



# CHOWKIDAR

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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 1,100 (2019) 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](http://www.bacsa.org.uk)**

Founded by the late Theon Wilkinson, MBE

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## PLANTATION DESPAIR

Nostalgia for the Raj often presents a glamorous picture of British life in India before Independence in 1947, but careers outside the major cities could be challenging and lonely. BACSA member and historian Dr Avril Powell tells us a tragic story about a relative.

‘On a recent visit to Kerala I visited my uncle’s grave in a tiny cemetery perched on a hillside overhanging the precipitous Western Ghat highway. St John’s Church is situated where the road connecting the coast with the hill country, after an almost vertical ascent, and many breath-stopping hairpin bends, flattens out to the small town of Vyathri, and to the green vistas of the tea plantations beyond. Belonging now to the Church of South India, the cemetery contains only half a dozen pre-Independence graves. BACSA granted £400 some twenty years ago to prune the undergrowth and to repair its perimeter fence (apparently in order to keep the local goats ‘out’, or perhaps, according to correspondence at the time, to keep them ‘in’). Consequently, when my niece visited shortly afterwards, the graves were in excellent condition. Sadly things have deteriorated since: the chapel roof leaks, the stone edging of my uncle’s monument has been removed, and the inscription is half-obsured. (*see page 84*) I met the minister, the Reverend Anil David, who, fairly new to the parish, knew very little about the history of the cemetery, but who unlocked it for me and expressed interest in my quest.

‘This quest was to explore the background to a sad tale of utter despair with plantation existence, followed by suicide just as the Second World War commenced. For on 6 October 1939, my uncle, Walter Raymond Bradford, aged 32, and apparently among the ‘most promising younger members of the planting managership’, shot himself in his bungalow on the Chembra Peak tea estates, after first shooting his horse. The latter action was not as unusual as it may sound, as according to local informants, planters often acted so, even when merely leaving a region, for fear others might ill-treat their steeds. As for the suicide, family letters suggest that such despondency was the culmination of a number of causes. Born in Upper Burma, the son of a Methodist missionary, it seems that my uncle was directed to a plantation career for lack of alternative career prospects, following an indifferent record at a famous Methodist boarding school in Britain (a case, most probably, of what would now be recognised as dyslexia). By the time of his suicide, thirteen years later, having had only one home leave, he had nevertheless advanced from assistant manager to manager of two tea

estates in the Chembra Peak region of present day Wyannad district. But his letters emphasize the extreme loneliness of such plantation postings, an impression certainly supported by memoirs from other tea plantations in India, especially when marriage was discouraged until ten years' service was complete. In his case, at least one 'jilting' by a proposed bride left him still a bachelor in 1939. Letters written after his suicide by his general manager, showing great empathy for his situation, suggest that matters reached desperation point when, on the declaration of war, unlike many 'other fellows of his age' who were called up for war service, he was passed over on the practical ground that his presence was vital, war or no war, to ensure the flow of tea to the motherland.

The local planters' association organized an immediate burial, with one of their number officiating in a 'lay' ceremony. War conditions made correspondence with the family in Britain very difficult, but eventually a headstone and inscription were provided, with donations from local planters. Present family members are now relieved to know that their relative was buried in consecrated land (although at that date suicides were usually buried in unconsecrated graves), but as a child I was never told of the manner of the death, and not until my mother's death did I read the locked-away correspondence. Yet, the shock of the event in Wyannad itself was such that, sixty years later, the children of estate workers could relate details (such as the shooting of the horse) handed down to them by their parents.

Written records and oral testimonies are too sparse to contemplate a full memoir of a planting career suddenly cut off, and a sad one at that. However, my recent stay at a nearby 'homestay' in the heart of the plantations surrounding Chembra Peak, and the help of my host, Mr Victor Dey (awarded a life-membership by BACSA for his earlier services to cemetery research in Kerala), have stimulated an interest in the wider question of the under-researched lives of the many others occupying the 'sub-altern' stratum of British, and increasingly Indian, assistant-managership on such plantations during the final years of the Raj. There has been considerable study recently of social aspects of plantation life in Assam and Sri Lanka, but Wyannad, in the remote north-east of Kerala state, has had scarcely any attention (although Heather Lovatt's evocative history of a neighbouring Kerala district, in *Above the Heron's Pool*, published by BACSA, provides a parallel context). I welcome contact with any BACSA members who have knowledge of plantation conditions during the inter-war years in Kerala in general, but in this particular district in particular.

## MAIL BOX

BACSA members get up to all kinds of things, apart from visiting cemeteries and readers will enjoy this story about the BBC programme 'Who Do You Think You Are?' 'Long time member Geordie Burnett Stuart recently shared a happy day's filming at his home in the Scottish Highlands with our new national treasure, Oscar and Bafta winner, Olivia Coleman who was starring in the new series. Olivia's ancestor Captain William Slessor of the East India Company died in a 'shooting accident' near Kisenganj in northern Bihar. It would be wonderful if William's tomb could be found. Tearful stories of William and his brother John (Geordie's ancestor) leaving Oporto in Portugal aged seven and nine in 1785 for an education in England reduced Olivia to tears. The story came to light due to the publication in 1993 of *The Backbone: Diaries of a Military Family in the Napoleonic Wars* skilfully edited by the late Alethea Hayter, author of the renowned *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*. *The Backbone* told the story of John Henry Slessor and his mother Harriot.

'William Slessor went to India as a cadet in the Company's Army, aged fifteen. He died before his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and his daughter by his Bihari local wife was taken to England. She was lovely looking and obviously of a sweet disposition as she found a husband on the boat on the way home. She returned to India with her second husband many years later. By then she was known as India Harriot, named after William's mother. When, as was the custom, William's effects were sold to his fellow officers, they fetched the princely sum of Rs 2,775. Among 12 page of items are:

1 bay horse Rs 600	toast rack Rs28
1 gray horse Rs120	couple of hounds Rs 50
1 poled tent Rs120	1 elephant Rs 27
1 telescope Rs 32	1 terrier Rs 24
1 set of mahogany chairs Rs 130	4 goats Rs 65
double barrellled gun Rs 200	7 cases of botts. of Gin Rs 125
medicine chest (including	7 pint botts. of Rum Shrub Rs 80
medicine ) Rs 50	2 cows and calves Rs 110
glass hookah Rs 29	8 bullocks Rs 75
watch Rs 58	

In addition, at his death he had debts in the bazaar and wages owed to 26 full- and part-time servants including grass cutters, 2 mahouts, khitmatgars, tailors, cooks, bullock men, etc. It conjures up a glorious

image of a young man living a rich life in Bihar in the very early 1800s. Although just a lowly captain in the 7<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry (Foot), he still left at his death a decent sum of money all carefully accounted for in Calcutta 10 months after his death and duly handed over to his mother in Portugal three years later.'

