



CHOWKIDAR

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British Association For Cemeteries In South Asia (BACSA)

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Notes on BACSA

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

There is a steadily growing membership of over 1,700 (1996) 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 the building up of a Records archive in the Oriental and India Office Collections in the British Library; and many other projects for the upkeep of historical and architectural monuments.

The enrolment fee and subscription rates are obtainable from the Secretary.



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 condition of a relative's grave etc. There are also many other publications both on cemetery surveys and aspects of European social history out East.

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The Nepalese Cemetery at Kathmandu

By the treaty of Segauli in 1816, the Nepalese Durbar accepted, with reluctance, the presence of a British resident at Kathmandu. The treaty came at the end of a short but bitter campaign against the Gurkhas, conducted for the East India Company by Sir David Ochterlony. The importance of the treaty was not only to give the British a toe-hold in the Himalayan kingdom, but also to acquire Kumaon, Garwhal and the Simla hill states, thus leading to the rapid development of the hill stations of British India. Just as importantly, the war had convinced the Gurkha people of the strength of British power and 'left both sides with a lively appreciation of each other's qualities. Their mutual respect was the foundation for the friendly relations which persisted through the British period.'

The first British Resident was allotted a dismal site for the Residency, an outlying area called Lainchaur, which was locally believed to be unhealthy and inhabited by spirits. Within four years the need arose for a Christian cemetery and a site was provided a few hundred yards north of the Residency building. The earliest inscription is to 'Robert Stuart Esquire/3rd son of Sir John Stuart, Bart. of Allenbank, North Britain/and Assistant to the 1st British Resident at the Court of the Raja of Nipal/who died at this capital on the/14th March, 1820.' Robert Stuart's successor was Brian Houghton Hodgson, a Fellow of the Royal Society (1800-1894) who himself became Resident in 1833 for ten years. Although unmarried, Hodgson lived with a Muslim lady, whom he treated as his wife, and by whom he had two children who were raised by his sister. Both children died young, and there is a memorial to them in Petersham Church, Richmond, Surrey. Hodgson's *bibi* was buried in a Muslim cemetery in Kathmandu, which has long since disappeared, according to the former British Ambassador there. Hodgson was clearly one of those splendid Victorian polymaths, whose studies of the Nepalese people, their languages, customs, flora and fauna were so accurate and detailed that they continue to provide information for scholars today.

Inscriptions within the British cemetery record the personnel attached to the Residency. There was naturally an army presence, as the little tomb of Alice Mary shows. She was the infant daughter of Captain William Boyd Irwin, 10th Regiment Native Infantry, and his wife Elisabeth Mary. Alice died on 17 August 1869. Hastings Young of the 83rd Regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry was only 20 at the time of his death on 31 March 1840. The Residency Surgeon, Dr Oldfield, lost his son Philip Henry who died in 1865 aged five. Remote though it was from British India, these 19th century tombs and memorials were handsome structures, incorporating the familiar motives of funerary architecture including the fluted column, the pyramid and the Gothic steeple (see p.13).

Because Nepal was a closed kingdom until the 1950s, only a handful of Britons were resident, and Christian burials were infrequent. But when the country opened its borders to tourists and mountaineers, the number of burials naturally increased, until by the mid-1970s the flat part of the cemetery was almost full, with only six places remaining. The entire responsibility for the cemetery rested on the shoulders of successive British Ambassadors, who received no official funding for it. There was no parish church to provide a focus and source of income. One solution was to create more space by terracing the steep mound within the cemetery, but applications to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the British Government were rejected. The possibility of Hindu-style funeral pyres on the banks of the Bagmati river were discussed, in the absence of a crematorium.

In November 1974 an experienced British trekker, John Sims, died unexpectedly in the Kathmandu hospital from altitude sickness. He was buried in the British cemetery at a service attended by his brother Peter, from Beaconsfield. John Sim's London colleagues had donated several hundred pounds towards a memorial for him, and when the British Ambassador's advice was sought by his brother, the answer was clear. A donation was made to the hospital where John had died and a plinth designed by the British architect John Sanday, who was then restoring the Hanuman Dhoka palace in the old city. The inscription on the plinth reads: 'John Sims 1920-1974. This stone was placed by his brother and friends whose generosity has enabled the extension of this cemetery.' In addition, 23 small marble plaques were provided for graves without headstones, which were recorded in the Embassy archives but unmarked on the ground. The major part of the donation was used to terrace the mound and create space for a further 60 burials. One of these was to be Boris Lissanevitch, Secretary of the celebrated 300 Club in war-time Calcutta, who died in October 1985 after running a Kathmandu hotel for many years (see *Chowkidar Vol.6 No.3*). Today the cemetery is in remarkably good condition, with a sturdy wall, a resident chowkidar and an old and impressive arch. All burial records are intact in the British Embassy, something that few cemeteries in the East can boast of today. (With acknowledgements to the Journal of the British Nepal Society).

Mail Box

The explosion of the *SS Fort Stikine* in Bombay Docks on 14 April 1944 (mentioned in the Autumn *Chowkidar*), was the worst accident in wartime India. An estimated 336 people were killed outright and over 1,000 injured. Peter Elphick provided some facts and figures. The *Fort Stikine* was a new ship with a cargo of cotton and nearly 1400 tons of ammunition. She caught fire soon after midday on the 14th and the fire spread so rapidly that it could not be controlled. The first explosion came at 4.06pm and was heard, very loudly, ten miles away, preceded by a huge mushroom cloud over the harbour. 18 merchantmen and three war-

ships of the RIN were either sunk or badly damaged and 300 acres of the Docks flattened. Blazing bales of cotton were hurled over a wide area, starting secondary fires, which burned for two days. BACSA member Miss N Clayton who was working in the Censor's Office at the same time, recalled that her father's official driver, Raganath Singh, had gone on to become a senior officer in the Bombay Fire Service. 'Directing hoses onto the blazing ship, he and his unit were immediate casualties of the explosion. Teresa Glasiby, my mother's cousin ran an impromptu canteen beside the docks for the next few days to help the workers who were clearing up the area, but all was cut off from the general public because everywhere was perilous, just as after a major bomb.'

Mrs Jean Rasmussen (then Macklin) was also working in the Censor's Office and she took a series of extraordinary photographs immediately after the second explosion from Cumballa Hill, about four miles away. Her photographs were used in the official enquiry, but she was refused permission to sell them to *Life Magazine*. She remembers seeing 'a small ship in dry dock that had been blown bodily into the air, turned round in mid-air through 90 degrees and dropped back across her berth, of course breaking her back. She also confirms that the ship's secret cargo of gold bullion bars was hurled into the air and heard later that 'ONE of the gold bars was handed in by a very honest Parsi gentleman! And, when taking round tea and cakes to groups engaged in clearing up the mess after the explosion, I remember my feet sticking to the ground. I was on the site of a small molasses factory and was virtually wading in treacle.' Mike Lyons, who started the correspondence, adds that his mother was 'just outside the harbour when the place erupted. She was in our old Morris Oxford tourer... she put the car in reverse and bumped into the vehicle behind. We lost our friend Harbour Master Nicholson, who just disappeared.' A memorial service was held a couple of weeks after the explosion, in Bombay Cathedral, attended by the Royal Navy, the Royal Indian Navy, the Army, Port Authorities, the Mercantile Marine, Fire Brigades, Dockyard workers, and members of the general public. But no mention is made of any memorial or plaque subsequently erected.

