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NOTES ON BACSA

The Association was formed in 1976 and launched in Spring 1977 to bring together people with a concern for the many hundreds of European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia.

There is a steadily growing membership of almost 1,600 (2009) drawn from a wide circle of interest - Government; Churches; Services; Business; Museums; Historical & Genealogical Societies. More members are needed to support the rapidly expanding activities of the Association - the setting up of local committees in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia etc., and building up the Records Archive in the India Office Collections at the British Library; and many other projects for the upkeep of historical and architectural monuments. The Association has its own newsletter *Chowkidar*, which is distributed free to all members twice a year and contains a section for 'Queries' on any matter relating to family history or the condition of a relative's grave etc. BACSA also publishes Cemetery Records books and books on different aspects of European social history out East. Full details on our website: www.bacsa.org.uk

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

Founded by the late Theon Wilkinson, MBE
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GRAVEYARDS OF CHUNAR

The British connection with Chunar, in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, arises from the capture in 1772 of its fort, by the East India Company, which established in it a depot of artillery and ammunition. Warren Hastings took refuge here in 1781 after an encounter with Chait Singh, the Raja of Benares, and later a convalescent depot was established for wounded and sick Company soldiers. In January 2009 this year Mark Davies, an historian from Oxford, visited India on the trail of four ancestors who served the Company in both civil and military roles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In a specially written article for *Chowkidar*, he describes his unplanned, but fruitful, visit to Chunar.

'As it turned out, for a variety of reasons, the trip did not fulfil many of the objectives of my original plan, yet somehow the plan which replaced it turned out to be rather better. Such is India! An unenvisaged visit to Chunar in Uttar Pradesh was one such example. I had already spent two weeks following up various ancestral connections in Kolkata, Jharkhand, and Bihar. Mirzapur had no family relevance, so the idea was merely to relax, socialise, and be a mere sightseeing tourist for a while. That changed when I was shown a copy of *Inscriptions on Christian Tombs and Tablets of Historical Interest in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, compiled by EAH Blunt, published in Allahabad in 1911. Idly, I glanced through the index, and was thrilled and surprised to discover there a familiar family surname – Clayton.

The inscription recorded by Blunt was for Mrs Emma Maria Clayton, wife of Captain Thomas Clayton, both of whom I was already aware of – though had had no inkling that they had lived, and one of them died, at Chunar, where Blunt had seen her memorial. Chunar was about two hours away, and a place which was in any case of historical interest on account of its hilltop fort commanding a bend in the Ganges, a stronghold of the British since 1772. Of course, I had to visit! But I went there with little expectation. Blunt's book listed graves in 12 different locations in Chunar, some with just a single entry. Mrs Clayton was in one subtitled 'Shamspur', and she had died in 1793. My experience of visiting other old graveyards in India led me to expect that – even if I could find the right location – it would be in a sorry state, and that a memorial of that age would be either untraceable or, at best, illegible. I was unduly pessimistic on all counts. Chunar is a small place, and the main graveyard – designated 'below Fort, Old Cemetery' by Blunt – is very obvious. Many of the memorials (dating from 1782 to 1839) still stand proud, though there is some evidence of vandalism and removal of stone. (see page 36) And despite the encroachment of buildings on two sides, the incline up to the

fort on one of the other sides, and down to the Ganges on the fourth, make it still a place of atmosphere and beauty. Well, beauty, that is, if you can ignore the depressing (and almost inevitable in twenty-first century India) accumulations of brightly coloured plastic which adorn the site. This principal cemetery, incidentally, is where Alastair McGowan was taken to view the grave of his ancestor, Suetonius McGowan (died 1798), in an episode of the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are' series. But where was the Shamspur cemetery which contained the Clayton memorial? My driver quizzed a few local people, and we set off along an unmade track in a westerly direction, stopping at a fairly large plot with a dozen or so large memorials lying within sight of the dome of a mosque. Indeed this graveyard lay adjacent to a Muslim one, which displayed stone memorials of a very much more modest design. But this was not Shamspur: two of the engravings which are still legible - Captain Edward Dawson, died 23 March 1785 aged 54; and Major Thomas Pennyng, died 22 July 1784 aged 64 years - revealed this to be what Blunt called 'Old Cemetery near Dargah'.

We drove on, parallel to the main Mirzapur-Chunar road, and soon found another site, slightly smaller but more imposingly positioned, on a rise overlooking the track. Here there were another ten or so memorials - among them the one I sought: Mrs Emma Maria Clayton, died 1 June 1793 aged 24 years. Prior to this chance discovery, all I had known, from Hodson's *Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1804*, was that as Emma Maria Jenkins, she had married my ancestor, Thomas William Clayton, in 1787. (Thomas Clayton later served in Bencoolen, Sumatra.) The date of death proved something important. The daughter of Thomas Clayton, who continued my line, was born in 1800, so Emma could not have been her mother, and therefore was not a direct ancestor. (This was not a disappointment! My assumption had been that the mother was a local woman, or 'bibi'. This discovery strengthened that supposition.) Before leaving I paid a few moments of silent respect, with closed eyes and clasped hands, a gesture which silenced the vociferous, intrigued, and friendly group of mostly boys who had materialised from the scattering of small homes in the vicinity. Hopefully my visit will impress them enough to keep the graffiti and damage in check for a little longer than might otherwise have been the case.

At Shamspur there are a couple of memorials which are missing from Blunt's book, namely those of Mrs (?) Mary Brooke, died 12 April 1795 aged 23 years; and Emily Delamain, born 6 February 1799, and died 16 April 1801. This infant had died of smallpox, which leads me to wonder if the rationale for this particular graveyard, some five kilometres away from

the Fort and its much more convenient cemetery, was chosen to bury all such victims, for fear of contagion. My intention was not to make an inventory of which graves remain legible at Chunar, but my impression was that many still are in good and decipherable condition in the three graveyards I visited. Chunar is reputed for its masons and the quality of local stone to this day. The enduring excellence of the work done over 200 years ago stands testimony to this tradition. Since returning to England, I have discovered that Chunar's graveyards had been visited shortly before Blunt published his text. AFC de Cosson's article 'Chunar' in *Bengal Past & Present* (vol. iv; Jul-Dec 1909; pp 413-419) also includes photographs, though none of the cemeteries. De Cosson recorded all the legible inscriptions - even then only three at Dargah and fourteen at Shamspur - because even a hundred years ago he felt that 'the ravages of time are obliterating the names'.

