

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CEMETERIES IN SOUTH ASIA



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Front page: Celebration to mark the conservation of the Narinda Tomb, Wari Cemetery, Dhaka on 22 September 2025, with Archbishop Bejoy D' Cruz and High Commissioner Ms Sarah Cooke. *Courtesy of British High Commission.*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It is seldom wise to be self-congratulatory because self-congratulation can easily lead to complacency, and BACSA can never afford to be complacent. Nevertheless, I think our charity can look back on 2025 as a year of sound achievement overseas and positive developments at home.

In South Asia, we saw the completion of the restoration of the Narinda tomb in Dacca (which we previously referred to as the tomb of Colombo Sahib), and the completion of Phase 2 of the restoration of the Malakand Cemetery in Pakistan. Neither would have been possible without the drive and determination of local actors, in the case of the Narinda tomb, Waqar Khan and, more recently, Professor Dr Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed, BACSA's former and current Area Representatives in Bangladesh respectively, and in the case of Malakand, retired Major-General Syed Ali Hamid, who is now BACSA's Area Representative for the Punjab and North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. It is gratifying to see BACSA's funds accomplishing projects in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and we hope to do more in both those countries in the coming year.

That does not of course mean that we are neglecting projects in India where there remains, as always, more to be done that we have the resources and manpower to tackle. In 2025, we have planned Phase 3 of the project to conserve graves and reinstate pathways in the cemetery of St Mary's on the Island in Chennai and expect to see the work undertaken in 2026. This project is being implemented by Jeernodhar Conservators with the oversight of conservation architect Ravi Gundu Rao, our consultant and also Area Representative for South Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. We have also agreed to support restoration projects at the Lansdowne Cemetery No.2 in Uttarakhand and the Old Anglican Cemetery in Salem (Tamil Nadu).

On the home front we have seen some important changes in the composition of our Executive Committee. Foremost of these was the retirement of Peter Boon as Honorary Secretary. Peter had held this crucial post with great skill and tireless dedication for more than a decade. We welcome as his successor, Stephen Schaw Miller, who took over the role after the General Meeting last October. Fortunately, Peter has agreed to remain a member of the Executive Committee, without portfolio. So, we will continue to benefit from his deep understanding of BACSA's activities.

Two other recruits to Executive Committee posts during 2025 are Christina Macfarlane, who is taking the lead on Events, and Jason Beckett, who has succeeded Brigadier Ian Rees as Cemetery Records Officer. They are already making their presence felt and will be a great asset to BACSA for some time to come.

Finally, I should record BACSA's grateful thanks to Dr Richard Bingle, who has relinquished responsibility on the Executive Committee for BACSA's archives at the British Library. He and David Blake have been managing the archives for over 20 years. I have volunteered to take over from them and am beginning to appreciate what an undertaking this is.

In 2027 BACSA celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding by Theon Wilkinson in 1977. A good deal of the Executive's time in 2026 will be spent on planning events with which to celebrate this milestone.

When he founded BACSA in 1977, I wonder whether Theon Wilkinson expected it to be in rude health and as active as ever 50 years later? Of one thing I am certain: he would be delighted to

see the work we are currently doing in recording graves and conserving cemeteries in and around the Indian sub-Continent.

But the future of BACSA depends on its membership. It is encouraging that the number of members is holding steady. However, the key to BACSA's future lies in recruiting the next generation to its membership. I make no apology for returning to this theme. May I urge all members to sponsor someone under the age of 60 to join BACSA in 2026.

I wish all of BACSA's members a successful and, above all, peaceful 2026.

Mark Havelock-Allan

January 2026



Cemetery No 2 at Lansdowne. Courtesy of Maj Hiwale of the Garhwal Rifles Regimental Centre.

REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 2025

Structure, Governance and Management: Established in 1976, BACSA has an Executive Committee (ExCo) that meets five times a year. Its members are the trustees of BACSA who are guided and supported by the President and Vice-Presidents. Two general meetings are held each year. BACSA is governed by its Constitution and Rules. The BACSA Archives in the British Library are open to the public. BACSA has no paid staff and no office; all work is by volunteers both in the UK and South Asia. It has a website - www.bacsa.org.uk

Objects and Activities: BACSA is an institution for the recording, preservation and conservation of former European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia created before 1947. It promotes education in the history of all places associated with European residence in the area from the Red Sea to the China coast – wherever the East India Company set foot.