Sixteen years ago *Chowkidar* carried a haunting paragraph about Eleanor, a young bride, newly married to Henry Wright, a planter in the Western Ghats (in Kerala). Now a fuller version of the story has appeared recently in 'The Times of India'. It was 1894 when the couple reached India, Henry to join the Kanan Devan plantations at Munnar. The two were enchanted by the beauty of the place and Eleanor wandered outside, around the official bungalow, like 'a wood nymph in a trance'. On the third day after their arrival, the couple walked across the hill to the east of the present Munnar Christ Church cemetery, drinking in the scene before them. Eleanor suddenly exclaimed 'If I die I should like to be buried here, Henry'. Two days later she was dead of cholera, at the age of twenty-four. Her distraught husband had her grave placed exactly where she had stood, with her

prophetic words engraved on the tombstone. Later the site was presented to Christ Church by Henry Wright, though the cemetery was not formally consecrated until 15 April 1900 by the Rt Rev Noel Hedges, the first English Bishop to visit the High Ranges. The first entry in the burial register is that of Mrs Eleanor Wright, followed by five other interments recorded before consecration.

Again, looking back through earlier *Chowkidars*, we noted the ghostly legends surrounding the so-called 'Lady's grave' at Kasauli, none of which, though entertaining, really seemed to explain the name attached to the pine grove at the foot of the hill. Quite by chance, Mr D Leeds (a retired soldier, no rank given), from Lowestoft, was told about BACSA and sent us a bundle of precious old type-written pages. They were collected early this century by Mr Leeds' cousin, Norman Dawson Hay, and mostly referred to the events of 1857 at Simla, but the last page gave the definitive version of the Kasauli grave, and incidentally, another British funeral pyre. 'The lady was not buried there but burnt there by her husband, the late Captain Robertson of the 10th Queen's in the year 1856. Her burial had been arranged for at the Cemetery, but on the previous evening her husband had had her body carried down in a coffin, by four Jampannies, burnt between 9 and 10 o'clock at night on a funeral pile which he had secretly prepared during the day.

Upon this a quantity of country oil was poured before the fire was applied. The bearers... standing afar off were terrified at what they saw. Captain Robertson alone remained until she was quite burnt. Her ashes he took up and put into three earthen *chatties* which were afterwards packed in a box and sent to England for burial, Captain Robertson reserving a small portion to be enclosed in a locket, which he always afterwards wore. On the spot where she was burnt, Captain Robertson had the present monument erected. This Monument (which now consists merely of a Gothic, font-like structure with the monogram of Mrs Robertson's maiden names 'Annie Manson' repeated in each panel), formerly contained a sundial of brass or other metal, around which an inscription was engraved recording the name and age of the deceased. Mrs Robertson died of Consumption in the house called 'Paari View' overlooking the Club. Her husband was a very eccentric man, red haired and wild looking in appearance. She was the daughter of Colonel or General Manson at Poona. She left one son who was four years of age when she died.' An extraordinary tale, readers will agree. What happened to her son, and were any photographs taken of the memorial, one wonders.

Tragically, the sub-continent still claims British victims today. Donald Mackenzie, junior, died after an accident in India on 18/19 January 1995. His father, Donald Mackenzie, senior, who had been a tea planter at Bagracote, Jalpaiguri District, and an Honorary Game Warden and hunter, predeceased him only a month earlier, in December 1994. The family had long connections with India, a grandfather

and aunt were buried at Nagrakata, and a successful furniture business was started up by them. BACSA member Mrs Betty Mackenzie, widow of Donald senior, tells us that the reason for putting her son's grave (and her husband's memorial) in the middle of a paddy-field in Bagracote, was because the burial ground in Rangamati is now very neglected and used as a latrine. 'Our old bearer Patras Bara, kindly gave us his precious piece of land, and is lovingly looking after the grave, with his family. Bagracote means the Home of the Tiger.' The monument to both men, pictured on p.12 reads in part 'Now at home in India.'

In mentioning the grave of the Rev Father Daniel Kilty (not Kielty, as published), at the remote European cemetery of Leh, in Ladakh, the Editor idly 'wondered who the Mill Hill Missionaries were' of whom Father Kilty was a member. Her appalling ignorance was immediately remedied by a great number of people, including the Missionaries themselves, who are very much alive and flourishing at St Joseph's College, Mill Hill, London. The Fathers kindly sent a copy of Father Kilty's obituary, which appeared in 1889, and a most interesting article about the short-lived Roman Catholic mission in Ladakh. The parent branch of the missionary society was founded in 1866 by Father Herbert Vaughan, and a decade later assumed responsibility for the Prefecture Apostolic of Kashmir and Kafiristan, which had been carved out of the Diocese of Lahore and had its headquarters in Rawalpindi. It had been hoped to extend the mission's work to Kafiristan, but not surprisingly, this proved impossible, and attention therefore concentrated on Ladakh, where the majority of inhabitants were Buddhists. The first missionaries here were the Protestant Moravians who set up a church, a school and a dispensary.

Father Daniel Kilty was born in Liverpool in 1855, and had already served in North Borneo and Madras, when he got permission to stay in Ladakh for two years 'in order to learn the language'. He arrived in August 1888 and quickly embarked on his study, remarking that his work amounted to 'making a new dictionary'. He shut himself away for weeks in the cold dak bungalow and paid little attention to material comfort. Sadly his health, already weak, collapsed six months later, and before his Superior from Rawalpindi could arrive, he had died in the Moravian mission hospital from a liver abscess on 23 April 1889. Four Mill Hill missionaries were sent up to Leh from Srinagar the next year, and their first act was to kneel at Kilty's grave and recite the 'De Profundis'. Although the new missionaries were to gather valuable accounts of Ladakh in the 1890s, the mission was closed in 1898, having encountered a shortage of manpower, and intellectual hostility among the Buddhists. Thus Father Kilty's grave at Leh is the only reminder today of the Mission's work in the still isolated area. (Many thanks to all those who wrote in with information.)

From Leo Hawkins in Australia comes a fascinating little piece about 'The Gates of Negapatam' which stand, incongruously, above the Cromarty Firth in northern Scotland. This striking landmark of free-standing arches known as the Fyrish Monument, and built of grey stone, was the work of Major Hector Munro, Commander of the Indian Army in 1764. His victory in 1781 at the port of Negapatam, (now Nagappattinam) in southernmost India, marked the end of Dutch ambitions there. On his return home, Munro spent his fortune improving the family estate at Novar, and on works 'executed in style and on a scale beyond any which people in this remote corner would have imagined.' Tradition says that Munro's intention in recreating a piece of India in Scotland was to provide work for destitute local people, too proud to accept charity after the Highland Clearances and the introduction of the Poor Laws.

