



# 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 (2022) 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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## A MOVING INSCRIPTION

In January this year Mr Anirban Bhadra, of Calcutta decided to photograph every tomb in the South Park Street cemetery there and record the inscriptions. 'I would spend all day in the cemetery' he tells us 'and would clear the stones with a small painter's brush to clean the face so that the writing would become visible. I would get into any tricky place covered with vegetation, much to the displeasure of the *mali*. When summer came I stopped because of the heat but will soon resume this winter. Near the entrance I found a huge dark marble slab lying on a bed of grass. It was clean, although broken in two. Fussy as I was, I didn't spare even this crude-looking slab and took a photo to transcribe later. I found that it was an all-Latin inscription which commemorates an Angelica de Carrion followed by the phrase Edwardii Tiretta Tarvisini and a date of 15 June 1796 but didn't translate the text. I almost forgot about it until recently when going through my notes and only then found that Angelica was actually the wife of Edward Tiretta. I checked the *Bengal Obituary* and found that this inscription is the first in the section on Tiretta's Burial Ground. I knew about Tiretta and his burial ground but didn't know the whereabouts of his wife. I eagerly would like to know if this is recorded in BACSA records. Or is it my discovery? The verdict is very much anticipated.'

This was indeed an exciting find, especially as the tomb is not recorded in BACSA'S definitive guide *South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta: Register of Graves and Standing tombs from 1767*. The first thing to do was to get an accurate translation of the Latin inscription, which Mr Bhadra had gallantly tried to do through google. BACSA member Richard Morgan provided his own version:

'Here lies Angelica de Carrion, the very dear wife of Edward Tiretta of Treviso, whom on the third day after a pledge of love had been given, Death snatched away on the 15 June 1796 in her 18th year. Her grieving husband set up this marble sacred to her memory.'

(For members who would like to try their hand, the Latin inscription is reproduced on the back cover.) The next thing was to learn more of Edward Tiretta and his Burial Ground. Treviso is near enough to Venice for Tiretta to be called a Venetian and as a youth he had worked for Casanova, the great lover, before arriving in India about 1781. He was quickly appointed Superintendent of Roads in Calcutta as well as the Land Registrar, recording ownership deeds and marking the limits of the town. He was also a civil architect, though it would be more accurate to describe him as a property developer.

He established Tiretta's Bazaar in north Calcutta which became a centre for Chinese immigrants and still offers Chinese food today. Angelica, his child bride, whom he had married when she was only fifteen, was the orphan daughter of a French officer, the Comte de Carrion who had settled in Calcutta and may also have had Venetian links. Three years after the marriage, Angelica died in childbirth, leaving 'a little babe as a pledge of her friendship' as Tiretta wrote to Warren Hastings.

Angelica was interred in the Portuguese burial ground at Boytaconnah near the Circular Road, but for reasons 'too painful to relate' her widowed husband was forced to have her body disinterred shortly afterwards. This was apparently because such was the demand for burial spaces for Catholics, that even recent graves were being used for new interments. Tiretta therefore bought a plot of land in Park Street which became known as the French Cemetery or Tiretta's Burial Ground and here Angelica was laid to rest for a second time. A large obelisk was erected over her grave in the centre of the new site. (*see back cover*) The inscription was inserted at the base, facing the entrance. Nothing is known of her infant, nor indeed of Tiretta's own burial place.

In 1977 the French Cemetery was cleared for redevelopment. The last photographs were taken by BACSA member Mrs Elizabeth McKay and the surviving inscriptions were recorded before the tombs were demolished. A handful of gravestones which could be moved were brought to South Park Street through the generosity of the Compagnie Française des Petroles (Total), but the majority were lost. BACSA was then in its infancy and unable to do anything. The information was collated and published in 1983 as a BACSA booklet edited mainly by the late Basil LaBourchardière, himself of French descent. Writing about the Tiretta tomb he noted that the inscription was 'alas now no more' which makes Mr Bhadra's discovery all the more exciting. It appears that Angelica's inscription, removed from its monument, was simply left, face down, in South Park Street. It is such an important memorial that it should be carefully restored with a plaque detailing the history of this much travelled inscription. Anirban Bhadra is to be congratulated on his find.

And another sharp-eyed visitor to the same cemetery, Mr Sovan Dutta, found something that puzzled him – two stone plaques lying side by side on the ground. One was inscribed with foreign place names: Toulouse, Salamanca, S. Africa 1846-47, Central India and Alma. The second adjacent plaque had a regimental crest and the words 'Derbyshire Regt.' and 'Sherwood Foresters' could be made

out. This placed the plaques later than 1881 when the two regiments, from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire were amalgamated. Apart from a mention of 'Central India' the Regiment does not seem to have spent long in India, but played an important part in the American war of Independence, in the Napoleonic wars, and in the Crimean war. Mr Dutta asked the pertinent question 'Why is Alma mentioned first?' because it appears separately above a list of other battle names. Perhaps a military historian could explain the ranking order of names? Mr Dutta's query was passed to Dr Sudip Bhattacharya, who believes the plaques may be from a memorial originally at Dum Dum, now part of the Kolkata Municipal area. Possibly there was a military cemetery here which no longer exists, suggests Dr Battacharya and the two plaques, like the Tiretta inscription may simply have been dumped here. Who knows what will turn up next, we wonder.

## **MAIL BOX**

Sadly not all the cemetery news from India is good, in fact a report from Purnea in Bihar is extremely distressing, particularly for BACSA Executive member Charles Greig, who has relatives buried there. (see Profile on page 77) Villagers had begun digging up century-old graves of British officials and their families in the mistaken belief that they were buried with gold jewellery, diamonds and other valuable stones. It is estimated that of the 300 British graves here, 200 have been vandalised, including those of children and adults who died between 1880 and 1942, so within living memory. Of course no gold or jewels were found because Britons were not and never have been, buried with grave goods in the subcontinent. 'The majority of the graves have been vandalised since there is no security for this cemetery' reported Father Jacob, priest of the Emmanuel Church at Purnea.