BACSA was recently able to help new member Mrs Susan Hunt obtain a photograph of the grave of her step great grandfather Colonel Turnbull of the 15<sup>th</sup> Bengal Cavalry. Mrs Hunt would have liked to visit the grave herself, but because it lies in the Sheikh Bagh cemetery in Srinagar, Kashmir, this was not feasible because of the deteriorating political situation. So she was delighted when BACSA's Secretary, Peter Boon was able to get the grave photographed by the Revd. Viney Sunny. It is still in reasonably good condition and there is an intriguing story about its occupant too. (*see page 84*)

'Colonel Turnbull married my great grandmother Kate Burton on 16 November 1874 at St Luke's Parish Church in Chelsea,' Mrs Hunt tells us. The couple lived for six years in India, but do not appear to have had any children. Kate then returned home to England, describing herself as a widow, although her husband was very much alive and working in India. The reason for this deception is not clear, but it became known that Kate had given birth to an illegitimate child seemingly before her marriage. It may be that when the Colonel learnt this, she was sent home in disgrace and found it convenient to conceal her failed marriage. The child was brought up in England by a childless couple, and was to become Susan Hunt's grandfather. And what of the Colonel? He chose to remain in India and retired there, meeting an unusual fate. The inscription on his tomb reads: 'In Loving Memory of Colonel Sydney Drummond Turnbull, 15<sup>th</sup> Bengal Lancers, Retired, who died in Kashmir 21<sup>st</sup> February 1911, aged 66, from wounds received in an encounter with a leopard.' On the other side of the slab is a quotation from John 3.21 'And one that doeth truth cometh to the light' to which has been added the non-Biblical lines 'So he living sought light diligently and dying could by Thou see that great light.'

Curiously when Susan Hunt made contact with a member of the Colonel's family, they didn't know that he had ever been married. It seems to have been something Colonel Turnbull didn't want known, yet after his death Kate received a widow's pension. 'I shall almost certainly never know who my great grandfather was' says Mrs Hunt, except that he was evidentially already married when he met Kate, and that he provided financially for her and the child.

Aitchison College in Lahore was originally established in Amballa by the British government in India as an elite educational establishment for the young relatives of the 'Ruling Chiefs of the Punjab'. After the Mutiny of 1857, when the Punjab had (only just) been prevented from joining in, it was decided that education based on the English public school system was the way forward. (Mayo College in Ajmer was set up with the similar aim of educating the Princes of India.) There is no doubt that Aitchison College, named after the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, is probably the most impressive-looking college in the sub-continent, with its large grounds and Cordoban-inspired architecture. It is all the sadder then that the grave of its first Principal, Walter Allen Robinson, lies neglected in the Taxilla Gate cemetery near the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort.

Major Mazhar Pervez Akhtar, a former Housemaster at the College, with a keen interest in history, set out to learn more about the Britons who served the College in its early days. He first discovered a bronze plaque erected in the Cathedral Church of the Resurrection, opposite the Lahore High Court, which commemorates the Governor of the College, Lieutenant General Samuel Black. A Yorkshire man born near Sheffield in 1828, Black served for many years as the Military Secretary to the Punjab Government, after a career as a soldier, during which he was awarded the Mutiny Medal. He died at sea, off Gibraltar in 1893. Finding this plaque decided Major Akhtar to explore further and with the help of the Pastor, Shahid Meraj, the burial registers were examined. There at the bottom of page 43 was this entry: 'Mr. W.A. Robinson died of sunstroke on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1895 at the age of 55 years and was buried on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1895.' The cemetery plot number was 5, and the grave number 15.

Armed with this information a preliminary search was made of the cemetery which is indeed in a sorry state. Although still open for burials, it faces the familiar problems of drug users, 'night stragglers' and anti-social elements. 'The headstones and holy crosses on most of the graves were either missing or stolen and the wordings scratched making it difficult to determine the identity of the graves. The majority of these were covered with dry foliage and layers of dust mixed with sand. Others had crumbling side walls and unrecognisable epitaphs – on many the top plaster or cement layers had lost its bonding with bricks laid underneath.' Dispirited, the small search party returned to the Cathedral to re-examine a rough sketch map in the burial register showing the plots, but without scale, so it was difficult to estimate the distance from the central path to the Robinson grave.

Nevertheless, the following day, a larger party set out and this time was successful. The gravestone was covered with loose earth, mounds of dead leaves, overhanging wild shrubs and crimson grass. At first, only the letters Ait were visible, but by scratching away, the word Aitchison was revealed and the full inscription: 'In loving memory of Walter Allen Robinson, Principal Aitchison Chiefs' College Lahore who died on the 11th June 1895 in the 55<sup>th</sup> Year. God is Love' The name of the stonemason Dhian Singh, Lahore was inscribed on the left-hand side. (see page 85) Major Akhtar reminds us that Walter Robinson deserves to be credited as the Principal responsible for nurturing the embryo college, which began in Amballa as the Punjab Chiefs' College, with only 12 pupils, before moving to Lahore in 1886. Robinson had previously served as vice-principal at La Martinère College in Lucknow during the 1860s. He is certainly a man to be remembered today and it is to the credit of those involved in the rediscovery of his grave that this is now possible.