The Tomb of Raja Ram Mohun Roy

While BACSA is concerned with restoration of British cemeteries in the Indian sub-continent and elsewhere it is sad to report that the tomb of one of India's most revered intellectuals and the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, is in danger of collapse and possible demolition in the Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol. Raja Ram Mohun Roy was a gifted, liberal thinker, who left his home 'in disgust at a suttee in his family' and sought knowledge by his extensive travels. He mastered ten languages, advocated the study of English in early 19th century India, and was a pioneer of Indian journalism. In 1830 he came to Britain to plead the cause of the Mughal Emperor Akbar II (from whom he had received the title of 'Raja') and died three years later. A blue plaque in Bedford Square, London marks the house where he lived. At the instigation of his friend Dwarkanath Tagore, a large Hindu *chhattri* was erected above his remains in 1842. It was designed, in golden sandstone, by the talented amateur artist and East India merchant, William Prinsep, as a tribute to a man whose greatness transcended geographical boundaries.

It seems unbelievable that the Raja's handsome tomb should have fallen victim to a financial dispute today, but such is the case. The Bristol General Cemetery Company, who have taken over the Arnos Vale Cemetery, and have nominal responsibility for the tomb, point out that there is no endowment for it, nor for many others in the cemetery. It seems Bristol City Corporation are unwilling to provide funds for its restoration, which are estimated to be about £25,000. The delapidated tomb, which was recently photographed by BACSA members Prue and Michael Stokes (see p.12), overlooks a public path and could clearly pose a danger if it collapses. Officials from the High Commission of India have visited the grave and are aware of the urgent need for restoration, but are constrained by local politics. All the same, someone needs to break through this impasse quickly, for it would be shameful for both Britain and India were the Raja's tomb to be demolished, especially in this anniversary year of India's Independence. Surely the tomb's repair would be a most suitable candidate for Lottery Heritage funding, symbolising the synthesis between our two countries?

Can You Help?

BACSA member Denise Coelho was particularly interested to read in last Autumn's *Chowkidar* about a visit John Payne made to Junagadh in Gujarat last year. There he had found a little cemetery in reasonably good repair, and wondered about the history of Alice Lillian Fink who was buried in this remote spot in 1936. An answer came immediately, 'Alice was my aunt', writes Mrs Coelho, 'the spinster sister of my father William Hugh Fink, and had made her home with my parents. At the time of Alice's death at Manavadar, my mother was employed as Secretary to the Begum Sahiba, the widowed mother of the ruling Khan Sahib of Manavadar State. When Alice died in February 1936, aged 77, I was on holiday from my boarding school and well remember the event. As there was no Christian cemetery at Manavadar, a Muslim State, we transported Alice's coffin, lashed to the roof of a mini-bus, to the cemetery at Janagadh for burial. This will answer John Payne's question as to how and why this lady ended her days. I also remember that the Christian ayah that attended Aunt Alice died at Manavadar, and through my mother's endeavours we obtained permission to have a section of ground consecrated by an Anglican Minister (probably from Junagadh), for Christian burial at Manavadar.'

Other queries raised in 'Can You Help' have been answered too. Dr Rolin Franck, researching 'wolf children' in India now has a first-hand account from Patricia McCabe of Virginia. While working as a volunteer for the American Women's Association in Delhi, she frequently visited Mother Theresa's Home for the Dying and Destitute and there she met a woman 'who had been raised by wolves - or that was the story everyone was told!' Pat McCabe was fascinated by her and became a frequent visitor. 'She could not speak but she always seemed so happy to see people.' The woman, who had been named 'wolf' in Hindi, by the nuns, had odd, spatulate fingers and a mis-shapen face. She had been found in the jungle in the 1970s, running with a pack of wolves, and was captured by villagers. Nobody knew what to do with her and Mother Theresa's home was the only place that would take her. At first she walked on all fours, and ate raw meat. She refused clothes. The nuns taught her to walk upright and eat cooked food, and gradually she became assimilated, though she never learnt to talk. William Pridmore, ICS, who was Deputy Commissioner of Sultanpur in 1942-3, was aware that wolves in the District were snatching children, though there were no reported sightings of wolf-children at that time. But he reminds us that William Sleeman, in his *Journey Through the Kingdom of Oude* related several instances in detail of children recovered from wolves' dens in Sultanpur in the 1840s.

Information on the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930 had been requested by Mr Ronald Bose, from Chittagong and this brought a real treasure from Brigadier Cowan of Edinburgh - an unpublished, typewritten account by Trooper Burnett

of the Surma Valley Light Horse, who took part in the search for the stolen weapons. This was Trooper Burnett's first military experience, for he was a tea planter on the Kukicherra Estate near the Lushai Hills. Awakened at midnight on 14 April 1930, he was summoned to Silchar to learn that serious rioting had broken out in Chittagong, following a raid on the armoury by a large number of people. The armoury sergeant was shot dead, the armoury guards overpowered, 'and the whole stock of rifles (about 400) belonging to the Assam Bengal Railways Rifles, together with considerable quantities of police muskets were quickly transferred to taxi cabs which had been drawn up outside in readiness, the building was then set on fire and the rifles carried away.' The Surma Valley Light Horse were subsequently informed by a friendly Indian 'that the insurgents had been spotted at a place some five miles distant from Chittagong and were said to be advancing on the city.' This exacerbated the panic within Chittagong, for 'there was not a single rifle or musket (apart from a few sporting guns) to defend the town.' The squadron set off in pursuit (by taxi) and came under fire as they reached the ravine. Their retaliation was somewhat hampered when it was found that the tripod for the Hotchkiss Machine Gun had been forgotten in the hurry. Nevertheless, the engagement continued until dusk, and next day the cremated bodies of twenty Indians who had been shot were found, when the Assam Frontier Force Rifles took over. The rest of the group 'escaped by country boats soon after dusk and years were spent in rounding them up.' For his part in the operation Trooper Burnett received the sum of Rs 9-6. He died in 1978 after a successful post-war career in tea, and Brigadier Cowan tells us that 'these papers were made available to me by his widow, who is now my wife.' They will now be deposited in the India Office Library, a valuable and unique resource for future researchers.

Sir Ronald Lindsay got no fewer than eight replies to his enquiry about the defence of the 'Little House at Arrah', in which one of his ancestors took part. Even an esoteric query about *ganjifa* (Indian playing cards) by the Rev Jeff Hopewell, brought a prompt response from Fred Pinn, who had purchased a set in Calcutta in the 1960s. Let's hope the following enquirers will be as successful.

John McWilliam of Stratford on Avon was disappointed to find no mention of his grandfather, Francis (Frank) William Foster in the BACSA cemetery book on Vizagapatam and Waltair. The death certificate in the India Office Library shows that his grandfather died in Vizianagram on 12 August 1920, and was thought to have been interred in Waltair. He had been an accountant in the Bengal & Nagpur Railway Company, at Chakradharpur and he married Mary Kathleen at All Saints Church, Chaibassa District in April 1899. Two children were born of the marriage, William Kenneth Foster, at Kharagpur 23 July 1900 and Florence Annie Foster, June 1904. (Mr McWilliam is the son of William Foster.)