March 2022 marked the 200<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Edward Holden Cruttenden, who was the first person to be buried in the old Kotagiri Protestant Cemetery. A memorial tablet in St John's Church at Trichinopoly is inscribed: 'To the memory of Edward Holden Cruttenden, Zillah Judge of this station. This tablet is erected by a small circle of his affectionate and afflicted friends in mournful testimony of their deep regret at the early extinction of those endearing qualities, which graced his life and shed their cheering influence on all around him. His premature demise on the Neelgherry Mountains, where his earthly remains are deposited has deprived this community of one of its brightest ornaments, and the world of an eminent example of genuine worth, and unfeigned benevolence. Obiit anno domini 1822 aetatis 35.'

While this inscription has been previously recorded, Cruttenden's grave has only recently been rediscovered while BACSA-funded restoration work was carried out at Kotagiri. (*see page 80*) The headstone, which appears to be granite, has a clear cut inscription that reads: 'Sacred to the memory of Edward Holden Cruttenden, Esq. late Zillah Judge of Trichinopoly whose earthly remains are here deposited, in the hope of a blessed resurrection thro' the mediation of Jesus Christ. He died on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March A.D. 1822 in the 35<sup>th</sup> year of his age.'

The Cruttenden family had a long connection with India. Edward's grandfather was a Director of the East India Company, and unlike some of the other Directors, had actually lived in India where his son, Edward's father, was born in Calcutta in 1756. When the family returned to England they brought with them their *ayah*, the nursery maid. She was a handsome young woman who was subsequently painted by Joshua Reynolds, along with her young charges while interestingly the parents are not portrayed. Both Edward's grandfather and his own father had the same name, Edward Holden Cruttenden, which makes untangling the family tree slightly tricky, but as far as we can tell, Edward the Trichinopoly judge, was unmarried, since there is no mention of a wife in either the church memorial or on his gravestone. A *zillah* is a specific area of land, so Edward was a district judge, a position he reached no doubt aided by his important family connections. Nevertheless, he is still remembered in India and a prayer meeting at his grave was organised this March to mark the bicentenary of his death.

From Palayamkottai in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu, Mr Ashok Calvin has sent us news of the old Christ Church cemetery in the Military Lines there. Originally there were three large 'clusters' of graves, but the oldest has now been demolished and built over with high rise apartments. BACSA had listed this cemetery as 'closed'. 'Not only is it closed, it is gone forever' reports Mr Calvin. The second cluster is near a larger area of graves but here also there have been drastic changes. 'Space has played a major role in remodelling this cemetery. Now it houses a Primary School, homes for church workers and an expanded church, different from the British era.' The headstones have been moved and placed together in a large walled square in front of the church. Mr Calvin estimates there are as many as a hundred stones here although not more than 30 or so are still legible. It is a reminder that we cannot expect all old cemeteries to remain untouched, and that church activities, including setting up schools, will understandably take precedence.

## CAN YOU HELP?

New BACSA member Dr Jo Stanley has an interesting query that she hopes other members can help with. 'I am working on a book and video recording project about *ayahs*, especially those who came to the UK. Could BACSA members help by telling me if they know of any graves of ayahs and family servants, either in India or here? FIBIS's Cemeteries Project helped me find my first ayah's grave, that of Anama, an ayah in Jaipur, which is very exciting. Anama worked for Lt Col Sir William Curzon Wyllie and Katherine Georgiana Wyllie. She was with them for thirteen years, which was a third of William's total time in India (he had arrived in 1867). The couple married in Madras, 1881, so it seems that Anama had been in their household for much of their married life, during many postings.

'The Wyllies erected a handsome gravestone in 1903. It also commemorates the cook, Joseph Francis, her husband. (It was common for ayahs to be married to the cook or bearer of a household.) His name suggests he might have been a Goan of Portuguese descent. Records indicate that the Wyllies had no children. Therefore Anama would have been working as Katherine's maid, rather than acting as a nanny, which was the ayahs more usual role. Perhaps Katherine was feeling especially bereft of close ties in early winter 1903 when Anama's patiently-endured suffering ended. Katherine's father, David Fremantle Carmichael, formerly a grandee of the India Office, had just passed away that September. When Katherine was not quite two, her mother, Jane, died in Madras in June 1860 on the day she gave birth to a third child. So it is likely that Katherine was extra close to several 'almost-mothers': her early ayah in Madras 1860; possibly to the two English women servants who later brought her up in London from 1861; and then to Anama in India too.

'It appears that the physical closeness between Anama and Katherine was finally severed by the demands of William's job. The Wyllies returned to England in 1901, seemingly without their Indian servants. William organised the reception of the Indian princes attending the 1902 coronation of Edward VII. Anama's life ended on Boxing Day 1903 in Jaipur. The Wyllies would have arranged for Anama's headstone remotely, from London. Perhaps Katherine's younger sister in India helped. The choice of words is telling, the Wyllies saying of themselves '*with whom Anama lived* for 13 years, rather than saying she *served* them. Just six years later, in 1909, William was assassinated at the Imperial Institute in South Kensington.

Katherine was there. Memorial tablets commemorate him in St Paul's Cathedral, Rajputana and Central India, but his grave is in Richmond, Surrey, where his eldest daughter lived. I would be delighted to be contacted by BACSA members via: [doctorjostanley@gmail.com](mailto:doctorjostanley@gmail.com) Thank you so much.'

The Editor adds: not all ayahs were lucky enough to return to India. This summer (2022) saw the unveiling of a blue plaque at 26 King Edward's Road, Hackney, east London. Erected by English Heritage it reads: 'The Ayahs' Home for nannies and nursemaids from Asia was based here 1900-1921' The unveiling ceremony was attended by the actress Meera Syal. The ayahs were not only from India, but from Ceylon, Hong Kong, and Singapore too, and according to English Heritage were of different faiths. The idea of a refuge, or at least temporary accommodation, specifically for ayahs may date back to the 1820s, and a succession of such houses, all in London, culminated in the Hackney home. Ayahs accompanied their English families home on the long sea voyage then hoped to get a passage back to India or further east with another family going out. In some cases ayahs made a number of journeys back and forth and clearly there was an unofficial network that would recommend trustworthy ayahs to families looking for childcare. Other ayahs may simply have been abandoned when they were no longer needed. By 1900 when the Hackney home was established, it was run by the London City Mission as a charity and as many as 90 women were housed here. It is unlikely they could contribute much towards their upkeep, but a photograph of the sitting room in King Edward's Road shows the women sewing, which may have brought in a small income.

