



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

GRAHAM PAPERS

November 2007

Graham Papers (D812, D305 and T3263)

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Summary

The Graham papers comprise c.4,700 documents and c.95 volumes, 1741, 1777 and 1791-1957, and consist primarily of: title, deeds, leases, wills, accounts, correspondence, etc, 1741, 1777 and 1791-1957, relating to Graham property in and around Lisburn, Co. Antrim, and in Belfast; correspondence and diaries of Dr James Graham and Colonel James Graham, 1819-1905, including some family letters, but chiefly concerned with Dr and Colonel Graham's service in India and with the Indian Mutiny; and correspondence and diaries of Captain D.C. Graham, including descriptions of Captain Graham's experience during the 1914-1918 War, when he served with the Royal Engineers in France.

The Graham family originated in Scotland and settled in Ulster, probably at Lisnastrain, outside Lisburn, some time in the 17th century. By the early 18th century the family was well established in Lisburn, then a small market and manufacturing town, nine miles south-west of Belfast, and by the turn of the century they owned considerable property at Lisnastrain, and at Bow Street, Market Square and Graham Gardens, Lisburn, as well as head rents in Belfast. The Belfast head rents were possibly acquired through inter-marriage with the Joy and Tomb families, Colonel James Graham having married Louisa Maria Joy in 1865. As has been mentioned, Colonel Graham, his uncle and namesake, Dr Graham, and other members of the family also, saw military and medical service in India during the period 1819-1879. Their correspondence relating to the Indian Mutiny has been calendared in detail and forms the basis of the PRONI publication *The Graham Indian Mutiny Papers, edited and introduced by A.T. Harrison, with an historiographical Essay by T.G. Fraser* (Belfast, 1980). The following description of this, the central part of the archive, is drawn from that source.



The Grahams and the Ulster-Indian connection

'... The Grahams were one of a group of Lisburn families with a tradition of Indian service; at the time of the mutiny the family had five members in the East India Company's army. [These were:

Dr James Graham (1796-1857), [who] entered the East India Company Army as an assistant surgeon in 1820. In 1857 he was serving as superintending military surgeon at Sialkot.

William Stuart Graham (1830-1898), [who] entered the East India Company 2nd regiment of light cavalry in 1849.

James Graham (1831-1857), [who] entered the East India Company 14th regiment of light cavalry in 1849.

Thomas Chadwick Graham (1835-1880), [who] entered the East India Company 10th regiment of light cavalry in c.1855.

James Graham (1830-c.1905), [who] entered the East India Company 14th regiment of native infantry in 1850. [This James Graham, the future colonel, was Dr James Graham's nephew; the other three Grahams were Dr James's sons.]

(The above military details were obtained from the East India Company cadet papers and army lists held by the Oriental and India Collections of the British Library, London.)

... Large family groups like the Grahams were common to the British community of mid-19th century India. Adventurous and ambitious young men seeking a career, or bored by the prospect of a life of routine employment in Britain and lured by the romance of the east, carved out careers in the military and administrative structures of British India. The sons of such men emulated their fathers and served in India, and their sisters married into other Anglo-Indian families. Family members in Britain used the example and the patronage of relations in India as the means of exporting their surplus off-spring to the subcontinent. Dr Graham was the adventurous young man who laid the foundations of the Graham family's Indian activities. He qualified as a doctor in 1819 and, in 1820, when 23 years of age took up an appointment as an assistant surgeon in the Company's army. Two of his sons died in childhood, but the three who reached manhood, William, James and Tom, all pursued Indian military careers. They were born in India but were educated in Ulster, probably at the Royal School, Dungannon (Co. Tyrone), along with their cousin James. Dr Graham helped his nephew establish himself in India, and James Graham looked upon his uncle as a patron and a trusted adviser well versed in Indian affairs. ...

Throughout the history of British India (both pre and post mutiny) Ulstermen were prominent in the affairs of the subcontinent. Ulster was the birthplace of so many nabobs, soldiers and administrators who sought their fortunes or made their careers

on Indian soil, and many of the collections of family papers in PRONI contain official, commercial or personal papers of ancestors who served in India in a military or civil capacity, or were involved in Indian trade. The Ulster-Indian connection was crowned in the second half of the 19th century, when two Ulstermen (Sir John Lawrence and Lord Dufferin) held the rank of Governor General. ... The reason for the high degree of Ulster involvement in India - which was probably greater than Ulster's proportion of the British population warranted - was that India provided a career outlet for the younger sons of gentry and professional families, who could find few prospects within the limited Ulster economy. ...



