

The British International History Group

(under the auspices of the British International Studies Association)

NEWSLETTER

December 2003

Conference Reports:

British International History Group, University of Nottingham, 11-13 September 2003

The 15th Annual Conference of the **British International History Group** took place at the University of Nottingham, between 11 and 13 September 2003. At the Annual General Meeting members elected the following Officers and Committee: John Young (Chair), Ted Johnson (Vice-Chair), Glyn Stone (Secretary), David Dunn (Treasurer), Carolyn Kitching (Newsletter Editor), Committee Members: Gerry Douds, Sean Greenwood, Michael Hopkins, Gaynor Johnson, Lorna Lloyd, Thomas Otte, Alan Sharp, Joseph Smith: Co-opted Members: Louise Atherton, John Charmley, Michael Dockrill, Keith Hamilton, David Watson and Donald Watt.

The Chairman reported that the BIHG Website was nearing completion and members would be advised when it was operational. The website address will be www.bihg.ac.uk, and it will contain an electronic copy of the Newsletter, along with more up-to-date information. The Secretary reported that BISA membership had now exceeded 1,000 and its financial situation was good. He also identified a number of journals which would be pleased to consider international history articles. These included: The Review of International History (Editor, David Armstrong, Exeter University), History (the journal of the Historical Association, Editor Joe Smith, Exeter University), Diplomacy and Statecraft and the e-journal of International History. The new editor of Round Table, (Andy Williams, University of Kent) also called for articles, especially those based on issues relating to the Empire and Commonwealth.

Saul Kelly pointed out that the International History Seminars, which were brought back into existence 3 years ago, were proving very successful and requested that members attend these seminars if at all possible in order to keep the programme alive.

There were five submissions for the BIHG **Thesis Prize**, all of a very good standard. The judges felt that the winning prize, by Stephen Channing, was outstanding. The deadline for submissions for the 2004 Thesis Prize is 31 January 2004.

The Foreign Office and British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, held at the Institute for Contemporary British History, University of London, 19-21 June 2003.

Gaynor Johnson, who organised the above conference, would like to thank the British International History Group for their support. The event was a great success, and was attended by over 60 delegates, from as far afield as Los Angeles and Budapest. It was particularly pleasing to welcome six new international history postgraduate students, as well as more seasoned colleagues and friends. The conference was generously sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Those attending the reception held there on the evening of 20th June also had an opportunity to take a one-hour tour of the Fine Rooms.

Gaynor has secured a publisher for the proceedings of the conference. Frank Cass will be publishing a special number of *Contemporary British History*, to appear in April 2004, with a book version entitled, *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* published concurrently. They will include contributions from: Alyson Bailes; Sir Alan Campbell; John Charmley; Michael Dockrill; James Ellison; Sean Greenwood; Keith Hamilton; Gaynor Johnson; Richard Langhorne; Brian McKercher; Peter Neville; Thomas Otte; Kevin Ruane; Alan Sharp and Zara Steiner.

Forthcoming Conferences:

A conference on the Derbys and Victorian politics will take place at Knowsley Hall, Lancashire, on 19/20 March 2003. The conference, entitled ***The View from Knowsley***, will be opened by David Starkey, with a lecture on the Tudor foundations of the Stanley dynasty. Confirmed speakers include John Charmley, Angus Hawkins (biographer of the 14th Earl of Derby), Thomas Otte, John Vincent, Andrew Lambert, David Brown and David Dutton. For further details contact Professor John Charmley, School of History, UEA, Norwich, NR4 7TJ. Tel. 01603 593878, e-mail: conference@viewfromknowsley.com

To celebrate the centenary of the **Entente Cordiale**, BIHG are planning to arrange a Conference at The National Archive, in Kew. The provisional programme aims to cover two hundred years of Anglo-French relations, from the late 18th Century to the end of the 20th. For reasons outside of our control this has been rather a last-minute decision, and it may prove difficult, if not impossible, to organise speakers and papers by the proposed dates of 25 and 26 June 2004. Please consult the BIHG website for progress and arrangements on this conference.