Florence was a pupil at La Martinière School, Calcutta and her early death in 1921 was particularly tragic. She had been operated on for appendicitis, at the Presidency Hospital and died from an embolism. William Foster worked in the Army Intelligence Corps until February 1946, but after that date cannot be traced. Another relative was Frederic Charles Foster, who retired as a Chief Station Master and was run over by a train at Shalimar on 22 March 1939. 'Is there still a living authority on Indian Railways between 1900 and 1940, in particular the B & N Railway' asks Mr McWilliam, and does the Presidency Hospital still exist today, under another name? Any further information on the family would be appreciated, too.

Another query comes from Dennis Ivory, whose wife's family can be traced back to the 1860s in Calicut, south west India. Their name was Grollet, they were Roman Catholics and had connections with the French city of Pondicherry up to 1900. They then worked in Malaya, at Batu Gajah 'known locally as God's Little Acre' until 1942 'possibly on railways, pier construction and latterly in postal communication'. Information would be welcomed on the name Grollet, by Mr Ivory via the Secretary.

An article in the Victorian Society newsletter by Ruth Winram described her recent visit to India, and in particular, to the Nicholson cemetery in Old Delhi 'one of the most vivid and poignant memories... of an almost forgotten corner of the British Raj'. She relates how difficult it was even to find the cemetery, which 'as far as we know, does not figure in guide books.' (Happily this defect will be remedied with the forthcoming publication of BACSA's Indian Cemetery Guide.) Luckily an intrepid driver persisted, and she found herself suddenly stepping from chaotic traffic 'into a sedate and very English Victorian world. The contrast could not have been greater.' 'Every type of Victorian funerary architecture peers out from the fringes of the exotic vegetation that has overtaken the Englishman's solid statement of grandeur in death. Obelisks, laurel-wreaths, half-draped urns, pyramids and columns languish in lichen-covered luxuriance. Blank-eyed cherubs peep out at the parakeets and monkeys which flourish in this peaceful haven.' BACSA provided funds to heighten the walls of this cemetery a few years ago, to deter squatters, and for clearance of the dense undergrowth, revealing previously hidden graves. 'Many very simple low tombstones with rounded tops measuring about two feet high all bear the inscription 'Deo Notus' (known unto God) and a serial number. These absolutely mystified us. Could they be victims of the Mutiny of 1857 when there was enormous loss of life?' Can readers enlighten Mrs Winram about this?

And a *bonne-bouche* to finish with. Long time BACSA member Charles Allen had heard of a 'Calcutta sweetmeat called "Ledikeni" which is said to have been named after Charlotte Canning, wife of the first Viceroy, who died there in 1861 and is buried at Barrackpore.' He had however, not been able to verify this. The obvious person to ask was the veteran author Nirad Chaudhuri, long resident in Oxford, but born in Bengal. He confirmed that the sweet was indeed named after Lady Canning, and added that it was made from chhanna (soft curd cheese), 'fried in ghee until it was dark purple, almost black'. Another mystery solved!

The Lonely Artist of Ajanta

The Ajanta caves of Maharashtra were re-discovered in 1819 by a group of British officers attached to the Madras Army, who were hunting tigers during a period of leave. At the head of a gorge the men fell in with a half-wild boy who was minding buffalo. The boy offered to show the party some tiger lairs and led them down over rocks to the river bed, pointing towards the cliff face thickly overgrown with trees and creepers. Hacking their way through the undergrowth the officers suddenly found a large doorway of carved stone. 'Beyond, a square cavern lined with pillars led back into the rock, and at the far end, a huge figure of Buddha sat quietly smiling in the darkness. All the walls were covered with brilliant paintings.' In all, there are 29 caves, carved out of the living rock by generations of Buddhist monks over a period of 800 years. The site, which was difficult to reach, seems to have been abandoned by the 7th century AD, and lay undisturbed for over a millennium. The first full description was by Lt James Edward Alexander of the 16th Lancers in 1824, when he found the frescoes still intact and 'in excellent preservation', though in places the monsoon rains had seeped through the cracks in the rock, and internal pillars had collapsed.

During the 19th century more British visitors arrived, including Dr James Bird, who rashly 'proposed to scrape off with a knife as many paintings as he could conveniently carry and take them back to Bombay.' This was the era of the treasure seeker and souvenir hunter, and by 1843 James Fergusson, a leading architectural historian sent a memorial to the Directors of the East India Company begging them 'to take steps to prevent further desecration and destruction of these venerable monuments... and above all, to appoint someone to make drawings of the fast perishing frescoes at Ajanta before decay and the recklessness of tourists had entirely obliterated them.' The Company's response was to appoint Captain (later Major) Robert Gill, an artist attached to the Madras Army. He was provided with an elephant, a gang of coolies and bodyguards to protect him from the hostile local Bhils. He was to work at Ajanta for the next 27 years, taking stereoscopic photographs with the aid of a magnesium lamp and making tracings and coloured drawings of the frescoes.

Another artist, William Simpson, painted Gill at work in January 1862, seated at his easel, a bearded, hatless figure in white, 'hermit-like and indomitable', enchanted by Ajanta. For months on end, painting by the light of an oil lamp, he never saw another Englishman, and was often in danger, from the Bhils or the numerous wild animals in the valley. But there was a consolation in his marriage to a native dancing girl named Piro, from Ajanta village. Having spent so long transcribing the beautiful dancers of the frescoes, he delighted in watching his wife dance, wearing traditional costumes and jewellery that had been handed down for generations, perhaps since the days of Ajanta civilisation itself. As Gill finished each of his paintings, he sent them by bullock cart to Bombay, and thence by ship to London. Tragically all but five of his canvasses were destroyed in a fire in the Crystal Palace in 1866, though his stereoscopic photographs were published. One facsimile painting that escaped destruction is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, an invaluable record of figures long gone from the cave walls. Gill struggled on for five more years after the Crystal Palace fire, but understandably lost heart, and sold what was left of his drawings and sketchbooks to the Bombay government for £200. Shortly afterwards he fell ill and died. In the 1950s his tomb could still be found in the little cemetery at Bhusawal, to the north of Ajanta. His wife, Piro, was buried separately, just outside the village, on the edge of the plateau that falls down into the ravine. Does this dedicated artist's tomb still survive today, one wonders, and is he honoured as he should be? (Based on an article by Alan Moorehead in 'The New Yorker' 1954, kindly sent in by Richard Cochrane.)

Notice Board

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence and the creation of Pakistan. A large number of events have been planned in Britain, although dates have not been finalised in some cases, and no one seems to have an overall picture of everything that will happen (rather like 1947 really). BACSA is coincidentally celebrating its 20th anniversary with a special 96 page illustrated *Souvenir Chowkidar* to be published in March 1997 at a cost of £5.00. It will contain short stories and articles commissioned from leading BACSA authors, including Charles Allen, Pat Barr, Ruskin Bond, Lee Langley and Gillian Tindall, as well as other interesting features. There was such a good response from members and friends to the question 'Where were you in August 1947?' that these reminiscences will now be published in a separate little booklet this Autumn.

In addition the BACSA Exhibition entitled '*Goodness, how sad!*: British Graves in India' will be on view at the Commonwealth Institute, after the AGM on 19 March. The Exhibition will subsequently run for three weeks (from 22 March to 12 April) at Earlsfield Public Library, Magdalen Road, London SW18 and will later transfer to the Nehru Centre, South Audley Street, London W1 for five days from 14-19 April.

