

Remembrance and Forgetting: The Muslim Burial Ground, Horsell Common, Woking and other Great War Memorials to the Indian Army in England

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The pioneering historian of South Asians in Britain¹, Dr Rozina Visram, has written that:

“The long interaction between Britain and the Indian subcontinent begun in 1600 through trade, conquest, colonialism, and empire and the movement of peoples in *both* directions had brought not only goods, ideas and influences, but also South Asians to Britain long before the 1950s. And the influence of this interrelationship and interchange on the development of British society and culture, and the contributions of south Asians were manifest in many areas of British life and formed one important strand of British history.”²

The stories of memorials in England to men of the Indian Army who died from wounds received on the Western Front during World War One provides a useful example of this two way process in action. Those stories also offer some insight into the active roles of South Asians in claiming equal respect for Indian war dead with their White counterparts. The later fortunes of these monuments give a concrete form to changing relationships and attitudes as Empire came to an end and South Asian communities grew and settled permanently in Britain.

This group of monuments includes, in order of construction :
Sukha's headstone, Brockenhurst parish church, Hampshire - paid for by the parishioners 1915 and now part of a later Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) burial ground.

The Muslim Burial Ground, Horsell Common, Woking – paid for by the India Office (from Imperial Funds i.e. Indian taxes), 1916

Barton-on-Sea hospital memorial obelisk – paid for by hospital staff, 1917

The Memorial Chattri, Patcham – paid for by Brighton Council and the India Office, 1921 (The India Office budget was derived from Indian tax revenues).

The India Gate, Brighton – paid for by Indian subscribers, 1921.

¹ “Ayahs, Lascars and Princes” Pluto Press, 1986 and “Asians in Britain” Pluto Press, 2012 Rozina Visram. I am very grateful to Dr Visram for most helpful comments on my draft paper and for providing me with a wealth of references.

² R. Visram in “South Asians and the Shaping of Britain 1870-1950: A Sourcebook” ed. R.Ranasinha et al, Manchester University Press 2012 p.264

It is notable that none of these memorials were initiated by the Imperial War Graves Commission (now CWGC) which only received its charter in 1917.

In this paper, I want to look at:

- Why the British government supported this unusual group of memorials in England?
- What role South Asians then living in England played in their creation?
- What happened to the memorials as Britain's relationship with the Indian subcontinent changed over time?

To start with the last question, there has been a complex and uneven process of memorialisation, forgetting and memory work centred on these sites since their dedication.

In 2004 an exhibition about the work of artist Said Adrus, "Lost Pavilion", focussing on the Muslim Burial Ground at Horsell Common near Woking in Surrey, went on tour. The artist was then commissioned by Woking Galleries to create "Pavilion with a View", taking, as its inspiration, the stories and architecture relating to the British Asian presence in the south east of England.

Said Adrus said: "I am drawn to the project for a number of reasons. Firstly it is an opportunity to explore the complexities of British Asian History with reference to War, Migration, Empire, and issues of loyalty and affinity to a place and country.

Secondly there is a personal point of view. Photos in a family album of my father in uniform while serving in the British Army during WW2 in Kenya (British East Africa) could not be ignored! My father often spoke proudly to me about his experiences at the time of conflict with the Italian Army on African soil."³

Linked to this was a project by English Heritage Outreach Department, in partnership with the Undivided Indian Ex-Serviceman's Association of Slough to seek out the memorials to the Indian Army in the south east and document them. The project partners said that they hoped to "raise awareness amongst people of all ages and backgrounds, of the remarkable role played by the Indian Armed Forces in both world wars."⁴ Oral history interviews were carried out by Padmini Broomfield and the recordings are now in the English Heritage Archives, Swindon.

The title of the project was "Remembering Forgotten Heroes". Amongst the interviewees from Indian Army families, memory had not dimmed but, more widely, the existence of solid memorials does not seem to have prevented a process of

³ "The Muslim Burial Ground, Horsell Common, Woking" by Tina Cockett, pub: Woking Galleries 2004. Surrey History Centre ref: 940.46 S1x

⁴ "Remembering Forgotten Heroes" English Heritage April 2005

memory loss, which may now to be reversing now as British Asians actively seek out this heritage and highlight its significance.

A process of forgetting there certainly was. In 1949 Brighton Council added a very short inscription to the Chattri memorial at Patcham to make it clear that it memorialised the Indian dead of WWI *only*. I have not found evidence yet of why they applied to the India Office to do this, but, following on from Independence and Partition, the date seems significant. No further memorial was raised to the war dead of the Indian Army in Britain until 2002 when the Commonwealth Memorial at Hyde Park was dedicated.

Like many of my generation, born after Indian Independence, I managed to arrive at adulthood in the second half of the C20th without any idea that 1.27 million Indian men took part in WWI including 827,000 combatants – contributing roughly one man in ten to the war effort of the British Empire.⁵ When I went to see the film of “Oh What a Lovely War!” in the 1960s, I did not come away understanding that 49,000 men of the Indian Army died in the war, 7,700 on the Western Front. Despite the publication of Rozina Visram’s groundbreaking book “Ayahs, Lascars and Princes” in 1986, which made the evidence accessible and opened many eyes, representations of the Western Front remained unremittingly White for a further generation.