The 16th Annual Conference of the **British International History Group** will be held at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, between 9 and 11 September 2004.

Membership News:

Long-standing members of BIHG will remember the fatal accident in which Dick Richardson and Carolyn Kitching were involved following the Conference in Coleraine in September 1997. To prove her fitness, and to raise money for the Cumberland Infirmary in recognition of the support they provided, Carolyn completed the Great North Run, in September 2003. She would like to thank all friends and colleagues who helped her raise the princely sum of £1500, and to inform them that

the hospital intends to use the money to purchase a set of spinal instruments, a fitting tribute to Dick's memory.

Peter Beck, USING THE ARCHIVES

6. *The National Archives (formerly The Public Record Office), Kew, London.*

The Public Record Office (PRO), founded in 1838, presents itself as 'the custodian of the nation's collective memory as revealed in the records of government' dating back to the Domesday Book and filling more than 100 miles of shelving. For international historians conducting research on Britain, the PRO has invariably proved the principal archival source for their work. Indeed, for those working on twentieth century topics, FO371 files have come to represent a kind of research sheet-anchor, as evidenced by their omnipresent role in footnotes referencing articles and books. However, the opening up of records for the late 1960s and early 1970s – in January 2004 official records for the year 1973 became available under the Thirty Year Rule – means that Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) records are beginning to qualify the former centrality of FO371 files.

Viewed against this background, a guidance note for international historians about the PRO might be deemed superfluous. However, there are always researchers making return visits to Kew after a lengthy gap or postgraduate students setting out on a higher degree or Masters thesis and contemplating their initial visit to the PRO. Moreover, writing as an international historian who has been using the PRO in its various guises at Chancery Lane, Portugal Street and now Kew for over thirty six years, things move on. Certainly, the PRO has been no stranger to change regarding, say, its location, buildings and services offered to researchers. Users will be well aware of the ups and downs over the years affecting, say, opening hours, the availability of seats and the length of document retrieval times. Fortunately, the story has been one of general improvement, notwithstanding the escalating growth in users researching family history. As a result, my recent visits have proved both productive and enjoyable in terms of benefiting from, say, the longer opening hours on two days per week, Saturday opening, the speedy retrieval of document orders, and an efficient copying service. In many respects, this reflects the PRO's pursuit of a more conscious user-centred approach, as demonstrated also by its participation in conferences with a range of academic groups and institutions. In addition, the ever-expanding range of on-line services – these include access to the archive catalogue as well as facilities enabling, say, prior registration, advance ordering of files and the downloading of documents - means that an increasing amount of research planning, preparation and work can be done without even going to Kew.

During the past year the PRO has passed through yet another significant phase in its history; indeed, it presented itself as the 'new gateway to British history'. Certainly, recent visitors to Kew will have noticed a new logo and title reaffirming the fact that in April 2003 the PRO merged with the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), the central advisory body on archives, to form The National Archives for England, Wales and the United Kingdom (TNA). As a result, it seems timely to cover the PRO – oops, sorry, The National Archives, as the Press Office informed me when I queried the matter in the light of the frequent use still of the term "PRO" on the

archive's website - in this series, even if many readers could easily write their own version of this article. Meanwhile, readers are reminded that henceforth Kew-based sources should be referenced as located at 'The National Archives', not the PRO. Moreover, the merger is still in progress, as suggested by the ongoing integration of the websites of the HMC and PRO and the scheduled move of the Historical Manuscripts Commission to Kew in December 2003.