Left: The tomb of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol (see p.6)



Below: The memorial to the two Mackenzies (father and son) in Jalpaiguri District(see p.5)



The little cemetery at Kathmandu (see p.1)



The Sexton's house at Rajahmundry (BACSA's address is on the plaque behind the step-ladder - see p.14)

The Indian Army Association, with whom BACSA has close links, is arranging a one day *tamasha* at Royal Navy headquarters in Portsmouth, on 18 July. There will be massed bands and the laying of commemorative wreaths at the War Memorial etc. Details from Lt-Col Patric Emerson OBE, 20 Kings Road, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 5HR. The National Army Museum, Chelsea will be launching a major exhibition on the Indian Army on 14 August, accompanied by a scholarly catalogue.

Blowing Our Own Trumpet

BACSA achieved national recognition in a 'Sunday Telegraph' article on 22 September 1996 about British graves in Pakistan, and specifically at Ali Masjid. The fact that graves of servicemen who died between the two World Wars have no official watchdog, other than what BACSA can do, was highlighted, with quotations from Sue Farrington. Sue also appeared in the SSAFA newsletter, when she was able to provide a photograph of the grave of Patrick Hickie, an Army schoolmaster, for his daughter, Mrs Crouch. It was feared that the 1931 grave in Quetta may have been lost in the devastating earthquake there four years later, but it was found intact and in good condition.

Recognition of another kind came with the arrival of photographs from the Sexton's House at Rajahmundry, near Bimlipatam. BACSA had made a donation for the repair of a ruined gatehouse at the cemetery. It had stood roofless for years, though the walls were still strong. A sturdy thatched roof of palmfronds has now been put in place, and to mark BACSA's involvement a handsome stone plaque has been inserted in a wall, giving the Secretary's address, a thoughtful and permanent reminder (see below and p.13)



Books by BACSA Members

[These can be ordered via BACSA, at no extra cost to the purchaser]

Angels of Albion: Women of the Indian Mutiny Jane Robinson

'The traditional image of the Mutiny has tended to be: a military campaign, all about soldiers and sepoy, arrogance and insurrection, strategy, politics and heroes', writes the author. She decided to look at the events of 1857 and 1858 through the eyes of the women caught up in them, the memsahibs, whose own arrogance has sometimes been indicted, unfairly, as a contributory factor. In truth, the origins of this uprising were far more complicated. The memsahibs, if they were considered at all, were seen by the mutineers only as unimportant adjuncts to the real problem, the East India Company, its officials, its army, and its policies. The women *were* unimportant, they could make little impact on Indian life, other than to provide employment for ayahs and servants. That they *became* important is due solely to the Mutiny, and part of its continuing fascination is in seeing just how ordinary women responded when caught up in extraordinary events. Many, of course, were given no chance to respond at all. They were massacred, with their children, in dreadful circumstances. Just outside Cawnpore, for example, a woman thought to be Mrs Eckford was seized, with her three young children, taken to the middle of the *maidan* and fired on, all were killed at the first volley, except an infant. It was rolling about on the dead bodies taking the hands of the corpses, was lifting them up and was saying "why have you fallen down in the sun?" At last a trooper killed it with his sword.'

Where the English women were spared, and left written accounts, their reactions range, as one might expect, from the banal to the heroic. At Sialkot, Mary Gilliland writing to her mother, described matter of factly how she and her husband were disguised by a mali, who brought them native dress, which enabled them to escape to safety. But 'our poor piano was pounded into morsels, every article of clothing carried off and in fact nothing left but the four bare walls of the house... all my lovely dresses are gone, everything but what we escaped in...' At Indore, on the other hand, the Burra Mem. Annie Durand, castigated the British troops for their cowardice. '... what disgusted me beyond measure was the dastardly conduct of our troops, soldiers they did not deserve the name of, and I was almost equally provoked at two of the officers whose one idea seemed not to hold out to the last but to be off and save their wives and themselves with all possible speed - long before the attack or the probability of danger...'

Robinson's book must inevitably suffer comparison with Andrew Ward's Cawnpore epic, reviewed below, especially as both cover the same ground and appeared almost simultaneously. Ward believes that retribution after the Bibighar massacre was, in part, because British men had been unable to defend their women and children, the most sacred symbols of purity in Victorian society. The mutiny

and its aftermath quickly moved from a military dispute among soldiers on the parade grounds, into the bungalows and compounds of British India. This is why it seemed particularly horrifying, because of its domestic nature. Robinson does not attempt this kind of analysis, yet has produced a readable book, even if much of the ground she covers is now rather familiar. (RLJ)

Dark Legacy Nicholas Shreeve

“Dark Legacy” is the story of Sardhana - a time bomb waiting to explode. Nicholas Shreeve has done us the favour of setting alight the fuse. We can now examine the fallout of a terrific exposé for years to come, high society scandal of such shenanigans as we never dreamed, like that involving the Iron Duke and the Jezebel wife of the Begam Sombre’s adopted son and heir; the dubious madness of David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre tacitly exploited by Mary Ann Jervis to thwart her “darkie” husband’s Parliamentary ambitions and to further her own Royal pretensions with his fabulous riches, thus enabling her eventually to become Cecil Forester’s wife, who was Groom of the Bedchamber to William IV and later controller of the Royal Household to Queen Victoria; racial prejudice be-devilling Indo-British relations throughout their long association: these are all subjects waiting to be explored.

Does “Dark Legacy” lift the lid off Pandora’s Box and set free the imps of Sardhana’s history? It does more. It is the open sesame to an Alladin’s cave of a rich Indo-British association and love/hate relationship through the ages. If the stings hurt, Hope is the balm that will soothe the pain! One gets the feeling that Nicholas Shreeve has done a lot of preliminary research of a period of immense interest but, in so doing, has only scratched the surface. It is a real beginning however and oh! what a glimpse he has revealed from his gold mine of material for future would-be historical novelists and scholars to follow. Think of what writers in the style of an Austen, or a Bronte and/or even an Indian-born William Makepeace Thackeray could make of the activities of the Iron Duke and Mary Ann Jervis who described Wellington as “the best dangler in the world - never out of my bedroom but when I am in his.”

Sardhana was the principality of a remarkable woman, forerunner of such as Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Mrs Bandaranaike and the like - a land bequeathed to her by an extraordinarily capable soldier partner, the astute General Sombre, who was never once defeated, not even by the English, who continued to be a threat and obstacle throughout his life.

