

INDIA AND THE BRITISH: *THEY CAME NEVER TO RETURN*

Seeking fame or fortune, Britons first came to India more than 350 years ago. Some returned home as wealthy men. Many others, including soldiers, women and children left their bones here. Discover the life they led before they found their last resting place in India.



*Bringing together people with a concern for the
European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia*

A joint initiative of Indus Experiences and the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia

Stephen McClarence

On busy days, something like 60,000 people flock to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. Barely a handful, however, take a taxi a few miles across the city to the Roman Catholic Cemetery. They're missing a treasure.

The sprucely maintained cemetery boasts an intriguing monument: the so-called Red Taj. Like a scale model, it duplicates the Taj's dome and minarets in warm red sandstone. And there's another, more touching, parallel. Where the Taj was the emperor Shah Jahan's memorial to his wife Mumtaz, the Red Taj was Anne Hessing's memorial to her husband John, a soldier who died in 1803 and left her a "disconsolate widow", as the inscription says.

The whole site, the oldest European cemetery in North India, is a haven of quiet in a city of hectic bustle; only the squawking green parakeets disturb the peace. It dates back to the 17th century and houses the tombs of scholars, journalists, adventurers, missionaries and diplomats, including John Mildenhall, an English merchant who was Elizabeth I's envoy to the Mughal court.

The cemetery encapsulates the social structure of India's colonial past and is just the sort of place that might figure in an enterprising new joint venture by the Harrow-based tour company Indus Experiences and BACSA, the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia. The aim is to use cemeteries as a way of increasing awareness of Britain's contribution to the sub-continent's heritage - and at the same time to help travellers and tourists connect with their own family histories.

BACSA, which currently has more than 1,100 members, has been pursuing similar aims for 40 years. It brings together people interested in the many hundreds of European cemeteries scattered across South Asia. There are more than 800 of them in India alone, the last resting places of perhaps a million Britishers, including some who died in polo accidents, or after being attacked by bears, or even from exploding soda bottles.

Yet most organised tours of India ignore them. The nation's British history is all too often regarded as off-limits, apart from an afternoon tour of Lutyens' New Delhi or a couple of journeys by rail, one of Britain's great legacies to the sub-continent.

The new venture sets out to address this. One of BACSA's members - Yasin Zargar, managing director of Indus Experiences - is a driving force behind it. "So many people who take our tours say: 'This town is where my grandfather worked in the civil service or on the railways'," he says. "There are so many people wanting to explore their ancestry in India, to see the places where their families lived, but they don't know how to go about it."

To help them, Indus Experiences has launched family history tours, tailored to clients' particular needs, which may involve obscure towns that have changed radically since Indian independence in 1947. Tour leaders research relevant church records and cemeteries in advance, and arrange visits. The result is invariably positive.

"A few years ago we had a client who said: 'My grandfather talks all the time about his days in India and I want to give him a present'," Yasin recalls. "She went to the places where he lived and worked, took 120 photographs of them and put them on a disc for him. Every day after breakfast, he goes straight to his computer to look at those pictures."

Locating old family bungalows, the churches where ancestors were christened or married, and the graveyards where they were buried can be a challenge. Cemeteries may be vandalised or submerged in jungles of undergrowth, with the monsoon taking its annual toll. Walking round them is often like exploring the evocative remains of a vanished civilisation.

This is where BACSA has special expertise, raising awareness of cemeteries' importance and funding preservation work. Not all are as well-preserved as South Park Street Cemetery in Calcutta, perhaps the grandest cemetery in South Asia.

With its pyramids and obelisks, it offers a fascinating insight into European life in India; here are the first British envoy to Tibet, a British Major-General who converted to Hinduism and a former MP who died "due to an inordinate use of the hookah".

South Park Street opened in 1767 and was already full by the early 19th century. There was much demand for graves. Two monsoons was then regarded as the

average life expectancy of Europeans newly-arrived in India.

At midday in Delhi's Nicholson Cemetery, the sun blazes down on grieving stone angels and cherubs, some of them marking the graves of army wives who died in their early twenties and children who died tragically young. One small grave is dedicated to "Mercy, our darling infant, who died aged two months: Our second little bud in heaven".

