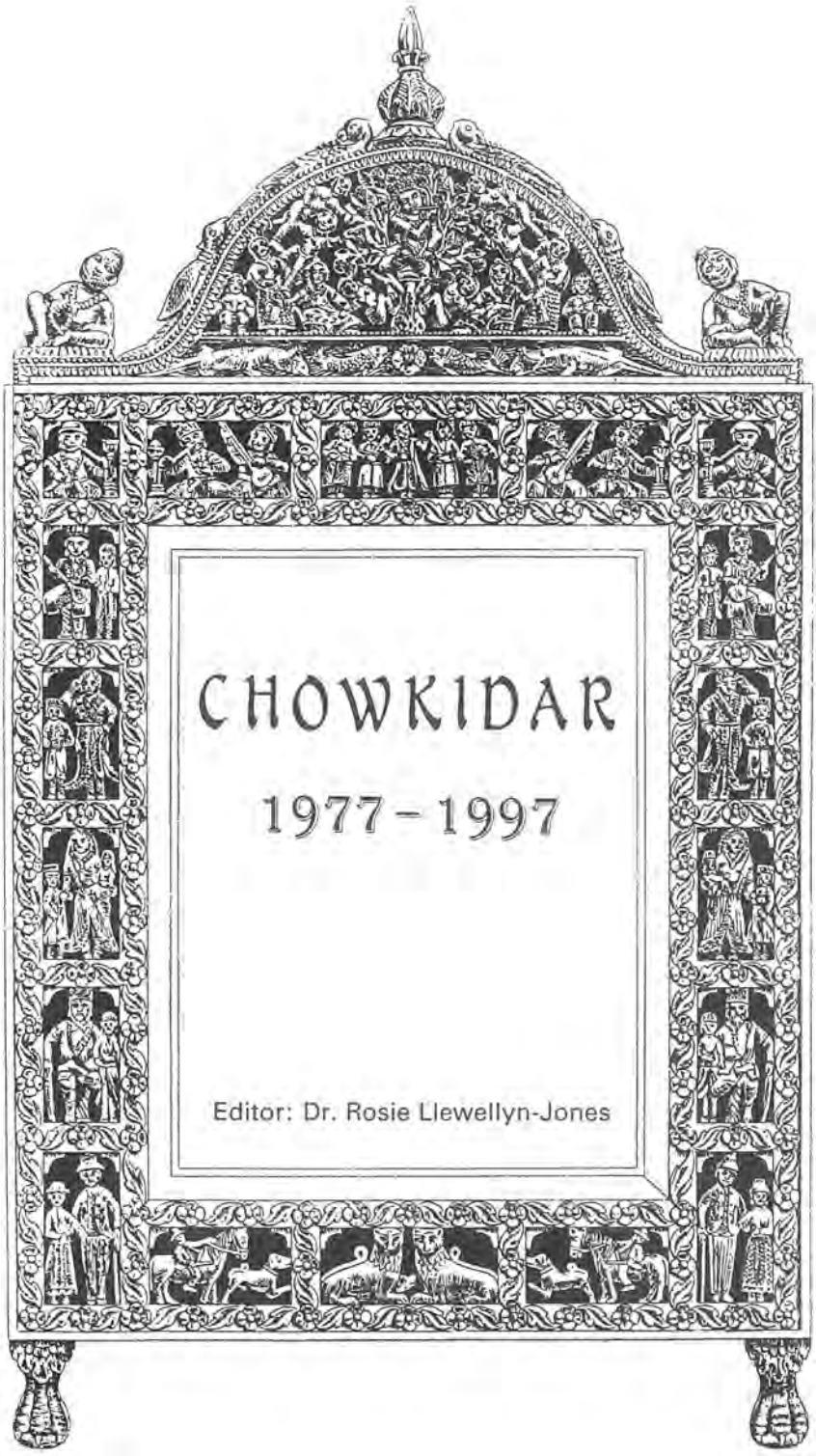
British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA)

CHOWKIDAR

1977 – 1997

Editor: Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones



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Foreword

1997 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the transfer of power in India and Pakistan and, not inappropriately, the twentieth anniversary of BACSA's foundation.

BACSA is no mere exercise in nostalgia. Its original and primary role is, of course, the preservation of the cemeteries and memorials of those who, over three centuries, contributed to the relationship in various forms and at various levels between Britain and the East. BACSA, which has always depended on the energy, enthusiasm and generosity of its members and wellwishers was formed initially by the vision of Theon Wilkinson and those he enlisted.

But also, almost imperceptibly, it has become a great repository of history, personal and family, of those who played a part - and whose descendants are often still playing some part - over the centuries. In this, *Chowkidar*, under its remarkable Editor, and with its widening web of contributors, has played a key role, as have the books which BACSA has published. They do not attempt to compete with the great works of history, but they do provide a wealth of fascinating vignettes, of footnotes as it were, which add depth, and substance and colour.

Service in the East did not at the time, I have often felt, generate sufficient literary work, if the reporter on the staff of the Lahore *Civil and Military Gazette* will forgive me. Perhaps service in that vast field was primarily for men of action, with little time for contemplation. But *Chowkidar*, with its wealth of recollection and reminiscence and, today, of fiction, will, I hope, provide the stimulus and raw material for further literary work before the vision of the Raj has faded from view.

Lord Rees

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How BACSA Began

The opening scene is in the Lecture Room of the National Army Museum on 30 March 1977 when the title and constitution of BACSA was formally approved at a General Meeting; the facilities at the Museum being provided thanks to Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer. There had been an inaugural meeting of 'Friends' at the Cavalry & Guards Club six months earlier, to agree on the desirability and framework of such an Association; the facilities being provided thanks to Major General GM Dyer ('Moti' to all who knew him), the President of the Indian Army Association and Chairman of the Indian Cavalry Officers Association.

Two decades have elapsed and it is timely to repeat our thanks to these great men who lent their unswerving support when BACSA was still very much an infant organisation with no funds and no membership base. It was a great act of faith on their part and a public endorsement of the need for urgent action to preserve and record the monuments to our ancestors in South Asia.

But before the birth of BACSA there had been a long gestation period, if I may continue the metaphor. The seed of the idea had been taking hold of various people with long connexions with the East; for instance Vincent Davies with Bihar, Bangladesh and Bengal; Robin McGuire with Burma, reconstructing the records so devastated during the war; and Major Alan Harfield with South-East Asia, Hong Kong and Pakistan; each beavering away in their own spheres and with BACSA now acting as a catalyst.

In my own case it was in the summer of 1972 when I took our son on a trip to India to mark his twenty-first birthday, retracing the steps of three generations of the family. One of the things that struck us was the appalling condition of many of the European cemeteries, particularly in Calcutta where a chance encounter with Dr Maurice Shellim exposed the desperate situation of the great South Park Street Cemetery. Maurice became another of the prime movers in the foundation of BACSA and its 'sister' organisation in Calcutta, 'The Association for the Preservation of Historical Cemeteries in India' (APHCI in short).

For three years I collected information on cemeteries and tried to enlist the support of the interested parties - the State, the Churches, the British High Commission, the local community and relatives. I outlined

to them a four point plan: a) to preserve a few of the historically important cemeteries as part of South Asia's heritage; b) to turn decaying and 'abandoned' cemeteries in cities to social uses; c) to record all *sources* of information on cemeteries and inscriptions for historical and genealogical purposes, and - most importantly - d) to publish a book to draw attention to the urgent need for action, the inspiration for *Two Monsoons*. This document was dated May 1974 and the book was launched at the inaugural meeting two and a half years later.

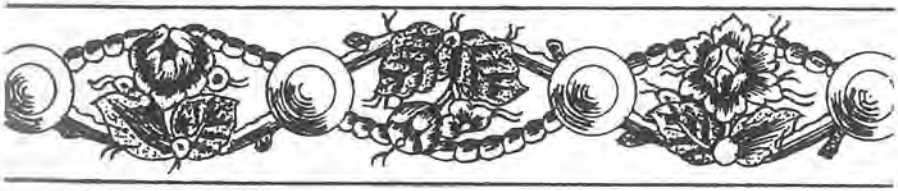
The reason for dwelling on these early recollections is to stress the involvement of many members without whom BACSA would hardly have got off the ground. I felt - as I wrote at our tenth anniversary and now repeat for new members - like the paddler of a small canoe following a distant star through unknown waters and being unexpectedly escorted and speeded on my way by vessels of all sizes going in the same direction. I was invited to the House of Lords to meet Lord Gore-Booth who, when Ambassador to Burma, said 'It would be a fascinating job rescuing for posterity the surviving evidence of the British sojourn in Burma; as if someone in AD 500 had made a proper archaeological survey of Roman Britain'; to the Commons to confer with the (then) Rt Hon Peter Rees and to the Foreign Office to explain my intentions. I received a summons to tea with Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer who was, I think, a little taken aback at first by the beard I was then sporting but soon showed his enthusiasm for the project and offered much practical assistance and advice.

It was not only the battleships and heavy cruisers that were escorting me - please now forgive a nautical metaphor! - but a fleet of small boats of all sizes flying the flags of their particular interests in South Asia. To the fore were the Indian Civil Service, represented by Vincent Davies who was to become our second Chairman in succession to 'Moti' Dyer; the Indian Political Service, represented by Sir John Cotton who later became our second President, in succession to Lieut. General Sir John Worsley, and brought with him Indian connexions in an unbroken line, father to son, from the 18th century; the Services, both British and Indian Army; the Indian Navy; the Indian Police and other Government Officers; the Business Houses, the Planters, the Churches and the local residents who expressed an interest. Enormous kindness was shown by many people in different ways, all directed towards putting BACSA firmly on

the map. By concentrating on the lives of individual men and women who left their bones in a land which many of them grew to love - whether India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka or Malaysia - an identity of interest developed which transcends political, racial or religious boundaries.

BACSA now stands as a meeting ground, a camaraderie of members from all corners of the world - as a glance at our membership list, now nearing 2,000 from 38 countries, reveals - imbued with a common interest in the European involvement in South Asia over the last three centuries and a desire to take some positive action in the present and future for the 'preservation, conversion and registration of former European cemeteries in South Asia', BACSA's official sub-title.

This twenty-year landmark in our history provides a good opportunity to recall the names of the founding fathers (and mothers!) who formed the first Council: Sir John Cotton, Miss Joan Lancaster (Director of the India Office & Records), Sir Andrew Noble, Mr Peter (now Lord) Rees, Aileen Viscountess Slim and Sir Gerald Templer; and the Executive Committee: Mr WA Barnes (Educationist, representing the Indian Government Officers Association), Mr John Comyn (representing the South Asia Church Aid Association), Col Henry Cotton (brother of Sir John and representing the Indian Army Association), Mr Vincent Davies (representing the ICS), Mrs Elizabeth McKay (photographer and regular tourist), Mr John Rayment (representing the Federation of Family History Societies), Mr SG Speer (representing the Business Houses - James Finlay), and Mr George Walker (representing the Indian Police). The Chairman was Major General GM Dyer and the Treasurer Mrs Molly Henry (widow of an Indian Army Officer in the Mahrattas). The Secretary, as you may have guessed, the writer of this piece, Theon Wilkinson.



Resuscitating the Raj

It is hard to believe now in the mid-1990s how hostile the British media and British academia were to all notions of Empire a quarter of a century ago. This hostility wasn't limited to the concept of imperialism but extended to all those who in one way or another had been involved in running the empire. It was British India that loomed largest in the public mind and it was the 'Koi hais' and 'Mems' who got most of the stick. This easy targeting reached its nadir with the bizarre BBC TV series 'The British Empire'. Being a little strapped for cash, the programme-makers recreated the 1857 Mutiny on Bagshot Common: the scene consisted of one cannon, one Pandey lashed to same, a gunner, one memsahib mounted sidesaddle on a horse and lots of smoke. To much rattling of drums, the wretched Pandey was blown to pieces and the memsahib's dress drenched in blood. That was it: all the fault of the wicked English memsahib.

Having been educated in England during the post-war years of decolonisation, I found it easy to laugh along with Malcolm Muggeridge when he mocked the blimps and buffoons who had for so long oppressed the Indian peoples. Yet it seemed that my own father was one of these oppressors. All those first years of my childhood in India when I'd so often seen him receiving deputations of the local tribespeople on the front verandah, listening and talking to them in their own dialects, or when he'd gone away for month long tours in the hills - was that what he'd been doing? Oppressing them? Somehow it didn't quite seem to fit the bill.

In the early 1970s I had the good fortune to meet a mild-mannered genius named Michael Mason, one of the unsung heroes of BBC radio broadcasting in its golden years. For some time Michael had been trying to persuade his masters to allow him to put together a series of programmes on British India. He was told that the subject was of no interest. But he kept badgering away until eventually he was given permission to do a limited number of, I think, three programmes. The idea behind the series was breathtakingly simple - and novel. There would be no judgements made; 'survivors' of the Raj would tell the story of their lives in their own words. Michael hired me, as chela to his guru, to collect the interviews.

To start with, we faced hostility and suspicion. A well-known peer of the realm wrote us a blisteringly offensive letter questioning our motives. But interview by interview the walls began to fall. Personal

recommendation was our chief weapon: A suggested we talk to B; B agreed to talk because we had a chit from A, and he recommended C - and so it went on, round the Home Counties and then on into the Shires and beyond.

There were false starts. I lacked interview technique so to begin with a very distinguished BBC foreign correspondent accompanied me to show me how to comport myself. D***** was a household name at the time but had disgraced himself overseas (an offence that today would cause no one even to lift an eyebrow) and had been brought home while the burra sahibs decided what to do with him. He was an immensely dignified man, both in manner and dress, who walked abroad wearing both a bowler and a magnificent astrakhan coat with moleskin collar. Almost our first interviewee was an elderly lady who lived in a small village near Chobham. We had difficulty finding the place and arrived a little late. A fierce-looking woman was waiting for us outside her house 'You're *very* late!' she exclaimed as we approached, D***** marching magnificently in front and I trailing behind carrying the large Uher tape-recorder. She flung open her front door and pointed under the stairs: 'You can get to work right away.' Then she opened the door to a tiny cupboard under the stairs and waved us in. D*****, who was a tall man, entered and crouched there for a moment, at a loss for words.

'Perhaps,' he said eventually, 'Perhaps we might go into your sitting room and have a chat.'

'A chat?' said the lady. 'What an earth do you want to chat for?'

D***** climbed out of the cupboard and drew himself up to his full height: 'Madame, we are from the BBC.'

'Nonsense,' said the old lady. 'You're from Rentokil.'

Most interviews went rather better. The oldest interviewee was 98-year old Grace Norie, born in Roorkee in 1876, who had left India in 1919 - just a year after our youngest interviewee was born. That was Terence Milligan, better known 'Spike', whose photographic memory enabled him to recall in breathtaking detail the Armistice Day parade he witnessed as a babe in arms. The most distinguished interviewee was undoubtedly Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who had retired to Morocco after being very shabbily treated by Mountbatten and others. The Auk had always refused to give interviews and winning him over was a great coup for us, but I remember noting with astonishment that the great warrior, who had

had his first Frontier skirmish in 1905, was shaking like a leaf when our interview began: he was as nervous as I was! Sadly, his memory had already begun to go but I particularly recall his bitterness over the way he felt India had been betrayed by British politicians. 'The English never cared' he said. 'I don't think they ever took any interest in India. I think they used it.' There were tears in his eyes when he spoke of the hardest thing that he had ever had to do - presiding over the break-up of the Indian Army: 'You felt your life's work was finished, you see, when what you had been working for all along was just torn in two pieces.'

It would be invidious to pick out any more of these 60 or so kind persons who so trustingly allowed us to trawl through their memories. Many became honoured friends and most are now departed. But my deepest salaams to them all. The fruit of their generosity was *Plain Tales From the Raj*. It soon became clear to both Michael and I that we were uncovering an exceptionally rich treasure-trove of buried experience. By fierce advocacy Michael Mason was able to extend the radio series to six programmes, first broadcast in the autumn of 1974, while I concentrated on assembling the interviews into a book. Both series and book were, I have to say, smash hits. A chord had been struck. Listener response to the radio series was phenomenal and resulted in a second series of radio programmes being produced as *More Plain Tales from the Raj*, while over Christmas 1975 the book *Plain Tales from the Raj* soared to Number Two in the Non-Fiction Best Sellers list - second only to Edward Heath's *Sailing*! Over the years the book has sold something in excess of 400,000 copies - to the great financial benefit of the BBC and the publishers and of no financial benefit at all to those who contributed to it. The radio series was very soon followed by a BBC TV series, *Tales of the Raj*, which mirrored the radio programmes in many respects but with a viewing audience that was ten times as large. Some reviewers sneered but the public loved it. Fashion magazines began to put models in Raj costumes and backgrounds and Indian restaurants began to add 'Raj' to their names!

What I learned from this public response and from many hundreds of letters from viewers, listeners and readers was that India was sunk deep into the subconscious of the British people. You had only to scratch at an ordinary British family to find someone with an Indian connection: an uncle who'd served as an ordinary soldier on the Khyber, a great-aunt

who'd been a missionary, a grandfather who had gone out to join the Forest Service. It was deeply imbedded, but the link had always been there, waiting to be rediscovered. What the country learned - over a period of time as attitudes changed was that, while the British may have had no more right to go out to India and order the Indians about any more than the Romans had in ordering the British Celts about, the men and women who did so were ordinary mortals. And that what they did there was not a cause for shame but something worth remembering. *Plain Tales* was a milestone, I believe. It was when the British Raj ceased to be politics and became part of our history.

Charles Allen

Calcutta's Graves of History

Cities like to boast of their hoariness but Calcutta is young and it is a matter of some historical significance that it is the only city in India in which the tomb of its founder (1693) has been preserved. In a corner of what was the English trading centre's first burial ground that once stretched down to the Hooghly river and is now a part of St. John's Churchyard on Council House Street, Job Charnock's octagonal mausoleum, rather oriental in appearance, is the oldest extant brick and mortar structure. Begum Frances Johnson, grandmother of the Earl of Liverpool, who outlived four husbands and chose to stay on as the Grande Dame of 18th century Calcutta, died in 1812 at the age of 87 years and was buried in St. John's Churchyard. Chief Commander of the Fleet Vice Admiral Watson, the saviour of Calcutta after the siege in 1756 also lies here. A late entrant to the churchyard was Lord Brabourne, Governor of Bengal who died in office in 1921. Lady Canning's ornate funerary mosaic sculpture surmounted by a cenotaph and carved headstone were removed from Barrackpore Park and installed on the west side of the church. Her grave (1861) remains by the river with her Lord on horseback keeping vigil. The controversial Black Hole monument was also moved from Dalhousie Square to the churchyard.

Chapters of the early history of Calcutta are written on the gravestones in eleven Christian cemeteries within the city. Only the precise location of the Greek cemetery is unknown. The French, North Park Street and Old Mission cemeteries have now been built over, but some of the tablets have been re-sited in the South Park Street cemetery (1767-1790) through APHCI. BACSA's recent contribution is being used to renovate the gateway and porch through which visitors pass, some in search of their roots, others to spend an instructive and peaceful hour getting an insight into the lives of the men, women and children who came from distant shores to build a city and an empire.

Death was around the corner. Death was sudden. The causes for death inscribed in the older cemeteries - morte-de-chien as cholera was called, sunstroke, malaria, puerperal fever, shipwreck and often just living it up in an insalubrious climate - are a vivid revelation of the health and other hazardous conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries faced by those who lived and worked here. The number of small graves mark the many children who never grew up to see their motherland.

South Park Street Cemetery gatehouse, Calcutta. Newly restored, 1997

For reasons more of superstition than hygiene, people were buried on the outskirts of settlements and so it was in Calcutta. The Burial Ground Road, now Park Street, leading to South Park Street cemetery, was specially laid to facilitate funeral processions by torchlight after dark to the city's municipal limits marked by the Mahratta Ditch. The neo-classical funerary architecture - pyramids, pavilions and pagodas - created 'an Imperial city of the dead'.

