequent life in Britain, after she was recovered. (As the author emphasises, the child's mother is nowhere mentioned in any of the accounts of the disaster or its aftermath. Presumably she was a tribal.) Lewin married in England in 1877, and returned with his wife to Darjeeling where he was now posted, but took premature retirement in 1879, partly on account of his wife's indifferent health in India. Lewin was also an extensive author in his own right, on subjects as diverse as *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers therein: with comparative vocabularies of the hill dialects* (1869); *A Manual of Tibetan, being a guide to the colloquial speech of Tibet* (1879); and *Life and Death: being an authentic account of the deaths of one hundred celebrated men and women* (1910). This is a very erudite and lovingly produced tribute to a memorable administrator in North East India. (SLM)

1993 Paul Strachan - Kiscadale Ltd. Gartmore, Stirlingshire FK8 3RT £14.99 plus postage pp437

Chronicles of the Mutiny & Other Historical Sketches and A Star Shall Fall PJO Taylor

The first book is a compilation of articles that appeared in *The Statesman*, Delhi between 1989 and 1991, and introduced the author to an appreciative

audience both in India and Britain. It was as a young officer serving with the Mahratta Light Infantry in 1944 that Peter Taylor first became fascinated by the events of the Indian Mutiny. That experience of army life gave him first-hand knowledge of men at war. Later he became a school master and Education Advisor, using his talents to read and research in depth and develop his special skill of being able to see both sides of a question. Although he is covering familiar ground, certainly in the 'Mutiny' chapters, he has an engaging way of turning perceived ideas on their head. This not only makes for better stories, but also adds an important historical gloss to things formerly taken as gospel. For example, how many people know that a European woman, the wife of a sergeant in the British Army, was hung at Meerut for encouraging the Indian rebels? Or that an English sergeant-major, converted to Islam, commanded Indian soldiers fighting against the British in Delhi? It is stories like these that fascinate Taylor, and he shares his enthusiasm with the reader in a lively and informative manner.

A Star Shall Fall, taken from the signal for revolt in 1857 'Sitara gir parega', covers in greater detail, further events from that terrible year, again, by a debunking of myths and an objective questioning of recorded history. These episodes, full of human interest, include individuals on both sides in the conflict, many of them women; people like Miss Wheeler and Amy Horne, Azzezun and the Begum of Oude. 'The Captives of Oude' encapsulates all the horrors and privations of the outbreak and 'Turned Sour' describes some of the Europeans who changed sides and were traitor to the English cause. Taylor personally travelled to Jagdishpur to trace the career of Babu Kunwar Singh, a Rajput chief of Bihar, and hero of the rebellion, who has been overlooked until now.

Taylor uses modern language which brings the past vividly, almost shockingly, into the present, as for instance when he describes 'darling Azimullah' the Nana Sahib's secretary, as 'a roaring, howling success with the ladies'. There is no denying that Taylor is an Indophile, eager to redress the balance between the heroes on both sides and this book is proving hugely popular in India. Some BACSA members, while applauding his scholarship and research may disagree with the 'display of probabilities' and the 'balance of reasonable conjecture' he puts forward. The biggest slight perhaps is to the memory of Captain Mowbray Thomson, one of the four survivors from Wheeler's entrenchment. It is surely hard to believe that any man who had survived the siege of the entrenchment and the slaughter at the boats could have felt dispassionately about the Nana Sahib and his eminence grise, Azimullah Khan. Incidentally, Mowbray Thomson's name is spelt incorrectly throughout the book, and Thomson's own book 'The Story of Cawnpore', though heavily criticised is not included in the bibliography. The font Taylor mentions on page 57,

as 'given by Queen Victoria to the All Souls Memorial Church at Cawnpore', was in fact 'pure white Carrara marble erected to the memory of their comrades by the surviving Officers of the 2nd Light Cavalry'. There are a number of good maps and an excellent selection of illustrations, some by the author, but alas! there are no captions and no sources given, surprising when the publication is an imprint of Harper Collins. The reader is thereby deprived of many delights and might not know that the fine equestrian statue on the frontispiece is the Rani of Jhani that stands at Gwalior. (ZY & RLJ)

Chronicles of the Mutiny 1992 Harper Collins, India pp184

A Star Shall Fall 1993 Harper Collins, India pp269

Both books obtainable from Peter Taylor at 20 Garden Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1TJ Tel:0273 476136, price £4.95 each including postage and packing, and the latter book will carry an errata slip, captioning all the illustrations.