The changing nature of international history, in conjunction with the ever-broadening horizons of researchers, means that it is difficult to be too specific about relevant TNA sources, but the following brief outline, though making no claim to be comprehensive, should offer a useful basis for further investigation. The archival record code required to order documents is given in brackets. Inevitably, the records of the Foreign Office (FO) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) represent a prime focus for international historians, even if State Papers Foreign (SP) will figure prominently for those working on the pre-1782 period. Equally significant are records covering the Cabinet (CAB) and its subcommittees, like the Committee of Imperial Defence; the Prime Minister's Office (PREM); the Treasury (T); Trade (BT); the Colonial Office (CO) and the Dominions Office/Commonwealth Relations Office (DO). Defence departments include the Admiralty (ADM); Air Ministry (AIR); Ministry of Aviation (AVIA); Ministry of Defence (DEFE); Ministry of Munitions (MUN); Ministry of Supply (SUPP); and the War Office (WO). Other possibilities include the British Council (BW); International Organisations (DG) and the Secret Intelligence Service (HD). Obviously, researchers need to take account of the changing titles of departments (e.g. in 1947 the Dominions Office was renamed the Commonwealth Relations Office) alongside their reconfiguration over time, such as happened in 1968 when agencies dealing with British relations abroad were unified in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). A useful reference source outlining departmental changes is David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts, 1900-2000* (Palgrave: 2000), pp.53-4.

Within any one departmental code it is important to identify the specific records relevant to your research topic and period of study. When ordering documents, you are required to specify three things: the departmental record group number (e.g. FO); within this record group, the class, which normally corresponds to function, as evidenced by the use of 371 for Foreign Office political correspondence; and the piece number of the file(s) within this class according to year, countries of coverage and so on. Unsurprisingly, each department tends to do things in its own way, thereby requiring researchers to understand departmental practice before ordering and consulting files. Prior to 1906 the Foreign Office's general political correspondence can be found in individual country classes (FO1-FO82, FO99-FO110), but note also FO83 and FO92 (general correspondence) as well as FO95-97 (miscellanea, supplement). For post-1906 topics, FO371 (Foreign Office political correspondence) often proves central, but other classes, including FO370 (Library), FO372 (Treaty), FO800 (Official Papers of Foreign Secretaries surrendered on leaving office), or FO395 (News), should be checked for relevance. Other classes include embassy and consular archives, Confidential Prints as well as Commissions and Conferences (e.g. 1919-1920 Peace Conference: FO373, FO608, FO893; Lausanne and other interwar Conferences: FO839; 1945 Potsdam Conference: FO934).

Notwithstanding the Thirty Year Rule and the adoption of a more liberal attitude towards sensitive files, selected files still remain on extended closure for

periods exceeding thirty years. Access can be requested to such files, but hitherto my experience in such cases has proved variable; indeed, one request for access to 1959 and 1961 files on extended closure remains pending still after two years! Other files may have been withdrawn temporarily 'for research' by a government department. In any case, plan well ahead of your intended visit.

Published Official Records

A range of documents housed at the PRO have already been published, particularly on Britain's foreign relations, such as in *Calendars of State Papers*; G.P. Gooch & H.W. Temperley (eds.), *Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (1926-38); W.N. Medlicott, D. Dakin, M.E. Lambert *et alia* (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (65 volumes: 1946-86); P.N. Mansergh, E.W. Lumby, and E.P. Penderel (eds.), *Constitutional Relations between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power 1942-7, 12 vols.* (1970-83); H.R. Tinker (ed.), *Constitutional Relations between Britain and Burma: The Struggle for Independence 1944-8, 2 vols.* (1983-84); S.R. Ashton, S.E. Stockwell, R. Hyam, D. Goldsworthy, Wm Roger Louis *et alia* (eds.), *British Documents on the End of Empire* (1992-); and R. Butler, M.E. Pelly *et alia* (eds.), *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (1984-). Such multi-volume publications, which are often available in university libraries, offer a useful introduction for many topics, while suggesting relevant documentary references to follow up on a visit to Kew. Moreover, the ongoing *Documents on British Policy Overseas* covers records closed under the Thirty Year Rule. Another substantial project, based on the Foreign Office's Confidential Prints, is *British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Prints* edited by K. Bourne, D. Cameron Watt, Paul Preston and Michael Partridge (University Publications of America, Maryland, USA). Parts 1-III covering the period to 1945 are complete; in fact, 425 volumes comprised Part 1. Part IV (1946-50) is in progress.