The little village of Aston, some miles south west of Nantwich in Cheshire, seems an unlikely place to find a connection with 19<sup>th</sup> century India. Yet on the Wrenbury Road stands The Bhurtpore Inn, with an exceptionally fine painted sign-board of a handsome turbaned and moustachioed sepoy holding a mortar. Bharatpur, as it is now spelled, is best known today for its famous bird sanctuary, developed in an old hunting park. It lies about 30 miles west of Agra and was therefore of strategic importance to the East India Company which tried to storm its great 'Iron' Fort (the Lohagarh) after the successful capture of Delhi in 1803. The Fort's outer wall was formidable, strengthened with vertical tree trunks and measuring six feet thick in some places. It was surrounded by a deep, wide moat and was fiercely defended by its Jat inhabitants.

By 1825, Stapleton Cotton (Lord Combermere), the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief determined to put together a substantial force to mount another attack. He marched to the Fort with 19 infantry regiments, supported by cavalry and two companies of Gurkhas, the first time they had been actively employed by the East India Company following the Anglo-Nepalese war. Bombardment of the Fort with 24-pounder cannons began in December 1825, initially with little success. The following month Combermere ordered mines packed with explosives to be inserted under parts of the wall. Fierce fighting continued even after the mines had been detonated but the city surrendered on 18 January 1826 with a large number of Jat casualties and a further 7,000 taken prisoner. British casualties were estimated at 563, although deaths among Indian and Gurkha troops increased the total to around 1,000.



Seven British officers were killed. It was a striking victory for the Company and is remembered in Britain today by the captured Bhurtpore Gun that stood for many years at the Royal Artillery Barracks at Woolwich. And of course, The Bhurtpore Inn, originally a humble one-roomed hostelry surrounded by a small-holding rented from the adjoining Combermere estate. The Inn was extended and renamed after the victory and still flourishes today being named as Cheshire's CAMRA Pub of the Year in 2018. A handsome marble tomb in the local church, St Margaret's at Wrenbury, commemorates Lord Combermere who died in 1865. Strangely there seems to be no existing memorial to the men who died during the Bhurtpore siege although two of the officers, Brigadier-General Wilbraham Tollemache Edwards and Captain H.B. Armstrong of His Majesty's 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment are commemorated at Meerut.

### **CAN YOU HELP?**

Writing from Switzerland BACSA member Cynthia Versaci-Lloyd asks if anyone can help with the location of a street scene found in her father's photograph album. (*see page 85*) There was nothing written on the back of the photograph and hours spent online trying to identify it have drawn a blank. Two views show a substantial archway standing in the middle of a badly damaged street. The inscription above the keystone says simply 'Fryer Memorial 1940'. The rubble in the street is unexplained – could it be an earthquake, or the aftermath of Partition riots? A tentative identification has been made of Major Arthur Clare Fryer, District Officer, frontier Constabulary in the North West Frontier Province. He died of wounds received in action against outlaws at Dera Ismail Khan District on 27 March 1940. This would seem to fit, particularly as Mrs Versaci-Lloyd's father was posted there in 1947. It seems unlikely that the archway still exists in this troubled area but any light that readers could throw on it and further details about Major Fryer would be welcomed.

How queries to BACSA are answered can sometimes be as interesting as the queries themselves. Here is a good example. Mr Nadir Cheema, a London-based lecturer, sent us a photograph of a child's gravestone earlier this year, which was found by a friend of his in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. The inscription read: 'In Memory of Our Darling CLAUD The dearly loved son of Charles & Jeannie McCulloch Who fell asleep in Jesus on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1900, aged 1 year and 9 months 'If thou should'st call me to resign what most I prize, 'Tis always thine, I only yield thee what is thine.'

Another tragic death in childhood, but what is curious is that the stone turned up in Islamabad, the new capital built in the 1960s. BACSA member and authority on graves in Pakistan, Sue Farrington was able to discover more about baby Claud. He was born on 13 January 1899 in the hill station of Murree and baptized there in August that year. Sadly he died from convulsions and was buried in Murree on the day he died, the burial service being taken by the Church of Scotland acting chaplain, the Revd. R. McCheyne Paterson. Claud's father Charles was a builder and contractor. We don't know how the little tombstone found its way from Murree to Islamabad, but at least it is now in safe keeping.

Mrs Gill Cheema, Nadir's wife, has her own connection with Pakistan too. Her maiden name was Talbot and she is the great grand-daughter of a jeweller who attended the 1911 Durbar in Delhi to take care of the royal jewels. He subsequently travelled through the Princely States selling jewellery. During a recent visit Mrs Cheema found a well-preserved monument in Harley Street cemetery in Rawalpindi to Frederic Augustus Talbot, who died there on 11 September 1863, aged 35. We assume this is a relative and more information on Frederic Talbot would be welcome.

BACSA member Dr Rosemary Raza is researching for a book on women artists in India - not only celebrated people like Lady Lawrence and Emily Eden, but those about whom less is known. Painting and sketching were considered ladylike activities, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the few pastimes that women could indulge in. It also gave them the excuse to travel and to seek out picturesque scenes and people. Two artists are of particular interest, the first is Amelia Hearsey, wife of Lionel Douglas Hearsey from the celebrated Anglo-Indian family. In 1973 Brighton Museum and Art Gallery presented an exhibition on 'The British in India' that included two items by Amelia Hearsey. There was an album of sketches (c.1861-1880) with views of Lakhimpur and Ranikhet and a second album with drawings of moths and butterflies done at Ranikhet between 1904-6. 'I wonder if by any chance someone might have a contact for the Hearsey family who are now in England?' asks Dr Raza. 'The second artist is May Dart, who illustrated flowers, trees and birds of India in the 'Nurseries of Heaven' series, with text by 'Torfrida'. The books were published in 1944 by Mrs May Dart, Wellington, Nilgiris; and another bird book gives her as living at Kotagiri, Nilgiris. She is interesting in fitting into the line of women illustrating popular accounts of India's natural world. I can find nothing about her on line - again possibly a *Chowkidar* reader might know something about her?'

