



CHOWKIDAR

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Editor: Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones MBE

British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA)

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Honorary Secretary

Mr Peter Boon

Barn End, London Road

Blewbury, Didcot, OX 11 9PB

tel: 01235 850410

email: secretary@bacsa.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer

Mr Charles Greig

138 Sherborne Court

180 Cromwell Road

London SW5 0SU

tel: 07801 232869

email: treasurer@bacsa.org.uk

Editor

Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, MBE

135 Burntwood Lane

London SW17 0AJ

Tel: 0208 947 9131

Email: rosieljai@clara.co.uk

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Mr Christopher Carnaghan

42 Rectory Lane

Kings Langley

Herts WD4 8EY

tel: 01923 267458

email: membership@bacsa.o

Facebook Page Editor

Ms Victoria Herrenschmidt

victoria.herrenschmidt@gmail.com

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 (2020) 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**

Founded by the late Theon Wilkinson, MBE

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THE CEMETERIES ENDOWMENT FUND INDIA

An important statement was made in the House of Commons and the House of Lords earlier this year about BACSA. On 6 February 2020 it was announced by the Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mrs Heather Wheeler, that the Cemeteries Endowment Fund, previously held at the British High Commission in Delhi had been transferred to BACSA. This not only gave BACSA £19,000 to spend on cemetery restoration in India but marks the final phase in the history of endowed graves. This was a system peculiar to the former British government in undivided India and does not seem to exist anywhere else. Between the 1880s, and 1947, British men and women serving or living in India, or their relatives, could pay for the perpetual upkeep of their graves by lodging a small capital sum with three government departments: the Public Works Department (PWD), the Military Engineering Service and the Railway Board.

It is clear that when the date for Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan was hastily brought forward to August 1947, no-one had considered what would happen to the European cemeteries there. We do not have a precise number for the burials of foreigners in the sub-continent. An earlier estimate of around 2 million is now considered too high, but we do know that nearly a thousand registered European cemeteries exist, and that there are many other isolated graves or unrecorded burial places. Following the British withdrawal in 1947, Brigadier Humphry Bullock, attached to the High Commission and a former Judge Advocate General, was asked to collate details of British burial records and endowed graves in the sub-continent. It was an immense task, but one that was carried out efficiently and by April 1948 all the Christian cemeteries in India and Pakistan were handed over to their respective High Commissions for 'upkeep and maintenance'. 952 such cemeteries were recorded in India and 197 in East and West Pakistan. By March 1949 these cemeteries had become the responsibility of the government of the United Kingdom. This was after the Commonwealth Relations Office had proposed that all these 'foreign' cemeteries should be levelled to the ground. It was only the fact that this would involve the loss of endowed graves, where money had been invested in good faith, that this was prevented, otherwise there would be no BACSA today and even more importantly, no significant record of Britain's three hundred year involvement in the East.

In India the High Commission delegated responsibility for distributing the endowment interest from the capital sum to six Regional Trustee Boards, who then passed it on to 300 local voluntary cemetery committees to administer. (What happened in Pakistan is less clear.) At the same time a lump sum of £50,000, called the Treasury Grant was allocated to the regional boards both in India, West Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

By the 1960s, the lump sum had been expended and the regional boards wound up. Local cemetery committees were asked to approach the High Commissions direct to seek payment from the endowment funds. It became immensely complicated to work out how much each cemetery committee was entitled to, sometimes only a few rupees each. So it was with relief, at your Editor's suggestion, that the Delhi High Commission handed over the responsibility for payments to the East India Charitable Trust in Calcutta, an organisation that gathered up miscellaneous trusts established in British days. The EICT struggled on gallantly for some years, under its late Secretary Mr Carlyle Murray, but simply didn't have enough staff to cope. So a lot of diplomatic work went on behind the scenes, not least by the BACSA Secretary, and BACSA President to take the initiative and get the Fund transferred. Here is the Parliamentary statement in full:

‘My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I announce today the transfer of the Cemeteries Endowment Fund (‘the Fund’) from the High Commission in New Delhi to the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (‘BACSA’), a UK based charity.

The Fund was originally established in India in the late 19th century for the purpose of maintaining European graves and cemeteries. Any such cemeteries maintained by the Government of India could be endowed by friends or relatives of deceased persons and such endowments were credited to the Fund.

After India gained independence in 1947, arrangements were made for the UK Government, through the High Commission, to take responsibility for the maintenance of the European graves and cemeteries. A parliamentary undertaking, in the form of answers to parliamentary questions in both Houses, was given on 15 March 1949, that the UK Government would be responsible for European cemeteries in India – and had been since April 1948. The Government of India authorised transfer of the Fund to the High Commission in June 1949 and the Secretary of State for the Commonwealth Office inherited responsibility for the Fund.

Over recent years, it has become apparent that administration of the Fund requires dedicated resources. For this reason, the High Commission requested that the Fund be transferred to BACSA, a UK-registered charity (charity no. 273422) which would be able to use the Fund more effectively in accordance with the Fund's original purpose. BACSA has as its aim to promote the preservation, conservation and recording of former European cemeteries and isolated monuments in South Asia and elsewhere in Asia. It also seeks to promote education in the history of all places in South Asia and elsewhere in Asia associated with European residence, and in particular the territories formerly administered by the East India Company and the

British Government of India. Its objectives therefore coincide with those of the Fund. Following appropriate consultation across Whitehall and with BACSA, the Fund was transferred to BACSA on 15 March 2019 to the sum of £19,047.64. This statement has also been made in the House of Lords: HLWS92'

MAIL BOX

No sooner had the Spring 2020 *Chowkidar* arrived through readers' letterboxes, than an immediate response came to our query about the grave of Glancer, a much loved hound buried in the grounds of the old British Residency at Gwalior. The Editor's suggestion that Glancer's owner might be identified from a poetic eulogy written after the dog's death on 25 February 1814, led to BACSA member Edward Peters' article entitled 'Glancer, Richard Strachey's faithful foxhound and his memorial at the former Residency, Gwalior'. Strachey was Resident to the Court of the Maharaja Daulat Rao Scindia for four years, between 1811 and 1814, a tense and troubled period, as the British sought to gain control over the Maratha confederacy. Strachey had joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1798, and accompanied Sir John Malcolm on the latter's successful mission to Persia in 1799-1800. Richard was blessed with extraordinary good looks, so much so that when Lady Strachey, Lytton Strachey's mother visited Persia eighty years later, she was reminded of her ancestor who was known as 'the English Adonis' and to the Persians as 'Istarji'.

Richard Strachey seems to have acquired Glancer during a period of leave in England between 1803 and 1806. Glancer accompanied his master when he travelled back to India – by sea to St Petersburg, then overland via Moscow, Georgia, Turkey and Persia, arriving in Bombay in January 1807. For the next three years Strachey was deputy Superintendent at Chandernagore and Chinsurah in Bengal before accompanying his close friend Mountstuart Elphinstone on his mission to Kabul, presumably with Glancer. A portrait of the well-travelled hound was commissioned by Strachey in 1808 from the artist Thomas Morris, which is now in the collection of the British Sporting Art Trust. (*see page 132*) After Glancer's death, Strachey was subsequently Resident at Lucknow between 1815 – 1817 before resigning the service and returning to England where he married and had a large family. Lytton Strachey was his great nephew.