Public Benefit: BACSA is the only established organisation helping to care for an historic part of South Asia's and the United Kingdom's built heritage in South Asia. It guides the public into researching and increasing its understanding of European lives and deaths in South Asia before 1947 through specialist help from BACSA members and others.

Achievements and performance: Work on conservation projects continued steadily. The biannual general meetings took place at London's Union Jack Club. Between 50 and 60 members and guests attended each of the March AGM and the October GM. Membership stands at about 800. 40 new members joined during the year. The Executive Committee met regularly at the Royal Asiatic Society, London.

Grants totalling over £45,000 were made for projects (details in the Projects Report). Sales of second-hand books donated by generous members and non-members raised £1,824, a valued contribution towards financing conservation projects. The Executive Committee maintained its focus on the larger and more historically significant cemeteries in the sub-continent.

The website received, on average, about 800 visits per month: roughly 1/3 from the UK; 1/3 from India, 1/3 from other countries (mainly the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Pakistan and Bangladesh). 36 news items were posted during the year, covering BACSA projects and events; lectures and exhibitions; accounts of members' visits to cemeteries and places of historic interest in the subcontinent. This year's coverage included five articles submitted by overseas readers of the BACSA Newsletter (which currently has around 850 subscribers).

BACSA was represented on the India stand at the London-based World Travel Market fair, raising awareness of the value of cemetery heritage.

Cemeteries in the subcontinent remain at risk from encroachment, undesirable elements, so-called land-grabbers, and others attracted by the potential value of land in built-up areas. They must have local community support if they are to be sustainable in the long term. To encourage this approach, BACSA urges current and future project partners to use its handbook *Historic Cemeteries in South Asia and Community Engagement* (available free from the shop on BACSA's website) and prepare a cemetery and community management plan.

BACSA and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission continued their cooperation in the subcontinent.

Mr Peter Boon retired as Honorary Secretary but remains on the Executive Committee. New members of the Executive Committee are Mr Jason Beckett, Cemetery Records Officer, Dr Christina Macfarlane, Chair of the Events Sub-committee, and Mr Stephen Schaw Miller, Honorary Secretary.

Plans: To continue to build on the interest in cemetery conservation increasingly shown by local people in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. To promote community engagement amongst present and future conservation partners. To continue to raise awareness in India's travel trade of the value to tourism of India's old European cemeteries and monuments. To encourage members to make their children life members and to introduce new members.



The Old Anglican Cemetery, Salem. *Courtesy of the Church Committee responsible for the cemetery.*

Financial Review: A very satisfactory year from a financial point of view. We spent over £45,000 on projects. This was significantly less than the nearly £81,000 we spent in 2024, but that was an exceptional year.

Projects supported included St Mary's Cemetery on the Island, Chennai, India (£23,234), Christ Church, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India (£6,700), Lansdowne Cemetery No.2, Uttarakhand, India (£5,060; via INTACH), Hyderabad Residency Cemetery, Telangana, India (£1,100; via the Deccan Heritage Foundation) and the British Soldiers' Cemetery, Malakand, North West Frontier, Pakistan (£7,766). Our total expenditure on projects was £45,675 (£80,992 in 2024). Other outgoings included £8,400 for events and meetings (£6,899 in 2024), £5,523 for the website (£3,272 in 2024), £2,538 for producing Chowkidar (£2,363 in 2024), £2,678 for the cost of mailing it and printing various AGM/GM and other materials (£2,825 in 2024), and £4,354 for miscellaneous expenses, including trustees' insurance, the Independent Examiner's fee, costs of the sale of publications and of second hand books etc. (£2,855 in 2024), giving a total

of £23,561 for non-project expenditure (£18,226 in 2024). Our total expenditure for the year was £69,236 (£99,207 in 2024).

As to income, donations increased significantly from £32,400 in 2024 to £49,650 this year. This was largely thanks to very generous gifts of £30,000 from the M St.J Way Charitable Trust, £5,000 from the Richard Broyd Trust, £1,950 in donations from the winding up of ICOSA, £1,000 from the Englefield Charity (Benyon), and £1,000 from the Inchcape Foundation. In addition there were generous bequests of £8,119 from the Estate of D Little and £1,250 from the Estate of Sir Edward Fairfax Studd.