MAIL BOX

Following a visit to Madeira earlier this year, BACSA President Peter Leggatt became interested in the old British cemetery at Funchal, the island's capital. Subsequent correspondence with John Grant, the Superintendent of the cemetery, revealed that a number of people with Indian connections are buried here. This is not so surprising as it may seem at first, because the island was a convenient port for ships bound for the East Indies on their way round the Cape of Good Hope. The halt also enabled the captains to stock up with Madeira wine, which became an immensely popular drink in the East, as it did indeed in Europe and America. The wine was shipped in 'pipes', each one estimated to contain almost 600 bottles worth of liquor. Curiously enough, the wine was found to taste even better after a long sea voyage where it was exposed to heat and movement! The first Protestant burial ground at Funchal was established in 1761 by the British Consul-General and two more areas were subsequently acquired and became known as the New Burial Ground, and the Middle Cemetery. Burial Registers exist from 1809, and the first recorded grave is that of Lady Sophia Bligh, the second wife of Captain William Bligh of the *Bounty*. Among those buried here, who were on ships either bound for, or returning from, the Indies are James Howard of the East Indiaman *Union*, died May 1811, Robert Atkinson, third mate of the Hon'ble East India Company's ship *Carmarthen*, died June 1812, and Philip Reiley of the *Northumberland*, who 'endeavoured to make his escape by swimming ashore on 26 May 1817, but was found drowned on the beach' and buried two days later. Also here is Jane Isabella Ewart, the wife of Lt. David Ewart of the East India Company's Artillery, who died on 17 January 1834, aged twenty three and was interred the following day.

A couple of years ago Susan Haskins started looking into her family history, and found a number of Indian connections, which prompted her to visit south India earlier this year. Honorary BACSA member Admiral Dawson was able to help in finding the tomb of her great grandfather, Brooke Cunliffe Leggatt (1841-1909), who is buried in Bangalore. The simple tomb, surmounted by a cross, is in reasonably good condition, although it is now missing some of its indented lead lettering and the marble chips that probably covered the grave. Brooke Leggatt was employed as a Deputy Collector and Magistrate and served in various places in south India, including Madras, Salem, Mangalore, Calicut and Coorg. Family legend relates that he was a friend of the Maharaja of Mysore, and that on his death he was acting as advocate and lawyer in the court at Mysore. He died at the Cubbon Hotel, Bangalore. His own father, William Leggatt, had gone to India in the early 1800s as a lieutenant colonel in the Madras Army, retiring to Ootacamund (Ooty) for the last twenty years of his life. Susan Haskins also found William's grave, and that of his wife Mary Ann, but reported that these tombs were broken and damaged, and that the Ooty cemetery was in fairly poor shape, with much charred ground and damaged stonework. By contrast, the church at Ooty, St Stephen's, is in good condition, and contains a stained glass window dedicated to Susan Haskins's great, great aunt, Lucy Caroline Watson. Other family links were found at Mangalore and Kotagiri, where a very large bungalow, birthplace of a cousin, was being offered for sale complete with its Victorian furniture. This is just one of many British families with Indian links stretching back two hundred years or more.

New BACSA member Jeremy Prescott, for example, also has long-standing family connections in India. His great grandfather, William Bruce Prescott, was Superintendent of the Bombay Baroda and Central Indian Railways (BB & CIR) in the 1880s. 'On the 22nd November 1885, William Prescott and his wife were on their way, in a horse-drawn carriage, to an official function in Broach (Bharuch) in the northern Bombay area, when riots suddenly broke out. The Prescotts' carriage was ambushed and William was killed in an arrow attack, but his wife escaped. It was later established that the wrong carriage had been attacked and his death was a total mistake,' writes Jeremy Prescott. 'The Chief Constable was so sorry about his death that he instigated a collection from the villagers in Broach towards a memorial fund.' This was sent to William Prescott's widow, who left India to settle with her young son, Cyril, at Clifton, in Bristol. A gold watch was later presented to the boy with the inscription 'To Cyril W Prescott from the people of Broach, in memory of his father William Bruce Prescott who died 22nd November 1885.' Cyril eventually returned to India and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Indian Army. But the

location of the grave of his murdered father is not known, although for many years after the death, the remorseful local people of Broach lit candles at the grave, as a mark of respect, so there may still remain a folk memory of the English Superintendent.

What seemed initially like a straightforward query arrived from Angela Blaydon earlier this year. Her great aunt, Florence Fisher, had gone out to India as a pianist with Wilson's Circus, and died on 31 December 1912. A burial register in the British Library revealed that Florence had committed suicide, at the age of twenty-seven years old, and indicated that she was buried on 1 January, 1913 'at the Church of the Holy Name, Bombay, in connection with the Church of Rome'. This was the first surprise, because while recognizing the anguish of a person who commits suicide, the Catholic Church has in the past denied a funeral to those who died by their own hand. The register also recorded the burial of another suicide only ten days later. Did the Bombay Church have a more liberal policy, one wonders. The BACSA Area Representative, Mrs Marilyn Hywel-Jones, was able to throw some light on this. The Church of the Holy Name, in Wodehouse Road, Colaba, which was later elevated to Cathedral status, does not have its own burial ground. Catholics are buried in the large Sewri cemetery, Bombay, as are Protestants too. As a suicide, Florence Fisher's grave may not be marked although it should be recorded in the burial books kept at the cemetery.

Angela Blaydon tells us that Florence came from a family of strict Baptists, and became estranged from her family, possibly because she chose to go 'on the stage', although it may be that religion was at the root of the problem. Florence only communicated with her mother, through a brother in this large family, and after her mother's death in 1909, and her father's in 1911, she must have felt particularly isolated, working in a foreign country, as a circus pianist. She seems to have left the Baptists and become a Catholic, too. There is certainly an untold tragic story here, and it would be interesting to know more about it, and about the life of a travelling circus in India nearly a hundred years ago.

BACSA member Sergeant Roy Barwick and a small party were recently invited to visit one of India's oldest horse-breeding establishments at Babugarh in Meerut District. This came about because he is a member of the Light Cavalry Honorable Artillery Company, a mounted ceremonial unit in the City of London. The LT/CAV HAC is affiliated to the President's Bodyguard of India, and exchange visits are paid between England and India. The Equine Breeding Stud Babugarh was raised in 1811 as the Hapur Remount Depot by the East India Company and was to

provide its Army with horses and mules. During World War Two, as the need for the animals increased, a Reserve Remount Depot was raised by Captain BJ Humphrey. A Veterinary School was started here in 1871, although after a few years it was transferred to Lahore, and in fact the majority of Depots and Studs were established by the British in what is now Pakistan. On Independence in 1947 there was an acute shortage of mules in India, which made the former Hapur Depot all the more valuable, and it is now the premier Stud in India. We know little about the men who worked here in British days, so Roy Barwick was fascinated to find a small, well-kept cemetery within the extensive two thousand acre depot and adjoining farm. He estimated that about fifty graves lie here. (*see page 36*) This may seem a strange place to find a British cemetery, but given the difficulties of transport in the old days, it was inevitable that men who died while employed here would have to be buried here.

One photographed inscription reads: 'In ever loving memory of my darling husband Surgeon Captain John Francis Fitzpatrick died at Babugarh on the 26th March 1906 aged 64 years and 4 months.' Interestingly, according to BACSA records, the cemetery was not consecrated until 1871, although burials date from the establishment of the Stud in 1811. Consecration of cemeteries could only be done by a visiting Bishop, and it may be that either the horse breeders felt it was not necessary, or that no Bishops were interested enough to visit Hapur for sixty years after its foundation. Because the cemetery lies within Army land, it is not open to the public and we are therefore lucky that Sergeant Barwick was kind enough to tell us about it, and to send us photographs.