The Collector's Bag RV Vernede

This book is a collection of short stories, varied not only in length and subject matter, but also from different periods of the author's life. All are graphically told in such a way that the reader feels compelled to go on and find out what happens next. Anyone who remembers North Garhwal in the days of the British, will be immediately and nostalgically transplanted to those wonderful high mountain ranges, deep, narrow valleys, spanned by a variety of bridges, (some safer than others!) and stony 'roads' or mule-tracks, with their incomparable views of the Snows; the great square block of Chaukamba and the peaks of Nanda Kota, Nilkanta and others, forming a backdrop to some of the stories. Events in 'The Bridge of Juma Gwar' take place in 1951, when China invaded Tibet, and a local jail-bird is released to act as Guide over the dangerous Passes into North Garhwal.... 'The Hermit of Hunkund' is about a Sikh soldier deserting from the Burma Front Line in 1943, badly affected by the *cafard*, who reaches Garhwal and evades arrest by pretending to be a hermit - with unexpected results.... 'The Snow Tiger' is an exciting *shikar* story, set in the high mountains, and 'The Blood Feud of the Bishts' is, as its title suggests, a detailed account of a feud - very rare in Garhwal- between two sects of the same clan, and the personal tragedy of a brave man who begins by trying to stop it all. 'The Law of their Fathers', a long story, describes a complicated intrigue up in Garhwal in 1857, that ends in murder and a trial by the time-worn Ritual of Ordeal, used in preference to the newly-introduced British Rule of Law.

Other stories are set in the Plains, in Meerut and the Benares District, others still in the Lebanon and Poland. These are fiction, inspired by author's travels, but 'A Gentleman's Agreement' is a plain statement of fact. In this Mr.

Vernede recounts how one night in 1934, acting as Collector of Allahabad, with under six years of service in the ICS, he walked and talked with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru up and down the platform of a country railway station discussing how best to achieve an arrangement which could be accepted by Government, who regarded Nehru as 'probably the most dangerous man in India', and by Nehru himself, for his temporary release from prison, to enable him to visit his sick wife Kamala. Despite his matter-of-fact account, it is clear that on this occasion Mr. Vernede rendered a notable service to the Government. But this is beyond the province of a reviewer. This is History. (A & RB)

1993 Colin Smythe Ltd. Gerard's Cross, Bucks £14.95 plus postage pp267

H.C.P. Bell: Archaeologist of Ceylon and the Maldives
BN Bell and HM Bell

Any apprehension about biographies written within the family are quickly laid to rest by even the most cursory skimming of this well researched and thorough study of the career of Ceylon's first Archaeological Commissioner. The authors, Bell's grand-daughters, are eminently qualified for the work, Heather Bell being a former librarian of the Institute of Archaeology and Bethia Bell a linguistic and literary expert. They bring to their task a totally professional approach which is as painstaking in recording Bell's work as it is fairminded in appraising his personality. It is Bell the archaeologist who forms the subject of the book, and indeed his life was inseparable from his work. Family detail does however add sauce to the professional meat. The combination is neatly encapsulated in the striking cover photograph which shows him with two of his children perilously poised over oblivion on a rickety bamboo platform jutting out from the rockface at Sigiriya. Acrophobes (vertigo sufferers) had better turn the page quickly.