Often there was a funeral with full military honours as when Sir John Clavering (1777), the Commander-in-Chief was buried there. Col. Monson (1776), a member of the Supreme Council and his wife Lady Anne, a great grand daughter of Charles II, the celebrated beauty, Elizabeth Barwell (1779), George Bogle (1781), the first British envoy to Tibet, Lt-Col. Robert Kyd, founder of the Botanical Gardens at Sibpur and Lt-Col. James Lillyman (1774), supervisor of the new Fort William and many others - master mariners and river pilots and those who died on the most treacherous Hooghly channel from the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta port, servants of the East India Company - are buried there. The striking pyramid is that of the linguistic genius, Sir William Jones (1794) who founded the Asiatic Society. One of the most interesting monuments resembling a temple rises over the grave of Maj-General Charles Stuart, known as 'Hindu Stuart'. And one that is much talked about is Rose Aylmer's (1800) spiral column wreathed in roses. The elegy by her lover, Walter Savage Landor was added much later. Each year on his birth anniversary, the famous 22-year old Anglo-Indian poet, HLV Derozio, leader of the Young Bengal movement is remembered in recitations and readings at his graveside by the Derozio Society. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's anniversary is also celebrated at the Lower Circular Road cemetery nearby where his admirers gather to recollect his contribution to Bengali poetry by introducing blank verse. In the Scottish Church cemetery (1820) on Karaya Road lies Rev. Lal Behari Day, well-known for his authorship of *Folk Tales of Bengal and Bengali Peasant Life*. These early writers heralded the Indo-British penmanship that has won the highest literary awards and has its niche in modern English writing.

The Scottish cemetery records the growth of Calcutta from its East India Company factory days around Tank Square to the political and commercial capital of British India. The Scots contribution to Calcutta's

mercantile and commercial scenes comes alive in the names engraved on the tombs - Macleod, Hamilton and Miller. Companies they headed are now Indianised. John Stewart, first secretary of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce is buried here.

The Scots presence in Calcutta became so forceful that they could afford to purchase another plot in 1820 of 14 bighas (4 1/2 acres) which was shared by other denominations, so that, true to Scottish thrift, they could reduce funeral expenses which they considered excessive in the English burial ground. Here 1,000 tombs and family vaults bear inscriptions of the city's early educationists - William Carey's and Pearce's families of the Baptist Mission, Grand Masters and past Masters of the first Masonic Lodge, Anchor and Hope, in the Indian Masonic Constitution. Separating the overgrowth, one discovers Calcutta circa 1850 peopled by guardians of the law, merchants, bankers, doctors and ironically Dr. Dwarka Nath Basu's three wives, all of whom died in childbirth, ship builders, tavern keepers, coach builders, river pilots, tailors, indigo and tea planters and jutewallahs of Angus and Meghna Jute Mills. Caleb B Ladd, the agent for the Ice House on Hare Street negotiated with captains of independent American ships calling at Calcutta with cargoes of ice and Baldwin apples, some of whose mortal remains are in the Scottish cemetery.

It was the practice that the benefactor of a Catholic church also endowed a burial ground for its parishioners and was buried within the church precincts. The Surah cemetery, 68 Beliaghata Road was endowed by Grace Elizabeth Shaw, the donor of the church of our Lady of Sorrows at Baitakhana, below the Sealdah flyover. The cemetery is largely filled with unmarked graves of people of modest means who served the city's daily needs like the East Bengal cooks, the Gomes whose light handed soufflés and pastries have a nostalgic flavour. On the other side of the same flyover and almost hidden by lean-to stalls is St. John's Church and a quiet well-kept cemetery. This 'asylum for departed Roman Catholics' was bought by Joseph Barretto, a Portuguese merchant for Rs.8,000 in 1785. Here lie in ordered plots the many nuns and priests who left their homes forever and are remembered by generations of students with love and reverence. Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity have a plot on Convent Road in the Entally cemetery of the Sacred Heart Church in Dharamtalla, originally donated by Dona Pascao De Sousa, née Barretto in 1834.

In the Armenian churchyard of St. Nazareth (1724) on Armenian Street lies the oldest gravestone (1630) in the city that has sparked off a controversy as to who were the first settlers - the Armenians or the English? An inscription on the tomb of Esahac Abrahamian explains that the cause of death was a fight with a lion in an organised sport in Calcutta 250 years ago. Later members of the wealthy Armenian community who in the early 20th century owned more than half of Calcutta, are buried in the area surrounding their church. Among them are AA Apcar and JC Galstaun, the Grand Old Man of the Turf whose horse 'Paddy's Darling' features in Rumer Godden's novel *The Dark Horse*. The Armenian cemetery is adjacent to the Lower Circular Road cemetery and many of the epitaphs are statements of worthy contributions to the building of the city they made their home.

The Bhowanipore cemetery (1782) was originally the Military and later Fort William Burial Ground. The first British regiments arrived in India about 1760 and by 1850 there were 40,000 British soldiers and 240,000 Indian sepoys. The hospital attached to the new Fort William cared for soldiers stationed in the Fort and those wounded in battles in other parts of India. They died like flies and were carried off with ranked ceremonial honours. The Chaplain was kept busy and a Burial Parade at the Padre's Godown, as the cemetery was called, was an everyday feature in a soldier's life. 'Don't die on a Wednesday', was the soldier's request to his wounded comrade for Thursday was a garrison holiday.

The registers dating back to 1826 resurrect the military scene in Calcutta. While commissioned officers like Maj. William Turner merited inscriptions of over a hundred words, foot soldiers and camp followers lay in unmarked graves in separate rows maintaining social and military distinction even in death.

The broken headstone of Lt. Walter L Dickens, second son of Charles Dickens, re-sited in the South Park Street cemetery through contributions raised from the Jadavpur University, English Department recognises India's many literary connections in the 18th and 19th centuries. HWM Thackeray, a surgeon in the Bengal Artillery was a forebear of William Makepeace Thackeray whose parents were married in St. John's church and who was born in Calcutta.

A large hedged-in area encloses a cemetery within a cemetery of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The tall Cross of Sacrifice

is the cynosure of the small uniform tablets arranged in long rows in parterres with no distinction of rank or religion. Later opened to civilians, career women like midwives, nurses, governesses and school teachers were buried here. Esther Leach, the Indian Siddons and star of the Calcutta Theatre died when her costume was set alight by the oil lamp footlights at the Sans Souci Theatre on Park Street in 1844 and was laid to rest here. 150 years later, Miss Helen Higgins MBE stayed on to run her school and was buried here.

Calcutta has become a safer place to live, work and visit be it as a tourist, a scholar or observer. It was unfortunate that the young indologist, David McCutcheon died while researching terracotta temples in West Bengal and his grave is inlaid with terracotta panels. Sheilah Rome and Pearson Surita, two founder members of APHCI are buried in the Bhowanipore cemetery.

Where have all the tablets gone in the Church Missionary Society's cemetery in north Calcutta near the Anglican Christ Church? One may stumble upon a simple marble slab bearing the inscription: Toru Dutt/ youngest daughter of Govin Chunder Dutt/ Born 4th March 1856/Died 30th August 1877. Her family was one of the many highly educated Indians who were converted sometimes at the cost of social ostracism and tremendous sacrifice. Some followed Alexander Dutt and were buried in the Scottish Cemetery; others bought plots in this cemetery. Toru Dutt lives on in a slim volume of poems and in letters written to her English friend, Mary Martin, giving a vivid description of the manners and mores of genteel Calcutta in the late 19th century.

There is a revival of interest in genealogies among young people especially those whose ancestors lived, worked and died away from home and were forgotten. APHCI receives many enquiries to locate graves which are then made the focus of the enquirer's visit to the City. With the growing ecological consciousness, cemeteries may be recognised as lungs of a city and South Park Street cemetery is indeed an example of how to preserve them.

Bunny Gupta and Jaya Chaliha

By this time Sue was working at the British Embassy in Pakistan, and any chance she had of escaping from Islamabad, she took advantage of the opportunity to visit cemeteries. Gradually she began to realise that other families may not be as fortunate as hers, that someone may not have taken the trouble to record the whereabouts of their memorials, or the condition they might be in. By 1981, it had been forty years since anyone had really taken time to visit the cemeteries and if they had it would have been on an individual basis only. Earlier this century, inscriptions had been recorded and published, but these tended to concentrate on the more senior officers and members of the administration. Armed with a list of some 184 sites which had been handed over by the British government in India in 1947, Sue resigned from the Foreign Office and began a full survey of all known British burial sites in Pakistan. The fieldwork of this project is now all but complete, only a few weeks short of the 50th Anniversary of Independence.

When asked how successfully she has achieved her objective, Sue replies positively: 'I was incredibly fortunate to begin this project when I did. There were still enough elderly local people who could remember where the British buried their dead, although at the beginning I sometimes ended up being directed to Muslim cemeteries. I have had nothing but enthusiastic support and help throughout the whole of the 15 years I have been visiting Pakistan. It must make me sound an incredibly slow worker, but some of the locations are very remote and it takes time to gain permission to visit them. Until the last couple of years, too, I had a job to sustain, and was only able to continue the research during periods of holiday. Other factors have drawn out the project, not least being the travel restrictions during the Gulf War, taking time out to do more comprehensive studies, and the number of locations being added to the original list of 184. Including battle monuments, regimental memorials and churches (of which there are about 80) the total figure is now in excess of 350. This increase is caused by inclusion of much older cemeteries which had long been abandoned even by the time of Independence in 1947, and by other individual graves not maintained by either PWD or MES. To give a definitive figure of how many people may have been buried on the North West Frontier is far from easy - I am only able, after all, to record inscriptions that are still legible. Headstones have fallen and been covered by

leaves or maybe mud washed into the cemetery during the monsoon; others may never have had any formal engraved headstone because of their isolation. I am pretty confident that 99.9% of all surviving inscriptions have now been recorded, and these number between 16-17,000. It would be pure guesswork, but if I had to put a figure on it, I would estimate that this probably represents 50-60% of the total number of actual burials.'

17,000 inscriptions is quite a substantial archive, added to which are a similar number she has recorded in cemeteries in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Burma and India. To find accommodation for nearly 40,000 has been no mean task, but the inscriptions have found a home on a computer database at the Empire and Commonwealth Museum, beside Temple Meads station in Bristol. Sue also maintains her own database of over 8,000 photographs, so it is safe to say that not many 'stones have been left unturned' in Pakistan. With the information already published (as well as the ecclesiastical records in the India Office Library), as comprehensive a record as is possible is now available to anyone who wishes to trace their families and ancestors.

One of the most satisfying aspects of her work, by her own estimation, is the pleasure derived from being able to respond to queries on the whereabouts of graves and the confirmation that the headstones still survive. As a result, some families have been able to make their own pilgrimages to visit them. Many other avenues of research have opened up as well - 'It may sound a gloomy way to spend your time, but had I not been studying the cemeteries, I would never have known about peshqabzs, and the Frontier Corps, battle monuments and the Heatstroke Express, the Faqir of Ipi and the Quetta Earthquake, mule trains and gricing..... and so much more. So many kind people both in Pakistan and Britain have guided me along the way, and so many of the extraordinary coincidences that have happened have been pure serendipity.

In Britain, people sometimes remember routes and towns by the hotels and pubs they have visited. In a similar fashion, I use the cemeteries in Pakistan! On occasions, there has been no record of there ever having been a cemetery and yet intuition told me otherwise. One such place was Bahawalpur, in southern Punjab. There simply had to be one, and having failed by asking locally, I contacted some friends in North Wales who put me on to someone in London and a further two visits later, I

found the cemetery. It contained one of the oldest inscriptions surviving in Pakistan: a Lieutenant Colonel who died on his way to join the Army of the Indus en route for the First Afghan War in 1838.' So much for intuition and perseverance!

Another entertaining anecdote concerns the burial place of the infant daughter of one of Ranjit Singh's French mercenary officers, General Allard. One quiet Friday morning in Lahore, accompanied by her overnight hosts and dogged determination, they set off for the Anarkali district of the city. They were a good half mile from their eventual destination and way off course, when quite by chance a young man on a motor bicycle passed by and enquired if he could help. 'We are looking for Kapurthala House, please'. 'No problem, follow me.' He imagined they were seeking out a member of the Pakistan cricket team who lived there. Rather sheepishly they admitted they were looking for the grave of a young girl buried in 1827. 'Oh, that is no longer in the grounds of Kapurthala House. A building has been built in the garden, but I know exactly where to find the grave.' Behind a block of flats and quite recently renovated and in excellent condition, was Marie Charlotte Allard's grave. One wonders what drew the motorcyclist to those BACSA members, on what would quite probably have been a totally fruitless search without his assistance?

In addition to recording everything that remains legible on the headstones, Sue draws up location maps of both where the graves are in the cemeteries, and where the cemetery is within the city. For her four BACSA publications *Peshawar Cemetery* (1988), *Peshawar Monumental Inscriptions II* (1991), *Quetta Monuments and Inscriptions* (1992), and *Rawalpindi Cemeteries and Churches* (1995) even more detailed plans have been made, pinpointing the exact locations of every grave. Her books have all been illustrated by her sister-in-law Diana with charming line drawings. Sue is currently working on a rather more comprehensive endeavour which will list all the sites of British burials within the Pakistan borders. Her preoccupation, however, is to try to complete the publication before the 50th anniversary of the founding of BACSA!

Quite a significant number of cemeteries no longer contain any legible inscriptions, and often telltale pieces of coping stone or marble or the faintest outlines of long demolished walls are all that remain. However, BACSA has been able to help with several restoration projects now, and

The Farrington tomb at Mussoorie demolished recently in a road-widening scheme

The Farrington tomb, Mussoorie, (top right hand above smaller bungalow)

local interest is beginning to grow in these historical sites. In addition to Jacobabad, contributions have been made to work in Bannu, Chilianwalla, Malakand, Manzai, Peshawar, Ramnuggar, Rawalpindi, and Risalpur. Sue claims to be relieved that the end of the travelling may soon be in sight. Each time she allows herself such a luxurious thought, someone casually remarks "But you must have seen....." or "Do you know about?" She has travelled by car and jeep, bus, train and aeroplane, and even by boat (to Manora, off Karachi). Accommodation has ranged from first class international-style hotels, through private homes (including wonderful earthwalled 19th century bungalows), to a charpoy and a bucket of water on a verandah. And she also claims to have hardly ever had an upset stomach!

'When I walked into my first cemetery in Peshawar in 1981, I realised that here, written on the headstones, was the whole history of the North West Frontier: members of the military, the administration, medical staff, clergy and missionaries, boxwallahs, and their wives and families - all were represented including a Master of Hounds and several who died from polo accidents and other sporting activities. The more cemeteries I looked at, the more I began to learn and understand the history I hadn't absorbed at school. More importantly, though, I realised what a remarkable historical, social, regimental, genealogical and personal resource was waiting to be recorded. Archaeologists struggle to interpret life from fragments they can unearth generations later - we were in an unique position to capture an unrepeatable period of British history before it too disappeared'. To highlight her almost obsessive belief in the need to record inscriptions, there is a personal sadness - Sue has recently learnt that the monument to her great great great uncle on the hillside near Mussoorie has been demolished in a roadwidening scheme. The gravestone in the faded photograph that started her off on this unusual mission has itself now gone forever.

BACSA's Book-anza 1981-1996

When I was asked to contribute an article about the twenty-six books which members of BACSA have published to date, I didn't foresee that quite such a cornucopia of goodies would come my way. But that is what it has proved to be. And first of all I feel that members who are just readers might wish me to put on record the extent of our gratitude and admiration for the amount of research, determination and hard work that must have gone into the preparation and writing of every single title. It has to be a 'labour of love' for the authors cannot, under BACSA's charitable status, profit financially from publication.

I also discovered that a panel of two (Editor and Secretary) was formed in October 1980 to select all manuscripts for publication, their recommendations to be approved by the Executive Committee. This panel has remained unchanged for sixteen years and is also responsible for the editing and proof-reading of each book. To them both, congratulations and thanks are surely due! It really is a splendid achievement and anyone with even a passing interest in the British Empire overseas will find among these volumes at least a few that are a pleasure to read. For those members with more than a passing interest I can honestly recommend the whole collection. You won't see its like again.

Confronted by a fairly considerable pile of reading matter, I decided to go from top to bottom, making notes as I went and placing the books in categories according to subject. The notes were duly made, but I soon found that categorisation by subject was no simple matter. Certainly each book has its parameters and its main topic is carefully defined in an introduction: the Indian Civil Service, the armed services, the police, planters, engineers, business men, forestry officers, particular regions or cities, genealogical memoirs, recollections of childhood and schooldays.

The one meaningful division I could make was between those books that are purely historical, that are centred around personalities of the past (for example, Begum Johnson, the mariner John Adolphus Pope, Major-General Sir John Malcolm, a memoir of the Ilberts) and those dependent for their very being on the authors' own personal recollections of India. The former category, while making valuable contributions to the British-in-India story, could have been written by other, equally diligent students of the subject. The latter category, however, includes most books and

The editorial team - Theon Wilkinson and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones at the BACSA bookstall, Hurlingham, 1996

these are to be specially treasured because the spirit that informs them is that of the individual writer whose personal selection of topic, people, places, events is particular to that writer. In other words, these books could only have been written exactly as they are by the person who wrote them. Each one makes an original, unique contribution (however small, fragmentary and idiosyncratic) to our knowledge of the British Raj and those involved in it. Because they are so individual, so autobiographical, they do jump around - between past and near-present, between youth and maturity, between the personal and the general, the adventurous and the humdrum, the experiences of the narrator and his/her family, friends, acquaintances, bosses and so on. It is this quality which makes them so readable and full of interest - but it also makes them difficult to categorise and, in most cases, probably precludes their being published commercially.

What so many of these BACSA books offer then is what has always been the focus of my abiding interest in history: not the great battles, not the sweeping government policies, not (usually) the public careers of the centre-stage personalities, but the manner in which ordinary people have been caught up in these processes, have their lives made or marred by them, how they coped on the particular spot at the particular time. And there are so many stories here about personal coping - with crises, separations, illnesses, risks, times of loneliness and loss, times of reunions and festival.

It would be invidious and presumptuous of me to make critical judgements about individual books; instead I'd like to remind you of the contents of the whole corpus by describing a few which admirably represent their kind. One of several contributions from 'the Heaven Born' is *Morning Drum* by John Christie. He joined the ICS in 1928, served first in Bengal, became Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and later served on the staff of three viceroys. His memoirs are pleasantly informal and graphic, including some cogent inside stories about the problems of Partition (he had great admiration for Mountbatten). He is also refreshingly enthusiastic about the twelve years after Independence when he and his wife remained in India enjoying the changed social climate, the exhilarating atmosphere of hope and promise of better things to come.

In contrast to this, but equally fascinating is *India: Served and Observed* by William and Mildred Archer. The Archers were unusually unconventional in their attitudes towards India, being determined to get to

know Indians socially and to learn as much as possible about them. 'Bill' Archer spent most of his ICS career in Bihar where his wife joined him and the two of them studied the languages and customs, the songs and dances of the region. Later they became internationally-known experts in the hitherto neglected subject of Indian art and Company paintings, the painting done by Indian artists for the British. Their excellently-illustrated story (supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography) is told with humour and understanding and suggests how much one could learn and appreciate, even if posted to the mofussil, by those who had energy, enthusiasm - but never enough time to play bridge!

The subject of life with the armed services in India is also well covered, at least for the officer class - the other ranks still wait their chronicler. A well-constructed historical account of a famous military family, called *The Fighting Ten* has been written by Evelyn Battye. It stemmed from a trunkful of Battye memorabilia left to her husband, Stuart and is an exciting, excellently researched story of the ten Battye brothers. Three of them were involved in 'The Sepoy Revolt' of 1857 where Quintin was the first to die in the Siege of Delhi. The last to die, in 1929, was Montague (Monty) who became a Military Knight of Windsor during the reign of George V. Such facts, incidentally, bring home to younger readers that the whole British-in-India enterprise, which may seem remote and quaintly out-of-tune with our modern times, happened just the day before yesterday, as it were.

A different and rather unusual slant on the armed services theme is *Bombay Buccaneers*, a collection of first-hand reminiscences edited by Commander DJ Hastings about some of those who served in the Royal Indian Navy. It gives a comprehensive survey of various branches: gunnery, radar, communications, mercantile marine, engineering etc. It also provides some valuable insights into the important part played by the RIN during World War II and the causes of the 'Bombay Mutiny' in 1946.

A similar format is used for *On Honourable Terms*, a collection of memoirs (edited by Martin Wynne) by some of those concerned with 'law enforcement within the British Raj'. Again, the assignment is carried out with admirable thoroughness and includes sections on police training, conditions of service, special duties, the work of the Central Intelligence Bureau. I found the chapters devoted to particular aspects of police work

- spread of rumours, shooting accidents, dacoits, communal riots, problems of Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns - particularly interesting, partly because they were told from a point of view I'd not considered before.

The books I've mentioned so far (and several others I haven't) deal with the administrative and military services which were at the very centre of the British presence in India. But there are other books which describe lives far removed from this centre where things were much less predictable and tell of experiences and encounters, anecdotes and tangents which fill in the interstices and idiosyncrasies that are invariably omitted from conventional history books. These books deal with the lives of the memsahibs, with childhood and schooldays, with people who worked on the Raj frontiers whose skills were in planting trees, tea or sugar, building bridges or irrigation canals.