The battle of Meeanee (also Miani) that took place on 17 February 1843 is not one of the better-known victories of the East India Company. Led by Sir Charles Napier, the Presidency army of Bombay defeated the ruling chiefs of Sindh, the amirs, and subsequently most of their country was annexed by the British. Napier's aggressive attitude towards the amirs led to the engagement at Meeanee and although both sides are said to have been fairly evenly matched in numbers, the British had superior weaponry and the outcome was not in doubt. Major Henry Crawshay Teasdale was the commanding officer of the 25<sup>th</sup> Bombay Native Infantry and leading his men from the front, he was killed in action. Teasdale was born in London in 1801, the son of a solicitor and attended the Royal Military College before being nominated as a cadet in the Bombay army. He was regarded as an able linguist and was initially acting as official interpreter before rising to the rank of Major in 1842. His family life was not without



tragedy. His first wife, a Maratha princess, predeceased him having given birth to two children and his second wife was left a widow at his death. He died a hero ‘while animating his sepoy, [he] dashed on horseback over the bank amidst the enemy, and was instantly shot and sabred – dying like a glorious soldier!’ A further battle a month later at Hyderabad in Sindh, consolidated the British victory.

Now a relative, BACSA member Andrew Matthews is curious to know more about the large stone memorial that was erected to commemorate the battle of Meeanee. It was said to have a spire and contained brass plaques with the names of the British officers and men who were killed. (*see page 80*) These plaques were removed in 1952 from St Thomas’s Church in Hyderabad and installed in the south transept of Chester Cathedral. Soldiers from the Cheshire Regiment had been involved in both battles. It is not clear whether the original memorial was inside the Hyderabad church or not – brass is not generally used in exterior sites. Perhaps someone familiar with St Thomas’s Church could help, and could also explain why the plaques were removed from it in the 1950s?

## **CEMETERY ROUND UP**

Our Area Representative for Bihar and Jharkhand, Mr Syed Faizan Raza has been gathering information and photographs from a number of sites in north India. He reports as follows: ‘The condition of the Christian cemetery in Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) is getting worse by the day and it needs urgent restoration. Tombs here employ circular roof; cylindrical columns; pyramid tops; rectangular, square, octagonal, cubical, and cuboid bases. There are certain graves which are simple in design. Some inscriptions of tombs have faded while some are missing. The inscriptional engravings have been done on marble and red sandstone. A few tombs have lost their central portion making them vulnerable to immediate damage. The neighbours are using the graveyard for their personal purposes and, thus, they are causing irreparable harm to the tombs.’ Among the names noted here are those of Thomas Thornton who died in 1848, aged 88 and his wife Harriet Frances who predeceased him in 1835 aged 58. Clearly this couple had made India their home.

One of the most interesting inscriptions reads: ‘Sacred to the memory of Antoine A. Pedron Esq son of the late Col. Etienne Pedron of Scindia’s service who died on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1830 age 34 years 9 months.’ Colonel Étienne Pédrón was one of those elusive French mercenaries who haunt 18<sup>th</sup> century India, appearing in French novels almost as frequently as in historical records according

to one French historian. He may have fought for the Awadhi nawabs against the British and was successor to General Benôit de Boigne, the French commander of Mahadaji Scindia's Maratha troops. Nothing is known of the career of his son Antoine, although a number of Pedrons were recorded in Agra. There are indeed many fine tombs here as Mr Raza points out. (*see page 81*) Other neglected cemeteries noted include Subathu in Himachal Pradesh which was the old cantonment near Shimla and three cemeteries in Haryana: Bharawas, Sirsa and Rohtak. In the latter is an inscription to the Deputy Commissioner, Frederic Englehart Moore 'who died from the effects of wounds received from a fanatic while sleeping. Born 16<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup>. 1830, died 6<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup>. 1877.'

## **PROFILE**

*A new series looking at BACSA members and their connections with South Asia. Charles Andrew Greig worked at Christies for many years and is today a leading authority on Company paintings.*

As a boy my Indian background was almost never discussed by my family. When I was 17, and about to embark on a journey across Asia, my cousin on my mother's side, gave me an old battered green file that had been assembled by her father in Purnea in 1930s. He had done a great deal of research on my family but had encountered many conflicting pieces of evidence. I was intrigued and ever since have tried unravelling the truth.

My direct ancestor, William Palmer, arrived in Bengal in 1766 and joined the 3rd Native Infantry a year later. He formed a close friendship with the Governor General, Warren Hastings, and was his Military Secretary for several years from 1776. In 1784 when the Governor General visited Lucknow he made Palmer his private Agent, a position he held until July 1785. In 1786 he returned to London on furlough returning a year later to become Resident at Scindia's court and after 1798 at the Maratha Peshwa's Court at Poona. He died at Berhampore in Bengal in 1816. By all accounts he was a decent administrator but his private life - about which rarely referred to in correspondence - was complicated to say the least and despite his huge salary he lived like a prince but was perennially short of money. He had been married in St Kitts in 1762 to Sarah Hazell with whom he had three sons and a daughter. He left his wife with his mother in Greenwich in 1766 when he set out for Bengal. In about 1781 he formed a close relationship with Begum Faiz Baksh, possibly of the Delhi Royal House (no firm evidence has come to light to support this). She is buried in a splendid Muslim

tomb in Hyderabad. At the end of 1785, just before his departure for London in January 1786, Palmer commissioned the famous Palmer conversation piece (now in the British Library) about which there has been a great deal of controversy and even today scholars disagree - one thing is certain - it is not by Zoffany as maintained by the British Library. Mildred Archer stated, correctly it seems, that it shows William Palmer with Faiz Baksh and their elder three children and to Palmer's left another beautiful Indian girl who was his second *bibi*. Many have tried to trash this theory, but it certainly seems to be true from my very recent research. Palmer is recorded in the Calcutta baptismal records as having two sons, Charles born in Fatehgarh on 7 January 1791 and Robert in August that year - they had to have different mothers. It has recently come to light that Charles's mother was Khairan Bibi, a daughter of Ahmed Khan Bangash, Nawab of Farrukhabad, an Afghan and his last wife also called Khairan Bibi. The younger Khairan is almost certainly the second *bibi* in the portrait. Curiously Khairan later went on to marry William Palmer's eldest son from his St Kitts marriage - Samuel, and continued to live in Fatehgarh fort for many years having been left a significant fortune by him. Charles (after whom I was named) settled in Purnea as a *zamindar* in 1811 and built a splendid large house which survives today as Purnea College. Charles married a Bengali Muslim girl from Siripur, Reaz un nissa. They had just one daughter, Marianne (named after Warren Hasting's wife) and her descendants remained in Purnea as zamindars until they lost all their property in the 1950s. By then, most of the family, of whom I am one, were impoverished and limped back to Europe or went to Australia. A few remained in India, living in abject poverty, until the last died there some thirty years ago. Charles and his wife and some descendants are buried in a *maqbara* in the grounds of their house - it survives as a ruin. Other members of my family are buried in the recently vandalised Catholic Cemetery in Purnea.