The Lawrences and Nicholson

The Grahams in 1857 were certainly not out of place in the Punjab and northern India, as two of the most important British officials in this area were Ulstermen: Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, and John Nicholson, Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar. ... There is doubt over John Nicholson's birthplace. [But] Captain L.J. Trotter, Nicholson's biographer, states that he was born in the Grahams' home town of Lisburn, on 11 December 1822. ...

Both of these men were members of larger family circles serving in India. John Lawrence was one of three brothers in India. Their mother originally came from Co. Donegal (their father was a military man who had a long record of service in India) and they were educated at Foyle College, Londonderry. Sir Henry Lawrence, who was the equal of his brother John as a civil administrator – he was Chief Commissioner of recently annexed Oudh at the outbreak of the mutiny – died gallantly leading the defence of the British residency at Lucknow, before he had achieved his full potential in Indian government. ... The Grahams, as shown by their letters, knew the Lawrence brothers, and were conversant with ... Nicholson's activities.

Nicholson, and [Sir] John ... Lawrence, were men of stature who influenced the course of history. Their careers have provided material for the biographer and the historical novelist, and no history of the mutiny is complete without reference to them and their deeds. The Grahams were made of humbler clay. They were passengers in the events of 1857, playing their roles within a framework in which the Lawrence brothers and Nicholson were determining factors. Indeed Dr Graham's death [at Sialkot in 1857] can be attributed to the policy instituted by Nicholson and John Lawrence of stripping the Punjab of British and loyal Punjabi forces preparatory to the assault on Delhi. Dr Graham's death during the Sialkot rising was a personal tragedy for his family, but only one of many similar tragedies enacted throughout Anglo-Indian society at the time. ...



Ordinary life in Anglo-India

In retrospect the Grahams are thus unimportant as individuals, but their very ordinariness endows them with an historical relevance as typical representatives of Anglo-Indian society during its greatest period of crisis in 1857-1858. ... [They] provide a fascinating view of the complex web of family tradition, patronage, career structure, ambition and financial motivation which governed an Anglo-Indian family's affairs, and ... give the reader a realisation of the human dimension during the mutiny [and in Anglo-India generally]. ...



The 'fishing fleet'

Thus, Dr Graham emerges from his letters as a pragmatic and somewhat cynical "old India hand" [For example, in an undated letter (D812/10/B/2), preceding the mutiny, to his nephew, James, he] ... listed the various accomplishments needed by any young lady who came out to India with the annual "fishing fleet", as one of James's sisters was thinking of doing:

"... Almost all the girls who come to this country tho' but half educated, have a few superficial accomplishments which fit them for the society they are intended for, and they have brass and impudence which gives them conversational powers and with training at home they enter a ballroom as if accustomed to society from their infancy. These qualifications I fear are entirely wanting in Sarah. An easy indifference in manner and movement in society or in a ballroom require some training and experience, and your sister Sarah has had none, and I am persuaded if she could settle at home her happiness would be greater that it ever could be in this country. ..."



The family's varied responses to the mutiny

... [Dr Graham had] firm opinions on all topics, especially the ruthless extirpation of mutineers. Two of his sons, William and Tom, are portrayed [by their letters] as brave young men caught up in the heady madness of war.

William, the spendthrift, the schemer and the loveable rogue of the family, displayed all the bravado of youth in the face of death:

"Delhi gone fhut at last, and I was there and had a little to-do in the business. ... But thank God I got all serene out of it, not without one or two nasty patches. One ball got through my pugry ['puggaree' - a indian type of turban], and the other spent ball hit me on the heel. I was riding a 1400 rupee horse which I was in such a state about, I had not time to think of myself. ..."

It is interesting to note that William - perhaps after the sobering effects of the mutiny - retired in the early 1860s, settled down, and even became a justice of the peace on the Isle of Wight.