Baroness Flather, (whose family came originally from India), speaking in a debate on this issue of World War I commemoration in the House of Lords in March 2013 recalled:

‘When I was Mayor of Windsor, I had to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday. On that occasion, I was asked by a councillor, “Does Remembrance Sunday mean anything to you?”. That is my point: there are still educated people in this country who do not realise how much we Indians did in the First World War.

It was a horrible shock to me because my father was a student in Ireland at that time; he was at King’s Inns. Gandhiji said⁶ that Indian students could help the war effort, but should not kill. So he joined up - he volunteered - as a stretcher-bearer, and there I was being asked if Remembrance Sunday meant anything to me. It was a heart-rending moment to think that all those sacrifices and all those people who had come here had got lost in the mists of time.’⁷

⁵“Indian Voices of the Great War” by David Omissi,p.4. Pub:Macmillan Press Ltd 1999

⁶ Gandhi’s open letter to the India Office 14.8.1914 quoted in “South Asians and the Shaping of Britain: A Sourcebook” ed. R. Ranasinha et al, Manchester Univeristy Press 2012, p101. In his chapter “Britain’s Forgotten Volunteers: two world wars”, p.84, Florian Stadler points out that Gandhi played a key role in the formation of the Indian Field Ambulance Training Corps in Britain recruiting Indian students from British universities. I am most grateful to Dr Stadler also for his advice on navigating the India Office Records.

⁷ House of Lords debate on commemorating the centenary of WWI. 4.3.2013.

Baroness Flather was a leading figure in the campaign to set up the Commonwealth Memorial at Hyde Park, but in the 2013 debate she was still concerned that the role of people from the Indian sub-continent in WWI would go unrecognised.

This lack of recognition was a concern raised during the war itself by General Sir James Willcocks, commander of the Indian Corps until September 1915, when he resigned his commission after clashing with Douglas Haig. He was uneasy about the lack of recognition, in Britain and from the Viceroy's government in India, for the achievements of Indian troops. In 1917 Willcocks published a long poem, "Hurnam Singh", about a disabled Indian Army veteran returning home and passing on the glorious story of Indian arms in Europe.⁸ It concludes with the idea that these deeds will live in oral tradition "And need no marble pile." Professor Michèle Barrett has shown⁹ that the Imperial War Graves Commission reserved its major efforts in personal memorialisation for the European theatre of war, while colonial troops who died on other fronts did not receive individual named markers, let alone "marble piles".

But not all the British wanted to downplay the memory of Indian participation in the war at the time. There was deep anxiety about the security of British rule in India and the role of the Indian Army could be used to send a strong political message that might help retrieve the position. The records of the India Office show how important they felt it was to *emphasise* the Indian war sacrifice as a bond of Imperial brotherhood with Britain and to do this through respecting and memorialising the war dead.

Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India from May 1915, was a passionate Imperialist, very influenced by the romantic dream of Empire propounded by Lord Milner, from 1916 an influential member of the war cabinet under Lloyd George and later, Colonial Secretary.

Milner was also a major influence on Fabian Ware¹⁰, who set up the Imperial War Graves Commission and commissioned the extraordinary monuments, (Thiepval, the Menin Gate, Neuve Chappelle), across the Western Front after the war. Herbert Barker, one of the two leading memorial architects, came under Milner's influence in South Africa and later worked (unhappily) with the other great Imperial War Graves Commission architect, Edwin Lutyens, to design the new Imperial capital in India, New Delhi. Barker was to design the monument to the Indian Army dead at Neuve-Chappelle which opened in 1927.

⁸ Reproduced by Florian Stadler in "South Asians and the Shaping of Britain: A Sourcebook" ed. R. Ranasinha et al, Manchester University Press 2012 pp.111-15

⁹ "Subalterns at War" by Michèle Barrett (2007), in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 9:3, 451-474

¹⁰ "Empires of the Dead" by David Crane, William Collins 2013 pp.18-20

Milner's vision of the British Empire as ... "a world encircling group of related nations, some of them destined to outgrow the mother country, united in a bond of equality and partnership and united ... by moral and spiritual bonds"¹¹ fed easily into the urge to create memorials acknowledging India's role in the war. This rhetoric of equal brotherhood within Empire – so different from the reality of life in British India, is strongly evident in the language of the India Office. In 1916, during arguments with the War Office over the Muslim Burial Ground at Woking, Chamberlain wrote ... "in such a matter it is our bounden duty to pay the most scrupulous regard to the feelings of our Moslem (sic) fellow subjects..."¹² The Chattri memorial at Patcham is dedicated.. "in grateful admiration and brotherly affection" from the people of Brighton. (An inscription approved by the India Office.)