Subscriptions increased marginally from £7,858 in 2024 to £7,879 in 2025. Dividends increased from £8,781 in 2024 to £9,228 this year. Website sales were down a little from £1,166 last year to £914 in 2025. Second hand book sales were significantly down from £6,649 in 2024 to £2,226 which is explained by the sale last year of a single high value book for £3,600. Gift Aid reclaimed from the Inland Revenue came to £948 as against £2,078 in 2024. This gives a total income for 2025 of £77,405 compared with £84,961 in 2024 (but £20,000 of this came from our portfolio in the form of the return of a cash transfer made in late 2022 from our bank account when interest rates were so low that transferring the sum to our then brokers seemed to make more economic sense). So a healthy increase in income in 2025.

The Financial Statements for the year to 31.12.25 are to be found elsewhere in this Annual report.



A tomb under conservation at St Mary's on the Island, Chennai, September 2025. *Courtesy of Srivani Naraparaju.*

PROJECTS REPORT ON ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH ASIA 2025

Area Representative's (AR) name in brackets.

Bangladesh (Professor Dr Abu Sayeed M Ahmed)

Under the expert guidance of our AR this project to restore the Narinda tomb (previously called Colombo Sahib's tomb) in Wari Cemetery in Dhaka was completed, together with the restoration of a Mughal style gateway and the laying of a solid pathway between the two. BACSA had contributed £10,000 to the conservation of the tomb. The Commonwealth Heritage Forum (CHF) made a larger contribution. The completion of the work was celebrated at a ceremony on 20 September, led by Archbishop Bejoy D'Cruze with the UK's High Commissioner, Ms Sarah Cooke, as one of the principal guests.

India

Uttarakhand Hill Stations and Dehra Dun (Virgil Miedema) BACSA had agreed to assist the Garwhal Rifles Regimental Centre with the conservation of Lansdowne Cemetery No 2 and sent an initial payment of £100 in March. The project was taken over by the Architectural Heritage Division of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) with a grant of £5,160 and work began in early December 2025. This project includes the cleaning and conservation of graves, repair of boundary walls, and soil erosion control.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) provided our AR in November 2025 an assessment of First World War graves in the Landour Cemetery. These war casualties had been invalided to and died at the British Indian Army's Landour Sanitarium. We understand that the CWGC will be following up with some necessary clearing of invasive vegetation and cleaning of these graves. Overall, the historic Landour Cemetery (first burial 1828) is in reasonable condition, but some repair and clearing are needed in various sections of the cemetery, and the lych gate and some *pushtas* (terraces) require attention. This may present an opportunity for BACSA collaboration with CWGC and the local overseers of this "general" cemetery (civilian and military).

The recently reconstituted Mussoorie (Camel's Back) Cemetery Committee is considering preparing a grant proposal to BACSA for urgent work at this historic cemetery (first burial in 1829). In the meantime, the local committee, headed by the energetic chair Rev Lazarus Cornelius of the local Union Church, is undertaking some minor works using funds in its own reserve.

Kolkata (Dr Neeta Das) The Kolkata Scottish Historical Trust (KSHT) has spent this year repairing and consolidating boundary walls and resurfacing the roof of the gatehouse. The ongoing work involves care and maintenance of the repaired tombs, which are inspected on a weekly basis, while continuing to enrich the biodiversity of an urban forest in line with the specifications laid down in the India Green Building Certification process. Next year KSHT is planning to repair the footpath network which was damaged by floodwater and to repaint the gatehouse and will be submitting a request for a grant from BACSA.

Tamil Nadu (Ravindra Gundu Rao)

Chennai, St Mary's Cemetery on the Island. Phase 3 of our major project at this cemetery started in August, involving the clearance and consolidation of more pathways and the conservation of five monuments to named individuals, dating from the late eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries. BACSA has committed some £31,400 at current exchange rates to this phase and during the year has sent our contractors, Jeernodhar CPL, about £21,000. Salem, Old Anglican Cemetery. This is in the care of Christchurch, Salem, and as part of its 150th anniversary celebration in 2025, it embarked on a wide scale restoration including strengthening of the boundary and entrance, cleaning and repairing graves and laying paving. BACSA has contributed £6,800 for the conservation of the graves and strengthening of a small stretch of the wall.

Pakistan

Punjab & NWFP, Pakistan (Syed Ali Hamid)

Malakand Christian Cemetery. Phase 1 was completed in 2024 and a second phase undertaken in 2025. BACSA committed £7,760 for phase 2, involving the remaining excavation of the site and the identification of graves or grave markers. This was another project the costs of which were shared with the CHF.

Annual Maintenance in India

Grants were made to Hyderabad Residency, Jhansi Cantonment, Kotah, Meerut Cantonment and Salem cemeteries. Indian Government or banking regulations and local difficulties obstructed making grants to the cemeteries at Nicholson, Delhi and Agra Cantonment and the Christian Burial Board Calcutta.

