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NOTES ON BACSA

The Association was formed in 1976 and launched in Spring 1977 to bring together people with a concern for the many hundreds of European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia.

There is a steady membership of over 1,300 (2014) 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 building up the Records Archive in the India Office Collections at the British Library; and many other projects for the upkeep of historical and architectural monuments. 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 the condition of a relative's grave etc. BACSA also publishes Cemetery Records books and has published books on different aspects of European social history out East. Full details on our website: www.bacsa.org.uk The enrolment fee and subscription rates are obtainable from the Membership Secretary.

Founded by the late Theon Wilkinson, MBE

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THE SEARCH FOR BLOCHMANN

We sometimes forget that Indian and British scholars do not have a monopoly on exploring the rich heritage of the sub-continent. France often takes the romantic view, using drama, fiction and music to express her appreciation, whereas the German and Austrian approach has inclined more to languages, particularly Sanskrit, and to archaeology. The work of the 'German Orientalists' as they are called, in Indian studies is well known and includes such luminaries as Professor Max Müller, after whom roads and institutions are named today in Delhi and other cities.

So there was great excitement when the grave of one of these scholars, Henry (Heinrich) Ferdinand Blochmann, was rediscovered last autumn in Calcutta. This came about through research being carried out at JNU University, Delhi in the Indo-Persian department. Professor Syed Akhtar Hossain and his student Mr Golam Moinuddin had established that on Blochmann's early death in 1878, at the age of forty, he had been interred in the Lower Circular Road Cemetery. Did the grave remain, was then the question. Because the burial had taken place a few years before the Christian Burial Board was established, it meant a visual search had to be undertaken, rather than looking through the burial and plot registers. But it was found, although in a dilapidated condition and almost hidden by accumulated rubbish.

Blochmann is described today as the 'towering figure' of Mughal studies, who translated part of the great *A'in-i-Akbari*, the chronicle of the Emperor Akbar and who was the leading authority on medieval Muslim India. He was born in Dresden in 1838 and studied Oriental languages at Leipzig and Paris. He then travelled to England and enlisted as a private in the British Army as 'the only means open to him of getting to India', which is where he really wanted to be. He was twenty years old and we don't yet know why he pursued this rather unconventional start to his academic career. Even during the voyage out to Calcutta in 1858, in the wake of the Mutiny, his linguistic skills were recognized. On arrival he met the Arabic scholar Captain William Nassau Lees, who soon helped him obtain his discharge from the Army and got him a post as assistant professor of Arabic and Persian at the Calcutta Madrassa, the prestigious college set up by Warren Hastings. Blochmann is believed to have undertaken several archaeological tours in India and Burma and subsequently became Secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, located in Park Street, Calcutta. Overwork and the climate are said to have contributed to his early death on 13 July 1878.

So his grave had been found and funds for its immediate restoration were found too, and approved by the archaeological advisor and engineer at the Christian Burial Board. (see page 12) However, there were a couple of intriguing sentences in his obituary notice. Blochmann had married an Irish lady, who survived him and the couple had three children. We know nothing more of her, but one of the children is commemorated on the grave – little Ernest Percival Blochmann who died in 1870 aged thirteen months. Also, ‘a well-executed marble bust [of Blochmann] adorns the rooms of the Asiatic Society of Bengal’.

Of course this was irresistible information, so your Editor went straight to the Society and asked to see it. The Society’s catalogue showed that the bust, by the English sculptor Edwin Roscoe Mullins, had been installed in the old Council Room in 1881. But where was it today? A long and fascinating search began through the rooms of this handsome eighteenth century building. Finally, the Curator, Mrs Keka Banerjee opened a cupboard door off the main staircase, and there, on the floor, and facing the wall, was Blochmann. He was pulled out, dusted down and he turned out to be a handsome young man, clean-shaven and with short hair – not at all a typical Victorian professor. It was established that the bust had been placed in the cupboard because Blochmann had fallen off his pedestal (it happens to the best of us at times), and was awaiting repair, which the Curator undertook to get done.

One might think that the current German Consul in Calcutta would have been as excited as we were about the twin discoveries of tomb and bust, but sadly this turned out not to be the case. Proof was demanded that Blochmann was indeed a German citizen, despite his birth in Dresden and apparently permission from his descendants was required before any talk of restoration could begin. These unreasonable requests were ignored and today the refurbished tomb lies proudly in the cemetery in the company of other great men like Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the Bengali poet and reformer.

MAIL BOX

Last Autumn’s *Chowkidar* published the long and graphic inscription in St John’s Church, Calcutta to the memory of two young British officers murdered in Multan in 1848. They were Patrick Vans Agnew and Lieutenant William Anderson, both assistants to the Resident at Lahore. BACSA member Dr Virginia van der Lande was particularly interested because she is descended from the Anderson family on her mother’s side. She tells us that the Calcutta inscription is virtually identical to that of the Multan memorial obelisk.

Lieutenant Anderson was actually four days short of his 28th birthday at the time of his death. ‘Although I once trekked in Pakistan, Multan was not included in the itinerary’ wrote Dr van der Lande. ‘However, in 2005 following the discovery of a manuscript at the British Library, I made contact with its author, Rosalind Kendrick, now known as Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, writer and poet. She had earlier visited the site of the massacre and provided photographs. Ruqaiyyah had also photographed a small memorial plaque in the Eidgarh mosque, which had been detached from its original position and was then (1989) on the roof of the mosque. Eventually she managed to get onto the roof of the dome, via a locked door and narrow spiral staircase where she found the plaque, face-down in the dirt, clearly undisturbed for many years.’ (see page 12)

The inscription reads: ‘In this Idgarh on the 20th of April 1848 died Patrick Alexander Vans Agnew of the Bengal Civil Service and William Anderson of the 1st Bombay Fusilier Regiment. Their monument stands in the Fort Multan.’ We don’t know when this plaque was originally installed. But intriguingly, the author Miles Irving who compiled one of the great Monumental Series of Christian tombs and inscriptions, wrote in 1910 that there had been a tablet in the mosque which was ‘removed by order’ with slightly different wording and the incorrect date of 19 April for the murders. Dewan Mulraj, the Minister in charge of Multan Fort at the time, surrendered the following year and was sent for trial to Lahore. His death sentence was commuted to life, but he died shortly afterwards. However, his family prospered after settling in Lahore. A descendant, Lieutenant Colonel Diwan Chand Chopra OBE was employed in the Indian Medical Service, and his brother, Iqbal Chand Chopra CBE, QC became a Judge in Tanganyika. A few years ago one of the Judge’s descendants contacted Dr van der Lande and the tragic events that brought these two unlikely correspondents together were discussed and remembered.