During Richard Strachey's time at Gwalior, the British Residency had stood 'on the road to Agra, seven miles out of the town', but that building was destroyed by rebels during the Uprising of 1857/8. In the 1920s the then Resident at Gwalior, Mr W. E. Jardine, C.I.E. (uncle of Douglas Jardine, the Bombay-born England cricketer), re-discovered Glancer's memorial in the abandoned grounds of the old Residency. Mr Jardine had the memorial – a circular building supported on eight pillars, containing the

masonry slab with its verse inscription - removed and re-erected in the garden of the 'new' Residency which is now the Air Force Officers' 'Residency Mess', in Residency Road, Gwalior (474005, Madhya Pradesh). No doubt Richard Strachey would be touched and delighted that, more than two centuries after Glancer's death, his decision to erect that memorial meant that his faithful hound – and the thousands of miles they had adventured together - were still being recalled.

And as a footnote, Mr Peters has sent us a photograph of his three year old son George with a copy of *Chowkidar* (see back page). Although George can't yet read, nevertheless he seems immersed in the journal and we look forward to welcoming him as a future BACSA member.

Sir Henry Marshman Havelock-Allan, born in Bengal in 1830, was the son of General Sir Henry Havelock and his wife Hannah (née Marshman). Harry, as he was known, was in the curious, though not unique, position of being the son of a national hero, and moreover, a hero who died at the moment of victory, following the relief of the Lucknow Residency, during the mutinous Uprising of 1857. Harry was a soldier like his father, commissioned as ensign aged 15 and initially joining HM 39th Regiment of Foot. By the early 1850s he was appointed an ADC on his father's staff and served during the brief Anglo-Persian war before joining the fight against the mutineers in northern India. He was recommended for the VC after charging the Nana Sahib's troops at Cawnpore and performed equally gallantly in the first relief of Lucknow where he and a fellow officer captured the vital Charbagh bridge. He was at his father's deathbed in November 1857 and thus succeeded to the baronetcy.

Thereafter he filled a number of important positions in New Zealand, and Canada and acted as war correspondent during the Franco-Prussian war and the Russo-Turkish war, as well as taking part in the battle of Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt. It was while visiting his old Regiment, the 18th (Royal Irish) of which he was now Colonel, on the North West Frontier, that he was shot dead by Afridis on 30 December 1897. He was buried in the Harley Street Cemetery, Rawalpindi, which was painstakingly restored by Brigadier Samson Sharif between 1995-2000. (see page 132) The retired Brigadier, who is now Rector of St Mary's College, Rawalpindi, was put in touch with BACSA's President, Sir Mark Havelock-Allan, by BACSA member Nadir Cheema. Touchingly, the Brigadier offered a prayer at Harry's grave and is planning to plant perennials shrubs around it. He has now moved on to restore the dilapidated Dharampura Cemetery in Lahore, which was described in the 2019 Autumn *Chowkidar*.

Jonathan Spencer Jones was intrigued to find a memorial to his collateral ancestor Josiah Webbe in the Spring 2015 *Chowkidar*, photographed by BACSA member Colonel Gerald Napier. Mr Spencer Jones is also aware of the Flaxman memorial in St Mary's Church, Madras to this eminent East

India Company officer who was appointed Resident at the Court of the Maratha leader Daulat Rao Scindia (following Richard Strachey), where he died aged 37 after a long illness. But where is Webbe buried? According to Sir John Malcolm, writing in 1817 ‘my first march was to Doloreah [Dolaria, south west of Hoshanagabad], where I arrived late at night, but went immediately to pay an almost devotional visit to the tomb of my former friend, poor Webbe....a tomb was erected to his memory by the late Sir Barry Close, and a Fakir, or Mahomedan priest, was left a small salary to guard it...the allowance and the donations of travellers have enabled him to make a garden around it, and to keep a lamp burning at the tomb. I gave him money to build a small house and sink a well. I cannot express the feelings with which I contemplated this spot. The remains not merely of one of my dearest friends, but of the most virtuous and the ablest man I had ever known, were interred amid a wild waste from which human beings had been driven by the leopard and the tiger, and their precursor and ally the merciless Pindarree, who had for many years chosen as his den the opposite banks of the Nerbudda. His monument is a shrine which no one can pass without hearing the story of his life ...’

This is quite an explicit description of a tomb which even in the early 19th century must have looked something like a *mazhar*, the grave of a *pir* or saint. There is a suggestion that the headstone was subsequently moved to St Mary’s Church, Madras, but instinct tells us that Josiah Webbe’s burial place remains to be identified, possibly as a Muslim shrine today although Webbe’s name has been forgotten.

CHARLES ALLEN 1940-2020

BACSA members and many others will be saddened by the news of the death of Charles Allen on 16 August this year. Born in Cawnpore from a family long established in undivided India, Charles was sent ‘home’ to be educated when he was eight years old, and thereafter identified with Rudyard Kipling, leaving the warmth and affection of India for a cold English boarding school. His great grandfather had in fact given Kipling his first job as a reporter for *The Pioneer*, published in Allahabad and Lucknow. It was Charles’s BBC radio series in 1974 ‘Plain Tales from the Raj’ that began the revival of interest in British India, two years before BACSA was founded. Charles always supported BACSA, writing for *Chowkidar*, joining its Council and lecturing in the ‘Revisiting the Raj’ series where he gracefully demolished Jon Wilson’s *Inglorious Empire: what the British did to India*. What some of the British did do, Charles said, was to make accessible to Indians many of their own ancient texts, which had been jealously guarded from the masses by elite Brahmins. They also stopped some of the worse excesses of the caste system and Charles’ last book, to be published next year is provocatively entitled *Aryans: the search for a people, a place and myth*. He is mourned and much missed. (RLJ)

A GOOD 'ORIENTAL' READ

One result of the worldwide lockdown this year was that people were unable to travel and therefore *Chowkidar* didn't receive its usual reports of cemeteries in South Asia. At the same time publishers scaled back production so there were fewer books of interest to review. Rather than produce a slimmed-down *Chowkidar*, it was decided to try something new. A number of British-based BACSA members, the majority of them published authors, were invited to submit a short (maximum 500 word) description of a book that first got them interested in the East. There were no restrictions – the book could be fact or fiction, short stories, novels, history, archaeology, travel, light-hearted or tragic. And the date of publication didn't matter, the important thing was that it had held the reader's attention. The first six contributions are published here and the second six will be in the Spring 2021 issue. Our warm thanks to those who responded to the challenge.