The son of a Major General, Bell went out to Ceylon in 1873 and never returned home either on furlough or when he retired. His early career in the Ceylon Civil Service was remarkable only for an official visit to the Maldives which gained him a lifelong reputation as an authority on that neglected imperial outpost and which first drew attention to his scholarly bent. Many years later he was to revisit the Maldives and had the satisfaction of demonstrating the existence of a Buddhist culture predating the arrival of Islam. In 1890 he was appointed to the newly created post of Archaeological Commissioner which he held for the next 22 years. A hands-on archaeologist he spent much of his time on site where he was methodical and indefatigable. The sites on which he worked were the three great Sinhalese capitals, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa. He did much to survey, excavate, analyse and conserve these, and at the same time he laid the foundations for systematic archae-

ology in Ceylon, a tradition in which many notable talents have continued his work.

Personally Bell was, in the authors' words, 'self-centred, irascible, meticulous, opinionative, but with a strong appreciation of good work and a love of beauty in nature and in art'. His combativeness won him waspish comments from the Colonial Office and possibly cost him the CMG. However, he got on well with his immediate superiors and was generous in giving full credit to his assistants. He had many Sinhalese and Maldivian friends. Not all his local associations were cerebral: in the course of their research the authors discovered that they had Sri Lankan cousins of whose existence they had upto then been unaware. The book is lavishly produced, with good photographs, maps and plans of the main sites. Appendices include a genealogy and a bibliography of Bell's published works. The absence of a general bibliography is compensated for by extensive references in notes to the text. The index refers only to people, which makes it a difficult book to dip into. But, whether for the specialist or the general reader, it is an excellent book to read. (HCQB)

1993 Archetype Publications Ltd., 12-14 Hall Square, Denbigh, Clwyd LL16 3NU. £30 plus £3 postage. pp275.

OM: An Indian Pilgrimage Geoffrey Moorhouse
Tranquebar: A Season in South India Georgina Harding

Woven into the tranquil pattern of South Indian life, Geoffrey Moorhouse discovers a thread of religious passion. His journey starts in Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin), where India too begins. Its promenade reminds him of Herne Bay but there the resemblance ends, for soon he is jostling with the pilgrims who throng the temple dedicated to Parvati, or wandering alone through the old Portuguese church of Our Lady of Ransom. At Trivandrum he witnesses the Republic Day parade and visits Christ Church with its crumbling graveyard. Here lay not the remains of the customary ICS officials or military personnel, but those of the educationists, doctors and sundry civilians who served the erstwhile Princely State of Travancore. There is much more of Kerala to savour in the historic towns of Quilon and Alleppy and of course, Cochin, from where he paints for us a poignant picture of the dwindling community of Cochin White Jews and their ancient Synagogue.

Tamil Nadu is a vigorously contrasting mosaic of politics and religion, illuminated by Moorhouse's beautifully descriptive prose. He is sceptical of the mystic fundamentalism on display in the Ashrams at Quilon and Pondicherry where philanthropy in practice is distinctly at a premium. Despondency could have set in at Pondy were it not that he was quartered in the eccentric M Magry's faded Le Grand Hotel d'Europe, an oasis of comic relief in a desert of

unremitting fatalism. Madras had not lost its uniquely open feeling, nor its surprises. At the Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore he saw 'a man stand for three hours on one leg in front of a shrine, the rest of his body contorted to resemble a reef knot.' He would come back to Mylapore but not before he'd taken advantage of an excursion across the State border into Karnataka where he was keen to find and talk to India's most celebrated living guru, Sathya Sai Baba, in Whitefield near Bangalore. Come face to face with Sai Baba he did, but talk to him he did not. Not even when the great man surprised Moorhouse by pressing a smidgen of sacred powder into his palm, saying, "You like vibhuti?" The guru had moved on before a startled Moorhouse could collect himself to respond.

