John Eric Colenso:

British Officer in the Gurkha Rifles

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One of the annotations on a globally circulated, handwritten Colenso family tree is:

"John Eric Colenso ("Jock"),
(Lieut Col Gurkhas)
m. a Burmese girl who was
abandoned when regiment
returned to India about 1898.
Retired late 1920s to Oxted
Recalled 1942 Staff Officer
H Command York 1945/55"

As often happens in genealogical research it has been an obsession to find out what was this man's story, living in the shadows of his grandfather, father, uncle and aunts. As frequently is the case, there were some clues in the annotation, but it also substantially misrepresented Eric Colenso's life story.

Fortunately Teddy Lindley generously provided me with the results of his searches through British records before they became more readily available and Gwil Colenso shared information from his family papers and from his searches in Colenso archives in England and South Africa. Gwil also gave me advice with references regarding the "propaganda of imperialism" to help me understand the context of Eric's career choices and constructive criticism after reviewing a late draft of this article.

Birth & Childhood

John Eric Colenso was born in Durban, Natal, South Africa on the 28th November 1880. He was the son of Dr Robert John Colenso and his wife Emily Ann Kerr, the daughter of the late Thomas Cockburn Kerr, a Scottish born merchant of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He was their first child and the first grandchild of the "controversial" John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal.

Robert John (Robin) Colenso, the eldest son of the first Bishop of Natal, had been born in Norfolk in 1850, raised at Bishopstowe Natal, 6 miles outside Pietermaritzberg. He and his younger brother Francis Ernest (Frank) were sent back to England to attend University – Robin at Trinity College Oxford and Frank at St John's Cambridge. Robin qualified as a doctor of medicine in 1879 and Frank as a barrister in 1877.

Emily Ann (Emil) had accompanied her family back to England from Canada before 1878, where her father died in Kensington. Her mother was living in Oxford in 1881, so this was probably where Robin and Emil met. They married on the 7th January 1880 in St Giles Oxford and the celebrant was Emily's uncle Edwin Hatch. The couple travelled back to Natal, where Robin set up practice in Durban.

Some of Eric's early life can be gleaned from the letters of his very fond grandmother[1] to her friend Katherine Murray Lyell, the wife of Colonel Henry Lyell. Colonel Lyell was the brother of the geologist Sir Charles Lyell, who was also married to Katherine's sister Mary. The sisters' father was the

[1] Wyn Rees (ed), Colenso Letters from Natal, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzberg, 1958

geologist Professor Leonard Horner. The Lyells were long-term friends and supporters of the Colenso family. Sarah Frances and Katherine Lyell had a strong common interest in botany.

"Baby, for as yet he has no name, is the most intellectual looking infant I ever saw. He is very pretty, though not so angelically perfect in feature as his Father was at his age! Pray excuse this – you too are a grandmamma."[2]

"The dear Baby has been very ill (with dysentery) just before they came up (to Bishopstowe from Durban), but looked bonnie when he left us. He is such a pet, almost too intellectual looking, with a head the shape of his grandfather's and large dark brown eyes, and such a droll little laugh you start to hear it for the first time. He has twined all our heart strings so tight round, it is almost fearful. We can only beg the Heavenly Father to save and spare the centre of so much love."[3]

Bishop Colenso & his grandson, 1882, from his biography by Sir George W Cox.

"Emily can run out in her bathing gown at her garden gate and have a salt water bath with the greatest of ease. The other day she took her little man with her. He was delighted at being a 'bish', and of course, required no bathing gown. If I were to expatiate on my little grandson you would laugh at me, so I will only say that Eric's Father has complete control over him. Robert's voice admonishing instantly stops the accents of passion or self-will in the nursery. You surely must ere now that photo of the tree[4]*. I have been assured it has been sent to you. I expect you will receive several all at once one day. But really Eric has quite grown out of it."*[5]

"O, I wish you could just have a glimpse of Eric's face when his Father drew the bow across the strings – it is so radiant. He does not often hear the violin, being generally in bed when it is speaking, but if he happens to wake up then, he being in the room above, he puts his head on one side, lifts up his little forefinger, and says 'Baba'? He is such a spiritual looking little creature that we need the fine pair of legs, and the broad deep chest (and back accordingly) which tubbing time discloses, to make us feel easy about him[6]*. You are a grandmama too, so I may write about him…….What I most want to draw just now are dogs, cats, etc. to remind Eric of Bishopstowe. I think he enjoys the society of his Ganma, but alas it is out of her power to carry him in her arms. We were racing or rather dancing a galop down our very long passage the other day, when I came down on my face or rather my forehead. My companion looked very much shocked, but approached and 'kissed the place to make it well' quite anxiously. He began about it the next morning to his mother in the morning twilight, "Ganma tumbled down got a bump" – the bump was the leading idea. He takes his own*

[2] Rees: Letter from Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Katherine Lyell, started 31 October 1880

[3] Rees: Letter from Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Katherine Lyell, 16 October 1881

[4] The wild fig tree planted beside the house at Bishopstowe at Eric's birth, still there in 2002. The Witness, 26 Oct 2009

[5] Rees: Letter from Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Katherine Lyell, 13 January 1883

[6] Thomas Blackmore Colenso, brother of the Bishop died of tuberculosis in 1849, and at this time Fanny Colenso was suffering from it and would die in 1887. Also Frank had married in England and his first son Esmond, born in November 1881 died suddenly in July 1882.

bumps very coolly, rubs his head in a kind of surprised way as if he did not know whether to laugh or cry. I think the greatest pleasure Bishopstowe afforded him was that wonderful green frog you sent us years ago and which is still able to hop. It has always been treated with the greatest of respect, and though Eric wanted very much to wind it up for himself, he was always prevented – indeed he has not really the strength enough in his little fingers for the operation. It is so pretty to see him sit down and open his arms to embrace any baby, black or white, whom he comes across. Whence does the darling get that instinct for gathering every scrap of humanity to his heart, and the tenderness of his manner towards the little waifs and strays?"[7]

Five months later, on the 20th June, his grandfather died at Bishopstowe after a short illness, but after many struggles with his theology and the growth of his homeland's empire.

Colenso Family in Natal

In 1853 John William Colenso was consecrated as the first Bishop of the newly created diocese of Natal which was under the authority of the Bishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray. Colenso arrived in the colony on 23 January 1854. On a site, just outside the capital Pietermaritzberg, a homestead was built for the Colenso family – called Bishopstowe. On adjoining land, a mission station, called Ekukanyeni, was established, which from 1856 included a boarding school.

Colenso had had, despite impoverished circumstances, an outstanding academic career at Cambridge, as a Fellow at St John's College, as a mathematics master at Harrow, and as the author of mathematics text books. He married Sarah Frances Bunyon in 1846 and took a living at Forncett St Mary in Norfolk. The couple had 4 children in Norfolk - Harriette, Frances, Robert and Francis - with Agnes arriving soon after their move to Africa.

Sarah Frances was the daughter of Robert Bunyon, and granddaughter of Thomas Bignold who had founded the insurance company Norwich Union. Her father had managed an insurance company in London before having financial difficulties. His daughters were educated at the Academy for Young Ladies at Cheltenham. The family was evangelical but Sarah Frances was attracted to the theological teachings of F D Maurice, a Unitarian and Christian Socialist. She met Colenso while visiting her brother Charles at Cambridge.

Her interest in F D Maurice's teachings influenced Colenso, as did the questions of his indigenous flock. He first provoked controversy in 1855 with his Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Polygamy – suggesting that a man with multiple wives should not discard them when converting to Christianity. Then in 1861 he published a commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans in which he questioned the doctrine of eternal punishment, refusing to preach to African converts that their ancestors were condemned to eternal damnation. This was followed in 1862 by the first volume of a critical examination of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, questioning whether certain sections could be understood as literally or historically accurate.

Bishop Gray of Capetown had Colenso tried for heresy, found guilty and sentenced to be deposed from his position a Bishop of Natal but when Colenso appealed to the Privy Council in London they ruled that the Bishop of Capetown had no jurisdiction in Natal and that the sentence was "null and

[7] Rees: Letter from Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Katherine Lyell 2 April 1883

void". Nevertheless, in 1866, Gray declared Colenso to be excommunicated as a heretic and a rival bishop was consecrated for the hitherto non-existent Diocese of "Maritzburg". However Colenso continued as Bishop of the diocese in Natal, supported by a generous testimonial raised in England. He was financially supported by many English clergy, along with influential men such as Charles Lyell and Joseph Dalton Hooker.

Colenso became an outspoken political activist within the colony especially after the administration's treatment of the Natal Zulu chief Langalibalele and the Hlubi people in 1873. This political activism was further provoked by the invasion of the Zulu Kingdom in 1879, leading to the defeat of the British Army by the Zulus at Isandlwana in January 1879. The British returned in June 1879 and defeated the Zulus at Ulundi. Until his death in 1883 Colenso continued to support the Zulus, and then this cause was to be championed by his daughters Harriette, Fanny (till her death in 1887) and Agnes. His son Frank, now a lawyer and actuary in England, was also active in the cause. Fanny published two books, *History of the Zulu War and its Origins* and *The Ruin of Zululand*, as well as several novels. As well as championing the Zulus, Fanny also tried to clear the name of her friend Colonel Durnford, who had died at Isandlwana and whose actions were said to have contributed to the defeat.

In his sermon[8] at a memorial service two months after the defeat of Isandlwana the Bishop of Natal used the text "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" to outline how the colonial administration had not been just, merciful or humble in its dealing with the Zulu Kingdom. The mirror he held up to the colonists would not have reflected the belief that becoming part of the British Empire would be good for the future of the Zulus.

THE COLENSOS' HOUSE AT BISHOPSTOWE, WHICH BURNT DOWN IN 1884

From The Witness 2009

The increasing isolation of the Colenso family from the Natal settlers had an impact on Robin's Durban medical practice. Robin left it 1886 and went to seek his fortune on the Witwatersrand. His mother described the endeavour "*….we had Robin with us last week….he looks very thin and worn, but seems in tolerable spirits with his gold mine affairs!....his knowledge of the ologies has made a good assayist of him which brings in money."*[9] Robert had lost his capital by 1890.

[8] Sermon given by the Right Reverend J W Colenso, Bishop of Natal at St Peter's Cathedral, Pietermaritzburg March 1879. www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/rejan79.3/rejan79.3.pdf

[9] Rees: Sarah Frances Colenso to daughter Fanny in November 1886.

Against this background Eric spent much of his time at Bishopstowe in the company of his aunts and grandmother.

