



# CHOWKIDAR

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Editor: Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones

## 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 1,900 (2003) 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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## THE BUDDHA AND THE SCOTTISH ZAMINDARS

In June 2003 members of the Buddhist Society in London were photographing the Society's 'treasures' for insurance purposes when they came across a small cardboard box in what is known as the Rupa Cabinet, in the lecture hall. The hand-written label on the box read 'Relics of Buddha, From the Piprahwa Stupa, Birdpore Estate, Gourakhpur, NWP India, 1898'. When the box was opened, it was found to contain twelve little compartments and in each square was one tiny object. There were two pearl-like items and ten minute pieces of worked semi-precious stones, two resembling the base of a lotus flower. Of course, excitement ran high, and BACSA member Charles Allen, author of the recent book *The Buddha and the Sahibs: the men who discovered India's lost religion*, kindly gave us the story as it developed.

The first mystery was that the cardboard box did not appear in any of the Society's records, and how it got to Eccleston Square was quite unknown to any living member of the Society. But it was fairly easy to establish that the twelve little objects had indeed come from the Piprahwa Stupa, up on the Nepalese border, which had been excavated in 1898 by the local zamindar (or land-holder), William Claxton Peppé. We need to digress for a moment to look at the history of this enterprising family, who came from Aberdeenshire in Scotland, for it is relevant to our tale. William's father, also called William, had arrived in India in 1843, with his brother, to set up a sugar factory. The curious name Peppé is thought to be of Italian, or possibly French, Huguenot origin. William senior prospered and married the widow of Hugh Gibbon, who had been manager of the Birdpore Estate, or zamindari in Gorakhpur District. By this marriage William established himself as the manager, or zamindar of Birdpore, a large estate named after Robert Bird, the local District Commissioner. Gorakhpur, in the unhealthy *terai* area, had been part of the land ceded by the Nawabs of Awadh to the East India Company, which then adopted the Indian system of letting out tracts to British and Indian 'managers', in return for a nominal tithe or rent.

William Claxton Peppé, born in 1852 on the estate, grew up as an hereditary zamindar, and also a keen antiquarian. Charles Allen relates that as soon as the Christmas festivities of 1897 were over, Peppé began the excavation of a prominent mound near Piprahwa village, half a mile south of the border with Nepal. Preliminary excavations earlier that same year had established that the earthen mound covered a solid structure of large bricks laid in concentric circles, forming a Buddhist stupa, or masonry reliquary. Luckily for archaeologists, Peppé wrote up his findings in a paper submitted to the Royal Asiatic Society, London, so we know what was found. (William's wife made actual size drawings of the precious objects discovered, to illustrate her husband's paper.)

A huge slab of stone was found at a depth of eighteen feet, which turned out to be the cover of a massive sandstone coffer hollowed out from a solid block of rock. The coffer, when excavated, weighed nearly 2,000 lbs. Within it were several hundred 'wonderful things' including urns, a crystal bowl, gold beads and ornaments, pearls, Buddhist symbols including a gold *svastika*, and drilled beads of cornelian, amethyst, topaz, garnet, coral and crystal. Most precious of all were fragments of wooden vessels containing pieces of burnt bone, and an inscription which indicated that the stupa was erected by the Sakyas, kinsmen of the Buddha, shortly after his 'death' or nirvana about 368 BC. If so, this was undoubtedly the earliest Buddhist inscription found in India and an almost certain indication that the Piprahwa stupa contained some of the actual remains of the Buddha after his cremation. Piprahwa was subsequently identified as the ancient settlement of Kapilvastu, home to a colony of Buddhist monks. All the marvellous treasures from the stupa went first to the Indian Museum in Calcutta, and then to Siam (now Thailand), at the request of King Chulalankara.

So how did the little cardboard box, containing what is obviously part of this hoard, reach London? This has yet to be established, but Charles Allen has been able to trace the descendants of William Claxton Peppé, the antiquarian archaeologist, with the help of BACSA. A member of the Peppé family had joined our Association in its early days, and although we were unable to provide a direct contact, we were able to furnish a link in the chain that found the present day Peppé family in England, and to fill in the rest of their story. William Claxton Peppé had been sent home, as a young man, to train as a civil engineer, and he came back from the University of Edinburgh with a degree. This stood him in good stead when he took over the running of the Birdpore Estate, building on the sensible management of his father who had drained and irrigated the land, protecting it from drought and famine. In 1890 the fifty-year lease on the estate was extended by the Government of India for an unlimited period, and when William Claxton Peppé died in 1936, it was taken over by his second son Humphrey. The estate remained in the family until the 1960s, when the ruling Congress Party nationalised it. Humphrey appealed to India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, but although acknowledging that the Peppés had been model zamindars, Nehru felt unable to intervene. The present head of the family is Humphrey's son, and William Claxton's grandson. Most exciting of all, William's grandson has a few more items from the stupa, which have been handed down in the family and may throw yet more light on this fascinating part of India's ancient and religious history.

Of course BACSA would like to learn more about the Peppé family, and in particular of the grave of William Claxton Peppé and his father, who are presumably buried on the family estate. Perhaps someone who has visited the area recently may be able to help with photographs?

## MAIL BOX

Part of BACSA's remit is to investigate existing tombs in the subcontinent, and frequently important news will arrive *after* a story has first been published in *Chowkidar*. This is all to the good, and we make no apologies for sometimes revisiting an item, especially where we have been able to get more accurate information. A case in point was our brief report in the Autumn 2003 *Chowkidar* about the wilful destruction of a double grave at Mahabaleshwar in the Satara District of Maharashtra. It was thought the grave was that of a married couple called Campbell, but John Malcolm, who was pictured standing in front of the tomb shortly before its demolition, has come up with quite a different story, which is all the more precious since the tablet and obelisk have now gone.

'In 1997 I visited the Mahabaleshwar hill station' writes Mr Malcolm. 'I was setting out to write a biography of my kinsman Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), who had founded the hill station in 1828/9. One day we were invited to lunch by the Doctor family, prominent Bombay lawyers, at their large bungalow called 'Four Oaks'. After lunch we were taken on a tour of the grounds, and came upon a stone obelisk, about ten feet high, surrounded by a low wall. On it was a tablet, with a badly worn inscription, painted over by the mali, which *appeared* to read: 'Sacred to the memory of Colin Campbell [and] Sacred Loving Memory of Matilda the daughter of Colin Campbell 4 May 1801'. 'The date was puzzling', he continues, because 1801 would have been more than twenty years before any European set foot on this part of the plateau. But over the next few years I gradually unearthed the facts.

Colonel Archibald Robertson of the Bombay Army, was the British Resident at the Court of the Raja of Satara between 1827 and 1832 and he played a major role in the negotiations leading to a Treaty between the Raja and the Bombay Government, which resulted in the setting up of the Mahabaleshwar Sanatorium and hill station. In 1827 Colonel Robertson built a small bungalow, which he subsequently enlarged, on Sindola Hill (about a hundred yards east of the 'Four Oaks' bungalow, which came up later). Colonel Robertson had four, or possibly, five children. The eldest, Matilda, known as Tilly, was born at Poona in 1821 and died at Mahabaleshwar on 9 May 1831. The youngest child, Colin Campbell Robertson, was born at Satara on 31 December 1828 and died the following year at Mahabaleshwar on 20 February 1829.'

The European cemetery had not yet been built, since the settlement had only recently been established 'so it would have been only natural that Matilda should have been buried on her parents' property. Thus all the evidence suggests that the obelisk and memorial tablet mark the resting place of the little girl, and probably her baby brother as well.