Sir Gerald Napier visited Seringapatam in Mysore a couple of years ago and found something that he thinks will interest readers. He writes: ‘I had wanted to explore the north bank to locate the sites of the batteries during the 1792 campaign. With the help of our guide, the excellent Mr Kiran Singh, this was achieved but then some local people directed us to a striking memorial nearby in the form of a 60-foot obelisk, the inscription of which had been obliterated. I originally thought this must commemorate someone who was killed in the battle. Subsequent research at the British Library revealed that it was erected in memory of a Madras civil servant, Josiah Webbe.’ (see back cover)

Webbe had been appointed Resident at the Mysore court after the death of Tipu Sultan, when the East India Company had installed a new ruler. As Resident, he was able to negotiate a greater percentage of the revenue for the state treasury, and in gratitude the *dewan* (the prime minister) Purniah had this pillar erected in his memory. Webbe died in 1804 at the age of thirty-seven, and at the time of his death was Resident at the Mahratta court of Scindia. The Seringapatnam obelisk, which stands on a small platform, lies to the north west of the old fort.

Part of the now vanished inscription was recorded in 1906: 'Erected to the memory of Josiah Webbe, Esq, by Poorniah Dewan, as a tribute of veneration and respect for splendid talents, unsullied purity, and eminent public virtue.' And a useful note: 'Owing to a skirmish here in 1809, between the mutinous forces marching from Chitaldroog to Seringapatam and the Mysore troops sent to intercept them, the monument acquired the name of *rana-kambha* or war-pillar, by which it has since been known.' There is also a memorial to Josiah Webbe in St Mary's Church, Madras in the form of a fine statue by the English sculptor, John Flaxman.

Five years ago *Chowkidar* (Vol 12. No. 3) began the story of Antony Pratt's search for his father's grave at Muntok on Banka Island, Indonesia. Donald Frederick Pratt died at the beginning of May 1945 as a civilian prisoner of the Japanese. The article was read by Judy Balcombe, a BACSA member living in Australia whose grandfather had also died in the Muntok internment camp. Since then two visits have been made to the site by Mr Pratt and Mrs Balcombe, and more information has come to light. Mrs Margie Caldicott, the granddaughter of another victim also went to the site and had with her lists of internees and a plan of the Muntok cemetery before some, but not all, of the graves were relocated in the 1980s.

The remains of about 25 people which were reburied in a nearby Catholic cemetery in 1981 have now been identified (not individually) as those of British and Australian women who died in the camp. A small fence is to be erected around the site to which BACSA has made a donation. It was also finally established that the graves of male civilians who died in the camp, including, we presume, that of Donald Pratt, were simply built over in the late 1960s. People living on the site found human remains when digging the foundations for their houses. But some good has come out of this sorrowful and lengthy search for the truth. Plaques in memory of the four to five thousand men and women who died in the Banka Straits, including those massacred at

Radji Beach, have been erected and are being respectfully cared for by the local people. This September, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camps, a party will go to Muntok again, this time with a plaque listing the names of all those who died in the camps and whose bodies are believed to be still there. It is hoped a small Peace Museum and a heritage walk will also be established. For further information please contact Judy Balcombe at: jdbalcombe@gmail.com

Alan Lane, a BACSA member, tells a good ghost story about his time as an engineer in Assam in the mid-1960s. He was staying with Mr Gohain, the manager of the Doyang tea estate in his burra-bungalow which at that time used Petromax lamps in the evenings. Around 4.00 am one morning Mr Lane woke up with a creepy sensation and saw a hideous face looking down at him. Unable to go back to sleep, he learned that a planter from many years earlier had hanged himself in that room and that other visitors had reported the same thing. 'Needless to say, I never stayed at that bungalow ever again! I made sure I stayed at either the Jamguri Tea Estate or the Golaghat Club for subsequent visits.' And thanks to last autumn's *Chowkidar* story about the murder of Arthur Whitten, an earlier manager who had lived in the same bungalow, Mr Lane is pretty sure he has identified his ghost. Time had distorted the murder, by disaffected tea workers, into a 'suicide', but it is still a creepy story.

One of BACSA's Vice-Presidents (we have five distinguished Vice-Presidents), Field Marshal Sir John Chapple has sent the following account of a heart-warming encounter in the Chin Hills.

'During the late 1990s we visited Burma on a bird-watching trip. I had never been there before and was quite keen to see something of the country about which I had read so much. Towards the end of our visit we were in the Southern Chin Hills. I knew something about this area having read accounts of the various military expeditions there in the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s - as well as during the Second World War. It was quite difficult to know where we were. No one had any maps and the names which occurred in any old maps that I had seen had now been changed. When we got down to the village our local agent arranged for us to stay in the local school. This was very comfortable - and dry. We put our sleeping bags down at one end of the big classroom. The cooking was set up at the other end. Whilst waiting for supper, a few locals came in to greet us. They had not met any overseas visitors for many, many years. Only one senior villager could speak English. He asked to talk to me. We sat down together and chatted for a while. I

asked him about his village and who lived there. It was a largely Christian Chin community. The missionaries had arrived in the early 20th century. They had not had any links with the village since Independence. The local pastor joined our group, which gradually got bigger as other villagers joined in. Eventually the atmosphere was right for the Chins to ask the question which they had wanted to put to me. It was this. Did I have authority to allow them to move two graves so that they could build an extension to the school house? I assumed that these were Second World War graves and thought that I could certainly help them by taking the details to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. But when I told them this, they said 'No, these are much older British graves from one of the expeditions to Chin Hills.'