Neil Marshall from Australia tells us he is looking for details about his great grandfather, Henry Percy Marshall, an Englishman who went to Ceylon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Henry was Superintendent of St Blane's tea estate at Dedugalla in the Dolosbage District. He is recorded as Manager there in 1898, some fifteen years after its establishment. Tea plantations were developed on the island after a devastating blight had wiped out its coffee plantations. What Neil Marshall didn't know until recently was that Henry had been killed by lightning while playing his piano on 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> October 1901, surely one of the strangest deaths recorded in South Asia. He was buried in 'Kandy Cemetery' (probably the Kandy Garrison Cemetery) on 30 October. Henry Marshall left two sons behind, one of them Neil's grandfather, and both boys were taken as orphans into a local Catholic Seminary in Kandy. What happened to their mother is unknown. The term 'orphan' was used more loosely then than it is today, particularly when the female parent was a local woman, alive, but unable to care for the offspring of a European. However, this is speculation and Neil Marshall says he would be pleased to receive answers to what is still an 118-year old mystery.

Paul Smith from Canada has an ancestor buried in the Neemuch cemetery in Madhya Pradesh. The tomb is in reasonably good condition, and in fact is quite a spectacular example of early 19<sup>th</sup> century funerary architecture (*see back cover*) with its fluted column, Ionic capital and pedestal urn. The inscription remains in good shape too, and reads: 'Sacred to the memory of J. Smith Surgeon 42<sup>nd</sup> Regt. N.I. who departed this life 24th July 1830 Aged 39. Sincerely regretted by all who had the pleasure of his friendship and acquaintance. This memento is erected by his affectionate and deeply afflicted Widow'. Paul Smith had a partial copy of this inscription which seemed to give his ancestor's age at the time of death as 59 years, which made him twenty years older than the family had thought. BACSA was able to help when new member Mrs Vicky Singh visited the cemetery in February this year and photographed the inscription. Although not easy to read, a close examination and comparison with the way '3' is inscribed in the year of death, 1830, does confirm that Surgeon Smith died at the age of 39, not 59. There are other interesting graves in this isolated cemetery including that of Roderick Peregrine Ochterlony, son of General David Ochterlony, who died in 1823, two years before his father. BACSA now has a list of most of the people buried in the cemetery of the cantonment, which was established in 1817. The cemetery is now under the Central Reserve Police Force command so access is restricted but possible with Police permission.

## **A TRIBUTE TO FOY NISSEN (1931-2018)**

In August 2018, India and Bombay in particular lost one of its most erudite and gifted historians – Foy Nissen. He had a deep knowledge of Bombay and its surroundings, which he often captured in photographs, and an extraordinary memory that helped to answer many a visitor's query. I first met Foy as an undergraduate student in 1994 when studying at Sophia College in Bombay, and was involved in a special research project. Students could choose any topic provided they had a mentor within the college who could act as their supervisor. Each project was done in pairs and two of our topics related to the History of Bombay. Our initial conversations with people about Bombay often brought up the name of Foy and so my colleague and I set up an interview with him at his home in Altamont Road.

What followed was an extraordinary association with a man who amazed us with his insightful comments, his deep interest and love for both the history of Bombay and India, and his willingness to engage with two undergraduate students who had no previous background knowledge about Bombay or indeed any specialist training in History at the undergraduate level. Foy shared with us key texts or pointed us in the direction of libraries or other individuals who might be able to give us a fuller picture. Our first project related to the history of Bombay - Foy urged us to explore parts of Bombay including the Sewri cemetery, the Victoria Gardens and other lesser-known parts of the city. This inspired my colleague and me to focus our energies on examining the monuments and tombstones of St Thomas Cathedral in the Fort area of Bombay. So our next research project sought to explain how the different memorials and their stories in this historical building were a 'Reflection of the Raj.' Foy was able to shed additional light on most of the key memorials and this helped to refine our research findings. After my undergraduate degree, I continued to be in touch with Foy as we shared a common love for visiting graveyards associated with the British in the hill stations and towns of India. Foy introduced me to the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA), and would always have some interesting story to share about a graveyard that I had visited on my travels. Sadly, Foy was diagnosed with dementia and passed away in August 2018. His neighbours and friends have been untiring in their efforts to keep his legacy alive. They have set up a website that showcases some of his photographs of Bombay, and also sheds light on his life and work (<http://foynissen.com/>). My debt to Foy for sharing his stories and his love for Bombay's history is immense, and I will always remember with gratitude his warmth and kindness, and Mangala's delicious cooking!

Dr Sunita Abraham

## THE SOUND OF BUGLES

After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 by the East India Company, a British cantonment was established near the Mughal tomb of Anarkali, outside the walled city of Lahore. It was not a good choice because the area was marshy and unhealthy and only two years later a new cantonment was built several miles to the south-east. Another tomb, that of the Sufi saint Hazrat Mian Mir who died in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, gave its name to the area which was developed with parade grounds, artillery lines, barracks, officers' bungalows, a church, a hospital and of course a cemetery. Also known as the British Infantry Graveyard, or Dharampura, the Mian Mir cemetery lies behind an army workshop on Infantry Road. It was visited by your Editor earlier this year. The cemetery had been closed at Partition in 1947 but was re-opened in the 1970s for further Christian burials.

It is a sad sight today, with a makeshift metal gate. The original entrance was a wide, handsome archway opening off the road that was paved in British days, but is a *kutch*a path today. On either side of the archway were rooms for the chowkidars. Nothing remains now and the archway itself is blocked with debris. Directly inside the cemetery was a raised pathway with smaller paths leading around the cemetery in a circular pattern. Only their outlines can be traced in the grass today together with the remnants of drainage channels. Much of the large site, an estimated 12 acres, is covered with grass, and a pile of broken headstones is heaped up near the gate. The oldest visible tomb is dated 1872, but the chief interest here are the memorials to a number of officers and men of the Royal Flying Corps which was formed at Lahore in September 1917. A memorial stone now propped against the wall reads: 'In Memory of No. 78889 C.G. Cady, Royal Flying Corps, who died at Lahore on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1917, aged 30 years' and thus one of the earliest casualties. Under the carving of the Imperial Crown, an eagle flies over the inscription '*per ardua ad astra*'. A year later the Corps became the Royal Air Force and there are further burials of pilots who died in the 1920s including that of 'Flying Officer L.A. Harbord Royal Air Force died at Lahore 27 Aug. 1919 Age 48 yrs'.