"India's cemeteries tell of Britain's long involvement in the sub-continent," says Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, an authority on colonial India who edits BACSA's newsletter *Chowkidar* (its name taken from the Hindi word for the watchmen or gatekeepers who look after cemeteries).

"There's an affection between India and Britain, an underlying bond that can't be broken," she says. Over many visits to the subcontinent, she has noticed a growing interest in the visible remains of what older Indians sometimes call "British times" - "rather like us having Roman remains in Britain and adopting them".

Yasin Zargar confirms this bond and counters suggestions of Indian resentment about its former colonists: Raj-*rage* as it has been called. "Once there was a sort of thought about India: 'We are British and shouldn't go there; it will hurt the people.' But today's India is a changed country; it's better educated." As a result, clients on family history tours often find local Indians "really keen to help them".

Peter Boon, BACSA's Honorary Secretary, can trace his family history in India back 200 years. His great-great-uncle served with the British army in India and died in the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845. Other ancestors were involved in tea planting and the indigo business.

Some years ago, Peter, born shortly before Partition in the hill station of Mussoorie, joined a family group to trace ancestral graves and have them restored.

"When the graves were covered in undergrowth it was sad to see them," he says. "But once the area was cleared and the headstones were repaired, there was a great deal of satisfaction. We felt we'd done right by our ancestors. We'd come to look after them."

Thanks to this new venture, others will now find it easier to follow suit.

CEMETERIES

ALLAHABAD CANTONMENT CEMETERY

What is the connection between the 1964 epic 'Zulu' and this cemetery? In the film, Michael Caine portrayed Major Gonville Bromhead who won the Victoria Cross in 1879 at Rorke's Drift. Bromhead later served in India where he died in 1891; BACSA conserved his grave in Allahabad in 2010.

AGRA CANTONMENT CEMETERY

Supported by BACSA. Dates from 1806 after Agra's annexation by Lord Lake in 1803. The city became a major military base and the seat of government of the North West Provinces. **Lieut William Turner**, 4th Regt Native Infantry, 1806; the oldest identifiable grave. **Capt Hastings E Harington**, Bengal Artillery, winner of the Victoria Cross at the second relief of Lucknow 1857. Apothecary **Henry Watson's** family: of 12 children by three wives only two survived infancy. **John Newton O'Brien**, late jailer of Agra Central Prison, who 'departed this life ... leaving a disconsolate widow and four children to bemoan this irreparable loss'. **Dorothy Rhoda** wife of Staff Sergeant Instructor **Buckley** aged 22. 'Ah, she was but a twelve months bride, not half her love and sweetness tried, a mother who had scarcely smiled, ecstatic welcome to her child, rest then in thy narrow bed, no ill can come to thee most blessed dead.'



AGRA ROMAN CATHOLIC CEMETERY

The oldest European cemetery in north India. The Moghul Emperor Akbar's Court was at Agra in the 17th century. Buried here is John Mildenhall, self-styled ambassador of Queen Elizabeth I. 'Here lies **John Mildenhall** Englishman who left London in 1599 and travelled to India through Persia reached Agra in 1603 and spoke with the Emperor Akbar. On a second visit in 1614 he fell ill at Lahore died at Ajmere and was buried here through the good offices of Thomas Kerridge merchant'. Also **John Hessing** 'late colonel in the service of Maharaji Daulat Rao Sindia ... departed this life 21st July 1803 ... native of Utrecht ... came out to Ceylon in the military service of the Dutch East India Company'; **Jeronimo Veroneo**, famous Venetian jeweller who worked on the Taj Mahal (1640).



SOUTH PARK STREET CEMETERY, KOLKATA (CALCUTTA)

BACSA for many years has supported 'The Great Cemetery', opened in 1767. The architecture of the mausolea recalls the grandeur of Europe at the time of Beethoven and Nash. Its 'residents' represent a cross-section of the European population of the time. The greatest of all orientalist **Sir William Jones**. Scholar, lawyer, linguist, naturalist and author, he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1785. His discovery of a Hindu classical age was sensational. Commanding HMS Sybille, **Captain Edward Cooke** attacked the powerful French raiding frigate Forte in February 1799 in the Bay of Bengal. He was struck by grape shot and died in May in Calcutta after an agonising three months. BACSA supported the conservation of his tomb. A memorial stands in Westminster Abbey. **Mrs Elizabeth Jane Barwell**: 'The celebrated Miss Sanderson'. A famous beauty who set Calcutta society alight.