An old 'Certificate of Title', a land document, shows an area about 30 by 20 feet, marked simply 'tomb' on the exact site where the obelisk stood until recently. The puzzling wording on the tablet 'may lie partly in the mali's inexpert painting of the worn stone inscription and/or the fact that the tablet seems to have been superimposed on top of another inscribed stone (there were nail holes at the corners). The tablet probably should have read 'Sacred to the Memory of Colin Campbell [and in] Sacred loving Memory of Matilda the daughter of [Lieutenant Colonel and Mrs Robertson] born 1821 at Poona, Died at Mahabaleshwar 9 May 1831. 14 May 1831.' Although the tablet has vanished and the obelisk been demolished, there is good news. John Malcolm and colleagues are planning to erect a replica of the tablet (and if possible the obelisk as well) at the Christian cemetery in Mahabaleshwar, which happily has been restored and is now well-maintained.' So the memory of the Robertson children will not be forgotten, even though their tomb no longer exists.

On his way to Simla in September 2003, Giles Quinan got lost in Nahan District, but serendipitously came across an interesting memorial which 'appeared to be in good condition in its own little enclosure. (see page 61) A couple of modern graves fitted in around the base.' The tablet on the memorial tells the following story: 'Sacred to the memory of Wm. McMurdo Wilson, Ensign 2nd Battn. 26th Regt. N.I. Killed on the 27th Decr. 1814 Aged 22 Years While the Light Company of his Regiment [was] covering the retreat of Major Wm. Richard's column, on the [Heights] of Jeytock near Nahan When the Officer Commanding the Conquest (Lieut Thackeray) & 57 men were Killed or Wounded by a Strong & Overpowering column of Goorkhas led by Cazee Ranjore Thappa The remains of the deceased with three other Officers Lieut Munt, Thackeray & Ensign Stalker were buried at this spot & this Tomb erected by the surviving officers of the Light Battn. to their memory - ✨ - This Slab was placed by an affectionate Brother After a lapse of twenty five Years The original having been lost'.

The encounter in which the officers and men lost their lives was part of the Anglo-Gurkha war of 1814-1816, when the Gurkhas were advancing through Company-held territory which had been ceded to it thirteen years earlier. The Marquess of Hastings, then the Governor General, determined on a four-pronged attack along the extended frontier. In all a total of 34,000 Indian and British soldiers were set against an estimated 12,000 Gurkhas. But at the end of 1814, just when William McMurdo Wilson lost his life, three of the Company's 'prongs' were thrown back, only Sir David Ochterlony, in the west of the area, making any progress. Hastings calmly reinforced his mountain troops and by April 1815 Ochterlony had captured Jaitak, and the following year marched through the dreaded *terai* and on towards Khatmandu. This convinced the Gurkhas that they could not win, and they accepted the treaty of Sagauli in March 1816, which led to the opening up of the area by the British and the establishment of the hill station at Simla.

Following our story about forgotten graves in Iraq (*Chowkidar* Autumn 2003), BACSA member Henry Brownrigg tells us that one of his relatives, his uncle Jock, was killed near Basra during the first World War. Lieutenant Jock Brownrigg was commissioned into the Royal Norfolk Regiment and joined its second battalion in India. In November 1914 he was among those who captured the port of Basra, then moved upcountry to confront the Turkish enemy at a fortified village called Shaiba, nine miles south-west of Basra. Here in April 1915 a determined stand was made, and the Turks were finally defeated, losing nearly 2,500 men. British and Indian losses were 1,200, including Jock Brownrigg. He is buried in Plot 3, Row E, Grave 24 in a war cemetery five miles north-west of Basra. He is also commemorated in a stained glass window at St Mary's Church, Guildford. Unfortunately the situation in Iraq means it is still too dangerous for much restoration work on the war graves cemeteries to take place, or for Henry Brownrigg to contemplate visiting his uncle's grave.

Complaints about the lack of upkeep in Indian cemeteries are common. BACSA gets them all the time, both from visitors to the subcontinent and from people who live there. Here is another one about the Bangalore cenotaph. 'Disgraceful conditions...I well remember only a few years ago, when the city was under the control of the Station Municipality, what a pretty little plot of ground this was. The Engineer of the Station Municipality was in charge of it, and the place was laid out with beds in which were sown bright annuals regularly, and the walks were kept scrupulously clean and in apple-pie order. But what a contrast it now presents! I think it was our late Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who left a Note regarding the preservation of ancient monuments, and surely this monument ought to be included among them. If our popular British Resident would visit the spot and take a personal interest in it, it would very soon shows signs of improvement. It stands adjacent to a water fountain, so that lack of water can be no excuse. It is simply lack of interest.' You've probably guessed by now that this letter to the *Madras Mail* wasn't written last week, in fact it is nearly a hundred years old, and was published in the newspaper on 1 November 1907. Plus ça change! Does anyone know if the cenotaph still exists, I wonder?

#### THE PEARL RIVER INCIDENT REMEMBERED

A touching ceremony of remembrance took place in September 2003 in the Happy Valley Cemetery, Hong Kong, which went completely unnoticed in England. Luckily BACSA member Colin Aitchison, who lives in Hong Kong, was able to attend the ceremony, and has put together a little booklet for us about the event. Fifty years ago, in 1953, Her Majesty's Motor Launch 1323 set out for three days of work monitoring and photographing vessels coming into Hong Kong waters. The launch was part of the Hong Kong Flotilla, whose role was 'the defence of

Hong Kong, to assist the police in anti-piracy and smuggling, and to keep open the waterways between Macau and Hong Kong'. This was in the jittery post-colonial period, when Britain, with her new Queen on the throne, was still recovering from the aftermath of the second World War, and no-one quite knew what was happening in Communist China. There were fourteen men on board when Launch 1323 set out on 9 September 1953, including the captain, Lieutenant Merriman, described as 'a twenty-three year old South African with a gung-ho reputation'.

A few hours later seven of the crewmen would be dead. The launch headed out west of Lantau and into the mouth of the Pearl River, where Captain Merriman began photographing a Chinese landing vessel. There had been shooting before, in fact the launch had been fired upon the previous month, on four separate occasions, but the then Governor of Hong Kong made no official protest to Peking, in order to avoid a diplomatic incident. This time, however, the Chinese boat signalled Launch 1323 to stop and turn back, but Merriman ignored it, whereupon the launch was bombarded with small arms, shells and machine guns. A shell smashed into the bridge, wounding Captain Merriman fatally, four crewmen died in the wheelhouse and a fire started in the engine room. With great presence of mind, Leading Seaman Gordon Cleaver, then only twenty years old, steered the vessel back to safety, where the dead were taken off by the destroyer Concord. He was subsequently awarded the British Empire Medal (military division) for his action.

Gordon Cleaver went back to Hong Kong last autumn, to attend the ceremony of remembrance for his lost comrades. He recalled that at the most desperate moment, two British aircraft flew overhead, by pure coincidence, causing the Chinese vessel to withdraw. This time diplomatic protests were lodged with Peking, the British insisting that Launch 1323 had been in international waters when she was hit. Winston Churchill, Prime Minister at the time, gave a curiously muted report, saying the shelling 'was not the herald of Chinese aggressiveness...but an isolated incident which may have been the fault of a trigger-happy Chinese officer'. It was subsequently learnt that the Chinese captain who had ordered the firing was court martialled in secret and executed, at a time when China was trying to join the United Nations.

For fifty years Captain Merriman and his companions have lain in the Happy Valley cemetery under Commonwealth War Graves Association headstones. (see page 61) Wreaths were laid at the service and the Mariners' Version of Psalm 23 that starts 'The Lord is my pilot, I shall not drift' was read to commemorate these brave young sailors. The event has recently been examined in detail by John Fleming, who was a young seaman at the time, in his book *Hong Kong: the Pearl River Incident, the untold story of HMML 1323*.