I was amazed and asked their names. The pastor went off to fetch the 'parish register,' I went across to my backpack to dig out the book I was carrying on the Chin Hills, by Bertram Carey and H.N. Tuck published in 1896. I had acquired this book a year ago. It had formerly belonged to a Major Coldicott of 6th Gurkha Rifles. I always try to take this sort of book with me on these journeys to put into context what we were doing there a century or more beforehand. I had been reading this book every evening over the previous few days. I knew there were a number of footnotes with names of those who had been killed. Back came the Chin pastor with an enormous manuscript folder all written in Burmese script. He found the reference in 1891 and read out the two names. I didn't understand them but I quickly looked through my book and said, 'Do you think they were Major Eyre and Captain Rennie?' A look of utter amazement took hold. 'They were indeed the names.' I couldn't verify this because I couldn't read the script but they were sure this was right. How did I know? I had clearly been heaven-sent. I must say it was a very special moment. Anyway I gave to Revd Thong Ngai Om, Pastor, Myoma Baptist Church, Mindat, my permission to move and rebury these officers. It was also amazing that those graves had survived so long.'

CAN YOU HELP?

Christine Polybank tells us that Carl Joachim Bechtler was her great grandfather. 'He had trained as a watchmaker in St Gallen, Switzerland, before going out to India in 1880. In 1885 he opened his first jewellery shop in Allahabad, and very soon he had one in Lucknow and another in Mussoorie. From the early 1890s onwards, he and his family spent the winters in Allahabad and the summers in Mussoorie. During one of these summers – possibly 1899 - my great grandmother Helene Bechtler died and was buried in Mussoorie. Some 10 years later, Carl

had a child - Wilhelm Hermann Bechtler (by his second wife) - who died in May 1910, and who was also buried in Mussoorie in a cemetery 'on the edge of a forest ...looking over to the high peaks of the Himalayas'. His grave was marked by a little bronze angel. I am searching for records which show in which cemetery they were buried. The help I have sought so far has not brought success. Is there anyone reading this who might know where I can turn for this information? Any other information on the family or business of Carl Joachim Bechtler would also be of great interest to me.' BACSA's records for both Mussoorie cemeteries, the Camel's Back and Landour, have been searched, but the Bechtler names have not been found. It may be that because the family was Swiss their burial details were not kept in British records, so a visual search of the Landour cemetery is needed. The description of the cemetery on the edge of a forest would seem to indicate that this is the right one.

BACSA member Eileen Hewson writes: 'In September 2014 the town of Srinagar in Kashmir was submerged by monsoon floods and very few houses and businesses escaped. Sheik Bagh Cemetery was virtually washed away and part of the retaining wall between the Christian and Muslim sections was broken. This cemetery is the last resting place for many explorers, statesmen, missionaries and the British who preferred to 'Stay on' rather than return to an uncertain life in England. A search in the burial records and amongst the tombs reveal a sinister side to this tranquil cemetery - the bodies of four foreigners who had dared to criticise the regime of the Maharajah of Kashmir and whose deaths are still unexplained.'

One was Dr William Elmslie who died, probably murdered, on 18 November 1872 aged forty, ostensibly of a recurring heart problem but he could have been poisoned by the Maharajah because he wrote several letters complaining about the carelessness of the government's attitude to the cholera epidemic. He wrote the first Kashmiri/English dictionary and was a Missionary Doctor. He was born in Aberdeen, the son of a shoemaker. There were several accidents in the mountains where climbers and sportsmen fell or were swept away by avalanches; a major truck accident which happened on the way to Leh (everyone died); a couple of suicides and a French Count, the Marquis Raoul de Bourbel, a Major General in Royal Engineers are just a few of the interesting people buried here. BACSA has been approached for help in rebuilding the wall, but would like an independent opinion first, so if anyone is going to the cemetery, please report back, with photographs if possible.

During the 1930s (we don't know the exact date), Lieutenant Michael Gutteridge went out to Lahore where he was serving with the 3rd Royal Tank Corps. Less than six weeks later he was dead from typhoid. The death, at the age of 27, was particularly poignant as Lieutenant Gutteridge had seemed one of the fittest of men. He was known as 'Irrepressible Mike' and was a noted runner. He represented his University, Cambridge, against Oxford in the late 1920s and went on to represent England at the Empire Games in Canada in 1930. His best time was running half a mile in 1 minute, 54 seconds at Southend on Sea in the Southern half-mile championship. Now his nephew, Mr Peter Gutteridge wonders if the grave is still there in the Lahore cemetery. He has sent in a couple of newspaper cuttings and two photographs of the cemetery as it was then, with a new grave covered in flowers.

Writing from Lehmen in Germany, Mr Eugen Denkel says that he has found Robin Volk's BACSA book on the *Agra Cantonment Cemetery* a great help. 'To all volunteers my warmest thanks for their work' he adds. In particular the information was very valuable in assisting him with research on a Charles Shepherd (1830-1905). Mary Shepherd, Charles' wife is buried in the cantonment cemetery, having died at Agra about 1855. But it is who Charles was, and what he was doing in India that is the most interesting part of Mr Denkel's email to *Chowkidar*. Shepherd trained as a chronometer maker, and was an engineer and inventor too. He became famous for his work on electric clocks and electric time distribution. He built the clock for the Great Exhibition and the Gate Clock at Greenwich.

In 1853 he went to India to work for the East India Company which was just starting to develop the 'electric telegraph' as it was called. He worked as assistant to William O'Shaughnessy who was responsible for laying down some 4,000 miles of wires before the Mutiny. Charles was working on the line between Calcutta and Agra but was dismissed the service in 1856 suffering from a mental collapse following the death of his wife, Mary. He brought his one-year old daughter to England to be cared for by her grandparents and returned to India, probably to Agra, the same year. He must have been an eye-witness to the revolt in 1857. In 1863 he married Sophia Marshall and he retired to England in 1878. But the question is, was this the same Charles Shepherd who was a well-known photographer by the mid-1850s? If so, then he went into partnership with Arthur Robertson, and was initially based with him in Agra before transferring the studio to Shimla in 1863. The partnership

produced important topographical studies in north India before Charles Shepherd joined Samuel Bourne in 1865, creating Bourne & Shepherd, the well-known firm of photographers. The circumstantial evidence looks good, particularly as we know Charles' boss, William O'Shaughnessy was involved in early photography in Calcutta. Perhaps readers can help with the final, decisive piece of evidence?