Dr Graham's other son James, [... who committed suicide at Lucknow in 1857], appears from the family correspondence to have been a melancholic, anti-social individual, whose end was in keeping with his personality. There are some references in the correspondence to a quarrel between James and his father, stemming from James's marriage [in 1853] to Sarah Ann Riddell, whom Dr Graham considered beneath the family's social class. ...



Colonel James Graham

Perhaps, in retrospect, the most important member of the family was Dr Graham's nephew, James [Colonel] James Graham, a commissariat officer, in his diary, homeward letters, and commissariat letters, describes the almost feudal logistics of keeping an army in India fed, clothed and on the move. (In 1857 the Indian telegraph system was still in its infancy, and although it was proposed that approximately 3,500 miles of railway should be constructed, only 300 miles of track had actually been laid. ... The Indian Mutiny campaigns were [therefore] slow and ponderous affairs because of the great distances involved and the backward forms of communication and transport available to the military commanders.) ...

Graham, as evidenced by his homeward letters, and by letters he received from his superiors in the commissariat, was a cautious, hardworking soldier. ... After the mutiny he gained steady promotion until, in 1879, he retired due to ill health with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In retirement, Graham settled in Wimbledon and became a pillar of the local community. ... An avid family historian and genealogist, ... he organised his papers, and collected and organised the papers of the other members of the family, and carried out a vast amount of genealogical research into the family's origins. ... True to his Ulster Protestant origins and his imperial service, Graham ... was a supporter of the Conservative-Unionist cause during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. ...



The Graham papers as a source

... The Graham papers ... [differ from the more] established [Indian Mutiny] sources ... in the obvious respect that they are the correspondence of a family with widespread military and financial interests in India, rather than of an individual, however well placed. As such, they are rich in that overworked cliché, "human interest", reminding us that the men and women of 1857 were not Victorian superbeings, but representatives of the middle class whose heroism went along with mundane health problems, family tensions and financial worries. As [the other] James Graham's suicide at Lucknow reminds us, not everyone was a potential John Nicholson. Conversely, his widow's account of her sufferings during the siege is as poignant a comment as one could wish on the plight of those forced by events to overcome the most severe trials and deep personal tragedy. More effectively than ... [other sources], they enable us to approach the "feel" of the embattled British community.



Castigations of Prince Albert's 'flunkeys'

Few of those involved in the mutiny had time to speculate at length on its nature and possible causes, but here the Grahams were well placed. During the period of nearly two months between the initial outbreak at Meerut on 10 May and his death on 9 July, Dr James Graham in the deceptive calm of Sialkot, like his nephew in remote Landour, did have the opportunity for such reflection.

Like many others, notably Frederick Roberts and Colonel John Chalmers, they felt especially aggrieved against the luckless and inept Commander-in-Chief, General the Hon. George Anson, "a man", Colonel James Graham wrote from Landour to his sister in Ireland [D812/14/139], "who knew nothing of his profession, felt his own incapacity, and, poor man, it was not his fault but those who sent him". What is noteworthy here is James Graham's strong prejudice that the principal reason for Anson's appointment had been his "flunkeyism to Prince Albert", a disposition on his part to blame the army's inadequate high command on the Prince Consort. Other published letters on the early stages of the mutiny lament Anson's performance, but few of them are quite as venomous in their castigations of the senior commanders and their royal patron as [Colonel] James Graham's correspondence, though he can hardly have been unique in holding such sentiments.



Criticisms of Christian missionaries

He was certainly a young man of lively prejudices. High among the causes of the outbreak he placed the inadequacies of the Christian missionaries, a view with which many modern historians of the mutiny would sympathise. ... In a number of letters to his sister [including the already-cited D812/14/139, dated 25 June 1857, he] places part of the blame for the mutiny on the disruptive influence of missionaries. He accuses them of creating disquiet in the native mind and also of failing to live up to the high ideals they presented to the natives.

"... Then your Exeter Hall [the Evangelical HQ on The Strand] people send out a lot of missionaries who never attempt to convert by setting the people a good example. They merely look after their own pockets, and trying to make as many squabbles as they can amongst both Europeans and natives. Don't believe one word you ever see in a missionary's report. It is all cooked up for the English palate, a mass of lies. I know myself one missionary who is a pork butcher, and instead of saving souls is employed saving bacon. I declare most solemnly that every piece given for missionary purposes in this country is a sin The Exeter Hall people have also been doing their best to force education upon a people not ready to receive it, then the people's minds are bothered with everything that can disturb their peace. ..."