Deeply compromised by racism as this notion of Imperial brotherhood certainly was, it allowed some space for co-operation between the British authorities and Asians who were living in or visiting Britain during the war over the erection of monuments to the Indian Army war dead. Rehana Ahmed has explored the struggle over "equality of citizenship" for Indian subjects in the period running up to World War I. The British authorities, Ahmed shows, applied this concept only very selectively but anxiety about Indian public opinion at home meant that Indians in England had to be listened to with increased respect at this time.¹³

The India Office was always mindful of the effect that treatment of Indian troops in Europe would have on opinion in India. British rule there was by no means secure and the Kaiser was seen as a real threat to the Indian empire. Wilhelm's personal views on this are now evident from the following note he wrote on a dispatch from Germany's London ambassador:

"And our consuls in Turkey and the Indies, our agents, etc., should foment a savage insurrection of the entire Mussulman (sic) world against this nation of odious shop-keepers, these conscienceless liars, since, even if we are to be bled white, England must at least lose India."

Kaiser's note on despatch of the German Ambassador to London 29.7.1914¹⁴

¹¹ "Milner's Young Men" by W.Nimocks, London 1970 p.13, quoted in "Empires of the Dead: How one man's vision led to the creation of WW1's war graves." David Crane 2013. Pub: William Collins pp18-19.

¹² India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/17232

¹³ "Equality of Citizenship", Rehana Ahmed in "South Asians and the Shaping of Britain, 1870-1950" ed. R. Ranasinha et al, Manchester University Press 2012, pp.21-45

¹⁴ World War One Document Archive, Brigham Young University
<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/1914/wilnotes.html>

Once Turkey joined the Central Powers and Britain declared war on the Sultan, (who also claimed the title of Caliph and guardian of Islam's holy places), in November 1914, there was real British concern about the allegiances of Indian Muslims.

Sikh loyalty was also under pressure at this time. Germany was supporting the Ghadr party founded in 1913 by expatriate Indians on the west coast of America¹⁵, described by the British as a "notorious revolutionary Sikh society"¹⁶ which was attempting to trigger a mutiny in the Indian Army.¹⁷

In May 1914, the *Komagata Maru* affair saw Sikh emigrants refused entry to Canada and culminated in July with a riot in Calcutta when the passengers of the returned ship refused to travel back to the Punjab. 18 of the passengers were shot by police. Revolution was in the air. By November, the German consulate in Hankow was spreading rumours through Sikh workers that..

"Afghanistan has declared war on India, that the frontier tribes have risen and that Indians are hurrying home from all parts of the world to take part in a holy war against the British."¹⁸

Meanwhile, on the western front, German propaganda aimed specifically at Muslim troops fighting for Britain and France urged them to desert to the side of the Caliph and warned that the Allies would not treat the Muslim dead with appropriate respect. This approach had some success. The Indian Mail Censor reported that over the winter of 1914/15 a party of Afridis from one regiment on the western front went over to the Germans.¹⁹

The Germans also encouraged Muslim prisoners of war to build an impressive wooden mosque in their camp on the outskirts of Berlin and took visiting Ottoman dignitaries to view it. This certainly worried the India Office who felt they were losing the propaganda advantage as the plans for a Muslim burial ground at Woking stalled amidst disputes between the India Office and War Office²⁰ over who should take responsibility for the project.²¹

The preparation of the Horsell Common burial ground is constantly discussed by the India Office in terms of the effect it will have on opinion in India. Cuttings of Indian press references were kept and, as soon as it was ready, the India Office

¹⁵ "Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History" by Rozina Visram, Pluto Press 2002 p.174

¹⁶ India Office Records, British Library. L/PJ/12/645, p.15 quoted in note p.71 "South Asians and the Shaping of Britain."

¹⁷ "South Asians and the Shaping of Britain, 1870-1950: A Sourcebook" ed. R.Ranasinha et al, Manchester University Press, 2012 p.14

¹⁸ India Office Records, British Library L/PJ/6/1346 File 119

¹⁹ "Indian Voices of the Great War" by David Omissi, pub: Macmillan Press Ltd 1999. P.371

²⁰ See The National Archives, War Office records W/O 32/5110 Sir Walter Lawrence to Lord Kitchener, Sec. Of State for War 2.10.1915 p.5

²¹ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/17232 A.A.Baig to Austen Chamberlain 10.1.1916

commissioned architectural photographers Bedford Lemere to take record shots for distribution to the Indian press and the Indian Army newspapers published in London, "Al Hakikat" and "Satya Vani".

The contribution of India to Britain's war effort were of huge value and needed to be protected by every possible means. In India this meant the Defence of India Act 1915 and draconian repressive measures against political dissent. The arrival of large numbers of Indian soldiers in Europe presented a different challenge. If the troops were not seen to be treated with respect, would they fight? Would "agitators" in India make capital from any lack of equality in treatment?

The role of the Indian Army forces on the Western Front was crucial in 1914-15. At the outbreak of war it soon became clear that, with Germany forces' massive and successful invasion of Belgium, the small British Expeditionary Force would be inadequate to cover the part of the Front which defended Allied access to the Channel ports. One third of the Indian Army was always kept on standby for action, (usually the enemy was expected to be Russia), and the Lahore and Meerut Divisions were promptly dispatched to Europe via the Suez Canal. They arrived at Marseilles in late September and were, David Omissi tells us: .."fed piecemeal into the front line in an attempt to stem the German rush between Ypres and La Bassée."²² Commentators suggested that they arrived in the nick of time to save the British from being over-run.