## CAN YOU HELP?

Dr Anil Kumar Nautiyal has written in with an interesting and intriguing query. 'I work with the Provincial Medical Services in the Balrampur Hospital at Lucknow' he tells us. The hospital is situated adjacent to the Residency compound and part of it was the old European Hospital, which was previously a dispensary. 'There is an old isolated European grave right outside the operating theatre, belonging to one Frederic Augustus Megowan, died on 28 January 1860 at the age of twenty-seven years. I am told that he was one of our old members of staff, physician or surgeon I am not quite sure (more chances of being a surgeon.)

I would be obliged if you could somehow send me some information about him, his rank and place of posting, as I wish to put up on behalf of the hospital, a small plaque/information board about this old alumni of the Balrampur Hospital. The grave is not in a very kept state and I wish to honour an 'old boy'. Several people have suggested that the name on the old grave is more likely to be 'McGowan', rather than the more uncommon 'Megowan'. Any ideas on how to proceed would be welcomed, via the Secretary, for there is no record of him among the lists of medical men, nor in Thackers Directory, at the India Office Library. Could he perhaps have been an Indian-born apothecary? But even so, why was he not buried in one of Lucknow's numerous Christian cemeteries? We hope to have a photograph of the grave in the next *Chowkidar*.

Another surgeon, happily still with us, is BACSA member Fergus Paterson, who has a particular interest in the old cantonment cemetery at Saugor. Dr Paterson is anxious to set up a restoration project there through local helpers and is visiting Saugor this Spring in order to make a thorough survey of the inscriptions, which will be published in due course. He asks if there are other members who may have an ancestor buried in the old cemetery. If so, please contact him via the Secretary. BACSA has details of more than fifty burials at Saugor, dating from 1818 to 1870, and these include many senior officers of historical interest who were buried in the imposing tombs there. (see page 60)

Among the handsome memorials is one that reads 'Sacred to the Memory of James the Infant son of Colonel & Mrs. W. Nott, who departed this life on the 19th July 1829, aged 4 Year [sic] and 8 Months.' This is likely to mark the resting place of a son of Major General Sir William Nott (1782-1845), one of the few heroes of the disastrous first Afghan war in 1842. Nott senior had first arrived in India in 1800 as a cadet, and is likely to have been stationed at Saugor during the course of his long military career. He retired to England in 1844 and died the following year, being buried in Carmarthen, a world away from his infant son. Curiously this tomb does not appear in Olive Crofton's *Tombs and Monuments in the Central Provinces and Bihar* which was published in 1938.

BACSA member Roger Perkins is attempting to research the life of a European man who lived in Shanghai in the 1930s but so far has made no progress whatever. Mr Perkins writes 'I have in my possession a Chinese-made presentation silver salver engraved with the following words: "F. H. Browne, Esq, from the officers and members, Shanghai Light Horse, on the occasion of his marriage, 10.11.38." Can any BACSA member please point me in the right direction in identifying F.H. Browne? The Shanghai Light Horse was an element of the part-time Shanghai volunteer corps. The title 'Esquire' in the wording suggests that he was either a Subaltern or a gentleman trooper. I assume that he was employed by one of the great trading companies based in Shanghai, but there are other possibilities. Given that he married at the end of 1938, one must wonder what happened to him and his new wife following the arrival of the Japanese army.' Any suggestions will be most welcome. Please write to Roger Perkins at Torwood Cottage, Haytor, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 9XR.

Many moons ago (in 1980 to be precise), *Chowkidar* published a story about a manuscript handed over on a deathbed in Hyderabad, seven years earlier. The manuscript had been written by Melville Boardman, who had been brought up by his aunt, Dr Edith Boardman 'a woman of powerful personality and presence'. Dr Boardman, whose family connections in India 'were founded on the love of a handsome General for a beautiful Indian dancing girl' was the first woman to qualify as a doctor of medicine in Hyderabad. She then met and married a local Muslim gentleman called Imad-ul-Mulk, who was subsequently given the title of 'Nawab', while his wife became Lady Imad-ul-Mulk. New BACSA member Dr Omar Khalidi comes from Hyderabad, and knows of the grave of Lady Imad-ul-Mulk there. He is intrigued by mention of the manuscript and wonders if it is possible to trace it, nearly a quarter of a century on. The typescript was handed over to a Mr R.D. Hartle in England around 1980, and his interest lay in that his family and the Boardmans were related by marriage. Anyone who could throw light on the subsequent fate of the document is invited to write to the Secretary. (BACSA does not seem to have received a copy.) Incidentally, Dr Boardman was also a writer, and produced a novel called *Zora*, which may turn up in second-hand book lists.

And a follow-up to our lead story in the Autumn 2003 *Chowkidar* about the elusive Major General Edward Edwards. There was a question over whether the Welsh-born General had perished in the battle of the Alamo in Texas in 1836. David Harvey tells us 'that of the 286 men in the garrison at the Alamo, Edward Edwards was definitely NOT one of them. I have checked three recognised lists of the 286 killed and his name (nor anything like it), is not shown.' Perhaps even this piece of negative evidence may help refine the search for information about the General's mysterious end?

## TIGER TARANTULAS OF INDIA AND CEYLON

Andrew Smith is a man with a curious, but somehow very BACSA, kind of mission. In the steps of the great British collectors, usually gifted amateurs, who found and catalogued the flora and fauna of the areas where they were stationed in the subcontinent, Mr Smith is attempting to pin down the collectors themselves. In an engaging letter to readers, he seeks information about these particular men and women.

I am at present writing a book about the Indian and Sri Lankan tarantula spiders of the genus *poecilotheria* - or tiger spiders. Locally they are called *divimakuwala* in Sri Lanka and *bagh makwas*, west of Calcutta. This is a large black and white spider with lemon legs, which occupies holes in old trees, but when pushed, will live in a native thatch roof or handy bungalow gutter. The spider is large enough to cover the palm of one's hand, although this is not recommended, as the beast bites. The planned book is primarily about the identification of these spiders, but some chapters will be celebrating both the lives of Reginald Innes Pocock, the Natural History Museum zoologist who described them, and the men of Empire who found them - the collectors. These are, of course, the forgotten men of Victorian and Edwardian natural history and after the passing of a hundred odd years, little is known of them but their names. These names, I may add, are very well preserved, as they rest with their specimens in the thousands of jars of alcohol that sit in the 'spirit rooms' of the British Museum of Natural History in South Kensington.

I have thus set myself the task of writing a series of biographies about these sterling men of Empire. Not an easy task, as you can imagine, as few warranted a biography and so I have gathered and garnered snippets from a multitude of sources, and in most cases, created a basic profile. I now need an element of luck - the anecdotes and photographs needed to enrich my characters, which can only really be sourced from family histories. The odds are not in my favour. Madras Railway engineers, army officers, naval surgeons, telegraph operators, forestry officers, tea planters, local chaplains, missionaries, box-wallahs and colonial officers, all collected the majority of my spiders between the years 1890 and 1935. I would be very interested in hearing from BACSA members of any family folklore or any anecdotal recollections involving both the spiders and the collectors, should any of the names ring a bell amongst genealogists or descendants. Photographs would be much cherished (and returned in due course).

In Ceylon, as it was then, we have Colonel Yerbury and the naval surgeon Percy Basset-Smith, representing the army and the navy. Tea planters of the Central Highlands were represented by Mr E.E. Green and William Hardy, while Mr Thwaites and Mr William George Freeman (who may have died in Trinidad),

worked at the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens. Down the road, in the diocese of Ratnapura, the Reverend Montague Burrows strove to collect more than lost souls. Visitors to Ceylon who collected spiders were Mr Jacoby, Mr Mead-Waldo and the indomitable Miss Gordon-Cummings - a Victorian lady adventurer. Mystery collectors, of whom I know nothing, are a Mr Lunn, a Mr Frederick Layard, and a Mr E.E. Fuller.