BACSA member David Railton has been slowly uncovering more and more information about an ancestor, William Graham, who died in December 1819 and is buried in South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta. At first there seemed to be no clues, but fragments of William's life have started to appear. He was the son of Brevet Ensign Graham who was buried in the Lal Darwaza cemetery at Monghyr in 1829, thus surviving his son by ten years. William was born in 1775, but we do not know where. At the age of twenty he married Mary Jones, daughter of the Commissioner in Bihar and an Indian mother, Missory Khanam. A son was born to the couple and all we know about him was that he was not baptised ('unchristianed' as William put it), and that he moved to Patna as a young man. William's wife must have died because he remarries in 1816 to Charlotte Knipe and two children are born of this marriage, Charlotte Elizabeth and William Milton.

The probate for William's Will, completed in January 1821, the year of his death, tells a sorry tale of financial misdoing. Living 'in some style' he had been borrowing from his employers, the bankers Palmer & Co. and on William's death, his assets were insufficient to meet his liabilities. There was no maintenance for his second wife Charlotte and the two children. William had been the 'head bookkeeper' to Palmer & Co. and when that Company started to go bankrupt in the 1820s, it cannot have been helped by having an imprudent head book-keeper. So the questions are: does Ensign Graham's tomb still exist at Monghyr and is there more information to be found on William Graham's life? Strangely, William Hickey, the lawyer and writer, who was an inveterate gossip about Calcutta life does not mention Graham.

Viceroy's House, New Delhi - did you ever attend a banquet, dinner, garden party or afternoon tea there? Dr Lizzie Collingham, historian, teacher and food writer, has sent in the following message: 'I am looking for anyone who remembers visiting Viceroy's House either pre- or post-independence. I have been commissioned by the Indian President, who now lives there, to write a volume on 'Kitchens, Dining and Entertainment' at Rashtrapati Bhawan (President's House), which in the days of the Raj was the Viceroy's House.'

I am interested in any experiences of food or entertainments at the house from its inauguration in 1929 to the present day. State banquets or an 'at home' hosted by an Indian President would also be of interest. If you have any such memories, I would be very grateful if you could get in touch and I could arrange to interview you.' Lizzie Collingham e-mail: thslic@yahoo.co.uk or via the Editor please.

Last Autumn's *Chowkidar* asked for help to establish the meaning of 'shapendar'. It was found on the memorial inscription for Don Gonzalez De Lanciego who died in the Mandalay District, Burma, in 1838. Several people provided explanations. 'Those familiar with the Vereenigde Oostindische Compangie (VOC) the Dutch East India Company will have come across the term 'shabandar' harbourmaster' writes Mr Maarten Timmer. This was a pretty senior position in the hierarchy of the VOC, usually filled by a 'merchant' or a 'senior merchant'. The term is of Persian/Arabic origin 'shah bander' literally the ruler of the harbour and this title existed in the Malay States, and by extension to Burma, before the coming of Islamic traders.

SIKH SOLDIERS IN WORLD WAR ONE

BACSA marked the centenary of the outbreak of war by focussing on the role that Indian soldiers played in it. We invited Mr Jasdeep Singh Rahal, a curator at the National Army Museum, Chelsea to speak at the General Meeting on 24 October 2014. This is a summary of his talk.

'In the First World War, the Sikhs made up less than 1% of the population of India yet they comprised 20% of the British Indian Army. The relationship began during the early 1800s between the British and the ruler of Panjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh. There was a mutual agreement between the two by way of the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809, which stipulated a perpetual friendship between the British Government and the State of Lahore. After the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 a rapid succession of unfortunate events led to the disorder of the kingdom. The friendship and treaty broke down and resulted in the British and Sikhs engaging in two wars in the 1840s. The British faced the toughest opposition they had faced in India but the Sikhs were defeated and Panjab annexed. The Sikh army was disbanded but gained admiration and respect from the British. This quickly led to the recruitment of Sikh soldiers into the British Indian Army. For the next 60 years through events such as the Indian rebellion in 1857, the Afghan wars and the Boxer rebellion in 1900, the Sikhs time and time again proved that they were a very professional, loyal and effective force. Many Sikh

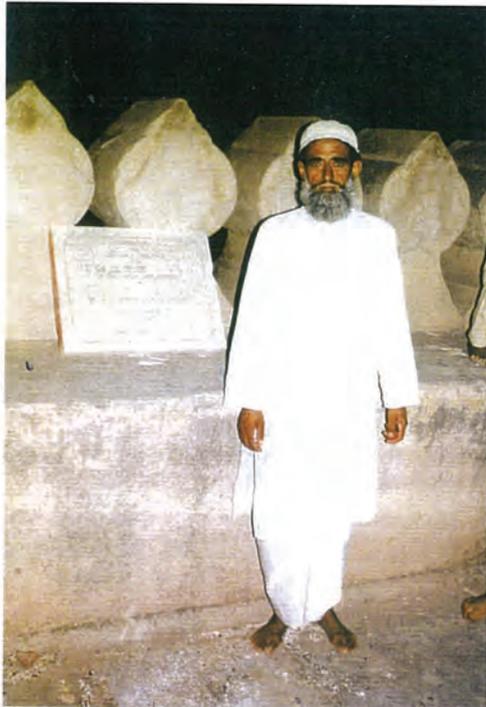
Regiments were raised and expanded as a result, some of which were the very first Indian Army regiments to arrive on the Western Front in 1914. During the First World War, more than 200,000 Sikh soldiers saw action in almost all major theatres of war including Festubert, Gallipoli and Salonika. The story of Subedar Manta Singh helps highlight the spirit of the Sikhs in the First World War. In the battle of Neuve Chappelle, Manta Singh of the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs wheeled his wounded British comrade Captain Henderson to safety with the aid of wheelbarrow he found in no man's land. Manta Singh was injured as a result and was sent for convalescence in Brighton where he developed gangrene in his leg and died of his wounds. His name is mentioned on the Indian Army Chhatri memorial near Brighton. The sons of Captain Henderson and Manta Singh also served together in the Second World War and the families are still friends today. In this period of centenary commemorations of the Great War, the role of the Indian Army is often overlooked but light must be shed on this untold story. It is difficult to determine the reason why there was such a large contribution from Sikhs in the First World War but this letter helps us understand the inner working of a Sikh soldier in the War. Risaldar Dayal Singh to Chuni Lal, Campbellpur, Attock District, Punjab. France, July 14, 1917. 'I am not afraid either to live or die. This is all in God's hands. I have escaped hitherto from a rain of shells and bombs, and I believe it will be the same in the future. If He has laid down that my work shall lie in the midst of such a blazing fire I shall go on doing it with His help. There are two points to note in this. The first is that God has ordained my career; and the second is that loyalty to the King compels me to serve him and to be true to my salt.' (see page 13)