In spring 1915 the Indian Army corps were moved to the Neuve Chappelle to Givenchy sector where they remained for almost a year. The big offensives in which the corps took part were Neuve-Chappelle in March, the Second Battle of Ypres in April, then Festhubert in early May and Loos in September. Most Indian casualties occurred on this 7 mile front.

The appalling shock of winter in the trenches had sapped morale. In December 1914, Sir Walter Lawrence, the War Office Commissioner for Indian Hospitals visited the troops at the front and writes to the India Office: "The Indians are not in a singing mood ...What they want is sunshine. They are damned damp unprofitable bodies. I have never seen such mud before."²³

By late 1915 the Infantry divisions had been sent to Mesopotamia to fight Turkish forces. The two Indian cavalry divisions remained in France until early 1918 when they were sent to support General Allenby's offensive against Turkey in Palestine.²⁴

²² "Indian Voices of the Great War" by David Omissi,p.3. Pub:Macmillan Press Ltd 1999

²³ India Office Record, British Library. L/PJ/1358 file 110

²⁴ Indian Voices of the Great War" by David Omissi,p.4. Pub:Macmillan Press Ltd 1999

By the end of the war, soldiers of the Indian Army had been awarded 11 Victoria Crosses – 6 for acts of individual heroism on the Western Front.²⁵

The Indian Army units fighting in Europe were varied in culture, language and faith. Very rapidly, the British had to organise for the reception of Indian troops of all faiths, not only at the Front but also in England, as casualties began to be shipped back to the south coast. In October 1914 a charitable comforts fund for Indian troops was set up and Lord Kitchener appointed Sir Walter Lawrence to organise hospitals in England.

Strict segregation was to be applied, (which rather gives the lie to the official rhetoric of Imperial brotherhood and equality), and Indian Medical Service personnel were brought to Europe to man the 8 hospital ships and 6 land hospitals reserved for Indian soldiers. There were also a large, non-combattant complement of “sweepers”, ward orderlies, cooks, barbers, tailors and so on to cater for Indian troops.²⁶ The Brighton Pavilion was converted to a hospital in three weeks and opened on 14th December 1914.

Further hospitals for Indian troops were set up in Brighton, Bournemouth and at Brockenhurst, Milford-on-Sea and Barton in Hampshire. Part of the Royal Victoria army hospital at Netley, Southampton was also used for Indian troops. Very complex arrangements for separate catering and care of different faith groups had to be made at each hospital.

The bodies of soldiers who died at the English hospitals had to be provided with appropriate treatment according to their beliefs. The Indian Mail Censors had already picked up complaints on this subject in letters home from hospitals in France:

“I am sorry to say that this is an evil country, because they bury Hindus and Musalmans in one place.”²⁷

The Indian Mail Censors existed to prevent any unfavourable comment from Indian Army soldiers in Europe getting back to India²⁸ – where the political situation was described by a senior judge in 1915 as “a powder magazine”²⁹ waiting for a spark. This issue had explosive potential. Sir Walter Lawrence tackled it quickly:

²⁵ Florian Stadler “Britain’s Forgotten Volunteers: two world wars” in “South Asians and the Shaping of Britain: A Sourcebook” ed. R.Ranasinha et al, Manchester University Press 2012, p.87

²⁶ “Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History” by Rozina Visram, Pluto Press 2002 p.181

²⁷ British Library, Indian war correspondence www.bl.uk/world-war-one

²⁸ See Omissi, “Indian Voices of the Great War” throughout.

²⁹ India Office Records, British Library L/PJ/6/1358. Chief Court of Punjab judgement in case of “The Comrade” and Standard Press. 3-5 March 1915.

“I pointed out in my letter to Lord Kitchener of 31st December 1914 that they had been burying Hindus at Boulogne. It took some time to arrange for cremation. The French authorities were against it, but eventually we succeeded.”³⁰

Indeed, so well did Lawrence succeed that by June 1915 a French committee was proposing to extend cremation “in the simple manner of the Indians” to the disposal of all unidentified human remains on the western front.³¹

Clearly, cremation arrangements had to be put in place at the English hospitals as well. It was arranged with the Indian Medical Service commanding officers at each of the Indian hospitals for a cremation place to be set up to burn the bodies of dead Sikh and Hindu soldiers. These were “open air” cremations on a pyre of wood, quite outside the provisions of the Cremation Act 1902. As the Home Office commented at the time “The proposed action is of course quite illegal”.³² The most famous of these cremation sites is marked by the Chattri memorial (now a Grade II Listed memorial), at Patcham on the Sussex Downs outside Brighton.

Walter Lawrence planned, from the start, for there to be a lasting memorial after the war on every hospital site:

“I feel that it would be wise on political and historical grounds to spend a good deal of care and some money on preserving the memory of the Indians who have died in France and in England.