Christopher Penn

The Men who ruled India by Philip Woodruff published by Jonathan Cape, London 1954. Vol.1 *The Founders* Vol.2 *The Guardians*

Philip Woodruff is the nom de plume of Philip Mason OBE CIE (1906-1999) who worked for the Indian Civil Service from 1928 to 1947. The book describes the history of the Indian empire from the formation of the East India Company to Independence. It is a beautifully written book. The introduction to Volume I starts: 'There comes a time in a man's life when he may well stand back and consider what he has built, planted, written or begotten and whether it was worth doing. If in such a mood the English ... look back on their varied history, the long connection with India will be an achievement that cannot be ignored. . .'

'The nearest parallels on anything like the same scale are the civil services of China under the Emperors and of the Ottoman Empire under Suleiman the Magnificent; the Romans had nothing comparable. But there is an ideal model for the Indian system, not consciously adopted and exactly followed, for that is not the way English minds work, but a model with which every English statesman in the nineteenth century was familiar. Plato pictured a state ruled by guardians, men specially chosen by their seniors in the service, trained in the use of their bodies and in the study of history, taught that they were a separate race from those they ruled, aloof, superior to the ties of marriage or fatherhood and to the attraction of gold, governing by the light of what they knew to be beautiful and good.

'India too would one day be free; Macaulay said so, Queen Victoria said so, Gladstone said so. Munro, Elphinstone and Metcalfe felt in their bones that it must be so and it was the conscious will of England. But for the present it was guardianship India needed. And in fact it was to peace and unity rather than to freedom, that the effort in India was directed.'

Given that the author served with distinction for his working life in the ICS it is not surprising that the service is painted in favourable colours. For this reason, when buying the book many years ago in Heywood-Hill in Curzon Street I was advised to buy and read also *The Ruling Caste* by David Gilmour, published by John Murray in 2005 which describes the service and its personalities in somewhat more dispassionate tones. But, to be honest, *The Men who ruled India* is closer to my own vision of the service and of the Sudan Political Service, which was modelled on the ICS and for which my father worked until the Sudan too gained its independence.

Hugh Purcell

I have a copy on my desk now. It's an early (1898) edition of Rudyard Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* and I see that I bought it for 50p in 1972. Eight years earlier I had travelled to India for the first time and found the remnants of the Raj still clinging to the hillsides of Simla and other hill stations. I remember conversations, mostly with Anglo-Indians, that were tinged with nostalgia and regret – 'Did we (the British) have to leave when we did?' 'Who is to blame for the mess India is now in?'

So my fascination with British India began with the hill stations. I think I realised even in those student days that they may have begun as refuges from the heat of the plains but they were essentially refuges from the reality of India, and being a little homesick I felt an affinity with them. In New Delhi in 1964 I bought my first copy of *Plain Tales from the Hills* and carried it round India in my rucksack. I escaped from the crush of Indian trains to the world of infidelity, intrigue, idiosyncrasy and gossip that made up Kipling's short stories. Here I found the romance of *Cupid's Arrows* and *Miss Youghal's Sais* and the 'blackguardly' adventures of the *Soldiers Three*, though Kipling's transcription of their accents took some concentration.

Sweating and squeezing on a bench in a third class compartment of the night train from New Delhi to Lucknow I was transported to the Mall of Simla in the 1880s and English-style blessed rain. Perhaps it was this that alerted me to Charles Allen's classic BBC Radio 4 series that began three years later, 'Plain Tales from the Raj'. If I assumed that these tales would follow Kipling's fictional story telling I was instantly corrected. Here were the true voices of British India between the wars, many Oxford accented and all of them steely. I still remember, for example, Kathleen Griffiths, whose baptism to India was arriving at Kontai in West Bengal by lorry, finding that all her furniture had been destroyed during the journey, that the nearest European was sixty miles away and that her husband then departed on District Commissioner business. 'I told myself, well, I fell in love with this man and I've married him. I better make the most of it. So I decided to learn the language'. I remember reading this out to my wife.

'Plain Tales from the Raj' had a formative influence. It led me thirty years later to track down the few survivors of the British Raj who had been brought up in India but stayed after Independence and made their lives with the new nation. I called the book *After the Raj* and I was just in time because, with the exception of Mark Tully, all the survivors have now passed away.

Rosemary Raza

Fanny Parks, who lived in India from 1822 to 1845, was an astounding woman who helped to change the course of my life. In the 1970s I was living in Pakistan, fascinated by its ancient civilisations and vibrant contemporary life. OUP was then re-publishing some of the classic writing of British India, and in 1975 re-printed in Karachi Fanny Parks' *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, which had originally appeared in 1850. Here was a writer after my own heart, and one, like many others, who disproves the misguided assumption held by some in our own day that the British in India uniformly exercised a malign and brutal influence over people for whom they had scant sympathy. Fanny Parks was insatiably curious about everything India had to offer and once she escaped the confines of Calcutta for her husband Charles' posting in Allahabad, was able to indulge her passion for enquiry and travel. She sailed alone with her Indian crew up the Jumna and Ganges, roamed widely on her horse and explored the northern hill ranges. She had many Indian friends, both men and women, but it was particularly the latter who enabled her to give an unrivalled view of the little known life of the zenana, which was one of the selling points of her book.

One of her closest women friends was the Baiza Bai, a former ruler of Gwalior, and in her Mahratta circle Fanny Parks enjoyed a relatively relaxed code of living, including riding astride. If I had been Indian, I would have been a Mahratta, she declared. These friendships enabled her to understand from the inside the religions, history and culture of India - her reports ranged far wider than these serious topics, giving a new meaning to eclectic. She collected birds (some preserved by herself), insects, reptiles, artefacts and works of art, many displayed in her famous Cabinet of Curiosities. Should you wish to know how Indians washed their hair or arranged a turban, Mrs Parks could explain, while she also favoured you with a recipe for mustache dye and perfumed tobacco cakes. With exceptional verve and vitality, she popularised knowledge about India - a mission she also continued on her return to England when she created in 1851 a *Grand Moving Diorama of Hindostan*. This included some of the many illustrations she had made throughout her time in India, as well as the work of her friends. The *Diorama*, accompanied by an exhibition including her own collection of objects, was displayed to great acclaim in London and the provinces. I found these achievements irresistible, and determined

to find out more. This led me back to academic life some years later, where my search for Fanny Parks became taken up in a wider investigation of the many British women who wrote about the sub-continent. Others shared her knowledge, affection and enthusiasm – but it was hard to find anyone who matched her sustained dedication and commitment, fully justifying her self-description as a ‘Pilgrim’.

Alan Tritton

During the 1970s I visited India several times, one year travelling all over Rajasthan and staying with the Raj Mata at Jaipur, the Rajas at Bundi, Kotah and so on but a particular pleasure was to stay with Jack Gibson, the former Principal of Mayo College, at Ajmer. His full name was John Travers Mends Gibson, although he was always known as ‘Jack’. Before I arrived there, I had read his book entitled *As I Saw It: Record of a Crowded Life in India 1937-1969* an excellent description of India by one of the old pre-war and post-war hands, who had seen it all. It was lovely staying with him at Shanti Niwas and then being taken to Mayo College where he had served as Principal for fifteen years, after teaching at the Doon School. The reason why I stayed with him was because Dr Charles Clarke, who was the medical officer on the 1975 Everest Expedition was a friend of his and introduced me to him - I think they may have climbed together in the Himalayas. Jack Gibson was a great mountaineer, he was President of the Indian mountaineering club as well as the Alpine Club. He was always thinking about getting married but never did and died at Shanti Niwas. Jack had the rare distinction of being honoured by two governments – an OBE from Queen Elizabeth II and the Padma Shri from the Government of India for his contributions towards education.