A related World War One story comes from Calcutta where a memorial to honour Indian seafarers who died in the conflict is being restored. Called the Lascar War Memorial, it stands on the eastern bank of the Hughly near Prinsep Ghat. It consists of a tower with a gilt dome and four small minarets. The prow of a vessel projects from each side of the four-sided obelisk, which was designed by the British architect William Ingram Keir. Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal unveiled it in 1924. Unusually for such a memorial, one can enter inside to read the dedication plaques installed there. They commemorate the 896 seamen of Bengal, Assam and Upper India who died between 1914 and 1918. The word 'lascar' meaning a seaman, is not mentioned here. The memorial was restored in 1994 but more work was needed last year so Commodore Ahluwalia was put in charge with a Rs30 lakh budget for repair and restoration. He was assisted by Mr G.M. Kapur the INTACH chapter convenor for the city. The memorial certainly looks quite splendid today and is floodlit at night.



above: the restored tomb of Henry Blochmann (see page 2)

below: the roof-top plaque to Vans Agnew and Anderson at Multan (see page 3)



Civilians gather round the memorial obelisk at Sobraon where the East India Company defeated the Khalsa Army of the Sikhs on 10 February 1846 during the First Sikh War. (see page 11)

BOOKS BY BACSA MEMBERS

Malcolm – Soldier, Diplomat, Ideologue of British India: The Life of Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833)

John Malcolm

It is rare for an author of a biography to share the same name as his subject, but in this case it is true, as John Malcolm is a distant relative. It was his work in Iran (for Royal Dutch Shell) that led him to Sir John Malcolm, for Sir John is remembered in Iran, but almost forgotten elsewhere. However it was not until his retirement that he was able to undertake the necessary research, and that took several years, and much travelling. But the result is a magnificent study, which takes its place beside the Victorian life by Sir John Kaye (2 vols., London 1856), and fills out the sketch by Sir Rodney Pasley, another kinsman, *Send Malcolm* (BACSA 1982).

Sir John Malcolm was the seventh child (of 17) and fourth son of George Malcolm, a poor tenant farmer in Eskdale in the Scottish Borders. Despite poverty George had very good connections, and through a neighbour obtained a nomination for John as a cadet in the Madras Army. John was only eleven, but passed the oral examination at India House, and arrived in Madras in April 1783, aged thirteen. His service in India lasted 47 years, broken only by three periods of home leave. His army service formed the basis of his later diplomatic career, for he was a natural leader, and formed close bonds with his sepoys, aided by his social skills, and his ability to talk to them in their own languages, and thus to learn about their customs. He fought in the later stages of the wars against Tipu Sultan of Mysore, during which he met Colonel Arthur Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington (who became a lifelong friend), and in the Maratha and Pindari wars of 1802-1805 and 1817-1818; he commanded a division in the decisive defeat of Holkar at Mehidpur in 1818.

Malcolm's diplomatic skills were developed in three embassies to Persia, marked by his affability, which gained the confidence of the Persian officials, and his ability to converse with them in fluent Persian. Unfortunately these embassies coincided with British Government missions led by Sir Harford Jones, and Malcolm clashed with him; little was gained for India, but Malcolm did collect materials for his magisterial *History of Persia* (2 vols., London 1815). Diplomacy was also demanded in 1818 when Malcolm was appointed Agent of the Governor General, Lord Hastings, to settle the relations between the petty States of Central India and the East India Company.

He achieved this by negotiating directly with the rulers, bypassing their officials; the treaties which Malcolm signed brought peace to Central India, and the experience provided the materials for his *Memoir of Central India* (2 vols., London 1823). Malcolm hoped that his success would be rewarded by his appointment as Governor of Bombay, but this went to his friend Mountstuart Elphinstone. The Governorship of Madras went to his friend Sir Thomas Munro; his proposal that Central India should be governed by a new Lieutenant Governor was turned down by the Court of Directors in London. Promotion to Major General, and the award of a GCB (Knight Grand Cross) did not pacify Malcolm, and so he went home on leave for five years, feeling that this was the end of his Indian career.

However, after five years of life as a country gentleman, and a fruitless search for a parliamentary seat, Malcolm did succeed Elphinstone as Governor of Bombay, but his three years there were not happy; the bureaucratic rules of the Bombay Council and Secretariat did not suit Malcolm's independent spirit, and there were two major problems. It was a time of austerity, and neither the civil service nor the army appreciated the cuts which were forced on them. The second problem was a bitter dispute with the Supreme Court over the Court's application of English law beyond the city's limits; this was opposed by Malcolm, and was only settled in 1830, in Malcolm's favour, by the Privy Council. Malcolm fled from these problems by making extensive tours of outlying districts, and by spending the hot weather at Mahabaleshwar. These tours were Malcolm's last opportunity to talk directly to local people, settle minor disputes, and apply his policy of governing newly-acquired territories. This involved minimum disruption of existing institutions and authorities, and the employment of Indians (he favoured Brahmins) in senior positions. His views were shared by his predecessor, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and to some extent by Sir Thomas Munro, but ignored by later reformers.

Throughout his career Malcolm showed an infectious enthusiasm for his work, immense energy, and delight in riding and hunting; no wonder that the nickname 'Boy Malcolm' stuck to him. He made friends easily, and was intensely loyal, but was not above using his friends to advance his career. His public speaking was almost garrulous, and he tended to dominate conversations with a flood of anecdotes. For a boy whose formal education ceased at thirteen, Malcolm developed remarkable literary gifts, bombarding his superiors with voluminous Minutes, and publishing nine books. He was devoted to his immediate family, his beloved wife Charlotte and their five

children, and to his numerous brothers, three of whom were knighted, and his sisters; many relatives contrived to visit Malcolm in India, or in various English homes. Despite settling in the London area, Malcolm remained true to his Scottish roots, and had many Scottish friends in the Indian services. Sir John Kaye used 'a room-full' of Malcolm's private papers, but most had disappeared, victims of flood and fire, when John Malcolm came to write. His search for archival materials extended across the globe, and included access to significant private collections; his bibliography of printed sources is exemplary. The result is a fine work which will be the envy of many historians, and the standard study of Sir John Malcolm's life and work for years to come. (RJB)

2014 John Donald, Edinburgh ISBN 978 1 906566 73 9. £30.00 pp641

The Nicholas Brothers & A.T.W. Penn: Photographers of South India 1855-1885
Christopher Penn

The author published in 2008 a moving account of his discovery that an ancestor, Albert TW Penn, was an accomplished photographer working in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. This new publication, which moves far beyond family history, is a thorough and much-needed investigation into the lives and work of two professional photographers: his ancestor Albert Penn and a contemporary James Perratt Nicholas. Perhaps because they worked in southern India, away from the commercial centres of Bombay and Calcutta, these two important photographers have been hitherto neglected but this volume goes a long way to rectify that.