The chowkidar, Mr Suleman Sardar, lives on the site, and the cemetery has been supported in the past by a BACSA grant. Mr Sardar told me that when he first inherited his cottage from his father he met an old woman who lived nearby. As a child, she remembered visiting the then immaculate cemetery and how the English ladies would give her sweets. She also remembered the sound of bugles playing what must have been the Last Post at burials. Aural memories are the most elusive of all, but we can recapture the marching feet of the burial party along Infantry Road and through the archway, the shouted commands as it wheeled to the newly dug plot and the melancholy notes of the bugle as another Briton was laid to rest in this now forlorn spot.



*above: the tomb of Walter Raymond Bradford in Wyannad District, Kerala (see page 73)*

*below: Colonel Turnbull's gravestone, Srinagar, Kashmir, records his death from 'leopard wounds' (see page 76)*







*above: 'Fryer Memorial 1940' possibly at Dera Ismail Khan (see page 79)*

*below: Major Akhtar at the newly discovered tomb of Walter Robinson at the Taxilla Gate Cemetery, Lahore (see page 78)*



## BOOKS BY BACSA MEMBERS

### **For The Honour of My House: The contribution of the Indian Princely States to the First World War** Tony McClenaghan

The centenary commemorations of the Great War saw a renewed interest in the conflict which shaped the course of modern world history. This was reflected in the number of publications that examined the war and its consequences from a variety of perspectives. Many of these took the reader away from the metropole to hitherto unexplored areas on the periphery. In the context of Britain and its empire this translated into a closer look at the largely unacknowledged contribution of India and its armies to the prosecution of the war effort in various battlefields around the world.

In 1914 the Army in India had three major components: the regular British army in India, the Indian army, and the armies of the semi-autonomous Indian Princely States known at the time as the Imperial Service Troops. Professor Peter Stanley has recently examined the role of the 'Terriers' that replaced the British regulars in India during the war and there have been a number of books on the Indian army in the conflict, but none that have traced the contribution of the Imperial Service Troops in any great detail. The only publications on the subject, other than the rather sketchy war histories produced by the states of Bikaner, Gwalior and Patiala, were two official publications produced in 1919 and 1930 - *History of the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade during the Great War, 1914-1918* (London: HMSO, 1919); and Maj Gen Sir Harry Watson, *A Short History of the Services Rendered by the Imperial Service Troops during the Great War, 1914-1918* (Calcutta: Govt of India Central Publication Branch, 1930).

This gap in the historiography of the Great War has been filled by Tony McClenaghan's latest book *For The Honour of My House*, which forms a part of Helion's series on 'War and Military Culture in South Asia, 1757-1947'. Well known for his long-standing association with the Indian Military Historical Society, Tony is also the acknowledged authority on matters relating to the military history of the Indian Princely States, a passion he shared with the late Richard Head, to whom the book is dedicated. Tony and Richard had previously co-authored the two-volume *Maharaja's Paltans: A History of the Indian State Forces, 1888-1948* (New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2013). He also produced *Indian Princely Medals: A Record of the Orders, Decorations, and Medals of the Indian Princely States* (New Delhi, Lancer Publishers, 1996). The title of the current book is derived from a letter sent by the Maharaja of Patiala to his regiment of lancers serving in Egypt.



Written after their poor performance during the battle of Mahadat on 29 April 1915, he exhorts them to uphold ‘the honour of my house’ on the field of battle. Drawing on extensive archival research in repositories in Australia, India and the UK, the book presents readers with a deep insight into the myriad ways that the Indian princes and their armies served not just Britain and her empire but also attempted to further the cause of India’s military and political interests.

The book starts with a historical perspective which provides a brief background to the development of the Imperial Service (I.S.) Troops scheme in 1889 and its attendant travails and triumphs up until the start of the First World War. The next chapter is devoted to the role of the ruling princes and their individual contributions – military, financial and political – to the war effort. This is followed by a look at the manner in which the officers and men of the various I.S. Troops followed the lead of their rulers. This chapter examines the various factors affecting recruitment, discipline and morale among them. It is worth pointing out that the Indian princes were not always the handmaidens of imperial policy but also held forth on important issues that were vital to Indian interests. Chief among these was the anomalous position regarding the appointment of Indians as officers in the army and their support for greater political autonomy for India as a reward for its services in the war. The colonial reluctance to trust Indians troops with sophisticated weapons such as machine guns and heavy artillery at the end of the war, was also perceived as an insult by some of the rulers.

The global nature of the contribution of the state units is reflected in the next six chapters. These describe in detail the deployment of the I.S. Troops in France and Flanders, East Africa, Gallipoli, Egypt & Palestine, Mesopotamia and other minor theatres such as Macedonia, the North West Frontier and the Third Afghan War. These are followed by an excellent chapter on Honours, Rewards and Commemoration, and an equally illuminating concluding ‘Aftermath’ which highlights the role of Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner and other princes, in the diplomatic and political arena, among other things. Ganga Singh was a signatory of the Versailles Peace Treaty on behalf of India.

The book contains five useful appendices. These include a unit-wise list of the battle honours awarded, deployments at a glance and an annual listing of unit-wise caste returns. Two appendices containing the Roll of Honour and Honours & Awards have not been included in the book but are available for reference as a PDF on the Helion website.

The seven maps in the book have been exceedingly well produced and greatly assist the reader in following the operational narratives. The book is highly recommended both to the professional historian as well as the lay reader with an interest in the old Indian Army and the Great War.

**Rana TS Chhina**

2019 Helion & Co. ISBN 9781912390878 £29.95 pp360

**Colonial Self Fashioning in British India, c.1785-1845** Prasannajit de Silva

Up until recently there has been a widely held and romanticised view that the last thirty years of the 18th century was a period of remarkable inter-racial harmony and tolerance between the British and Indians. This changed significantly to one of deliberate segregation on the part of the British in the 19th century. In this remarkable and meticulously researched book, Prasannajit de Silva considers how the British in India imagined their lives through the visual context of paintings and prints. He comes to rather different conclusions from the stereotypical view of this period of transition and reveals a much more nuanced interpretation of how the British identified themselves in their Indian colonial setting. The study of these various visual images raises important questions about identity - what distinguished the British in India from the British at home, but also how they expressed their difference from their Indian surroundings.