Tipu Sultan and his fortress palace at Seringapatam are of continuing interest, not only to historians, but to those whose British ancestors fought against Tipu in the Mysore Wars, some of whom were subsequently imprisoned for years in the Seringapatam dungeons. One such person was Captain James Turing, who arrived in India in the early 1770s as an ensign. Following the battle of Pollilur in 1780, which was a signal defeat for the East India Company, Lieutenant Turing (as he then was), spent twelve long years as a prisoner of Tipu. Over two hundred Company men had been captured and incarcerated, and they were later to be joined by other British and European captives during the subsequent Mysore Wars. Many died during their imprisonment, others were forcibly converted to Islam, and 'James Turing must have been a tough customer to have survived this ordeal until his release in 1792, when Tipu was forced to sue for peace,' writes BACSA member Kevin Wells. Turing returned to his military life and was appointed to serve with the 4th Madras Battalion, which occupied Pennagram, one of the many small cantonments in the Baramahal District.

Pennagram, which today is known as Pinagra, was at that time being held by a British garrison to control several strategic passes that linked the coastal region to the plateau of Mysore. A year later, Captain Turing was dead. He had survived Tipu's jails only to succumb a year after his release. The cause of his death is not known, but a possible identification of his battered tomb has been made by Mr Wells.

Baillie-ki-Paltan, a book by Lt Col HF Murland, published in 1932, records that Captain James Turing 'was buried in a field on the glacis of the fort at Pennagram, where his tomb forms the only remaining indication of military occupancy'. The foundations of Pennagram Fort were still visible during Kevin Wells's tour of the area in 2007, together with a single standing wall of the chapel. In a nearby field stands a lone mausoleum, its inscription long ago vanished. 'The position of this field could indeed have been at the foot of the glacis of the fort, though that area now has many houses on it.' There seems no reason to doubt that this is the Turing tomb, as indomitable as the man it houses. (*see page 37*) Although a scant family tree exists, the Turing name, of Scottish origin, is associated with the East India Company as far back as the 1730s, and is particularly interesting to anyone who uses a computer today. Julius Mathison Turing was an ICS officer, stationed in the Madras Presidency at the turn of the 1900s. He married Ethel Sara Storey, whose father was Chief Engineer of the Madras Railways. Both families came from an upper middle-class background, and it was not unusual for the children of such families to be brought up in England, while their parents remained in India. When Ethel became pregnant in 1911, she travelled to London to give birth to her second son, Alan, in June of the following year. Alan and his elder brother were fostered out when their mother returned to India, and the precocious boy, educated at Sherborne, and who worked at Bletchley during World War Two, was to become known as the father of the modern computer.

BACSA member Laurence Fleming first visited the Anglican cemetery at Margherita, in the Assam Valley, in 1972. He tells us that it is beautifully situated on the banks of the Dehing river, between the old railway bridge and the new road bridge. Entrance is now through the grounds of a small mosque. The area was developed by the British who established tea gardens here and exploited the natural resources of oil and coal. A metre gauge railway was opened in 1882 to transport these valuable products and not surprisingly, railway, tea and oil company employees and their families lie in the cemeteries here. About forty names have been recorded from the Margherita cemetery inscriptions, and among them is Robert Sharpe Kennard Hastings, the uncle of Mr Fleming. He died on the 6 August 1942 from diabetes. The grass in the cemetery is kept in good order by goats, though many of the tombs seen in the 1970s have now disappeared.

The very un-Indian name of Margherita derives from the Italian engineer, Chevalier Roberto Paganini, whose workmen built the Dehing river bridge for the Assam Railways & Trading Company in the 1880s. Paganini is thought to have named the place in honour of Queen Margherita of Italy. Mr Fleming and his sister were brought up at nearby Digboi, where their father was General Manager of the Assam Oil Company from 1934 to 1944. The Digboi War Cemetery, which was also visited, is a reminder that a military hospital was here during World War Two, when this area was an important base in the Burma campaign.

And lastly a reminder from *The Friend of India* Calcutta, 4 October 1860, that a concern for old graves is not a new thing: 'A sum of Rs1,200 has been sanctioned for the repair of the ancient tombs in the Dutch Burial Ground at Negapatam. Some of them are 250 years old. The old Graveyard at Cossimbazar, near Moorshedabad, in which some of Warren Hastings' family were buried, was cleaned out five years ago on the occasion of the Lieutenant Governor's visit.'

CAN YOU HELP?

BACSA member Virgil Miedema is writing a book on the delightful hill station of Mussoorie, in northern India, which will complement his earlier publication on Murree, the hill station now in Pakistan. Mussoorie was founded in 1825, when Captain Young, and a British revenue officer from Dehra Dun, decided to build a shooting lodge on the hilly site. This was followed shortly afterwards by the establishment at nearby Landour of a sanatorium, where East India Company troops could recuperate away from the deadly heat of the plains. By 1842 a Colonel Reilly had built himself a house in Mussoorie, which he called 'Woodstock'. Perhaps it was a piece of speculative building, or perhaps the Colonel was posted elsewhere, for in 1855 Woodstock was leased out to the formidable sounding 'London Society for Promoting Female Education in the East'. This was a missionary-led organization, based in south London, whose aim was 'To afford scriptural and useful education to the women and girls of Asia and Africa.' Four ladies from the Society were invited to set up a Protestant Christian School, equivalent to the Catholic Waverley Convent, which was already established in Mussoorie. On Colonel Reilly's death in 1867, the Society purchased the house from his widow, having already adopted the name of Woodstock School for their establishment. Today Woodstock is an international boarding school with a fine reputation throughout South Asia. But what of Colonel Reilly, whose house gave the school its name? Virgil Miedema would like to know more about him. Did he die in Mussoorie, we wonder, and if so, does he lie in the Camel Back cemetery or the Landour cemetery, further up the hill? Ideas please to Mr Miedema at vmiedema@gmail.com or through the Secretary.

Mrs Joan Scott from Edinburgh recently had some old photographs developed, and among them was the poignant little grave of 'Baby Allan' who is buried in a Darjeeling cemetery. The baby's parents were Tom and Zoë Ward-Allan, and the baby (we do not know if it was a little girl or boy), died shortly after birth in January 1922. Zoë Ward-Allan was Mrs Scott's aunt, and therefore the baby would have been a cousin to Mrs Scott. Zoë, whose maiden name was Pymm, was brought up in Darjeeling, and attended Loreto Convent in the 1900s. She met her future husband, Tom, when he came out as a tea-planter and worked for Goodricke and other companies, rising to the position of Superintendent during World War Two. The loss of their baby, all those years ago, has always been felt by the family, writes Joan Scott. It was thought the death may have been caused by the large doses of quinine that the mother was taking at the time, because she suffered from recurrent malaria. The dangers of pregnant women taking medication was less well understood then than it is now. During a visit to India in 2000 (which was reported in *Chowkidar* at the time), Mrs Scott found her grandfather's grave in the Lower Circular Road Cemetery, Calcutta, and paid for it to be refurbished. He was the well-known Darjeeling journalist, Russell Austin Pymm, and died in 1919, four years before Baby Allan's brief life came to an end. It is thought that the baby's tomb is in the Singtam cemetery, although it is not recorded in Eileen Hewson's 2006 book *Darjeeling and the Dooars: Christian Cemeteries and Memorials*. Perhaps someone who has time to spare in Darjeeling could look for the small tomb, which had a sturdy stone cross and the simple inscription 'Baby Allan', 24th January 1922.