Several of these were written by women, whose lives in India were invariably less formal and work-oriented. Take, for example, *In the Shade of Kanchenjunga* by Jennifer Fox whose father was a tea planter. She writes about Darjeeling and its early history (did you know that Sir Joseph Hooker was kidnapped there by the Sikkimese in 1848? I didn't.) She describes the town's development into a late Victorian hill station with theatre, cafés, ballroom, hotels and schools all present and correct. Then, in a leisurely, chatty style, she describes her own family's hill-station life. Hazel Craig was a 'Raj daughter' at a Darjeeling boarding-school and her well-illustrated *Under the Old School Topee* describes the town's growth as an educational centre and her own schooldays there - for nine months at a stretch, followed by the blissful 'hols'.

Betsy Macdonald came from a family with generations of Indian experience and her childhood memories are of summers on Mount Abu; years later she was awarded a Kaiser-i-Hind for her voluntary service during World War II. Her husband was a sugar planter and the most delightful section of her book, *India... Sunshine and Shadows* describes the setting up of their first home together in Bihar in 1930, riding elephants, inspecting plantations, enjoying the wild countryside. The 'shadows' came later: public disturbances, her husband's dangerous voyages on the eastern seaboard with the RIN while she worked as a cypher clerk and in the WVS. It's all very real, very 'felt' and how genuine were their 'sore hearts' when she and her husband left India in 1946.

Also among the mems' memories I must draw attention to Maisie Wright's *Under Malabar Hill* because it's the only BACSA book written by a social worker. Miss Wright went to work at the Bombay University Women's Settlement in 1928 where she lived among Indians and in very different circumstances from the 'red carpet ambience' of the Higher Raj. Her letters home describe teaching English and health education to Indian girls, meeting Indian Christian groups, running a play-centre. She witnessed demonstrations of Congress Volunteers in the city and a meeting of the National Christian Party where men threw away their ties to symbolise their anti-British sentiments and support for Indian industries. This book reminded me that there are not, so far, any BACSA books by missionaries who, inspired by their Christian faith, set up small hospitals, clinics and schools often in remote regions. Their lives were often hard and lonely and I suspect they have a fund of unusual experiences worthy of record.

When I reached the end of my pleasurable reading, I allowed myself the indulgence of choosing my two favourite books which have no special claim except that they exemplify, to me, so much that is rewarding and memorable about the whole series. I selected first, *And Then Garhwal* by Audrey Baylis, a charming story of her family's long connection with India and her own childhood spent in Garhwal; secondly, I chose *Follow My Bangalorey Man* by Paul Byron Norris, an amusing, informative exploration of the 'Garden City' seen through the eyes of the author when he was growing up there. To my delight I then found I had, quite unknowingly, selected the very first and the most recent of the BACSA series, numbers one and twenty-six. A perfect indication that the standard of excellence has been maintained, absolutely intact!

However, Paul Norris's book will not long be the most recent for manuscripts continue to arrive and more books are in the pipeline for future publication (see below). As a professional writer protective of my own bailiwick and as an occasional teacher of 'creative writing' where the standard is not especially high, I've always doubted the dictum that "everyone has a book in them". Now I'm not so sure - not *everyone* certainly, but perhaps every member of BACSA has? Time will tell...

Pat Barr

More about BACSA Books

Reviewing *The Ilberts in India 1882-1886* by Mary Bennett recently in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Dr Peter Marshall wrote 'Many [of BACSA's books] have been personal memoirs, but some, like this one, are scholarly studies. In bringing out such works, BACSA performs an admirable service. As the university presses retreat onto ever more restricted ground BACSA has taken to offering books that in more expansive times would have appeared under their imprint, at a fraction of the cost, and as this book shows, with a high quality of production, especially in the admirable selection of illustrations.'

In pursuing our policy of covering neglected or little known areas of Britain's imperial history, BACSA's next book (to be published in October 1997) will be *The Kashmir Residency* by Evelyn Desirée Battye, author of *The Fighting Ten* and many novels under her pseudonym, Evelyn Hart. This is an autobiographical account of a vanished world vividly recalled. As a young woman, the author was employed during the early years of World War II as Personal Assistant to the Resident of Kashmir, Lieutenant Colonel Denham Fraser (later knighted).

BACSA is always willing to consider manuscripts that fall within our guidelines, that is books about Europeans in South Asia, published for our members, with a wider public in mind. Sometimes manuscripts are recommended to us by individuals or institutions, at other times they arrive unsolicited. All are read carefully and decisions about publishing made on the basis of interesting subject matter, appeal to members and the literary merit. The most attractive manuscripts are those which need little or no editing and where the author can provide a number of good illustrations. All manuscripts submitted must be typed in double spacing.

Books are published on the subscription methods (and are cheaper if ordered before publication). The print run varies from between 400 and 800 and a number of the most popular editions are now out of print. Those still available, from the Secretary, are listed overleaf.

The Gordon Creeds in Afghanistan
by William Trousdale, 1984

On Honourable Terms: The Memoirs of Some Indian Police Officers: 1915-1948
ed. by late Martin Wynne, 1985

Peacock Dreams
by Bill Tydd, 1986

Bombay Buccaneers: Memories and Reminiscences of the Royal Indian Navy: 1927:1947
ed. by Commander Jack Hastings, 1986

Canals and Campaigns: An Engineer Officer in India, 1877
by Maj-Gen Sir George Moncrieff, 1987

Under Malabar Hill: Letters from India 1928-1933
by Maisie Wright, 1988

Far Frontiers: People and Events in North-Eastern India:1857-1947
by John Whitehead, 1989

'Hellfire Jack!' VC: General Sir William Olpherts 1822-1902
by Peter Collister, 1989

The Calcutta of Begum Johnson: 1728-1812
by Ivor Edwards-Stuart, 1990

The Burma of 'AJ': Memoirs of AJS White, CMG, OBE, ICS 1922-37; Sec-Gen. of British Council 1940-47
1991

Forest Families
collected by Mary McDonald Ledzion, 1991

Free Mariner *by Anne Bulley*, 1992

Ulysses in the Raj
by Paul Byron Norris, 1992

Married to the Raj
by Margaret Martyn, 1992

In the Shade of Kanchenjunga
by Jennifer Fox, 1993

Above the Heron's Pool
by Heather Lovatt and Peter de Jong, 1993

India Served and Observed
by William and Mildred Archer, 1994

The Ilberts in India 1882-1886
by Mary Bennett, 1995

Follow My Bangalorey Man
by Paul Byron Norris, 1996

Remains of Empire

It has been fifty years since the celebrations at midnight on 15 August 1947 announced India and Pakistan's independence from British rule. While many, over the ensuing years, have debated what legacy the British left to these two newly independent countries, as well as to their dominions in Southeast Asia, it is clear today as you walk through the cities of Britain's former empire, that there remain certain physical manifestations. When the last of the British troops paraded under the Gateway of India heading for home, they left behind not only a political and physical infrastructure for these new governments but also works of architecture ranging from the grandiose, such as Victoria Terminus in Bombay, or the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, to the churches - small and large. These were bulging with marble funerary tablets to individuals who had given their lives in service to either the East India Company or the Crown. There were more than two million graves, as well as a host of public commemorative

monuments raised to the men who had dedicated themselves to 'God, Queen, and Country.' This brief essay seeks to answer the question, 'What happened to those very public works of art raised in honour of British imperial heroes since the granting of independence?'

Certain writers have drawn inferences that all of the commemorative statues raised within the public arena during the time of the East India Company or the British Raj suffered the effects of iconoclasm. These observations have carried some credence with certain audiences but the fact is that of the more than 170 civic statues erected through Southeast Asia, either by that most democratic of means, the public subscription, or through the generosity of a private patron, all but 15 exist. True, a few have been exported to other cities within the old British Empire. For example, Benedict Read arranged to have the bronze equestrian monument of Lord Hardinge returned to the family estate in Penshurst and the Ontario government in Canada did unveil Sir Thomas Brock's colossal equestrian bronze of King Edward VII in Queen's Park, Toronto for a second time on 29 May 1969 but, for the most part these are the rare exceptions. Indeed while many of the bronze or marble effigies have been removed to museums for display or removed to other sites to make way for statues of the new heroes of these independent countries, many still remain on their original sites. Visitors to Madras can hardly help but notice Sir Francis Chantrey's heroic bronze to Sir Thomas Munro, Governor of the Madras Presidency from 1820-1827 on the Island or Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm's figure of Queen Victoria under an elaborate canopy at Chepauk Park. And while recent requests from municipal officials in Bangalore have indicated a desire to remove three statues from Cubbon Park, most notably Brock's marble figures of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII and Baron Carlo Marochetti's equestrian statue of Sir Mark Cubbon, petitions by residents of the city have seen this proposed removal stayed. From Victoria Green in Pulau Pinang to Bombay numerous statues either remain on their original sites or serve as complements to architectural structures and parks.

These civic statues, the funerary monuments, and the numerous graves serve as reminders of those individuals who gave their life for Empire building. Of these, we should be most concerned not with the statues which have been removed from their original sites to be relocated elsewhere, but rather those that lie derelict behind buildings forgotten, in

store, or those that once formed grand allegorical groupings and have had their components separated. These are, in fact, works of art - and aside from all political manifestations or personal memory - they are images, either cast or carved, from the workshops of some of Britain's finest sculptors. Recently Sadashiv Gorakshur, Curator of the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay, appealed for the preservation of these statues, not as reminders of colonial rule, or as individuals which the youth of the country might aspire to emulate, but rather for their artistic merit alone.

While their numbers are few, there remain certain statues that are in critical need of attention. These include two figures of Queen Victoria, both by Herbert Hampton, observed behind a wall in Nagpur by Sue Farrington. One was originally situated in Nagpur, while the other was erected in Jabalpur. Exactly how or when the two works were grouped together and left, remains unclear. But the effects of the environment and the physical presence of the two marble statues in an area where children play on a regular basis appear to be taking their toll on the overall condition of the figures. In addition, we run the risk of allowing these works to be damaged, destroyed or sold off as souvenirs, as may have happened with the 15 or more marble statues re-erected on the site of the Old Durbar ground in Delhi.

The works in store seem less problematic but still forgotten. In Madras, the curators of the Fort St. George Museum have a bronze portrait statue of Lord Willingdon executed by Sir William Reid Dick wrapped in tarpaulin in their storage shed. In Pakistan, the marble figures of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII which once graced Frere Park now find themselves in a PWD warehouse in Karachi, forgotten for 40 years. Recently some of the statues in store have found new homes, giving hope that eventually all will be turned over to individuals or institutions that wish to put them on display. In the early 1990s, JH Gardner's marble figure of a young Queen Victoria, which once stood at the junction of Mall and Murree Roads in Rawalpindi, but in store since the Suez Crisis of 1956, was presented to the British High Commission in Islamabad. About the same time, the Garden Superintendent's Office in Bombay decided to re-locate Boehm's majestic equestrian figure of the Prince of Wales to an oval rose garden directly inside the entrance to the Jijamata Bhonsle Udyan.

Perhaps the greatest concern is for the statues which are missing in Southeast Asia and those that have been disunited. It still remains unclear what happened to the figures of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, and Arthur Dhayre once located in Rangoon. Elderly citizens can remember seeing the statues as children in Fytche Square. Whether it was the military junta controlling the country since independence in 1948 which wanted to remove any visible reminders of their former colonial status, or the occupying forces of the Japanese during World War II, that dismantled and recycled the memorials, perhaps into ammunitions, remains unclear. Plainly this was the case with five figures to Queen Victoria that were exported to Hong Kong. During a routine check of the Sakurajimi Warehouse at the Osaka Army Arsenal in 1946, an unidentified military officer in the Japanese army spotted a bronze statue of Queen Victoria. This figure was returned to Hong Kong that same year and placed in Victoria Park. The other four remain lost as do the figures of Colonel Baird, Lord Dalhousie, King George V, and Lord Kitchener, once erected in Calcutta.

Remains of John Bacon's marble statue of Richard Colley, 1st Marquess Wellesley, completed 1814, Bombay.

The Wellesley statue before its destruction, drawn by William Simpson in 1862

In Delhi, at least four others remain completely untraced. They include the figures of Brigadier-General John Nicholson and General Sir Alexander Taylor once located near the Mori Gate as well as the marble figure of King George V for Government House and Alfred Turner's marble statue of Queen Victoria which originally stood in front of the Town Hall. Brigadier Perry, an area officer of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, recalled seeing the figures of Taylor and Nicholson being removed in January 1956. Exactly what happened to the two works in bronze is unknown. There is no current evidence to show that either of these works or the figures of King George V or Queen Victoria were amongst the civic statues removed to the site of the Durbar in Delhi in 1985.

Besides the civic statues that remain untraced, there is great concern for multi-figured sculptural groups that have been split up. Under the provisions of India's Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 (No. 52 of 1972 with Corrigenda 1973, 1976), all monuments, even including those exported from Britain, at least 100 hundred years old, are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. There have, however, been numerous episodes which may have compromised the integrity of these public monuments. For example, in 1975 an offer was made by the City of Halifax to the Superintendent of Gardens, Bombay, for the purchase of Noble's statue of Queen Victoria (1869). Under the provisions of the Act, the case was debarred. However, an event followed which helped to confuse the issue. The statue was separated from its marble canopy, and the canopy sold to Mr Vijayapat Singhania for his private garden on Warden Road. Today, the status of the marble figure of Queen Victoria is unclear as to any protective laws. Similarly, the bronze memorial celebrating the vice-regal reign of Hardinge has been disunited. At the time of its unveiling, the heroic figure was accompanied by two groups, *Peace* and *Maternal Love*, in addition to a bronze lion and lioness. Today, the effigy of Hardinge stands in the lee beside the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum with *Peace* and *Maternal Love* situated within the gardens of the Jijamata Bhonsle Udyan. The bronze lion and lioness were recycled for a third time in 1990 when they were added as decorative elements to the Lokmanya Bal Ganghadar Tilak Monument on Chowpatty Beach. The problem resides not simply with the breaking up of a multi-figured sculptural grouping but also with

the ultimate consequences this might have on the protective status of the work. Is the marble figure of Queen Victoria, which once stood so proud underneath the Gothic canopy on Bombay Green protected? What about the bronze figure of Hardinge? Both stand in the lee beside the Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum, their home since damage during August 1965 caused the municipal government to become concerned for their safety. Those civic works of sculpture which have been compromised, and which are not yet 100 years old are under the greatest threat.

While sustained efforts by members of BACSA, in co-operation with groups and individuals in Southeast Asia, have seen clear gains in the protection and preservation of the British cemeteries, there has been no unified or sustained effort by any organized group for the protection and preservation of the civic imperial statues. This article has been written in the hope that the same kind of enthusiasm and persistence will spill over to the funerary monuments and the civic statues which, like the cemeteries, form such an integral part of the British presence in Southeast Asia.

Mary Ann Steggles

The Lonely Grave of Alexander Elliot

How a meeting with a Maharaja led the author to BACSA and the solution to a puzzle.

The Maharaja of Sarangarh, Naresh Chandra Singh, moderated his voice to a whisper when he began recounting to me the curious story of his family's inextricable tie with the death of a servant of the East India Company. We were interrupted by his chief servant who reminded the ruler that Dr Gupta had prescribed an early bed time. He knew he was no match against his servant and Dr Gupta, so he promised to finish the story the next morning on our expedition to inspect the tomb dedicated to this young Englishman whose last breath occurred scarcely twelve miles from where we were sitting. This conversation took place in the drawing room of the palace during the cold season of 1974, four years short of commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the death of Alexander Elliot in 1778.

Sarangarh is a small town in the Chhattisgarh Division in the southeastern corner of Madhya Pradesh bordering western Orissa. Heavily populated by tribal peoples, the area was first made known to the outside world by Verrier Elwin who gathered their remarkable folk tales and songs and exposed the dreams and aspirations of these otherwise unknown people. The Raj-Gonds were the ruling elite in this area and my host in Sarangarh was the titular head. Chhattisgarh is still considered a 'backward' area, a little on the other side of nowhere. This isolation made me wonder even more how an Englishman in the 18th century came to stray into this *terra incognita*, far from the safety of the cantonments of Calcutta or Madras. I was there collecting photographs for a dissertation on a group of brick Hindu temples from the 8th century. The Department of Archaeology in Bhopal had urged me to visit the Maharaja, for his family was active in preserving the antiquities within the former Sarangarh state.

While many gained much from Independence, India's freedom left the Maharaja with little, apart from his palace. It was built largely in the early 1930s when these so-called 'petty maharajas' still enjoyed many privileges; at the same time, these aristocrats were probably plagued by the uneasy feeling that the world as they knew it was inexorably collapsing around them. The winds of independence blowing all the way from Whitehall uplifted the kites of the Congress Party but were part of an uncertain storm for others. Proof of this anxiety was tangibly recorded at Sarangarh where an entire second floor of the palace was planned but never built, cut short abruptly. Without its top floor, the palace seemed somehow stunted, a poignant symbol for the diminished role that the Maharajas would exercise in the democratic India envisioned by Nehru.

The head servant rapped his hand smartly on our bedroom door the next morning, finishing off with 'Saheb, bed chai?!!' The Maharaja soon drew into the curved driveway in a jeep whose silencer had long since fallen off. In the back of the jeep my wife balanced with one hand a big basket filled with stainless steel lunch tiffins as we zoomed along on the mostly *kaccha* road.

Twelve miles north of Sarangarh we spotted the pyramidical shaped tomb, which was a furlong or two off the road. 'The other local rajas would not allow this poor boy to be interred in their domains but we accepted. Fever took him down, I suppose right on this spot. Let's go see.'

concluded the Maharaja. An inscribed stone inscription let into the square base of the 15 foot high monument told the story--or really only part of the story: 'To the memory of Alexander Elliot, Esquire, who having been selected at a very early period of life for the execution of an important commission at the Court of Naugpoor, died of a fever at this place on the 12th September, 1778, aged 23 years, this monument which covers his remains was erected in testimony of his virtues and of the loss which the State has sustained in his death by order of the Governor-General of Bengal.'

What was this 'important mission'? If it was so important, why depute a lad of only 23 (I was only four years older at the time)? But the Maharaja could add little to solve the riddle of Elliot's mission. We moved on another ten miles or so to the brick temples where my wife and I ran about snapping photos of facades and sculpted doorway jambs. We then broke into our tiffins before returning to the palace at Sarangarh late in the afternoon. But something disquieting about this young English boy resting in such a remote region troubled us. We had toured cemeteries in many places, even the great South Park Cemetery in Calcutta, but this

The pyramid tomb of Alexander Elliot near Sarangarh, photographed in 1983

visit was imbued with something different. A tinge of odd melancholy stuck with us, partly because of the isolation of the tomb and partly because Elliot's 'important commission' was still a mystery.

In California two years later my study on the brick temple was finally submitted. At this time we received a note from the Maharaja's family conveying the sad news that despite Dr Gupta's care the Maharaja had passed away. In some illogical way, this news meant somehow that the mystery of Elliot's death was even less likely to be resolved. I then began teaching Indian art at the University of Texas in Austin where a copy of *Chowkidar* landed on my desk. I joined BACSA in 1981 and in 1984 sent a photo of Elliot's tomb to Mr Theon Wilkinson, and it was published in *Chowkidar* (vol.3,4).

Digging amidst the records in London, Theon found that Elliot was sent on this 'important commission' by no less than Warren Hastings. War had erupted with France and Hastings despatched Elliot, who was his private secretary, to secure the allegiance of the native court in Nagpur. Before leaving Calcutta, he was sent to Chandernagore, a French settlement, to seize its governor. The French officer fled and Elliot was forced to swim a river in pursuit; and evidently it was a chill from this experience to which his death was attributed three months later on September 12th. The Raja of Sarangarh then was Vishvanath Singh (1778-1808) and it was in the first year of his reign that he took the weighty decision of allowing Elliot's body to be buried within his realm. Other rajas refused, presumably because they did not want to risk the ritual pollution or perhaps because of more complex political reasons. However, Hastings rewarded Vishvanath Singh amply, for the Sarangarh court received an elephant and a full dress of honour.

Hastings also directed the Government to construct the monument for Elliot and *Gazetteers* in the early part of this century record that the tomb is 'kept in order at the cost of the British Government'. The pyramid was in tolerably good condition during my visit. Although the Raj-Gonds kings of Sarangarh never merited a salute nor were entitled to keep a military force, the family is unassailably tied to a brief but important moment in the history of British India. And through chance circumstance, I stumbled on to this tangled bit of history myself and thereby also came to be involved with BACSA. But our lives (and young Elliot is no exception

with his fever) are so often governed by events which are capricious.