The first part of the book considers a small group of oil paintings by artists in the narrow period from 1785 to 1805. These paintings, by some of the most eminent painters ever to visit the subcontinent from Europe, are portraits of members of mixed- race families and also individual portraits of *bibis* (Indian wives and mistresses). Perhaps the best known of these is the Palmer Conversation Piece - a painting that is, to this day, much argued about. Many authors have seen this work which shows William Palmer with his beautiful Mughal wife and their three eldest children as evidence of a remarkable moment in the history of British and Indian relations. De Silva argues that the reality was much more complicated as the painting of these portraits coincided with a period of increased social pressures on mixed race relations and legal restrictions on the Eurasian population of British India. He further contends that these paintings constituted an attempt to stabilise extremely complex fluid identities but at the same time they are characterised by underlying ambivalence. They do not simply reflect an idyllic period in colonial history but mirror the changing attitudes towards race and the position of the British in India.

The second part of the book examines printed images of the domestic life of British residents in India in the first part of the 19th century. The author particularly considers the publications by Sir Charles D'Oyly, William Taylor and Mrs Belnos. These books were, of course, done largely for an audience back home in Britain. What is most apparent about almost all these printed images is the hybridity of the colonialist's existence. Exoticism and distinctiveness from Britain was a major part of their appeal. They constitute an extraordinarily complex statement about identity that was both different but at the same time compatible with British mores of the time. One is struck by the fact that middle-class civil servants in India were taking possession of aristocratic modes of behaviour. In contrast with the oil paintings of mixed-race families, most of these prints emphasise that although India encroached on the lives of the British, there remained a much more profound separateness between those depicted and their colonial neighbourhood.

The last part of the book looks at a number of printed images of the Nilgiris by clever artists like James Barron and Captain Peacocke. They show a much more deep-rooted vision of Britishness and this is the crucial element in the colonialist's identity in the period of the 1830s and 1840s. It is as if here in the cool hills that were not so different from England itself, the British tried to lead a lifestyle that was essentially independent of India when in fact the reality was so different. Barron frequently showed Todas in the foreground of his landscapes emphasising that this was still Indian soil. The hill stations could never be just a recreation of life back in Britain. Indians are always present in the plates, albeit in a subordinate role.

The images, which the author discusses in great depth, represent lifestyles of the British in India during a period of flux and change. They are also an essential part of fashioning them - that is they not only observe but codify and are explanatory. This is particularly true of the printed plates of British domestic life in India. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the lives of the British in India but also for anyone seeking an interpretation of the images that have come down to us. It is a very complex book and sometimes the author's language is unduly scholarly but overall I consider it a highly important new look at a fascinating period in Indo-British relations. The production of the book is impressive, with numerous clear albeit black and white illustrations and a good text.

**Charles Greig**

2018 Cambridge Scholars Publishing ISBN 9 781527 508989. £61.99  
pp295

## BOOKS BY NON-MEMBERS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

### **Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the making of a Massacre** Kim A. Wagner

“This damns us for all time.” So said Colonel J. C. Wedgwood MP in the House of Commons in 1919 about the Amritsar Massacre when Brigadier Dyer’s small force fired into the crowd in the Jallianwala Bagh. How right he was. Indeed for many people it is the only event for which the British Raj in India is known. Kim Wagner, an academic at Queen Mary University of London, has produced one of the best descriptions of what happened in Amritsar between 10th and 13th April 1919. It is narrated skilfully without allowing the detailed sourcing to get in the way of a highly readable, indeed exciting, account of the events. By initially focusing on the 10th of April when the civil authorities lost control of a riot which threatened to overrun the Civil Lines and during which several British nationals were killed, Wagner reminds us that the events of the 13th April had a hinterland which played a key role in the disastrous events three days later.

Wagner contends that historians have underestimated the importance of the 1857 Mutiny in instilling a sense of paranoia amongst the British in India and a conviction that anything less than firm action in the face of civil unrest might result in a repeat of the Cawnpore Massacres. He makes a valid point. One of the problems of the Mutiny is that the British did not see it coming and never fully understood why it happened. Over a century and a half later there is still much about the Mutiny which we don’t comprehend. Was it just a sepoy mutiny or a rebellion or a conspiracy or even a war of liberation? No wonder, therefore, that a repeat of the Mutiny engendered such fear amongst the tiny British population of India. However, stories of the Mutiny do not justify Dyer’s behaviour when he led his small detachment of Indian and Gurkha soldiers into the Bagh. Even if a volley over the heads of the crowd had been justified (which was not the case) there was no excuse for firing into the multitude for a full 10 minutes. 1650 high velocity bullets wreaked terrible carnage. The imposition of a curfew added to the misery and death-toll by denying the wounded access to medical help. Ironically it is Dyer’s ‘crawling order,’ the least lethal of his measures, which demonstrates the Brigadier’s lack of mental balance. Wagner shows that Dyer himself was racked with self-doubt before and after the massacre. Indeed he is quoted as saying ‘I’m for the high jump.’ It was only when he was lionised by the right-wing press and parliamentarians in London and interviewed by the Hunter Commission that Dyer gave the impression of being sure of his actions.

He certainly had supporters in England and India but there will always be advocates of extreme action; that does not indemnify a public servant for losing his head in a crisis. Wagner tells us almost nothing about Dyer the man. This is probably because he sees Dyer as merely a tool of the 'racialised violence' by which he contends Britain ruled India. He thinks it wrong to interpret Amritsar as an aberration but as completely in character. This argument is only developed in the Conclusion but one can detect his train of thought occasionally emerging throughout the narrative. I question whether Wagner has got this right.