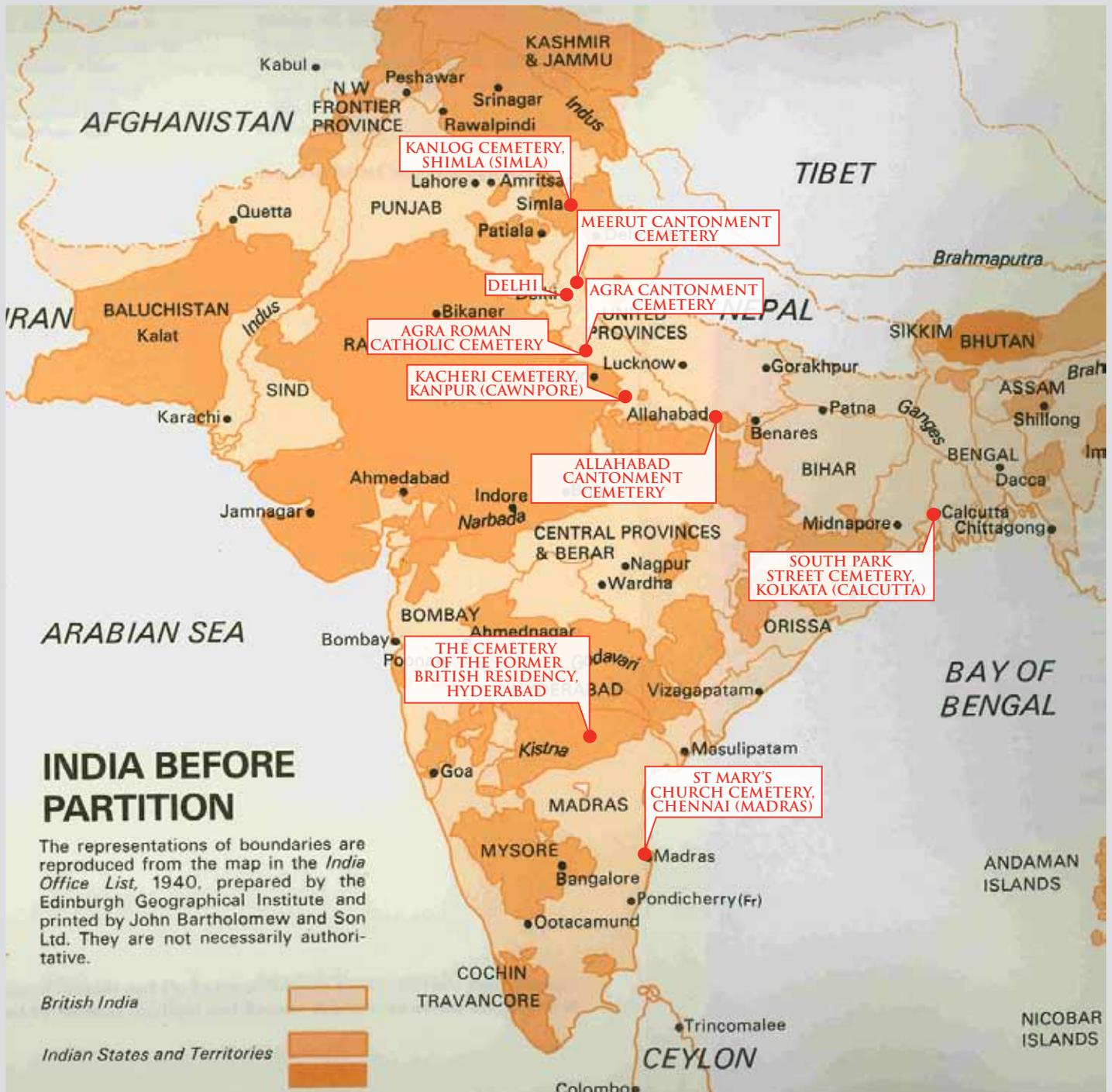


THE CEMETERY OF THE FORMER BRITISH RESIDENCY, HYDERABAD

BACSA and the Deccan Heritage Foundation are conserving this graveyard dating from 1807. Readers of William Dalrymple's White Mughals will be familiar with **James Achilles Kirkpatrick**, the East India Company's Resident at the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad. He had the palatial Residence built and married a Mohammedan princess. Kirkpatrick lies in Calcutta but four successors and some wives are buried here. **Lieut Col Sir Alexander Pinhey**, Resident whose funeral in 1916 was upset by bees that sent the crowd and horses flying in all directions. **George Bushby**, Resident. **Frances** the 19 year-old wife of the Resident **Thomas Sydenham**.



INDIA



Map courtesy of The British Library

CEMETERIES

ST. MARY'S CHURCH CEMETERY, CHENNAI (MADRAS)

Opened in 1680 St. Mary's is the oldest Anglican church east of the Suez Canal. One of the oldest garden cemeteries in India, St. Mary's dates from 1763. **James Anderson**, celebrated Scottish botanist who was largely responsible for the introduction of cochineal, silk, sugar cane, American cotton and English apples to India. **Gilbert Pasley**, Surgeon-General of the Madras Presidency, 'a skillful physician'. **General Sir Eyre Coote** three times commander-in-chief, the decisive influence at Plassey, ranking with Marlborough and Wellington as one of the greatest commanders who ever lived. His body was later exhumed and taken to England. **Nicholas Morse**, great-grandson of Oliver Cromwell and Governor of Madras who in 1746 surrendered the town to the French led by de La Bourdonnais.



MEERUT CANTONMENT CEMETERY

Meerut became a significant garrison town in the 19th century. BACSA supports the cemetery dating from 1807. **Captain Donald Macdonald** of the 20th Regiment Native Infantry and **Mrs Louisa Macdonald** and other victims of the insurrection on 10 May 1857. **Sir David Ochterlony** victor of the Nepal wars, whose 165-foot high monument stands in the centre of Calcutta. Whilst British Resident to the Mughal Court at Delhi, he every evening took his 13 Indian wives or concubines on a promenade around the Red Fort, each on the back of her own elephant. **General Sir Robert Rollo Gillespie**. In the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814 he led a column attacking a fort at Khalanga where, shouting 'One more shot for the honour of Down' his county of birth, he was shot through the heart. His monument is but 50 feet high.