Elliot's tragic death must have profoundly touched Warren Hastings, since it was the Governor General's own resolution to place the young man in harm's way in central India. That this decision haunted Hastings is suggested by a poem that he composed on his return to Britain, at sea near the Cape of Good Hope, in 1785, fully seven years after Elliot's death. He contrasted the young and relatively unknown Elliot with Robert Clive who 'liv'd renown'd' and to a 'ripen'd age.'

'An early death was Elliot's doom
I saw his op'ning virtues bloom,
and manly senses unfold;
Too soon to fade! - I bad the stone
Record his name midst hordes unknown,
Unknowing what it told.'

Perhaps an equally fitting memorial is a line from one of the anonymous folk ballads sung at funerals that were collected by Verrier Elwin: 'In the forest your body must make its camp.'

Don Stadtner

India Sans Heat and Dust

Henry Nelson came to India for the first time during the War. He was there for two and a half years, serving in the Chindits. He could never quite make up his mind about the British presence in the country but, 'it fascinated me that such a tiny number of Englishmen were controlling such a massive population of Indians and has been doing so for so long'. His interest in the subject became an addiction. Back in England he began to collect artefacts and memorabilia and one day found himself with enough material to start, in a converted sweet factory in Colne, **The British in India Museum**.

It was not long after the founding of BACSA that someone suggested an outing, the destination to have some connection with India. What more appropriate choice than Henry Nelson's museum? The occasion was much enjoyed. Henry Nelson's instincts were right: there is something immensely

evocative about ephemera! The BACSA party were soon poring over old invitation cards, programmes for long-forgotten guest nights in the mess, family photo albums and such like. Since that trip, our annual outings have taken us far and wide, always in search of some Indian connection. What follows is a sketchy Cook's Tour and reminder of these diverse places.

The aristocratic Viceroys of the late Victorian era - Curzon, Lytton and Lansdowne - were by no means new to grandeur when they arrived in India. Curzon's magnificent family home **Kedleston Hall** is one of the showpieces of Derbyshire. He owned other homes but throughout his career it was always to the pale beauty of Kedleston that he returned to restore his spirits. The summer months, when we visitors come to admire these great properties, find them at their most serene and opulent. It comes as a surprise, therefore, to learn that life at Kedleston was not always like that. Curzon himself commented on the atmosphere in the autumn, 'sodden with disappointment and vocal with decay' and in a telling passage in her memoirs Grace, his second wife, comments 'I always thought that it needed a warm sun to bring its frozen beauty to life. The vast, splendid hall, the long galleries, the tall, cold rooms with their great windows looking out over the Derbyshire dales, would have come into their own under a hot blue sky with strong sunlight to warm them.' Kedleston survived a serious financial crisis in the 1980s and its future has been secured by the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Curzon's Indian collection, the many gifts received when he was Viceroy from 1898-1905, are always on exhibition.

Robert, 1st Earl of Lytton, became Viceroy in 1876 and he it was who had the unenviable task of organising accommodation for some 68,000 guests at the Durbar on 1 January 1877 when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. Lytton appears to have managed the whole business with aplomb. When he returned to **Knebworth House**, the family seat since 1490, to his loves of farming and poetry, he brought with him collections of mementoes and gifts from the princes who attended the Durbar, together with robes and photographs of his time in India. The splendour of the Durbar and more relaxed moments at family picnics in Simla are to be seen at Knebworth House. There was evidently nothing quite so hectic as the Durbar when Lord Lansdowne was Viceroy (1888-1894) and the collection of Indiana at **Bowood House**, near Marlboroough,

is comparatively small. But there are some lovely watercolours and the exhibition is well worth a visit, as is the house itself, in a setting of English landscaping at its finest.

Kedleston, Knebworth, Bowood: their trophies reflect the supremacy of British rule. Mountbatten's **Broadlands** takes us to the end of the story. (Lord Louis, be it remembered, was one of the first to join BACSA; this would have been a short time before his tragic death in 1979.) In visiting Broadlands, BACSA members were returning to their own not-too-distant past. Brushing aside the Greek and Roman marbles, the Piranesi vases and the classic portraiture of Van Dyck, Reynolds, Romney and Lely, the BACSA party headed for the stables and the Mountbatten Exhibition. Here for once was an exhibition which answered their personal experience! There is a strong 1940s flavour. Some of the photos we have seen for years in the history books: Lord Louis haranguing the troops under the trees, the khaki-clad Edwina visiting a hospital, Nehru exuding charm. In the midst of all this panoply of state, a simple figurine of the Mahatma, his familiar skinny body hunched like a question mark.

As a very young naval cadet Louis spent two years at the Royal Naval College at **Osborne**. The college was situated on the site of the stables at his great-grandmother's home. He would surely have wandered through the Grand Durbar Room, quite unconscious of the ironic fate that would lead him to play such a prominent part in the undoing of the power so amply celebrated there. What to think of the Durbar Room? 'Not a very happy sugar cake Moghul decoration' is one description of Bhai Ram Singh's intricate plaster-work, and indeed there is a touch of overdone Chandni Chowk confectionery about it. Victoria was much attached to her Indian staff, and their portraits line the corridor from the room to the main building.

It is said that John Lockwood Kipling was consulted in the design of the Durbar Room. Sooner or later, of course, there is the need to visit the house of his famous son, **Bateman's** in East Sussex. This is where Rudyard came with his wife Carrie to escape the incorrigibly inquisitive crowds at Rottingdean. He lived in Bateman's from 1902 until his death in 1936. This part of Sussex inspired the last important phase of his writing career, when he turned away from the East and found his material in the history and life of the Kent and Sussex countryside. Inside the house,

however, there is much of India: brassware, toys, books, rugs as well as two striking plaster reliefs by his father depicting Mowgli and the Miracle of Purun Bhagat. It is a house with an atmosphere, studious and austere. Angus Wilson, in his fine biography of Kipling, wrote, 'But if Bateman's interior may not be to our taste, and was surely not comfortable, I think we must remember that comfort was not a quality which Rudyard and Carrie placed high in their stoic-puritan scale of values.'

Richard Benyon, once Governor of Fort St. George, lived at **Englefield**, near the man widely regarded as the greatest Englishman ever to serve India: Warren Hastings. He is buried within the church at **Daylesford**, near his home, and outside stands a monument to his memory, as unassuming as the man himself.

In acquiring his fortune, Francis Sykes owed much initially to Robert Clive, who got him the job of Factor at Kazimbazar in 1757, the year of Plassey. Today the Clive Collection at **Powis Castle** is undoubtedly the best exhibition of Indian art and artefacts in the UK, outside London. It is run by the National Trust. Clive did great things for his country but no one can deny that he was the maestro of booty! On display at Powis is just part of the enormous hoard he brought back to England. Clive was no fastidious connoisseur of fine art. Until the 1980s there were attics at Powis which no one had explored for decades, 'dusty, ill-lit rooms where 10ft spears line the walls and weathered hookahs occupy dim corners like coiled snakes left to die long ago'. The National Trust archivists must have had a wonderful time. War, gaming and smoking were his real interests. But his son and daughter-in-law collected with a purpose and they have made the display at Powis what has been described as 'a comprehensive amalgam of Indian workmanship in metal, enamel, textiles, ivory and precious stones'.

Forty years on from Clive's success at Plassey the Battle of Seringapatam in 1799 turned the tide in the south. On his return to England after his triumph, General George Harris bought the **Belmont** estate near Faversham. Regalia from his military career and other Imperial mementoes can be seen there, though somewhat overshadowed by the best collection of clocks in any English country house open to the public! It is also a cricketer's mecca: the fourth Lord Harris is one of the great figures in the history of the game. It is sometimes forgotten that he was once Governor of Bombay. Belmont should be better known.

We descended on **Sezincote** one afternoon in a heavy downpour. The house glowed against the monsoon-green vividness of the shrubbery and the tropical yuccas. India had fired the imagination of its architect Samuel Pepys Cockerell, who had put a Muslim dome on the house of Warren Hastings at Daylesford. At Sezincote the result is a most handsome architectural curiosity, an English house in full Mughal dress. Thomas Daniell designed the Hindu temple in the garden and Brahmin bulls guard the Indian bridge. The Prince Regent was so impressed by the exotic look of Sezincote that he commanded Nash to produce a more palatial version for himself - and so we gained the Brighton Pavilion.

One journeys to Thetford in Norfolk with high hopes of seeing another building with a distinctly oriental flavour, having heard of Maharajah Prince Duleep Singh GCSI (whose portrait by Winterhalter hangs at Osborne). The Maharajah, the last ruler of the Sikhs, bought **Elveden** and the 17,000 acre estate in 1863. With the help of the architect, John Norton, he enlarged the hall into 'an oriental extravaganza unparalleled in England. The walls, pillars and arches of the central domed hall were covered with intricate Indian ornamentation, all in white Carrara marble, the doors with panels of beaten copper.' Alas, the Maharajah's enthusiasm frittered away. He went off to Paris. The Guiness family moved in but they too evidently found it difficult to love Elveden. Today the house is a scene of desolation. In the 1980s the young men of Christie's sorted out the contents for 'The Sale of the Century'. Empty, unused, unloved, the huge marble hall of Elveden has the reputation of being the coldest room in England. Just think what we've missed!

No Indian treasures or National Trust showpieces are to be found in Addiscombe, near Croydon, but the area has a strong association with British India in the 19th century. In 1808, on the death of its owner Lord Liverpool, the East India Company bought **Addiscombe Place** and its estate of some 60 acres for use as a military college. A local historian writes 'Cadets were trained for the Company's army at Addiscombe Place. They were admitted between the ages of 14 and 18 years and were expected to have a fair knowledge of arithmetic, good handwriting and a good understanding of English and Latin grammar.' Their studies during their two years at the college included mathematics, fortification, military drawing and surveying, Hindustani, Civil and Lithographic drawing (they

were expected to be good water-colour painters), French and Latin. Parents and guardians were required to pay £50 per term for each cadet - a lot of money in 1808.

The college closed in 1861 and by that date 3,600 cadets had passed out to serve in India. The estate was cut up into lots. Nobody offered the reserve price for Sir John Vanbrugh's mansion and it was pulled down. Today in this suburban precinct the roads are named Canning, Outram, Clyde, Elgin and Havelock; in 1861 familiar names from the very recent Mutiny. Yet none of these was trained at the college. It may have been more appropriate to have chosen the no less distinguished names of Addiscombe's former cadets, such as Lawrence, Napier and Eyre. Behind one of the houses in Havelock Road stands the one remaining building of the old college. The gymnasium was first converted into a warehouse and is now a small block of flatlets called Havelock Hall. It deserves a plaque.

Bungalow. From the Hindi and Mahratti term *bangla*, meaning 'of or belonging to Bengal'. It is strange that this country, on the whole so meticulous about its architectural heritage, does not commemorate the birth of the bungalow in Britain. The place to do this would be on the Isle of Thanet in Kent. The history of the bungalow and its development can be found in AD King's *The Bungalow* (recently re-issued as a paperback) and in a *Country Life* article (August 1978) 'The First Bungalows' by Michael Darby. Darby quotes from *Travels in India* (1793) by Hodges, who had noticed single-storey Anglo-Indian residences which he described as 'Bungalows.... the plan of them usually is a large room in the centre for eating and sitting room, and rooms at each corner for sleeping; the spaces between the angle rooms are viranders or open porticoes to sit in during the evenings....'

The advent of the bungalow to these shores - and hence to the western hemisphere - is due to the enterprise of two architects, John Taylor and JP Seddon. Taylor built the first bungalow in August 1869 at Westgate, this part of the North Kent coast being chosen to attract 'persons of refinement and artistic sympathies' away from 'other upstart watering places in Normandy'. This first bungalow and another built the following year are, regrettably, now demolished. Taylor moved a mile or two down the coast to **Birchington** where, between 1870 and 1873, the first bungalow settlement was established. Taylor and Seddon entered into an agreement

over the development of Birchington and it was the latter who was the prime designer of the Tower Bungalows, built by the cliff edge to catch the bracing, health-giving breezes. These two-storeyed bungalows can be seen today in Spencer Road, easily identifiable by their remarkable sgraffito decoration executed by George Frampton. By 1880 the link between Bengal and Birchington may have looked somewhat tenuous, but it is definitely there and the evidence can be studied at the V&A where, among 2,000 drawings by Seddon, are several designs for buildings at Birchington. We sometimes complain of English Heritage plastering its labels all over England but it seems that here there is a clear need for their taking some action!

John Wall

War Graves

People outside BACSA are often puzzled by the work we undertake, because they imagine, erroneously, that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) takes care of all British graves in the Indian subcontinent, both military and civilian. In fact, although the War Graves Commission is an Associate Member of BACSA, its remit is limited. Lt-General Menezes, Honorary BACSA member and recently appointed Liaison Officer in India for the CWGC, explains here what its work entails, particularly in the Indian context.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was established by Royal Charter of 21 May 1917, and extended by a supplementary charter of 8 June 1964. The current President is HRH the Duke of Kent. The concept was that of Sir Fabian Ware, former editor of 'The Morning Post'. At the outbreak of World War I, he was too old to be accepted for military duty and arrived in France in September 1914, in command of a mobile unit of the British Red Cross. He was quickly struck by the absence of any official organisation responsible for the marking and recording of the graves of those killed, and it was in a conversation with Lt-Col Stewart, a Red Cross medical assessor, that the idea of Ware taking on this task was first mooted. The importance of the proper care of the graves was soon ac-

knowledged by the War Office, both in response to demands from relatives, as also for the morale of troops in the field. In 1915 therefore Ware's work in recording and maintaining graves was recognised by the creation of the Graves Registration Commission, which under his command left the Red Cross and became part of the British Army. Ware was promoted to Major, and ended the war as a major general. From the outset, Ware had been anxious that the spirit of co-operation, so evident in the war effort, should be reflected in his work. This multinational aspect was recognised by the Imperial War Conference, and in May 1917 the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission was established with the Prince of Wales as its President, and Ware as Vice-Chairman, a post he was to hold until retirement in 1948 (he died in 1949, at the age of 80, with a tablet to his memory in Westminster Abbey). As early as 1916 Ware arranged for advice on the horticultural treatment of the cemeteries to be provided by the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, and on his initiative the most distinguished architects of the day, like Lutyens and Baker, and the garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll, were engaged to design the war cemeteries and memorials.

The Commission's duties, formulated on the fundamental principles forged by Ware's vision and energy, are to mark and maintain the graves of the members of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two World Wars, and immediately after (up to 1921 for World War I, and 1947 for World War II, on account of the continued world-wide post-war deployment of the Commonwealth forces): to build and maintain memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown, or who were cremated: and to keep the relevant records, now computerised. The cost is currently shared by the partner governments of Britain, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa, in proportion based on the numbers of their graves. India's contribution today is 2.3 percent of the annual budget of the Commission which aggregates over £30 million. There are 147 countries in which there are Commonwealth war graves and memorials commemorating 1,694,999 personnel. The task is an ongoing one, as, for example, World War I bodies are still being found and identified in the fields of France, and the bodies of World War II aircrew recovered recently in Papua New Guinea and North Burma, and even in Britain. Casualties previously buried in graves marked as 'Known unto God' have been

given identities as a result of new evidence made available. Further names are added to the records as the details of casualties previously unknown to the Commission are submitted by diligent members of the public. Sadly, not all damage to Commission property is due to extremes of nature: vandalism and theft play their part. The Commission is not responsible for Commonwealth military graves between the two World Wars and these fall within BACSA's remit.

The Commission's work is founded upon Ware's principles which have remained unaltered: that each of the dead should be commemorated individually, by name either on a headstone on the grave, or by an inscription on a memorial: that the headstone or memorials should be permanent: that the headstones should be uniform: and that there should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed. The standard headstone is 2 feet 8 inches high. At the top of each is engraved a national emblem, or the service or regimental badge, followed by the rank, name, unit, date of death, age and usually a religious emblem; and

The Indian Army War Cemetery (1939-1945) at Forli in Italy

underneath, in many cases, a poignant inscription chosen by relatives. In some war cemeteries, notably on the Gallipoli peninsula, in Macedonia and in the Far East and the Pacific, where there is a risk of earth movement, stone or bronze plaques on low pedestals are used instead of headstones. Climate permitting, the headstones stand in narrow borders, where floribunda roses and small perennials grow in a setting of lawn, trees and shrubs. Two monuments are common to the cemeteries: the Cross of Sacrifice, set usually upon an octagonal base and bearing a bronze sword upon its shaft, and in the larger cemeteries the Stone of Remembrance, upon which is carved the words from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, 'Their name liveth for evermore'. The men and women whose graves are unknown, or who were cremated, are commemorated in memorials ranging from small tablets to great monuments, the latter bearing many thousands of names.

The forces of undivided India played a major part in both World Wars. The war cemeteries in which Indian dead are buried, and the memorials on which they are commemorated in more than 50 countries, extend from the Pacific Islands to Britain: they honour the deeds of the Indian Armed Forces and they form an abiding tribute to the 160,000 dead of undivided India. In the 1914-18 War the strength of the Indian Army rose to one million. They first saw action in August 1914 in the small German colonies in China, and played a vital part in the first critical battles in France and Flanders. In Belgium there are 76 Indian graves and 417 are commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres. In France there are 3,750 Indian graves in some 150 cemeteries, and 5,029 commemorated on memorials, mainly at Neuve Chapelle, where from 10-13 March 1915, the Indian Corps fought its first great action as a single formation and lost one-fifth of its strength. The Indian Army formed the major part of the forces in the war against Turkey in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine, and also fought in Gallipoli and East Africa. In Iraq alone there are 8,792 Indian World War I graves in seven cemeteries, and 33,367 commemorated on the Basra Memorial. (Since Operation 'Desert Storm', the Commission's officials in Britain had not been able to visit these cemeteries, but have now been permitted to do so in 1996.)

The Indian wounded brought to Britain from France and Flanders to convalesce were nursed mainly in the Brighton Pavilion, which had

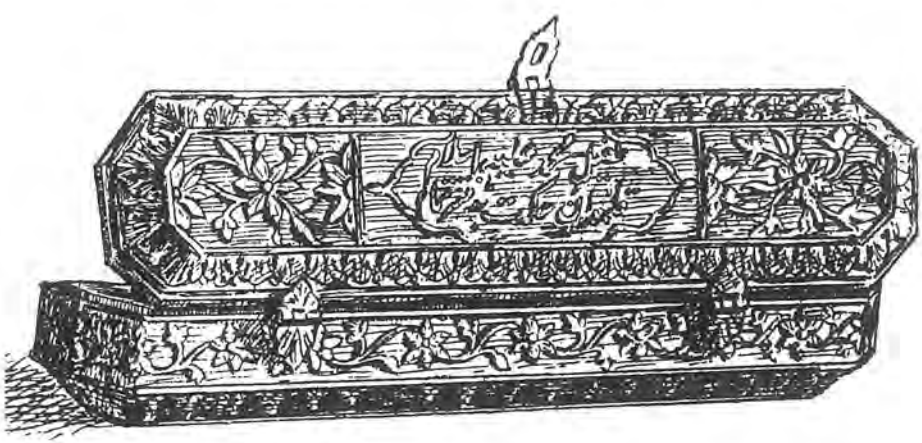
been converted for the purpose, and in a convalescent home at Barton-on-Sea. The Hindus and Sikhs dying at Brighton were cremated on the Downs, a poignant monument in the shape of a beautiful Chhatri marking the site. It was designed by the Indian architect EC Henriques, under the directions of the India Office and was begun in 1915. The estimated cost of £6,000 was met jointly by Brighton Town Council and the Council of India. At Barton-on-Sea the dead are commemorated by a memorial in the town, subscribed for by members of the staff of the depot. The then Commandant, Col. J Chaytor White, IMS, left £100 in his will, the interest on it being used towards its maintenance. Neither of these two monuments are the responsibility of the Commission. The cremations of those dying at Barton-on-Sea would appear to have been performed at Brockenhurst. No memorial commemorates this site, but three Indian burials are commemorated by the Commission in the Brockenhurst churchyard. The Muslim soldiers who died in Britain were interred in a special cemetery at Woking, but owing to vandalisation and difficulties in maintenance due to its isolated position, all 24 Indian graves were exhumed and moved (in 1968/9) to Brookwood in Surrey by the Commission, in consultation with the Imam and Trustees of the Shah Jehan Mosque, the land reverting to the Ministry of Defence.