## NOTICE

At our Annual General Meetings and General Meetings we have a bric-à-brac stall - fun for browsing, and the sales help fund our projects in South Asia. We are always on the lookout for items - china, glass, brass, copper - or silver! - as well as pictures and other items. Do you have anything unwanted at the back of a cupboard, or in your attic? Your neglected item might be someone else's treasure. We will be very grateful for any contributions. If you have anything suitable, please contact Rosemary Raza, rrraza@hotmail.com or telephone 0207-736-4842

## JANE RUSSELL'S MONUMENT

A correspondent, Vicky Coltman, has been researching the history of a fine marble monument in St Mary's Church at Fort St George in Madras and kindly sent us details. Sculpted by John Bacon the Younger, it was erected against the south wall of the church in 1813 and is composed of three separate elements. At the top is an angel holding a crown; in the middle is the moving death scene of Jane herself, surrounded by relatives and below is a biographical inscription. Jane was the daughter of J.H. Casamaijor, a man of mixed British, Portuguese and Malay descent. She was born in August 1789 and married in October 1808. Two months later, on 29 December 1808, she was dead. The cause of death is not known. The *Madras Gazette* described Jane as being 'in the first and gayest bloom of youth, adorned by every charm and elegance of person; and elevated by every dignity and accomplishment of mind...' Her funeral took place the following day when she was buried in St Mary's Church in the presence of 'the principal Inhabitants of Madras, of both sexes' and while the coffin was carried from the hearse by six gentlemen, the pall bearers were eight ladies.

It is unusual, says Coltman to find a voluminous paper trail of family correspondence about such a monument, unusual too to find such a large, privately commissioned memorial to a young woman. Jane's widowed husband was an East India Company official, Henry Russell, working first at Poona, then Hyderabad in south India. Her father was based in Madras, as a member of the Governing Council there. It was Henry's mother, living in London, who supervised the sculptural commission, visiting John Bacon's studio in Newman Street and reporting back on the memorial. The grieving widower had written a detailed description of Jane's death, saying that writing offered him comfort rather than pain. A sketch of the deathbed scene was sent to the sculptor who adopted it for his final design and wrote that 'it was a real Scene, in which the feelings of every Individual must be interested' rather than using 'Allegory and Hieroglyphick' which were understood by very few. This explains the immediacy of the tableaux, with the people around the bed identified as Jane's husband, mother and sisters.

Drawings, sketches and designs went back and forth between London and India and were circulated among the Russell family at home and abroad. By May 1811 the completed memorial was on board the *Elizabeth* and was eagerly awaited in India when tragedy struck and the ship was wrecked off the French coast. A replacement memorial was commissioned and executed by Bacon which arrived safely and was duly erected. (see page 81)

## THE 'JUNGLE' CEMETERHY AT SEHORE

Sehore lies in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh and was a former British cantonment. It also served as the headquarters of the British Bhopal Agency which was established in 1818, after the third Anglo-Maratha war. The agency monitored semi-independent states in the area which were under princely rule and later became the Central India Agency. Three cemeteries are noted in the BACSA list on our website: the old English cemetery which dates from 1819, shortly after the Agency was set up; the Circuit House cemetery from 1829 and the cemetery near the jail, also 1819. Sehore is not on the tourist map so we were pleased to receive a report from Ms Shireen Comfort, a PhD scholar at Barkatullah University (formerly Bhopal University), who has examined the old English cemetery attached to All Saints Church in Jungli Hata, Sehore. This delightful little church, whose date is variously given as either 1838 or 1848 was built by a Company official and copied from an existing church in Scotland. For those who want to see more, it appears in two locally made youtube videos (in Hindi) and perhaps someone can identify the original Scottish building. Neither video shows the old cemetery but Ms Comfort has provided some photographs of it, showing mid-19<sup>th</sup> century tombs in reasonable condition, though there are certainly signs of deterioration.

Most of the graves are of stone, and interestingly, although these were probably constructed by local stonemasons, the marble inscriptions came from much further afield, from memorial firms at Chunar and from the W. Brown Company in Bombay. Maintenance of this cemetery and the payment of its chowkidars was carried out by the Public Works Department of the Bhopal government until the 1930s but the position after that is unclear. Two of the most poignant memorials are to the infant son and daughter of Captain and Mrs H.W. Trevelyan, the Political Agent and his wife. Their son, born in March 1842 died in the same year and a daughter, both unnamed in records, died aged one in 1845. The two near identical graves carry inscriptions from two different memorial firms, one from Allahabad and the other from Agra, which shows that the grieving parents had to search for new stonemasons, possibly because the first one had ceased trading. Certainly the two inscriptions are very different in style. 'Our historic cemeteries are highly valued' writes Ms Comfort 'not only as places of commemoration but as oases in built-up areas, havens for wildlife and showcases for decorative sculpture. But they are clearly vulnerable.'





*Above: the new wall at Kotagiri (see page 72)*

*Below: brass memorial in Chester Cathedral (see page 75)*





*Top: ruins of a fine tomb at Aligarh (see page 75)*

*Below: Jane Russell's tomb in Madras (see page 78)*



## **Dust of Glory: The First Anglo-Afghan War 1839-1842, its Causes and Course**

Bill Whitburn

I suppose everyone knows the outline of this dreadful story: a bid by the British to restore a claimant to the throne of Afghanistan. A huge army invades and successfully accomplishes this mission, but the promised uprising in favour of the new king never materialises. Instead the British forces are harried at every turn, their howitzers rarely useful in the mountain passes, whereas the Afghan rifles (*jezails*) have a longer range than the British Brown Besses, especially when fired into a pass from above. The British forces become fatally fragmented and in a disorganised attempt to leave many are slaughtered.