[His uncle, Dr Graham,] ... certainly held the chaplain ... [at Sialkot] in scathing contempt Such anti-clerical views were coming not from Laodicean Englishmen but members of an Ulster Protestant family.



The Muslims as scapegoats

Perhaps contemporary observers would have sympathised more readily with [Colonel] James Graham's view [D812/14/139] that the Muslims were providing the essential dynamic for the mutiny and that the Hindus were merely their dupes. It was an interpretation given some apparent substance by the march of the Meerut mutineers to the former Mughal capital of Delhi, one of the great cities of the Islamic world, and their proclamation of the aged Mughal, Bahadur Shah, as Emperor of Hindustan.

... The Company's army had been largely composed of Muslims and high caste Hindus often of Brahmin status. This had been especially true in the Bengal division, and the experience of the mutiny produced a prejudice against these groups on the part of those responsible for the formation of the new Indian army. This prejudice was a natural one in the circumstances, and was one expressed by most Anglo-Indians quite early on in the mutiny. [As Colonel James Graham wrote:]

"... The present sepoy will rue in sackcloth and ashes. To them the only field of employment will be closed forever, and they will see stepping into their shoes, the, by them detested, Sikhs and Ghoorkas. They will from the easiest and best paid employment in India, lapse into mere tillers of the soil, and earn a mere existence with labour which after their life of comparative ease will be worse than the treadmill. The old men who looked forward to drawing their pensions, and passing their remaining years as small lords in their native villages, will now find that they also will have to work hard for their very bread"

British animus against the Muslims was only dispelled later in the century when Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Sir William Hunter argued persuasively that their position had been misrepresented.



Anglo-Indian bitterness against 'Blacks'

Where the Graham papers are most in accord with other ... collections are in their feelings of outrage, revenge and shattered certainties. All those who witnessed the scene of the Kanpur massacre, or heard its details, shared such sentiments.

Moreover, the [Graham] family suffered badly in the mutiny, losing two adults and two infants. From the beginning their letters voiced the naked racial fears of a small community facing the prospect of annihilation. "Lawrence and his officers have established a reign of terror in the Punjab which Blacky appreciates", applauded Dr Graham, and his son William, on hearing of his father's death, wrote that he "would take to cab-driving" rather than "command Blacks again" [D812/10/B/32 and D812/14/144]. Yet there also went a generous appreciation, by no means common in mutiny correspondence, of the mutineers' fighting skills. For James Graham, "Though our regiments are mutinous, they were very fine men, and good soldiers", while three days before his death his uncle made the significant admission that "Blacky never fought so well or showed such energy in our service as he is now doing", [D812/14/51 and D812/10/B/34], a sentiment which would have warmed the heart of V.D. Savarkar, the Indian revolutionary who in 1909 first advanced the theory that the insurgent soldiers had waged a war for their country's liberation. ...

"... The mutiny created a great deal of bitterness in relations between Anglo-Indians and Indians, although certain groups such as the martial classes were exempted by the British from this ill-feeling. The bitterness between Briton and Indian lessened with the passage of time, but the mutiny left an uneasy doubt in British minds. The precedent for rebellion existed and the British in India, always an isolated, alien minority, were forced by the mutiny to realise just how alien and how isolated they were. James Graham described [D812/14/196] the change in the relationship between Indian and Briton in the following way.

"... India though in outward appearance getting round to its old appearance is much changed, and I think ladies are well out of it. The link is broken which bound the natives to us. Now we may always expect little disturbances, which will not annoy bachelors, but will give many an anxious moment to those encumbered with wives and families. Mind you I do not mean to say that there will be any more mutinies or disturbances, but I mean that formerly we used to settle down into a quiet home (as much as India can be a home), now we will always be soldiers in camp."

Graham's attitude, expressed during the heat of the mutiny, was typical of the views of many Anglo-Indians at the time, and this siege mentality continued until the end of British rule. It was not always evident during normal times but the Anglo-Indian community (especially the "planter" and commercial classes) was subject to sporadic bouts of xenophobia. ...