The undivided Indian Army of the 39-45 War was two-and-a-half million strong, the largest volunteer army the world has ever seen. Once again it participated very early on - a mule company of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps was part of the British expeditionary force in the 1940 campaign, ending in the evacuation from Dunkirk. There are 102 Indian World War II graves in 16 cemeteries, and five commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial. Divisions of the Indian Army won renown in the campaign in the Western Desert, in the Middle East, in Eritrea and Ethiopia. They fought in Italy and took part in the liberation of Greece, but it was in the East, in the war against the Japanese, that the Indian Army was to play its greatest role, right through from the reverses of December 1941 to the final victory in 1945. In the Indian subcontinent, there are the following commemorations:

Bangladesh: 3cemeteries, 1,416 graves, 6,469 nameson memorials.
Pakistan: 2 cemeteries, 1,000 graves, 26,433 names on memorials.
India: 21 cemeteries, 9,206 graves, 53,017 names on memorials.

The memorial figures for Bangladesh, Pakistan and India include the dual commemorations of the Bombay/Chittagong 1939-45 Memorials (422 sailors of the Royal Indian Navy and 6,047 merchant seamen), and the Delhi/Karachi 1939-45 Memorials (25,865). The Imphal Indian Army War Cemetery contains the graves of 1,603 Commonwealth servicemen. The Kohima War Cemetery is cited on what was the garden of the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow, where attackers and defenders faced one another across the tennis court, and where after desperate fighting, the Indian and British Armies won a famous victory. It contains 1,421 Commonwealth graves, and the cremation memorial bears the names of 915 Indian servicemen. The other main Commonwealth war cemeteries in India are at Digboi, Gauhati, Delhi, Ranchi, Madras and Kirkee. The dead of World War I are also commemorated in India - 13,321 Indian and British soldiers on the Delhi War Memorial Arch (India Gate) who died in the fighting on the North-West Frontier between 1914 and 1921 and have no known grave, and of those then buried to the west of the River Indus whose place of burial, though known, could not be maintained. Those who died in India during World War I were not exhumed and their graves remain where they died - over 100 such graves for example at Lucknow, Meerut, Mhow, Kirkee, Poona and Bangalore; with a smaller number in over 25 towns - and they are, in addition, commemorated by name on War Memorials at Delhi, Madras and Kirkee, so none is forgotten.

Lt-Gen SL Menezes



An Introduction to the India Office Library and Records

The India Office Library and Records (IOLR), which now forms part of the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), has been visited by many members of BACSA over the past twenty years, some as members of the regular parties of visitors, and others in search of records relating to their families. They will know of the various sections of the IOLR, but there is always more to be discovered in that vast treasure trove of information, and I hope that this short article will contain some surprises for all present and potential users of the IOLR.

Let us start where all readers have to start - in the Reading Room. Here you will find lists and indexes which will enable you to find the manuscripts and printed records, the private papers and the printed books which you will need for your research. There are also shelves of reference-books: the East India Registers, India Office Lists, Indian Army Lists, Gazetteers for every District of British India, and Directories for Madras, Bombay, Bengal and India as a whole. And in one corner, several microfilm readers and cabinets of microfilms. These are the Ecclesiastical Records, the baptisms, marriages and burials of European Christians in India from 1700 to 1947, a basic source for genealogical studies and family history.

Behind, above and beneath the Reading Room lie immense resources for the study of India and neighbouring countries. It all began with the group of London merchants who decided in 1599 to finance a voyage to the East Indies in search of spices. The Islands which comprise modern Indonesia were the first objective, and the first voyage, and trade with India, the source of fine textiles, soon eclipsed the trade with the Islands. Many small trading-places (factories) were established, some were short lived but three grew into the main centres of power, the Presidency Towns of Madras (1639), Bombay (1662) and Calcutta (1690).

By the time that India and Pakistan gained their independence in 1947, and Burma in 1948, the India Office Records (IOR) amounted to nine miles (14km) of shelving, and was housed partly in the old India Office building in Whitehall, and partly in a Government repository in Hayes, Middlesex. The two parts were brought together in 1967 when the

Library and IOR moved to Orbit House in the Blackfriars Road. In 1998-1999 the whole OIOC will move to the new British Library building next door to St Pancras Station in Euston, but it appears that some of the IOR will have to be outhoused, as there is not enough storage space in the new building.

The shape of the IOR has been dictated by the needs of the East India Company and the India Office to maintain records of their work in London, and to receive the fullest information about their employees' work in India. It is by no means a complete picture, because the process of selecting the information to be forwarded to higher levels of government in India and then to London, was always at work and so it is often a picture of India seen through European eyes.

The records produced in London were the papers generated by a great trading company and then by a large government department. So the East India Company's Court of Directors kept extensive minutes of their weekly meetings, bound in vellum, with drafts of their despatches to India, and elaborate financial records in the Accountant-General's department. There are also the Boards' Collections, the information culled from documents received from India, and arranged as collections to provide the background material for specific paragraphs in despatches; the information ranges from the minor peccadilloes of civil servants to major decisions relating to Indian states. The Company also kept detailed records of the recruitment of civil servants, army officers and private soldiers, which are noted below.

The India Office maintained similar records of its activities, some in less detail than the Company, eg. The Minutes of the Council of India, but more often in much greater detail. The departmental records are voluminous, particularly after 1880, when a more modern registry and filing system were introduced. The main departments were:

- the Public and Judicial Department, which was concerned with internal administration, law and order, constitutional reforms and the Civil Service.

- the Political and Secret Department, which dealt with matters relating to the Indian States, and external relations.

- the Military Department, which organised the recruitment of personnel, and was concerned with the operations of the Indian Army.

The other basic departments were the Accountant-General's Department, the Financial Department and the Revenue Department. All the departments developed 'collections' of files on particular topics, so it is possible to trace the history of one subject over several months or years, in one volume rather than pursuing several different files in various volumes.

The papers produced in India are more varied, and usually more interesting than the records produced in London. They are also the most difficult to describe in a few words, for they range from the records of administration to printed reports on extremely abstruse subjects.

The core of these records is undoubtedly the set of Proceedings and Consultations of the Government of India and of the Presidencies and Provinces, 1702-1945, and amounting to over 46,500 volumes. The Proceedings provide a very full account of the activities of the administration and arose out of the simple system used by the East India Company in its early days. Each week the Governor and his Council, and their senior Civil Servants, met to deal with all the important business of the Presidency. If a despatch from London had arrived during the previous week it was read, together with reports from District Officers, and civil service departments. The Governor and his Councillors recorded their Minutes and Resolutions, orders were issued and the Secretaries instructed about the terms of their replies. All these matters were recorded in full, and a copy was made and sent to London. The copies were made by the most junior Civil Servants, the Writers, and later by Indian clerks. At first there was only one series of General or Public Consultations, but as administration replaced trade, the volume of business increased, and the Council met on different days to consider different subjects, and recorded their decisions in different sets of Consultations, for instance the earliest offshoots were the Military Consultations, followed by a Political series for relations with Indian States; later Education, Public Works and Railways followed. The Proceedings were not printed until 1860, and then only the most important matters were printed (A Proceedings) and sent to London, with summaries of the B Proceedings. Despite this innovation, the printed Proceedings continued to grow, and over 12,000 volumes had been sent to London by the 1920s, when the devolution of government under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms meant that the Proceedings became less important.

In addition to the Proceedings there are several of the groups of records which demand attention. At the District level there were printed Survey and Settlement reports, which provide useful information on all kinds of local history and social and economic conditions. These reports form part of the collection (about 70,000 volumes) of Official Publications. These include reports on central and local government, statistical series, civil service lists and civil service histories, reports on Indian meteorology and geology, and many other subjects.

The large collection of maps (65,000) covers India and neighbouring countries, and includes early manuscript surveys and the systematic Survey of India maps. Here you will find James Rennell's maps of India in the late eighteenth century, and plans of Indian towns and cities at various periods, notably an 1824 map of Calcutta measuring 18ft x 18ft.

Biographical Sources

Many people come to the IOLR in search of biographical information, either concerning a family member or someone who has lived and worked in India. The first records to be consulted should be the Ecclesiastical Returns and other sources in the Reading Room.

If the person served in the East India Company's civil services (of Bengal, Madras and Bombay) or was an officer in the Company's Armies, or was a private soldier in the Company's European Regiments, there are usually recruitment papers in the IOLR. Only the most basic details are available for private soldiers (date of birth, place of residence, trade and general appearance) but for Civil Servants and Army Officers there is usually a certificate of birth or baptism, evidence of education, and the name of the Director who nominated the individual. After the establishment of competitive entry into the Indian Civil Service in 1854, the papers of successful candidates can be found in the Public and Judicial Department files, while the papers of Army Officers are in the files of the Military Department.

Service in India can be followed in detail, for Civil Servants in the Civil Lists and Histories of Service, and for Army Officers in the service records for each of the Presidency Armies. If they died in India, there are copies of their wills and probates in the Accountant-General's records, and if they survived to draw their pensions in England, there are full records

of payments in the same series. Widows' pensions are also recorded, together with the allowances paid to their children - for boys until they were 21, and for girls until they married (and for life if they remained unmarried).

A full account of the biographical sources is given in Ian Baxter's *India Office Library and Records*. A brief guide to biographical sources (2nd ed. London: British Library, 1990).

Private Papers (European Manuscripts)

The wealth of material in the official records is almost overwhelming, but beyond them there is another world of private materials - diaries, letters and memoirs - which can bring into sharp focus the lives of many people who lived in India. The European Manuscripts section contains papers dating from the early years of the Company's activities in India to 1947 and in more recent years, and includes papers of a wide range of people, from Viceroys, Governors and senior Army Officers to businessmen, travellers, missionaries, teachers and private soldiers. The collection is still growing, and has been enriched by deposits and donations made by several BACSA members. Each new acquisition helps to illuminate some aspect of the British connection with India, such as the problems of family and social life in one area, or the joys of living in another.

At a senior level, Lord Clive's letters give us an insight into the complicated politics of India in the 18th century, while Lord Curzon's private letters reveal his real feelings about his colleagues. There are letters written in code, some of which have yet to be deciphered, others with some words written using the Greek alphabet in case of capture during the second Sikh war, and others written on thin slips of papers by Warren Hastings in 1781 when he was besieged in Chunar by Chait Singh. There are 100 collections with Mutiny connections, some with graphic accounts of escapes, suffering and sudden death. There are diaries of pleasant holidays in Kashmir, and others of arduous expeditions, like those of Lt-Col FM Bailey on the borders of Tibet and Burma. There are letters written by children, letters written by young ICS officers to their parents, and letters written by men and women who have spent many years in India. And many more categories could be added! Private papers provide the personal view which is hidden, or absent, in official documents, and allow

the reader to feel very close to people who wrote about their hopes and fears, joys and pains, one hundred or two hundred years ago.

Books and pictures

This survey would be incomplete without reference to the important collections in the India Office Library. The East India Company did not establish its Library until 1801, and made it not merely a repository for books and manuscripts collected by its servants in India, but also a museum for objects and natural history specimens - three elephants' heads were among the first accessions! The museum objects were dispersed to Kew, the Natural History Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum between 1874 and 1879, leaving the books in European languages, books and manuscripts in Indian languages, and pictorial materials to form the India Office Library.

For eighty years, the Library was entitled to a copy of every book published in India. Not all were taken, and when the privilege ended in 1947, the collection grew more slowly, but the result is a magnificent collection of 134,000 monographs, supplemented by 35,000 volumes of periodicals, and 10,800 reels of microfilms of newspapers. The collection of books in Indian languages, ancient and modern, is even larger at 272,000 volumes, together with a manuscript collection of 27,800 volumes, strong in Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and Prakrit, and with many illuminated manuscripts.

The collection of paintings, drawings, prints and photographs is amazing in its breadth and depth. There are paintings and drawings by all the major artists who visited India, and by the many amateur artists who lived and worked in India (23,000 drawings). Indian artists are represented in the collection of miniatures (Richard Johnson amassed 60 albums of them), Natural History Drawings (5,000), 'Company Paintings' (3,500) and Indian popular paintings (626). The collection of photographs ranges from the earliest days of photography, and the official photographs of the Archaeological Survey, through the professional photographers like Bourne and Shepherd who worked in India, and contributed to the lavish Viceregal albums, and thousands of amateur photographers. The whole collection amounts to some 225,000 prints.

A final word

All researchers come with different questions; some can be answered after a brief search, while others will need patient work in the IOLR after a much longer period or, as one scholar said facetiously, 'till death do us part'. Whatever your question, the raw material in the IOLR is waiting for you.

Richard J. Bingle

The British Continue to Haunt India

Believe it or not, though the British left India in 1947, their ghosts still continue to haunt India. In the hill station of Ooty in South India lived Mrs Carter (1902-1990), adjacent to the 165 year old St Stephen's Church. Mrs Carter must have been one of the oldest Britishers alive in India and had come to Ooty from Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) as a young bride to a tea-planter in 1919, when she was seventeen. In her cottage, Mrs Carter led a quiet life and her 105-year-old residence was among the earliest buildings in Ooty. When I met Mrs Carter in 1988, she said that, in her beautifully maintained gardens, she had often seen the apparition of a well dressed English lady, most probably an earlier occupant of the house, who still loved the garden well enough to pay occasional visits! 'The apparition is very quiet and harmless, except scaring away dogs in the vicinity.'

Another British spectre was well-known in the Glenview bungalow, present headquarters of the United Planters' Association of South India (UPASI) at Coonoor-Nilgris. Lady Canning had stayed in the Glenview in the 1850s. I met one of the former secretaries of the UPASI sometime back and the gentleman, then nearly eighty, said that the Glenview ghost was believed to be that of the owner of Glenview (then a hotel) an Englishman. In the early 1930s, unable to meet his liabilities, he committed suicide. Later, haunting his former hotel as a ghost, he engaged in nothing more annoying than physically 'transferring' guests from one room to another during the night without their being aware of the movement! You might have gone to sleep in the Western bedroom and would wake up in the Northern hall... The ex-Secretary's wife confided that on occasions when she was seriously ill, she had seen the ghost looking like 'an old

man with a nightcap on his head' standing by her bedside. The appearance was always heralded by a drop in the room's temperature, which made it very chilly even by the standards of a cool hillstation! The visits of the apparition ceased, when the 'haunted' portion of the hotel was burnt down in a fire in the 1970s - the newly constructed wing is free of its nocturnal visitor.

According to one British historian's estimate, no less than two million citizens of Great Britain - soldiers, missionaries, administrators, doctors, planters and others have died in India during the 347 years of British presence in the sub-continent. Lady Reading, the Vicereine of India in the 1920s, refers to the famous Ridge at Delhi as the 'place where there were English ghosts among all the Hindu, Central Asian, Mahratta and Afghan spectres'. As the battlefield between Indian sepoys and British soldiers in the 1857 uprising - the Sepoy Mutiny (known to Indians as the First War of Independence) - the Ridge was particularly eerie in the evenings in the turn of the century and in the officers' quarters over the main gate of the Red Fort, where British forces had been massacred, even stolid garrison gunners in the 20th century had felt uneasy. Inside the Red Fort, where in the initial days of the Mutiny, a number of British women and children had been brutally killed under a tree in the courtyard of the Diwan-i-Am (palace), it is said that horses would shy and avoid going below the tree for decades after the massacre.

Meerut, as the British cantonment, where the Sepoy Mutiny started, had a number of houses, with plaques affixed to the facade about the British officers and their families killed in the struggle. During the oral history sessions collected by the BBC for its 'Recollections of the Raj', one British Army Officer's wife told the interviewer that, during the early decades of the present century, there were a number of houses in Meerut into which no dog would enter - a sure sign of ghosts. Nobody could sleep inside these houses due to banging doors, blasts of chilly wind and similar mysterious manifestations. Often the British officers and their families had to spread their bedding out on cots in the compound for undisturbed rest.

In Calcutta, the house of Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India, is today a Women Teacher's Training College. For decades, local gardeners used to aver that on New Year's Eve a phantom coach

drawn by four horses would emerge from the dark and dashing out of the coach at the portico, the wraith-like figure of Warren Hastings would rush into the house to search for some items apparently hidden by him. It is known that some of the documents which would have been of great value in his defending himself during his Impeachment by the British Parliament in the late 18th Century were kept by him in a secret compartment in one of the almirahs. It had been lost and poor Hastings had been searching for the papers ever since. Anyhow as late as the 1930s, occupants of the mansion like Lady Braid-Taylor, wife of the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India had experienced ghosts & 'phantom carriages' in the 250-year old mansion.

Further, the British coming into contact with the non-Christian Hindu/Islam and animist religions of India had a great number of occult experiences which have been recorded. During my research for my book *British Ghosts in India* I had come across many instances of deaths caused to the *feringhee* (Britisher) not giving proper respect to the *Pirs* (Muslim holymen) and finding many 'prophecies' of Indian astrologers to Britishers coming remarkably true, decades after they were made.

Some of the British 'Ghosts & Occult Experiences' did elude me. One related to a forest officer in Malabar, who after hunting wild bison in the nearby forests found the 'ghosts' of the killed animals regularly attacking his quarters in the local Dak Bungalow. The *Tehsildar* (revenue official) who had been with the Britisher fending off the spectral attacks on the bungalow had died in the 1930s and his only nephew (in his sixties in 1996) who had heard of the incident from his uncle had migrated to Canada - 'address unknown'. Hence the story could not be verified. Another case of a Pir cursing the *feringhee* was in Karachi in the 1950s, when the visa office in the newly created Pakistan had to be abandoned as no one could live and 'survive' in the building. I was not able to get the information as to whether it was the British or American diplomatic mission.

Instances of *Pirs* threatening British pilots come from an area in the former North West Frontier. It is said that military aircraft pilots flying over this area often found themselves disoriented due to 'psychological reasons' as they were 'desecrating' by flying over the hallowed ground below. I remember reading about this 'vengeance' long ago but could not trace the book.

In July 1995 (fifty years after the end of World War II), the *Indian Express*, India's largest circulated daily, carried news that at Kohima, the capital of the Nagaland State of India, the local State Assembly Hall was becoming the haunt of the ghosts of the war dead - as the edifice had been built over the battle field where the Japanese fought the Allies. My efforts to find as to whether the ghosts were British or Indian or Japanese could not succeed despite writing to the Speaker of the Nagaland State Assembly.

The final question comes.. how many of the British ghosts are still active in the Indian sub-continent? In addition to Ooty, where Mrs Carter assured me in 1988 of seeing the 'lady ghost', I found that at the former British Residency building at Kota in Rajasthan, the ghost of the British Resident, Burton, murdered during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 was still active in the 1990s. In the 1960s one Indian Administrative Services officer had experiences with the ghost of a British revenue official (killed during a tiger-hunt in the 1920s in a remote district of Gujerat. But, by and large the British ghosts seem to be abandoning their haunts in their former Empire.

KRN Swamy

Local Projects

Mention the word 'projects' in any charitable organisation and at once one tends to think of funds and appeals for donations. With BACSA there is a difference in that we resist the temptation of mounting a major UK-initiative for a particular cemetery crying out for urgent restoration until there is evidence of a strong enough local group who can, not only carry out the work in terms of converting financial grants into bricks and mortar for effective restoration, but also identify themselves with the project and see it as their heritage - whether it be in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma or elsewhere in South-East Asia - and so have the stamina to maintain the cemetery on a regular on-going basis. On-going maintenance by the local group is an essential element in deciding the priority of grants. As a matter of principle, BACSA confines its grants to work of a specific kind, such as repair of walls, restoration of tombs, re-roofing the chowkidar's quarters, erecting a new gate, arranging for electricity and water supply

etc; leaving the wages of the chowkidar and regular maintenance to the local committee. BACSA also looks to the local group for a share in the financial commitment so that we can be seen as topping-up their own efforts rather than taking the lead. It is their cemetery in their land and unless they have the will and means to look after it, any funds we may give for restoration will only survive a short time.

In the 20 years since BACSA started, we have been involved in over 100 cemetery projects covering almost every country from the Persian Gulf to Hong Kong. The focus of our activities has been the subcontinent of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh but there have been projects in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and even Japan. Some of these have been on a large scale in proportion to our own resources, and some have been quite small, just enough we hoped to encourage a local group to do something about it themselves. As with most human endeavours, much always depends on the leadership of one or two individuals, and in this scatter of projects throughout South Asia will be found a General here, an Admiral there, a Padre (usually more pre-occupied with the living than the dead!) a headmaster of a school, a film star, a retired senior civil servant, a businessman or woman; each in their own way striving to activate a small local group to take an interest in their heritage. BACSA in the early stages of a project often seeks to record and publish a survey of the graves with short biographical notes so that the dilapidated stones carry a message of the lives of those interred and increase awareness of their social and historical significance. In years to come these places may be regarded by the local citizens in the same way as we now look at Roman remains in Britain without political and religious overtones.