In India, Mr H.R.P. Carter, Mr Henry West and Mr Burroughs-Strange, were the engineers and collectors of the Madras Railway Company. In Bombay, the members of the Bombay Natural History Society, under Mr Herbert Phipson of Phipsons Wine Importers, and his trusty employee Mr Millard, answered with gusto Pocock's clarion calls to collect spiders and bagged them by the brace - all of which were despatched at the Society's expense to London. The Reverend Logsdail, on the other hand, collected west of Calcutta, and sold his spiders on to Pocock for 14/6d. Forestry Officers Wroughton, Edie and Gleason, did sterling service, collecting some 800 spiders and scorpions between them. Customs Officer A. A. Aitken collected and published three classic natural history studies of bungalow life.

Employed in the Indian Museum service was Dr Gravely, in the Madras Museum, Captain Harold Stuart Ferguson of the Trivandrum Museum and Allandale and Alcock of the Indian Museum in Calcutta. Working for them was the geologist H.K. Slater, who collected in Mysore and then in 1915 disappeared, presumably into the mire of the trenches. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel L.L. Fenton found a perfect specimen of *poecilotheria* in a military hospital in Matheran. Mr L.P. Staunton of Durban collected spiders in Bangalore. Was he a railway engineer? We do not know. Engineer Eugene Oates collected spiders, but wrote about the birds of India, and likewise the Chief Telegraph Engineer Mr F.W. Townsend, collected spiders, but loved shells. No accounting for taste, and each to his own. I mean, which of your readers would choose the collecting of shells and Indian birds over bagging a black and white spider the size of your hand? None of them - exactly. What a sterling bunch!

Please contact Mr Smith direct at <andrewsmithuk@yahoo.co.uk> or write to him at 89 Ermine Road, London SE 13 7JJ. Alternatively, letters can be forwarded via the BACSA Secretary. But absolutely no specimens please!

## NOTICES

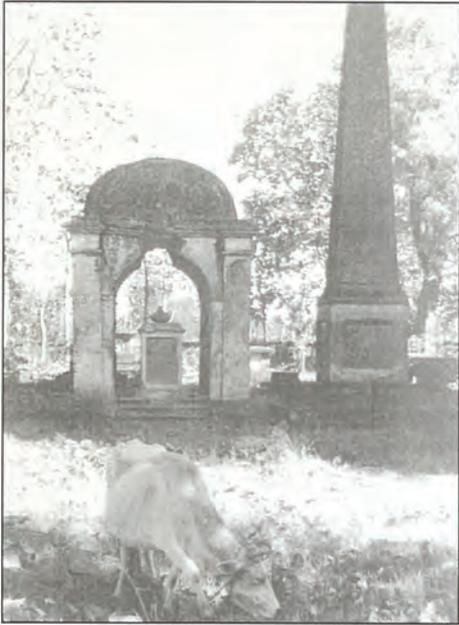
**An Indian Cemeteries** website was set up by new BACSA member John Kendall after he returned from a visit to India. Mr Kendall has encouraged other visitors to send him photographs from cemeteries they have seen, with a brief note, for his

site. So far he has covered some of the better known cemeteries and monuments, and his imaginative idea will interest members with access to the internet, who want the latest pictures of a particular place. There is also a page about BACSA, and useful links to other sites. The website address is:  
<http://www.indian-cemeteries.org>

**A free lecture** on Samuel Cornell Plant, First Senior River Inspector on the Upper Yangtze, will be held on Saturday 5th June at 3 pm in Room G-3, Main Building, School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Samuel Plant was the subject of an article in *Chowkidar Vol. 9, No. 5*, and this lecture is being given by Michael Gillam, a descendant of Captain Plant. It has been arranged by the Friends of the Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch, and the Friends will welcome any interested BACSA member. For further information please contact Rosemary Lee, the Co-Programme Secretary at <rosemary.lee@talk21.com> or phone 01491 873276.

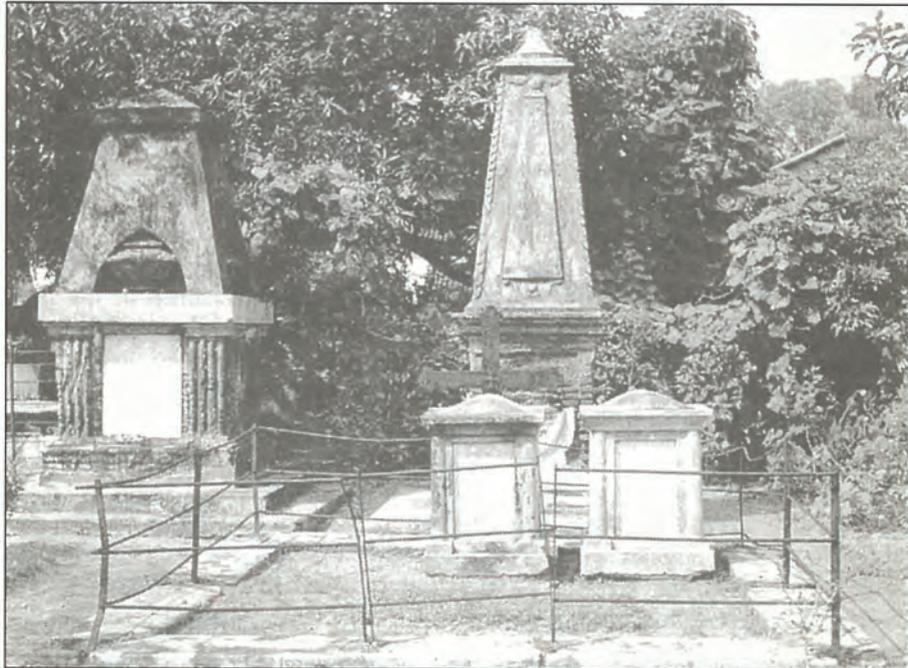
**The exhibition** entitled 'King of the World: The Padshahnama, an Imperial Mughal Manuscript' which opened in New Delhi in 1997 to mark the 50th anniversary of Independence, has been touring England and America for the past six years. For those unacquainted with the Padshahnama, it is a book of exquisitely illustrated Mughal paintings documenting the life of the Emperor Shah Jehan. It was presented to George III in 1798 by the Nawab of Awadh, Asaf-ud-daula, and thus passed into the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. For the exhibition, the paintings were unbound from the book and displayed as framed pieces of art. Now it has reached its final venue, in the Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, where it will be shown until 3 May 2004. Then the painted pages will be reassembled in the book from whence they came, and the only souvenir will be the magnificent catalogue that accompanied the exhibition. For further information contact Holyroodhouse on 0131 556 5100.

**Travel to Afghanistan in 2004.** Matthew Leeming has spent much of his spare time in the last ten years organising various small-scale projects to help the Afghans, but this is the first time for many years, that anyone has had an opportunity to help the Afghans help themselves, by visiting their country. It is one of the most beautiful countries on earth, and its people the kindest and most hospitable. While the south is still threatened by militias, the centre and north of the country is perfectly safe. Mr Leeming visited Bamiyan and Herat last year, places that were at the centre of Afghanistan's tourist industry in the 1960 and 70s. Together with the Afghan Ministry of Tourism, he is organising a number of trips to the country this year, the first being to Bamiyan and Herat in the Spring. The Wakhan Corridor follows in the summer, with the Panjshir and northern cities in the autumn. For further information, contact Mr Leeming at <travel@matthewleeming.com> or phone him on 01962 738492.