This is a book that can be truly recommended for its appeal to a varied readership. (CHH)

1996 Bookwright, Cross Bindery, Convent of the Poor Clares, Crossbush, West Sussex. BN18 9PJ. £15.00 plus postage pp179

Strangers in the Night Ruskin Bond

This paperback contains two short stories, the first ‘A Handful of Nuts’ was written, as the author describes ‘over a period of three and a half months last winter, when icy winds and occasional snowstorms kept me confined to my small abode in the hills. I felt a longing for the hot languorous summer days of my youth... and tried to recapture something of that time and place. Please do not take it as straight autobiography.’ The tale is based, loosely, around young Sitaram, an unprepossessing youth whom the author cannot quite shake off. But there are many diversions in Dehradun that carry the story along in the most pleasant way. The day Stewart Granger came to town, for one, shortly after filming ‘Bhowani Junction’ and sat in a corner of the local café downing ‘several bottles of chilled beer, much to everyone’s admiration.’ BACSA members will have a preview of the tale, for the author kindly allowed three chapters to be published in the forthcoming *Souvenir Chowkidar*. The second novella ‘The Sensualist’, has an interesting history, for its publication in the Bombay magazine ‘Debonair’ some twenty-two years ago, during the Emergency, got its author arrested on a charge of obscenity. There is nothing objectionable in it, and during a long drawn-out case, the public prosecutor died of a heart attack, the opposition lost ground, and the author was given an honourable acquittal. What is interesting today, is to compare the two stories, to see how Bond’s style has developed into that seemingly casual way of leading the reader into the small town life of northern India, so skilfully that one can miss the craftsmanship behind the words. Warmly recommended. (RLJ)

1996 Penguin Books India Rs 150 pp143

Stone-Paper-Scissors: An Autobiography The Stead Sisters

This is a charming and unusual book written by four sisters each in turn. For anyone who knew ‘old’ Shanghai - that is between the wars - it is a ‘must’. Straightforwardly written in short sentences of conversational style, it reads easily and tells of a family who, after living in Mexico, progress to the International Settlement of Shanghai where the mother of the young children dies. Death for Europeans in those parts was a particular hazard in the times before antibiotics, and indeed my own mother died in Shanghai soon after the First World War when still in her twenties to ring the same sad bell. But this is by no means a sad story. Together with their devoted father, faithful Chinese servants, and some very good ‘auntie’ friends, the children support one another through childhood as they go to school and grow up in the fascinating and frenetic Eastern city.

Known in those days as ‘The Paris of the East’, amidst the local masses, modishly-dressed Europeans could be seen in cars or riding in rickshaws along the famous Bund (bordering the Whangpoo River) with landmark of Customs House building containing square clock tower and chiming bells. Directly opposite this tower

lay anchored my father's flagship of the Yangtze Flotilla flying the White Ensign of the Royal Navy. All sorts of incidents in the book bring back memories such as the washie-washie woman hissing out water through her teeth to dampen the garments always impeccably ironed; also the gambling game title of the book known to anyone who has been in China or Hong Kong. One holiday is spent in the north in Wei-hai-wei, reached after a two day journey by steamer, a deep water harbour with Island akin to Hong Kong which had become the summer mecca of the China Fleet escaping from the heat of the south. Another holiday is taken in Sham-hai-kwan where on the coast the Great Wall of China comes to an abrupt end when it snakes into the sea.

The happy care-free life of the sisters changes when the girls are evacuated to Hong Kong during the pre Second World War Sino-Japanese 'troubles' in which Shanghai is bombed though the international community is not involved. When the immediate danger is over the girls return to Shanghai where, subsequently, one sister together with her husband is interned by the Japanese. She tells of the horrors of her ordeal. With the father's posting to India, the scene shifts to that Continent of particular relevance to BACSA members, and later to Britain. Here, with the extended family of four husbands, children and grandchildren, I found it a little difficult to follow who belonged to who. A family tree to add to the excellent plans of the international settlement would be helpful. Altogether *Stone-Paper-Scissors* is a delight to read. A unique story it will appeal to many, particularly those interested in Shanghai. (EDB)

1991 Oxon Publishing. Obtainable from The Stead Sisters, c/o 10 Astrop Grange, King's Sutton, Banbury, OX17 3PR. £12.95 incl. postage and packing. pp244

British Voices from South Asia: An Exhibition Catalogue Rosan Augusta Jordan and Frank de Caro

Several years ago the authors tape-recorded a number of interviews with people who had served in India before 1947. Copies of the tapes were deposited in the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, but the originals have gone to Louisiana State University, USA where an oral history archive has been set up. The exhibition which was held from April 8th to August 5th 1996 was to mark this event, and reading the excellently produced catalogue, one wishes fervently that some organisation had had the wit to bring it here, especially during this 50th anniversary of Indian Independence. American historians of British India (and there are an increasing number) have the advantage of seeing it without the 'cultural baggage' that most British writers invariably carry along, often themselves unaware of it. The themes chosen are familiar, but comprehensive and were entitled: The Passage to India; Running Your Little Empire ('People at home thought it was all play and no work. Actually we did much more work than most people at home' said a Royal Engineers Officer); Life in the Bungalows;

Imperial Diversions: the Club, the Hills, the Field; Never the Twain? Indo-British Relations; 'No India to Go to' Departure and Connections. The exhibits include fascinating items like an Indian-made sewing box, painted lead figures of an Indian tiger hunt (made in Britain) many photographs and paintings, solar topees and silverware. Slightly tongue-in-cheek there were also bottles of Camp Coffee with the well loved label of the British Officer and his Sikh orderly. There are a few catalogues still left, and people may apply to the BACSA Secretary for details.

Books by Non-Members (that will interest readers)

[These should be ordered direct and not via BACSA]

Our Bones are Scattered Andrew Ward

Few books were awaited as eagerly in 1996 as the American writer Andrew Ward's definitive study of Cawnpore and the 1857 uprising. During the years it took to write, several BACSA members made valuable contributions with old family letters, photographs, their own research into the Mutiny and handed-down oral reminiscences. Fittingly, the book is dedicated to the late Zoë Yalland, sister of BACSA's Secretary, and the historian of Cawnpore. In an extraordinary time-warp, Ward interviewed Narain Rao Tope, the nephew of Tayta Tope, a childhood playmate of the Nana Sahib, days before the old man's death. Ward is particularly well qualified, being born in India, but writing in America, which gives him a useful distance from Indian and British historians of the period. He had already produced a novel about Cawnpore in 1985, *The Blood Seed* and a novelist's gifts are evident in the current work with its strong narrative flow, plot and characterisation.

Our Bones are Scattered has already been widely reviewed in the English papers, mostly by BACSA members, who divide sharply between those praising it, and those criticising it for lack of breadth. This reviewer is in the former camp, and in good company. Ward does not attempt a comprehensive survey of the causes of the uprising, which, let us not forget, swept across only a fairly small part of northern India. Its limited geographical spread refutes those who describe it as the 'First War of Independence' for at the time, India did not have a sense of nationhood, being composed of many petty kingdoms, that in terms of territory, if not in influence, were greater than the area controlled by Britain. The strength of this book is literally in the detail, focused only on Cawnpore and its surroundings, and only on the years 1857 and 1858, apart from some necessary scene setting.