This is a big book – a 1kg paperback of about 240,000 words. It starts in a leisurely way with a history of the Hindu Kush (a short walk if you like) and the battles of Alexander the Great and others in antiquity, followed by two chapters on the history of Afghanistan in the 50 years before the War (fratricidal warfare with everyone taking it in turns to be hewn in pieces like Agag, or at least blinded, by a usurping cousin). After this another chapter about Britain in the 1830s with a good deal about the Great Reform Bill. By now we are on page 76 and at last we can greet the new Governor General, Lord Auckland, as he arrives in India. But there are still three more chapters before we can begin the invasion of Afghanistan. I am not suggesting these chapters are unnecessary, but after all we have been through readers may be tempted to skip them.

Thereafter the narrative is a blow-by-blow account of the greatest defeat of British troops in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a dismal story of muddled objectives, naivety, optimistic interpretation of military intelligence, mission creep, people promoted beyond their capabilities, unresolved conflicts between political officers and soldiers, and sheer incompetence. There are some 40 books of first-hand accounts – many not published till many years after the events – presumably because the memory was too raw. Mr Whitburn has read them all and quotes extensively from them. However he seems to have made more limited use of the India Office Records.

His conclusions are not especially startling but in general this is a workmanlike narrative. The threat from Russia and anxieties about the Sikh empire are well described. The nightmare logistics of moving a large army with sometimes thousands of camels and a huge body of camp followers are also vividly set out. The tortuous negotiations with the Afghans and the sufferings of troops, civilians and others from Afghan attacks, hunger and thirst, and an inclement climate are painted in bleak colours.



And now the niggles: the book is marred by some defects. Mr Whitburn has a liking for slang: ‘booted out’, people ‘hightailing it’, ‘put the kybosh on’, etc. Will such phrases always be intelligible in 50 years’ time? Mercifully he gradually loses his appetite for these irritating expressions as the book progresses. This is just as well when dealing with the more harrowing later chapters.

His maps are a mixed lot. One particularly opaque one on p20 covers western China. Various parts of the country are marked with Roman numbers I to IV, but neither the map generally nor the numbered areas are ever mentioned in the book. The legends on many maps (eg pp230, 242) are minutely small even though the map has plenty of blank space for such text. The battle maps have lines to show the movements of the different combatants but often no identification of who these represent (eg p252).

By contrast the illustrations are mostly well chosen and well presented, but we have no idea where they come from, nor whether the captions are Mr Whitburn’s or those of the original author. The index is frankly a disgrace. At least three quarters of people mentioned in the text are missing. All the numerous Singhs in the Sikh royal family are omitted except Maharaja Ranjit Singh. There is no index of regiments. No index entries are subdivided in any way. Though Governors General Wellesley, Bentinck, Auckland and Ellenborough (but not Hardinge) have their own entries, there is also an amorphous lump of about 70 further references under nothing more helpful than ‘Governor General’. After all this no one should be surprised to find that the book is littered with spelling mistakes – Lady Sale is called Florentina instead of Florentia (an overactive spell-check, I think). Some if not all of these crimes should be laid to the charge of Mr Whitburn’s publisher. For those who can ignore these irritations, Mr Whitburn has provided a solid if diffuse analysis of the sorry tale.

**Richard Morgan**

2021 Helion & Company ISBN 978-1-914059-33-9 £29.95 425pp

### **Corner of a Foreign Field: The British Cemetery at Kathmandu**

Mark Watson & Andrew Hall

The British cemetery in Kathmandu may be less well known to BACSA members than others, but it has a history as long as our diplomatic relations with Nepal and our unbroken friendship with that country. As an independent country to the north of India, Nepal was long an irritant to the East India Company, involving niggling hostilities. But these ended with the Treaty of Sugauli of 1816 which also established a (for decades solitary) official British presence in Kathmandu.

Following Independence, and after a tussle with Pakistan over ownership, the new Indian Government inherited most of the British legation premises in Kathmandu. But, when they built their new Embassy, the British retained the nearby cemetery. This has now found two able chroniclers in Mark Watson, a distinguished botanist, and Andrew Hall, a former ambassador to Nepal.

Quite how the three-quarter acre cemetery was acquired is obscure, but unchallenged. The first burial there in 1820, under a monument and inscription typical of the time, was that of Robert Stuart, the Assistant Resident, who died of pneumonia. There was then a trickle of burials during the nineteenth century, most of them dependents of the small British official community, but very few in the first half of the twentieth. It was after 1950, with the opening of Nepal to aid agencies, tourism and mountaineering, that the cemetery began to fill – to the point where some terracing has been needed to keep space for future burials.

Among earlier burials there are some unexpected characters, including Henry Gaye, one of a succession of bandmasters brought to Nepal by Prime Minister Jung Bahadur after his visit to the United Kingdom in 1850. Jung Bahadur, whose portrait by a Nepalese artist long graced the Foreign Secretary's office in Whitehall, also got a taste for bagpipes – a tradition inherited by the Gurkhas. Another burial is that of Gilbert Deatker, surgeon to the resident Minister, an able doctor from the Indian Army who could not rise above warrant officer status because he was of mixed race.

Coming forward in time there are several graves of people well remembered by lovers of Nepal: Boris Lissanevitch ('Boris' to everyone), who pioneered the hotel trade (when he was not out of favour or even in gaol); Jim Edwards, who developed Tiger Tops and did so much for tourism in Nepal; and Amar Rana, whose marriage led to ostracism from the royal family for years. But there are monuments and graves for many others, including residents, missionaries, mountaineers and, sadly, victims of air disasters.

Aside from the Kathmandu cemetery the authors do well to detail other relevant burial places in Nepal, including the several Gurkha cemeteries and the resting place of the Jesuits who founded St Xavier's School – among them Marshall Moran, known to ham radio operators world-wide by his call-sign Micky Mouse.

The maintenance of the cemetery was for many years sporadic, involving bureaucratic tussles with Whitehall which must have cost far more than the pittances wrung from them. But in recent years,

thanks to more enlightened official attitudes and private generosity, the situation has been much improved. There is a permanent caretaker who takes much interest in the trees and plants, which Mark Watson catalogues in great detail. The net result is the pleasant and well-maintained ‘corner of a foreign field’ of the book’s subtitle.