Bishopstowe

Eric was at Bishopstowe with his mother, when it was razed by a bushfire in September 1884. He was deposited by his aunts in a mulberry grove, sitting in his grandfather's study chair, described by his Aunt Harriette as *"as good – as his grandfather's child – all through."*[10] With further comment by his Aunt Nellie (Frances Ellen) *"I think having Eric with us prevented us feeling alarmed for ourselves, we were so anxious about him. The darling boy was so good, never gave us any trouble at all, and hardly ever complained when the smoke made his eyes smart."*[11]

"I would like everyone who has any kindly feeling for us, or who remembers his most dear grandfather, to see the arch little Cupid, Eric. Perhaps the best time is when he first wakes in the morning and crawling over to his Mother's pillow half whispers in a musical voice, "Let's have a kiss today my darling mother". …..I think Aunt H.'s great charm with Eric is that she is always ready for some fun, some masquerade, putting on him Grandma's bonnet and also her spectacles, sometimes making him a whitey-brown paper moustache, which, when, he has it on, he struts most comically about, personating Sir Henry Bulwer. When we unfolded some of our treasures to wit, the little biscuit china rabbits from Mrs Lyell gave him fits of delight, and from the same quarter that charming horse and cart. The seven oaks here have loaded the cart many times with acorns and the apple trees with apples. The roughness of this place made it, I think, all the more delightful for the darling. He saw the cows milked and had his share of the feast, though very indignant at what he considered the rough way in which the calves were dragged by their legs. The native school which was going on vigorously the latter part of the time in the barn, was almost too interesting for him, but he was not allowed to interfere with it. Right, left, right went on Eric standing under a tree while they filed past him. Of course they look up at him with enthusiasm, old and young too ready to serve him."[12]

Robert Colenso, his son Eric (or "Nondela') and his wife Emily seated next to his mother. Harriette Colenso is standing and Agnes is present but, as always, on the margins. Guy is asleep on the veranda on the left. At Seven Oaks.
(From *View across the River*)

Eric was given the name Nondela by the Zulus.

[10] Rees: Letter from Harriette Colenso to Francis Ernest Colenso 8 September 1884
[11] Rees: Letter from Frances Ellen Colenso to brother Francis Ernest Colenso 8 September 1884
[12] Rees: Letter from Sarah Frances Colenso to Mrs Lyell 14 April 1885

"I have hardly told of Eric's delight with his presents when they came out of the box. We have had to go with him to the border of our little stream to find a place for the little ducks to swim under the guidance of the magnet. He keeps us all going, besides the three to six little black boys whom he calls his tail."[13]

"His little black playmate, Manise, son of Sotemba, native teacher and preacher, was waiting on the verandah to see Eric's treasures as they were taken out of their paper wrappings. When the bottom of the box was reached, Eric came whispering to his Aunt Harry, "Mightn't he see if he couldn't find something for Manise from amongst the presents he had on the Christmas tree, because Manise had nothing", and Eric's sympathetic little soul could not bear it. So he was allowed to endow his poor friend with the History of Jack the Giant Killer….."[14]

In 1888-9 Emily was in England with Eric where they stayed between Frank's house in London and her mother's in Oxford (the address was simply 'Winfield, Oxford,'). In May 1889 she returned with Eric to Bishopstowe where she left him when, sometime before September 1889, she went to Johannesburg to join Rob[15].

His Aunt Harriette took Eric with her to Eshowe (sometime between May and August 1889) where the son of Cetshweyo, Dinuzulu, now King of the Zulus, was imprisoned. He and Dinuzulu (then 21) became friends and gave one another gifts – it was an unequal exchange, sweets for the one and a calf for the other. Dinuzulu mentioned him in a letter to Harriette from his exile on St Helena on the 13 December 1891, asking if he was well[16].

In January 1890 the ladies of Bishopstowe left for London to continue their campaign to free Dinuzulu.

Rob's affairs did not prosper in Johannesburg and in 1890 they also returned to England. They were staying at 22 Crooms Hill, near the Greenwich Observatory in July 1890, but by December 1890 they were living at Cromwell road, London, which was to be their long term residence[17].

The following photograph is of Bishop Colenso's family in London, early 1890s. "*Seated in the middle of the picture is Bishop Colenso's widow, Sarah Frances. In the back row standing from the left: the Bishop's daughters, Agnes and Harriette, and his daughter in law, Emily, wife of his son, Robert, seated on right of picture. Seated on far left of Picture is Sophie, wife of the Bishop's son, Frank, seated to her left. The grandchildren are Eothen, Irma and Sylvia, the three daughters of Frank and Sophie; and John Eric, the son of Emily and Robert."*[18] Frank's son Nigel was born late 1889 and Robert's daughter Angela was born in July 1891, but they are not included.

Sarah Frances Colenso and her daughters Harriette and Agnes returned to Natal in September 1893 where Sarah Frances died in December 1893.

[13] Rees: Letter from Frances Sarah Colenso to Mrs Lyell, 1887.
[14] Rees: Letter from Frances Sarah Colenso to Mrs Lyell, 1888.
[15] Gleaned from family letters by Gwil Colenso.
[16] Jeff Guy, View Across the River
[17] Gleaned from family letters by Gwil Colenso
[18] Gwil Colenso provided this photograph and caption

Family in England

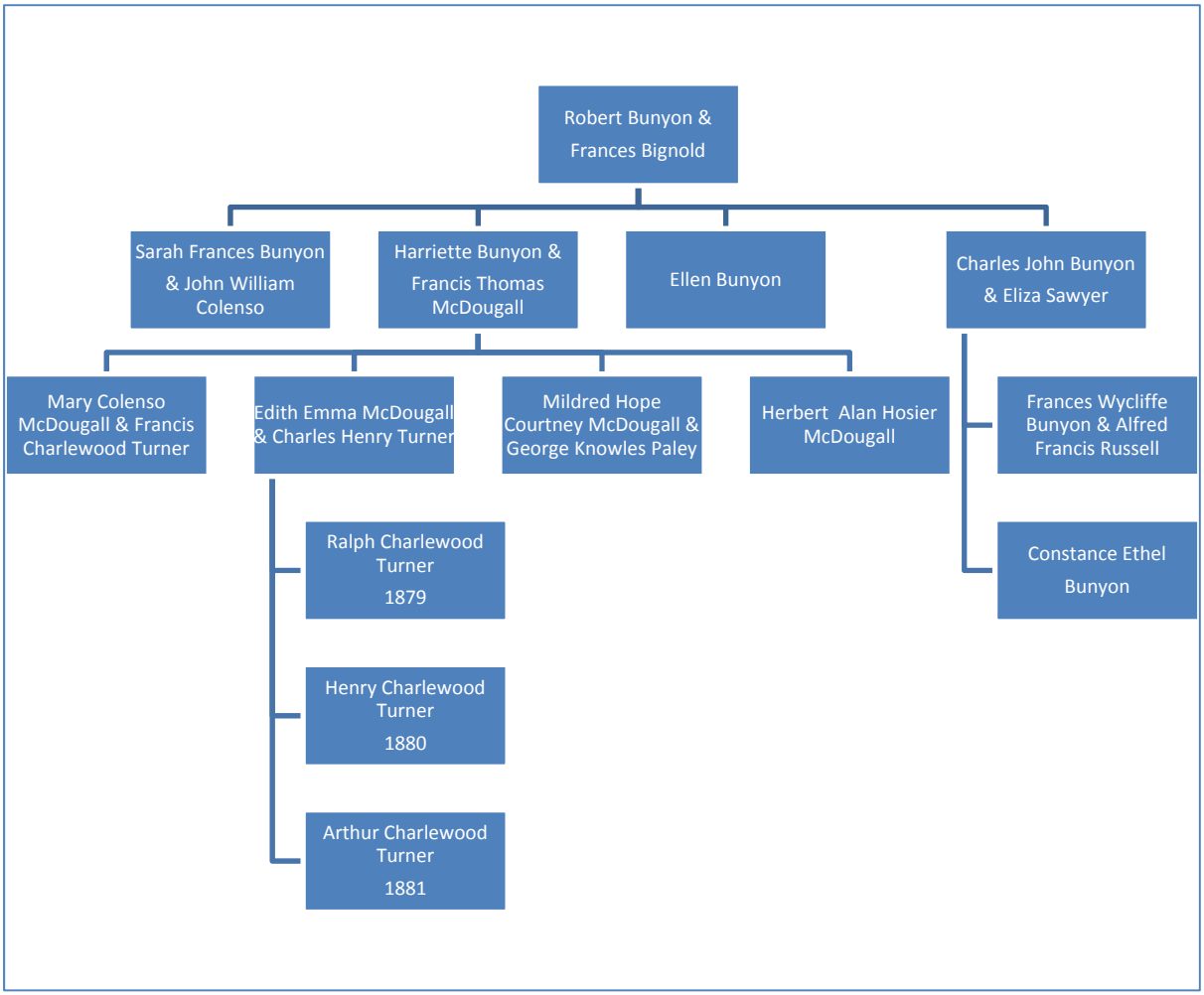
When Robert and his family arrived in London, they were without financial resources and his mother's brother Charles Bunyon provided assistance. His uncle had helped Frank get established as an insurance actuary, and ultimately Frank was to become a co-author of the later editions of "*The Law of Fire Insurance"*. The Bunyon side of the family were evangelical and high church, definitely not approving of the Colenso activism, but still provided financial and social assistance – sometimes reluctantly. They also provided Eric with an extended family.

Sarah Colenso's sister Harriette had married Francis Thomas McDougall, the Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak. This family had returned to England in 1868. Their four surviving children had married and their families were expanding. In particular Edith Emma McDougall married Reverend Charles Henry Turner[19] in 1877 and was to have 5 sons and 4 daughters. The three elder sons were of similar age to Eric.

Charles's daughter Constance was a committee member of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel for 42 years before her death in 1936 and actively involved in the education of missionaries. His daughter Frances married Canon Alfred Francis Russell, the Rector of Chingford in 1886. One of their sons served with the Gurkhas as well.

Charles Bunyon died in June 1892, leaving an estate of over £100,000. Most of his money was left to his wife and daughters, but he provided his sister Sarah Frances with annuity of £100, leaving £500 to his niece Mrs Frank Charlewood Turner, £500 to each of his grandchildren (four when he died), and nine legacies of £100 each to sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews and cousin.

[19] Later Chaplain to Queen Victoria and consecrated the Bishop of Islington.



Eric's maternal grandmother Catherine Elizabeth Kerr and two aunts Edith and Mabel were settled in Oxford close to Catherine's sister Bessie and her family. Bessie was the widow to the Reverend Edwin Hatch (1835-1889), a theologian of the Broad Church. In the 1891 census Eric was holidaying with his maternal grandmother and aunts in Fowey, Cornwall.

Only one of his paternal grandfather's siblings had children. This was Sophia Ann Colenso who married the Chaplain of Bodmin Gaol, Nicholas Kendall. They had one daughter, Mary, who married Spencer Perceval Butler, a conveyancing counsel, and settled in Harrow. Between 1864 and 1889, Mary and Spencer had 11 children who survived infancy – of whom 9 were sons. Two of these became senior administrators in India and one served there between 1899 and 1909 in the Royal Field Artillery. I have no evidence that Eric knew this family but they were second cousins.

Harriette Colenso also returned to London in 1895, staying with her brothers, while she spent two years lobbying for political support for the Zulus.

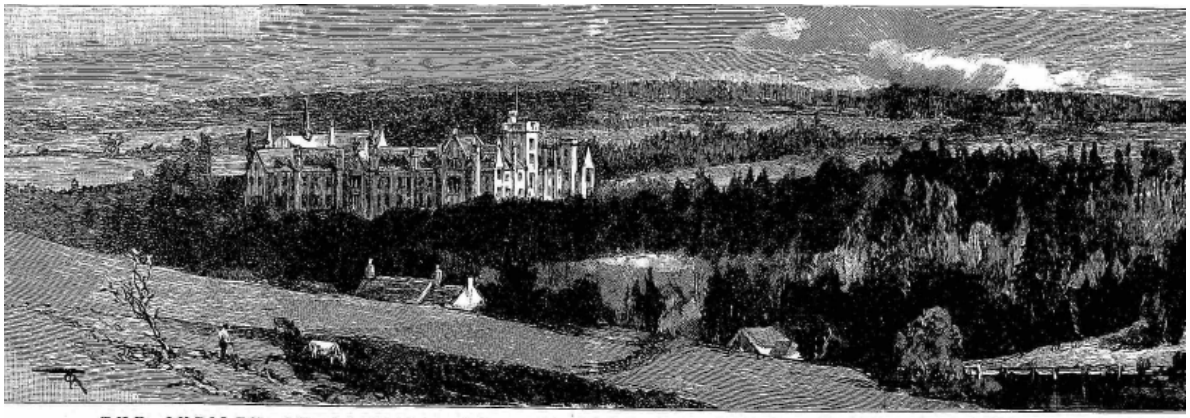
Trinity College, Glenalmond

Eric started at Trinity College, Glenalmond in 1893, three years after his family settled in London, and left on 28th December 1898, when he was 18 years old.