An introduction sets the scene in India, presenting the state of photography in both Britain and in India, and brings our focus on to Ooty (Ootacamund) in the Nilgiri Mountains, where both photographers were based. There follow eight abundantly illustrated chapters exploring the lives of Penn and Nicholas, and then colour plates. The Nicholas brothers, John and James, were to establish a studio in Madras in c.1858, with a second branch in Ooty. They quickly became known, through their portraiture work, exhibitions and their connection with the Photographic Society, as the leading professional photographers in the south. They were well connected (James's wife was the daughter of the man who established the booksellers Higginbotham's) and their business expanded in the 1860s. In 1864 they took on the young ATW Penn who had just arrived in India aged only fifteen and a half. The following year Penn moved to Ooty and was to remain there, running the photographic business well into the early twentieth century.

Throughout the 1860s, the firm Nicholas Brothers expanded rapidly, increasing its stock of views to cover Madras, Coonoor, Bangalore and Calicut as well as portraits of notable individuals and ethnographic studies. This continued even after the departure of John Nicholas in 1866, after which JP Nicholas ran the business alone. The author has conducted meticulous research in museums, libraries and archives in several countries, painstakingly identifying photographs potentially taken by Nicholas or Penn and then working out from inventories, inscriptions on the photographs, newspaper advertisements and other ephemeral material if they can be attributed to his two photographers.

This level of detailed research is rare within the history of photography, where it is not uncommon to find photographs dated to sometime within a couple of decades. Here the author's dedication is evident, as it is painstaking work and the results will serve as a valuable reference for future historians. The history of the two studios is followed until the deaths of the two photographers: Nicholas in 1895 and Penn in 1924.

Such close attention to the running of the businesses provides a very rare glimpse into the role played by a photographic studio in British society during the Raj. We see how important photography was as a way of communicating with Britain and how portraits and landscapes both helped people feel at home in India by keeping memories fresh and alive, as well as feeding a desire for news and information about the country. The author also focuses on the art and artistry involved in many of the photographs, drawing comparisons with leading professional and government photographers, including ED Lyon, Samuel Bourne and WW Hooper.

Gradually, through the telling of this detailed yet very readable story, we slowly put together a complete picture of what it was like to work as a photographer in India. Perhaps because of the personal connections, this is more than just a reliable, well-researched biography; we move from individual details, such as the tragic death of Penn's young son aged fifteen months, to broad context involving governors, politics and current affairs, and the story is the richer for it. Since producing this book, the author has self-published a further volume (*The Herklots Folder of Photographs*, 2014, 154pp., 74 plates) concentrating on a recently-discovered portfolio of nineteenth-century photographs of Coonoor and the Nilgiris. The photographer of these photographs remains unidentified, but he speculates that the important figure of Dr Alexander Hunter, the principal of the Madras School of Arts, may have had a hand in the production of the photographs or their

compilation. This shows that for the author, despite having produced a comprehensive account of the work of Penn and Nicholas, the exploration of photography in India continues, and that can only be a good thing. (SCG)

2014 Bernard Quaritch Ltd. ISBN 978 0 9563012 6 0. £45.00 pp234

Sahib, Bibi, Nawab. Baluchar Silks of Bengal: 1750-1900

Eva-Maria Rakob, Shilpa Shah, Tulsi Vatsal

This is a beautifully produced book about a fascinating and unusual subject – Baluchar silks. It was published to coincide with an exhibition of these lovely fabrics, usually saris or shawls, from the Tapi Collection at Surat. ‘Baluchar’ in the Bengali language means a sandbank, an odd name for a particular type of silk. But one has to remember that the Bhagirathi which separates the little town of Murshidabad from its sister town on the left bank, is a capricious river that has been known to change course in historic times. In doing so, it has thrown up sandbanks which have become amalgamated over time into the fertile soil of the twin towns, or has slipped back into the river. The area round Murshidabad was particularly suited for mulberry trees, the habitat of the domesticated silk-worm moth. It produced a creamy silk which took and held dyes beautifully although it is the extraordinary richness of the woven patterns which distinguish Baluchar silks. The deep sari borders typically show figures in procession, or individually framed in small alcoves. Many of them are of course Indian people – rajas shown in profile, holding a flower, men and women smoking hookahs, carriages pulled by prancing horses and so on. But there are Europeans here too, woven into the fabric.

A fine example has a European couple in early 19th century dress seated in a carriage, the man holding what looks rather like a beer bottle. In another three English soldiers stand guard around a large cannon and in a third, a steam locomotive puffs happily along the woven border with its carriages and European engine driver. Passenger trains were operating from the early 1850s, presenting as the writers say, a new and exotic subject for Murshidabad weavers. There is tantalisingly almost no written evidence about the origin of Baluchar silks and it is only from internal evidence like the woven train that approximate dating can be made. It seems to have started about 1750, possibly earlier, and this coincides with the heyday of Murshidabad, before it lost its place as the capital of Bengal to British Calcutta. Stylistically there are links with Gujarati saris, and the suggestion is

made that Jain merchants from India’s west coast brought patterns to Bengal when they emigrated to the rich Murshidabad court. Baluchar saris were exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1855 and the Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester in 1887. Fashions change however, and the plainer ‘Bombay sari’ was introduced by upper-class, westernised Bengali women, which meant the multi-coloured Baluchars were subsequently seen as over-ornate and old-fashioned. By 1894 there were only six *naqsha* (pattern) looms left in Murshidabad and only one man who knew how to set them up. Thirty-four pieces, mainly saris, are illustrated here in colour, with explanatory notes. A lovely book. (RLJ)

*2014 Tapi Collection, Surat. Email: info@tapicollection.com Rs500 plus postage, pp100

BOOKS BY NON-MEMBERS WHICH WILL INTEREST READERS

Masked: The Life of Anna Leonowens, Schoolmistress at the Court of Siam
Alfred Habegger

Anna and the King of Siam and ‘The King and I’ (the book, film, and musical story) of Anna Leonowens née Edwards (1831-1915), a British school teacher at the court (1862-1867) of King Mongkut, Rama IV of Siam, unintentionally made that widowed woman, with two children, known worldwide. Who was Anna? Habegger summarises her unconventional life with these words: ‘The British ancestor who had fathered a mixed-race progeny in India and by doing so had left his descendants...a legacy of shame, ambition, painful effort, and endless concealment.’ Born in Ahmednagar (now in Maharashtra) growing up in Poona, schooled in Bombay, the 18-year-old daughter of an Irishman and a Eurasian mother married Thomas Leonowens from Enniscorthy in County Wexford, Ireland.