The story of the early years is not very eventful, and the authors rightly link it to the history of British relations with Nepal. Indeed the book might have made more of this. One would have welcomed a fuller description of the fluctuating tension between the royal family and the prime minister. It occupied a lot of the Residents’ time – when they were not, like the most famous of them, Brian Hodgson, doing so much to advance our knowledge of the fauna and flora of the country as well as its beliefs. And in discussing the arrival, post Hodgson, of wives and families, they sadly consign to a footnote Hodgson himself and his long-standing relationship with a Muslim lady which produced two children whom he fully acknowledged. Indeed his son has a handsome tomb in Darjeeling.

The book contains biographical notes on all those buried and their parentage where this is available and detailed descriptions of all the graves. These are valuable, but the arrangement involves a good deal of overlap with the narrative, so that the reader has rather to jink to and fro to get the full story. A stronger editorial hand might have been helpful in getting more cohesion in the narrative. But the story is a fascinating one, and a visitor to Kathmandu might well find time to follow the road between the British and Indian Embassies to visit the cemetery. It is a detour well worth making.

**Timothy George**

2022 Vajra Publications, Kathmandu ISBN 978 9937 624 14 5  
£34.99 through Amazon pp268

### **India: A History in Objects**

Richard Blurton

Objects from the past give us a profound insight into the history of our ancestors - each object expresses a unique view of reality that even written texts can never convey. Richard Blurton’s new book explores in depth the rich cultural heritage of the Indian subcontinent, encompassing Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, through a wide variety of objects from the earliest communities down to modern artefacts. The book is beautifully produced with excellent clear illustrations and impressive descriptions of each object. So often nowadays authors arrange such objects thematically, but the author here has arranged them chronologically making a more understandable narrative.

Among the earliest objects are ceramics from the borderlands of Iran and South Asia. The excavated sites of Mehrgarg and Nal dating back over 3000 years revealed some astonishingly modern looking vessels richly decorated with animal and geometric motifs. A few hundred years later highly sophisticated seals from the Indus civilization recall ancient Greece and remind us of the cross-cultural connections even in the distant past. The author carefully maps out the emergence of the great religions in the subcontinent - Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Sikhism followed by the arrival of Islam and Christianity each represented by superb objects.

The British Museum's outstanding collection of Gandhara sculpture takes anyone's breath away but lesser known Buddhist sculptures from Sarnath and Bihar followed by the delicate friezes from Amaravati each have an extraordinary power and sensitivity. I have always found much Jain art somewhat static but a few 3rd Century fragmentary figures from Mathura rival the very best Buddhist sculpture of the early period. Similarly, the elaborate Jain bronze of the thirtankara Parasvanatha from the Deccan (11th century) is outstanding. Buddhism of the Mahayana school flourished from the 1st century in Sri Lanka and solid cast and gilded bronzes from various sites on the Island were collected and donated by European amateur archaeologists like Hugh Nevill (1847-1897) and others.

The standing Buddha of Tara has a fluidity and grace that seems to transcend bronzes that were produced in China at the time. The lost wax process of bronze casting had been known in the subcontinent since ancient times, but it reached its zenith under the Cholas. The Museum's collection of Chola bronzes is one the finest in the world. It contains the incredibly early 9th century small Nataraja that, to me at least, is one of the finest devotional bronzes that exists anywhere. The slightly later and much larger bronzes like the Siva Nataraja from about 1100 that is on the front cover and the gorgeous saint Chandesha donated by Eton College are each testament to the extraordinary sophistication of this form of high Art that rivals sculpture produced anywhere in the world.

The British Museum contains superb art of the Islamic period produced in the subcontinent including paintings and richly decorated objects - carved and inlaid jades, armour, metal wares and textiles. Among the paintings is the rare early but fragmentary painting of the house of Timur done on cloth - the figures are arranged around a garden pavilion. It was worked on over a long period initially in Kabul in about 1550 and with additions at the Mughal court in 1605 and in 1628. I know of nothing comparable. The collection is no less

rich in Mughal paintings of later periods. These include the world famous ‘Weighing of Prince Khurram’ showing the young Shah Jehan sitting on scales being balanced against bags of gold. It is fashionable nowadays to see the European period in India as one of decline in the artistic productions of the subcontinent. Long forgotten paintings of the Company period made for patrons as diverse as Antoine Polier and William and James Fraser disprove this myth entirely. Indeed, much of the British Museum’s magnificent collection of objects owe their discovery to Europeans who had a genuine and profound interest in the cultures of the past and devoted their lives to the excavation and research of such.

The modern period is represented here by some magnificent paintings. Abanindranath Tagore’s ‘The Buddha to be bids farewell to his horse’ taken from ancient Buddhist history, is imbued with such depth and emotion that is far removed from the European art that he reacted against. It almost moves one to tears. His successors of the progressive school are much better known today but the author doesn’t neglect the art of Pakistan and particularly that produced in Lahore. Quddus Mirza’s ‘Portrait of my Village XIV’ has real charm while the self portrait of Ali Kadim is just sublime.

For anyone interested in the art and objects of the area of the world that BACSA covers, I cannot recommend this excellent book more highly. It is sympathetically written, it covers a huge and diverse span of history, and it is a joy to look at.

**Charles Greig**

2022 Thames & Hudson ISBN 13:978 0500 480 649 £30.00 pp320

**Lucknow 1857**

Rosie Llewellyn-Jones

**Kanpur 1857**

Andrew Ward

These are the first two volumes to be published in the ‘India’s Historic Battles Series’ edited by Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina. As he says in his Editor’s Note: ‘While academic rigour has been applied to the research, the tone of the volumes is not academic. On the contrary, it is intended to appeal to the lay reader, while meeting the requirements of the discerning historian as well.’ As far as these two books are concerned, he is right on both counts.

When the first shots were fired in Meerut on 10 May 1857, there began 18 months of some of the bloodiest fighting in the northern plains of India that the subcontinent had ever witnessed. So it is not surprising that four of the first six volumes in the first release of the ‘India’s Historic Battles Series’ should be targeted on the Indian Mutiny, as the British called it, or the First War of Independence as some Indian writers have described it, or, to use more neutral terms, The Great

Uprising of 1857. Other volumes in the pipeline will cover Meerut and the Siege of Delhi. The two remaining volumes will serve as historic bookends, one covering the Battle of Haldighati in 1576, when the Mughals defeated the Rajputs of Mewar, the other covering the Battle of Kohima and Imphal in 1944-45, when General Slim's forces halted the Japanese advance into East Bengal in World War Two.