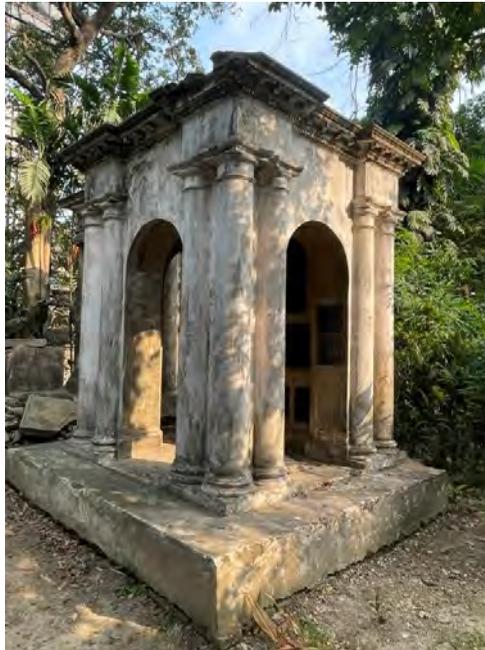
Plans

Phase 3 of the project at St Mary's on the Island, Chennai, will be completed, after which the Executive Committee will review the need for further conservation there. We expect that further conservation will be proposed at Secunderabad, Kolkata, Allahabad, Meerut and in Uttarakhand. A decision will be taken on several options offered by our AR for Punjab and the NWFP in Pakistan for further conservation projects.

AREA REPRESENTATIVES The Executive Committee is grateful for the support of our volunteer area representatives. It appointed Mr Eshan for Allahabad (Prayagraj); Mr Wilbur Julian, Assistant AR for Agra; Mr Virgil Miedema for Uttarakhand Hill Stations and Dehra Dun; and Mr Anand Kumar Sethi for Himachal Pradesh.



The Garrison Cemetery, Seringapatam.
Courtesy of Phillida Purvis.



The Crump Family Memorial at South Park Street
Cemetery, Kolkata. *Courtesy of Jill Jackson Hill.*

DONATIONS IN 2025

BACSA receives generous donations, both financial and in kind from members and non-members. We receive reports and photographs of cemeteries visited. Each issue of *Chowkidar* carries reviews of books, some of whose authors or publishers have donated amounts to BACSA for every copy of their book sold. Some donations are in kind, where people have given their time to do a task for the Association, for example reviewing a book for *Chowkidar*. Although not all donors can be listed, every donation is received with gratitude to further BACSA's work. Among the donors in 2025 were:

Financial

M StJ Way Charitable Trust
The Estate of David Ralph Erskine Little, deceased
Mr Richard Broyd
Dissolution of the Indian Civil Service Association (incorporating the Indian Police (UK) Association)
The Estate of Sir Edward Fairfax Studd, deceased
The Englefield Charitable Trust
The Inchcape Foundation
Mr Michael Manser

Second-hand books

The Estate of Diana Scott, deceased
Mrs Jane Keskar

Donations in kind

Mr Virgil Miedema
Mr Richard Morgan
Mr John Randall
Dr Rosemary Raza
Mr Francis Robinson
Ms Cynthia Stephen
Mr Mike Tickner

Cemetery visits, visit reports, photographs, records

Mrs Jean Andrews	South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata
Mrs Chandrakiran Dubey	Trimulgherry, Mount of Olives, Parade Ground and Gurock Enclave Cemeteries, Secunderabad
Ms Clare Finch	Chandra Nagar Cemetery, Uttarakhand
Mrs Jill Jackson Hill	South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata
Dr Ali Jan	Cemeteries in Murree, Pakistan
Mr Jeffrey Leo	Mathigiri Cemetery, Tamil Nadu
Mr Virgil Miedema	Landour and Mussoorie Cemeteries, Uttarakhand
Mr Mark O'Donnell	Gods Acre, Wari, Bangladesh
Mr Anu Tarigan	St James's Church Cemetery, Baroda
Mr Michael Theilmann	Ross Island, Andaman Islands



Detail of Nakshi kantha, Bengal C19th. *Courtesy of Weavers Studio Resource Centre, Kolkata.*

Summary of the talk by Dr Sonia Ashmore at the General Meeting on 19 October 2025

Like its changing riverine landscape, historical 'Bengal' is a fluid area, its boundaries shifting since the seventh century CE. A long story of changing dynasties, migrations and colonisation, as well as the stories of Bengalis themselves, have been reflected in its variety of marvellous textiles. It is not limited to 'Bengal', but has had an impact across the world, both before and after the arrival of the European trading companies and the eventual dominance of Britain. World trade, clothing habits and industrial production have all been influenced by the cloth of Bengal.