It was at this moment that Anna pretended to be of Welsh stock: with slightly darker skin than most English women in India and black hair though strictly speaking she was a ‘quarter Eurasian’ – at least in the eyes of colonial British society. Starting their married life, the couple went to Western Australia. Four years later, in 1857, Thomas found a far better job in the Straits Settlements but died in Penang in May 1859. To earn her living, Anna set up a private school in Singapore. And here it was where King Mongkut’s Chinese agent, looking for a suitable schoolmistress for the children of the King’s harem, came across her.

A contract was signed and in early spring 1862 Anna took up her job. What she later wrote about her five years in Bangkok, what she told her American audience in her lecture tours turned more and more into a subjective description of her life and the court in the 1860s. Habegger compares and analyses these 'facts' with the information he gained from his research of contemporary sources: papers, diaries, reports/letters from businessmen, diplomats, journalists, and missionaries living in Bangkok. And Habegger unveils an Anna being proud of her British (white race) origin, often arrogant, stubborn and getting furious, but seldom diplomatic in her relations with the King: Less 'the King and I', more 'I and the King.'

She dealt with the King at eye level only which later made her very sympathetic for the American public. Habegger's second part of his documentation deals intensively with Anna's eleven years in New York and the New England states. When she arrived there she immediately was supported by people who had once been to south east Asia and she was admitted to a very influential society. What she told and wrote was highly welcomed by the public who had hardly ever heard anything about Siam. Though some doubts arose from her description of the Siamese court, she didn't once leave her adopted path, even when directly confronted with facts differing from her reports. Among these cautious critics was Henry James. As Anna's fame and attraction began to decline, her daughter married a banker and the family moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia and later to Montreal. On purpose, Habegger has left out the biographical section covering Anna's life after 1878 until her death. This includes her five years at Kassel, in Germany, where she sent her grandchildren for a first-class education outside the English-speaking world - and the three years at Leipzig where she chaperoned her most beloved grand-daughter Anna Leonowens Fyshe, who studied the piano.

The third part of Habegger's book deals with Anna's revival. After her death she was soon forgotten until Margaret Landon discovered Anna's publications - and wrote the first biography *Anna and the King of Siam* (New York, 1944). She brought back Anna from the dead, but she romanticised her life so much that the book became 'far more misleading than anything Anna had written herself'. Habegger has reserved one fifth of *Masked* to a most valuable appendix including genealogical tables which I have never found in similar biographies. He has compiled everything so carefully that the book will remain a reference work for any further research. As this documentation is crammed with facts and analyses, I recommend to read a biography

(half the size of Habegger's book) first which tries to cover Anna's entire life, which will give the frame that Habegger fills with details - *Bombay Anna: The Real Story and Remarkable Adventures of the 'King and I' Governess* by Susan Morgan, published by the University of California Press in 2008. (HH)

2014 University of Wisconsin Press. Distributed in Britain and Europe through Eurospan. ISBN 978 0 299 29830 2. £24.95 pp 543

Colonising Plants in Bihar 1760 – 1950 Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff

This book is unlikely to be a best-seller yet it is packed full of interesting information and draws on the memoirs of several early BACSA members, who came from planter families in the area. The author's thesis is that not only a country, and its peoples, can be 'colonised' by a foreign power, but that the very vegetation of the country can be too. If this sounds bizarre, then consider for a moment the frenzy for indigo in the late eighteenth century, when every lady of fashion had to have a blue-dyed gown. This was orchestrated by the East India Company, anxious to make a profit for its Court of Directors in London. The history of tobacco in India began earlier when European explorers to the Americas introduced the plant and there are accounts from the beginning of 1600 of it being smoked in the sub-continent. Smoking is not the only thing one can do with tobacco, of course, as the author points out. It can also be chewed, or inhaled as snuff.

The topic of why India and the Middle East adopted the hookah, where smoke is passed over scented water, while the West preferred pipes, cigars and cigarettes, could have been explored more fully. But there is plenty of fascinating detail here – the difference between *desi* (local) and *vilayati* (export quality) tobacco grown in Bihar; how the loss of Britain's American colonies at the end of the eighteenth century incentivised the East India Company to begin tobacco planting in India, and why cash crops are not necessarily a good thing. Land that could have been used for growing food grains and vegetables to feed local people, was instead given over to crops that made money for the East India Company; for the British Government in India, and for European planters. One has to weigh up the benefits for economic growth against the fact that local people simply didn't have enough to eat. Amitav Ghosh's splendid book *Sea of Poppies* (which is not referenced here) relates in heartbreaking detail how villagers around Ghazipur suddenly found their landscape transformed with the planting of opium poppies by East India Company staff.

This is a rich book. The author has consulted a huge number of sources and she draws her examples from a wide and eclectic range of published material. One senses that English is not her native language but the occasional infelicity really only adds to the charm of this book. There are a number of black and white photographs, some taken by the author herself, others from relevant publications. Recommended (RLJ)

*2014 Partridge India ISBN 978 1 4828 3911 1 pp464 Rs 749

Cawnpore to Cromar: The MacRoberts of Douneside Marion Miller

BACSA's first residential visit in 2012 was to Douneside, a large comfortable house in Aberdeenshire. It was chosen not only as a convenient base from which to visit nearby Scottish houses with Indian connections, but also because of its own links to the industrial city of Cawnpore. How these links were forged is the subject of this engaging book by the author who lives in the village of Tarland, adjacent to the Douneside estate. Sir Alexander MacRobert, as he was to become, started life in 1854 in very humble surroundings, in an Aberdeen tenement, the son of working-class parents. Aberdeen was at that time a city of mills, particularly textiles and paper. Alexander began work as a sweeper at the Stoneywood Paper Mill, but took advantage of the city's night-schools, including the Mechanics' Institute. Extraordinarily gifted and hard-working, by 1883 he is travelling to Cawnpore to take up a job at the Muir Cotton Mills.