Thereafter, I used to visit India regularly and at length and later involved myself with Calcutta and the Victoria Memorial Hall there but that is another story. However, all this and more is related in my autobiography entitled *The Half-Closed Door* published in 2008 - and, if anyone wonders why I chose that title, the answer is that it is the Preface to Jan Morris’s Book *Pax Britannica* - ‘Say farewell to the Trumpets, you will hear them no more, but their sweet sad silvery echo will call to you through the half closed door.’

Now how did all this lead to BACSA and the answer is that in the late 1970s at a Dinner Party I sat next to Lady Templer, the widow of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, the former High Commissioner of Malaya, where I had fought in the jungle there during what was euphemistically called the ‘Emergency’ but was actually a war against the Chinese Communists in the late 1940s and 1950s who were intent on taking over the country. She asked me whether I had heard of BACSA – I looked non-plussed and said no, whereupon she said that I must join. I did join and, forever afterwards, found its work of conservation and restoration of absorbing interest.

Patrick Wheeler

The East has always been mysterious, and mystery never ceases to fascinate. In my youth the short stories of Somerset Maugham invoked a curiosity that remained unsatisfied for years. The humid haze over islands rimmed with mangroves; the eerie sultriness of a Malayan jungle at night, filled with unexpected noise; the slow thump of a ship's engine as a steamer chugs eastwards over the horizon. Maugham was a genius at painting a picture in words. His descriptions were of the places and characters of his times, brought to life by words, but without metaphor. As he modestly said of himself, 'I have painted easel pictures, not frescoes', but how real and evocative were those pictures, and how clear, and yet without hyperbole. His writings were based on his own travel experience, steeped in the relaxed entitlement of Empire. As he languorously passed the time in the lounges of great hotels such as Raffles and the Eastern and Oriental, sipping cocktails and watching the passers-by, so he drew his characters; perhaps a rubber planter, sitting alone on the veranda of his isolated bungalow while dreaming of England, and enjoying whisky in generous doses. In the background might stand a native woman waiting to replenish his glass, and perhaps to offer companionship of a different kind. There was usually a sinister twist to his tales, but the background was painted with such pre-Raphaelite accuracy that it was not difficult to imagine oneself really there, eager to explore this beguiling world.

This was the East, but it wasn't India, the interest of much later years. The trigger for this was entirely different in style, and by a noted contemporary travel and history writer. William Dalrymple's *City of Djinn*s was one of his early books, and sparked an urge to see and learn more. His open-minded curiosity glitters with wit, and impresses with the desire to understand the intricacies of India's multifaceted life. From the experience of just one city there emerges a raft of detail. This might be historical; consecutive Muslim invasions and a not too censorious, and inquisitively anecdotal, look at British times. Additionally there is graphic architectural description; mosques, shrines, tombs and palaces: descriptive insights into people; Sufis, musicians, shopkeepers, even eunuchs: and of lifestyle; religions, spirituality, poverty, and inevitably bureaucracy.

This diversity merges into a whole; an absorbing mix of enchantment which engages the reader through its lightness of style and its good writing; a 'bonne bouche' of India that demands greater fulfilment. Such an abundance of illuminating cameos can only lead to a greater want of knowledge, and a desire to see that irresistible continent.

Tim Willasey-Wilsey

Stephen Taylor's *Storm and Conquest* (London; Faber & Faber, 2007) is one of the most beautifully constructed stories about the rivalry between Britain and France in the Indian Ocean in 1808 and 1809.

By pure chance it also mentioned the death of an ancestor, Colonel David Richardson who went to the bottom of the Southern Ocean with his wife and three young children during the Great Hurricane of November 1808 in which three fully-laden Indiamen were lost. That must have been the Georgian equivalent of the disappearance of Malaysian Airways flight 370 in March 2014. It was many months before it was certain that all three ships had been lost. Lady Sale's *A Journal of the Disasters in Afghanistan* (London; John Murray, 1843) is an astonishing tale of resilience and courage by a group caught up in the chaotic retreat from Kabul in 1842. The book took on a new meaning for me after flying over those mountains and inside the gorges and defiles aboard RAF aircraft in the months following the 9/11 attacks.

But the book which best reflects my own relationship with India (constantly finding myself in remote places looking for graves or forts, clambering over walls, peering at inaccurate maps and drinking tea with villagers who think I am mad) is Roy Moxham's *The Great Hedge of India* (London; Constable, 2001). Roy buys a book at Quinto's in Charing Cross Road (a favourite second hand bookshop of mine; long since gone) by General ('Thuggee') Sleeman which mentions a Customs Hedge for administering the government Salt Tax which, in 1869 ran for 2,300 miles from the Indus to the Mahanadi in Madras. Roy spends hours in the old India Office Library in Blackfriars Road and finds a report which describes the hedge as being 'from 10 to 14 feet in height and 6 to 12 feet thick, composed of closely clipped thorny trees and shrubs amongst which the babool, the Indian plum, the caroundam the prickly pear and the thuer...are the most numerous'. He decides that he must try and find any remnants of the hedge. Roy's first trip proves fruitless. Back in London he realises he needs an accurate large-scale map. He gets lucky at the Royal Geographical Society where he finds the hedge marked clearly on an 1876 map. He buys a GPS and sets out again for India with mounting confidence. There are moments of optimism followed by despair. Then suddenly he meets a villager who knows of the hedge and uses its correct Hindi name; the 'parmat lain' but a road had been built on top of it. The following day they find a short length of raised embankment on which the hedge once stood. They walk along the line of the embankment and suddenly there was a length of hedge; 'thorny acacias topped the embankment. Some were 20 feet high. Thorn-covered plum barred the way....The embankment was fully 40 feet wide and well raised. It was the Customs Hedge. We had found it at last....the greatest hedge the world had ever known.'

Note: The Spring 2021 contributors are: Anne Buddle, Anna Dallapiccola, David Gilmour, Leslie James, Richard Morgan and your Editor.



above: Brigadier Sharif at the Rawalpindi tomb of Sir Henry Havelock-Allan (see page 124)

below: Glancer, the faithful hound, painted in 1808 (see page 123)





above: the isolated British cemetery near Manzai Fort, Pakistan

Recent reports on a cemetery in Waziristan have uncovered a little known episode on the North West Frontier in 1937, ten years before the British left the sub-continent. Photographs show a bleak, walled site with the majority of tombs in reasonably good condition and their short inscriptions still legible. The cemetery was initially spotted on a Facebook post, and then explored by a British based firm of security architects and engineers working in the region. Manzai Fort had been built in 1919 during the Third Afghan War and a large convoy set out from it on 9 April 1937 carrying supplies, officers and men to the garrison outpost at Wana. 49 lorries, an ambulance, three private cars, and four armoured cars were ambushed in the Shahur Tangi, a narrow river gorge, by rebellious tribesmen. The four leading vehicles had exited the gorge but the remainder were ferociously attacking, their drivers and passengers killed and their contents looted. Even a small aircraft providing overhead support was shot down and forced to land.