This school, set in the Grampians, Scotland, was founded in 1847 by James Robert Hope and William Ewart Gladstone, later to be a Liberal Prime Minister. It was established for boys to be trained for the Scottish Episcopal Church. There the sons of the laity could be educated and brought up in the faith and tradition of the Church. This faith and tradition was of the Tractarian variety and the founders were associated with the Oxford Movement, which opposed Bishop Colenso's views. The first Warden (headmaster) was the Reverend Charles Wordsworth (1806-1892), nephew of the poet William Wordsworth, later to be the Bishop of St Andrews.

These five years in Scotland may have resulted in his nickname of "Jock", but the family still called him Eric.

In 1893 the Warden of Trinity College Glenalmond was Reverend John Huntley Skrine, appointed in 1888. He married the stepdaughter of Charles John Bunyon's wife's sister, Mary Jessie Hammond Tooke, in 1878. Both Charles Bunyon's daughters, Frances and Constance were her bridesmaids together with Mary Colenso McDougall. After the death in 1886, of their aunt Frances Wycliffe Tooke, Constance and Frances commissioned, in her memory, the beautification of the reredos (the decorations behind the altar) of Monkton Farleigh Church, where her husband Thomas Hammond Tooke had been rector. This indicates a close connection.



THE JUBILEE OF GLENALMOND COLLEGE: GENERAL VIEW OF THE BUILDINGS

Eric's cousin Henry Charlewood Turner also attended Glenalmond at the same time, although all his brothers were to be students at Marlborough. Being of the same age Eric and Henry were probably sent together as support for each other.

The British Public School system trained the children of the elite, the next generation of empire rulers, warriors and builders. Perhaps Eric's extended family considered that he needed to establish the links within British society that were missing due to his early childhood in South Africa and his family's activism against the growth of empire in South Africa and their subsequent isolation from the Natal white settler community.

The educational philosophy of the time could be as expressed by Thomas Carlyle when he wrote that 'Man is created to fight; he is perhaps best described as a born soldier; his life a battle and a march under the right general.' With this rise of militarism from the 1880s the nation was placed above the individual, and the growth of empire by conquest was the central determinant of national identity. Colonial campaigns were 'the image of war, without its guilt and only twenty-five percent of the

danger.'[20] For the British people they were an ancestral form of war, shorn of guilt by social Darwinian and racial ideas, and rendered less dangerous by the increasing technological gap between Europe and the rest of the world.

After Eric's family were settled in England, as well as corresponding with his aunts, he kept in touch with Natal as a participant in the Ekukhanyeni letter writing circuit. Writing to an African correspondent, who was learning to read and write, Eric said:

"I am getting a big man now and someday perhaps will come and play with you again as we did once. I think Miss Colenso will read this to you and perhaps you can so I write it large……about the fire which I had not long ago, all my things were burnt that was up in Scotland."[21]

He is referring to the incident to which a 16 year-old student of Glenalmond College pleaded guilty to the following charge *"….on the 15th October 1894 in the prefect's common room, forming part of the west wing of said college, and in a school room forming part of the north wing of said college, set fire to said prefect's common room and schoolroom, and the fire took effect on said prefect's common room, and also in the janitor's rooms, three masters' rooms, a museum, twelve bedrooms, and a dormitory, all forming part of said west wing, and also on said schoolroom….."*[22]. This was Eric's second experience of the catastrophic impact of fire.

Henry Charlewood Turner finished at Glenalmond and entered Emmanual College Cambridge in October 1898, going on to obtain a BA in 1901 and MA in 1908. He was also appointed a second lieutenant in the 22nd London Regiment in 1910, promoted to captain in 1911 and Major in 1916. The 22nd London was a territorial regiment that was embodied when WW1 was declared. Henry became engaged in 1911 to Rev. Skrine's daughter Inez, although the marriage did not occur.

Eric left the school in December 1898, and appeared to have continued his studies. From the tenor of his aunt Harriette's letter to Eric's mother, written in September 1900[23], she had hopes that he would continue his grandfather's work in Natal:

"You will sent him to his godmother now won't you, for a month or two, as I suggest. We've been waiting so patiently, not to interfere with his studies, and those hurry scurry exams which I don't care about. But now I think it's our turn to have him, just for a visit."

But later in the same letter it is apparent that there were other plans for his future:

"Thank you dearest for sending me Connie's letter to Robert of August 27.She writes as though there had been other plans "openings" for Eric – "I have never had any communications with Eric about <u>any other</u> openings <u>which have presented</u> themselves" and again Emily tells me Eric ….. he has learnt of an opening". If I knew which had been mentioned as a possible opening it will give us some light on a subject of the first importance to us all."

Harriette Colenso wrote to her brother Frank on the 24th November 1900[24]:

[20] Surtees describing hunting
[21] Eric Colenso (Nondela) to Fundi (after 1894) quoted by Vukile Khumalo in *Ekukhanyeni letter-writers.*
[22] Dundee Courier, 20 November 1894
[23] Harriette Colenso to Emily Colenso, 29 Sep 1900, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 80

"I am still too much in the dark about Eric. Emil says "The idea is for him to spend the winter at Malta." Whose idea? Why? Then Eric writes "so much hangs on the next few months". What hangs? How does it hang? & on how many months? Please try dear Frank to throw some light on these points for me."

It became clear that Eric was planning a life in the Army. This results in another letter from Harriette to Emily on the 8th March 1901[25].

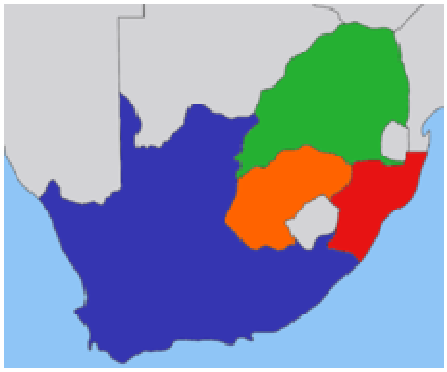
"Under these circumstances I can't write much, but must send a few words as in reply to your inquiry as to how I suggest that Eric should provide for himself with 'clothes' out here – i.e. something more than earn his bread. Well! At the worst, i.e. supposing he does not at all take up with Bishopstowe mission work, I think that he might do well by (1) starting what should develop into to a cooperative store for natives, or (2) a wattle plantation which is said to pay well in seven years. Whatever he does he has here in Natal an advantage in his grandfather's name more than he would have elsewhere. But of course we should hope that he would take up with Bishopstowe & have perhaps the cooperative store & cooperative wattle plantation there – I must not enlarge further on these points today but there is one thing further on which you can perhaps judge. Eric has not yet answered my last letter – don't urge him to – it's no use his screwing out a duty letter until he has something to say. Now you say that he has been driven towards the army, for 'the kid's sake', (and his parents) from the feeling that he ought to do something. But now that he has done something it is possible that the military idea is taking hold of him; that he may now have set his heart on getting into the army service corps.
Frank tells me that marks for active service tell heavily in the examination before Eric, & the dear boy may fancy that six months in one of the many irregular corps now being recruited out here would be a short cut for him. He would be wrong. The six months term is a blind, they are kept on, (once caught) month after month, the desolation of the country makes the apparently high pay barely feed them, & here is the sort of work they are engaged in. Nothing could be much worse than his being picked up by one of the marauding regiments, who probably have recruiting officers on most steamers. If however, Eric has not now set his heart on the army, this fear of mine is vain. You see for him to have taken part in this vile war would destroy the advantage for him of his grandfather's name in the eyes of natives as well as Boers – Indeed between you R & E & me, we have not & shall not – unless it become inevitable, let our people know that he is trying to join the army.
Also to our mind one of the great advantages of the invitation to Bishopstowe – one without which I should hardly have given it – is that the money advantages are not enough to become a bribe – If he takes up the work it will be for the work's sake, as the son of the house……."

Harriette seemed to assume that either Eric or his sister Angela would continue her work in Natal. Frank's wife had refused to live in Natal, before they married, so their children did not appear to be in her plans.

[24] Transcribed by Gwil Colenso from "Harriette Colenso to Frank Colenso, 24 Nov. 1900, The Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, Oxford, MSS. Afr. s.1286/1b.
[25] Harriette Colenso to Emily Colenso, 8 Mar 1901, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 80

The Boer War, Glenalmond and the Army

The Anglo-Boer War was fought between the 11 October 1899 and the 31 May 1902, following an ultimatum by the President of the South African Republic Paul Kruger for the removal of British Troops from the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The troops were not removed so war was declared on Britain by the Boer Republic.



The geography of Southern Africa: Transvaal (green), Orange Free State (Orange), Natal (red) and Cape Colony (blue).

The troops were there because Britain wanted to incorporate the Transvaal and Orange Free State into a federation under British control. The two territories had seen a massive influx of *uitlanders* (mainly English) since diamonds were discovered in the Kimberley in 1866 and gold at Witwatersrand in 1886. Pressure was exerted by the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain[26] in September 1899 for the Boers to grant franchise to the *uitlanders* led to the ultimatum.

The Boers mounted pre-emptive strikes into British-held territory in Natal and the Cape Colony, besieging the British garrisons of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley. The Boers then won a series of tactical victories against a failed British counteroffensive to relieve the sieges.

One such victory, on the 15th December 1899, around the town of Colenso[27] in Natal, was the result of inadequate preparation and reconnaissance and uninspired leadership. It was a heavy, and in some respects a humiliating, British defeat. The British, commanded by Sir Redvers Buller lost 143 killed, 756 wounded and 220 captured by the Boers.

In August 1900, nearly two years after leaving Glenalmond, Eric travelled to Scotland to attend the school's Commemoration Day[28], where the Warden's, Canon Skrine, speech included *"….like other people they had losses in the war in South Africa. Altogether the school had contributed to the fighting men in South Africa perhaps a higher proportion than any school in Great Britain…from inquiries a few years ago nearly one-tenth of the boys who left Glenalmond became soldiers. At the present time there were about 60 old Glenalmond boys serving at the front – and, with the exception of a sister school in England, Glenalmond occupied a higher place on the list than any other school. Out of the 60 serving in South Africa they had as yet lost three, including Colonel Dick-Cunyngham[29]; Walter Frost[30], a brother of a one-time sub-warden, who is serving in the Canadian Rifles; and Lieut. E. Codington[31], who fell in the charge of the Essex men."*

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[26] Neville Chamberlain, who signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler in 1938, was his son.

[27] Named after John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal.

[28] The Dundee Courier, 2 August 1900, page 7, column 4.

[29] Lt-Colonel William Henry Dick- Cunyngham (1851-1900), who won the VC in Afghanistan in 1879, and died in action at the Siege of Ladysmith commanding the Gordon Highlanders.