By coincidence, another grave in the Lower Circular Road Cemetery, Calcutta, was restored a few years ago by BACSA member the Rev Sidney Mourant, from Armagh. It contains the burials of male members of the Moreno family, including two sons of John and Susan Moreno. Susan (née Bunn) was the great grandmother of our enquirer, and came from a Calcutta family, her own parents being buried in South Park Street Cemetery. After the death of Susan's husband in 1889, she remarried, and unusually, her second husband, Justin Horace Vallentine, who died in 1913, also shares the Moreno family tomb. Susan herself is buried in Allahabad, where she died in 1921. But mystery hangs over the fate of Minnie Moreno, a daughter of John and Susan. Minnie was Rev Mourant's grandmother, and she married Walter Weskin, a guard on the East India Railway. Minnie and Walter had ten children, seven of whom died in infancy, a shockingly high mortality rate, though perhaps not unusual for the time. Minnie's last child, born in Jubulpore, died at the age of one year old in 1915, and her story seems to finish then. It is possible she is buried in the Mandla Road cemetery there, although there is no mention of her death in the India Office burial registers. Any information or ideas would be appreciated.

Next year 2010 sees the World Exposition in Shanghai, the first time it has taken place in a developing country. BACSA member Martyn Webster is preparing a research paper on expatriate cemeteries in China to coincide with this event. The lack of information about (mainly) British graves on the Chinese mainland, and indeed, the physical lack of graves which we know to have existed, has been touched on earlier in *Chowkidar*. A starting point is the project being carried out at the University of Bristol, which is focusing on the Chinese Maritime Customs Service and its foreign staff. A new catalogue has been produced of the 55,000 Customs files held in Nanjing, many of which are thought to be in English. In time this will enable researchers to locate local birth, marriage and death registers, and, it is hoped, to establish a cemetery database, with a search facility. Mr Webster, a retired Immigration officer, says that frequent enquiries are made to his Shanghai contacts about expatriate graves, and, at present, they cannot be answered. It is a delicate topic of course, because the majority of these graves were cleared after 1949, with the advent of the Communist regime. On the other hand, Chinese people do have a sincere respect for the dead, and Martyn Webster intends to address the 'brick wall' that presently confronts people researching from abroad. Luckily, he says, there is a surprising amount of background material available, and previously unseen photographs have been tracked down. Any help or suggestions, particularly connected with the Shanghai area, will be warmly welcomed. Please email to: martyn.webster1@btinternet.com or write to the Editor.

Penang was formerly Prince of Wales Island, and it was here that BACSA member Tim Newling's ancestor, Patrick Crummey, worked as an apothecary in the first half of the nineteenth century. Patrick had come from Ireland (either from Armagh or Antrim), and probably on an East Indiaman. In 1838 he married seventeen year old Hannah Smith, who appears to have been an orphan, as her guardians attended the wedding. Earlier in his career Patrick Crummey had served in HM's 51st Regiment Light Infantry, before becoming Assistant Apothecary, and later Apothecary, in the Madras Medical Establishment. He retired from this post in 1849 and seems to have retired to Madras, as he was buried in St Andrew's Church, Poonamallee, in December 1856. His widow, Hannah, outlived him by twenty years, and died at Cuddalore (now in Tamil Nadu), in June 1876. Tim Newling would be interested to hear of anyone who has researched their family tree in Penang, and also, as a more general enquiry, to learn more about apothecaries in nineteenth century India. Please contact him at tjnewling@hotmail.com or through the Secretary.

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The photograph on page 37 shows the BACSA President Peter Leggatt on a recent visit to Bangladesh, at the Chittagong cemetery. BACSA has made a grant here for restoration work and the cemetery is now in good order.

NOTICES

Photographs of Theon Wilkinson: Following the deaths of Theon Wilkinson, the founder of our Association, and his wife Rosemarie, both in 2007, a substantial amount of BACSA papers, from their Putney home, has been archived at the British Library. Among papers recently received were two photographs of Theon Wilkinson, taken about 1986 and holding copies of his own book *Two Monsoons* and books published by BACSA. These are professional photographs by Penny Tweedie and picture Theon in an English cemetery. One photograph shows him seated on a tombstone, and the other standing by a tombstone, with a characteristically quizzical expression. Both photographs measure 9 by 6 inches, and are matt finish, in black and white. A limited number of copies are available at £8.50 each, including postage in a hard-backed envelope. Cheques should be made payable to BACSA and sent to the Secretary.

Wilkinson Memorial Plaque in Calcutta: The first ever BACSA restoration project was in South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta, in 1977, a year after our foundation. It is therefore fitting that a memorial plaque to Theon and Rosemarie Wilkinson should be erected here. (*see back cover*) This handsome marble memorial has been erected by the Christian Burial Board of Calcutta, in consultation with the BACSA Secretary during two recent visits. The wording was suggested by BACSA Committee members and approved by Wynyard Wilkinson. The plaque is on the inside of the main gateway, so departing visitors will see it as they leave, and spare a kind thought and a prayer for the two people it commemorates.

The Christian Burial Board in Calcutta have set up their own website at: www.christianburialboardkolkata.com A well-designed and informative site, not only about the many memorials of British inhabitants of old Calcutta, but with plans for future work, and photographs of well-kept gatehouses, including the Tollygunge Cemetery and Lower Circular Road Cemetery. Together with Mr Arijit Mitra's website (*see the Spring Chowkidar* 2009) which has changed and is now: www.burialsinindia.net the Calcutta cemeteries are now much more accessible to all who have relatives buried there, as well as the general public.

The Gora Qabristan, Karachi. Daphne Alfrey, a Pakistani lady living in Karachi is part of a local group called CARE, and one of their aims is to restore the old Christian Cemetery in Karachi, known as the Gora Qabristan, or White Peoples Cemetery. The large site of 22 acres contains a number of pre-partition British graves, some of which have been lost, or re-used. The group are trying to locate descendants of those buried here. The CARE website is: www.karachigoraqabristan.org and shows the commendable efforts to restore and clean this large cemetery. Please contact them if you can help.