Tranquebar by Georgina Harding is a delightful book. She focuses on a particular stretch of the Coromandel Coast, then homes in on her subject; the old Danish Settlement of Tranquebar. Intrigued during a short earlier visit, she is determined to return and discover more. In the fading light of Europe's colonial past, few discern that Denmark too had a finger in the Indian pie. Their main port since the year 1620 was Tranquebar, 174 miles south of Madras, most of which has now slipped into the sea. What remains is a relic. Georgina Harding wondered what, if anything, remained of Tranquebar's past in the lives of its people today. She could find out only by living in their midst. She had a 14-month-old baby son. She would have to take him with her. They rented a house on Queen Street, off King Street, so named to this day after the Danish Royal family. Harding finds that history lurks around every turn in the dusty by-lanes of Tranquebar, mainly in the old houses and in the four well-stocked cemeteries. But in the house on Queen Street she is among the living: Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Integrating her own daily life with the lives of the women around her, she absorbs the ethos of the tight little community.

To learn of the view beyond the women's world of the oven, the grinding-stone and the water pump, she listens to the men in the evenings. The politics of a wider India reaches them sieved through an oral mesh of hearsay, anything of their heritage through the even more pulverising and distorting gauntlet of time. The Danes left much history here, the British (since 1845), some. Harding sifts through the evidence, past and present, to come up with an extraordinary array of characters and incidents. She stretches her legs to explore occasionally up and down the coast; Pondicherry, Kariakal, Nagapattinam, Nagore. There is a vivid portrait of the Roman Catholic village of Vailankanni, seven miles south of Nagapattinam, with its imposing basilica of Our Lady of Health, a view of the 16th-century Mosque at Nagore, and Darasuram, the great Shola Temple in Kumbakonam. There is much else in Georgina Harding's book in which she has striven by means of a deft interweaving of the historical idea of Tranquebar with the day-to-day lives of its

people to produce a well-structured example of travel writing at its best. (MJM)

OM 1993 Hodder & Stoughton £16.99 plus postage pp266

Tranquebar 1993 Hodder & Stoughton £15.99 plus postage pp205

Above the Heron's Pool Heather Lovatt & Peter de Jong

A short history of the Peermade/Vandiperiyar District of Travancore from 1847 when the Rev Henry Baker Jr of the CMS sought a base for his new Hill Mission and picked a site in the jungle about 30 miles east of Kottayam. He named it 'Heron's Pool'. From this beginning the Baker family and their kin, the Munros, transformed an uncharted area of plateau grassland and jungle into a well-ordered and thriving sector of the plantation industry. Heather, the prime author, lived here for many years and was in the process of rewriting an earlier history she had compiled, when she died, and Peter has completed her work to give a rounded picture of the District. For the genealogist, there are family trees and a copy of the Church Register.

1993 BACSA £9.00 plus £1 postage pp166

Also noted: Undermining the Centre: the Gulf Migration and Pakistan by Jonathan Addleton. How the migration of more than 1 million workers has affected the Pakistani economy. 1992 OUP Pakistan £18.00 pp256

Books by Non-Members (that will interest readers)

[These should be ordered direct and not via BACSA]

Mussoorie and Landour: Days of Wine and Roses Ruskin Bond and Ganesh Sali

The evocative text of this attractive little book is by Ruskin Bond and the magnificent photographs, in colour, by Ganesh Sali. Bond rightly urges, 'What is nostalgia but an attempt to preserve that which was good in the past? The past has served us well: let us serve it in this way.' There are, inter alia, chapters on Mussoorie's birth; its tombstones, and its schools. One of the anecdotal nuggets in this book avers, 'The big push in the brewery business [in Mussoorie] really began in 1876, when everyone suddenly acclaimed a much improved brew. The source was traced to Vat 42 in Whympers & Co.'s Crown Brewery. The beer was retasted and re-tasted until the diminishing level of the barrel revealed the perfectly brewed remains of a human being. Someone, probably drunk, had fallen into the beer barrel and been drowned and, all unknown to himself, had given the beer trade a real fillip'. Its author goes on to say that 'meat was thereafter recognised as the missing component and was scrupulously added till

more modern and less cannibalistic means were discovered to satiate the froth-blower' in lieu of the poor, drowned 'pahari phaltoo'.