Microfilm materials include *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the reigns of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I, 1547-1582*. Adam Matthew Publications have microfilmed a wide range of Cabinet, Foreign Office and other records. In 1995 the HMSO published a CD-Rom PROfiles of selected documentary releases for the year 1964, but failed to continue the series.

Reference Aids

Extensive finding aids, located in the Reference Room, describe collections by department, list contents and provide the information required to order documents. The catalogue is on-line, and can be accessed on computer terminals at the PRO as well as at home/college through the internet. Detailed searches are possible focused on specific departments, topics, keywords, dates &etc. It is also possible to browse the catalogue by department and class, even if some aspects of browsing prove far from intuitive.

Indexing of files within and across departments proves variable. However, Foreign Office files, including FO371, are indexed in printed form for the period 1920-51 and published (and hence may be available in some university libraries) as *Index to the Correspondence of the Foreign Office* (131 vols). A card index is available for 1906-19. On indexing &etc. for all time periods, read Louis Atherton's

'Never Complain, Never Explain': Records of the Foreign Office and State Paper Office, 1500-c.1960 (PRO Readers Guide no.7: 1994), pp.113-165. Another invaluable reference source is Michael Roper's updated Handbook *The Records of the Foreign Office, 1782-1968* (PRO: 2002) and Anne Thurston's *Sources for Colonial Studies in the Public Record Office: Records of the Cabinet, Foreign Office, Treasury and Other Records* (HMSO: 1998). Such publications are available for purchase at the bookshop located near the entrance to the TNA. A wide range of Information Leaflets can now be downloaded online upon such topics as 'Foreign Office Records from 1782'; 'Foreign Office: Card Index, 1906-1910'; 'Foreign Office: Card Index, 1910-1919'; and 'Intelligence Records in the Public Record Office'. For those working on the interwar period, useful guides include B. Swann & M. Turnbull's *Records of Interest to Social Scientists, 1919-1939. PRO Handbook 14* (HMSO: 1971) and S.S. Wilson's *The Cabinet Office to 1945. PRO Handbook 17* (HMSO: 1975). Both are out of print, but may be in some university libraries. In 1998 Keith Hamilton, a historian working for the FCO, and Greg Quinn published a useful outline about British diplomatic records in the *DSP Newsletter*.

For information about the Foreign Office's departmental structure, personnel and posts overseas, see the annual publications entitled *The Foreign Office List* and its successor *The Diplomatic Service List*. Note also *The Civil Service Yearbook; The Colonial Office List, The Dominions Office and Colonial Office List, and The Commonwealth Relations Office List*. In 1995 the archive of diplomatic, consular, foreign service and foreign ministry lists dating from the 1950s to the 1990s was transferred from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Library to the University of Leicester Library for cataloguing and storage.

Electronic resources

When launching the National Archives, Sarah Tyacke, Keeper of Public Records and now Chief Executive of TNA, stressed the desire 'to reach out to people who have not previously used our services and to make The National Archives available to everyone – onsite or online' ('A new gateway to British history – The National Archives – is launched', *National Archives, Press Release, 27 March 2003*). In this vein, Rosie Winterton, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department, used the TNA's launch to announce a new digital archive for storing, preserving, and providing access to government records created in electronic form, including emails, web pages and databases: 'The new National Archives is about more than a change of name, it is part of a government-wide agenda to improve our electronic information resources' (*National Archives, Press Release, 27 March 2003*).

Subsequently, in September 2003 TNA launched a new *UK Central Government Web Archive* instructed to preserve selected government websites. Already the 2003 Hutton Inquiry website, documenting every stage of the proceedings and making them available online, has established the research value of such a facility. Significantly, it is among sites selected for preservation together with those for, say, 10 Downing Street and the Northern Ireland Office. According to the *UK Central Government Web Archive* website:

51 websites have been carefully chosen as a representative sample of the entire UK Government web domain, and have been selected in accordance with criteria designed to reflect the overall functions of government. A number of

departments and agencies were then chosen which are representative of each of these functions. This provides a broad cross-section across UK Central Government. The websites are harvested at varying intervals, to provide the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. Initially, 10 websites are harvested every week, and the remaining 41 are harvested every six months.