(Notices continued on page 38)



top: 'the old cemetery below the Fort' at Chunar (see page 25)

below: the Remount Depot cemetery, Babugarh (see page 30)



top: the isolated tomb thought to be that of Captain James Turing (see page 31)

below: BACSA President Peter Leggatt inspecting a tomb in Chittagong, Bangladesh



BACSA website: A project to digitize the indices of BACSA's cemetery records books was set up in 2007. A good start has been made, and now we need more volunteer transcribers. You don't need a high level of computer literacy, but you should have Excel on your computer. You will be provided with the books you need, and a template into which you type the information, plus support. Please contact the Secretary if you can help.

BACSA postcards and BACSA ties. A set of nine colour postcards depicting different domestic servants at work in India in the 1840s was reprinted last year and has proved popular with members. Sets can be purchased for £4.50 including postage, and will be on sale at meetings for £4.00. **New BACSA ties** are also now available for members. Made from 100 per cent heavy silk, with a silk lining, these are a sophisticated navy blue, with thin gold diagonal stripes and one BACSA *chowkidar* logo in a small plain oval. A discreet loop anchors the narrow end of the tie, just above the label. The tie costs £10, including postage in a padded envelope. Please send your cheque, made payable to BACSA, to Miss Caroline Whitehead, 21 Pentlow Street, London SW15 1LX

Old postcards of South Asia and Raj ephemera are always welcomed for the second-hand stall at the BACSA Spring and Autumn meetings, as well as second-hand books with an Oriental theme. Please contact Miss Caroline Whitehead, as above, or phone her on 0208 789 2090 if you have anything of interest. We can sometimes arrange to collect books.

Michael Aidin, a BACSA member, is giving a lunchtime talk on 18th March 2010 about memorials to the British war dead, both in India and in this country. This is taking place at the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HT and is free of charge.

BACSA needs a new Treasurer! Brampton Mundy, our Treasurer since 2003, has left to take up a job abroad. We are actively looking for someone who can take over from our acting Treasurer, Alan Tritton, who kindly stepped in to fill the breach over the summer. The duties are not onerous and would suit a retired person, possibly an ex-Banker? The post, like that of all the BACSA officers, is honorary, but the work is varied and rewarding. If you can help, or could suggest someone who may be interested, please let us know.

India's World of the Horse Tour is an innovative look at a little known (to tourists anyway) aspect of Indian life. The tour includes visits to thoroughbred studs, a day at the races, polo matches, including elephant polo, and meetings with people specializing in Marwari and Kathiawari horse breeding. The tour leader is Philippa Waterfield, whose experience of India goes back nearly twenty years, both as a visitor, and a tour guide. For further information contact her on tel: 07977304919, or email at: info@waterfieldtravel.com The website is waterfieldtravel.com

BOOKS BY BACSA MEMBERS

Graveyards in Ceylon, Nuwara Eliya Vol II Eileen Hewson

This is a further collection of memorials (about 900 names), in the Holy Trinity Church and the old graveyards of Nuwara Eliya, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), taken from surveys, written records and biographical details. Volume I was published last year and was reviewed in the Spring 2009 *Chowkidar*. This is the first survey to be published for nearly a hundred years and while several tombstones have been found from the early 20th century survey, many others not previously recorded were found in this later survey of 2008-9. Nuwara Eliya with its comfortable climate was an oasis for the planters who came from the surrounding tea estates for some home comforts and social life. Under the influence of Sir Samuel Baker the hill station had become a prosperous commercial town and a carbon copy of an English village with the planters' Hill Club as its social centre. Many planters opted to stay after retirement, reasoning why go home when you can eat steamed pudding and roast beef here and be served by waiters wearing white gloves. Their pensions went a long way in Ceylon and the thought of the cold and expensive climate at home did not appeal. There are still some reminders of the British period in Nuwara Eliya, the Grand Hotel once the residence of Sir Edward Barnes, Governor of Ceylon, the Hill Club, the Post Office and the fragmented remains of the planters' lives in its graveyards.

Although the majority of graves are those of British residents, the spot attracted other Europeans too. Among the names recorded are those of Charles Liesching, CCS (Colonial Civil Service) who came to Ceylon under the auspices of a Chief Justice, and who is remembered for planting a rhododendron walk in the local park. He married Louisa Sophia, the daughter of Sir Charles Layard, who was Government Agent to the Western Province. Louisa Liesching, who is also buried here, died in 1899, her husband outliving her by just a year. Brief biographical details are given in some cases, recording sudden deaths from riding accidents, like 33 year old James Dodwell Palmer who was returning from a gymkhana at Nuwara Eliya, when his horse slipped and fell. Both rider and horse were killed. James Parson was a government mineralogist, who set out on a jungle walk in December 1908 and who died of exhaustion when he became lost. His body was found by a Tamil tracker several months later. Sadly Parson had been only twenty minutes away from the edge of an estate, where he would have found shelter. A handy little booklet.

2009 Kabristan Archives, 19 Foxleigh Grove, Wem SY4 5BS ISBN 978-1-906276-24-9 Price £8.00 plus post UK £1.00 Europe £2.00 Overseas Airmail £4.00 pp66

FIBIS Fact Files, Numbers 1 to 4

FIBIS (Families in British India Society) have issued four useful little booklets this year, packed with information for those researching their family histories and for the general reader. No. 1 'Researching Anglo-Indian Ancestry' by Geraldine Charles (also a BACSA member), examines the multiple meanings of 'Anglo-Indian'; English women in India before 1833 and the author's own extensive and well-researched Anglo-Indian family tree, as well as specific sources of information. No. 2 'Getting started with the India Office Records' (in the British Library) by Lawrie Butler, is an invaluable guide for those 'many readers wandering around the Reading Room obviously at a loss to find something in particular' (which have surely included most of us at times!) It starts with the basics of how to get a Reader's Pass, where to find the lockers to deposit coats, etc. and a layout of the Reading Room itself, on the third floor. The 'Ecclesiastical Returns' are explained, together with Wills and Inventories, Muster Rolls, Embarkation Lists and much more.

No. 3 'Indian Directories' by Richard Morgan (another BACSA member), lists and explains the many directories, official and unofficial, that recorded Britons, their occupations, and often their places of abode in India. They include the *Bengal Calendar & Register* (1790), *The East India Register and Directory* (1803) and the invaluable *Thacker's Indian Directory* (1863). Runs of these Directories are on the open shelves in the Reading Room. No. 4 'Research sources for Indian Railways, 1845-1947' by Hugh Wilding, contains a brief history of the railways and a handy glossary of terms like 'famine lines', 'PWD' (Public Works Department) and 'Volunteer Forces'. It also has an exhaustive list of railways known to have operated between 1853 and 1947, although the abbreviations take a bit of working out – M&SMR turns out to be Madras & Southern Mahratta Railway, and GLR is the Gwalior Light Railway, a line designed for lighter equipment and lower speeds. All these booklets are thoroughly recommended and we hope they will be the first of others. (RLJ)

2009 FIBIS, Book Sales, 14 Gableson Avenue, Brighton, BN1 5FG, email: sales@fibis.org Various ISBN numbers. £2.50 each including postage