[30] Private W. Frost, Enlisted: Calgary, N.W.T. (Alberta), 1st Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, Next-of-Kin, Brother, Mr. E. Frost, Grieff, Perthshire, Scotland, Queen's South Africa Medal, Clasps-Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Johannesburg and Diamond Hill. Casualty list states died of wounds received June 10th, 1900, died June 12th, 1900.

[31] 2nd Lieutenant Coddington who died at Dreifontein on the 10th March 1900, when the Essex and Welsh Regiments took part in a bayonet charge, losing 16 men and 72 wounded.

Ultimately the school lost 11 former pupils who were commemorated on this tablet installed in the new school library in 1905. Both the library and tablet were the school's Boer War memorial, unveiled by Sir Ian Hamilton, later to command the British & Imperial army in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign in 1915.

The Bishop of St Andrews (George Howard Wilkinson) presided over the prize-giving ceremony and his speech included the following: *"….those who had been taught to think had been considering a great deal about this war in South Africa and it must have come to the minds of many to think of the amount of latent hidden heroism there was in Great Britain. Let them reflect a moment and think about the men, soldiers and officers, who distinguished themselves, and they might be struck with the fact that they knew the officers as they came from their club in Pall Mall, or had seen their soldiers in their ordinary life in any barrack town, and they would never single them out as great heroes, but the latent possibilities were there, and, having been developed, their names were written in the history of Great Britain for all the ages. If they wanted to imitate men like Robinson, Brooks and Harry Normand[32], who had been martyred in China, they should do their best in everything. If they wanted to imitate that dying soldier, who, when presented with a drink, said to pass it on to his pal that he might live, they should think of others before themselves. They had the example of their fathers, and he hoped they would strive to lead a life that was ennobling and pure."*

The example of Eric's father (and uncle) included service in the Volunteers when they were at University in the 1870s. Until he left South Africa in 1890, his father had been commissioned as a surgeon in the Natal Royal Rifles, a volunteer force which existed between 1889 and 1895.

In 1900 both Eric's father and uncle were involved with the Pan-African Association. In addition to medical practice, his father also lectured on artistic anatomy at the South West London Polytechnic Institute and the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. Rob also mentions to his sisters that he is preparing a Zulu dictionary. His published writings included three books on artistic anatomy, a couple of medical papers and some stories on his childhood for Boy's Own Paper.

In his Commemoration day speech, Canon Skrine continued with the following comments: *"….for we of the public schools always say that whatever these institutions teach, there is one instruction given by them which is nowhere given so well. People give it various names, and some talk of the schools "turning out gentlemen." I prefer a less cant phrase and an older one, and the public schools are pleased to teach the ancient and honourable virtue of chivalry[33]. Perhaps here and elsewhere we do*

[32] Sidney Malcolm Wellbye Brooks was murdered in China's Shandong province in December 1899, aged 24. Harry Vine Normand and Charles Robinson were also murdered in the Tientsin district in June 1900. All three were missionaries for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the victims of the Boxer Rebellion.

[33] Defined as the combination of qualities expected of an ideal knight, especially courage, honour, justice, and a readiness to help the weak.

not teach it to every boy – but then a poor schoolmaster is like one of those artificers whose trade is to make a silk purse – he must have a little help from nature. However it is the duty of a school like ours to make chivalrous men….."

One of the consequences of the outbreak of Boer war, with its initial failures for Britain, was that many standing army regiments were withdrawn from Britain and other parts of the Empire and sent to South Africa. As a result, it was necessary to embody the Militia in Britain.

The 6th Battalion (militia) of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) was embodied on the 1st May 1900 until 18th October 1900. John Eric Colenso was appointed as a 2nd Lieutenant on the 20th September 1900, so it unlikely that he was member of the militia before it was embodied. He was then attached to the regular army from the 22nd March to the 7th June 1901, possibly after spending the winter of 1900/01 in Malta at his family's request. He was recorded as a Militia Lieutenant in the Officers Mess, Budbrooke, Warwickshire, in the census taken on the 31st March 1901. He was not granted a Regular Commission until the 29th January 1902, this delay may have been because he did not turn 21 until November 1901.

The officers also lodging in the Officers Mess in 1901[34] were unlikely to have dampened his enthusiasm for new horizons, they included:

- Major Gregory Haines of the Madras infantry, born in India, and the son of Lt-Col Haines and grandson of Viscount Hugh Gough, both families long associated with India;
- Captain Edward Lynn Allen of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment;
- Lt-Col John Henry Rudyerd Helpman, of the Royal Fusiliers Militia, who had led an expedition to the Klondike in 1897 to map and explore for minerals.

Given the patriotic fervour of the time and culture of the school he had attended for 5 years, it is not a surprise that this young man's ambition was to join the army. He had been an athlete (rugby and shooting), a leader (prefect and cadet) and possibly not a scholar. Many of his extended family had been contributors to the expansion of empire – in Canada, India, Sarawak, South Africa – as settlers, soldiers, administrators and missionaries. In matters of religion members of his family represented both sides of the religious debates of the time. The most significant attribute of his genetic inheritance was that it was unlikely that he would do nothing.

His choice of India was possibly the result of a desire to start somewhere fresh, unfettered by his close family's reputation and activism, and to avoid embarrassing his aunts with the Zulus and Boers. A soldier whose surname was the same as the name of a recent significant military defeat might be looking for a relatively clean slate. The championship of the Zulus and Pan-African movement by his aunts, uncle and father might encourage him to go somewhere other than Africa. He had cousins who had already established themselves in India.

On the 29th January 1902 Eric was attached as a 2nd Lieutenant to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). At this time the Battalion was in Mandalay, Burma. He arrived in India on the 19th April 1902 as an officer recorded for admission to the Indian Army when qualified. In 1903 he was stationed in Maymyo[35], Burma and

[34] Ancestry images of the 1901 Census

appears in the Army List as having achieved a "lower standard" qualification in Urdu (a standardised form of Hindi). On the 5th November 1904 he was initiated to Freemasonry at Lodge Mayo in Maymyo.

The Army of India

The Army of India consisted of both the Indian Army and the British Army in India between 1903 and 1947. Its role was threefold:

- Protecting the frontier against invasion pending help from England
- Keeping the peace amongst frontier tribesmen
- Maintaining internal security

Lord Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief, India between 1902 and 1909. He instituted large-scale reforms of the military units in the British Raj (India), including merging the three armies of the three presidencies (Madras, Bombay and Bengal) into a unified force and forming higher level formations, eight army divisions, and brigading Indian and British units. Kitchener's reforms resulted in:

- The Indian Army which was recruited locally and permanently based in India, together with its expatriate British officers (after WW1 around 180,000 Indians and 20,000 Gurkhas).
- The British Army in India which consisted of British Army units posted to India for a tour of duty, and which would then be posted to other parts of the Empire or back to the United Kingdom (after WW1 around 50,000 troops).
- The Indian Army and the British Army in India were grouped together as the Army of India.

These changes along, with the abolition of the Indian Staff Corps, increased the officer requirement by 938. It had already been difficult to find suitable British officers. Indian Army postings were less prestigious than British Army positions, but the pay was significantly greater so that officers could live on their salaries instead of having to have a private income. Accordingly vacancies in the Indian Army were much sought after and generally reserved for the higher placed officer-cadets graduating from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst whose backgrounds were vetted by the Commander-in-Chief, India. British officers in the Indian Army were also expected to learn to speak the Indian languages of their men, who tended to be recruited from primarily Hindi speaking areas. The factors that resulted in Eric's selection are not known, but he was appointed to the Indian Army on the 6th March 1904, and assigned to the 87th Punjabis as a 2nd Lieutenant. On the 29th April he was promoted to Lieutenant. This photograph of sepoys of the 87th Punjabis was published in 1904, submitted for the Badminton Magazine's monthly

SEPOYS OF THE 87TH PUNJABIS

Photograph by Mr. J. E. Colenso, 87th Punjabis, Kirkee, Bombay

[35] A hill-station about an hour's drive from Mandalay. It was a military cantonment, and a civil and military police-station.

photographic prize.[36]

In the conclusion[37] of "*The Indian Corps in France*" the authors described the relationship between a British officer and his men in an Indian regiment as "*unique*", with the "*degree of dependence"* between the private soldiers and the officer as very high. *"Each officer looks upon his men as his children*", in the sense addressed by the poet describing the fathers of the fallen:[38]

Happy and young and gallant,
They saw their first-born go,
But not the strong limbs broken
And the beautiful men brought low,
The piteous writhing bodies,
They screamed "Don't leave me, sir",
For they were only your fathers;
I was your officer.

Merewether and Smith further elaborated that the British Officer was not leading men with whom he shared a common heritage and could not be sure that his outlook on unfolding events was the same as his men's perspective. *"However if he earns it, his men will give him a great degree of loyalty and respect. A trusted officer will receive the unquestioning obedience that a boy will give an affectionate and admired father".* Because of the uniqueness of this relationship the selection of British officers had the close involvement of the Commander-in-Chief, especially for the Gurkha regiments – in the early 1900s Lord Kitchener.

[36] Badminton Magazine of Sports & Pastimes – Volume XIX, July to December 1904
[37] The Indian Corps in France, Merewether & Smith, pages 472-3.
[38] Lt E A Macintosh MC (1893 -1917), In Memorium, addressed to the fathers of his slain Seaford highlanders

During his 30 years in the army of India Eric was to serve on the North West Frontier and the North East frontier in Burma.

The Gurkha Rifles

After a couple of months with the 87th Punjabis, in Bombay, Eric was transferred to the Gurkha Rifles.

After the East India Company and the Gurkha Kingdom of Nepal signed a peace treaty in 1816, following the Anglo-Nepalese War, the British realised the potential of Gurkha soldiers in British service. They became the trusted backbone of the Indian Army, especially after fighting on the British side in the 1857 Indian Mutiny. Between the mutiny and the start of WW1 the Gurkhas saw active service in Burma, Afghanistan, the Northern frontiers of India, Malta, Cyprus, Malaya, China and Tibet. British officer vacancies in the Gurkha regiments were normally reserved for the sons of Indian Colonial and military Officials .

The Gurkha Regiments had developed their own line of rifle regiments since 1861. In 1902 there were six of these (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 9th). It was decided to raise a Gurkha regiment for local service in Burma. It was to be called the 8th Gurkha Rifles, taking funds, band and mess from the 8th Madra Infantry, just disbanded. It was formed in Thayetmyo in Central Burma from 400 men of the 10th Gurkha Rifles (a Burma Military Police Battalion), 100 men from the Burma Military Police, and transfers from other Indian Army Gurkha regiments. Its date of raising was 16th May 1902.

In February 1903, in Kitchener's great re-numbering, the three Gurkha regiments that were still numbered in the Bengal Infantry line, 42nd, 43rd and 44th, were placed in the Gurkha numbering, as 6th, 7th and 8th. This meant that the recently raised 8th Gurkhas had to become the second battalion of the 10th Gurkha Rifles.

On the 3rd July 1904 Eric was attached as a supernumerary to the 1/7th Gurkha Rifles. In December 1905 he changed from a Maymyo Lodge to one in Meerut, presumably as he was now stationed there.

On the 31st March 1907 Eric arrived back in England 5 years and 10 days after he first left for India[39].

In April 1907 the Nepal Durbar allowed an increase in recruitment. All the Gurkha regiments were to have two battalions. The 7th (43rd) and 8th (44th) were not allowed second battalions because they were recruited from the Magar and Gurung tribes. The only solution was to amalgamate the two regiments into one. This was to be called the 8th Gurkha Rifles comprising the 1st battalion from the 8th (44th), and the second battalion from the 7th (43rd).