The fascination of anything to do with the East is the infinite variety which defies any generalisation that can be applied to our activities. In some cemeteries we become involved in a co-operative effort with INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) at Kotah, for example; with the Archaeological Departments of both India and Pakistan, at Kanpur and Chilianwalla respectively; with the British High Commissions of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and the British Embassy Rangoon over various projects; and the Planters in Malaysia at Batu Gajah. At other times BACSA is on its own with a solitary benefactor, attempting to put a small cemetery or outstanding historical monument, such as

to the Bengal Artillery at Dum Dum, in order. Appeals for help from cemeteries wherever situated and however small have seldom been turned down provided our two conditions of self-help and financial viability for future maintenance are fulfilled. The self-help can take many forms; at its simplest it is a guarantee to match our grant 50/50, or if this seems too much for a small local group of very limited means the percentage is lowered to, say, 25% and if this is impractical but the determination to undertake a joint project is there, voluntary work of clearing and recording inscriptions is accepted as a substitute, sometimes undertaken by school-children.

Everywhere this oriental variety exists; in one project we were asked for and provided a steel spade and fork ('made in Britain' specified!) in another a bicycle (of local manufacture) so that the person in charge of the project could get there without having to pay for a tonga. In some cases the project is to pick up the pieces after an enforced conversion of a cemetery to another use, in others it is a request to provide a white-ant proof storage place for the 'Hatch/Match/Despatch' Registers like the steel cabinet we provided for the Bishop at Shillong.

This variety and diversity extends to the problems encountered. One of the first difficulties to overcome is the transfer of currency. We have found from experience that the most sure way is through an Interbank Transfer but this can also be the slowest and subject to bureaucratic delays if being sent to a Branch in the 'mofussil'. Material, like cement, is sometimes in short supply, the monsoon interrupts, there is a postal strike and letters fail to arrive, making communications tenuous. There is seldom a dull moment in the saga of each project! Whatever the uncertainties, BACSA with its charitable status in mind needs to ensure that the Grants we send, usually by instalments, are put to their intended use, and this is generally done through 'before' and 'after' photographs and also by requesting members visiting the subcontinent to report on the progress being made at cemeteries on their route. This is now mainly co-ordinated through our Area Representatives, 20 in number; the photographs being displayed and reports made at our six-monthly meetings. The role of Area Representatives needs some explanation as it has developed in the course of the last few years and illustrates the growth and extension of BACSA over the last 20 years.

At first, as one would expect of a very young organisation, we took on few projects as we had no reserve funds and when it was agreed in principle to assist, we set about raising funds for that specific project. Examples of our earliest appeals of this type are for the South Park Street cemetery in Calcutta, the Daudpur cemetery in Bihar, the resiting of the Silchar Church plaques at Shillong, the rescuing of the monuments removed from the Mercara cemetery to a new walled site nearby (under the watchful eye of Field Marshal Cariappa), and the restoration of Bannu cemetery on the North-West Frontier in response to an urgent appeal for help from Dr Ruth Coggan, daughter of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, an appeal immediately and generously met by numerous BACSA members who had served there and Indian Army Regimental Associations. Happily these early projects were spread across the map of the subcontinent, and Chittagong cemetery in Bangladesh also received its share of treatment soon afterwards, so that there was no undue concentration of effort in one area and the support was drawn from different sectors of our growing membership; those in commerce were naturally drawn to Calcutta, those in the Army to Bannu, the Indian Civil Service and Indian Police Officers were prominent in the Bihar appeal and those staunch individualists, the Planters, responded to the appeal in Assam and Coorg.

As the number of projects that BACSA took on increased, it was still involved in monitoring progress of the earlier ones which often took several years to build up a local infrastructure capable of handling the work, so members of the Executive Committee took over responsibility for particular projects in places in which they were most familiar and had personal contacts. This process continued until a point was reached five years ago with projects developing or under consideration in every Province of India - from Assam to West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madras, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Bombay and Maharashtra, Gujerat, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh - it became desirable to appoint Area Representatives to each of them and some to particular towns with several cemeteries, such as Lucknow and Allahabad in the U.P. Through the local knowledge and contacts these representatives develop, a network of information is emerging to bring potential projects to our notice, report on existing ones and also assist in the building up of records of inscriptions within their area.

Any account of so many projects over a period as long as 20 years is likely to contain an 'up-side' and a 'down-side', in modern jargon. To take the 'down-side' first; there have been examples where after a promising start nothing much has been achieved, often due to the departure from the scene of one of the key motivators of the project; there have been allegations of financial irregularities, especially when too much responsibility has been placed on an individual rather than being answerable to a committee; there have been sad cases of intervention by government or local authorities to clear a cemetery as part of town planning, most recently at Rangoon and Singapore; and there have been cases of *force majeure* where either the elements have intervened in the form of a flood and landslide, or terrorist activities have made visits and communications well-nigh impossible, as in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Kashmir and parts of Assam where our projects were seriously impeded. Yet another cause of failure and enforced inactivity when all around appear willing and ready to go ahead with a restoration project, is the rivalry between different interested parties; sometimes between separate church denominations, sometimes between local authorities and conservation groups. These disappointments need to be faced up to and not tucked away out of sight as there is a natural inclination to do when celebrating an anniversary.

On the other hand there is much to congratulate ourselves on and our many volunteer workers and supporters here and overseas. BACSA has produced over 20 cemetery surveys, many of them forerunners and closely linked to restoration projects. Six recent projects illustrate some of the most successful aspects of our endeavours. South Park Street cemetery in Calcutta must take pride of place and although the story of its restoration has been told before, with its combination of local effort and support from BACSA members, we can now report it reaching greater heights after a short period in the doldrums, and I quote from the Foreword to the third edition of the forthcoming booklet by Jennifer Garwood, daughter of our Council member Richard Magor:

> 'In the last twelve months 800 visitors have recorded their names in the Visitors Book kept by the Chowkidar at the Gate House. Some come in search of links with their ancestors; others to bring themselves closer to the history that breathes from every tomb; yet others simply to escape the hustle and bustle of Calcutta city life in the beauty and peace of the cemetery.'

The Jacobabad Cemetery, Pakistan, before restoration

The Jacobabad Cemetery after restoration in 1996

And she goes on to describe the work that has been done in the past with tributes to Aurelius Khan the late Chairman of APHCI, our 'sister' organisation in Calcutta, Maurice Shellim, Sheilah Rome and others in the 1980s, then a period of running-down again with the departure of these key figures and now a resurgence in 1996 with Williamson Magor, the tea company, taking over the maintenance of the central area and the restoration of the tombs there. BACSA has played its part and provided funds for the repairs to the porch and gate house; and all should be completed this year, a splendid achievement.

A contrast to the large scale activity in Calcutta is our project at Landour, a cantonment set in the Hills above Mussoorie where a small group of enthusiasts drawn from the local community and led by the well known novelist, Ruskin Bond; the film star, Victor Bannerjee; a master from the Woodstock School and the local padre, much assisted by a BACSA member from New Zealand, Angela Middleton, have made a video of the cemetery and carried out a programme of restoration with the aid of the local army authorities, culminating in setting up a special endowment fund to support the employment of a chowkidar on a permanent basis. The target was set at a modest level and a chowkidar-cum-mali is now on site with his family. BACSA contributed to both the restoration work and the endowment fund and support is continuing to be received from visitors and well-wishers, some in the form of clothes for the children and help with their school expenses; a great combined effort on a small scale which shows what can be done.

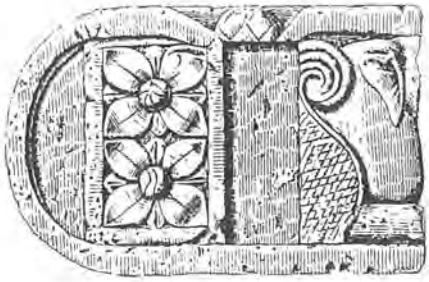
The same pattern of self-sufficiency through a co-operative effort of the local community and outside conservation-minded bodies is seen in Pakistan (Jacobabad, described elsewhere by Sue Farrington), in Bangladesh (Chittagong, due to the tremendous efforts of Ronald Bose), in Thailand (Chiang Mai, due to consistent endeavours over a period of years by Roy Hudson), and in Indonesia (Bencoolen, through the combined efforts of Alan Harfield and Norman Campbell).

The message that comes through loud and clear is that preservation of cemeteries depends first and foremost on the effort and interest the local community is prepared to take. Money enters later into the equation and in some proportion to the local commitment. As BACSA enters another decade there is a dawning sense of reality which conflicts with our

present desire to answer every call for help, and points in the direction of concentrating on a few of the more historical sites in each major area and make them flourish as 'Show Places' to attract tourists and as a source of local pride. Quite apart from actual achievements on the ground in the way of repairs, restoration and recording, BACSA can claim to have started a conservation movement in South Asia which defies boundaries of race, religion and culture and has encouraged an ever-increasing number of local citizens to participate in our activities; an orthodox Brahmin at Sibpur, a Muslim benefactor at Dhaka, a prominent student at Delhi University, the list grows each year and particularly among the younger post-Independence generation, which is remarkable.

And what can our own members do, apart from the generous support which is always forthcoming for our various projects? One of the best ways is through cemetery visits and showing an interest which gives tremendous encouragement to the local group struggling to keep things going. Only a few fortunate members are likely to travel to the subcontinent and further East each year but to assist them, BACSA is preparing a Guide with town maps to help in the location of the different cemeteries, often hidden away behind modern buildings or in some remote part of the town. Visitors' first point of reference should be to the appropriate Area Representative who can brief them on any special assignments such as photographs and reports required on particular cemetery projects. Nearly everyone has a part to play.

Theon Wilkinson



BACSA Fiction

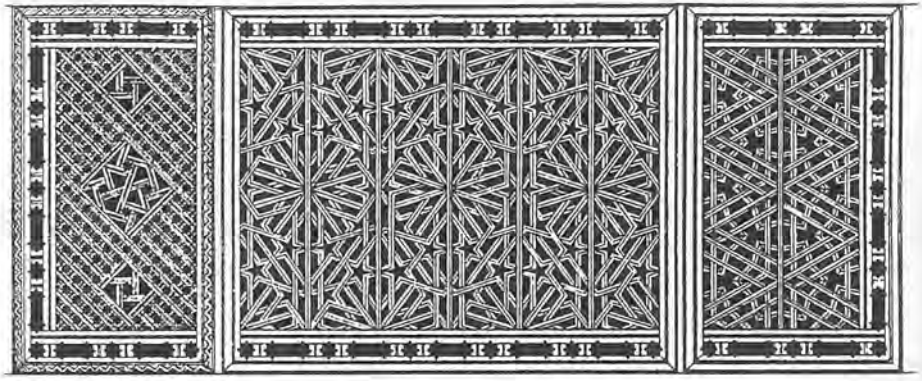
Among BACSA's many talented members are some authors of real note, internationally recognised prize-winners, who have written novels and short stories set in India. Post 1947 fiction, written in English, has understandably diverged from what used to be known as 'Anglo-Indian' literature, from Rudyard Kipling, Maud Diver, Flora Annie Steele and many others. Very few stories today are set in Imperial India, perhaps because, as *Chowkidar* has shown over the last 20 years, truth really *was* stranger than fiction. Although the 1857 uprising still attracts some writers, only the late JG Farrell in *The Siege of Krishnapur* and his unfinished *The Hill Station* came close to capturing that peculiar Victorian character of our recent forefathers. An underrated book *Run out the Raj*, (1975) by the late Dennis Castle, was one of the very few novels with a humorous approach to the British in India. Undoubtedly there was much to provoke amusement, albeit sometimes of a surreal nature, yet the burden of government seemed to weigh down the creative spirit. A sense of humour was not something the British took with them to India, although satire travelled well, usually at the Indian's expense. Paul Scott's quartet *The Jewel in the Crown* is clearly the most serious chronicle of Indo-British relations written in retrospect and, at present, remains the benchmark for the 'Raj' novel. It is sobering to think that undivided India, still vivid to us, is now the realm of the historical novelist.

Contemporary novels by Indian and Anglo-Indian writers have established a small, but steady following in the West. Like any recent trend, they are evolving into various genres, from the mystical realism of Salman Rushdie's earlier books, to the Vikram Seth blockbuster *A Suitable Boy*, which strangely, was much more popular *outside* India. But a much better novel, *Trotternama*, by I. Allen Sealy which chronicled an Anglo-Indian family over 200 years was barely noticed in England. It is really only by browsing in good Indian bookshops that one gets an idea of the astonishingly large range of English fiction published there, for the majority of these locally produced paperbacks will not find their way westwards. Curiously, the rest of the subcontinent, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, does not appear to be producing its own indigenous writers, working in English.

Books by British writers set in post-Independent India have been altogether different, now that the imperial mission has ended. Who could have imagined that the fictional Bombay detective, Inspector Ghote, would capture such a large audience? All the more remarkable since his creator, HR Keating, had never been to India when he began his series, although he has now. BACSA member Lee Langley's last three novels have been set in India and the Andaman Islands, and her short story, 'The Sugar Palace' written specially for this issue has the same bittersweet blend of past and present, as does Gillian Tindall's story 'The Great Eastern Adventure'.

Ruskin Bond has always lived in India, apart from a brief stay in the Channel Islands in the 1950s. Undervalued in the West, he has been writing about 'small-town India' as he describes it, all his life. The story published here, 'Of Tombstones, Tigers and a Coffin' is typical of his seemingly effortless style in capturing a particular moment in time. Rooted in India, his Indian characters have none of the stiffness or stereotyping about them that often spoils modern British writing on the subcontinent.

All three short stories were commissioned by the Editor, and they have subsequently gone on to have a life of their own. 'The Sugar Palace' will be published in Granta this year, 'The Great Eastern Adventure' was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in July 1996, and 'Tombstones, Tigers and a Coffin' will appear in Ruskin Bond's next book. The fourth story 'The Debt' by Malcolm Murphy, a BACSA Executive member, was offered unsolicited to the Editor, who, never slow to spot talent, readily accepted it for publication. The author is now working on a collection of short stories.



The Great Eastern Adventure

by Gillian Tindall

My uncle and aunt had been planning their trip to the east for so long that, by the time they finally undertook it, it had become almost unimaginably momentous.

They had always been great travellers. In the 1950s, when my parents looked no further than Littlehampton, Aunt Susie and Uncle Trevor were already connoisseurs of Brittany and the Tyrol. Spain was out of bounds, till Franco fell: Uncle Trevor, at sixteen, had tried unsucessfully to run away to fight in the Civil War, and he was a person who stuck to his views. But they colonised Italy and Greece, ventured on the white dust roads of Yugoslavia and Turkey. Later came eastern Europe, and Russia. They mastered strange currencies and alphahets; they were intrepid with phrase books and unfamiliar dishes, briskly unconcerned with plumbing. "I cannot bear," Aunt Susie used to say, "the sort of people who, when you ask them politely about their blasted holiday, tell you about the *loos*."

Their great strength lay not in a conscious intention to keep ahead of mass tourism but in a blithe refusal to recognise its existence, or even to acknowledge the effects of time and change. So it was that their Great Eastern Adventure (as they began to call it) figured in their joint imagination much as it would have done in the days of ocean liners. It was a once-in-a-lifetime extravagance into which they must pack all that they possibly could. Not just India, but also Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and, finally, Beijing.

At least they weren't attempting Japan as well.

"But Auntie, south-east Asia's a whole world in itself, before you even get started on China - let alone India, of course..."

India, enormous, trailed between us, opaque with meaning. "I mean," I said uselessly, "wouldn't it be more rewarding - much less tiring and actually, perhaps, cheaper in the end - if you were to go, say, just to India this time and save Thailand and Malaysia for next year...?"

But Auntie Susie widened her eyes like an obstinate doll, a trick learnt in her inconclusive career as an actress before she married. Even at her age, she has rather beautiful eyes, disconcertingly dark in that carefully made-up face under its aureole of hair that has been spun-glass fair for so long that I think she has forgotten herself what its natural colour might be.

"Darling, you may *well* be right - but the fact is, we've been planning our Great Eastern Adventure for ages, and just to change it now to a series of

cheap package hols - well, it would seem the tiniest bit *dreary*. And your Uncle Trevor's set his heart on this big trip. You know how he likes to plan!"

Yes, I did know. But I also knew that whenever my aunt referred like that to 'your Uncle Trevor' she meant *Don't bother me about this*. And I knew too that jolly references to India as just one part of a Dream trip to the Fabulous Orient were being used to dissemble a central fact about Aunt Susie which, for once, set her apart from her husband. India wasn't the Fabulous Orient to her at all. Long ago she was born and grew up there. India was once our family home.

Never my home. I was born years after that War that is a watershed in the generations. Years after India became independent, that is, when families like ours set sail for the alien, greyer, milder place they had traditionally called Home. By the time I was born I think that my parents, with the nervous self-protection of chameleons, had become grey and mild themselves. So they remained, cooking Irish stew and rhubarb and custard, parrying stray questions with vague references to the colonial service - and to a Spanish grandmother whose looks we had all allegedly inherited... Not that there were many questions. In the 1950s and '60s few people in England seemed to have any interest in the lost empire. So, with a deceptive ease, my family disinherited themselves from their complicated, nourishing origins. They were so successful in this that when at last I began travelling eastwards as part of my work for an international organisation, India assailed me like an unexpected blow between the eyes, an explosion of grief and pain...

But this is Aunt Susie's story, not mine. And Susie has, for so long, been spreading a light veil of uncertainty over her age, and hence over her youth, that the true contours of her life have long been undiscoverable. By her own account, she was sent 'back' to England in her teens, to boarding school. But then, unless she is even younger than she pretends to be, which is hardly likely, this schoolgirl period would have coincided with the War, not a likely time for such a voyage. And wasn't she also, at some point, supposed to have been in the WAC(I)s - and also to have entertained the troops as part of an ENSA team?

The more I have learnt about India on my various visits there the clearer has become my image of Aunt Susie as one of those raven-haired belles of Anglo-Indian Bombay, dancing the night away on Colaba in the arms of British officers, bravely pretending a familiarity with a homeland to which, at that point, she had never been.

So this, all this, was the background to Susie and Trevor's Great Eastern Adventure. Not that Uncle Trevor had any stake of his own in India (his family were Welsh, and Socialist) but he was protective of Susie. He, if no one else, must have known that for his wife to revisit the country of her childhood after a lifetime away would be an ordeal. So, as I see it, they colluded in wrapping the whole venture up with a lot of other things as if in expensive gold paper, rolling it in a magic carpet. India, to hear them mention it, was to be a relatively brief excursion at the start of their odyssey, centring on Udaipur, Jaipur and Jaisalmer, on jewels and carved casements and elephants.

A delapidated bungalow off Colaba Causeway shaken with modern traffic, a Christian church where hangs a memorial tablet to my grandfather, the Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway engineer: such scraps as I had furtively sought out on my own visits to Bom - these things were not on Susie's itinerary.

Yet, as the exciting departure date drew near, she began to express worries about Trevor's health.

"I just hope he's *up* to it, darling. I'm afraid you were right when you said it is rather a full schedule."

I recognised my turn to reassure.

"Oh, I should think he'll be fine. After all, he's completely over that bronchitis he had last winter, isn't he? And he's much better than you are at taking little naps when he needs to."

"I just hope the other people don't get on his nerves. In the hotels, I mean. And all that room service we're promised. Your Uncle Trevor's never much liked big hotels, as you know. He likes to feel independent."

"Mmm."

"We'd really have prefered little, out-of-the-way guest houses, but..."

"Oh Auntie, I told you: places like that just wouldn't be suitable. Not in India. For one thing, they'd be full of German and Australian hippies these days, and you know how Uncle Trevor'd love that! I hear the Lake Palace Hotel at Udaipur is lovely."

But, like someone insuring against ill-fortune by predicting it, Susie conscientiously went on worrying and imparting her worries, in disguised form, to me. By the morning when I saw them off at Heathrow I had become secretly convinced that what my poor aunt was doubtful about was really herself. She must have feared that when they landed in India, and the magic doors opened onto tropical dust and smells and the caws of crows, it wouldn't just be suppressed memories that greeted her but a whole other self, come back to wait for her on the hot tarmac.

At the Departure gate, while Trevor was fussing precisely with passports and boarding cards, she suddenly muttered to me "Do you think his *colour's* all right?"

"His colour?" For a moment I was at a loss, for I had been vaguely thinking of another sort of colour. Before he went bald and freckly, Trevor was a pale, sandy-haired man.

"Since that bronchitis."

"Auntie, he's *fine*. Honestly." Actually, now I looked at her, she didn't look particularly well herself. For the first time, I felt it was the crepey cheek of an old woman that I kissed goodbye.

Late that evening I got a call from Bombay. A polite Indian voice asking for me. The Manager of the Leila Kepinski hotel near the airport.

Auntie Susie, I thought, in that half second before I identified myself: it's her. I knew it. Going back like that. Something awful has happened to her.

But it was Trevor. Susie had been right about him after all. They always were very close. Having no children of their own.