...I wanted also, as a matter of historical interest, to have columns erected in every place where an Indian hospital existed.I know from constant conversations with Indians of all classes that the worthy commemoration of the Indian dead in France and England would be greatly appreciated in India.”³³

Some individual Indians did not fit the neat religious divisions made by the British. A unique personal monument was erected in the churchyard of St Nicholas' church, Brockenhurst, at the expense of the parishioners, to mark the burial in January 1915 of Sukha, a sweeper of the 16th Supply & Transport Corps working at the Lady Hardinge Hospital. Sir Walter Lawrence reported to Lord Kitchener³⁴ that Sukha had belonged to “a peculiar sect which never cremates. We asked the Woking Mohammedan (sic) Burial Ground to allow us to bury him there, but they flatly

³⁰ India Office Records, British Library W.Lawrence to Major J.L.Storr, War Office 16.12.1915 Ref: L/MIL/7/19548

³¹ “Empires of the Dead: How one man’s vision led to the creation of WW1’s war graves.”

David Crane 2013. Pub: William Collins pp66-67.

³² “Hindu Cremations in Britain” by Stephen White in “The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal” ed. P.C.Jupp and G.Howarth, Macmillan 1997 p.136

³³ India Office Records, British Library W.Lawrence to Major J.L.Storr, War Office 16.12.1915 Ref: L/MIL/7/19548

³⁴ The National Archives, War Office records, W/O 32/5110 Letter from Sir Walter Lawrence to Lord Kitchener, Sec. Of State for War, 15.2.1915 p.15 “..I am particularly anxious, ...that the War Office should insist on the India Office fulfilling their responsibility.”

declined. We then had recourse to the Reverend Mr. Chambers, the Vicar of Brockenhurst. He came forward and most kindly allowed us to bury him in the Churchyard.”

Sukha’s gravestone at Brockenhurst reads: “By creed he was not “Christian” but his earthly life was sacrificed in the interests of others.”

Lawrence mentions here, the Woking Muslim Burial Ground. The bodies of Muslim soldiers who died in the hospitals must also be buried in accordance with their beliefs, but there was very little such provision available in England. There was already one Muslim burial plot within the private cemetery operated by the London Necropolis Company at Brookwood near Woking, near to where Britain’s only purpose-built mosque was also sited. This seemed to be a possible solution.

At this point the Muslim member of the Secretary of State for India’s Council in London, Sir Mirza Abbas Ali Baig, enters the picture. Baig had had a long and prestigious career in regional government in India and was appointed to the Secretary of State’s Council in 1910, retiring as its Vice-President in 1917. He had been very involved in acquiring the Woking mosque building from the Leitner family and founded the Woking Mosque Trust, inviting Al-Haj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din to take charge there. His obituary in “The Islamic Review” in 1933 comments that “He was a great believer in the Nationalist Movement and always advocated the Indian claims.”³⁵

In October 1914 Baig wrote to the Secretary of State for India³⁶ to say that he had met with the Imam of Woking, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and his deputy, Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, to agree that they would conduct funerals at Woking mosque and make arrangements for decent burial at Brookwood.³⁷ However, costs at Brookwood were exorbitant and the War Office agreed to requisition a plot of land for a dedicated Muslim Burial Ground at Woking.

It was not before time, as the 129th Baluchis went into action at Wytschaete, Belgium that month. “Mohamedan (sic) sick and wounded are arriving in this country already...” India Office warned the War Office as they agreed to purchase two motor hearses and a plot of land at Horsell Common outside Woking.³⁸

³⁵ <http://www.wokingmuslim.org/pers/aabaig.htm>

³⁶ India Office Records, British Library copy letter from Baig dated 23.10.14 attached to Minute 18023/1914 in L/MIL/7/17232: 1914-19.

³⁷ Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din left England on 28.8.1914 to undertake the pilgrimage to Makkah and returned to India where he remained for two years. Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din was therefore managing everything to do with the establishment of the Woking Muslim Burial Ground on behalf of the Woking Mosque at this time. See Dr Zahid Aziz “Muslims in Britain and the start of the First World War” 2014: <http://www.wokingmuslim.org/work/ww1/woking-ww1-web.pdf> footnote p.9. I am grateful to Dr Aziz also for his comments in a private communication.

³⁸ India Office Records, British Library Minute 18023/1914 in L/MIL/7/17232: 1914-29

The creation of a dignified site at Horsell Common was very much driven by Indians resident in England. Chief amongst these was Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din of Woking Mosque. Lawrence noted that Sadr-ud-Din “comes from Sialkote and I believe is employed at the University of Lahore.”³⁹ He came to England as a missionary for the Woking Muslim Mission and preached every Friday to a London congregation as well.⁴⁰

Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din took on the actual work of arranging all the troop burials at Brookwood and ensured that they were carried out with honour. He arranged for members of the mosque congregation to attend the interments and insisted that coffins be covered in a Union flag and a military firing party provide a last volley over the grave. This latter action surprised the India Office who commented: “He has even been able to obtain firing parties, though I do not know on what authority. This is certainly an innovation as far as Indian soldiers are concerned.”⁴¹

The War Office, having obtained the land at Horsell Common, sent troops from Aldershot to put up a 6ft high wooden fence round it, take down any trees and mark out some rough paths. A wooden hut was provided as a mortuary and shelter for mourners. The ground was waterlogged and bare when they handed over the keys to the Maulvi in May 1915.