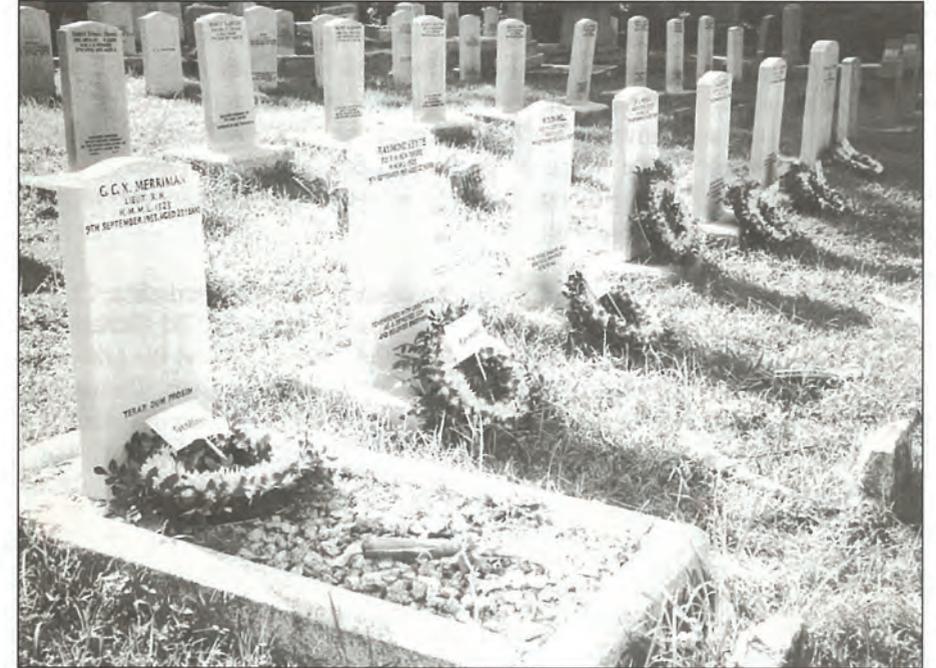
*left:* Tombs in the old  
Saugor Cemetery  
(see page 55)

*below:* Petersen family tombs  
in the Zion churchyard,  
Tranquebar (see page 62)



*right:* Tomb of Ensign  
William McMurdo Wilson  
at Nahan (see page 52)

*below:* The Happy Valley  
Cemetery graves with  
Commemorative wreaths  
(see page 54)



**BACSA BOOKS** [Books by BACSA members. These can be ordered via BACSA, at no extra cost to the purchaser and will be sent with an invoice.]

**Tranquebar Cemeteries and Grave-Monuments** Karin Kryger & Lisbeth Gasparski

It is hard to imagine any School of Architecture in the UK even considering a publication dealing with European cemeteries and monuments in India, such are the benighted times in which we live, when instant gratification, the production of what is arguably non-architecture, and the pursuit of fleeting fashion are all-pervading. This splendid publication documents the existing gravestones in the Danish burial-grounds in Tranquebar and consists of descriptions and photographs of the monuments, transcriptions of the inscriptions, and surveys of places of interment, together with information from church registers about the persons commemorated: in other words, it deals with reality, and is a product of sanity, diligence, and hard work.

Tranquebar was established as a Danish trading-centre on the east coast of India in the district of Tanjore, south of Madras, and a factory was opened there in 1620. It was taken by the British in 1801, restored to the Danes in 1814, and finally purchased, together with the other Danish settlements in India, in 1845. Thus for 212 years, Tranquebar was a Danish possession. Many Danish and Norwegian traders, government officials, and military men, German Lutheran missionaries, and British service personnel and merchants were laid to rest in Tranquebar, often with their wives and children. So the place is redolent with European connotations, and evocative of the long connections between Europe and India. Nevertheless, much of the fabric of that connection has been eroded over the years, so the Kryger/Gasparski book is timely, in that it records a tiny part of what is left, and that is pretty impressive.

The graveyards covered are Zion Church and churchyard, New Jerusalem Church and churchyard, the cemetery at the Town Gate (Landporten), the Old Cemetery in Nygade, the Roman Catholic burial ground near the Town Gate, and the graveyard at Bethlehem Church, Poreyar, about one kilometre from Tranquebar. The book is liberally illustrated with historical picture-maps, old plans, and survey-drawings, as well as a delicious array of photographs of monuments, memorials, and mural tablets, lovingly recorded by the intrepid authors and their associates. (see page 60 and back cover) Some fine watercolours by Ib Andersen of 1948 are also reproduced. Usefully, the typology of the monuments is also covered.

As time, vandals, the elements, and age take their toll, much more needs to be done to record a vast legacy of funerary art, not only in Europe, but in those outposts of Europe throughout the world.

Such records are necessary for historical, genealogical, art-historical, and architectural reasons (among others), for the artefacts themselves are fast disappearing. Having contributed to, and edited, one of the most comprehensive studies of a 19th century English cemetery (*Kensal Green Cemetery: The Origins & Development of The General Cemetery of All Souls, Kensal Green, London 1824-2001*), this reviewer is more than aware of the amount of labour involved, but the task must be done somehow, and BACSA has been in the forefront of encouraging moves in the right direction.

The excellent Danish publication is warmly commended, even though the reader is left with a sense of sadness and loss having perused its fascinating pages. To say that the Empire and European influences outside Europe have had an execrable Press over the last forty years or so, would be understating things, and the fact is that children leave school these days (if they know anything at all), with their heads stuffed with the most appalling nonsense, not least about the colonial past. Kryger and Gasparski's book reminds us that Europeans were burying their dead in India many centuries ago, and that our connection with the subcontinent has been of long duration, so a considerable impact was made, not least in the form of built fabric, monuments and a celebration of the dead. Much was achieved and there is certainly, at the very least, an architectural and commemorative legacy in India that deserves to be better known and more fully appreciated. This book has served a very useful and timely purpose in recording part of that legacy for posterity. (JSC)

2003 The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture Publishers (obtainable through the BACSA Secretary) ISBN 87-87136-45-7 £24 plus £5 postage and packing pp175

**Travels, Tales, and Encounters in Sindh and Balochistan 1840-1843**  
Marianne Postans ed R. A. Raza

The author sailed to the little fishing port of Karachi early in 1840 to rejoin her husband, Lieutenant Thomas Postans, having already established herself as a writer on India during an earlier sojourn in Bombay. The chapters in this book appeared as separate articles in the *Asiatic Journal* between 1842 and 1844 and the three volume *Facts and Fictions illustrative of Oriental Character* (London 1844). They have been brought together here to focus on Sindh, which had been conquered by Charles Napier for the East India Company in 1840, so Postans' articles are the first reports on a large tract of India newly under British rule. Sindh had previously been ruled by the amirs, or princes, and Postans was obviously charmed by one of them, Mir Ali Moorad of Khyrpore, whom she described as 'the very beau-ideal of a strong-hearted and independent chief.....'

...who, consistent in his independence from first to last, refused all connection with the British as allies, and held his own strongholds calmly but sternly, alike uninfluenced by either our threats or our promises'.

But there is no question that other amirs were dreadful men, delighting in persecuting the Hindu merchants and bankers who had settled in Sindh. One greedy amir levied a tax on the Hindus of Shikarpour, and in spite of their defiance 'armed men dispersed the crowd, seized the wealthiest of them, hung cows' bones round their necks, compelled them to eat flesh, and heaped upon them every outrage to their religious feeling that intolerance could devise, and these were neither few nor merciful'. Postans paints a picture of the despotic rule of the amirs, whose subjects were steeped in superstition and 'gross intellectual darkness'. The East India Company's new mandate must have seemed to offer some kind of relief from the past injustices that the Sindhis had suffered under their former rulers.