Today, a Mussoorie old timer urges, 'Stand still for 10 minutes, and they'll build a hotel on top of you.' This hill station in northern India is now one long ugly bazaar, but if you leave the Mall and walk along some of the old lanes and by-ways, you will come across many of the old houses, most of them still bearing the names the British gave them, back in the mid 19th century. The English went in for castles like Connaught Castle, and Hampton Court. The Irish named their houses Mullingar, Tipperary, Killarney, and so on. The Scots prefixed their numerous houses with 'Glen', or suffixed the names with 'burn', like Glencoe and Redburn. Sir Walter Scott must have been popular, for there are numerous houses echoing his novels - Kenilworth, Ivanhoe, Woodstock, etc. Mussoorie also had a Dickens' connection for his correspondent in India was the Australian John Lang, lawyer, novelist and newspaper proprietor who spent the last years of his life in Mussoorie. His account of a typical Mussoorie season titled 'The Himalaya Club' appeared on 21 March 1857 in Dickens' magazine 'Household Words', and is reproduced in this book, which is recommended for any aficionados of Mussoorie and Landour. Whereas Simla had its Viceroy, and Nainital its Governor (of the UP), 'Mussoorie remained unofficial - for affairs of the heart', according to the author. (SLM)

1992 Lustre Press, Delhi pp136. Obtainable from Ganesh Saili, Trim Lodge, Mussoorie 248179, UP, India, £15.00 (sterling cheque) including postage by registered air mail.

Hanklyn-Janklin or a Stranger's Rumble-Tumble Guide to Some Words, Customs and Quiddities Indian and Indo-British Nigel Hankin

This book is a treasury of Indian and Indo-British words in the classic tradition of Hobson-Jobson, invoking Sir Charles Napier's inimitable 1844 exhortation, 'Headquarters, Kurrachee 12th February. The Governor unfortunately does not understand Hindostanee, nor Persian, nor Mahratta, nor any other eastern dialect. He, therefore, will feel particularly obliged to Collectors, sub-Collectors and officers writing the proceedings of Courts-Martial and all staff officers, to indite their various papers in English, larded with as small a portion of the to him unknown tongues as they conveniently can, instead of those he generally receives - namely Hindostanee larded with occasional words in English.' The author sets out to explain words and expressions that are in common use in India, and which, increasingly, are playing a role in reshaping the contours of the English language. When originally scheduled for release in 1991, *The Independent on Sunday* had in relation to the manuscript recorded on 1 September 1991, 'An old Raj recipe of mother tongue served up as spice.... Mr Hankin has gone about collecting words for his glossary with the same

inspired eccentricity as Hobson-Jobson's original authors.... reading the Hanklyn-Janklin you have the impression that some time ago at the turn of the century the English language in India sprouted off in a different luxuriant direction'.

The author has resided in India for nigh on 50 years having first landed in Bombay as a Captain in July 1945 after war service in Britain and north Africa. At the end of the war he saw the commencement of demobilisation and in 1948 he chose to be demobilised in India, staying on since, referring to Delhi as 'my home town,' though he was born and brought up in Surrey. Not only is this book extremely erudite, it is also authoritative in its field, considerably augmenting Yule's and Burnell's classic *Hobson-Jobson* (1886) and Ivor Lewis' *Sahibs, Nabobs and Boxwallahs - A Dictionary of the words of Anglo-India* (1991) (reviewed in *Chowkidar*, Spring 1992). The dustjacket rightly says, 'No scholar's tome, yet academic in content, Hanklyn Janklin is compulsively readable and a valuable companion for all Indophiles.' It is illustrated throughout with black and white line drawings and has a very useful index listing some linkages of the words covered in the book, such as Ahmadiya, Basmati, Chatai, Dhaba, and so on. But why the title 'Hanklyn-Janklin'? Tongue in cheek, this is sought to be explained by the author, 'The commercial reason advanced by Colonel Yule for his choice (of Hobson-Jobson) has not escaped my notice: in a bookshop, a volume with a main title of a glossary of something is likely to be perceived as a textbook or, at least, not for the general reader. It also happens that jingle or echo words are quite common in Indian family speech; one may give a party-warty, drink a cup of chai-wai, or read a kitab-witab and so on: the echo usually begins with a "wa" sound, but in English, Hanklyn-Wanklin could seem a little outré.' An inspired work. (SLM)

1992 Banyan Books, New Delhi pp261. Obtainable from Sarita Vellani, Banyan Books, 59 Regal Building, Connaught Circus, New Delhi 110001, price £12.00 (sterling cheque) including postage by registered airmail.