When the Manager put Susie herself on to talk to me, she kept saying "It was so quick, darling. So quick. I never imagined... The doctor they called said he wouldn't have suffered, wouldn't even have known... You don't think he did, do you?"

"I'm *sure* he didn't, if the doctor said not."

"We'd arrived not long before and were unpacking in this nice room... Then - just like that..."

"You'll come straight home with him, of course? If you put me back to the Manager I'll talk to him about - about an undertaker and everything. There must be standard international arrangements..."

A tiny pause. Then - "Oh. Well actually, darling, I've thought. And I don't want the poor darling dragged round the world in a box. I want him buried here."

"In India. Are you sure?"

"Why not? There's a big Christian cemetery in Bombay. I happen to know that," said my aunt bravely.

I thought of saying: But Uncle Trevor wasn't noticeably Christian. Or I might have said: You've never been apart in life. Why leave him now under mango trees on the other side of the world?

Instead, I said, "If that's what you really want, I'll fly out at once... Yes, Auntie, of *course* I will, don't be silly."

I meant: how could I possibly leave you on your own, there of all places? Yet, when at last, after a journey of nerve-wracking delays, I stood beside her in the cemetery at Sewri, where a shanty-town hangs perilously on a slope above the older crosses, I found she was less alone than I had feared. The Anglican clergy of Bombay, hearing of the plight of the poor lady from U-K so suddenly widowed, had rallied round, it seemed. A Mrs Joseph, matron of an old people's Home and 'a pillar of our tight-knit community here', as the very dark-skinned Vicar put it, had been particularly kind. She had invited Aunt Susie to stay in her flat and, rather to my surprise, Susie had accepted. But then she always has been an intrepid and adaptable traveller.

That was two years ago. Aunt Susie never did get to Thailand and all those places, and now I suppose she never will. But she has been back twice already to Bombay, once with me, when she spent a lot of time in the cemetery chatting up the old watchman in a pidgin-Hindi I never heard her use before - and again this year when she has been staying with her friend Mrs Joseph. The two of them are planning a holiday together next year, to a hill station called Matheran where there are no cars and they can stay in a nice, clean little boarding house Mrs Joseph knows. You see, it turns out that Beryl Joseph and Susie were at school together though, as both their surnames had changed, it took them a little while to recognise each other.

I have read a theory that all the journeys we make in our lives are really detours on a long, curving trajectory back to the first place, or a version of it, where our hearts and minds opened fully for the first time. This seems to fit Aunt Susie's life well, doesn't it? But I am left with a question: all those years, what was poor old Uncle Trevor travelling to find? Surely it wasn't just the grave in a hot, strange land that he missed in Spain when he was young?

Gillian Tindall *has pursued a career as a novelist, journalist, biographer and, increasingly as an historian for the last 30 years. Chance took her to India in the late 1970s, shortly after she had published an historical study of London's growth, and the eventual result was her much-acclaimed 'City of Gold: the Biography of Bombay' (published by Temple-Smith in 1982 and Penguin in 1992). She retains a long-term interest in India as the story published here shows, but more recently the focus of her research has been on 19th century France. Her prize-winning 'Celestine, voices for a French Village' was published by Sinclair-Stevenson in 1995 (Minerva paperback 1996). She lives in London with her husband, whose own work takes him frequently to south-east Asia. They have a grown up son.*

The Sugar Palace

by Lee Langley

Train-hopping round Italy had, after all, not been such a good idea; carriages crowded, timetables complicated, the towns full of tourists or delegates to trade fairs. They swarmed, clogging the piazzas and narrow streets, transforming the mysterious into the accessible by their presence and, worse, their voices - "...his most famous Crucifixion-" ... "Three stars in the green Michelin..." Where Susan had expected timeless contemplation she found two-week packages.

Finally, in Bologna, when their quiet hotel exploded into Activity Fashion week, Josie made one of her suggestions: why not hire a car, get out of town and continue the rest of the holiday by road? "Cut our losses, shall we?"

It was usually Josie who took the decisions which modified existing plans - "Perhaps the overnight ferry?" Or, "I thought lunch early today, say twelve-thirty?" The question-mark was rhetorical. Widowed young and mother of three, she had long ago learned how to twitch the reins of authority.

Susan, unwed, depended on by no-one, invariably acquiesced. The question-mark was unchallenged.

They were driving through a small town on the way to Turin when, up a side street, Susan caught a glimpse of a big, pale house set back from wrought-iron gates beyond a drive edged with cypresses. She cried out "Stop! Stop!"

Josie slammed on the brakes, alarmed. "What? What is it?"

"That house back there. I recognise it!"

"Should we know it? Is it in the book?"

"No, no!"

Josie frowned. "Then-"

Susan got out of the car and crossed the road, blinking in the noonday heat, her eyes scratchy with dust.

The dust was white. In India, she recalled, it had been dun-coloured, lying thickly on the roadside, soft as velvet. At sunset, churned by the wheels of ox-carts, it glowed pink, like cheap face-powder; sunset was called cow-dust hour. In the rainy season it turned to a lake of mud, a slick the consistency of paint that sprayed carts and cars to a uniform clay beige. But this dust was white, floating like a wedding veil.

She stood, staring up at the villa with its square tower, its incongruous verandah. It looked empty, the windows shuttered, the steps littered with dried leaves. She heard Josie's brisk, commonsense voice: "Press on, shall we?" The rhetorical question mark.

Susan said "I need a drink."

There was a cafe at the crossroads and Josie ordered small black coffees. Susan kept glancing across at the villa, a memory fluttering like a half-seen movement at the periphery of vision.

"I know that house..."

The dust settled, coating her shoes with a fine, even layer, like icing sugar. That's what the cook books always said, a last instruction: "Turn out the cake and when cool, dust with icing sugar-" She reached for a lump of sugar and let it dissolve on her tongue. And everything came into focus. Peliti's restaurant in Delhi, and a house with cypresses and palms where one afternoon, old people sat and talked about the past.

"It's the Villa Peliti," she said.

They had told her there were two villas, the other one "back home" in Italy. This was where it had all begun, where young Federico Peliti had changed from sculptor to cake-maker.

A lifetime ago, clinging tightly to her grandfather's hand, she had walked up the drive of the Villa Caragnano in Delhi, where a tall, grey-haired man waited on the verandah. Not Federico, he was history by then, dead more than thirty years before. She was six and it was her birthday: August 15th 1947, a birthday being celebrated, it seemed, by the whole city, with parades and firecrackers and music in the street, which surprised her: she had been told she would have no party this year.

They went to tea at the Villa Caragnano, she and her grandparents, and while she played with glass marbles from an ebony box, shaking them gently so that they chinked one against another, the grown-ups talked over her head.

Crawling under the table after a runaway marble, curtained behind the heavy chenille cloth, she could barely hear the voices, quiet in the dim room, the blinds at the windows keeping out the sun, the overhead fan turning with a soft, steady groan, like the breathing of a rickshaw-wallah pulling them along. (She had asked her grandmother once, "Aren't we too heavy, three of us, and just the one of him?" and her grandfather explained that it was all to do with the laws of physics; motion and gravity, and it was really quite easy for the rickshaw-wallah.)

Susan, hot even in the shade of the cafe awning, said "I need a Coke" and saw Josie's look of surprise. "Are you sure? Tea would be more refreshing in the long run."

The long run. It sounded so tiring, the long run. She recalled how she had cracked one marble against another that afternoon, viciously, feeling excluded. The past was always present for old people, the long-ago always there to be summoned up, comfortingly unchanged. Muffled, in the high-ceilinged room, the voices rose and fell, overlapping as they talked of Signor Peliti, who had begun by sculpting in marble but who built his true fame on foundations of sugar.

It had been considered somewhat un-English for Lord Mayo, newly appointed Viceroy in 1869, to hold a competition for a chef and a pastrycook. A Frenchman might worry about what was placed before him at table, but an Englishman should surely have more important things on his mind? And Federico, the triumphant confectioner, was an unlikely winner: graduate of the Turin School of Art, a sculptor. "An amateur in the true sense of the word," the Viceroy explained.

Federico arrived in Delhi, bringing with him a vast array of Italian platters and pans and curious utensils designed for the arcane business of working in sugar. He whipped and creamed and baked and chilled; he built gilded Fabergé cages enclosing arrangements of fruit, the caramel filigree fine as spiders' webs.

He created weightless structures of pastry and exotic sweetmeats and perilous towers of cream and chocolate. But his masterpieces were the sugar sculptures he created as table decorations: three-masted schooners, white as though frozen in some polar ice floe; extravagantly detailed flower-pieces coloured from life, monuments and castles towering three feet tall above the table, all carved with delicacy and precision. Perhaps most admired of all was a pink palace with latticed balconies, a blue ornamental pool glimpsed in an inner courtyard with lotus blossoms no bigger than lentils 'floating' on its surface.

Federico loved his work, but what he loved best was the time between: after the excitement of creation, the applause of diplomats and princes, came an interlude of stillness when he wandered through the empty rooms, the shelves and tables and floors scrubbed, a smell of wet stone in the air, implements ranged in readiness for the next challenge.

Another banquet behind him, two hundred at table, including several maharajas and a royal guest of honour, Federico could relax, elegant in his

velvet smoking jacket and cap with silk tassel. A thickly-starred sky and palms tipped with moonlight glimmered beyond the window to the verandah. Yes, a cigar, then bed- But tonight the stillness was broken by a sound. Hardly more than a scrape, a sigh, from the next room, but the room should have been empty. He was alone in the house; a thief could have slipped past the chowkidar at the gate. He opened the door an inch, and stared, astonished at a scene of kitchen chaos: heaps of sugar and pots and pans littered the shelves, on the table; an oozing mess unevenly blotched with colour. And crouched over it a young Indian, one of the kitchen servants, his white clothes streaked with sugar pink.

Federico was at a loss: the boy was a keen worker, though required to do little more than scrape down the work surfaces and wash the utensils. "Arun? What is going on here?"

Haltingly, the explanation came out. There was a bride-to-be, a girl much sought-after. Arun had felt a need to impress. Boasting of his employment with Signor Peliti he had described the sugar sculptures, particularly the pink palace, with such enthusiasm, such detailed vividness that his listeners had gained the impression...

"You told the family the palace was of your making."

Silence. A tragic nod.

Disaster had followed: "She said she would much cherish such a palace, it could be a betrothal gift from me to her."

So he had watched Signor Peliti at work-

"And helped yourself to my stores, it seems-"

"No! I brought my own, sahib. I did not steal." He stared down at the marble slab. "Perhaps I shall now kill myself. It will be more easy than to see her under such circumstances." Arun's slender face had grown gaunt, his eyes dull with loss of hope.

Federico said, "You will lose the girl if she does not receive this gift?"

"Oh no. The marriage is arranged. But what will be lost is the way she looks at me. With admiration."

"Is that so important? With everything arranged?"

Arun said, "I am loving her. It is not required, but I do."

Well. Enough time had been wasted here. The boy had learned a lesson, let the young fool off with a reprimand and that would be the end of it.

From the depths of Arun's tunic-clad breast a sound reached Federico's ears, tremulous, repressed, but audible. A sob.

Federico stubbed out his cigar and stroked his moustache impatiently. He patted the pink splodge. "Throw this out. And scrape down the marble." He reached for an apron. "We must start from the beginning."

They set to work, Federico barking orders, Arun quick to follow. They set sugar and water boiling, added drops of cochineal, the crimson spreading to an even pink. Then, with a splash of vinegar, the syrup foamed and seethed like lava. "Now," said Federico, "We pour, so, and leave it to dry." Later, with his narrow blade he gouged and hollowed and trimmed, shaping the slender pillars, whittling the lattice-work windows.

While they worked, the moon moved on, the sky paled. By morning, the palace was finished.

In the gloom of the villa Caragnano the fan turned, groaning softly and the child beneath the chenille cloth pressed her hot cheeks to the marble floor. The old voices droned on.

"So the boy's honour was saved and he and his betrothed presumably lived happily ever after?"

"As to that, not altogether. When Arun proudly carried home the pink sugar palace his father was most displeased: it seems the design was inspired by a Moghul monument, hence Muslim and quite unsuitable for a Hindu betrothal. He slapped Arun and told him he was a fool. And after marriage the girl emerged as less than ideal, proving to have a temper that was easily aroused and less easily mollified."

But by then Arun had developed a passion for sugar sculpture and demonstrated such ability that in time Signor Peliti allowed him to create a Viceregal centrepiece unaided.

When Lord Mayo embarked on his next extended tour of duty, Arun went with him, as Chief Pastrycook. Under cramped and difficult conditions he produced dazzling examples of his sugary art, and even when they boarded a ship and headed out into the Indian ocean, Arun each night presented Lord and Lady Mayo and their retinue with sculptures not unworthy of the Delhi master.

He was experimenting with a complex set piece when after some days at sea they anchored off the Andaman Islands and the Viceroy was rowed ashore to inspect the British garrison. By the end of the afternoon Arun, shaking with elation, knew this sculpture was his finest achievement.

Lord Mayo was ready to return to the ship. At the Port Blair jetty, a boat waited as the Viceroy and his party came down the steep path after inspecting the vast, five-tentacled Cellular Jail where convicted murderers

transported from the mainland served life sentences. The sun was almost on the horizon, the sky a radiant pink, and the Viceroy stopped to admire the sunset. The entire party paused, their faces turned to the west, the scene bathed in a rosy glow that was rapidly fading to grey. In the waiting boat, the sailors, too, were watching the sun disappear. Only Arun, there as a favour, was watching the Viceroy, waiting to catch his eye. So only he saw the dark figure racing down the path like a shadow, moving so fast that Arun felt a movement in the air like a wind, a moment before the man leapt on Mayo, clinging to his back like a tiger on its prey, his arm rising and falling. It all happened too fast, and then it was too late. The attacker was wrenched from the Viceroy's back; Mayo staggered slightly. He seemed unhurt. Then slowly he toppled into the water, the sea now too dark for the blood welling from his body to be visible. From the boat Arun had already dived into the water and he reached Lord Mayo first, holding him above the surface until he was dragged into the boat. Arun followed, huddled small, shaking. He knew it was too late. The Viceroy would never see his centre piece, the shoal of flying fish rising from the sea, their curved bodies gleaming silver, fashioned in such a way, that through a trick of the light and the mastery of Arun's fingers they seemed to spring free of the foam and hover in the air. Arun wept, his tears falling onto his sodden uniform, the white streaked with the uneven pink of Mayo's blood.

Josie was enthralled. "And what happened next?"

Susan frowned. Happened? Next? She had cried, burying her face in the velvety table-cloth. They had heard her and drawn her out from under the table, being kind, murmuring that it was only natural, "under the circumstances". Her grandfather, bracingly, had suggested the child was probably in need of her tea. Emotion was not something that should be indulged, and in any case the loss of parents through accident, epidemic or violence was not uncommon in India. He had explained that to the child when it happened. The birthday party had been cancelled as inappropriate under the circumstances, but excessive emotion should not be encouraged.

Their hosts had fed her cakes and sugar fruits from one of the Peliti shops and given her chilled boiled milk. After tea they showed her the photograph album, and the picture of Signor Peliti's villa in Caragnano near Turin.

"Perhaps it's open to the public," Josie said, and demanded of the waiter, "*Questa villa, e possibile visitare?*"

But before he could answer, Susan said, very firmly, "No. No visit. Press on now, shall we?" The question mark was rhetorical.

Federico Peliti: born Caragnano, Italy, 1844. Died India 1914. Lord Mayo: born 1822. Assassinated Port Blair, 1872)

Lee Langley *was born in Calcutta, of Scottish parents. She travelled widely in India during her childhood, until her family returned to Britain. She was educated in England and France. Her first novel 'The Only Person' was published in 1973. Her fifth novel, the highly autobiographical 'Changes of Address' received critical acclaim and was shortlisted for the Hawthornden Prize. Her sixth novel 'Persistent Rumours' won the Writers' Guild Best Fiction Award and the 1993 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Novel (Eurasia Region). Her latest novel, her third set in India 'A House in Pondicherry' was short listed for the 1996 Hawthornden Prize. She has written poetry and a stage play, produced in London's West End and several other countries. Her scriptwriting has included a feature film and work for British and American television. She has written on travel and the Arts for leading British newspapers and magazines. She is a member of PEN, the international writers' organization, and is a member of the Literature Advisory Panel of the Arts Council of England. She is married to the writer Theo Richmond. They have three grown-up children.*

Of Tigers, Tombstones and a Coffin

by Ruskin Bond

The monsoon was only a fortnight away, we were told, and we were all looking forward to some relief from the hot and dusty days of June. Sometimes the nights were even more unbearable, as squadrons of mosquitoes went zooming across the eastern Doon. In those days the eastern Doon was more malarious than the western part of the valley, probably because it was low-lying in parts and there was still more water in drains and pools.

But it was now mango-time, and this was one of the compensations of summer. I kept a bucket filled with mangoes and dipped into it frequently during the day. So did Jai Shankar, William, Suresh Mathur, and others who came by.

One of my more interesting visitors was a writer called G.V. Desani who had, a few years earlier, written a comic novel called *All About H. Hatterr*. I suspect that the character of Hatterr was based on Desani himself, for he was an eccentric individual who told me that he slept in a coffin.

"Do you carry it around with you?" I asked, over a coffee at the Indiana.

"No, hotels won't allow me to bring it into the lobby, let alone my room. Hotel managers have a morbid fear of death, haven't they?"

"A coffin should make a good coffee-table. We'll put it to the owner of the Indiana."

"Trains are fussy too. You can't have it in your compartment, and in the brake-van it gets smashed. Mine's an expensive mahogany coffin, lined with velvet."

"I wish you many comfortable years sleeping in it. Do you intend being buried in it too?"

"No, I shall be cremated like any other good Hindu. But I may *will* the coffin to a good Christian friend. Would you like it?"

"I rather fancy being cremated myself. I'm not a very successful Christian. A pagan all my life! Maybe I'll get religious when I'm older."

Mr Desani then told me that he was nominating his own novel for the Nobel Prize, and would I sign a petition that was to be presented to the Nobel Committee extolling the merits of his book? Gladly, I said; always ready to help a good cause. And did I know of any other authors or patrons of literature who might sign? I told him there was Nergis Dalal; and William Matheson, an eminent Swiss journalist; and old Mrs D'Souza who did a gardening column for *Eve's Weekly*; and Holdsworth at the Doon School - he'd climbed Kamet with Frank Smythe, and had written an account for the journal of the Bombay Natural History Society; and of course there was Jai Shankar who was keeping a diary in the manner of Stendhal; and wasn't Suresh Mathur planning to write a PhD on P.G. Wodehouse? I gave their names and addresses to the celebrated author, and even added that of the inventor of the Sit-Safe (Dehra's first toilet-seat, circa 1955). After all, hadn't he encouraged this young writer by commissioning him to write a brochure for his toilet-seat?

Mr Desani produced his own brochure, with quotes from reviewers and writers who had praised his work. I signed his petition and allowed him to pay for the coffee.

As I walked through the swing doors of the Indiana, Indu and her mother, the Rani, walked in. It was too late for me to turn back. I bowed like the gentleman my grandmother had always wanted me to be, and held the door for them, while they breezed into the restaurant. Larry Gomes was playing "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" with a wistful expression.

Lady Wart of Worcester, Lady Tryiton and the Earl of Stopwater, the Hon. Robin Crazier, Mr and Mrs Paddy Snott-Noble, the Earl and Countess of Lost Marbles, and General Sir Peter de l'Orange-peel...

These were only some of the gracious names that graced the pages of the Doon Club's guest and membership register at the turn of the century, when the town was the favourite retiring place for the English aristocracy. So well did the Club look after its members that most of them remained permanently in Dehra, to be buried in the Chandernagar cemetery just off the Hardwar Road.

My own ancestors were not aristocracy. Dad's father came to India as an 18 year old soldier in a Scots Regiment, a contemporary of Kipling's "Soldiers Three" - Privates Otheris, Mulvaney and Learoyd. He married an orphaned girl who had been brought up on an indigo plantation at Motihari in Bihar. My maternal grandfather worked on the Indian Railways, as a Foreman in the railway workshops at some god-forsaken railway junction in Central India. He married a statuesque, strong-willed lady who had also grown up in India. Dad was born in the Shahjahanpur military camp; my mother in Karachi. So although my forebears were, for the most part, European, I was third generation India-born. That expression 'Anglo-Indian', has come to mean so many things - British settler, Old Koi-hai, or Colonel Curry, that I don't use it very often. Indian is good enough for me. I may have relations scattered around the world, but I have no great interest in meeting them. My feet are firmly planted in Ganges soil.