Six British officers were killed, two from the 16th Punjab Regiment, together with two private soldiers and twenty-one Indian troops including an Indian medical officer. Over 40 Indian and British soldiers were wounded, so this was no minor skirmish. The cemetery had been established in 1922 because there was a small hospital at the Fort where a number of patients had died and sadly two suicides are here too, men driven literally mad by their surroundings. Further details, collated by Mr Nick Metcalfe can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/RoyalSignalsGallantryAwards/>

NOTICES

The Commonwealth Heritage Forum (CHF) was launched in March 2020 with BACSA member Philip Davies as its Chairman. Commonwealth countries have a shared history and built heritage, but until now there has been no focus for celebrating or promoting this, or for passing on an understanding of its remarkable shared legacy to future generations. Many historic buildings and sites across the Commonwealth are at risk from neglect, poorly-conceived development, or natural disasters such as earthquake, fire or hurricane damage. Often there is little awareness of what is at risk, why, or how to safeguard these irreplaceable assets for the future. Once an historic building is lost, it is gone forever. The CHF will be working with universities and heritage agencies to draw up a Heritage at Risk register for the Commonwealth. Among selected sites are the David Sassoon Institute and Esplanade Mansion, Mumbai, Ross Island in the Andamans, with an Anglican church and European cemetery and the Old Silver Mint, Kolkata. The CHF website is: www.commonwealthheritage.org - or write to 12 Devonshire Street, London W1G 7AB for further information.

BOOKS BY BACSA MEMBERS

The Nabob: The Life of Sir Francis Sykes 1st Baronet (1730-1804)

John Sykes

Francis Sykes has never been other than a controversial figure in the history of the East India Company during the period of its seizure and consolidation of both political and commercial control in Bengal. Sykes' role as the close and trusted associate of both Robert Clive and Warren Hastings would alone make him a significant figure in early Anglo-Indian history. This biography of Sykes reveals just how significant a part he played. Sykes's lifelong friendship with Hastings had been forged on their first tour in Bengal in 1750 where they joined together over the next decade in profitable private trading ventures in diamonds, timber and salt. They also shared real hardships and dangers as volunteers in Clive's forces at the critical period when Siraj ud daulah seized the Company's trading bases at Cossimbazar and Calcutta. After the battle of Plassey, fought in reprisal, the two young men were too junior to receive a share of the controversial disproportionate cash 'presents' received by Clive and his senior civil and military colleagues from the new Nawab, Mir Jafar. For Sykes the first hand witness of what wealth he might aspire to, clearly made a lasting impression. After Plassey, Sykes was appointed to serve under his friend Hastings in Cossimbazar and they continued their profitable private trade.

Sykes returned to England in 1761 with a fortune sufficient to buy a fine house, Ackworth Park in his native Yorkshire. He gave his support to Robert Clive, now battling in London for control of the East India Company. Clive recognized Sykes's often ruthless efficiency, and

determined to have him as a member of Council in Calcutta when he was asked to return to Bengal in 1764 to restore the Company's fortunes. Clive also appointed Sykes to the dual roles of Resident at the Court in Murshidabad and Chief at nearby Cossimbazar. Following Munro's victory at Buxar the Company was granted the *diwani* by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1765 giving them control of the tax income of the provinces of Bengal and Orissa and it was Sykes, the member of Council to whom Clive turned to organise its collection. This task Sykes set about with his customary efficiency. In so doing there is good evidence to demonstrate Sykes's claims to have been the architect, not only of the operation of the Company's administrative organisation in Bengal, but also the political system of indirect rule, through indigenous executives advised by British administrators, which became the blueprint during the hegemony of British government throughout much of its colonial empire for the next two centuries.

His triple responsibilities as Council member, Resident at the Nawab's Court in Murshidabad and commercial chief at Cossimbazar gave Sykes unprecedented opportunities to extend his own fortune. He seized these with both hands, and in so doing attracted much of the bad reputation which has remained associated with his name. He was the organising brain behind Clive's disgraceful Society of Trade which retained for specific senior colleagues the profits on the monopoly trade in salt, betel nut and tobacco which the Company itself had banned. Sykes also was to be heavily criticised for personally benefiting from a new tax which he introduced. It was, however, as a private trader, in association with his *baniya* Cantu Babu, that Sykes made the majority of his fortune. He outmanoeuvred the equally ruthless Richard Barwell to take from him control of the profitable timber trade in Purnea and he continued to trade in the lucrative but debarred salt trade and even in the Company's own 'investment' trade of silks. He was adroit in keeping his name out of transactions negotiated in Cantu's name.

Sykes returned home from his second and final tour in 1769 with one of the largest fortunes of any nabob, estimated at possibly £700,000 (about £70 million in modern values). He was still only thirty-nine. He retained Ackworth Park in Yorkshire, acquired Pensbury House in Dorset and then built a grand new Palladian house on the Basildon estate in Berkshire. He bought heavily into Company stock, controversially splitting and re-assigning it in order to increase his votes, and he proved a strong supporter of the appointment of his friend Hastings as governor general in 1772. In true nabob style he also bought a seat in Parliament, characteristically in a manner attracting critical attention even in an age when it was almost universal practice. In the 1774 election he was disenfranchised for bribery and required to pay damages to his opponent of £11,000 (£ 1.10 million in today's values).

The picture of Sykes, the man, which emerges from this book is that of an energetic and efficient, but ruthless and greedy individual, his actions devoted, to an unusual degree, to his own financial interests. His present biographer and latter day kinsman does not seek, as he says ‘to defend his actions but to explain them’. Sykes was a man of his age, often facing dangerous situations where the outcome could not be known, who should not be judged by today’s values. His reputation suffers because that of the East India Company and the British Empire itself has suffered at the hands and pens of today’s academic historians. One can echo Sir John’s call for the need for a revisionist view of the history of the British Empire and his plea for a more balanced assessment of the nabobs, but it has to be acknowledged that the case history of Sir Francis Sykes is unlikely to be cited in that cause. This does not diminish the value of the present biography which underlines the fact that history is not only made by idealists. By immersing himself in the experiences of his ancestor’s generation of nabobs in Bengal Sir John has provided much new fascinating detail on the factual realities of private trade and of everyday life. He has written an absorbing, highly readable, and important study.