A Suitable Boy Vikram Seth

It starts with a wedding and ends with a wedding. Mrs. Rupa Mehra is a widow, and having married off two of her children, she begins the search for a husband for her daughter, Lata. Like a good Indian mother she is looking for the 'suitable boy' of the title. The quest takes her from the fictional city of Brahmipur to Calcutta, Delhi and Cawnpore, with Lata in tow, to vet possible candidates. But these trips are also to get Lata away from the 'unsuitable boy' she has met, Kabir Durrani. On the way we meet the rest of the Mehra family, the Kapoors, the Khans, and the Chatterjis. The story is set in the 1950s, during the prelude to India's first General Election. Seth has been compared, in a mammoth hype, to Tolstoy. Indeed, there are similarities, in that both authors

take stereotypes from their countrymen and women then try to invest them with particular characteristics that make them memorable to the reader. Thus the Chatterjis of Calcutta converse volubly in rhyming couplets, and fuss over a pet dog, while the noble Muslim Khans (based on a real family), stoically suffer the indignities visited on an old aristocracy in newly free India. The Muslim prostitute, Saaeda Bai, is a traditional courtesan, with her fine singing voice and penchant for Urdu puns. But unlike Tolstoy's characters, Seth's seem unable to step outside the boundaries he has drawn for them. They not only lack credibility, they also, more seriously, lack the power to move the reader. There are plenty of *descriptions* of emotions, from the widow's tears, to a brother's infatuation with Saaeda Bai, but one does not really *feel* them, nor empathize with the victims. They remain merely literary devices. The book meanders on for 1349 pages and one closes it finally with relief, not least because it weighs almost 3 lbs. (RLJ)

1993 Phoenix House, London £20.00 plus postage pp1349

A History of the Jews of Cochin JB Segal

Cochin is increasingly becoming a major tourist destination, and few tourists fail to visit the famous Paradesi Synagogue located, appropriately enough, in Synagogue Lane, Jewtown. There were originally two other synagogues in the same street, one of which was recently shipped lock, stock and barrel to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Kerala's Jewish community is an ancient one, dating back to at least the 8th century. Around 1000 AD a certain Joseph Rabban was granted extensive privileges in Cranganore, though he was not, as some later claimed, 'a Jewish king'. In the 16th century the Jews were forced out of Cranganore and settled in Cochin. They suffered persecution under the Portuguese and only survived because they were protected by the Raja who had granted them land literally next to his palace. Understandably they sided with the Dutch against the Portuguese, and it was under the Dutch that they really came into their own, achieving a dominant position in commerce and also playing a big role in diplomatic and intellectual life. Changing patterns of trade led to their economic decline in the 19th and 20th centuries, though they continued to nurture their traditions and were viewed with benevolent curiosity by the outside world. The Paradesi synagogue's 400th anniversary in 1968 was marked by the Indian Government's issue of a commemorative postage stamp as well as by a ceremony in Cochin attended by Indira Gandhi. Today sadly only a handful of members of the community remain.

Professor Segal's scholarly book will no doubt become the definitive work on a subject that has so far defied definition. Segal's chair is in Semitic languages: he has excavated at Edessa, and must be positively the only authority on the diacritical point in Syriac to be also a holder of the Military Cross! South India

might therefore sound a bit off his beat. However, there is no feeling of this from the text which seems effortlessly on top of the Keralan material. The book has an excellent bibliography, though one could carp at the inadequate map and fuzzy photographs. It is a very small carp. Basically the book is well worth buying. (HCQB)