Postans had a clear advantage as a reporter, for she spoke the local language, and was free to travel through the region with her husband, although the Sindhi nobles 'are extremely jealous of the sanctity of the harem, and I never could persuade them to admit me as a visitor'. Remarkably free from colonial prejudice, she writes lyrically that 'Few things are more exhilarating and picturesque than a hawking party in Sindh: the fine Arab and Khorasan horses splendidly caparisoned with silver and velvet, their richly dressed riders, banners flying, and spears glittering in the sun, the birds, with their gay hoods and silver bells, borne on the wrist of Patan attendants form a group equally uncommon and picturesque.'

However, it has to be said that this is one of Postans' better passages, and that her usual style is very heavy going, with meandering sentences extending over half a page, and leaden witticisms signalled from a long way off. More than half of this book is taken up in the recounting of local tales, related in a quasi-medieval fashion by some Indian ancient mariner, who will not forego the smallest detail. There are undoubtedly many valuable nuggets of information to be found in this book, but oh dear! one has to work very hard to extract them. Dr Raza has done a gallant job in going through this tedious prose, writing a lively introduction that positions Postans as one of a number of English authors of the period, and providing good and clear notes. It is to Dr Raza's credit that she has not assumed all readers of this book will be as familiar as we are with references to Victorian personalities, nor indeed that English people will have the finer points of Muslim hagiography and Persian literature to hand. (RLJ)

2003 Oxford University Press, Karachi (available from OUP Direct Sales Saxon Way West, Corby, Northants NN18 9EB) ISBN 0 19 579795 7 £15.99 plus airmail postage £4.25 pp214

## Bengal Sappers 1803 - 2003 ed George Cooper & David Alexander

Published to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the formation of the Bengal Sappers and Miners, that distinguished corps of engineers, this book is also a tribute to the Bengal Sappers & Miners Officers Association, who were BACSA associate members until December 2003, when they disbanded fifty-six years after Indian Independence. The origins of the corps lie in the East India Company's territorial ambitions after the battle of Plassey in 1757, when public works and the surveying of newly conquered lands was needed, as well as engineers skilled in military duties. For anyone who has ever wondered exactly what a sapper is, the dictionary helpfully defines it as 'one who saps', but then relents to explain that a sap is a trench, 'usually covered, or zigzag by which approach is made to a hostile position'. The miners were just as necessary for undermining, literally, the forts where enemies of the East India Company were holed up. The headquarters of the Bengal Sappers and Miners was established at Roorkee, about a hundred miles north of Delhi, in 1853, and has remained there ever since. There is an evocative drawing by Desmond Henly of the No. 2 Mess at Roorkee in 1944, with deep, comfortable arm chairs and shaded lamps in an elegant high-ceilinged room. I would be very surprised if it looked any different today, and recent photographs of the officers' mess show that it is still in absolutely pukka condition.

This book is not, however, a history of the corps, but a fascinating anthology put together from the writings of officers and their wives, in chronological order, from the 1920s to 1948. Sited near the Siwalik mountain range, and not so remote from exciting places like Ladakh, Tibet and Nepal, it was inevitable that men from the corps would find adventurous things to do here, sometimes during an extended leave, like Ian Lyall Grant's journey from Wana to the Karakoram, or Archie Jack's official visit to Lhasa in 1938. Katherine Lethbridge spent her honeymoon in Spiti, having trekked to this 'high-up country with valley floors at about 11,000 to 13,000ft, arid, precipitous, with hills like the teeth of wolves...'

Although based in India, the corps saw war-time service in Europe, the Middle East, Malaya and Burma. There is plenty of action as the allied troops forced their way back across the eastern front, building wooden trestle bridges on the Tiddim Road in Burma, throwing a suspension bridge over the Beltang Lui river, a bridge of boats over the Manipur, and demolishing roads (because hindering the enemy's advance is as important as facilitating the path of your own men). This is a satisfyingly chunky book, not necessarily to be read straight through, but to be dipped into with pleasure by armchair travellers and old soldiers. (RLJ)

2003 The Institution of Royal Engineers, Brompton Barracks, Chatham, Kent ME4 4UG. ISBN 0-903530-24-4 £18 including postage and packing (please make cheques payable to 'The Institution of Royal Engineers') pp336

## Room to Swing a Cat: The Memoirs of Sir Michael Parsons

Autobiographies or memoirs of those who served in the Indian Army, the Indian Civil Service or other government services are many. However, those by members of the British business community are few and this work is a most welcome addition to their number. Writing entirely from memory, without the aid of diaries and historical research, Sir Michael's memoirs cover much more than his time in India and deal at length with his early life, his war service, and his activities after he left India in 1970. While less than half the book is concerned with India, this should not deter a reader who wishes to read only of South Asia, as the writing is lively, humorous and informative. The Parsons family did not have a tradition of long service in India, but the author's paternal grandfather, William, was in Calcutta from 1870 to 1906, initially in business and finally as Secretary of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce.

The author had a conventional education as a boarder at prep and public school, where the regimes were disciplined and conditions somewhat spartan. While not particularly enjoying his schooldays, in his opinion [they] 'taught the value of experiment, the need for competition and how to make the best of a bad job'. This clearly provided him with the ability to face the situations he was to encounter later in life. Further education was not a success, and on abandoning Oxford, Michael was offered a position in Calcutta with Barry & Co and sailed to India on the P & O's *Corfu* in 1937. The memoirs provide a vivid description of the experiences of a newly-arrived bachelor; the kitting out, the conventions of office, and the accommodation, whether it be a boarding house, chummery, or as a paying guest. One is reminded of how little things changed with the Independence of India, as the initial procedures can easily be recognised by the reviewer, who arrived in Calcutta in the early 1950s. Although the two major departmental stores had closed, the dropping of cards was no longer required and the ladies of Karaya Road were not of the quality that they had been before the war, the main difference was that as a consequence of disbanding the Calcutta Light Horse, the incentive and opportunities for riding were no longer available to the majority.

War intervened and Michael Parsons was commissioned into the Royal Garhwal Rifles. After training at Lansdowne and Bareilly, his regiment was posted to Kota Bharu in Malaya, shortly before the Japanese invasion. Initially based near the Thai border, he witnessed the withdrawal of the Allied Forces down the peninsula to Singapore. This is described with great clarity, as is his time as a prisoner of war, much of it spent in the construction of the Burma-Siam railway. Here his resourcefulness and his determination to make the best of a bad situation are in evidence. There are few survivors of this ordeal that could write of 'long exploratory walks in the neighbouring hills.'

With the end of the war, he returned to Calcutta in May 1946 to resume his employment with the Inchcape Group, and to find that as he was now married, he had to resign his membership of the Saturday Club and go up for re-election so that his wife could be vetted as suitable for joint membership, a requirement that was still in force as late as 1962. The Parsons were provided with accommodation in one of the Company's mill compounds to the north of Calcutta, and we are given an interesting description of life away from the centre of Calcutta activity. The communal disturbances of August 1946 that resulted in heavy loss of life occurred soon after their arrival. These were followed later in the year by increasing Trade Union militancy and Independence in August the next year. Legislation introduced by the Congress Government favoured labour; disputes between management and the unions became more frequent. Fortunately Barry & Co did not suffer the violence that was on occasion directed towards management, the most notorious example of which was the murder of a number of European staff in the works of Jessops & Co at Dum Dum in February 1949. As his career advanced within the Inchcape Group, promotion brought improved living accommodation. The Parsons moved away from the mills and factories, initially to Ballygunge, then to a house adjacent to the Tollygunge Club and finally to the burra sahib's house in Camac Street, as Chairman of Macneil & Barry Ltd in 1963.