BOOKS BY NON-MEMBERS THAT WILL INTEREST READERS

Delight in Design: Indian Silver for the Raj ed. Vidya Dehejia

When we were younger a mention of Indian silver from the British period was likely to produce a very cold look from Museum curators and historians of Indian art. On the other hand it was often polished bright and on display in the drawing rooms of families whose members had toiled, and died in India. It is no accident that an expert, who has done so much of the groundwork for the study of the subject, is Wynyard Wilkinson, the son of the founder of BACSA, who is the author of *Indian Colonial Silver* (1960)

and *Silver from the Indian Sub-continent* (1999). He is the most senior collaborator in this handsome and learned book that accompanied an exhibition at the gallery of Columbia University, New York. Head of the team that compiled this handsome and scholarly volume is Professor Vidya Dehejia, a Cambridge-trained academic perhaps best known for her study of the Buddhist caves and sculptures of Orissa. The two remaining contributors, apart from Wilkinson, are within the Indian/American academic spectrum. In accord with the changes in the aesthetic climate and taste of our times it is now possible to look at Indian silver of the British Raj and admire the bold and strange aesthetic and the often very accomplished craftsmanship, just as many of our own forebears did.

Those who have helped to bring about this change of taste include Paul Walters and Oppi Untracht. The former is an independent American collector who has always bought with a robust personal flair. His pieces figured largely in the recent exhibition in New York and in the 1999 exhibition in London that was celebrated in Wilkinson's previous volume. Oppi Untracht was a Fulbright scholar whom I met under the aegis of Irene Mott Bose in Delhi. He wandered on foot around the towns and villages of India and Nepal, often photographing in the bazaars with a trick Minolta camera. In New York he was already known as an expert metal craftsman and a designer of jewels. Oppi Untracht died last year after many years of residence in Finland. There he produced a bilingual English/Swedish catalogue of an exhibition of part of his collection of metal vessels from South Asia (*Skimrande Metall/ Metal Marvels.*, Borga 1993). Although he had no close connection with this country, Untracht left his own pieces of British Raj silver to the British Museum, where they are now more justly appreciated. (SD)

*2008 Mapin Publishers, Ahmedabad ISBN 0944142435 Rs3,000 pp223

Mrs D'Silva's Detective Instincts and the Shaitan of Calcutta Glen Peters

Calcutta in the Swinging Sixties forms the backdrop for a murder mystery that is liberally spiced with a heady mixture of corruption, politics, nostalgia and romance. The twists and turns of the plot as the story unfolds are unpredictable. Even the main characters are complex and the author uses the story line skillfully to explore both the strengths and weaknesses of human nature. The reader is eased into the story via a vignette of a middle class Anglo-Indian picnic and I was reminded of my own childhood in 1960s London and the Reunions we attended. However, any nostalgic reminiscences on the part of the reader are rapidly dispelled by the discovery of the body! Some of the traditions, myths and recipes mentioned will strike a chord with Anglo-Indian readers and I am sure will provide for animated debate as to whose *biryani* recipe is best and whether or not the Anglo-Indian accent derives from the Welsh valleys!

But there is also a portrayal of the darker side of Calcutta – squalid, vice-ridden and dangerous. A Calcutta where desperate mothers abandon their children to be brought up by Christian orphanages. A Calcutta whose student population was turning to Communism and terrorist tactics to bring about a new order, in which women were also flexing their political muscle. I enjoyed the story and would definitely recommend it as something to settle down to read on a long train journey or whilst enjoying a sundowner (or two) in front of the fire. (GC)

2009 Parthian ISBN 978-1-906998-01-1 £8.99 pp331

Oxford Dictionary of Hinduism WJ Johnson

This Oxford University Press publication is a companion volume to *A Dictionary of Buddhism*, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. At the very outset it needs to be said that it is an absolutely splendid compilation by Dr WJ Johnson of the University of Cardiff and encompasses, inter alia, a chronology, commencing circa 2,500 BC, some 2,800 entries, eg from Abhasvaras (a class of 64 deities attendant on Shiva) to Zoroastrianism, with biographical details for key thinkers, both Indian and Western including Dr BR Ambedkar and Sir William Jones, and also accompanying appendices and maps, a pronunciation guide and principal sources and suggested further reading.

Covering all the major Hindu practices, festivals, beliefs, deities, sacred sites and religious texts, this is the most comprehensive Hinduism dictionary in this genre. With its ambit covering 3,500 years of Hinduism from the religion's early conceptions to Hinduism in the twenty-first century, this new A to Z on Hinduism acknowledges the historical interplay between Hindu traditions and others, e.g. Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam. Hinduism, however, is more than a religion, it is a way of life. In this publication 'Hindu' is correctly defined as 'a word derived from Persian, Greek and Muslim renderings of the Sanskrit term for the river Sindhu (subsequently known as the Indus, designating the population to the east of that river)'. It could also be said, in the reviewer's opinion, that the Persians had an inability to pronounce the letter 'S' at the beginning of a word and therefore the country east of the river, essentially subcontinental India, became Hind and the people Hindus, Sindhu being the Persian word for a boundary stream.

Elements of Vedic mythology, which have been most significant for later Hinduism, will be found here. Many minor deities had to be omitted for compactness. Of the thousands of Puranic myths, only those have been retold that have some further ritual, theological or devotional significance.

While gurus and acharyas are ubiquitous and their hagiographies immense, they too have been filtered, essentially for their historical influence. Some recent and living gurus have been given entries. Not every temple complex has been described, the criteria for inclusion being their cultic or historical importance. Maps have been provided showing the approximate locations of the major sites mentioned. In the words of the compiler 'it would be absurd to claim for this dictionary, as the great Sanskrit epic Mahabharata does for itself that "what is here may be found elsewhere; what is not here is nowhere at all"'. Instead he makes the far more circumspect claim that 'while much, if not all, of what is here may indeed be found elsewhere, usually in greater detail and at much greater length, the reader may also, in the first instance, find it convenient to have a concentrated version available in a single volume'. In this he has succeeded admirably. A finely textured compilation encompassing the vast subject of Hinduism, not only for readers and academics, but also for students and adherents of Hinduism. Intellectually a masterpiece. (SLM)