Generations of colonial administrators and soldiers knew that the vastness of India could not be ruled by force. It could only be managed by consent, co-option and occasionally by divide-and-rule. Indeed most Indians continued to be ruled by their local Princes, all of whom had a *modus vivendi* with central government. The only time when unbridled violence was employed was in response to the 1857 Mutiny when Britons in northern India faced annihilation and when additional troops were summoned. However the Mutiny was far more akin to war than domestic law enforcement. Local unrest occurred throughout British rule in India; riots appearing to get out of control; administrators wondering whether to arrest, deport or co-opt the ringleaders; soldiers advocating a 'firm hand' and 'civilians' arguing for more time to gather intelligence and gauge the mood; and families feeling vulnerable.

What marks Amritsar out as different was that Dyer was given free rein by incompetent civil administrators and then acted with criminal folly. Patrick French writes of Amritsar that it was 'not representative of the imperial response to disorder but an aberration.' (see *Liberty or Death*, page 31.) More recently David Gilmour has written about the 'doctrine of minimum necessary force usually followed by British officers except at Amritsar when it was notoriously ignored by Brigadier Dyer'. (*The British in India*, page 262.)

Nonetheless Wagner does a good job of debunking some of the misrepresentations of Amritsar. Although Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi' stayed reasonably close to the facts, it portrayed Dyer as a man who was completely sure of himself, rather than the troubled and inadequate personality so clearly outlined on pages 420-423 of Nigel Collett's *The Butcher of Amritsar*. Wagner says on page xix of his Introduction about Shashi Tharoor that his 'account of the Amritsar Massacre....is completely inaccurate' although, to be fair to Tharoor, he would own to being more politician and polemicist than historian.

There are a few small blemishes. Given the multiplicity of contemporary sources it seems odd that the author repeatedly relies on comments by fictional Indian characters from E.M. Forster or caricatures of British officials from George Orwell. However Wagner has nonetheless produced the best narrative of Amritsar 1919.

**Tim Willasey-Wilsey**

2019 Yale University Press ISBN 978 0 300 20035 5. £20.00 pp360

**Viceroy: The Creation of the British**

Christopher Lee

This book aims to describe the rule of the Viceroys of India. Almost a quarter of the book sets out the background from the earliest times to 1858 and deals with the Governors General and their predecessors. The remainder works through the Viceroys with particular regard to the struggle for Indian independence. The last 90 years of the raj is well-worn territory and the chief theme of this book is the part the Viceroys played in this. The content is businesslike but unremarkable. The problems faced by the Viceroys are recognised and as a result the later Viceroys emerge better than one might have expected and even Dalhousie gets a more generous treatment than most historians would allow.

The problem with this book is not so much its content as its presentation. The author's style is informal and more suited to the medium of television than the world of scholarly books. There are tendencies to mis-statement and overstatement. First, mis-statement: the East India Company was not 'owned by the British government' in 1661 (p30) – there was no British government then, and the English government never owned the Company. And overstatement: 'The British nineteenth-century military mind had not moved on since the Crusades' – (p125). Where for example does the New Model Army fit into this? – or Marlborough? or Wellington?

The matter is not helped by three factors: the author's lack of cited sources; his viscous prose; and his publisher's failure to sub-edit. There are hardly any sources identified and when there are they are usually secondary ones. As to the author's prose, what are we to make of sentences like 'Lytton's declaration to the Assemblage had rung certain enough' (p197)? Whose fault is this sentence? And what of 'Zetland was at a loss with anything but the theatre of his office playing to an almost empty theatre' (p346) – Eh? One deep calleth another, perhaps, but can a theatre play to a theatre? Even the subtitle of the book: 'The creation of the British' is opaque.

And then the misprints, inconsistencies and the complete muddle with the endnotes in Chapters XI and XII. One note includes the words 'TO COME' which I interpret as a notice to the author or other editors that more text will be needed here. Dalhousie progresses from a marquessate to an earldom. Names are misspelled (Hearsey or Hearsy on the same page?), and even dates are wrong (Canning Viceroy in 1758). I have never seen a book with so many mistakes. The author follows in the footsteps of two earlier books on the Viceroy. The better of these *The Viceroy of India* by Mark Bence-Jones was astonishingly also published by Constable, but this was in 1982 before they were swallowed up by Little, Brown & Co and when they still had competent sub-editors. It is more scholarly, better argued, better illustrated, better bound and presented, and frankly in no way superseded by the present volume. Watch out for it in BACSA second-hand books.

**Richard Morgan**

2018 Constable ISBN 978-1-4721-2474-6 £30 (hardback) pp422

### **Terriers in India: British Territorials 1914-19**

Peter Stanley

At the end of his book, Peter Stanley quotes Nigel Woodyatt, author of a 1922 memoir *Under Ten Viceroy*s, in which he had devoted a chapter to the Territorials in India, advising that if readers found the subject 'dull....I hope they will skip the chapter altogether'. I have not read Woodyatt, but I would be astounded if anyone found Peter Stanley's account of the Territorials in India to be 'dull'. Those familiar with the author's style and the depth of his research will not be disappointed and it is, as the publisher's distributors point out, astonishing that it has taken a century for a book to be written about them. This is not because of a lack of resource material. Territorial units in India, drawn largely from the southern counties of England and those on the English/Welsh border, were not required to maintain war diaries since they were not at war, though they did become embroiled in internal security duties; those who were subsequently sent to Aden, Mesopotamia, Persia, Siberia and, later, the Third Afghan War, did maintain war diaries for the duration of their deployments, but the author uses these sparingly in his brief description of those campaigns.

Much of his source material, and therefore the joy of the detail in this book, comes from the many letters home that Territorials wrote to their families and friends (in the case of one soldier, a teacher by profession, to his former pupils) or from the regimental newsletters they compiled, copied to their home Depots where they were preserved. They also

wrote to their local newspapers, many of which published their contributions. In addition, many turned to photography and their albums, combined with 'scrap' albums that they kept, are now held by regimental museums and county archives. It is here that the author has dug deep to get inside the minds and attitudes of those citizen soldiers who, in 1914, volunteered for 'Imperial Service' at the request of Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War. Kitchener's distrust of the Territorial Army, and his determination to recruit a separate 'New Army' to fight on the Western Front, meant that a comparatively small proportion of Terriers were to see active service.