These are pocket-sized paperbacks for the history-curious traveller. The authors' brief was to condense the relevant history into 30,000 words. What is remarkable is how much detailed narrative and practical information has been successfully incorporated in each book while achieving this goal.

Both authors come with a distinguished pedigree. There is probably no British historian alive with more knowledge and understanding of the city of Lucknow and the kingdom of Oude (Awadh) than Rosie Llewellyn-Jones. Her previous books on the Mutiny period include: *A Fatal Friendship, The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow* (OUP India, 1985), *The Great Uprising in India 1857-58* (Boydell Press, 2007) and *The Last King in India, Wajid Ali Shah* (Hurst & Co. 2014). Andrew Ward is the author of the most recent and definitive history of what happened to the British garrison at Kanpur (Cawnpore) in 1857: *Our Bones Are Scattered* (John Murray, 1996). He is a widely-recognised authority on the subject. The two authors also contributed chapters on, respectively, Lucknow and Cawnpore, to *The Uprising of 1857* (Mapin Publishing and the Alkazi Collection of Photography, 2017).

The Uprising in Lucknow must be seen in the context of the annexation of the kingdom of Oudh by the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, in 1856. Having filled in this background and introduced the principal players on both sides, Llewellyn-Jones concludes Chapter 2 of *Lucknow 1857* by providing an invaluable summary of the forces who were ranged against each other at the various stages of the conflict. This section, entitled 'Orders of Battle' provides as good a breakdown of the military manpower deployed on both sides (cavalry, infantry, artillery, numbers and size of guns, numbers of men, regiments, names of commanders etc.) as can be found in any of the many previously published works on the siege of Lucknow. The book is worth buying just for that.

A brief chronology follows in Chapter 3. The meat is in Chapter 4, which contains a narrative account, masterly for its concision and yet full particulars, of the fighting in and around Lucknow from the time of Sir Henry Lawrence's unsuccessful first strike at the battle of

Chinhat on the 30 June 1857 to the final recapture of the city by Sir Colin Campbell between 4 and 19 March 1858.

As we are reminded in the Editor's Note, modern development has obliterated many of the historic landmarks of the Mutiny period. This can make it difficult for the 21<sup>st</sup> century visitor to get his or her bearings. In the case of Lucknow, the difficulty is highlighted in the author's description (page 114) of just how many of the buildings which feature prominently in her narrative have been wholly or partly destroyed in the past 150 or so years. But Lucknow has fared better than Kanpur and, arguably even than Delhi, in retaining remnants of its former royal buildings and palaces. And the preserved ruins of the former British Residency and its compound are a unique remnant of the Uprising, which now stand as a memorial to those who fought on both sides. A good example of what once was there and what has survived is shown in the juxtaposed images of the Neill Darwaza on pages 70 and 71. More groupings of 'then and now' illustrations would have been helpful, but this is a minor criticism. A modern map of the centre of the city with the routes taken by Havelock and Outram and then Campbell (twice) marked on it, and a key identifying the location of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, would have been the ideal: but this is practically impossible to achieve in octavo format.

There is much less left of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Cawnpore and little remains of General Wheeler's entrenchment. But the most atrocious acts of the Uprising happened in and around Cawnpore. As Andrew Ward puts it: 'The treachery and brutality of the siege of the Cawnpore Entrenchment and its aftermath, followed by the East India Company's rapacious and indiscriminate reprisals, is a story of unremitting horror and devastation in which no Indian or British apologist should take unalloyed pride.' It is hard to gainsay that assessment.

*Kanpur 1857* follows the same format as the Lucknow volume. Ward's introduction neatly explains the lineage of Nana Sahib and his reasons for disaffection with the British long before 1857. That his envoy, Azimullah Khan, should have been unimpressed by what he saw of the Queen's Army in the Crimea is revealing. The chronology is especially valuable for including (in italics) events outside the Cawnpore theatre in 1857, so the build-up to the ambush at the Sati Chaura Ghat, the massacre in the Bibighar and subsequent British retribution is seen in the context of the Mutiny elsewhere. The narrative of events at the heart of the book (pages 30-166) is a brilliantly condensed version of the much more detailed account in *Our Bones Are Scattered*. The précis, if anything, heightens the suspense, even though the gruesome



denouement is so well-known. The fate of that handful of survivors: Amy Horne, Margaret Wheeler, Lieutenants Mowbray Thomson and Henry Delafosse and Privates Murphy and Sullivan, assumes greater prominence when fewer column inches are devoted to how the women and children in the Bibighar House met their end. As Ward says: ‘What exactly followed ... when the Nana Sahib’s guards received the order to execute the women and children can hardly be imagined, and has no place perhaps, in a battlefield guide.’

In his Conclusions, Ward makes the telling point that the Memorial Well in Cawnpore was a millstone about the neck of the Independence Movement in India until it was counter-balanced on the British side by the Martyrs’ Well at Jallianwallah Bagh.

For such slim and inexpensive volumes (£9.40 each on *Amazon*), these books are very well-illustrated with maps, prints and photographs, past and present. Many of the illustrations come from the authors’ own collections and are not to be found elsewhere. Each book ends with a list of ‘Practical Information for Visitors’, demonstrating their worth as pocket histories and guidebooks rolled into one. The Editor is to be congratulated for engaging such distinguished authors for these first two volumes: it bodes well for the rest of the Series.

**Mark Havelock-Allan**

*Lucknow 1857* 2022 HarperCollins India ISBN 978 93 5489 405 3  
Rs499 pp157

*Kanpur 1857* 2022 HarperCollins India ISBN 978 93 5489 411 4  
Rs499 pp195

**Memsahibs: British women in colonial India**

Ipshita Nath

Ipshita Nath, a Bengali academic, was initially caught in her understanding of the ‘Memsahibs’ between the ‘airs and graces’ implied popularly by the term in her youth and the image of the bored and supercilious character in postcolonial fiction. She determined to find the truth in a return to what British women had actually written about India.

This is a laudable ambition – but hardly new. For at least the last four decades, British women have been examined through the medium of their literary production by both popular and academic authors, particularly since travel writing became a genre within academic study. Moreover, although she examines a fairly wide span of women’s writing, it is hardly exhaustive. Many writers are missing, while genres such as fiction, where women made a substantial and growing contribution from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, are under-represented.