Through its *DocumentsOnline* (formerly PRO-Online) programme, TNA seeks to market high quality research and teaching materials. Research sources currently available, free of charge, include Cabinet minutes and memoranda plus Chiefs of Staff material for 1971 and 1972. *DocumentsOnline* offers also material relating to the Special Operations Executive and Churchill's wartime minutes and telegrams. There is also the *Macmillan On-Line project*, a joint Adam Matthew Publications/PRO project available on subscription, covering the Cabinet papers for the Macmillan Government between 1957 and 1963.

BRIEF DETAILS:

- **New readers** can save time by registering online through the reader registration form, but will need still to produce proof of identification upon arrival to receive a Reader Ticket. Alternatively, you can register in person (basically, you answer questions on a computer screen), present valid personal identification, and receive a Reader Ticket.
 - Prior to your visit check out acceptable forms of ID.
 - Orientation sessions, lasting *circa* 20 minutes, are provided for new readers.
 - If you have not used the PRO for a time, note that Readers Tickets issued before July 2000 have been cancelled and require replacement.

- **Xeroxing** – An efficient but relatively expensive (e.g. 40p per A3 copy, the normal size for copies) copying service is available. There is an on-demand copy service as well as a postal service for larger orders. During the past year or so, the postal service has worked well with copies arriving within one week of the order. Alternative forms of copying (e.g. microfilm, electronic formats) and distribution (e.g. CD-ROM, internet) are available. Note that certain collections have been microfilmed in part or as a whole, and are available for purchase.

One innovation apparent during my recent visits concerned the way in which some readers were using their own digital cameras to copy documents for downloading to laptops/PCs. This is a new service offered subject to certain conditions, and requiring the prior reservation of space.

- **Pencils** – only pencils (plus laptops/typewriters) can be used in the Reading Room. No pens are allowed. You are advised to avoid bringing too many (i.e. 10+) ‘loose’ sheets of paper.
- **Laptop computers/typewriters** – a separate section of the Reading Room is reserved for readers using Laptops and typewriters. Scanners and mobile phones are not allowed.
- **What to wear in the Reading Room.** Air conditioning means that the Reading Room temperature might prove uncomfortable for some readers. From experience, the temperature varies, or so it seems, from one visit to another. Hence, even in high summer a warm option (e.g. pullover) might prove useful. Staff prove reluctant to allow readers to hang jackets &etc. on the back of their chairs, and hence any items of clothing not being worn should be kept in your locker.
- **Lockers** (with keys) are available to check personal materials. Normally, a pound coin was required, but when I visited in August 2003 lockers were free.
- **Ordering documents** – records may be requested at any time up to:
 - 4:00 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays;
 - 4.30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays;
 - and 3pm on Saturdays.

On recent visits, retrieval times were fairly quick (20-35 minutes), but slightly slower over the midday period. This has proved a key area of improvement, particularly as compared to a few years ago when times slipped to 1-2 hours.

If you already have a Readers Ticket, you can order three documents in advance by phone or on-line to ensure that they are ready upon arrival on a specified date.

- **Opening hours** – Like other details, these must be confirmed prior to your visit. Check out also closure dates for public holidays as well for the annual stocktaking week (in 2003: 1-6 December).