The second battalion of the 10th, recruited from the eastern region of Rai and Limbu, was split in two and they became the two battalions of the new 7th Gurkha Rifles. The majority of officers for this new regiment came from the 78th Moplah Rifles which had just been disbanded. They brought with them mess silver and band funds and instruments. The 10th Gurkhas then raised another 2nd battalion.

[39] Eric Colenso to Harriette and Agnes Colenso, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204 Box 44

The geographical division between Gurkhas of east and west Nepal is reflected in distinctive tribal, religious and social patterns and on the personalities of the soldiers. Viscount Slim, a former Colonel of the 7th Gurkha Rifles, wrote in the foreward of its Regimental History:[40]

"When after many years in a Gurkha battalion composed of Magars and Gurungs I came to the 7th Gurkhas, I wondered rather parochially, whether their Limbus and Rais could possibly be as good as the men I had left. I need have had no doubts. They had their full share of the indomitable courage, cheerful hardihood, never-failing alertness and unshakeable loyalty that made it an honour and deep satisfaction to serve with Gurkhas. To these basic foundations each kind of Gurkha adds his own particular excellence. For the Limbu and Rai, I think, it is to excel in the snarling dog-fight of close hand-to-hand combat. They made me sometimes almost sorry for the Japanese."

"An outsider, talking to an officer of Gurkhas, was always immensely struck by two things: firstly, by the affection he displayed for his men, and, secondly, at the assured manner in which he let it be known that his own battalion was by far the best of the bunch."[41]

Regiment		Recruiting Region	Post 1947
1st	King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment)	Gurung & Magar	India
2nd	King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)	Gurung & Magar	Britain
3rd	Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles (Kemaon Battalion)	Gurung & Magar	India
4th	Prince of Wales' Own Gurkha Rifles	Gurung & Magar	India
5th	Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force)	Gurung & Magar	India
6th	Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles	Gurung & Magar	Britain
7th	Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles	Rai & Limbu	Britain
8th	Gurkha Rifles	Gurung & Magar	India
9th	Gurkha Rifles	Chettri & Bahun	India
10th	Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles	Rai & Limbu	Britain

After his return from England to India, Eric was one of the Company Officers appointed on the 27th September 1907 to the 2/7th. He changed his lodge in January 1908 to one in Quetta. In August 1908 he was appointed Quarter Master for the Battalion.

On the same page of the digest recording this appointment it was noted that many of the regiment were retiring to the Reserve because there was a dislike of Quetta as a station. Lt-Colonel Woodyatt explained to Kitchener that Quetta *"..was a long way from their homes: about 1,500 miles by rail, besides the journeys onwards. Then the people of Baluchistan were all Mahomedans, and they can't even talk to them. There is no shooting or fishing, they hate the bad winds we get, and the new barracks on a stony plot are devoid of all shade."*[42] Aside from suggesting trees be planted and learning that three thousand were already planted, Kitchener replied that he thought *"….Quetta was very good place for Gurkhas, and I want them to like it, and I'm sure they will in time."* It is reported that they did.

During this time the battalion was training the new recruits while establishing the new quarters at Quetta. Building was still in progress, the parade ground needed to be cleared and the football ground levelled. Training was uncomplicated as rifles and bayonets were the only weapons. By October 1908 the battalion was involved in its first Brigade manoeuvres – in two phases against unorganised and organised enemies.

[40] *History of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles*, foreward.
[41] Lt Col N G Woodyatt, *Under Ten Viceroys*
[42] Lt Col N G Woodyatt, *Under Ten Viceroys*

Much of the work of the Gurkha regiments was concentrated on the northern frontiers of British India – both to the west and the east. The eastern region included Burma and was on the frontier with Tibet and China. The western region was adjacent to the frontiers with Afghanistan and the administered tribal areas.

Eric spent time in both areas and was reported to have become an expert in border and frontier dialects. No doubt speaking isiZulu in his childhood, and possibly other Bantu languages, in Natal helped him pick up more. By the time he retired from the army his records indicated that he had army qualifications in Baluchi, Burmese border languages, Urdu and Khaskura. The latter was the language used in the Gurkha regiments.

An insight into to his life style was used as a testimonial in The Graphic, 1909 by A. E. Gutman …….

"Quetta, Baluchistan

Sirs, I enclose herewith two small snapshots taken on the India Frontier, showing your "Thermos" flask in use. I thought they might be of some interest to you. The person holding the flask is a Gurkha soldier. These flasks are a very great boon to us who lead an open air life for nine months out of the twelve, and you deserve the heartfelt thanks of all British officers.

J E Colenso, Lieut, 7th Gurkha Rifles"

Eric was seconded to the Burma Military Police in November 1909.

Officers of the 2/7th Gurkhas taken in Feb 1908, the bottom one includes Eric's dog Laddie. Both were supplied by the Gurkha Museum, Winchester.

The North West Frontier

The North-West Frontier Province was created by the British in British India. It was established in 1901 and dissolved in 1955, after eight years as part of the state of Pakistan. The province covered an area of 70,709 km², including much of the current Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (also called KPK) province but excluding the former princely states of Amb, Chitral, Dir, Phulra and Swat. The capital was the city of Peshawar and the province was composed of three divisions (Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and Malakand). Until 1947 the province was bordered by five princely states to the north, the minor states of the Gilgit Agency to the northeast, the province of West Punjab to the east, and the province of Balochistan to the south. Afghanistan lay to the northwest, with the tribal agencies forming a buffer zone.

From 1849, under the British the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), both historically and traditionally had a unique administrative and political status. However, in 1893, a demarcation was raised with Afghanistan called the Durand Line. The British controlled the area through a combination of effective Political Agents and tribal elders, while leaving the people with their traditions and internal independence. Pakistan inherited this system and more or less continues with it even today.

Burma Military Police

Britain controlled parts of Burma from 1824 after the First Anglo-Burmese War, increasing their territorial control with the next two wars (1852 and 1885). They made it a major province of India in 1897. However there was not a major influx on British settlers into Burma, rather Indian migrants settled in the country. This created resentment and unrest by the Burmese – resulting in ongoing guerrilla activities against British rule.

The pre-WWI military garrison of Burma was a two-brigade mixture of British regular army and Indian Army infantry battalions, as well as the permanent Burma Military Police battalions. All these units formed the Burma Division that was headquartered at Maymyo, near Mandalay. Some of the regular units rotated in and out of Burma whilst others were permanently based there.

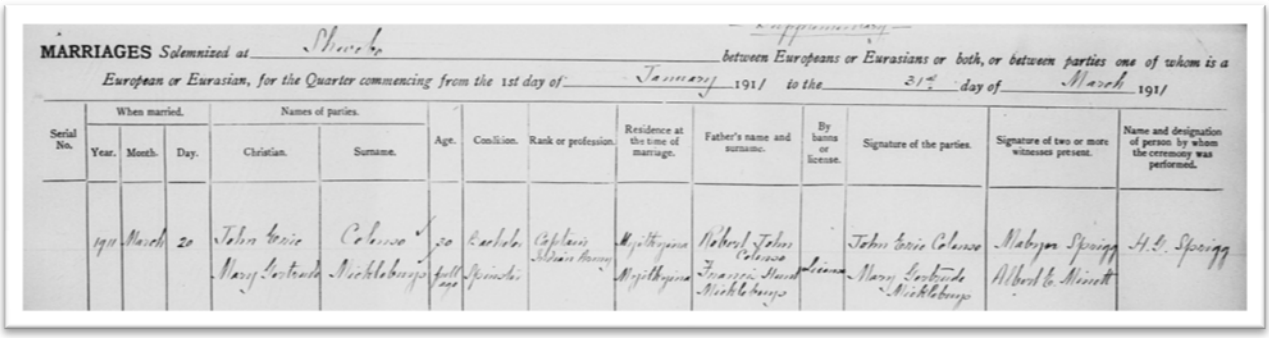
The Burma Military Police (BMP), a regiment financed by the Burma authorities, had been raised in 1886 as a low-cost alternative to having Indian Army units deployed along Burma's 1,300 kilometre-long land border. Initially recruits for the BMP came from the Punjab area of north-west India but soon suitable Burmese hill-tribesmen were also recruited. Gurkhas were enlisted in some of the battalions from the early years – they were mainly Limbus and Rais from eastern Nepal. European Officers were seconded from the Indian Army for tours with the BMP; Indian and Burmese officers, the backbones of the battalions, were recruited from the Punjab or trained and developed within the units. Each BMP battalion had a mounted detachment and some had obsolescent muzzle-loading artillery pieces. The BMP maintained law and order in remote regions of Burma as a light infantry regiment rather than a police unit. By 1912 the BMP was 15,350 in number with 3,000 Gurkhas.

Eric was seconded to the BMP on the 4th November 1909 as assistant commandant at Myitkyina. He was promoted to Captain on the 29th January 1911. In 1912 he was with the Magwe Battalion and then the Chin Hills Battalion in 1914, when he left for Lansdowne prior to leaving for the Western Front with the Garhwal Rifles.

In October 1919 he was appointed officiating commandant of the Shwebo Battalion of the Burma Military Police and joined the Rangoon Lodge in February 1920. He resigned from this lodge in August 1921 and in 1922 was transferred to the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, as second in command of the 2nd battalion.

Marriage

On the 20th March 1911 Eric married Mary Gertrude (Mollie) Mickleburgh by licence at Schwebo Church in the diocese of Rangoon. He was 30 and she was 42. They were both recorded as living in Myitkyina. The celebrant was Rev H G Sprigg and the witnesses Mabyn Sprigg and Albert E Minett.



MARRIAGES Solemnized at Shwebo between Europeans or Eurasians or both, or between parties one of whom is a European or Eurasian, for the Quarter commencing from the 1st day of January 1911 to the 31st day of March 1911

Serial No.	When married. Year.	Month.	Day.	Names of parties. Christian.	Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or profession.	Residence at the time of marriage.	Father's name and surname.	By banns or license.	Signature of the parties.	Signature of two or more witnesses present.	Name and designation of person by whom the ceremony was performed.
	1911	March	20	John Eric Mary Gertrude	Colenso Mickleburgh	30 full age	Bachelor Spinster	Captain Main Army	Myitkyina Myitkyina	Robert John Colenso Francis Hunt Mickleburgh	License	John Eric Colenso Mary Gertrude Mickleburgh	Mabyn Sprigg Albert E. Minett	H.G. Sprigg

She was the eldest daughter of Francis Hunt Mickleburgh who had been a midshipman in the Royal Indian Navy. When this was disbanded in 1863 he was employed by the Post Office in Toronto, Canada, as a clerk in the Marine Mail Service. His three daughters and 2 sons were born in Toronto. However the family had returned to England by 1891, settling in Dawlish, Devon.

Also living in Dawlish was Arthur Leslie Jacob, nephew of the local clergyman. Jacob was born in India, son of the headmaster of Elphinstone College in Bombay. He took a commission in the army in 1891, transferring to the Indian Army in 1892, then to the Foreign and Political Department in 1895. While living in Dawlish he seems to have formed a relationship with Jenny Coke Mickleburgh, who was aged 17 when he left England. They married in Bombay in 1896. As her father is living alone in Worthing in 1901, it is possible that Jenny's two sisters also travelled to India before 1901. Alice Frances married Ernest Frederick Orton, later to be a Major General, in 1904 in Quetta.