The author's approach to her subject is essentially descriptive, quoting her chosen writers' record of the circumstances of their life in India. This begins with the voyage out, houses, servants and the domestic environment, travel, the problems they encountered with boredom, isolation, dirt and disease, childbirth and bringing up children. Camping and sport provided entertainment, as did the hill stations like Simla which offered unsupervised frivolity. An interesting chapter presents women's experience of the 1857 uprising. The author's tone is empathetic, half way between a novelist and an academic as she attempts to feel what the memsahibs might have experienced.

However, the content of her account is not shaped by an accurate historical framework. The 'colonial India' of the title is amplified in the publisher's blurb as 'Britain's largest, busiest colony'. Yet India was never a colony, which is characterised by a permanent settled population. The author also fails to convey the evolving nature of the British presence, from traders to rulers, which shaped the numbers of women coming to India, their background, and hence their experience in India. Although some of the women writers from whom she quotes date back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she does not examine any earlier period, and focusses largely on the 'high noon' of empire, which had its own particular flavour and is not representative overall.

The term 'memsahib' is not used as a synonym for British women in general, but is presented as a rather vague appellation reflecting the status of the men with whom they were connected, particularly in the military and civil administration. The author suggests that there was a racist insistence on their exclusivity, and a resistance to Indian friendships or 'going native'. This may well have been true for some individuals, but it needs to be qualified. In the early period when Britain was establishing herself, there was considerable fraternisation, and interest in Indian culture, as women's writing illustrates. Many sought to establish contact with Indian women, and although this was more difficult in the Presidency towns, those who travelled in the interior were more successful.

Later involvement in Indian women's issues increased contact considerably. Contact with Indian men was another issue, but the wariness of them and their supposed sexual threat, which the author assumes, is not borne out by reading many women's accounts.

Some groups of women are hardly considered. The author seems ambivalent about missionary women and their status, which is a pity as they produced a substantial literature on India. She makes

the questionable claim that their reputation was somehow suspect because they had left the confines of home to travel overseas and rub shoulders with foreign men. A similar lack of understanding of British social and cultural attitudes permeates other aspects of her study. While noting that middle and upper class women in Britain did not have paid employment outside the home, she ignores the role of philanthropy and charitable work in the life of a 'lady'. This was transposed to India, where British women from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century became involved in various welfare projects, particularly involving the health and education of Indian women – though the extent of this work goes unremarked.

On the final page of the book, having rightly commented on the multiplicity of voices in women's writing, the author concludes that 'it is only through a sustained scrutiny of the variety of their activities in the Raj that we can finally understand them'. This is a frustrating summation, since she has spent the preceding chapters describing the memsahibs 'being' in British India, rather than their actual 'doing'. Her prologue had raised other hopes. Here she mentions women like Annette Ackroyd, a social reformer, and Sara Jeanette Duncan, a writer, who do not appear in succeeding pages. There are swathes of occupation which fail to get any analysis, let alone a proper mention. A significant number of women were published authors and journalists. Painting and drawing played an important role in many women's lives; some illustrated their own books. Many women were serious independent travellers. And then there were important interventions in the Indian world, including education, medicine, missionary work, and indeed politics, with the devoted support Madeleine Slade gave to Gandhi.

The author shows considerable enthusiasm for her subject and gives the impression of having enjoyed writing her book. If you are looking for a breezy canter round a well-established track, this book is for you. There is, however, a much more interesting story to be told, of which the author has only given glimpses. **Rosemary Raza**

2022 Hurst & Company, London ISBN 9781787387089 £30.00  
pp323

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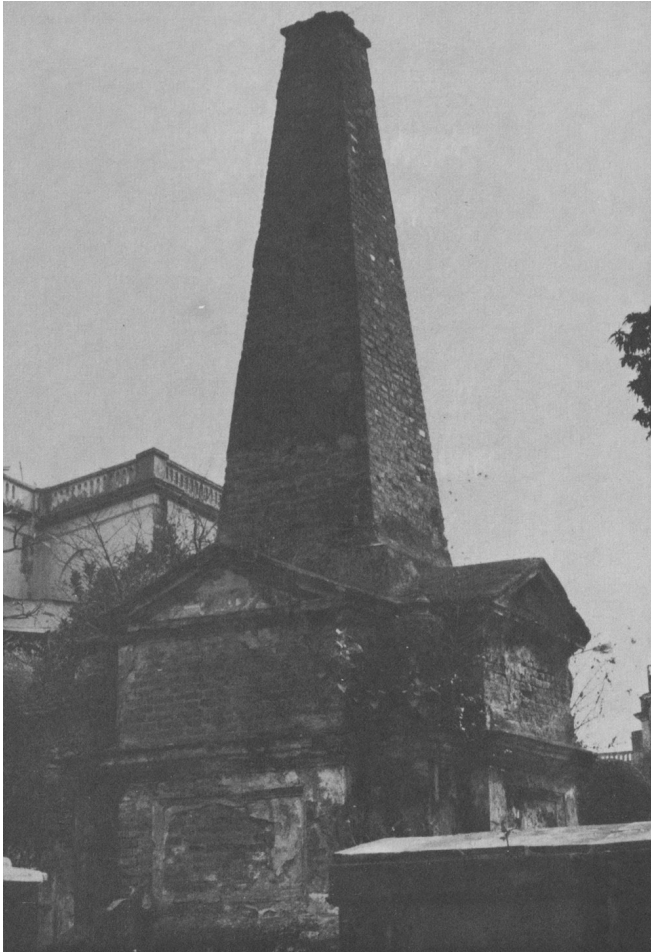
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- either send an email to the fellow member via the Honorary Secretary or the Editor who will forward it,
- or send a letter to the fellow member c/o of the Honorary Secretary or the Editor who will forward it unopened.

In both cases, it is at the discretion of the member to reply or not.

If planning a visit to a cemetery, either overseas or in the UK, a member should check with the Honorary Secretary to find out what has already been recorded and whether there is action associated with the cemetery that the member might assist with.

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



*Above: the demolished mausoleum of Angelica de Carrion (see page 9)*

*Below: the inscription slab from the tomb*

Hic Jacet,  
**Angelica de Carrion Edwardi Tiretta,**  
Tarvisini Uxor Dilectissima, Quam Tertio die  
post pignus amoris datum Mors eripuit  
XV. Junii, A. D. MDCCXCVI.  
et Ætatis suæ XVIII.  
Hoc marmor Memoria Sacrum Posuit  
Conjux Mœreus.