Grandfather (of the Railways) retired in Dehradun (or Deyrah Dhoon, as it was spelt in the old days) and built a nice house on the Old Survey Road. Sadly it was sold at the time of Independence when most of his children decided to quit the country. After my father's death, my mother married a Punjabi gentleman, and so I stayed on in India, except for that brief sojourn in England and the Channel Islands. I'd come back to Dehra to find that even mother and stepfather had left, but it was still home, and in the cemetery there were several relatives including Grandfather and Great-grandmother. If I sat on their graves, I felt I owned a bit of property. Not a bungalow or even a vegetable patch, but a few feet of well-nourished soil. There were even marigolds flowering at the edges of the graves. And a little blue everlasting that I have always associated with Dehra. It grows in ditches, on vacant plots, in neglected gardens, along footpaths, on the edges of fields, behind lime-kilns, wherever there is a bit of wasteland. Call it a weed if you like, but I

have every respect for a plant that will survive the onslaught of brick, cement, petrol fumes, grazing cows and goats, heat and cold (for it flowers almost all the year round), and overflowing sewage. As long as that little flowering weed is still around, there is still hope for man and nature.

A feeling of tranquility and peace always pervaded my being when I entered the cemetery. Were my long-gone relatives pleased by my presence there? I did not see them in any form, but then, cemeteries are the last place for departed souls to hang about. Given a chance, they would rather be among the living, among those they cared for or in places where they were happy. I have never been convinced by ghost stories in which the tormented spirit revisits the scene of some ghastly tragedy. Why on earth (or why in heaven) should they want to relive an unpleasant experience?

My maternal grandfather, by my mother's account, was a man with a sly sense of humour who often discomfitted his relatives by introducing into their homes odd creatures who refused to go away. Hence the tiny Jharipani bat released into Aunt Mabel's bedroom, or the hedgehog introduced into his brother Major Clerke's bedsheets. A cousin, Mrs Blanchette, found her house swarming with white rats, while a neighbour received a gift of a parcel of papayas - and in their midst, a bright green and yellow chameleon.

And so, when I was within some fifty to sixty feet of Grandfather's grave, I was not in the least surprised to see a full-grown tiger stretched out on his tombstone, apparently enjoying the shade of the magnolia tree which grew beside it.

Was this a manifestation of the tiger-cub he'd kept when I was a child? Did the ghosts of long-dead tigers enjoy visiting old haunts? Live tigers certainly did, and when this one stirred, yawned, and twitched its tail, I decided I wouldn't stay to find out if it was a phantom tiger or a real one.

Beating a hasty retreat to the watchman's quarters near the lych-gate, I noticed that a large well-fed and very real goat was tethered to one of the old tombstones (Colonel Ponsonby of Her Majesty's Dragoons), and I concluded that the tiger had already spotted it and was simply building up an appetite before lunch.

"There's a tiger on Grandfather's grave," I called out to the watchman, who was checking out his cabbage patch. (And healthy cabbages they were, too.)

The watchman was a bit deaf and assumed that I was complaining about some member of his family, as they were in the habit of grinding their masalas on the smoother gravestones.

"It's that boy Masood," he said. "I'll get after him with a stick." And picking up his *lathi*, he made for the grave.

A yell, a roar, and the watchman was back out of the lych-gate before me.

"Send for the police, Sahib," he shouted.

"It's one of the circus tigers. It must have escaped!"

Sincerely hoping that my young friend Sitaram had not been in the way of the escaping tiger, I made for the circus tents on the parade ground. There was no show in progress. It was about noon, and everyone appeared to be resting. If a tiger was missing, no one seemed to be aware of it.

"Where's Sitaram?" I asked one of the hands.

"Helping to wash down the ponies," he replied.

But he wasn't in the pony enclosure. So I made my way to the rear, where there was a cage housing a lion (looking rather sleepy, after its late-night bout with the lady wrestler), another cage housing a male tiger (looking ready to bite my head off), and another cage with its door open - empty!

Someone came up behind me, whistling cheerfully. It was Sitaram.

"Do you like the tigers?" he asked.

"There's only one. There are two in the show aren't there?"

"Of course, I helped feed them this morning."

"Well one of them's gone for a walk. Someone must have unlocked the door. If it's the same tiger I saw in the cemetery, I think it's looking for another meal - or maybe just a dessert!"

Sitaram ran back into the tent, yelling for the trainer and the ring-master. And then, of course, there was commotion. For no one had noticed the tiger slipping away. It must have made off through the bamboo-grove at the edge of the parade-ground, through the Forest Rangers College (well-wooded then), circled the police lines and entered the cemetery. By now it could have been anywhere.

It was, in fact, walking right down the middle of Dehra's main road, causing the first hold-up in traffic since Pandit Nehru's last visit to the town. Mr Nehru would have fancied the notion; he was keen on tigers. But the citizens of Dehra took no chances. They scattered at the noble beast's approach. The Delhi bus came to a grinding halt, while tonga-ponies, never known to move faster than a brisk trot, broke into a gallop that would have done them proud at the Bangalore Races.

The only creature that failed to move was a large bull (the one that sometimes blocked the approach to my steps) sitting in the middle of the

road, forming a traffic island of its own. It did not move for cars, buses, tongas and trucks. Why budge for a mere tiger?

And the tiger, having been fed on butcher's meat for most of its life, now disdained the living thing (since the bull refused to be stalked) and headed instead for the back entrance to the Indiana's kitchens.

There was a general exodus from the Indiana. William Matheson, who had been regaling his friends with tales of his exploits in the Foreign Legion, did not hang around either; he made for the comparative safety of my flat. Larry Gomes stopped in the middle of playing the Anniversary Waltz, and fox-trotted out of the restaurant. The owner of the Indiana rushed into the street and collided with the owner of the Royal Cafe. Both swore at each other in choice Pashtu - they were originally from Peshawar. Swami Aiyar, a Doon School boy with ambitions to be a newspaper correspondent, buttonholed me near my landlady's shop and asked me if I knew Jim Corbett's telephone number in Haldwani.

"But he only shoots man-eaters," I protested.

"Well, they're saying three people have already been eaten in the bazaar."

"Ridiculous. No self-respecting tiger would go in for a three-course meal."

"All the same, people are in danger."

"So we'll send for Jim Corbett. Aurora of the Green Bookshop would have his number."

Mr Aurora was better informed than either of us. He told us that Jim Corbett had settled in Kenya several years ago.

Swami looked dismayed. "I thought he loved India so much he refused to leave."

"You're confusing him with Jack Gibson of the Mayo School," I said.

At this point the tiger came through the swing doors of the Indiana and started crossing the road. Suresh Mathur was driving slowly down Rajpur Road in his 1936 Hillman. He'd been up half the night, drinking and playing cards, and he had a terrible hangover. He was now heading for the Royal Cafe, convinced that only a chilled beer could help him recover. When he saw the tiger, his reflexes - never very good - failed him completely, and he drove his car onto the pavement and into the plate-glass window of Bhai Dhian Singh's Wine and Liquor Shop. Suresh looked quite happy among the broken rum bottles. The heady aroma of XXX Rosa Rum, awash on the shopping verandah, was too much for a couple of old topers, who began to

mop up the liquor with their handkerchiefs. Suresh would have done the same had he been conscious.

We carried him into the deserted Indiana and I sent for Dr Sharma.

"Nothing much wrong with him" said the doc, "but he looks anaemic," and proceeded to give him an injection of vitamin B12. This was Dr Sharma's favourite remedy for anyone who was ailing. He was a great believer in vitamins.

I don't know if the B12 did Suresh any good, but the jab of the needle woke him up, and he looked around, blinked up at me, and said, "Thought I saw a tiger. Could do with a drink, old boy."

"I'll send you a beer," I said. "But you'll have to pay the bill at Bhai Dhian's. And your car needs repairs."

"And this injection costs five rupees," said Dr Sharma.

"Beer is the same price. I'll send you one too."

So we settled down in the Indiana bar and finished several bottles of beer, Dr Sharma expounding all the time on the miracle of vitamin B12, while Suresh told me that he knew now what it felt like to enter the fourth dimension. The tiger was soon forgotten, and when I walked back to my room a couple of hours later and found the postman waiting for me with a twenty-five rupee money-order from *Sainik Samachar* (the Armed Forces' weekly magazine), I tipped him five rupees and put the rest aside for a rainy day - which, hopefully, would be the morrow, as monsoon clouds had been advancing from the South.

They say that those with a clear conscience usually sleep well. I have always done a lot of sleeping, especially in the afternoons, and have never been unduly disturbed by pangs of conscience, for I have never deprived any man of his money, his wife, or his song.

I kicked off my *chappals* and lay down and allowed my mind to dwell on my favourite Mexican proverb: "How sweet it is to do nothing and afterwards to rest!" I hoped the tiger had found a shady spot for his afternoon siesta. With goodwill towards one and all, I drifted into a deep sleep and woke only in the early evening, to the sound of distant thunder.

(From *Strangers in the Night: Two Novellas* by Ruksin Bond Penguin India, New Delhi, 1997)

Ruskin Bond *was seventeen when he wrote the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize-winning novel, The Room on the Roof. Apart from a short period in England*

and the Channel Islands, he has lived all his life in India. Now, more than a hundred short stories, innumerable essays, novels, children's tales and a Sahitya Akademi Award later, the 62-year-old author says he is 'growing old disgracefully'. Ruskin Bond's Ivy Cottage in Landour, something of a landmark in Mussoorie, is the home he shares with his adopted son and his family. He has recently, by proxy, become a great grandfather. This is where emerge the books that continue to surprise and delight his readers. He is currently writing an autobiography covering his pre-Independence childhood and post Independence young adulthood. He is India's nominee for the next international Hans Andersen Award for children's books.

The Debt

by Malcolm Murphy

The 'old hand' will tell you, 'Never go back!' and there are many who will agree with him. I am not among them. I take enormous pleasure in returning to the scenes of my childhood, the trysting-places of my youth, the haunts of my special years. Where sadness lurks, my mind instinctively shifts into reverse and there is no regret. However, sometimes there is the unexplainable.

The opportunity to return to India, however briefly, was bounty not to be passed up. To travel alone and as I pleased. To see India the best way I know: through a railway carriage window. To be lost in some once-familiar aura and, in that magic moment (the reward of the time-traveller), to find myself at its heart.

I am as regretful of the last war as anyone else, nevertheless, the map of history carries its indelible reference. And, for some of us, its unanswered questions.

A training camp in the jungles of Central India haunted my memory for years. The Brigade had chosen the slopes of a hill so that the torrential rains of that September would send its waters rushing down its sides, into our tents and out again. It proved effective and we slept in our hammocks and charpoys slung above the wash.

The top of the hill was left bare and when we lost a Highlander whose face had been removed by a fractious mule, he was buried there. So was Sergeant Paddy Cosgrove who blew his brains out in a moment of secret

despair. And so too was Havildar Dost Mohammed who disturbed a hornet's nest while leading his column through a defile and was stung to death.

There came the day when our training was over and it was time to move on. Now for the real thing, they said. We moved on. I, with a last glance at that lonely hill we were leaving behind with its three small mounds which marked the graves of the three men buried there. Ironically, they were going to miss 'the real thing'.

In the half century since then I'd often wondered if that sad summit with its cache of human remains was still there. Perhaps now I could find out. There was a small granite lodge behind the hill, the home of the Indian Forest Guard. We had commandeered it and made it the Brigade Ordnance Dump, 'allowing' the Forest Guard, an amiable Indian Christian called Shadrach, to stay on in a back room of what was his home. I remembered Shadrach well. The eternal borrower. Always broke. Always tapping me for a loan. Always paying it back with monotonous regularity, only to borrow it again. He became a real friend in those wartime days, and, along with a last sight of that hilltop of graves as we rumbled out on to the Bhitoni jungle track, lived a picture of him in the distance running behind our convoy, waving frantically. It was a furlong or two before he gave up and vanished from sight. Now, with the old Forest Guard's quarters as a landmark, surely I would find the hill.

To India then, when the time came. Once there I drifted gloriously as the cross-winds of recollection caught my sails and steered me this way and that in a freedom of detours and digressions from one retrospection to another. Armed with my Indrail Pass and Newman's Indian Bradshaw I journeyed in a wayward spiral towards my Central Indian camp-site of 1944. India's great railway pageant spun intoxicatingly around me, hurtling me across the deserts of Rajasthan through bake-oven days. Swinging me east along the himalayan foothills from Bareilly to New Jalpaiguri. Then southwards and west towards the centre again, riding the mosaic of loop-lines, cord-lines and ever-changing track gauges, holing-up in dusty waiting rooms and crowded passenger sheds like the one in Moghul Sarai. Cacophonous termini and swarming platforms gave way to tranquil wayside halts and Flag Stations between latitudes of calm, before erupting again at the next junction.

Now I was in Central India. I changed at Bina. I was getting near. Glued to my Bradshaw and geared to my memory I closed on my final destination with excitement, remembering the railhead, Ghatpore. With my finger on the page, my mind in suspension, I was not prepared for the shuddering stop. I put my head out. Dammit, I was there! GHATPORE, said

the station board. The same banyan tree waved in that familiar afternoon breeze, sheltering the Station Master's office. A smell, the memory of which came back instantly permeated the air. The post-meridian sun glanced sharply off the creosoted wall of the same latrine. The shimmering heat-haze sang.

Apart from a basket of dried mangoes I was the only passenger to get off the train at Ghatpore. The Station Master, who doubled for Ticket Collector and trebled for Parcels Clerk, approached me with consternation written all over his wide, pock-marked face.

"This is Ghatpore!" he said in some alarm, casting an anxious look back at my train, the back of which was by this time diminishing rapidly into a state of total eclipse.

"I was hoping it was" I beamed.

"There is no connection from this place" he said,

"I am not here for a connection" I replied, "Ghatpore is my destination."

"You are stopping here?" he asked, in disbelief.

"Yes" I said.

"But there is nothing here!" he persisted, with a candour which would not have endeared him to the Ghatpore Tourist Promotion Bureau, had there been one.

Clearly, I was going to have to explain,

"The name's Roberts" I introduced myself, reaching for his hand.

The next hour over a few cups of coffee to the staccato accompaniment of his telegraph key told me as much about the Station Master as I told him about me. He was a product of the settlement, having been born and brought up in the tight cluster of dwellings outside the station yard. He was happy to be in charge here within hailing distance of his wife and family. He was a boy during the war, he said, but clearly remembered the soldiers and the camp in the jungle beyond the paddy fields. He knew the spot well, including the hill. My heart leapt when, on hearing my story he declared with some excitement, "The graves are there! The graves are there!" Then he stood up to rush outside. "I will send my brother-in-law with you, he will show you the way."

"That won't be necessary" I said, "I'd like to find it myself. I'd like to be alone when I get there."

I set off through the village feeling like the pied-piper with a knot of children trailing behind me, their panting becoming the more audible with every stride. On I went, past the last paddy field where the jungle suddenly began. The last of the children had given up and I was alone.

The sun shot translucent shafts through the branches overhead like angled spotlights on to what was becoming for me a remembered stage. As I

picked my way through the undergrowth, struggling to hold on to my recollected bearings I could feel myself losing control. Soon I knew I was being guided purely by instinct. Now left, now right, across a *nullah* and over a flat stretch. On I went until the ground began to rise. I was climbing. I looked up and knew I was there. But I had to be sure. I back-tracked and walked round. If this was the right hill the house of the Forest Guard, or its ruins, would be behind it. Round I went. And round some more. Then I stopped dead in my tracks. There, in a clearing, stood the old granite lodge, not quite in ruins but deserted and enveloped in moss and lichen.

The big shock was a second away and it came from behind. It was a loud and excited voice, "Mr Roberts! Mr Roberts!" I swung round, and there, wearing an expression which combined delight and, it seemed to me, relief, was Shadrach, the Forest Guard of 1944.

"Shadrach!" I exclaimed. "My God, you are still here? Good to see you, man. And you've weathered well!"

"I knew you'd come back" he said, "I knew, I knew!"

"Why, that's amazing" I said, "how could you possibly have known. I live in England now. It was only a chance development which....."

"Yes, yes, but still, I knew you'd come!" he cut me off.

What could I say. I told him the purpose of my visit.

"I came to visit the hill" I said. "To see the graves on top. You know the ones."

He nodded.

"The men who died when our camp was here."

He nodded again, sadly.

"I came to visit them."

"Go up" he said, "but first you must come into my place for a little while. I have something for you."

"You have something for me?" I couldn't believe it.

I followed him into the old stone building, through the musty front room which reeked of desolation, and into the cubbyhole behind. It was remarkable; the ease with which the old-timer negotiated his home-ground. The broken stone threshold and tangled roots across which I stumbled and tripped were to Shadrach, obstacles to glide effortlessly over.

"It is here" he said, pointing to a niche in the wall.

"What is?" I asked.

"Go on, look. Take it" he said. "It's for you."

I looked inside the niche. Turning back to him, puzzled, "There's nothing here, Shadrach" I said.

"Under the stone" he said.

I looked again. There was a stone inside the niche, I lifted it and saw what looked like a piece of paper. I took it out. It was an old ten rupee note.

"It's money" I said. Not knowing what to think.

"Ten rupees" said Shadrach. "You lent me that in 1944. Remember? I didn't get a chance to pay you back. Your Brigade moved out so suddenly. You must take it now."

I was speechless. It was likely I did lend it to him. Granting I did, I surely wasn't going to take it back from him now. But he pressed it on me with a resolve which I knew wasn't going to be shaken. I kept it then, slipping it reluctantly into my hip pocket. I could see the relief on his face. Almost ecstasy.

"Go up now. You know the way" he said.

I started the climb, over the sloping ground where our tents used to be pitched. I remembered with a peculiar feeling where mine had been. I recognised too, other vaguely-familiar landmarks; a gnarled tree trunk, a jagged outcrop, a fissure running down the west slope. Then I was at the top.

The graves were there. The mounds a little flattened, that's all. I counted them. One, two, three.... four! Four? There were only three, I reflected. I counted them again. One, two, three.... four! I was nonplussed. I would have to ask Shadrach. My memory was playing tricks with me.

I did a bit of clearing up. A bit of re-living the past with my eyes closed. I bit my lip involuntarily. A half hour was all I spent on that hill-top.

When I got down I went straight to the lodge.

"Shadrach, I'm back!" I called as I went in. I walked into the back room. "Shadrach? You there?" He wasn't. I came outside. Looking around me, I shouted "SHADRACH!" An awesome silence from the jungle was all the answer I got.

I sat down on a rock and waited, I don't know for what, but I waited. Ten, maybe fifteen minutes. For the first time I felt a shiver.

It was getting chilly and time to head back. Once again, as in 1944, I cast a lingering glance at that lonely hill-top, and left.

I threaded my way back to the station, quickening my steps as the light began to fade. The ground was more familiar now. As I approached the village I caught its sounds and evening smells; the barking of dogs, the whiff of cooking and woodsmoke. It was heartening to hear the welcoming voices of the children. Then the Station Master's cheery greeting inviting me to spend the night in his little office as my return train would not be along until morning.

I was happy to accept his invitation and share his supper. We chatted well into the small hours.

I told him about my experience at the lodge.

"I met Shadrach." I said, "the old Forest Guard."

He laughed, throwing his head back. Then, still smiling, he nodded in polite appreciation of what he obviously regarded as a feeble attempt at a joke.

"Shadrach? Shadrach is dead" he said. "He died... oh, some nine, ten years ago. They buried him on the hill, next to your friends."

Saying nothing I reached casually into my hip pocket, feeling the creased paper. Taking it out I glanced at it behind my back. It was the old ten rupee note. It was real all right. I slipped it back into my pocket.

I fell asleep in my chair until gently woken.

"It is O-five-twenty, nearly" said the Station Master. "31-DOWN Katni Shuttle is due."

He picked up his lamp with its red and green glass windows and walked with me on to the platform into the morning air. A distant whistle told us that '31-DOWN Katni Shuttle' was on time.

I carried that old ten rupee note about with me in my wallet for a long time before putting it away, only the other day, in the bottom drawer of my dresser. I have no reason to believe it isn't still there.

(This short story is a work of fiction and the characters in it purely imaginary.)

Malcolm Murphy *was one of the last generation of Anglo-Indians to be raised under the British Raj. He grew up in a railway environment in southern India and thanks to his father's entitlement of five free passes a year his appetite for travel was whetted at an early age. After a cursory nod at 'engine driver' his vocational ambitions locked firmly on to a career which would involve wearing a uniform. He joined up early in the second World War and served firstly in the British Wing of the Indian Army Corps of Clerks in Quetta, before joining a Chindit Brigade training in the jungles of the Central Provinces. On demobilisation he found India independent and most of his community gone. He left for England with his family in 1962, and now lives in north London. A life-long urge to write has caught up with him, and now in retirement, he practises the craft of the short story.*

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