The story begins in a leisurely, discursive manner, sketching in the main characters. Here is General Sir Hugh Wheeler, nicknamed 'Hamlah', 68 years old in 1857, with his Eurasian wife, the fecund Frances Marsden Oliver, who had already borne two children before she was sixteen, and who was to produce nine illegitimate children by Wheeler before the couple could marry. Here too is Azimullah Khan, the charity-school boy raised by evangelical English missionaries, who conceived an unrelenting hatred of the British, which did not, curiously, prevent several romantic liaisons with British women. The Nana Sahib is presented as a diffident character, certainly no enemy to the British of Cawnpore, whom he had entertained lavishly in happier days, but a man easily persuaded, who was, in the end, too weak to stand against the irresistible forces of his own people. The start of the siege in Wheeler's desperately unsuitable entrenchment was fairly leisurely too. There was time for a few, far-sighted men to send their families out of Cawnpore, reluctant as they were to go, while others, like the Shepherd family, managed to get *into* Cawnpore, and at first thought themselves lucky to have done so. Meals were brought by servants into the entrenchment for their British families at the beginning of the siege, and British officers deliberately slept among their men to show their implicit, but ultimately misplaced loyalty.

The actual events are not in dispute. The terrible suffering in the wretched entrenchment, the offer of safe-conduct to the ghat and the promise of boats to take the survivors down river to safety. The half joyful, half tearful journey to the river, where already some of the laggards were picked off when they faltered, the embarkation, the pre-arranged signal to fire the boats, the shootings and drownings, and the odd, miraculous escapes. Then the weary journey to the Bibighar, where the women and children were finally massacred by rifle and sword, though not all at once. This was the cruellest part, for even after the night of killing, a few women were found alive in the Bibighar the next day, but were not spared. Yet more terrible still was the retribution by General Neill, and the failure by Havelock to control the nights of rapine and murder by his men when the city was retaken. At the same time (in the only piece of paper that has escaped Ward's attention - the Church Order of Service on Friday, July 24, 1857, after the British entry), the prayers included the memorable words 'Teach the natives of British India to know their mercies, and to prize those right and equal laws which by Thine good Providence Thou hast given them through the supremacy of our Christian land... where Thy servants, whom Thou hadst set over them, were seeking to promote only order, and equity, and happiness.'

'No one' writes Ward, 'can say how many thousands of Indians - including women and children - died during the suppression of the Indian rebellion, but many times more, certainly than the Europeans who died at Cawnpore: so many that it seems almost incredible that ninety years later the British and the Indian

people should have taken leave of each other so amicably.' One can suggest that this was because a great collective shame about the events at Cawnpore, Lucknow, Meerut and Delhi had overtaken both Indians and British, for both knew they were guilty of the most appalling deeds.

In his conclusion Ward writes movingly 'For the well at Cawnpore was never really covered over, and the women and children never laid to rest. They festered in the minds of every Anglo-Indian, haunted even their loftiest intentions.' The deeds of 1857 were to direct much of British thinking in India up to Independence and were echoed in the Amritsar massacre of Indians in 1919. Ward has done a great service by his objective examination of the events, which can now, perhaps, be put behind us, if not forgotten. (RLJ)

1996 John Murray £35 pp703

Quest for Kim Peter Hopkirk

More than a decade ago *Chowkidar* examined in depth the theory that Kipling's Kim was based on a real-life person, Frank Beatty of Quetta. Several readers had useful snippets of information, and the Beatty family themselves said that Frank's father had been a sports reporter on the 'Civil and Military Gazette' and had arranged that Frank should show young Rudyard around Lahore. It was taken for granted, people said at the time, that it was from Frank that Kipling drew his inspiration for the most enduring character of Anglo-India. This is a lead that Hopkirk could have usefully followed up, but his book does demonstrate how accurate were Kipling's descriptions of the north Indian towns on Kim's route. Today, more than a century after the story of the Great Game was told, Hopkirk found it quite possible to retrace the journeys that the boy made, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, and even to find the places where he stayed. The book begins promisingly with the curious story of Namgay Doola, son of a red-headed Irish soldier who had deserted and eloped with a young native woman into Sikkim. Kipling's short story about this half-caste seems to have provided further inspiration for the character of Kim. The old Tibetan, who meets Kim astride the gun at the Ajaib-Gher, was, Hopkirk has found, based on an old lama who frequented the Museum and he has identified the site of the Museum of Kipling's day, several hundred yards to the left of the new one, begun in 1890.

But this is not just a game of identification, though one shares the author's pleasure when another piece of the puzzle is discovered, like the remnants of the old serai where Mahbub Ali's sons lived. Hopkirk has solved the problem of running two books in parallel, (his own and Kipling's) by reminding us briefly, at each stage, what Kim is doing and where he is. When he is sent (reluctantly) to St. Xavier in Partibus, we find our author in Lucknow at La Martinière school for boys, on which St. Xavier was based. (The reviewer could tell Hopkirk why

he never received an answer from the Principal to his letter of enquiry!) One of the most memorable figures in *Kim* is that of Lurgan Sahib of Simla, with his curio shop. Here there seems little doubt that this wonderful character was partly based on the mysterious AM Jacob, probably a Turkish Jew, who kept a curio shop on the Mall. There are well attested stories about Jacob's magical powers and his ultimate bankruptcy, when the Nizam of Hyderabad refused to pay him in full for a diamond. (BACSA member Foy Nissen searched unsuccessfully for Jacob's grave in the Sewri cemetery, Bombay). Kipling's description of the interior of the Lurgan/Jacob shop must surely be among his best writing, and the ingenious 'Jewel Game' he describes so impressed Lord Baden-Powell that he adopted it as part of the Boy Scout training. Interestingly, though Hopkirk does not say so, 'Kim's Game', as it became known, was used for memory training in the Indian Army, certainly up to the 1940s, and possibly still today.

The location of Jacob's shop on the Mall was not discovered by Hopkirk, despite intensive research during which he unfortunately lost all his notes, so the last quarter of the book tends to be sketchier, and perhaps rather more of the author than one would wish. In Mussoorie he meets another BACSA member Ruskin Bond, but clearly did not discuss Bond's work in detail, otherwise he would not have written so categorically 'that no such place as Shamlegh ever existed, save in Kipling's imagination...' Shamli, in Uttar Pradesh is certainly there, and in the title of one of Bond's books too. To sum up, this is a readable book with delightful little illustrations by Janina Slater, but at the end of it, the reader will go back again to *Kim* and its incomparable magic. (RLJ)

1996 John Murray, London £15.99 pp274

With the Gurkhas: India, Burma, Singapore, Malay, Indonesia 1940-1959
Scott Leathart

Christmas 1940 found the author in Victorian Barracks at Aldershot, prior to a seven week voyage to Bombay in a converted meat ship, the *Highland Chieftain*, which was a stranger both to physical comfort and culinary delights. Commissioned in Bangalore, he had joined the 3rd/9th Gurkha Rifles on the North West Frontier; thence to Bengal before facing the Japanese in the rain forests of Burma. Early in his service and especially in Mountbatten's 'Forgotten Army' with all its hardships, he realised how privileged he was to serve with the Gurkhas, whose loyalty and courage gained his increasing admiration. Wounded in action during Wingate's 2nd Chindit Campaign behind the Japanese lines, he was invalided home, but managed to rejoin his Battalion in 1946 for service in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaya, before returning to India and transferring to the 2nd Gurkha Contingent of the Singapore Police, commanding it for ten years during the island's progress from Colony to Republic, which the expanding Contingent still loyally serve. There was also time to marry, to honeymoon in the