2009 Oxford University Press, Oxford 978-0-19-861025-0 £30.00 pp384

Farewell Raj Tony Hearne

This book seems at first glance to be simply the reminiscences of an old soldier who served in India up to Independence in 1947 and witnessed the events that resulted from the partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan. The title is fairly anodyne too, with little hint of what is to come, but in fact this is one of the most haunting stories to have emerged, sixty-two years later, about what it was like to live through Partition. The author is from an Anglo-Indian family, and he hints briefly at what the end of British rule meant for his community, unsure of what life would be like in independent India, but equally unsure of their welcome, or otherwise, in England. Tony Hearne was educated firstly at a convent school, and then at St George's College, Mussoorie, where he admits he was a 'poor scholar', but that the devoted attention of the Patrician Brothers 'saved him from being a total dullard'. He must have joined the Indian Army immediately on leaving college and he was a sergeant in Calcutta during the riots of 1946, attached to the Port Ordnance Detachment. The horrors of communal violence there were to be a prelude to his extraordinary and terrifying journey across the suddenly divided subcontinent. With Independence approaching, Hearne found himself a job with British Petroleum in Kuwait, and he was told to return home to Lahore to wait for further instructions. He was discharged from the Army in Calcutta, and boarded a train at Howrah Station on 17 August 1947. Expecting nothing

more than a familiar, if tedious, journey across the plains of northern India on a train containing a comforting number of British officers, he set out. What happened next becomes a nightmare narrative. The coaches with the British officers on board were detached, the train was subsequently ambushed, and an escape to the supposed safety of Ambala Station was to enter the very mouth of hell. Few will read this story without becoming completely caught up in it. It is both high adventure and dreadful, factual reporting. Hearne had to dig deep into the precepts instilled into him by the Patrician Brothers, and some he was forced to violate. The horror of a million, perhaps two million people trying to move from India to the new country of Pakistan, and vice versa, is here caught in small incidents – women and children dying of dehydration in the back of a truck, an Indian soldier burning to death, a terribly mutilated girl put out of her misery. This is not easy reading. It can't have been easy writing either. It seems churlish to note that Chapter One should have been properly proof-read. There are mistakes with simple names like Gandhi, Jinnah and Attlee. But don't let this put you off. This is a story which has been long in the making, but still has the power to shock, more than half a century on. (RLJ)

2009 Tommies Guides, Menin House, 13 Hunloke Avenue, Esatbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8UL ISBN 978-0-9555698-6-9 £11.95 or £13.50 including postage. pp160

The Oxford Companion to Modern Warfare in India: From the Eighteenth Century to Present Times Kaushik Roy

With over three hundred printed pages (text in double columns) available to him from his Editor (and priced at over Rs3,000), the author has produced a comprehensive well-documented Oxford Companion, based on a considerable amount of source material, that not only covers conflict in the Indian subcontinent and South Asia, but also includes, by circumstance, parallel military developments in Europe and other parts of the world. Inevitably there have been other such military overviews as is evident from the extensive Select Bibliography, though neither the reviewer's book *Fidelity and Honour: the History of the Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Viking New Delhi 1993 and OUP New Delhi 1999) nor *Soldiers of the Raj* (National Army Museum, London, 1997) are mentioned, where the concerned editors were not so liberal.

In his narration, the author includes various personalities in India's military tradition, eg Shivaji, the Maratha warrior and king. As gleaned from this magnum opus, the expanding trade empire of the British East India Company

and concomitant global power, brought global problems for the British, most notably the enmity of the Spanish, French, Chinese and then of the Germans. With ultimately an international empire thus acquired, and then to be maintained, the British needed 'a fire-fighting force', hence the reliance on Indian troops until Independence, from, for example, Manila in 1764, China in 1840, then some sixty other countries, to Italy and Greece in 1943/45.

The book encompasses the various Indo-Pakistan conflicts and the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. The longer a war went on, the harder it became to stop. Often not one of the competing parties could muster enough strength to force a conclusion, until a state of exhaustion was reached after considerable carnage. At such junctures, India's manpower was useful. The First World War was worse than the First Afghan War and the accompanying surrender at Kabul; the Second World War and the accompanying surrender at Singapore was worse in extent than the First World War. In terms of the loss of human life, even more awful were the diseases that followed armies around, eg typhus fever and malaria in the case of the Burma campaign in World War Two. Indian troops were employed in all these wars. These wars, subcontinental or international, live on in the collective memory of today's Indian Army, though for any sentient being war is hell, as postulated by General William Tecumseh Sherman in 1879.

The author also deals with issues like insurgency in the north east of India and Indian naval developments, which usually tend to be overlooked. The author as a Professor of History in a Kolkata College combines a wide knowledge of international military history, with considerable insight into the military history of India. Keeping track of the complex narration is facilitated by the abundance of maps, tables, illustrations and appendices. This book is thus vast in scope, and full of fascinating military information, reminding us of the continuities in the Indian military tradition. Although not always an easy read, it is unfailingly informative. A very commendable effort for which both the publisher and author are deserving of praise for the quality of production, the former in particular for commissioning it. Its structure takes in many facets and weaves multiple strands into a tribute to the Indian military tradition. What comes through the generations of military writing on this subject in this work is the inevitable courage of the Indian soldier over the centuries. This is both an uplifting and sobering account. (SLM)

*2009 Oxford University Press, New Delhi 978 0 19 569888 6 Rs3220 pp326

Mussoorie Across the Ages Ganesh Saili

A visitor to today's Mussoorie will be confronted by an aerial ropeway from the Mall to Gun Hill, constructed by the local municipality in the 1960s. Gun Hill is where this hill station's water reservoir lies. While the view of the Himalayan ranges is stupendous, weather permitting, no visitor today remembers how it all began. This work fills this gap and is a compilation of delightful word pictures, introduced evocatively by Ganesh Saili, from 19th century books and early 20th century travelogues. Mussoorie was first settled in the 1820s, with Landour, originally a former British convalescent depot, set up slightly later. This is not the author's only book on this hill station (now in Uttarakhand, northern India). There had been an earlier collaboration with BACSA writer Ruskin Bond in *Mussoorie & Landour: Days of Wine and Roses* (1992).

Briefly, in order of appearance, the authors include: Baillie Frazer, 'one of the earliest records by any European to visit the Garhwal Himalayas in the 1820s': Fanny Parkes, 'the wife of a junior English civil servant. She arrived in India in 1822 and spent 24 years travelling and falling in love with the sheer magic of India': Emily Eden, 'the sister of Lord Auckland, the Governor General of India between 1836 and 1842 who accompanied him on overland trips from Calcutta to Simla.' In March 1838 Lady Emily came to Mussoorie, and her letters to her sister Fanny from the Upper Provinces were published in 1866. The first guide book was written by John Northam, in 1884, the 'Guide to Mansuri, Landour, Dehra Dun and the Hills, north of Dehra' (Mansuri was the original name for Mussoorie.) This was followed by F. Bodycot's 'Guide to Mussoorie' (1907) with a sampling of pictures by the celebrated photographer Julian Rust, whose studio the reviewer had visited when in school in Mussoorie in 1928, before Rust moved to Ceylon in the mid 1930s.