Mollie's two brothers went to Natal, the younger died there in 1903, aged 24. The other, Harold Travers Mickleburgh became Head Constable of the Natal Mounted Police.

Eric's family's reaction to his marriage to Mollie was expressed in a letter from his Aunt Sophie (Frank's wife) to Agnes in Natal[43] "…..*So Eric is to be married on Monday next! May he be truly happy, & not making a mistake. I do feel most terribly sorry for Robert and Emily - & it seems so cruel*

[43] Sophie Colenso to Agnes Colenso, 10 Jul 1907, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 14

that they can't even be present at their idolized only son's marriage. I can't see why he couldn't have married his fiancée whilst……" in England (?). No family member was a witness at the wedding and in April 1911 both of Mollie's sisters, with their children, are living in Camberley, Surrey with their father visiting. Eric had been in England in 1910, so home leave would have been difficult and Mollie would be unlikely to stay in India, unmarried, if her sisters were returning to England.

In September 1911 Frank's daughter Eothen married Dr. Henry Young Cameron Taylor. Frank had died in June 1910. Tragically his son Nigel John Hector Frankland Colenso died between the 29th March and the 11th April 1913 at Apsheronskaya, Kuban, Caucasus. He was only 24. His death was described as an accident, with no further details, in the report to the British Consulate by his employer Bewick and Moreing, a mining company. Nigel had been an engineer. Eric was now the only grandson of the late Bishop of Natal.

WW1

In January 1915 Robert[44] writes to his sisters in Natal that Eric was now at Lansdowne preparing to be sent to somewhere – "*France, Suez, Turkey or possibly South Africa! Suez or Turkey I hope, if not Africa.*" Mollie accompanied him to Lansdowne and was expected to return to England.

Egypt – February to March 1915

In May Robert[45] writes to his sisters again informing them that *"Eric was on his way to the front. He & his wife travelled together as far as Port Said, & then they separated, she to come home via Gibraltar by P&O & he to proceed to Marseilles."*

His records indicate that he was involved in active service in Egypt between the 12th February and the 3rd March 1915.

Britain and France had declared war on Turkey on the 5th November 1914. As the Suez Canal was vital to maintain oil supplies from the Persian Gulf and supply lines with the eastern empire (India, Australia and New Zealand) Britain had proclaimed Egypt a British Protectorate on the 18th December.

Regiments of the Indian Army were deployed to protect the Canal from Turkish and German efforts to close it.

[44] Robert Colenso to his sisters Harriette & Agnes, 8 Jan 1915, Pietermartizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 55

[45] Robert Colenso to his sisters Harriette & Agnes, 5 May 1915 , Pietermartizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 55

The 2/7th Gurkha Rifles left Quetta on the 31st October, embarked at Karachi on the 2nd, arrived at Suez as part of a large convoy on the 15th November. By mid-January 1915 the General Officer Commanding Canal Defences, Major General A. Wilson, had allocated his troops, called E Force, into three sectors along the canal. The southern sector, covering Port Twefik (near Suez) to Geneffe contained the 2/7th , the central sector, covering Deversoir to El Ferdan, included the 2/10th and 1/5th Gurkha Rifles, the northern sector, covering El Ferdan to Port Said, included the 1/6th.

The Turkish army advanced on the canal in three columns, with a decisive move made on the 3rd February. This was unsuccessful, but from the dates in Eric's records he was not involved. He was attached to a reinforcement of 2/39th Garhwali Rifles, who had been with the Burma Military Police. They were sent to join their battalion in France, via Lansdowne and the Suez Canal. Presumably the Turkish attack on the canal delayed their passage and they were put to use in the defences.

During this time the 2/7th was involved in an action at Tor. Their commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane was ordered to embark half his battalion at Suez on HMS Minerva on the 10th February. His mission was to punish a party of Turks threatening Tor at the southern end of the Gulf of Suez.

HMS Minerva left Suez at noon on the 11th February and arrived at Tor before midnight. The troops rowed into Tor Harbour, all ashore by the early hours of the 12th February. They met up with the Egyptian soldiers of the Tor garrison and a section of British Field Artillery. After seeking and destroying the Turkish camps around Tor the Gurkhas reboarded the Minerva at 17:20 and steamed north by 22:30. They reached Abu Senima at 6:00 on the 13th, dealt with some Hungarian demolition officers sabotaging a Manganese Mine, and eight hours later were back at Suez, returning to the rest of the battalion at El Shatt.

Western Front – March 1915 to May 1916

Rob's May letter to his sisters continued with "…..*he to proceed to Marseilles in charge of some 2/39th Garhwali Rifles – men akin to the Gurkhas.*" Eric's sister Angela was nursing in France[46] and at news of his approach, their mother met her in Paris and they travelled to Marseilles where they found him. They spent two days with him and then he went to "*Neuve Chappelle, arriving just after the big fight*".

The 2/39th Royal Garhwali Rifles[47] had participated in the first 4 days of the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, which had started on the 10th March 1915. They were relieved to billets at Zelobes until the 28th March. During this time they carried out drills and provided working parties to improve the communication trenches near the front. On the 29th March the Brigade marched to Calonne via Paradis and Pacaut, arriving at their new billets at 3:30pm. Orders came to temporarily (until Spring 1916) amalgamate the two battalions into one regiment - as a result of the casualties they had sustained.

On the 2nd April – Good Friday – the regiment received a visit from the Bishop of London (Arthur Winnington-Ingram), who conducted an open-air service in a field for the troops in the area. On the

[46] With the French Red Cross from December 1914.
[47] Drake-Brockman, *With the Royal Garhwali Rifles in the Great War 1914-1917*, pages 59-60

same day a reinforcement, consisting of two British Officers and 62 men of the Burma Military Police (Garhwalis) arrived. One of the British Officers was John Eric Colenso.

The Regiment rested in the billets up till the 26th April. This enabled short leave and officers, including Eric, went off in batches.

His father wrote in his May letter to his sisters "*Some weeks after Angel & Emil got back (from France) I went for 2 day weekend holiday to a trout stream in Gloucestershire, not having been able to leave London for many months before this opportunity. On the day after my arrival there, i.e. a Saturday evening, a cable came from Eric, forwarded to me to say he was home for 4 days. Needless to add that I returned at once & found him looking big & well & cheerful – his wife had travelled up too, of course. Well, we had a very happy 3 days together & then he went back to the same place, where he had already been in the trenches for five days. They move so many days in, & so many out of the trenches, 3 stints. We heard from him this morning that he is billeted in a farm house, but back to the trenches shortly. It's an awful war, & I can hardly expect, although I hope he may come alive & well out of it.*"

During April large working parties were provided to dig trenches near the front line. General Haig visited the Brigade on the 8th April. A visit by Sir John French cancelled because of a severe snowstorm. On the 10th April the regiment was moved to Vielle Chappelle. On the 13th they were moved back to La Couture. On the 14th some war correspondents, including Frederick Villiers and Ralph Cleaver, visited the trenches. Both of these gentlemen sketched the regiment, the latter depicting a quiet time in the trenches[48].

[48] Published in "The Graphic" 1915, found in the Amazon online catalogue

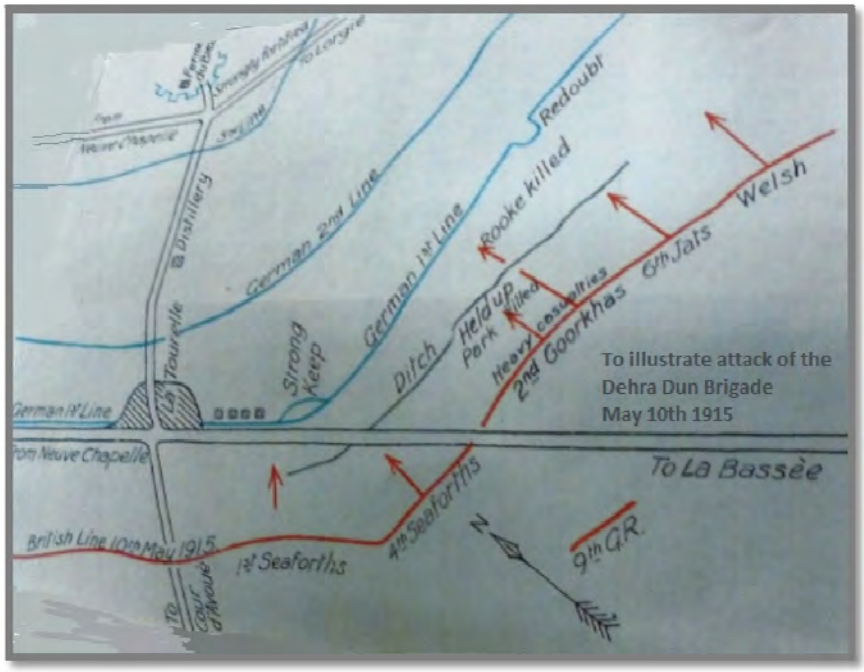
On the 18th April Eric was drafted as a reinforcement to the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd (King Edward's Own) Gurkha Rifles Regiment, part of the Dehra Dun Brigade. He joined them while they were holding a line of trenches just south of Neuve Chapelle. On the 29th April the battalion was relieved and moved back to billets at Vielle Chapelle. They moved back up to the front line on May 3rd slightly south of Port Arthur. The Regimental History describes the preparation for the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

"*The battalion took over the new line by 10:30 pm that day, No.1 and 2 companies being in the front line about the "Orchard Keep" the remaining ones located at "Lansdowne Post" in reserve, with the 6th Jats on the right. This post, 1,000 yards north of the Rue du Bois, and some 1,600 yards south-west of Neuve Chapelle, was a perfect maze of trenches and dug-outs, holding 400 men, and intended as a local defensive work."*

"Captain Cruickshank, the battalion's machine gun officer, who had been in this line before the battalion arrived, reported the Germans to have their machine guns (of which they had numbers) in action every 50 yards, while the brigade were severely handicapped by having on two guns per battalion still, though in January we had been told four more were being sent to each unit. So far only British troops had received this much needed increase. Another move took place during the night of May 6th-7th, when the battalion took the place of the 6th Jats in the front line a little further south."[49]

"*Orders were received to send back to the train all blankets, waterproof sheets, and such impedimenta which always heralded coming activity, to say nothing of the country which as one letter says was "alive with parties burying telephone wires." "*

The Dehra Dun Brigade *"would attack on a front of three battalions and capture the Ferme du Biez, Quinque Rue, and the Distillery in front; the Bareilly Brigade moving towards Ligny le Petit, and Ligny le Grand. Definite orders for operations by the First Army, namely the 1st, the Indian, and the 4th Corps reached the Brigade to move to position of assembly by 11 pm on May 9th, preparatory to an attack at dawn provided that a French attack which was to take place a little earlier came off."*



Map was included in the
History of the of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifle Regiment)

[49] History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifle Regiment), Pages 60-66

"The three assaulting battalions of the Dehra Dun Brigade were the Gurkhas, the 4th Seafords and the 1st Seafords, the last two names being on the left, while on the right were a company of the 6th Jats, and then the Welsh Regiment. Nos.2 and 4 Companies were detailed to carry out the first assault advancing in column of platoons at 25 yards distance, No. 3 in support and No.1 in reserve, with which were the machine guns."

"The British Officers present with the Battalion were Colonel Boileau, Major Sweet, Major Rooke, Captain Cruickshank, Captain Park, Captain Mullaly, Captain Mathew, Captain Colenso, Lieutenant Corse-Scott, Lieutenant Collins, Lieutenant Browning and Lieutenant Brandon."