Applause for Old Testament severity

The Grahams found their heroes in the Punjab, where their fellow Ulstermen, John Lawrence and John Nicholson, were forging an unshakeable alliance with the population as well as destroying the luckless men of the Bengal Army with an Old Testament severity. One of the most important consequences of the mutiny was the transformation of the army into a largely Punjabi force, a process particularly associated with Lord Roberts when he was commander-in-chief in the 1880s. As a result, the Punjab became the most favoured province of British India, laying the foundations of an agricultural prosperity which now makes it one of the showpieces of Asia. Amongst Dr Graham's first reactions to the outbreak was the belief that "high caste has had its day, and Sikhs and low caste will now take place" D812/10/B/2].

Undisputed leader of these new Punjabi forces was Nicholson, who is consistently referred to as the one man whose efforts might retrieve the situation. In his second last letter, Dr Graham wrote of him that "mercy is a word not to be found in his vocabulary" [D812/10/B/35]. He was correct. For those of us living in the late 20th century, Nicholson, with his iron courage and pitiless ferocity, may seem uncomfortably close to a type of soldier who has become all too familiar, to be found on the Russian front in the last war or in Algiers in 1957, but to men like Dr Graham, just hours away from death, he was the only possible saviour in a collapsing world. If his family's papers can make us grasp that point, then they have served their historical purpose.

The Graham papers, then, are not unique but they are important and help us nudge a little closer to an understanding of one of the great crises of the 19th century. Certainly, their place in mutiny historiography is now as assured as are the events they describe in the history of British imperialism and of the Indian subcontinent. ...'



The archive

The following is a general description of the Graham papers in their entirety.

The letters and papers to c.1910 (mainly deriving from Dr and Colonel James Graham) comprise: 3 volumes of bound letters and papers of the Graham family, 1819-1910, relating to a mixture of Indian, estate and masonic concerns; volume of bound copies of Dr James Graham's letters home from India, 1819-1857; c.1,400 letters to Colonel James Graham in India from family and friends in England and on the Continent of Europe, 1840-1872; c.175 letters to Colonel James Graham from family (mostly his sister, Anne) in Lisburn and elsewhere in Ireland, 1865-1868; c.240 letters to Colonel James Graham in India from his wife, writing from elsewhere in India, 1870-1873; c.675 letters to Colonel James Graham in India from Dr James Graham and other family members in India, 1849-1872; 6 bound volumes of letters from Colonel James Graham to family at home, principally his sister, Anne, 1846-1879; 7 volumes of Colonel James Graham's diary, 1849-1905; c.40 personal letters to Colonel James Graham, 1889-1901; 3 letter-books relating to the Grahams' property in and around Lisburn, 1889-1905; 28 volumes of genealogical notes, transcriptions, etc, 1850 and 1865-1956, mainly the work of Colonel James Graham, together with other genealogical material; and 5 volumes of newspaper cuttings, 1883-1912.

The letters and papers deriving mainly from Colonel James Graham's son, Capt. D.C. Graham, and from subsequent members of the family, comprise: 7 volumes of Capt. D.C. Graham's diary, 1890-1934; 2 letter-books of Capt. D.C. Graham, 1905-1911; c.280 letters home from Capt. D.C. Graham while on active service in France, 1917-1919; and c.1,700 letters, 1880-1957, many of them between members of the Graham family and Messrs Crawford & Lockhart, solicitors, Belfast, about estate and legal business. The family and personal correspondence for this period includes material on Ulster Unionist Council, masonic and military affairs.

Three volumes of photographs (retained by the family), c.1860-1880, have been copied by PRONI and the copies given the reference number T3263. Many of these photographs seem to have been taken by Colonel James Graham in India, and some have been used as illustrations in *The Graham Indian Mutiny Papers* and in the present description of the Graham papers. Most of the scenes and sitters are unidentified.

In addition, there are c.200 deeds, leases, wills, testamentary papers, account books, plans, inventories, etc, 1741, 1777 and 1791-1954 (mainly 1791-1876). The pre-1858 wills and testamentary papers included in the above comprise: a copy of the will of Joseph Masklin of Lisburn, 1777; a case for the consideration of counsel in relation to the will of Thomas Dixon, 1796; letters of administration to the estate of Thomas McCollum, 1835; probate of the will of William Graham of Lisburn, 1842; and epitome of the will of Dr James Graham, 1853, with a codicil of the same year, and probate, 1858.