John Ford

2019 self published by Sir John Sykes Bt. ISBN 978 1 5272 3781 0 pp402 £54.00 including postage and packing from Sir John at Kingsbury Croft, 13 Kingsbury Street, Marlborough, Wilts SN8 1HU

Digging up the Raj in Deansgrange Cemetery

Shabnam Vasisht

Deansgate Cemetery, south east of Dublin in Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown administrative county was established in 1865 in response to overcrowding of older Dublin graveyards, in much the same way as Highgate, Kensal Green, Brompton, etc were founded in London a few years earlier. With admirable impartiality it has a Church of Ireland section to the South and a Catholic section to the North, each with its own burial chapel. The Indian – born author describes walking through the cemetery with her sister and their remarking on the large number of memorials to people connected with India. She followed this up with research into some 74 of these people and their families (both parentage and descendants), buried there between 1866 and 2000. Her pursuit of descendants sometimes takes her up to the present day and on occasions she is able to include portraits of long dead Victorians. The book is self-published, but unlike so many comb-bound acts of genealogical piety, beautifully presented with good-quality colour illustrations on every page – often taken from slightly whacky sources (eg modern Indian postage stamps showing uniforms of Indian Army, or even the label of a beer bottle), but generally relevant. The author’s style is light but with a penchant for facetiousness. The biography of Frederick Arthur Cavendish Wrench begins: ‘Researching this gentleman was not easy, given the abundance of wrenches that popped up on the internet – monkey

wrenches, ratchet wrenches, square drive ratchet wrenches, open-end wrenches, torque wrenches etc. Having wrenched away from them’ This looks more like a chatty blog and less like a conventional non-fiction book. The author writes at one point that her aim is to ‘bring such people [the Irish with Indian connections] to the attention of their own countrymen’ but I suspect she intends the book to be used mainly by visitors to the cemetery while they wandered round. For most BACSA readers the primary interest will be genealogical. However, the book is not much like a BACSA cemetery book. We do not know what other Indian graves were not included, and although we have a location in the cemetery of each grave, we have almost no photographs of graves or transcriptions of MIs. BACSA readers may also wish to know that the Register of Interments at Deansgrange from 1865 to 1972 has been microfilmed and is normally available (except of course during lock-down) at Dublin City Library and Archive.

The author’s research seems to have had two main components – the internet (which I presume also includes the main genealogical players such as Ancestry, FindmyPast, etc) and talking/corresponding with descendants of the people buried and one or two others. The list of acknowledgements includes FIBIS, and Eileen Hewson, BACSA author and expert on all things to do with the Irish in India. I do not get the impression the author has used any other sources such as libraries, though I may be doing her an injustice. The book lacks an index. The individual subjects are arranged alphabetically, but of course that does not help one find places, regiments, or other families with which they intermarried. Occasionally one finds the word “ref” followed by a cross reference to another biography in the book where the same place or matter may also be discussed. There is no attempt to draw any conclusions. For example almost all the biographical subjects are buried in the South or Church of Ireland part of the cemetery and so were members of the Protestant Ascendancy. If we ignore the flippant style (which to be fair is often entertaining) there are actually some useful pieces of information here, some derived from the descendants and so not easily discoverable elsewhere. Or of course one would go to the cemetery and simply wander round looking at the graves and reading the biographies.

Richard Morgan

ISBN handprint 2020. 978 1 9163759 0 1. Obtainable from the author at Carriglea, 50A St Fintan’s Villas, Deansgrange, Co. Dublin A94 C3N3, Republic of Ireland. £15.47 including postage, or from Waterstones.

Bahawalpur: The Kingdom that Vanished

Anabel Loyd

In the seventy or so years since Independence, much less has been written about the Princely States which acceded to Pakistan than those that remained in India. The name of the once great State of Bahawalpur is no longer remembered among its well-mapped peers over the border in Rajasthan.

This book is based on conversations with Salahuddin Ahbasi, grandson of the last ruler of Bahawalpur, who was born a year before Partition. Starting with the history of his state and his family, his memories add light to stories of Bahawalpur's princes from old records, letters and the accounts of British travellers and civil servants. Pakistan's troubled history has clouded a clear picture of the nation and shrouded its component parts. From the microcosm of Bahawalpur, this account helps to join the dots for a more coherent view of the macrocosm of Pakistan and queries the future route of the Islamic State.

2020 Penguin Vintage ISBN10 987 654321 Rs599 pp285

BOOKS BY NON-MEMBERS THAT WILL INTEREST READERS

She-Merchants, Buccaneers and Gentlewomen: British Women in India 1600-1900

Katie Hickman

Katie Hickman specialises in writing about women, having previously published studies of British diplomatic wives, and courtesans in the 18th and 19th centuries. In her latest book she takes on a subject, the memsahib, who has long been of critical interest, and sites her within the topic of Empire, currently under hostile scrutiny. On both the memsahib and Empire, she takes a nuanced approach. The High Noon of Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, seemingly inevitable, was no foregone conclusion. From the often shaky pursuit of trading connections in the 1600s, through battles with other European powers and Indian rulers in the 18th and early 19th centuries, it was not always certain that Britain would come out on top and impose the Raj in the wake of the 1857 Uprising. The memsahibs of the 19th and early 20th centuries, who were popularly assigned the negative image of spoilers of Empire, were in fact preceded by women with extremely varied histories and interests, who reflected the different stages of Britain's engagement with India.

One of the most interesting and original aspects of Katie Hickman's study is the light she throws on the British women who went to India from the early period of the establishment of the East India Company in 1600. Far from the stereotype of the middle class memsahib, these were tough women, inspired by a sense of adventure, and often the desire to make money on their own account in an uncertain world where British merchants were dependent on their acceptance by Indian rulers and traders. With the acquisition of Bombay in 1666, Britain gained a base in India. Working and lower middle class women – as well as orphan girls as young as 12 from Christ's Hospital – were encouraged to sail to India to build up the infrastructure of the new British colony, the forerunners of innumerable women who for centuries ran small businesses and provided a wide variety of services. Their contribution is too often forgotten under the strangling image of the memsahib. Britain's presence in India was challenged in the 18th century by wars with other European powers, notably the French, and local rulers.

It was a close run thing, and it is easy to forget that the British themselves were sometimes doubtful of their ability to survive. In this maelstrom, British women's lives were far from safe. In the 18th century, some were captured by Marathas; Elizabeth Fay was held by Haider Ali and Elizabeth Marsh challenged by howling mobs on her travels round south India, a far cry from later days when memsahibs travelled the sub-continent with impunity, cared for only by their servants. However, the officers brought in to fight the wars, and the administrators to run the resulting areas meant the arrival in greater numbers of women from more educated backgrounds. Many of these like Sophia Plowden and Lady (Henrietta) Clive distinguished themselves by their love of Indian life and culture, and their communication of this to the outside world. On the other hand, the peace brought by the British control of Bengal and areas further south created an explosion of wealth from trade, not to mention chicanery. British society was rumbustious and raffish – with many women to match. As from the earliest days, reputations which would have been regarded as sullied at home were no barrier to acceptance in the highest levels of society. The moral conformists of the later 19th century would have been shocked.