"The three planned phases of the bombardment were:

- *1st phase – 40 minutes on German front trenches*
- *2nd phase – 35 minutes on La Tourelle and Quinque Rue*
- *3rd phase – 30 minutes on The Distillery*

And the assaulting columns were to deploy before the first bombardment ceased."

"During the night May 9th-10th the scouts under Havildar Sarabjit Gurung had been out placing bridges across a ditch in front and cutting wire, ladders had also been placed in the trenches, and by 2 am most of the men had settled down for a little rest, and all was quiet."

"The dawn broke fine and clear, at 4 am all moved quietly into their respective places for assault and waited. An hour later the guns opened in a terrific bombardment which however did not seem effective in keeping down the enemy's fire, for their machine guns were very busy while some of the British shells burst near the battalion wounding several soldiers, including Captain Mullaly in the hand. At 5:36 am the assaulting companies went "over the top," No.2 led by Captain Mullaly with Eric, No.4 by Captain Mathew with Lieutenant Collins, the company of the 6th Jats under Captain Dudley and Lieutenant Hebbert going into action along with them. The moment they appeared in the open a most appalling fire from rifles and machine guns met them, men fell in heaps and all the British Officers who were first to cross the parapet became casualties. The survivors of this line and the others coming on behind made a dash for a ditch in front, forming the only bit of cover, where they lay for some time with the storm of bullets passing over them."

On the left both battalions of the Seafords suffered heavily, and their commanding officer ordered Eric to halt the assault.[50] "*However Captain Park with No.3 Company rushed forward to support No.4, but got no further than the ditch where he too fell mortally wounded. The advance thus checked was then ordered to halt, and await a further bombardment to take place at 8:30 am.*"

"Meanwhile the men in front were getting it hot and were trying to dig more cover with entrenching tools as they had with them, but the slightest movement brought down a hail of bullets. The second bombardment also was not good, the "heavies" being inaccurate, dropped several shells amongst the line causing more casualties." The order to advance was cancelled but this was too late to stop the first platoon of No.1 Company in reserve led by Major Rooke, mounting the parapet at 8:40 am and rushing forward across the ditch and being joined by more of the men lying there.

[50] War Diary of 2/2nd Gurkhas Operations of 9 May 1915, an appendix in *Serious disappointment: the Battle of Aubers Ridge, 1915 and the subsequent munitions scandal*, pages 191-193.

The Germans were seen to be disorganised and retiring to their left, while the battalion's machine guns and men were keeping up a heavy fire on the enemy. The 9th Gurkhas were ordered forward as reinforcements but the trenches were packed with dead and wounded. Another assault was considered but ultimately cancelled. Orders were received to consolidate the line. The Germans were reinforced and began to fire upon the parapets in earnest, resulting in more casualties.

The Battalion was relieved by the Black Watch at midday on the 10th and returned to their billets at Riez Bailleul.

More than 11,000 British casualties were sustained on 9 May 1915, the vast majority within yards of their own front-line trench. Mile for mile, division for division, this was one of the highest rates of loss during the entire war.

The 2/2nd Gurhka Rifles, with the attached company of 6th Jat Light Infantry, lost 5 British Officers in the first 5 minutes of the assault.

- Captain Charles Mylne Mullaly, aged 30, killed, body not found.
- Captain Archibald Kenneth Park, aged 29, seconded from 10th Gurkha Rifles, died of wounds the next day.
- Captain Vivian Donald Berry Collins, aged 30, from the 13th Sherwood Foresters, attached to the 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles, killed, body not found. He had been a member of the Survey of India.
- Captain George Dudley Mathew, aged 33, 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles, mortally wounded
- Captain David Dudley, aged 34, 91st Punjabis attached to the 6th Jat Light Infantry, killed.
- Lieutenant Hebbert badly wounded.
- Major Giles Rooke, aged 40, from the 10th Gurkha Rifles, attached to the 2/2nd, was killed when the later advance was cancelled too late to stop the Reserve Company from crossing the parapet.

May 10th to September 24th 1915 was a period of comparative inactivity for the Dehra Dun Division. The 2/2nd Gurkhas were at Riez Bailleul until May 18th, and while there were joined by Captain H K Bruce, who had been for some time on duty with the Egyptian Army. With casualties and sick men the ranks of the 2/2nd Gurkhas were now sadly depleted, being down to about 400 effectives only; and the badly needed reinforcements were long delayed. In British officers too they were short, as on the 23rd May Eric was evacuated in ill-health, while Captain Molloy and Lieutenant Hay Webb, whose return from hospital was expected, were sent to other regiments when fit. Major Boileau also had to be sent back sick, but only for a fortnight, during which time Major Sweet officiated in command.

Robert described Eric's evacuation in a letter[51] to his sisters on the 7th June:

"*….Up till about 10 days ago we daily examined the casualty list, &, almost daily got a cheerful, if casual note from him. Then suddenly we got a wire – 'slight appendicitis coming home'. He was brought down from the Front with marvellous expedition & care, & turned up here looking well & with no temperature, although it had been high, & he had a bad bout in the trenches. His Army*

[51] Robert Colenso to his sisters Harriette & Agnes, 7 June 1915, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 55

Surgeon insisted on his returning, & he was at once received at the King Edward's Nursing Home for Officers[52], 9 Grosvenor Gardens, run entirely by two maiden ladies (Keyser) at their own cost, with trifling aid from the Officers & others. I went down there – in response to an eagerly expected telephone call from himself, & was with him for the evening & the following day – Friday & Saturday. He stayed in on Sunday & on Monday last, May 31st, the surgeon removed a very bad appendix – he came back in the nick of time. It appears that Eric has had attacks of appendicitis 3 or 4 times in Burmah. He is doing very well so far, & I am just going to have a few words with him. His wife arrived the day before he did."

By the 10th November 1915 the India Infantry Corps had been withdrawn from the Western Front. The reasons for this related to the high casualty rate, the anticipated difficulty there would be in maintaining the standard of reinforcements from India, without compromising the defence of India and the maintenance of internal order. The other problem was the supply of British Officers.

The establishment of British Officers in an Indian regiment is 13, including the medical officer. From the beginning of the engagement of the Western Front the loss of British officers was very heavy. So much so that one regiment, during its service in France, had been officered by no less than 70 individuals. It was particularly difficult to find suitable officers for the Gurkha regiments where the soldiers only spoke their own language. Hence, the need to second suitable officers to the 2/2nd Gurkhas after the losses at the Battle of Neuve Chappelle. This became even more difficult after the losses at Aubers Ridge.

Abstract of casualties for the Indian Units in the Indian Corps up to the 19th November 1915[53]

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Other Deaths	Total
British officers	150	294	49	3	496
British other ranks	4	34	-	9	47
Indian officers	103	336	50	6	495
Indian other ranks	2345	14221	3148	661	20375
Total	2602	14885	3247	679	21375

Eric's service record indicates that he was on the Western Front until the 10th May 1916. The India Cavalry Corps remained in France. In Rob's letter of the 7th June 1915, describing Eric's evacuation from the Front, he mentions that Eric was "…..*not likely to return to France for a month or more. When he does return we have hopes he will 'get a job' on the staff of a Colonel friend of his, not in the immediate fighting line.*" Perhaps this is what happened.

One officer attached to the Headquarters of the Indian Cavalry Corps, as an Intelligence Officer, was John Walter Francis (Frankie) Thelwall. He was the son of Major-General Sir John Bulkeley Thelwall (1826-1887), who had commanded the 2nd Brigade, which had included the 5th Gurkhas as part of

[52] King Edward VII's Hospital Sister Agnes was founded in 1899 by two sisters, Agnes and Fanny Keyser, who turned their home at 17 Grosvenor Crescent into a hospital to care for sick and wounded officers returning from the Boer War. King Edward VII became the Hospital's first Patron. In WW1 they used 9 Grosvenor Gardens to nurse British Officers. They were daughters of Charles Keyser, a wealthy member of the Stock Exchange. Agnes (1852-1941) was a long term mistress of Edward VII until his death in 1910.

[53] Indian Corps in France

the Kurram Valley Field Force in September 1878. His maternal grandfather, Walter Lindesay Willson, has been part of the geological survey of India. Frankie, a fluent German speaker, had been born Austria and had been educated abroad, as well as in Durham and Oxford. He had served as a diplomat in Germany before the War. He was to become Eric's brother-in-law.

Back to India – July 1916

Eric rejoined a Freemason lodge in Quetta in July 1916. His father writes in a letter[54] to his sisters on 31st October 1916 that …."*Eric is still at Quetta – although truly we have had no news for 2 weeks.*"

Other family news was that Eric's sister Angela (Angel), who had been nursing in France, married Frankie Thelwall on the 20 December 1916. After the war Frankie became the commercial consul in Berlin until he died in 1934 - after an operation.

On the 23rd January 1917 Rob further reports[55] that …."*Eric is now Brigade Major at Delhi – still captain however…….*", but the London Gazette reported that he was promoted to Major on the 29th January 1917. By May 1917[56] he was quartered at Dehra Dun with 8 regiments to look after as Brigade Major. As a Brigade Major he would have been heavily involved with recruiting and training drafts for the active Battalions.

The 3rd battalion of the 7th Gurkha Rifles was raised in June 1917. It was made up of drafts recruited for the 1st Battalion in Quetta and by the 2nd in Mesopotamia together with five hundred recruits from the 2nd battalion depot and a small number of military police. Its task was to help protect the frontier when regular units were being deployed elsewhere.

Towards the end of the war Eric would have also been busy with the demobilisation of men who had completed their period of engagement and who came to Dehra Dun in increasing numbers to be paid up and sent to their homes.

Marri Campaign 1918

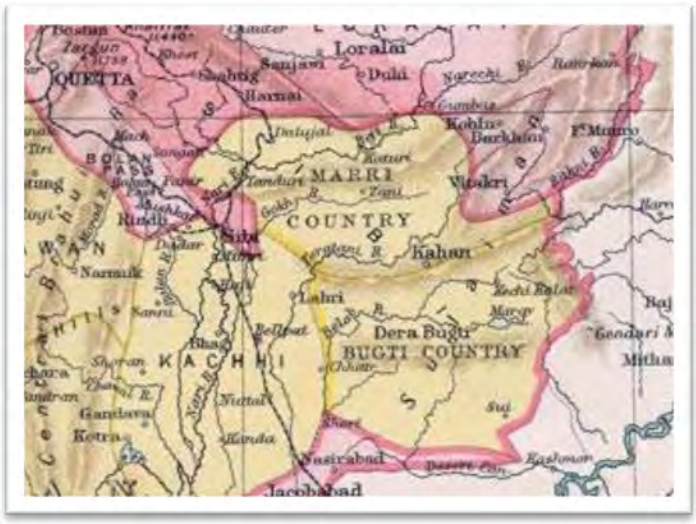
Eric saw active service during the Marri operations between the 18th February and March 1918.This was most likely to have been with the 3/7th Gurkha Rifles.

The Baluchistan Province of British India was a large but thinly inhabited territory that bordered southern Afghanistan, south-east Persia and the approaches to the Straits of Hormuz leading into the Persian Gulf. The Province was administered directly by the Indian Political Service, as was the North-West Frontier Province immediately to the north. During the War both of these Provinces were targeted by German agents positioned in neutral Persia who used gold and intrigue to spread disaffection against British rule.