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9am-5pm (Reading/Search Room opens at 9.30am)

Tuesdays 10am-7pm

Thursdays 9.30-7pm

Saturdays 9.30-5pm

- **Monthly Newsletter** – you are advised to subscribe online to *The National Archives Newsletter Monthly e-news* which provides updates on all aspects of the archive's work and services, including newly released government documents and exhibitions.
- **Accommodation** – The TNA's website has links to accommodation in Kew and Richmond, including bed and breakfast establishments. In vacations, accommodation might be available at university institutions located either nearby (e.g. Brunel, Kingston, St. Mary's) or in central London (e.g. LSE, King's, UCL, London University). Use the websites of individual universities.
- **Food** – A cafeteria and coffee bar are located on the ground floor. The cafeteria's tables can be used to consume your own food.
- **Transport** – Kew Gardens (Underground District Line, Silverlink Trains) and Kew Bridge (SW Trains) are the nearest stations. Kew Gardens Station, which is about ten minutes walk away, is closest, and accessed from central London by District Line trains to Richmond. Kew Gardens Station, which is only minutes from Richmond Station, is about 40-50 minutes from central London. Silverlink Trains, which also terminate at Richmond, link Kew Gardens with Willesden Junction (approx. 17 minutes), West Hampstead (25 minutes), Highbury & Islington (41 minutes) and North Woolwich. A rail alternative centres upon SouthWest Trains through Richmond, most notably linking up with the semi-fast Reading-Waterloo service. The Waterloo-Richmond part of the journey is fairly quick (about 16 minutes), and includes a stop at Clapham Junction.

Nearby bus services go to Richmond, Ealing (no.65) and Fulham Broadway (no.391).

There is a modest sized car park – you turn off the Mortlake Road/South Circular Road at the traffic lights which lead also to Kew Retail Park - but allow plenty of time when driving as nearby roads, like the South Circular Road or the A316 from the M3, are heavily congested. Junction 1 of the M4 provides access to Kew Bridge.

- **Tourism** – Locally, there are several possibilities including the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Syon Park, Richmond Park, Ham House, the Thames at Richmond and Kingston, Hampton Court, and Twickenham's Museum of Rugby. The libraries, museums and other attractions of central London are a mere train/tube ride away.

In October 2003 the National Archives launched free behind-the-scenes tours of the archive. Tours, which occur only on Saturdays and occasional Fridays, last two hours and can be booked by phone.

- **Maps** – local maps are available on the PRO website.

CONTACTS:

The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office)

Postal: The National Archives
Ruskin Avenue
Kew
Surrey TW9 4DU
England

Phone: 020 8876 3444 (From overseas 44 20 8876 3444)

Email: enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk

INTERNET ADDRESSES (note that the ongoing integration of websites means that the pro.gov.uk address, though offering the best link at the time of writing, will be increasingly superseded by the nationalarchives.gov.uk link)

National Archives (PRO)

Home Page: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Online catalogues: <http://catalogue.pro.gov.uk/>
<http://www.pro.gov.uk/catalogues/default.htm>

Information for New Users: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/new/default.htm#1>

Advance Document Orders: <http://www.pro.gov.uk/quickorder/advanceorder.htm>

Record copying <http://www.pro.gov.uk/recordcopying/default.htm>

Referencing Files in
articles/books: <http://www.pro.gov.uk/leaflets/Riindex.htm>

New Documentary Releases: <http://www.pro.gov.uk/releases/default.htm>

Links to documentary releases
for 2004 & earlier years: <http://www.pro.gov.uk/releases/r2004.htm>

Map of the area (including transport links):
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact/default.htm#images>

UK Central Government Web Archive:
www.pro.gov.uk/webarchive

Tours of the archive: 020 8876 3444.

Accommodation & Travel

Accommodation Listing: <http://www.kewaccommodation.com/>
<http://www.visitrichmond.co.uk/WhereStay/wheretostay.htm>

Other sources:

K. Hamilton & G. Quinn, 'Mining for Sources on Diplomacy: Britain', *DSP Newsletter*, no.4 (1998). Like other articles in this very useful series, this article was formerly accessible online from the Leicester University website, but now seems unavailable following the reported closure of the Diplomatic Studies programme.