It is difficult to find fault with Sir Michael's memory. However, Felicity Kendal may not appreciate the suggestion that 'as a small child' she might have been with her parents in Calcutta before the war. That delightful lady was not born until September 1946. This reviewer likes to claim an early sighting of Felicity when the Shakespeareana Company performed some of their plays at the Punjab Club, Lahore in 1956. Obviously anyone with experience of post-Independent India will find the chapters that concern Calcutta to be of particular interest and may discover the names of acquaintances and possibly friends. Highly recommended. (JAP)

2003 The Memoir Club, Whitworth Hall, Spennymoor, Co. Durham DL16 7QX. ISBN 1-84104-064-0 £19.95 plus postage and packing at £3.50. pp356

## Lucknow Then and Now

ed Rosie Llewellyn-Jones

Of all the large-scale books on cities in India portraying the old and new, past and present, then and now, this must receive top marks. It is an outstandingly splendid production with fine illustrations on every page enhancing the text which has chapters by nine authors who are acknowledged authorities in their own field. There are chapters on the history, the buildings, the schools and colleges, the Nawabi culture, painting, photography, arts and crafts, food and bazaars; each told in great detail with notes of sources for further reading.

It is difficult to think of any aspect of Lucknow life not covered unless it was a reference to the growing impact of the Hindus, now a majority. There are surprises, too: to learn of the Nawabi Court at Faizabad before it moved to Lucknow; the importance of the river Gomti in the earlier social life of the city before it was overtaken by modern transport; to read the sixty and more Lakhnawi terms for delicious food and drinks in a full page glossary - and much more. Each chapter brings fascinating details to light, the whole being put together by our very own Editor, who also writes the Introduction and opening chapter, while a later chapter on 'Painting at Lucknow 1775-1850' is contributed by another BACSA member, J.P. Losty.

The whole is a *tour de force*, even the end-papers depict the charming *chikan* work (of which I was ignorant!), described in the text. Credit to all concerned, including Marg Publications. My only criticism is that the book is so rich in its descriptions that one is left a bit like a gourmet after a sumptuous nine-course dinner suffering from indigestion; but one will be rewarded in going back later to re-read chapters. Apart from the interest and pleasure it will undoubtedly give to readers in this country, it is sure to be a source of pride to the citizens of Lucknow in providing knowledge of their wonderful heritage. (TCW)

2003 Marg Publications ISBN 81-85026-61-0 \*Rs 2250 (available from Ram Advani for £45.00, plus airmail postage £5.00. No charge for surface mail postage.) pp148

#### **British Cemeteries of Monghyr** Vincent Davies, ed Michael Stokes

The ancient town of Monghyr on the river Ganges, east of Patna, acquired a new importance when Mir Kasim, the Nawab of Bengal, moved his capital here in 1761 from Murshidabad. The nawab repaired the fort and an arsenal was established, thus creating the gun-making industry for which the town was noted throughout the 19th century. However, despite the improvement in defences and the training and disciplining of the nawab's troops by European officers, both the fort and the town surrendered quickly in 1763 when an East India Company force arrived. Thus Monghyr became a Company possession, and for a time, an important military post. Once the fighting troops moved on, Monghyr was selected as one of the centres for the settlement of the Company's military pensioners, or 'invalids' as they were known, who had retired because of age, wounds, or ill-health. Thus the scene is set for a host of interesting tomb inscriptions, which are gathered here from four sites, the Lal Darwaza cemetery, Choramba Road cemetery, Mofussil Thana cemetery and Pir Pahar, some three miles east of the town.

One hopes that these cemeteries have not deteriorated too much since the photographs taken of them in 1982 by BACSA member Satish Bhatnagar. There are some magnificent tombs here, from the chaste urn on a pedestal above Major General James Murray McGregor (d.1818), to the poignant double pyramid tomb of Benjamin and Sarah Richards, aged ten and eight years, who both died in 1840, and the 'broken pedestal' tomb of Caroline Eliza Smith, who died in 1872, aged twenty-two years old.

The author, the late Vincent Davies, was a founder member of BACSA, and Chairman from 1980 to 1984. His first two books were *British Cemeteries of Patna and Dinapore* published in 1989 and *Garden Graves and Isolated Cemeteries in North Bihar* in 1990. Vincent had put together a large amount of material for a third book, before his death in 2002 at the age of ninety-nine. Michael Stokes, who followed Vincent Davies as BACSA Chairman, undertook to edit and prepare this material for publication, as a tribute to its author. Michael has succeeded admirably, for the result is a fascinating booklet that puts this former backwater on the map again.

2003 BACSA ISBN 0 907799 80 9 £6.00 plus 50 pence postage pp40

#### **Darjeeling Pioneers: The Wernicke-Stölke Story** Fred Pinn

Written by the noted Darjeeling historian the late Fred Pinn, who died last year at the age of eighty-five, this is the fascinating story of three generations of one of the great tea-planting families, from the 1840s through to the end of the British Empire in India. The family founders were Johann and Sophie Wernicke, who came to India in 1841 as missionaries for the Moravian church in Germany. After a serious disagreement with their church, they gave up missionary work, but stayed on in Darjeeling and became gradually involved in the development of the fledgling tea industry. Their several children carried on the tradition, becoming owners and managers of one of the most important tea estates in the area. This well-researched work provides a rare insight into a previously un-researched aspect of the development of the Darjeeling tea industry, and will be essential reading for all who have an interest in the town, its history and the development of tea planting in the region. The appendix contains a reprint of a scarce memoir on the history of Darjeeling tea planting by Lt. Col. L. Hannagan, himself a plantation manager in the 1920s.

2003 Pagoda Tree Press, 4 Malvern Buildings, Fairfield Park, Bath BA1 6JX, Somerset <sales@pagodatreepress.com> tel: 01225 463552 ISBN 1-904289-01-0 £16.00 plus postage and packing pp144

**Books by non-members that will interest readers. [These should be ordered direct and not through BACSA.]**

**The Long Strider: How Thomas Coryate Walked from England to India in the Year 1613** Dom Moraes and Sarayu Srivatsa

The Odcombe Leg Stretcher was the name that Thomas Coryate gave himself, with that characteristic English blend of understatement and comic nomenclature. Indeed it is difficult to imagine anything more satisfying in the tradition of English eccentrics than the man who set out from his native Somerset village of Odcombe in 1612 to walk to the Indian city of Ajmer, arriving there in 1615. This was not Coryate's first pedestrian journey either, for he had already covered the European continent in 1608 when he travelled through France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, mostly on foot, passing through forty-five cities in five months. Coryate travelled simply from the love of travel and he wrote up his adventures in *Coryat's Crudities*, one of the earliest handbooks for the European visitor. *Crudities* has the same meaning that it does today, something raw and undigested, immediate impressions of what he had seen, put down on paper. Coryate, the son of the Rector of Odcombe, educated at Winchester before entering Gloucester Hall, Oxford in 1596, was clearly a man of sharp wit. He acted as a kind of court jester to Henry, Prince of Wales, where, it is said 'his prodigious memory and spiky repartee caused much merriment'. He was numbered among the group of Elizabethan and Jacobean entertainers, and rubbed shoulders with Ben Jonson, John Donne, Inigo Jones and possibly Shakespeare himself, at the Mermaid Tavern.

The authors of this entertaining book have not sought to write a straightforward account of Coryate's long walk, but have interspersed his adventures with their own, when they set out to trace his route through India. During their researches, they come to Coryate's birthplace at Odcombe, and visit the parish church, where they see Coryate's shoes carved in stone on the wall. The long strider had donated his boots to the church after returning from his European walk, but they were stolen or lost in 1702, so a stone replica was made. Back in India the authors seek out people who can tell them what Coryate's India was like, and who can guide them round the places he is known to have visited; Mandu, Ajmer, Agra, and Surat, where he died from dysentery in 1617. They meet the distinguished scholar and BACSA member Simon Digby at Aligarh Muslim University, who is described to them as a man who lives 'in a magical house' in the Channel Islands with 'no furniture, only books'.