Against the will of the high command in India (the Commander-in-Chief described them as 'immature'; the Viceroy dismissed them as having 'very small military value'). Kitchener wanted Territorial battalions sent there in order to release Regulars for service in more active theatres. 'Kitchener's Promise', that after six months in India they would be replaced by other troops and would then go on to serve on the Western Front, was widely reported in diaries and letters. But it was a promise never to be fulfilled, despite the units and men rising to the many training challenges of what became known as 'Kitchener's Test'. Many units served there throughout the war and, indeed, were retained in India for up to a year after the Armistice. Given the composition of the Territorial units, drawing on tradesmen and craftsmen as well as those with an education, it is, perhaps, not surprising that units were 'raided' on arrival in India for soldiers with specialist skills to fill gaps in the Indian Army. It is this same combination of education, skills and experiences that give the documents and letters produced by them such a variety of depth and colour and from which the author draws his inspiration.

Some 50,000 British Territorials served in India during the war, initially on garrison duties but later, as their military training and skills improved, as front-line troops in other theatres of war – ten Territorial battalions posted to India eventually served in Mesopotamia, including thousands of reinforcements, where a number were lost at the siege of Kut, or in the subsequent attempt to relieve the garrison. Others were sent beyond India to serve in Burma (guarding Ottoman prisoners of war), Singapore (following the mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry), Hong Kong, the Andaman Islands (a precaution against a possible German invasion to release prisoners) and even Australia (escorting German internees). The main theme throughout the book, however, is based on a Territorial soldier's life in India and is repeated in successive chapters for 1915, 1916 (when the introduction of the Military Service Act changed the terms of their service), 1917 and finally 1918-1919. We



see them adjusting to life in cantonment barracks and bungalows spread all over the sub-continent with their attendant followers, servants and vendors; the development of their attitudes towards and relationships with India, its people and cultures – sometimes, though not always, showing more sensitivity and understanding than the Regulars they had replaced; and over succeeding years their introduction to and embrace of sport, in many cases games or activities that were new to them or generally unavailable to their ‘class’ at home. It was not until 1916 that Territorial units began to train for operations on the North West Frontier and by 1917 they had taken their place alongside British and Indian Regulars as active defenders of the frontier, allowing them to feel that, even if they were ‘missing out’ on active service elsewhere, they were still ‘doing their bit’. Less comforting is the description of the role of some in support of General Dyer at Amritsar, whereas elsewhere in India they handled disturbances much more sympathetically. With eventual demobilisation and return to UK many of the units were given a civic reception on arrival at their home town, but knowledge of the role they had played in India soon faded and no-one wrote of their endeavours – until now. This book fills that gap and will provide an enjoyable read to anyone with an interest in military history in India. Highly recommended. **Tony McClenaghan**

2019 Helion & Co. ISBN 978-1- 912390-82-3 £29.95 pp364

**The Missionary and the Maharajas: Cecil Tyndale-Biscoe and the making of Modern Kashmir**  
Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe

This book is a very full account of an extraordinary missionary teacher, and the school which he developed in Srinagar, Kashmir. The missionary was the Revd Canon Cecil Tyndale-Biscoe (1863-1949), an Anglican priest who was sent, on account of his poor health, to Kashmir by the Church Missionary Society in 1890; he remained there until 1947. The situation he found there was dire. The streets were filthy and infested with pi-dogs. The schoolboys were the sons of the ruling Brahmin families (Dogras), all bearded and many married; they wore *pherans* (long shirts) which were not washed during the winter months and stank. Underneath was a *kangri* (clay pot with hot coals). They were anxious to learn. Tyndale-Biscoe was determined to produce good citizens, not converts, and so he stressed personal cleanliness, physical fitness, games, rowing and sailing, and climbing, combined with social service. It was a version of a Victorian public school ethos, reinforced by frequent beatings for misdemeanours. These objectives involved overturning entrenched customs. The Brahmins did

not want to touch leather footballs, and considered that rowing was the duty of Muslim boatmen. Competition and coercion won the day for football and cricket and the example of Hindu teachers ensured the acceptance of rowing. Social service followed. There were frequent house fires in Srinagar but no one tried to put them out, as that was the job of coolies. Tyndale-Biscoe organised a line of boys with water to extinguish the blaze. Care for sick and wounded animals followed, together with help during frequent floods. These efforts produced a new attitude in the school, as Staff supported these reforms. Numbers increased, from 200 in 1892 to 1,100 at six schools in 1899; clearly both Hindu and Muslim parents approved of the schools' results.

There were, however, many critics who disliked the schools. Foremost among them were the officers, local and national, of the Church Missionary Society. Their grants met only a fraction of the schools' expenses, and were cut from time to time. They deplored the lack of converts, despite the record of daily services and compulsory Bible lessons. Expenses were met only through constant fund-raising and private donations. There were also attacks from the Hindu Dharam Sabha, who supported an attempt by Annie Besant to open a rival school, which was met with limited success. Tyndale-Biscoe did not help matters by his hearty support of British rule, his dislike of educated Indians (some were poor teachers) and opposition to Indian nationalism. His son Eric helped to modify these prejudices when he joined the staff in 1927, and this enabled the schools to weather later political developments, communal riots, and the second world war. The direction of the schools passed to other hands, and so Eric left in 1946 for a post in New Zealand, and his father in 1947, only to die two years later in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). Eric's son, Dr Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe, the author of this book, is an Australian scientist who has maintained the family's links with the Tyndale-Biscoe schools, and has seen them flourish (4,000 pupils) under Kashmiri leadership, and with the support of many old boys in high places. He has constructed an enthralling narrative from a wide range of sources, despite some awkward gaps and the occasional errors of fact and spelling. Well worth reading!

**Richard Bingle**

2019 I.B.Tauris ISBN 978 1 78831 479 4 £27.50 pp340

*To be reviewed in the Spring 2020 issue*

**Scotland and the Indian Empire; Politics, Scholarship and the Military in making British India**

Alan Tritton

Published by Bloombury at £25.00 in December 2019

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The Editor's email address is: [rosieljai@clara.co.uk](mailto:rosieljai@clara.co.uk)



*The handsome tomb of Surgeon Smith at Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh (see page 81)*