UPA, an imprint of LexisNexis Academic & Library Solutions (CIS) – for published *British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Prints*:

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/academic/2upa/Isiaas/BritishDocumentsForeignAffairs.asp>

Adam Matthew Publications – for microfilm official documentary sources, including subscriptions to the *Macmillan On-Line project*:

<http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk>

University of Leicester Library - archive of diplomatic, consular, foreign service and foreign ministry lists:

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Gerry Douds: THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL, CANBERRA

A researcher at the magnificent Australian War Memorial at Canberra will enjoy a memorable experience on a number of counts. Even the mundane business of getting there has its high points. There is the option of a short, frequent flight from Sydney, but a preferred route is the sedate ‘Countrylink’ rail service, a thoroughly relaxing four-hour journey from Central Railway Station, Sydney, at modest rates. Astute engineers designed seats on the model of the famed French TGV and passage proceeds at a very comfortable 50 mph, a little galling to local commuters, but ideal for the visitor unused to the dramatic landscape. Lunch is homespun and tasty, and delivered to the table. Wine, as might be anticipated, is excellent, and all at prices very much below what used to be available on British rail networks. ‘Countrylink’ must be booked in advance (www.countrylink.nsw.gov.au)

The imposing Australian War Memorial stands on an elevated lie, at the head of the blood-red Anzac Parade, with a clear view across Canberra’s defining lake to the Old and New Parliament Buildings. Authorised by Parliament in 1925, the building commenced in 1934 and opened in 1941. Cruciform on shape, stylised Byzantine in architecture, surmounted by a vast copper-sheathed dome, it houses three broad areas: commemoration; exhibition galleries with war relics and art collections; the Research Centre and Library. The Roll of Honour has 102,000 names of those killed in wartime. In the Hall of Memory, the First World War is commemorated by stained glass windows and the Second World War by a huge mosaic of over 6 million pieces.

The AWM has established a comprehensive website – www.awm.gov.au – and publishes an impressive electronic journal that can be accessed at the site listed above. The major record series are categorised on the following chronological basis:

- pre 1914-18 War
- 1914-18 War

- inter-war years
- 1939-45 War
- British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF)
- Korean War
- South East Asian conflicts

My recent project researched at AWM, an investigation into the experiences of Indian Prisoners of War, principally taken in the Pacific campaigns of 1940-41, drew upon materials sub-divided into Unit and Operational Records; Administrative Records; Biographical Records; Copied or Captured Records; Intelligence Records; War Crimes Records. This last collection provided particularly rich material in the form of transcripts of trials of Japanese military personnel, conducted with scrupulous attention to form, by Australian military authorities.

The AWM Research Centre is currently scanning sections of its collections with a view to the provision of electronic access. Thus some War Diaries at AWM52 can be reached electronically. While such developments are generally to be welcomed, the hospitable staff at AWM would not wish to see diminish the regular flow of visiting researchers from overseas. Indeed, there are powerful arguments for researching in person, on the spot. Such is the supportive culture of the AWM Research Centre, that further leads, which would escape a distance researcher, will regularly be proposed by an alert and enthusiastic staff. The efficiency with which record requests are dealt with is exemplary. It also extends to photocopy arrangements where rates are substantially below those current in the UK.

In summary, the tangible pride which Australians take in this impressive institution is reflected in a spirit of very genuine hospitality. He is a privileged scholar who comes to be involved, as I was, in the AWM Historians' Christmas Picnic by the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. In the matter of accommodation, the residential complex within the Australian National University, notable at Liversidge Court, adjacent to the Lake, offers comfortable, furnished self-service apartments at competitive rates (reservations uas@anu.edu.au). Membership of the ANU Library, conveniently sited to Liversidge, is simply arranged. Given the generally flat topography of Canberra, the most imaginative way to travel from ANU to AWM is by cycle, alongside the margins of the Lake, a 20-minute ride culminating in the grandeur of Anzac Parade. Hire is easily available, and a measure of safety provided by ubiquitous cycle paths. As has been indicated above, there are many compelling reasons why a study visit to the AWM at Canberra should be undertaken with a keen sense of anticipation.

BIHG NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

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