The one weakness of this book is that we never find out what Alexander actually does. He studies science at the South Kensington Museum, London, but is also an auditor, a chemist, a contractor, a manager and a businessman – rather hard to pin down. He finds that the Muir Cotton Mills job has already been filled, but joins the Cawnpore Woollen Mill and within a few years has been able to turn this ailing company around. One of his first tasks was to create a brand name, and he adopted the red tamarind flower, the lal imli, that grew outside the mill compound. Soon the Lalimli logo became a symbol of quality and business flourished by supplying the Army with warm clothing during its constant forays on the Afghan border. Expansion took place with the purchase of the New Egerton Mill in the Punjab, and from then on every venture he undertook was a success. By the end of his Indian career, the Viceroy, Lord Minto, was requesting Mac, as he was affectionately called, to visit Afghanistan and advise the Amir how to modernise his country and develop a woollen mill in Kabul.

Sadly, his personal life was less happy. His first wife, Georgina, died from cancer in 1905 after a long decline. The couple had been married for twenty-two years, but were childless. Four years after Georgina's death, Mac met and married Rachel Workman, a young American woman of good family, who was returning home from a visit to India with her parents. Thirty years younger than Mac, the marriage was soon blessed with three sons, Alasdair, Roderic and Ian. They were still young boys when Mac died at Douneside with his wife beside him. His achievements were listed in his many obituaries in India and Britain. He has been a governor of Roorkee Engineering College, and of the Agricultural College, Cawnpore. He was President of the Indian branch of St John's Ambulance Brigade and a member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. From an unpropitious background, he had risen to the top of British Indian society. The latter half of this book relates the heart-breaking loss of his three boys, now grown men, all killed in war accidents within three years of each other. Their mother, the indomitable Rachel, funded a bomber aircraft for the RAF, aptly named MacRoberts Reply. She lies buried in the garden of her beloved Douneside, where the MacRobert Trust provides holiday accommodation for service personnel at a very reasonable rate. A readable and informative biography of the MacRoberts family. (RLJ)

2014 Librario Publishing Ltd. Brough House, Milton Brodie, Kinloss, Moray IV36 2UA. ISBN 978 1 909238 09 1. £12.99 pp206

Steamboats on the Indus: The Limits of Western Technological Superiority in South Asia Clive Dewey

This is such an important book that it is surprising it has not been reviewed in Britain. The distinguished author has turned conventional thinking about engineering in British India on its head, by revealing the debacle of steam-powered boats on one of India's greatest rivers. Three companies were set up in the 19th century: The Bombay Flotilla; the short-lived Oriental Inland Steam Navigation Company and the Indus Steam Flotilla. 'The search for a viable vessel – a steamboat suited to the "hazards of navigation" on the Indus and its tributaries – went on for forty years. But no-one found a solution: it was like the quest for the grail.' There were three essential criteria, unfortunately all mutually exclusive. The ideal steamer had to have a very shallow draught, not more than 18 inches or it would run aground on the shifting sandbanks. It needed a powerful engine to drag barges upstream, against the current and it had to have effective steering.

But if the ship-builder increased the engine's power the additional weight meant the boat would sit deeper in the water and if the boat was built with a wide flat bottom to accommodate the engine, then it became harder to steer. The problem was never really solved. What seemed perfectly feasible on the Clyde at Glasgow was clearly not going to work on the Indus. Steamboats brought out at huge expense from Britain had to be literally rebuilt when they reached India and their working life was very limited. Then there was the problem of fuel. Wood was freely available, but was not as effective as coal, and good quality coal was hard to find. Hopes were frequently raised when coal seams were found, only to be dashed when the seams petered out. So the boats had to make frequent stops to take on board great stacks of felled trees, whose weight slowed them down, and led to deforestation.

With all these problems one might wonder why the steamboat companies persisted for so long, from 1839 to 1878, to be precise. A lot of it had to do with the unshakeable Victorian belief that technology was the way forward, not just in Britain, but throughout much of the Empire too. Railways were the obvious example, speeding up the import and export of goods and moving soldiers quickly across country where they were needed. The electric telegraph which at first ran parallel to the rail tracks was another – information between cities could now be transmitted in hours rather than days. But the Indus was where British ingenuity failed. The river was treacherous, changing course without warning, full of shoals and sandbanks that themselves moved, so that charts were useless. Every journey was different from the one before. And the boats were terribly slow. Lieutenant Christopher recorded a painful journey when it took seven days to cover fourteen miles. It had been hoped that river transport would enable soldiers to be quickly moved to trouble spots on the north-west frontier but this proved not to be the case. *The Planet*, for example, taking men to the first Afghan War kept running aground and when the soldiers went into the river to haul and pull the boat off, the current was so strong they lost their balance. With immense detail Dewey examines every aspect of steam travel – the high fares which meant only the rich could sail, the cost of fuel, the risk of being attacked from the banks by warring tribes, the personalities of the captains and their crew, the unsatisfactory bridges over the river, the ill-fated ferries and much else. He contrasts all this with the small country boats that used the river, 'complex and fragile' as they were, but viable and cheap. A masterful book. (RLJ)

*2014 Oxford University Press, Delhi. ISBN 978 0 19 809219 3. Rs2,395.00. pp296

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When writing to the Secretary and expecting a reply, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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Members' email addresses will not be given out. If an email is sent for a member, via the Editor, it will be forwarded to that member. It is then at the discretion of the member whether they reply or not.

If planning any survey of cemetery MIs, either in this country or overseas, please check with the Projects Officer or the Honorary Secretary to find out if it has already been recorded. This is not to discourage the reporting of the occasional MI notice, 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 £4.00 for registered airmail for a slim hardback, and £3.00 for a slim paperback. Sterling cheques should be made payable to Ram Advani. Catalogues and price lists will be sent on request. Email: radvanilko@gmail.com

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Josiah Webbe's handsome memorial at Seringapatam (see page 3)