Himalayas and holiday in the Australian outback with a three month old son. This book is one man's memoir and a moving tribute to the men with whom he served, combined with many observations on the wildlife, taken from letters written home (often in pencil from 'the back of beyond') and a daily diary kept since 1948. It is a unique, authentic and entertaining story, a feast of memories covering twenty years of fast moving events, pleasures and privations, based on the close bonds between the British officer and his Gurkha colleagues, with a Foreword by Field Marshal Sir John Chapple. All proceeds from the book go to the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

1996 Pentland Press Ltd, 3 Regal Lane, Soham, Ely, Cambs, CB7 5BA. £30 including p&p (UK) £22.50 overseas pp270

Simla: the Summer Capital of British India Raja Bhasin

Post-colonial historians joke that the end of the British Empire was signalled with the laying of the foundation stone for New Delhi in 1911. Geographers, on the other hand, might argue that it was when the British Government of India decided to take to the hills (literally), for seven months of the year. For how could the sub-continent of undivided India possibly be ruled from a place described as nothing more than 'a glorified full stop on the map?' Yet for nearly a century, it was in Simla that most of the real work was done. Sir John Lawrence, Governor General and Viceroy, who had designated the hill station as the Government's Summer Capital in 1864, claimed 'he could do more work in one summer's day at Simla, compared to five in Calcutta'. Lawrence had been in poor health in the steamy Bengal heat and like other Britons, found the change to a fresher climate most beneficial. Simla avoided the inaccessibility of the Himalayas and the discomforts of the plains. 'It provided a pre-eminent position to lord over the Indian sub-continent'. But as Bhasin says, in this perceptive book, it was the insulation of Simla that gave it both strength and weakness. Public opinion was filtered before it reached these heights. Simla was cut off by layers and layers of governmental echelons and strategic decisions were taken in a vacuum. Government's removal from the real India for more than half the year ultimately had a negative effect, not just on Indians. Sir John Kaye, Political Secretary, said that 'This pleasant hill sanitarium has been the cradle of more political insanity than any place within Hindustan' and people spoke disparagingly on 'those idiots on the hill'.

The author, a journalist, was born in Simla well after Independence, and thus has no colonial axe to grind. He has not weighed down his story with the statistical analyses favoured by urban historians today, but neither has he provided any new research from Company or Government records, so that some of the earlier quotations, at least, are rather familiar. Yet this is the most readable recent book on Simla, which is observed with a humorous and affectionate eye. There is a

wealth of anecdote and gossip. What a story Kipling would have made from the Maharaja of Junagarh's canine revenge, or the six nuns in a shed. Simla mostly escaped the butchery at Independence, as it had escaped the uprising of 1857. Virtually none of its British buildings were damaged. That has come later, with the accidental burning, in 1981, of Peterhof, the first viceregal residence and the slow disintegration of Rothney Castle, home of Allan Octavian Hume, founder of the Congress Party. Annandale, the pine-fringed plateau, scene of gymkhanas and summer fetes, is now a helicopter pad. But as Bashin concludes, the real threat to the town today comes from over population and seasonal tourist traffic that trebles the population, increases pollution and leads to ecological damage. It is a down-to earth problem for the former Queen of hill stations. (RLJ)

1994 Penguin Books, India. £5.99 pp253

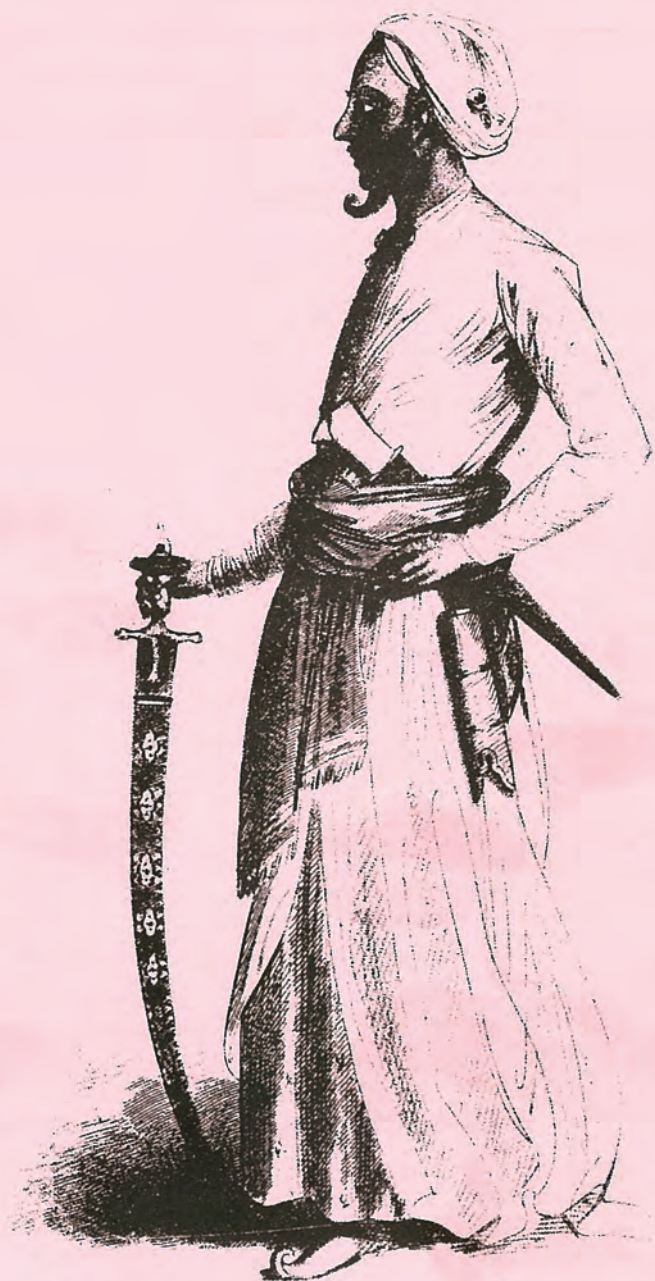
Books also received

Still life with voices: a childhood Richard Terrell (a BACSA member)
1996 Michael Russell £10.95 pp74

Far Above the Plain: the first forty years of Murree Christian School, Pakistan 1956-1996 ed Paul Ashbury Seaman
1996 William Carey Library. Available from the author at 19101 Broadwater Way, Gaithersburg, MD 20879-2167, USA. (Tel: 301 963 8087) \$17 plus \$9.50 postage and packing to the UK by air. Sterling price not given pp298

A Fighting Retreat: The British Empire 1947-1997 Robin Neillands
1996 Hodder & Stoughton £25 pp586

Richard Cochrane, a BACSA member, recently sent details of the Portico Library and gallery in Manchester which sounds an extremely civilised place. It was opened by a group of local businessmen in 1806 and is a neo-classical listed building by Thomas Harrison. Its interest, for BACSA members is that it has a specialist collection of mainly 19th century books about Lady Travellers, including visits to India, the Middle East etc. *My three years in Manipur and escape from the recent mutiny* by Ethel St Clair Grimwood, published in 1891 is just one of the intriguing titles. Details from the Librarian, 57 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3HY.



MOHMAN KHAUN, NABOB *of* CAMBAY.