There is a third strand to this curious book, the relationship between the two authors. Most of the present day story is told by Sarayu Srivatsa, and we see her becoming increasingly annoyed by her fellow author and his fondness for drink.

But during the course of the book, Srivatsa takes on the role of Moraes' daughter, chiding, loving, and arranging things for this creative, disorganised old man. At the end of the book, the search for Coryate's tomb moves from Surat, one of the suggested sites, to Rajaggr, north of Suvali, twelve miles west of Surat. Here a solitary domed edifice is known as Tom Coryate's tomb, and was named thus as a coastmark on a British Admiralty chart of 1837. But the tomb is described as 'a monument in the Mahommedan style' and there are earlier reports of a Surat grave 'known by two small stones that speak his [Coryate's] name' near the Kataragama Gate, where 'our English fakier, as they name him' lies. In the end, it really doesn't matter, because Coryate, the man who wanted to walk to China, through India, has left an imperishable memorial in his extraordinary life, nicely told in this book. (RLJ)

2003 Penguin Viking ISBN 0-67-004975-1 \*Rs 425 pp359

**Imprint of the Raj: How fingerprinting was born in colonial India** Chandak Sengoopta

'Every schoolchild knows that Britain gave its colonies the railway and the telegraph. It is recalled rather less often that it got curry, fingerprinting, and Worcestershire sauce in return, each of which has outlived the telegraph and, given the state of things in today's Britain, might even outlast the railways.' (The erudite author is, I fear, too generous in his estimation of what most British schoolchildren learn today, but this introduction does typify his lively and amusing style.) This fascinating and thought-provoking book is much more than just the story of how British administrators in India discovered the benefits of codifying fingerprints. It raises profound questions about why we need to identify certain individuals and why governments have found it necessary to record some, but not all, of their citizens and colonial subjects.

The need to track habitual offenders seemed particularly pressing in 19th century France, and this led to the development of anthropometry by Alphonse Bertillon, who realised that since every human being was physically slightly different from the next, devised a way of measuring specific features, like various forms of the human ear. Together with 'mug shots', first used by Bertillon, and eleven standard measurements, it was possible to build up a rogues gallery, and to put recidivists away. This method had a higher success rate than that of London's Metropolitan police, who relied on recognising criminals during regular visits to Holloway, where all prisoners remanded in London were inspected three times a week. In India, the use of finger or thumb prints was a centuries old way of signing a document by an illiterate person, and it was the over-riding need to deal with

fraudulent claims (of land or money) that saw Sir William Herschel first develop the notion of fingerprinting in the registration of deeds. His was a fairly crude idea, that was later refined by Francis Galton, who began collecting fingerprints (and other data), because he believed, erroneously, that certain racial types would share the same physical characteristics. Taking this premise to extremes, the curator of the Madras Museum, Edgar Thurston, author of the seven-volume *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*\* would pounce on Indian visitors to the museum in order to measure them. Thurston admitted that his instruments so frightened some poor people, that he found it necessary to offer a small fee, as well as 'cheroots for men, cigarettes for children, and, as a last resort, alcohol'.

It was Sir Edward Henry, Inspector General of the Bengal Police in 1891 who worked out the definitive system for classifying fingerprints so that a duplicate of a specimen print could quickly be found in a central register. The author believes that Henry's Indian assistants, both sub-Inspectors, Azizul Haque and Hem Chandra Bose, played a bigger part in the ingenious classification system than was admitted at the time. Both men were rewarded in later life with titles and honours rather more generous than a normal sub-inspector could expect. Sengoopta reminds us, however, that fingerprints as a tool for identifying criminals was not the initial reason for their collection in India, whereas it was the *only* reason for collecting them in Britain. The first Indian murderer to be caught by his bloody thumbprint left in the victim's room, was on a tea estate in north Bengal, in 1897. This was followed by other successes, but it was not until 1902 that a burglar at the Old Bailey was convicted using evidence which 'had never yet been used before a jury in an English criminal court'. India had shown the mother country a new trick, and not for the first time. Incidentally, land registration documents in India still have to be signed with the owner's right-hand thumb print, to the amusement of the highly-literate middle classes. Highly recommended. (RLJ)

2003 Macmillan ISBN 0-333-98916-3 £15.99 pp234

\* Thurston's epic work is co-incidentally offered for sale in the current second-hand book list accompanying this *Chowkidar*.

#### **Advance notice of new books to be reviewed in the next *Chowkidar***

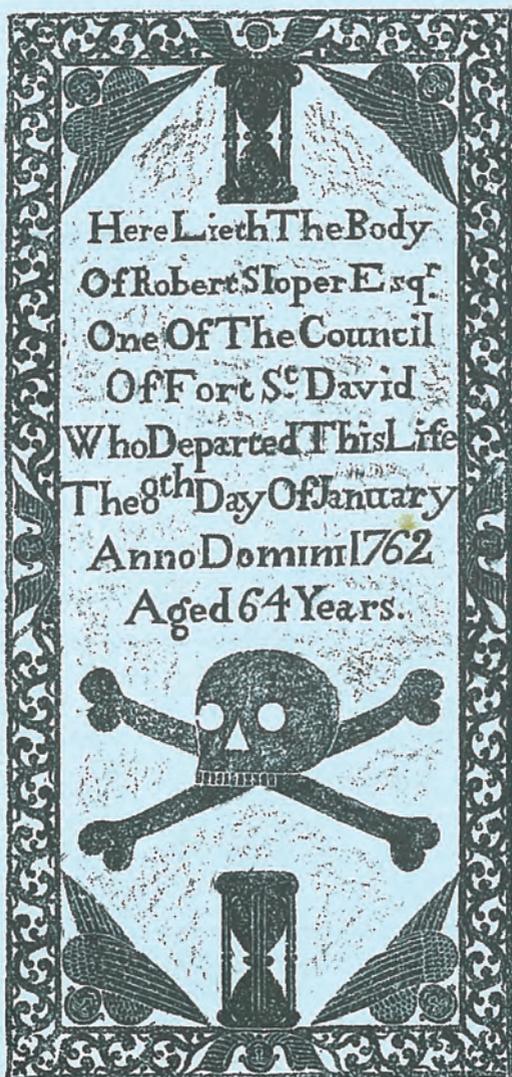
**Duel in the Snows: The True Story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa**  
Charles Allen  
2004 John Murray ISBN 0-7195-5427 6 £20 pp350

**Frontier Legion: With the Khassadars of North Waziristan** Frank Leeson  
2003 The Leeson Archive ISBN 1-904726-07-0 £10.00 pp233

#### **Notes to Members**

1. When writing to the Secretary and expecting a reply, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.
2. If wishing to contact a fellow-member whose address is not known to you, send the letter c/o Hon Secretary who will forward it unopened.
3. If planning any survey of cemetery MIs, either in this country or overseas, please check with the appropriate Area Representative or the Hon Secretary to find out if already recorded. This not to discourage the reporting of the occasional MI noticed, which is always worth doing, but to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

\*Books from India: where prices are given in rupees, these books can be obtained from Mr Ram Advani, Bookseller, Mayfair Buildings, Hazratganj PO Box 154, Lucknow 226001, UP, India. Mr Advani will invoice BACSA members in sterling, adding £3.00 for registered airmail for a slim hardback, and £2.00 for a slim paperback. Sterling cheques should be made payable to Ram Advani. Catalogues and price lists will be sent on request.



*Tomb in the New Jerusalem Churchyard, Tranquebar*