Bengal is rich in cotton, silk, jute, indigo and other dye plants. These produced a wide range of textiles, from its famed muslins and woven silks made for luxury markets, to the more modest yet varied fabrics worn by ordinary people, from the Santipur *dhoti* or the functional and now fashionable checked *gamcha* cloth. Bengal's textile artists produced superb muslin *jamdani*, *Baluchari* saris intricately woven with narratives, and stories embroidered by village women into *kantha* quilts made from recycled saris.

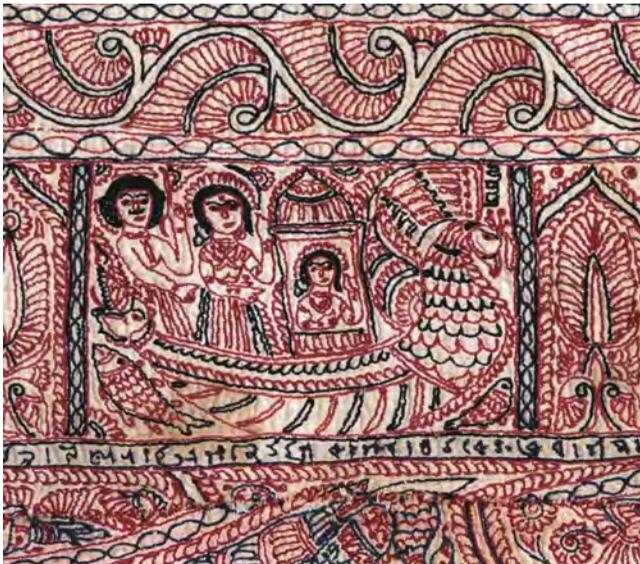
Waterways, crucial to both the production and trade of textiles, are often reflected in their imagery. Rivers were key to the trade of the European East India companies' factories (warehouses) and cities along the banks of the Hooghly, leading to the Bay of Bengal and the rest of the world. Bengal clothed many parts of the world until its textiles were replaced by British industrially produced imitation cloth. Muslin went to the Roman and Ottoman empires and clothed fashionable Europeans from the 17th century. Portuguese traders in Satgaon

commissioned quilts or *colcha*, embroidered in silk with Classical, Christian and Hindu imagery. Silk cloths went to Hajj pilgrims at Mecca, Bengal jute made the fortunes of Dundee. Many voices tell the stories of the textiles of Bengal. Here are the songs, memories and labour of the usually mute textile producers. In Bangladesh and Bengal today, these textiles are still part of a collective culture.

The book *Textiles from Bengal: A Shared Legacy*, benefits from Darshan Shah's project at Weavers Studio Resource Centre in Kolkata housing a collection of historic textiles. The Centre may be visited by appointment. The archive contains more than 1,500 fabrics such as *Kantha*, *Baluchari* and *Jamdani*. From this were developed a book and an exhibition in Kolkata of Bengali textiles in 2025.

The book is available online in the UK.

<https://www.mapinpub.com/products/textiles-from-bengal>



Professionally embroidered kantha, detail. West Bengal, late C19th. Courtesy of Weavers Studio Resource Centre, Kolkata

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CEMETRIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Statement of Financial Activities Year to 31 December 2025

	Year Ended 31/12/25 Total Funds	Year Ended 31/12/24 Total Funds
	£	£
Incoming resources		
From Voluntary Sources		
Subscriptions	7,853	7,858
Donations and legacies	49,656	32,361
Net Sales of donated second-hand books	2,226	5,886
Tax claims – Gift Aid	942	2,077
From Assets		
Dividends on investments	10,790	9,249
From Charitable Activity		
Web Sales	921	1,166
Meetings and Events	6,719	6,157
Total Incoming Resources	79,107	64,754
Expenditure		
Charitable Activity		
Cemetery works in South Asia	45,675	80,877
Record books and <i>Chowkidar</i>	2,538	2,363
Net publication Costs	925	565
Website Costs	5,523	3,272
Administration Costs		
Brokers Fees	4,006	3,940
Printing, stationery and postage to members	2,679	2,825
Insurance	589	4961
Subscriptions	30	30
Bank Charges	257	765
Governance Costs		
Independent Examiner’s fee	750	675
Meetings	9,119	6,899
Executive Expenses	1,366	402
Total Resources Expended	73,457	103,109