Dissatisfied with this crude arrangement, Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din started a campaign to get a dignified permanent enclosure created which would also be a lasting memorial to the Muslim war dead. He contacted leading Muslim converts such as Lord Headley, wrote to Lord Kitchener at the War Office and also got the Agha Khan to visit Woking. He pushed the India Office to come up with plans for a permanent enclosure with “some oriental decoration including a gateway”.

The Maulvi makes a succinct case to the War Office:

“It is not much if in response to the sacrifices that the Indians are making a little consideration were shown to give a decent look to the place where their bodies are laid and which is visited by the Convalescent Soldiers as well as those Indians that are resident in England.”⁴²

The India Office and War Office chafed at the criticism but could not ignore it. Sir Walter Lawrence found the Maulvi “an exceedingly ‘difficile’ person” and commented “he wants soothing”. It was clear to Lawrence that the War Office “cannot dispense

³⁹ India Office Records, British Library Mss Eur F143/80 28.5.1915 Letter from Lawrence to Col.F.F.Perry IMS, CO of Lady Hardinge Indian Hospital, Brockenhurst.

⁴⁰ India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/17232 Letter from Sir Walter Lawrence 28.5.1915

⁴¹ India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/17232:1914-29 India Office briefing to Secretary of State Austen Chamberlain 2.9.1915

⁴² India Office Records, British library. L/MIL/7/17232:1914-29 Letter to the Secretary, War Office 22.6.1915.

with the Maulvi and it would be very difficult to replace him.”⁴³ The tone suggests that he would have been very happy to be rid of Sadr-ud-Din, but Indian opinion was too important to jeopardise. In his final report to Kitchener, Lawrence made it clear that he believed Sadr-ud-Din’s ..”object is to make mischief.” Opportunity had been given, by the India Office’s mis-handling of the project, to “the agitator”.⁴⁴

Again, Abbas Ali Baig is asked to advise the India Office on its response to the Maulvi and approves the idea of an enclosure “with two small domes in the Indo-Saracenic Style”. He recommends that Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob should be asked to design the scheme.

Swinton Jacob had retired to Weybridge in 1911 after more than 40 years in service to the Maharajas of Jaipur, to whom he acted as surveyor and architect on many lavish building schemes including the extraordinary Ram Niwas public gardens and Jaipur arts and crafts museum. Maharajah Sawai Madho Singh II, through Swinton Jacob, championed the “Indo-Saracenic” style as the highest style of Indian architecture. (It has been pointed out by Thomas Metcalfe⁴⁵ that the Maharaja reserved this “colonial” style of architecture purely for buildings where he would encounter the British. It was the style which the Raj preferred. His private residences were of an entirely different design.)

“Indo-Saracenic” style, sometimes known as “Indo-Gothic” was the romantic, orientalisising fantasy architecture of the British rulers, intent on embedding themselves in an invented tradition of empire. As David Cannadine has described, it...”projected... a vision of imperial society as unified, venerable, time-honoured and hierarchical.”⁴⁶ Swinton Jacob was responsible for designing, in this style, the amphitheatre for the 1903 Coronation Durbar of Edward VII⁴⁷ and the setting for the 1911 Delhi Durbar. On both occasions he was decorated by the King Emperor.⁴⁸

Indo-Saracenic style represented the British definition of “Indian” culture and formed part of a wider movement to categorise and catalogue the Imperial possession and its people. The British sought to communalise even the architecture of the sub-continent, identifying particular forms of arch and dome as Hindu or Muslim styles – regardless of who built or designed the originals.⁴⁹ The India Office records abound

⁴³ India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/17232 Letter from Sir Walter Lawrence 28.5.1915

⁴⁴ The National Archives, War Office records, WO 32/5110. Printed report by Sir Walter Lawrence “Arrangements Made for the Indian Sick and Wounded in England and France” 8.3.1916 p.3

⁴⁵ “A Tradition Created: Indo-Saracenic Architecture under the Raj” by Thomas R. Metcalfe, History Today Vol:32 Issue 9, 1982

⁴⁶ “Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire” by David Cannadine, Penguin Books 2001 p.48

⁴⁷ “Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire” by David Cannadine, Penguin Books 2001 p.48

⁴⁸ “Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire” by David Cannadine, Penguin Books 2001 p.112

⁴⁹ “A Tradition Created: Indo-Saracenic Architecture under the Raj” by Thomas R. Metcalfe, History Today Vol:32 Issue 9, 1982

with comments about the religious suitability of designs for the Indian Army memorials –

even the headstones for Woking were to be of “a purely Mahomedan (sic) design.”⁵⁰ That is to say, they were to have pointed ogee arches at the top. To the British, pointed arches were always Muslim, straight lintels were always Hindu.

Funded by the Maharaja, Jacob published a massive set of portfolios of architectural design detail in this style.⁵¹ Jacobs also designed the Jaipur Gate, built by Jaipur craftsmen in London for the Kensington Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886, which can now be seen in the grounds of Hove museum (where it was moved in 1926). He was asked by the Secretary of State for India to advise Lutyens and Baker on their designs for New Delhi in 1911 but had to withdraw at an early stage because of failing health.