KANLOG CEMETERY, SHIMLA (SIMLA)

Opened in 1850. **Herbert S Harington** chief engineer of the Simla-Kalka railway enjoyed by many of today's visitors to Shimla. The Muslim spouse of **Lieut Col David Colyear** 'a good mother and a firm friend who lived in the service of her god'. Three children of Field Marshal **Lord Roberts** of Kandahar, Commander-in-Chief India, who died between 1861 and 1869. The seven wives of **Mr Hogan**, Head Clerk to the Commander-in-Chief's military secretary. Four teenage **Italian** musicians of a touring 19th century pop group crushed to death by a rock slide en route to Simla. **Demetrious Panioty**, Assistant Private Secretary to the Viceroy, a 'faithful servant. He tried to do his duty'. **Lieut Ralph Broughton** killed on the eve of his marriage in 1885 when his pony bolted frightened by rattling kerosene tins carried by a coolie.



KACHERI CEMETERY, KANPUR (CAWNPORE)

Dates from the time when the first European troops arrived following a treaty with the Nawab of Oudh in 1765. Here lie military officers and civil servants of the East India Company, merchants, traders, adventurers and their wives and children. **Major General Sir John Horsford** who never took home leave in 45 years. **Matilda**, wife of **William Dickson** of the Cawnpore Farm, married at 13 and died aged 23 in 1827. **Robert Home**, painter to the Nawab of Oudh. His paintings can be seen at the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata and in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. **Dr Robert Buchan** MD died after less than a year's service in India. **John Jones**, merchant and trader. **Ann O'Brien**, aged 18 months. 'Oh, the tempest was unkind, and stern the shower, and cruel was the wayward wind, that wrecked so sweet a flower'. **Lieutenant General Sir Dyson Marshall** who died in 1823 after 53 years' service leaving his Bebee Mindoo, 'my faithful companion for near forty two years and mother of all my natural children'.



SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

Help us support BACSA. Contribute £2.50 per person to the charity when you book your holiday with us and we will match this contribution by an equal amount and donate £5.00.

SPLENDOURS OF SOUTH INDIA

This is a magnificent tour of exploration visiting some of the most fascinating places linked to British History in the deep South of India. History will be brought alive with talks by local Guides and Historians and excursions to see the exact places where history was changed.

Arrive in Bangalore visit Bangalore and Mysore closely associated with the wars waged against Hyder Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan. Visit Seringapatnam to visit the memorial to Col William Baillie who died as a prisoner of Tipu and Tipu's mausoleum.

Leave the heat of the city behind and relax in the cool of delightful Ooty, one of the favourite British Hill Stations. Learn how to make a perfect 'cuppa' and take a ride on the Toy Train to Coimbatore.

Travel to Trichinopoly (Trichi) via Karur and Ariyalur to visit the Rock Fort Temple, British Cemeteries and then on to Pondicherry with its decided French air!

See the old Fort of St. David and the modern day experiment of Auroville. Next head up to Vellore and see Fort Arcot before arriving in Chennai - home of the British East India Company to explore their legacy. Visit St. Mary's Church Cemetery and then finally drive down for a day trip to the coast at Mahabalipuram to explore the delicate Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram.

EAST INDIA HERITAGE

This is a relaxed yet informative tour of East India with an emphasis on the British involvement in the area - don't forget there were also other nations vying for power....so Danish and French enclaves will be visited at Serampore and Chandernagore with a short cruise on the Hoogly River whilst there. Before that the tour starts off in Kolkata - or Calcutta as it was known in the British times - an expert local guide or a Historian will talk on the City of the Raj.... which will be followed by a walking tour of the main historical sights the next day including South Park Street Cemetery.

Then fly to the cool climes of the mountains and visit Darjeeling the most beloved of British Hill stations - there take a trip on the iconic Toy Train to its highest station of Ghoom.

Before returning to Kolkata stay in a wonderfully restored Tea Plantation Bungalow - now a Boutique Hotel and live the life of a Planter. Walk in the verdant tea fields, pluck the delicate tea buds... brew a real 'cuppa'! Sit on the verandah exchanging notes on the day's bird watching trek, relaxing with a traditional 'English Afternoon Tea'. Or sip a cocktail as the sun sets over the magnificent mountain backdrop discussing the day's fishing.....and, the 'one that got away'! It's the perfect retreat.

AN ODYSSEY OF NORTH INDIA

This is a wonderful journey of discovery and exploration: experience the sights and sounds of never sleeping Delhi.... its history and its modern vibrancy. Feel the pulse of Sikhism in Amritsar, and the heart of Buddhism in India in Dharamshala. Step back into the peace and quiet of the British Raj in their summer capital up in the cool air of Shimla. Pause for a moment at the sadness of the Indian mutiny in Meerut, Lucknow and Kanpur before visiting one of the world's most iconic monuments - the Taj Mahal. Explore Akbar's ill-fated capital city of Fatehpur Sikri, and meander the twisting slopes up to the stunning Amber Fort in Jaipur. An odyssey of a lifetime!

THE COLONIAL MOMENTS

There is no doubt that India was the jewel in the crown of the British Empire and even 70 years after Independence the legacy of the colonial rule is strong. British families lived and worked across wide areas of the northern plains and the Himalayan Foothills. Favouring the latter in the heat of summer, and the towns, churches, and public buildings they erected survive as poignant reminders of their significant contribution to the development of contemporary India.

On our Colonial moments tour you will wind your way from Delhi, the capital of British India, to Palampur and Paragpur, then on the mountain resorts of Shimla and Kasauli.

It is the perfect opportunity to follow in footsteps of your ancestors and to visit the colonial monuments held in such high regard not only by their creators but, importantly, also by the country's modern population. Highlights of this tour include a ride on the famous (and fabulous) toy train from Shimla to Kalka and fascinating heritage walking tours to some of the most intriguing cities of northern India.

Detailed day to day suggested itineraries and guide prices are available at

www.indus experiences.co.uk/family-history-tours

These itineraries can be tailor-made to your personal preference

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