Net (Outgoing)/Incoming Resources	5,650	(38,355)
Other Recognised Gains & Losses		
Realised gains/(losses) on investment assets	(12,987)	(4,257)
Unrealised gains/(losses) on investment assets	42,726	18,878
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net Movement in Funds	35,389	(23,734)
Total funds brought forward	365,432	389,166
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Funds Carried Forward	400,821	365,432
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

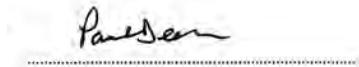
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Investment Assets				
Tangible Assets		-		-
Investment at market value		350,669		327,483
Current Assets				
Cash and Bank account	50,902		38,621	
Current Liabilities				
Accruals		750		675
Net Current Assets		50,152		37,949
		<hr/>		<hr/>
Net Assets		400,821		365,432
		<hr/>		<hr/>
Charity Funds				
Restricted funds		-		-
Unrestricted funds		400,821		365,432
		<hr/>		<hr/>
Total Funds		400,821		365,432
		<hr/>		<hr/>

The Financial statements were approved by the Trustees on *18 February 2026* and signed on their behalf by:



Hon Secretary



Hon Treasurer

PRESIDENT

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Honorary Secretary (from 5 Nov. 2025)

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Dr Christina Macfarlane

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Mr Yasin Zargar

Cemetery Records Officer

Records, British Library archives, UK Mis and church matters

Editor of *Chowkidar*; publications & second-hand book sales

Projects Coordinator

Chair of the Events Sub-committee

Communications Officer & Website Editor

South Asia Travel Adviser

AREA REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr Ravindra Gundurao, South Karnataka & Tamil Nadu

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Mr John L Harding, Malacca

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Mr Tom Inglis, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana & Southeast Odisha

Mr Leslie James, Penang

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Mr David Mahoney, Hong Kong & China

Mr Virgil Miedema, Uttarakhand Hill Stations & Dehra Dun

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Mrs Valerie Robinson, Gwalior & Shivpuri

Mr Trevor Rosemeyer, Agra & District & Mathura

Mr Anand Sethi, Himachal Pradesh

Mr Mark Whitehouse, Afghanistan

OTHER POSTS

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Mrs Tina Davies, General Meetings Officer

Ms Valmay Young, Website Support

Honorary Secretary

Mr Stephen Schaw Miller
New Square Chambers
12 New Square
Lincoln's Inn
London
WC2A 3SW

Tel: 07768 004684

Email: secretary@bacsa.org.uk

**Honorary Membership
Secretary**

Mr Robin Boon
Endene
Upton Bishop
Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire HR9 7UE

Tel: 07816 275657.

Email: membership@bacsa.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer

Mr Paul Dean
97 Verulam Road
St Albans
AL3 4DL

Tel: 01727 845229

Email: treasurer@bacsa.org.uk

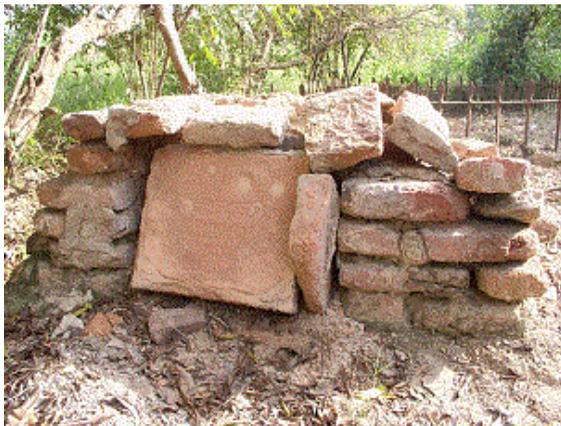
Notes to Members

- Members' postal and email addresses will not be given out. If wishing to contact a fellow member, please send an email or letter c/o the Honorary Secretary who will forward it. It is at the member's discretion whether to reply or not.
- When corresponding by post to the Honorary Secretary and expecting a reply, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.



Above: The gateway to the Magazine Delhi blown up by the defenders in 1857. One of them, William Raynor VC, at age 61 is the oldest recipient of the VC.

Below: His grave at Ferozepore, Haryana in a dilapidated and unbecoming state.





Murree Old (Afghan) Cemetery. *Courtesy of Maj. Gen. Syed Ali Hamid.*

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