It was Swinton Jacob, in retirement in Weybridge, who was also asked to design the chattri at Patcham for Brighton Council⁵². Prevented by ill health, Jacob suggested a young Indian architect studying in London, E.C. Henriques. The style for this monument too was to be “Indo-Saracenic”. The original conception apparently had rather more decorative detail than was eventually used by the clients who feared it would not stand up to the harsh climate of the Downs or “the ill treatment of mischievous boys.”⁵³

It appears, indeed, to have been Swinton Jacob who provided the first design for a memorial on the cremation sites for Indian troops in England. The War Office write to consult the India Office about this in February 1916, but sadly the design is missing from the file.⁵⁴ The War Office was keen to start at Netley and Brockenhurst, but in the event, the only one of the proposed hospital memorials actually put up seems to be at Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire where a granite obelisk with inscriptions in Urdu and English was erected in June 1917, by the local building firm of H.Drew with the aid of some British troops, at the expense of the hospital staff. There was an unveiling ceremony on 10th July 1917 and postcard photographs show troops on parade for the occasion.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/17232 Col. Selwyn, India Office to the Imam of Woking 30.6.1916

⁵¹ RIBA Library “Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details” pub: London B.Quaritch 1890-1913 Ref:E872.03(54)//JAC

⁵² India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/19548 Letter from Sir John Otter to Austen Chamberlain 28.12.1916

⁵³ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548 Letter from Sir John Otter to Austen Chamberlain 16.1.1917.

⁵⁴ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548 7.2.1916

⁵⁵ “New Milton in Old Picture Postcards” by A.T.Lloyd, 1985.

It was Brighton Council that came forward with a clear proposal for a memorial on a cremation site. Sir John Otter, Mayor of Brighton, had been very involved in setting up the Indian hospitals in the town. He was approached in August 1915 by Lieutenant Das Gupta of the Indian Medical Service for permission to erect a permanent memorial at the Patcham cremation site. Otter discussed this with Sir Walter Lawrence and a visiting Indian Army dignitary, Sirdar Daljit Singh, who then put the idea forward to Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India “who was greatly interested in the proposal”.⁵⁶

The idea came at a useful moment for Chamberlain. This was a profoundly difficult time in British relations with India. There had been heavy losses at Loos. In the Middle East, the Indian Army were being asked to advance on Baghdad against Turkish Muslim troops. The Mesopotamian campaign had been badly bungled by Viceroy Hardinge, with his eye on post-war oil reserves, by providing poor supplies and terrible care for the wounded Indian troops. Chamberlain would be forced to admit to Parliament in 1916 that the campaign had been a disaster and to resign when the full report to the House came out in 1917.⁵⁷

The India Office seized on Otter’s idea and offered to pay half the costs for the chattri memorial if Brighton Council went ahead with it. At the same time, wealthy Indians, (usually rulers of the princely states), were to be encouraged by Sirdar Daljit Singh to pay for a separate memorial India Gate in Brighton itself, commemorating the town’s care of Indian wounded.⁵⁸ No more state money would be available for this spontaneous gesture of gratitude wrote the India Office : “The India Office would not be directly concerned but it would afford Mr Chamberlain the liveliest pleasure if the Indian community were thus to signalise its appreciation..”

Building memorials in war time proved impossible for anybody but the War Office (who could get round the fierce restrictions imposed by the Defence of the Realm Act). Brighton had to wait until after the conclusion of hostilities to get the labour and materials it needed – including a consignment of Sicilian marble. The Chattri was dedicated by the Prince of Wales in February 1921. The final construction of the chattri looks more like Lutyens’ stripped-back Mughal style than Jacobs “Indo-Saracenic” but his influence can be seen in the forms and detailing.

The India Gate, now a Grade II Listed monument, is again in an Indo-Saracenic style this time based on C16th Gujarati building designs. It was designed by another British imperial architect, Thomas Tyrwhitt,⁵⁹ (who practiced in South Africa and Hong Kong) and was opened by the chief subscriber Bhupinder Singh, the

⁵⁶ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548. Memo from Brighton Council to Secretary of State for India 1921.

⁵⁷ “Austen Chamberlain – Gentleman in Politics” by David Dutton, pub. R. Anderson 1985 pp. 120-123

⁵⁸ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548. India Office to Sir Walter Lawrence 2.6.1916.

⁵⁹ The Hindu newspaper, Madras, 31.1.1993 “An Indian Island on the British Coast.”

Maharajah of Patiala later in 1921. The Maharajah was a significant Sikh leader who served on the British General Staff during the war. 28,000 troops from his princely state fought on the British side. He had already funded the establishment of the first Sikh gurdwara in England in 1911. No British money went into erecting this memorial, it was entirely funded from India.

In the end, Horsell Common burial ground, (now a Grade II Listed site), was designed by T. Herbert Winny, surveyor to the India Office. His beautiful design can still be seen in the British Library.⁶⁰ The Times of India commented that it was .."modelled upon some well known examples of Saracenic architecture, such as the Taj and the I'Timad-ud-Daulah at Agra."⁶¹ Swinton Jacobs died in 1917 and it is not clear whether Winny directly consulted him, but Jacobs was clearly the India Office's preferred architectural advisor and Horsell Common owes a lot to his published work in the Jaipur *Portfolio*.