The great attraction about Ganesh Saili, apart from the zest of his writing about Mussoorie, is his love for his subject. He luckily lives there and teaches at the post-graduate college in this beautiful hill station. The reviewer also is a Mussoorie aficionado, because he spent halcyon days there as a boarder in two different schools (Hampton Court Convent and St George's College) in the years 1928-1940. According to the Doon Gazetteer of 1907 there were altogether nine boys' and five girls' schools in Mussoorie the first being established in the 1840s. Today there are many more, the salubrious climate being conducive to studying, particularly for the children of the Indian diaspora in South East Asia and the Middle East. (Though not known to the author at the time, Oak Grove, the Railways-run School, set up in 1888, has been nominated as a World Heritage site, the

first time a school in India has been so short-listed.) The names of many of the estates/houses, like Kenilworth, are seemingly drawn from the pages of Sir Walter Scott, reflecting a nostalgia amongst the early English settlers for their homeland; also Waverley (now a girls' school complex, shown in an advertisement of 1907 reproduced on page 192) and Hampton Court (also now a school which the reviewer attended from 1928-1933). The Irish settlers named their houses or estates after those in Ireland, like Mullingar, while the Scots prefixed their residences with 'Glen' or suffixing them with 'burn'. Mussoorie inevitably had its quota of eccentrics among its residents. The travel writer Lowell Thomas gives us an evocative encapsulation in 'The Land of the Black Pagoda' (1936), 'at the hotel in Mussoorie where they ring a separation bell at dawn so that the pious may say their prayers and the impious go back to their own beds.' If this enchanting collation has a flaw, it is that it lacks photographs, as also an index of the landmarks and sites, of this beautiful hill station of Mussoorie and Landour, despite Mussoorie having had 'the largest congregation, 40 shops and more of photowallahs, of any hill station in the world'. (SLM)

*2009 Rupa & Co. New Delhi ISBN 978-81-291-1465-5 Rs150 pp146

Respected Memsahibs: an anthology ed. Mary Thatcher

In the late 1960s, even before BACSA was founded, Mary Thatcher began collecting accounts from British women who had been in India before 1947. Initial contacts were made through the Indian Civil Service (ICS) Association, which still flourishes today. During the mid 1970s, as Archivist at the Centre of South Asian Studies in Cambridge, Mary Thatcher began preparing this material for publication, using letters, memoirs, and recorded interviews. She met many of the women face to face and noted that 'Raj hospitality was well known, which the years since 1947 have not diminished'. The start date of the project is significant. Firstly, of course, there was a considerable number of women then still alive in the late 1960s, with first hand experience of life under the British Raj, as they followed their ICS husbands from post to post. Secondly, there was virtually no interest in Raj life at that period. It had neither been glamorised, as was to happen later with films like 'Jewel in the Crown', nor had the denigration of the colonial experience started, which was to climax with the academic assault led by Edward Said. The ICS wives spoke honestly about their experiences and the idea of scoring political points would have been completely alien to them. They were there to support their husbands. The one unmarried woman listed here, Miss Muriel McKnight, went to stay with family friends who moved in high Indian Civil Service circles. Some later became BACSA members. Mary Thatcher's own background had Raj connections, and she herself had visited India in 1937, something which probably allowed her to interact

sympathetically with her subjects. She described them as often living in remote places with few or no luxuries, where electricity was a bonus, not a right. The fact that there were plenty of servants had to be balanced against the lack of things now taken completely for granted, like antibiotics. Water and milk always had to be boiled. Letters from home (Britain) still took weeks to arrive. Books were hard to come by, but there was a great deal of entertaining, with concerts and amateur dramatics.

'Also, they often came from very sheltered backgrounds, they were middle class, they had all been to school, and mostly they had left about 16 or 17. None of them had been to University.... I think a lot of them had been educated by governesses; they were what one would call uneducated, in that they hadn't had a formal academic education; they were quite cultured in other ways. And they didn't take an awful lot of interest in Indian art and archaeology.' There are some generalisations here. It is thanks to Lady Olive Crofton that we have the *List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in the Central Provinces & Berar*, published in Nagpur in 1932 and a small number of women made time to paint and sketch their surroundings. But what these women did have was fortitude in the face of difficulties which would have felled most of today's generation. Mrs Margery Hall, for example, writes so vividly of the horror of being posted to Jacobabad, surely one of the most unhygienic places on earth, that one simply wouldn't want to go there even today. ('And the nights were more terrible than the days' is the heading of one section in her chapter.)

Having to bring up small children in these conditions demanded constant vigilance, and was often the reason that sons and daughters were sent home to Britain at the age of seven or so. But there were good times too. It was a gilded, if busy, life for Mrs Christian Showers, who had to supervise the arrangements for a Viceregal visit to Jaipur in 1909. And life, in camp, described by Lady Lyle Maxwell whose husband was a keen lepidopterist and photographer, was delightful - 'a mixture of absolute peace and wildness...so perfectly calm and yet one knew one was in some of the biggest jungles...'. It is from the Maxwell collection that many of the illustrations in this book are taken - cosy views of the interiors of bungalows, with the obligatory tiger and leopard skin rugs on the floor and rattan furniture, as well as mountain views. It would have been nice to learn a little more about the later lives of these women, especially as we share their intimate thoughts in these pages. This is a unique book, and the Centre's staff who finally brought it to publication are to be congratulated, as is the compiler herself, Mary Thatcher. (RLJ)

2009 Centre of South Asian Studies, Laundress Lane, Cambridge CB2 1SD.
ISBN 978 1 84382 214 1 £18.00 including postage pp334

Notes to Members

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

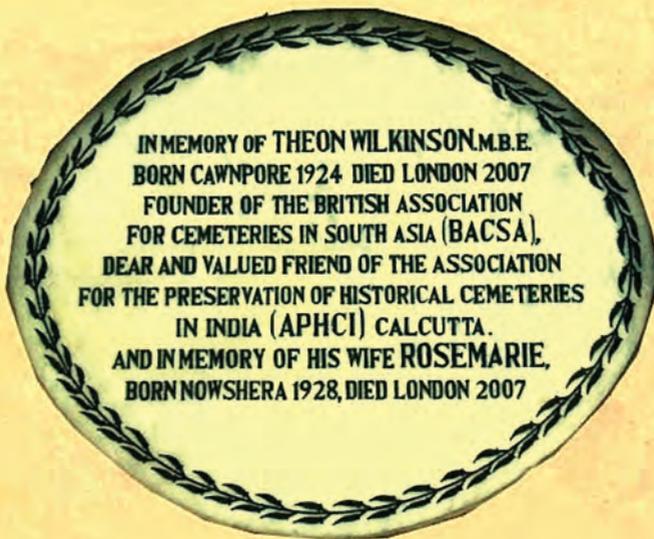
If wishing to contact a fellow-member whose address is not known to you, send the letter c/o Hon Secretary who will forward it unopened.

If planning any survey of cemetery MIs, either in this country or overseas, please check with the appropriate Area Representative or the Hon Secretary to find out if it has already been recorded. This is not to discourage the reporting of the occasional MI notice, which is always worth doing, but to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

***Books from India:** where prices are given in rupees, these books can be obtained from Mr Ram Advani, Bookseller, Mayfair Buildings, Hazratganj PO Box 154, Lucknow 226001, UP, India. Mr Advani will invoice BACSA members in sterling, adding £4.00 for registered airmail for a slim hardback, and £3.00 for a slim paperback. Sterling cheques should be made payable to Ram Advani. Catalogues and price lists will be sent on request. Email: radvanilko@gmail.com

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

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*The newly erected memorial plaque in South Park Street Cemetery, Calcutta
(see page 35)*