1993 Vallentine Mitchell & Co. Ltd. Gainsborough House, Gainsborough Road, London E11 1RS £15 including postage pp134

The Raj at Table: a Culinary History of the British in India David Burton

It is a curious fact that the British, who went to such lengths to reproduce their native dishes in India, have subsequently embraced Indian cuisine so enthusiastically that supermarket shelves are today crammed with bhajis, samosas and curries. It is also curious that although the first European merchants in India went in search of spices, the Victorian memsahib would normally instruct her cook to produce the kind of plain dinner that was being eaten at Home. Both these contradictions are pointed out by the author of this entertaining book (he is a cookery writer from New Zealand), but it would take a psychologist to explain the fickleness of the British palate. The first chapters examine 'Hospitality', 'Travellers' Fare' and 'Servants', with much fascinating detail, like the importation of tinned food to India in the 1830s, so that the gourmet in Simla could dine off truffled hare pâté from the Périgord. Perhaps it was Indian timekeeping that led to the gradual transition of dinner from noon to evening (page 17). In 1799 it was served at 4.00 pm, by 1830 dinner was at 6.30 pm, and a hundred years later it had slipped to 8.30 pm. (No doubt some mathematician can work out when it will next be served as breakfast!)

In spite of the well worn 'servant jokes', Indian cooks performed wonders with minimal equipment, producing meals of several courses on charcoal stoves, or even, during treks, over a pit of hot embers. Although Burton does not say so, cooks from the Chittagong area, known as *Mugs* were especially valued for their skills. Many ingenious recipes are given for fish, poultry and game, meat, vegetables, desserts, chutneys, drinks etc. and there is a useful note on bazaar weights, so it is possible to translate *tolahs* and *seers* into their modern equivalent and create Mughal pilaus. Indeed, this is not just a culinary history, but a good practical guide to 'Anglo-Indian' cuisine. I would have found it immensely useful when learning to cook (on a charcoal stove) in the 1960s in India, although it gives no instructions for boiling a deceased flamingo with which I was once presented. There are a few errors with dates (Bishop Heber had been dead for over 50 years when the author confidently describes him as travelling near Patna), but these are minor faults compared with the pleasure this book will give the adventurous cook. (RLJ)

1993 Faber & Faber £14.99 plus postage pp240

Cemeteries: Our Heritage Ed. Celestina Sagazio

My attention was caught by a picture in an Australian news-paper of a memorial in the cemetery at Mount Macedon, Victoria. The naked figure of a young girl asleep marks the grave of Laurie Matheson, an individual of some mystery, and adorns the front cover of this book, published by the National Trust of Victoria. Dealing not only with some 27 cemeteries and burial sites of general and historical significance in Victoria, but also covering the historical development of cemeteries, landscaping, architecture, botany, conservation and repair and recording, the book is of interest not only to Victorians, but to all, such as BACSA members, who appreciate the importance of cemeteries as significant records of historical and social interest. The book is a wonderful example of the ideal approach to the recording of cemeteries. The sections dealing with the use of cemeteries as tools for sociological research and cemetery conservation are valuable, as are the botanical comments, many of which have application in BACSA'S special area of concern. There are numerous monochrome illustrations as well as the spectacular front cover. (P de J)

1992 The National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Tasma Terrace, Parliament Place, Melbourne Victoria 3002. £7.50 plus £2.50 postage pp184

To be reviewed in our next issue: True Tales of British India by Michael Wise, published 1993

Verandah Books

Specialising in 'the British abroad, British India, mountains and Golf', Michael Hougham sells books from his London home and has recently issued his sixth catalogue 'India and the British'. He advertises an excellent range (over 24 pages of titles), mainly from this century, mainly by British writers, and all about India. It is gratifying to find so many BACSA authors listed here including MM Kaye, Mildred Archer, Charles Allen, Theon Wilkinson and Zoë Yalland. He plans a further catalogue dealing with 'India and the British - Fiction' early next year. Contact Mr. Hougham at 15 Langford Green, Champion Hill, London SE5 8BX tel: 071 733 8432

Above the Heron's Pool



A short history of the Peermade/Vandiperiyar District of Travancore