These memorials speak the architectural language which the British favoured. As Thomas Metcalfe has commented:

"Jacob's *Portfolio*.... carried with it a sense of mastery, of having understood the structure of values that gave India its distinctive character. Indo-Saracenic architecture, with its concept of a "traditional" India, was not only a creature of British colonialism. It involved as well the presumption that the colonial ruler could tell the Indian what his (sic) heritage consisted of."⁶²

At Brighton and Woking, the British are memorialising the India of their imaginations. Compare some of the memorials erected at that time to British soldiers – the shocking realism of Sargeant Jagger, for example, or the minimalism of Lutyens' Stone of Remembrance. It is hard to imagine "modernist" work like this being used to express the British idea of the Indian Army.

How were the memorials understood after the war? Already by 1923 there were concerns about vandalism at the isolated Chattri site, despite the provision of a caretaker's cottage inhabited by an ex RSM of the Indian Army.⁶³ There followed years in which Brighton Council struggled to maintain the site, before it was again requisitioned by the Army for invasion practice in WW2. At that time the chattri was left unprotected and was badly damaged by shot and shell, leading to compensation from the War Office towards repairs.

⁶⁰ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/17232 19.7.1916

⁶¹ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/17232 Times of India 12.7.1916 p.6

⁶² "A Tradition Created: Indo-Saracenic Architecture under the Raj" by Thomas R. Metcalfe. History Today, Volume 32 Issue 9 1982

⁶³ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548 March 1923

Once again, relations with India provided an urgency. The India Office spelled it out in a draft letter to the War Office in January 1946:

“The Secretary of State feels that, particularly in view of the present state of tension in India, it is inadvisable that the Indian Army War Memorial in this country should be allowed to remain in a derelict condition...”⁶⁴

So sensitive was this, however, that the draft is heavily amended to a blander wording in its final version.

Even after repairs, it wasn't long before the graffiti artists were at work on the chattri again. In 1949 the Parks Superintendent wondered whether it might help to put up a notice on local war memorials:

..pointing out to the public that these memorials are of a sacred character, and if possible imposing some penalty for wilful damage.”⁶⁵

At Horsell Common too, a notice appeared explaining the significance of the site. Despite being cared for by the War Graves Commission and used again as a burial ground for Muslim servicemen in WW2, vandalism at this isolated site remained a problem. By 1968, the Imam of Woking was in discussion with the CWGC about moving the graves to Brookwood. Woking by now had a larger, permanent Muslim community and matters seem to have come to a head following Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech in April of that year. Despite calls for calm on all sides locally, in early September 11 headstones were uprooted and smashed. Exhumations followed and the graves were moved to Brookwood military cemetery. No longer under the care of CWGC, the Horsell Common site became derelict and until quite recently, 1970s National Front graffiti disfigured its crumbling walls.

But that is not the end of the story. At Brighton things had turned a significant corner in 1932 when the British Legion decided to organise a memorial service at the chattri for the first time since its dedication.⁶⁶ They publicised this, with pride, in India. After the Second World War, the local Patcham branch picked up again and started holding an annual summer "pilgrimage" to the chattri with representatives of the Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese governments. They also negotiated funds from the Indian government to maintain the site. In 1953 they planted trees there to mark the coronation.⁶⁷ This annual pilgrimage continued every year until 2000 when the ceremony was taken over by the Undivided India Ex-Services Association⁶⁸. Today it is a big annual event. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has recently added a monument listing the names of all who were cremated there.

⁶⁴ India Office Records, British Library. L/MIL/7/19548 Military Sept, India Office draft letter 18.1.1946.

⁶⁵ East Sussex Record Office, DB/D/62/81 4.8.1949

⁶⁶ Sussex Daily News 19.9.1932 in India Office Records, British Library L/MIL/7/19548

⁶⁷ East Sussex Record Office DB/D/62/81

⁶⁸ "The Chattri Memorial Service" pamphlet no date. East Sussex Record Office Pamphlet Box BH6/

At Woking, the Borough Council and the site owners, Horsell Common Preservation Society, have taken the initiative to restore the original burial ground enclosure and created a peace garden within it, in time for its centenary. This initiative was supported by a grant from English Heritage for the conservation of the original enclosure under supervision of architects Radley House Partnership. Additional funding to create the peace garden came from the Armed Forces Community Covenant Scheme, Department for Communities and local Government, Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, the Sultanate of the government of Oman and Surrey County Council's Community Improvement Fund. The landscaping and water feature inspired by Islamic garden design were designed by terra firma Landscape Architects.

Perhaps the most powerful element of the new peace garden at Woking is the installation of a memorial combining stone from Britain and the Indian subcontinent on which the names of all those who once were originally buried at the Horsell Common site are recorded. The Peace Garden was opened in November 2015 by the Earl of Wessex at a ceremony which included prayers by both a British Army Senior Chaplain and Imam Asim Hafiz, Islamic Religious Advisor, Ministry of Defence.

These memorials have outlasted Empire but survived to be invested with new or expanded meanings. They were as much the creation of Lieutenant Das Gupta, Sirdar Daljit Singh and Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din as they were of Britain's imperial policy. As Said Adrus has said, these are evocative sites of memory with much to tell us about relations between Britain and the Indian sub-continent, not only in 1914-18 but ever since.