Engagement with India in the 18th and early 19th centuries often meant close personal contact. Innumerable British men had Indian wives, and *bibis* – and some women also married Indians. The intermingling of cultures was cut short by increasing British control, when the imposition of rule came to be equated with distance. This official policy was enhanced by the encouragement of missionary activity, which Katie Hickman sees as one of the major factors for a declining lack of sympathy for Indian life and culture. In neither of these developments were women directly implicated, though they were a focal point of the increasing Anglicisation of the life of British India. Nevertheless, many women continued to engage enthusiastically with India, including the ebullient Fanny Parks, whose writing has inspired generations of readers. The Uprising of 1857, the direct result of aspects of British policy, led to the establishment of the Raj, the abolition of the East India Company and direct rule by Britain. This was the era of what is popularly imagined as the memsahib, a privileged and dominant figure withdrawn from the world around her. While this is partly true, it must not be forgotten that, right or wrong, the treatment of British women and children during the Uprising created a hostility which lasted for several generations among many, though not all, of the British in India. On the other hand, the Raj provided many new opportunities for British women in India, among them teaching and nursing. Teachers included missionary wives, while others like Flora Annie Steele played a huge role in establishing secular schools in the Punjab.

Nursing is illustrated in the vivid and often harrowing account of a young Englishwoman, Hester Dowson, who sailed to Bombay to help in the epidemic of 1897-98.

These first hand stories of women's lives are one of the strengths of the book. We hear of their reactions to India, their delight in their experience and the culture and people around them, as well as their traumas and stress – not least in their accounts of episodes of the Uprising, including Meerut, the siege of Lucknow and the massacre at Cawnpore. Meanwhile one of the highlights of the ensuing Raj, the 1877 Delhi Durbar, is also presented through the eyes of the Vicereine, Lady Lytton.

Women from across the social spectrum were implicated in many different ways in the evolution of the British presence in India. What could be further explored is the way in which empire itself increased the opportunities for women at a period when they were asserting their right to education and participation in the world of work and politics at home. The Indian Army gave scope for nursing and welfare work; medicine became the goal of young women doctors who found greater opportunity to work in zenanas than at home. Philanthropic social work often became the domain of women, and this, with their contributions to health care and education, greatly improved the lives of Indian women in particular. Politics too found its adherents: one of Mahatma Gandhi's closest associates was the British woman Madeleine Slade. For all the current condemnation of empire, it must be remembered that it permitted women to make a lasting and often valuable contribution to India and her people. Katie Hickman's colourful book enables us to see how this developed from the earliest days, and is highly recommended.

Rosemary Raza

2019 Virago Press ISBN 9 7803 4900 8257 £20.00 pp390

The Lady of Kabul: Florentia Sale and the disastrous retreat of 1842

Michael Scott

When a movie studio next needs a story of cool-headed bravery and unbelievable survival against the odds it should look no further than the 1841/42 Afghanistan diary of Lady Florentia Sale. Add to that the recent book by Michael Scott on Lady Sale and the disastrous Kabul siege and subsequent retreat and massacre of 16,000 troops and camp followers in January 1842 and you have a drama on an epic scale. Lady Sale was a Victorian hero. She was feted on the publication of her account (it quickly went to seven editions) and dined with Queen Victoria, who described Sale in her Journal as 'so simple, retiring & quiet, & so sensible'. Sale was a dedicated army wife to General Robert 'Fighting Bob' Sale, the mother of 12 children, and as former Major General Michael Scott writes, she 'had the intelligence and shrewdness that her husband lacked'. Scott says: 'Today, she would be a Cabinet Minister or CEO of a FTSE 100 company.' Lady Sale's story has it all: A garrison under siege; a daughter's wedding; a son-in-law's death and burial; a forced march in freezing snow; a retreating army, massacred and defeated; earthquakes; captivity; a newly born granddaughter; fear of being sold into slavery; and ultimately freedom and reunion with her husband.

Through all the deprivations and chaos of an army under siege and on retreat, Lady Sale established her reputation for bravery, leadership, intelligence-gathering (an Afghan secretly came to see her and warn of the impending massacre), the odd tumbler of whisky, and even having a musket ball removed from her arm 'without, of course any anaesthetic', Scott writes.

The author Michael Scott commanded the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards in the Falklands War so he's well placed to provide a detailed military history of 1841/1842 in Kabul. By the time the retreat began in January 1842, in a foot of snow and freezing temperatures, he writes that: 'Leadership and morale were rock bottom.' Scott paints a vivid description of the chaos, panic and slaughter that became one of the worst defeats of the Victorian era. According to Scott: 'On paper, the order of march looked tidy and militarily efficient but it wasn't.' Yet, it's against this background that Lady Sale displayed her 'courage and superb confidence' and 'was unfazed by the perils in which she found herself'.

Florentia Sale was born in Madras in 1790 and in 1809 married Captain Robert Sale. She lived the typical life of a British officer's wife in India of social events and following her husband on overseas assignments. Her husband was killed in 1844 and Lady Sale died in South Africa in July 1853 (see the Spring 2020 *Chowkidar* for my article on her grave in Cape Town). The insurrection began in Kabul on 2 November 1841 when political officer Sir Alexander Burnes was murdered. From there everything in this instalment of the 'Great Game' went down hill as the British faced attacks at the Bala Hissar fortress and the military cantonments. The British were promised safe passage out of Kabul to Jalalabad in the east, but the Afghan commander, Wazir Akbar Khan had other ideas. Only Lady Sale seemed to forecast and appreciate the treachery of the massacre that followed.

The retreat from Kabul became infamous for the final defeat at the village of Gandamak. There are two renowned paintings of the action. William Barnes Wollen painted the last stand of the 44th Regiment (East Essex) of Foot showing Captain Thomas Souter who was spared by the Afghan forces who thought he was of some importance with the regimental colours wrapped around his waist. And 'contrary to popular myth' Scott writes, the only survivor of the retreat, Dr Brydon, painted by Lady Elizabeth Butler, arriving on horseback at Jalalabad. During the forced march the Afghans take hostage Lady Sale and others. Scott writes: 'Her captors must have regretted every day they had her in their power.' Captivity threw up all manner of difficulties and obstacles. Afghans recalled the worst earthquake in years followed by other quakes and freezing conditions. Lady Sale caught a fever. Her daughter gave birth ('another female captive' Lady Sale wrote). The hapless gout-ridden commander

Major General Elphinstone (a Battle of Waterloo 1815 veteran) died whilst being held. Eventually, after nine months of captivity, Lady Sale is reunited with her husband and they return to England in 1843 where they are treated as heroes. Her daughter Alexandrina was killed in the 1857 mutiny. Grand-daughter Julia lived an army wife's life as well and is buried in Somerset with 'Born In Afghanistan' written on her grave (see Llewelyn Morgan *The Buddhas of Bamiyan* published in 2012).

Having worked extensively in Kabul I can provide a few current connections to the story of Lady Sale. One of the main areas of the city is named Wazir Akbar Khan after the Afghan general who led the attack on the British. The UK's first base on the outskirts of the city in 2002 was named Camp Souter. The area where much of the action took place in 1841, the cantonments, is today home to the US Embassy and the NATO military headquarters. The Bala Hissar fortress is still magnificent today and undergoing some excavations and restoration.

