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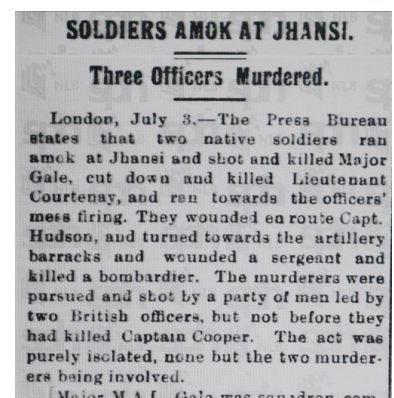
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MURDER IN JHANSI, 1915: MAJOR MARMADUKE HENRY LITTLEDALE GALE, 8TH (INDIAN) CAVALRY

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A few posts back I wrote of the First World War death of one of my great-great uncles in France in 1914. Another death on the other side of my family is recounted in the press release opposite, from July 1915. Two Muslim *sowars* – cavalry troopers – went on a murderous rampage in Jhansi in central India and killed four of their British officers, including my grandfather's first cousin Marmaduke Gale. Their regiment, the 8th Cavalry, had been kept



in India for internal security duties rather than being sent overseas. It was a similar incident in some respects to those experienced in recent years by coalition forces in Afghanistan with rogue Afghan soldiers. The British dead were buried in Jhansi Cantonment Cemetery, among 78 military deaths from the two World Wars commemorated there by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The motivations behind this incident can never be known for certain, especially as the two perpetrators were themselves killed. One report suggests that they were disaffected after having been detailed to join a draft for overseas service; the following year two entire squadrons of the 8th Cavalry refused to go to Mesopotamia to fight the Turks, on the grounds that they were fellow-Muslims. But for the press release to state that the Jhansi murder was a 'completely isolated incident' was being disingenuous. Across India there had been numerous 'terrorist outrages,' as the press called them, since the outbreak of war with Germany and Turkey in 1914, though this was the worst.

Some of these acts of violence were directly instigated by the Ghadr, the Sikh nationalist movement founded in California in 1911 that had strong support among Indians in the United States and Canada. Others, perhaps including the Jhansi incident, originated with Muslim groups. The spread of discontent by agents of these movements in the ranks of the Indian army greatly concerned the British, who feared a repeat of the revolt that had taken place in the East India Company army in 1857, the 'Indian Mutiny.' The terrible bloodshed inflicted by both sides in that conflict was a constant backdrop to events in India leading up to the final British withdrawal in 1947. During the First World War the British administration still felt it could contain the unrest punitively, and disaffection in the army was dealt with harshly according to military justice; after one incident in November 1914 when elements of the 23rd Indian Cavalry mutinied and attacked a local treasury, twelve of the men were sentenced to death after court-martial and executed.

The Indian nationalist movement was undoubtedly the main driving force behind most events such as the Jhansi incident. But the sudden upsurge in violence across India after August 1914 can also be seen as part of the wider war, and not just because the nationalists were taking advantage of British distraction. In Washington, the German Embassy provided funds and intelligence to the Ghadr movement, supplying them with thousands of rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition to mount a seaborne invasion of India. In Constantinople, the Ottoman regime in 1914 issued *fatwahs* ordering Muslims in India to rise in *jihad* against the British, another factor in the attacks. For these reasons, the authorities after the war saw the British military casualties of this violence as part of the wider

mander, and Capt. B. L. Hudson squadron officer, of the 8th Cavalry, stationed at Jhansi. Lieut. Courtenay was probably also a recently joined squadron officer of the same regiment. Capt. G. C. Cooper was double company officer of the 121st Pioneers, also stationed at Jhansi.]

THE JHANSI TRAGEDY.

SOME FURTHER DETAILS.

Allahabad, July 4th.—Regarding the Jhansi tragedy the "Pioneer" states that two Hindustani Mohammedan brothers who had just returned from leave to their homes in Moradabad set out for the 8th Cavalry Mess with sporting rifles and a large amount of ammunition. They first came upon Mr Courtenay, who was apparently going to inspect the stables, walking with his hands behind his back. They attacked him from behind and cut off his hands and clove in his skull. Mr Courtenay died the same evening.

The two went on to the Mess where they found Colonel Chaplin, who told them to put down their rifles. They fired but Colonel Chaplin providentially escaped through the Khitmatgar pulling him aside. Major Hudson was wounded in the side.

The men then went off to the cross roads near the Cantonment Magistrate's bungalow. Here they saw and saluted Captain Cooper of the West Kents, who was acting as S.S.O., as he was going to his office. They shot him in the back killing him.

Meanwhile Colonel Chaplin and Major Gale arrived with gunners who had been called up by Major Hudson. Before the men were finally accounted for, one being shot through the head by Colonel Chaplin, they succeeded in killing Major Gale and a bombardier and wounding another artilleryman.

conflict, and put their commemoration under the remit of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Marmaduke Gale's background was emblematic of the British presence in India. He was the fifth generation of his family to have been there, the first having been an officer on an East Indiaman in the late 18th century and the next a Lieutenant-Colonel in the East India Company's army. Marmaduke's grandfather, my ancestor John Gale, owned the largest indigo plantation in India, the 'factory' at Pundaul mentioned in the biography below, where my great-grandmother and her father were born. The conditions of work on the indigo estates led Mahatma Gandhi famously to visit them in 1919, when one of the planters he confronted was Marmaduke's cousin Maurice Gale – though in circumstances of non-violent protest that were to prove a more effective agent for change than the terrorist incidents of a few years before.

For a long time after the British left India the Jhansi Cantonment Cemetery was neglected, becoming overrun with vegetation and snakes. In a happy footnote to this story a local Anglo-Indian, Mrs Peggy Cantem, undertook to clear out and tend the cemetery, working single-handedly into her eighties until joined latterly by representatives of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. You can read about her work [here](#). The cemetery contains burials dating throughout the period of British rule in India, including the Indian Mutiny. The whereabouts of the graves of the two Indian brothers who died in this incident are unknown.

GALE, MARMADUKE HENRY LITTLEDALE, Major, 8th Cavalry, Indian



Marmaduke H. L. Gale.

Army, elder s. of the late Marmaduke Henry Littledale Gale, Proprietor Indigo Estate, Pundoul, Bengal, by his wife, Anna (Rayne Place, Rayne, Essex), dau. of Malcolm Neynoe Macleod; b. Muzufferpur, Bengal, India, 3 March, 1873; educ. Wellington and Sandhurst; gazetted to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 10 Oct. 1894, and promoted Lieut. 30 Oct. 1896; transferred to the Indian Army in 1897, and became Capt. 10 Oct. 1903, and Major, 10 Oct. 1912; commanded a Camel Corps 1903-6; took part in the Mohmond Expedition on the North-West Frontier, India, 1908 (medal with clasp); was on General Pilcher's Staff, 1909-10, then rejoined his regt. and in 1913 was appointed Squadron Commander in the 8th Cavalry. He was shot at Jhansi, 28 June, 1915, in the execution of his duty, by two Mahommedan Sowars of the regt., who had been warned to proceed to the Front with a draft the same afternoon. Major Gale was a very good linguist, and had passed in higher and lower Hindustani, Punjabi, Arabic, and Pashtu, and was author of "Hindustani for Beginners." He m. at the Cathedral, Calcutta, 11 June, 1900, Alice Maude, dau. of John Connell, and had a dau., Helen Alice, b. 9 July, 1901.

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