I never came across anything directly connected to Lady Sale in Kabul but I was thrilled to discover her grave in Cape Town in 2019. The inscription on the grave includes: 'Her heroism, her fortitude, and her patience under arduous circumstances are part of her country's story.' With the eye and admiration of a retired British Army general, Michael Scott captures the calm under fire she exuded and provides a much-needed account of what she faced with distinction.

Dominic Medley

2019 Endeavour Media Ltd ISBN 9781673527865 pp287

The Indian Empire at War: From Jihad to Victory, the Untold Story of the Indian Army in the First World War George Morton-Jack

The Indian Army served with credit and honour in nearly every theatre of the First World War. By 1918, over 1.4 million Indian soldiers had flocked to the colours. No account of the war can justly ignore this colossal effort and yet, this significant contribution became a mere footnote in the history of the war. The lack of a political identity in 1914-18 served to rob the Indian soldier of his place in history and a commemoration of his service. The First World War centenary commemorations brought about a renewed focus on India and the role it played in it. George Morton-Jack in his excellent and definitive book on the subject sheds light on the experiences of Indian soldiers who served on nearly all fronts across the globe.

Already celebrated for his work on the role of Indians in France and Flanders in his first book *The Indian Army on the Western Front* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Morton-Jack delivers yet again by presenting a refreshingly new perspective of the subaltern voice. This voice is drawn primarily from a collection of interviews of Indian veterans of the Great War, conducted by a team of Indo-American researchers in the 1970s and early 1980s. These interviews provide tantalizing insights into the experiences of Indian soldiers and allow us to understand how they

perceived the momentous events that were unfolding around them. Morton-Jack calls this 'a detective history based on a wide range of fragmentary evidence'. This is reflected in the book, which is rigorously researched with sources collected from across Britain, Germany and India.

The author recounts in vivid detail the varied experiences of Indian soldiers – from the trenches of Europe to the jungles of East Africa; from the pyramids of Egypt and along the Suez Canal to the barren deserts of the Middle East – covering all of their battlefield exploits. The book is divided into seven parts covering the 1914-18 period chronologically with the last part devoted to Indian veterans, and touching upon the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919. Interspersed throughout the narrative are several themes that provide a broader context within which this complex story is situated. For instance, racial hierarchies within the Indian Army are tactfully addressed, along with a careful consideration of the nuances of battlefield weaknesses attributed to Indians.

Until the start of the First World War, Indian soldiers had not been pitted against a European adversary. This was in line with the racial colonial policies of the time. The myth of racial superiority was consistently perpetuated through concepts such as 'prestige' and the 'martial races' and Morton-Jack discusses this at length. Similarly, he explores how assertions of unsoldierly behaviour ascribed to Indians, such as self-inflicted wounds and desertions were, in fact, not unique to them. According to Morton-Jack, the Indians held their own and fared much better than others. This was largely due to the fact that the bulk of them were pre-war regulars who were 'much tougher, more professional and pitiless than might be imagined'.

Among the social and cultural aspects covered in the book, Morton-Jack has focussed more on portraying Indian soldiers as individuals coming from a cross-section of diverse communities and regions, rather than viewing them as generic 'Indians'. One particular community that features prominently in the book is that of the Pathans, or more correctly, Pakhtuns. While some Pakhtun soldiers were recruited from within the territory of British India, most came from the independent tribal areas of Waziristan, Tirah and neighbouring territories encompassing 25,000 square miles. These lay outside the jurisdiction of British India and this presented a host of problems for British officers when dealing with these men. The Pakhtuns did not see themselves as Indians. Morton-Jack focuses in bringing out their peculiar characteristics and examines how they fit among the other 'martial' classes of the Indian Army. He rightly points out that the story of these recruits from the tribal areas is as important as that of the soldiers who predominantly came from the Punjab province, in order to understand how the war meant different things to Indian soldiers from different places.

Part of the reason why their story has so far been neglected is due to the dangers of visiting these tribal areas for research even today. Yet, drawing upon available resources, Morton-Jack manages to bring to light the fearless spirit and character of the Pakhtun soldiers as never before.

The Indian Empire at War is a detailed and highly engaging book devoid of tedious military or academic jargon and packed with interesting anecdotes and riveting accounts. The new paperback edition, which has been published recently comes with a range of welcome additions. These include a focus on the cautious attitude adopted towards politically volatile Sikh troops; a comparison of the disproportionate attention given to Indians in Europe as opposed to those serving in Mesopotamia; and additional details of Indian casualties and their commemoration, to name a few. The only drawback of the book is the lack of detailed footnotes or endnotes, but this does not detract from the quality of the overall narrative. The book is unlikely to be surpassed in breadth and scope within the Indian historiography of the Great War. **Adil Rana Chhina**

2018 (paperback 2020) Little, Brown ISBN 978 0 349 14184 8. £12.98. pp595.

CAN YOU HELP?

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich is a PhD student at the University of NSW in Sydney researching the experiences of British (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh) women who were in India and who were widowed between 1860 and 1900. She is interested in how they grieved and how they mourned. Did they choose to live their widowhoods in India or in Britain, did they remarry or not? What dictated their decisions? The diaries, letters and other papers of widows are vital to illuminating their priorities, their aspirations and their experiences of widowhood and Anne-Marie hopes that readers may have such first-hand accounts in their family archives. Her close reading of *Chowkidar* has pointed her to several widows. These include Maggie Smith who could not speak to her children about the death and loss of her first husband – only at 97 could she put pen to paper about it (*Chowkidar*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp54-55). Anne-Marie says: ‘Oh to have access to that letter!’ If you are able to help please make contact through the Editor.

SNIPPET

The word ‘furlough’ came as no surprise to many *Chowkidar* readers, because it is an old Anglo Indian term formerly applied to a period of leave for British officers, civilians and soldiers. According to Hobson-Jobson the word *vorloff*, of Dutch origin, is recorded as far back as 1796 and Fanny Parks noted in the 1830s that the ‘Furlough and Pension Fund for the Civil Service has been established; we subscribe four per cent from our salary, for which we are allowed by Government six per cent interest towards the purchase of an annuity of £1,000 after 25 years service.’

BOOKS FROM INDIA: Readers of *Chowkidar* are welcome to place orders for new Rupee priced books with Prabhu Book Service, Booksellers, House No.557/Sector 14, Gurgaon 122001, Haryana, India.

(Proprietor: Mr. Vijay Kumar Jain - Mobile No. 0091-124-9818727879). Mr. Jain will invoice BACSA members in Sterling adding £4.00 for Registered Air-Mail for a slim hardback and £3.00 for a slim paperback. Sterling cheques should be made payable to Prabhu Book Service.

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

If wishing to contact a fellow-member whose address is not known to you please send the letter c/o the Honorary Secretary who will forward it unopened.

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

If planning any survey of cemetery MIs, either in this country or overseas, please check with 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.

The Editor's email address is: rosieljai@clara.co.uk



Our youngest reader, Master George Peters, aged three