The Marri tribe of eastern Baluchistan had a history of resistance to the British. The tribesmen were long-bearded and long-haired and lived in a remote, barren area that was relatively untouched by economic progress or the war. In 1917 Marri chiefs had travelled to Quetta for a visit by the British Viceroy and there probably they had been led to believe by other more devious chiefs that there were no British soldiers left in India as all had gone to the war. Then the British Political Agent asked

[54] Robert Colenso to his sisters, 30 Oct 1916, Pietermarizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 55
[55] Robert Colenso to his sisters, 23 Jan 1917, Pietermarizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 55
[56] Robert Colenso to his sisters, 4 May 1917, Pietermarizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 56

for Marri recruits for a tribal levy, this caused anger and the Marris swore to refuse this British request. In February 1918 this anger was translated into action and an attack was mounted on Gumbaz Fort, which was south of Lorelai and garrisoned by a small detachment of Skinner's Horse.



On the 19th February the 3/7th Battalion, who was stationed at Lorelai with 3rd Skinner's Horse, though still largely untrained, was ordered to march two companies to Duki, half-way to Gumbaz. The action is described in the regimental history.[57]

"*Next morning an urgent call for help came from Gumbaz where the cavalry, seventy-five sabres strong, had been attacked in the night by some two thousand Marris, chiefly armed with swords, who scaled the walls using ladders. After a fierce battle that lasted for an hour the cavalry men, fighting from the roof-tops drove off the Marris with very heavy losses – but only just in time, for as they discovered at dawn, they had two rounds of ammunition left per rifle.*"

"*One company taking spare ammunition marched from Duki within the hour; but the distance was twenty-two miles, the track was bad and the men were not yet hardened, thirty of them being recruits sworn-in to make up the numbers only two days before; at 5 pm, with darkness falling, the company was forced to halt six miles short of Gumbaz. There was an alarm during the night but the Marris had had enough the night before and although they occupied the surrounding hills they did not attack. The company reached Gumbaz without incident next day. Again it was a case of just in time for the winter rains broke soon after their arrival and Gumbaz was cut off for a week by floods.*"

"Meanwhile two columns set out, one from Quetta the other from Dera Ghazi Khan, which joined forces at Gumbaz and turned south for Kahan the Marri capital. A company of the 3/7th marching with the 2/2nd Gurkhas accompanied one of the columns. No opposition was encountered in the long and difficult Wat Wangi Pass – indeed in the two days it took to clear the defile only one Marri was seen. The battery of artillery, two sections of Vickers, and two Lewis guns opened fire on him but he ran along the skyline like a stag and got away without being hit."

"Beyond the pass the column surrounded and destroyed the Marri village of Marman where the only serious action of the expedition was fought on a day that the 3/7th company was on duty as the camp guard. Soon afterwards the chiefs made their submission and the troops dispersed, the 3/7th company marched back to Lorelai, arriving in the second week of May, two and half months after it had set out."

The 3/7th also saw action in the Third Afghan War and then was disbanded in Quetta in March 1921.

[57] *History of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles*, pages 117-119.

Third Afghan War, NW Frontier 1919

In the summer of 1919 the unrest in India and Afghanistan became an open revolt.

In February Habibulla, the Amir of Aghanistan, who had remained neutral throughout the war, was murdered and Amanulla, his third son, had himself proclaimed Amir. Amanulla was not everybody's choice and knowing the weakness of his position he sought popularity by throwing in his lot with the revolutionary movement in India. This resulted in the Third Afghan War, which broke out in May. In itself the war was not a great menace but it made the British situation in a hostile Waziristan extremely difficult and it encouraged hotheads in India to go to dangerous lengths.

Every available man was needed to deal with the emergency and even non-operational units like training depots were combed to find men. Not only were untrained recruits and their instructors called upon, but men on their way home, their service completed, were hastily dragged back and sent off to Amritsar, Lahore and Gurdaspur where serious risings had broken out.

On the 19th March 1919, the 2/7th Gurkhas returned to Dehra Dun from field service in Palestine. This was the battalion reformed after the Siege of Kut, where the battalion had been captured by the Turks. Around this time the prisoners would have also been returning to India.

In March detachments of the 2/7th were sent to the Punjab (Saharanpur and Hardwar) in connection with civil disturbances.

On May 22nd the battalion was mobilised for the Third Afghan War. The commanding officer was Lt-Col (acting) J E Colenso. The battalion "*joined the 46th Brigade at Kohat but a number of cases of cholera occurred there which prevented the battalion from being used, but it did supply large reinforcements to the 2/11th Gurkhas who were employed against the Afghans in the Khyber*."[58]

Peace was signed in August and in October the Battalion moved to Delhi to provide the Viceroy's guard.

Eric's acting rank was gazetted till the 5 July, but it was re-gazetted from the 8th August until the 24th September 1919. The regimental history of the 7th Gurkha Rifles listed Eric as the commandant of the 2/7th from the 22nd May 1919 until 29th October 1920. He was appointed officiating commandant of the Shwebo Battalion of the Burma Military Police from the 10th October 1919.

In a letter[59] to his sisters, dated the 3 November 1920, Rob mentioned that Eric will be home after Xmas, but that Mollie would arrive first. Rob also shared the news that Angela was expecting a baby and that Emily was visiting her in Berlin.

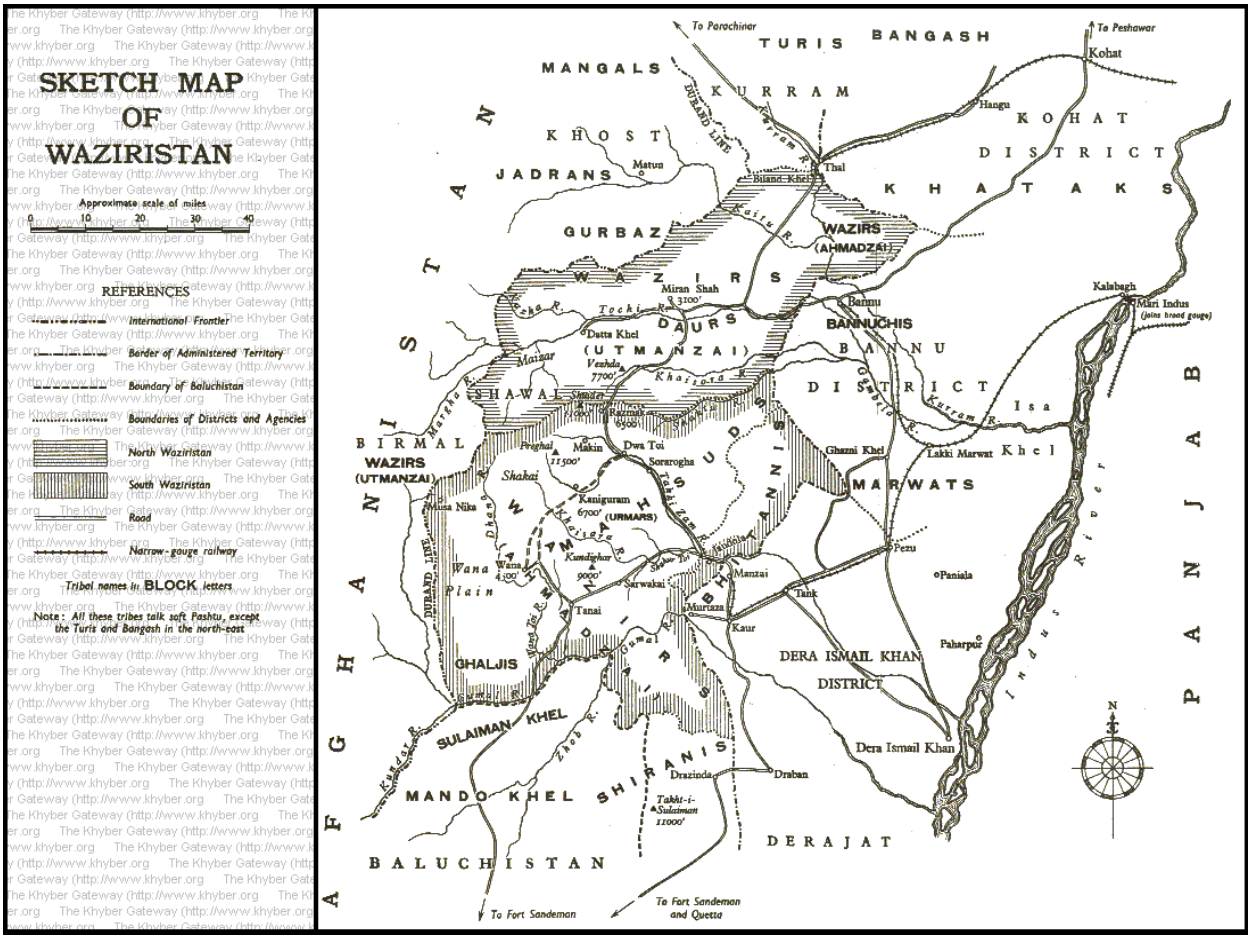
In May 1921 Eric became an uncle when Angel and Frankie have a daughter, Morwenna Colenso Thelwall – the only great grandchild of the Bishop of Natal.

Emily's final will was dated the 22nd November 1921 and witnessed by Eric's wife Mollie. It was therefore invalid for the bequests made to Eric. Possibly Eric returned when his leave was up (mid 1921) and his wife stayed behind or made another journey home. She was a passenger on the Domala, which left London for Bombay on the 23rd November 1923.

[58] *History of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles*, pages 115-116.
[59] Robert Colenso to his sisters, 3 Nov 1920, Pietermarizburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 56

Waziristan 1921-1924

Again the North West Frontier Provinces were in a state of unrest – possibly fomented by Russian Bolshevik agents. The Waziri tribe had agreed to the building of a mechanical transport road through Razani and Razmak, but in late 1922 there had been kidnappings of associated Indian officials. In December 1922 troops involved in the road construction were fired upon. Members of the Mahsud tribe could have been involved.



Sometime in 1922 at Dardoni, in the Bannu District, Eric was transferred to the 2/3rd Queen Alexandra's Gurkha Rifles as second in command. The battalion's activities in Waziristan are described in its regimental history[60] and photographs were included in Colonel Beynon's album in the British Library.

"*The battalion left Dardoni on the 30th December, 1922, and marched to Thal in Tochi, moved with the main force to Asad Khel the next day and on to Tamre Oba, 26 kms north of Razmak, on the 1st of January 1923. This place had been selected for the establishment of a new camp. The battalion's immediate task was to build, and garrison, four camp picquets.*"

[60] Regimental History of the 3rd Gurkhas, Volume 1, pages 295-298

"The next week was spent constructing and occupying road picquets, providing covering parties, a move to Razani,[61] and reconnaissance. From all this it was evident that a feature called Forest Ridge dominated any forward move to the Razmak Narai, a further 12 kms south. Being the key to an advance, the brigade commander decided to establish three strong picquets on this ridge, situated at a height of 8,200 feet above sea level and 2,800 feet above Razmak."

"It fell to the lot of the battalion to build and occupy these posts. Work was commenced on the 9th January, and very arduous it proved to be. The hill-sides were particularly steep. Frozen snow covered the slopes, making the carriage of stores over them a difficult task. To the main picquet , situated at the highest point , was allotted a trench mortar and two Vickers guns."

[61] 4 kms south

Map showing the Operational Areas in Waziristan for the 2/3rd Gurkhas in 1922-1923
(Regimental History of the 3rd Gurkhas)

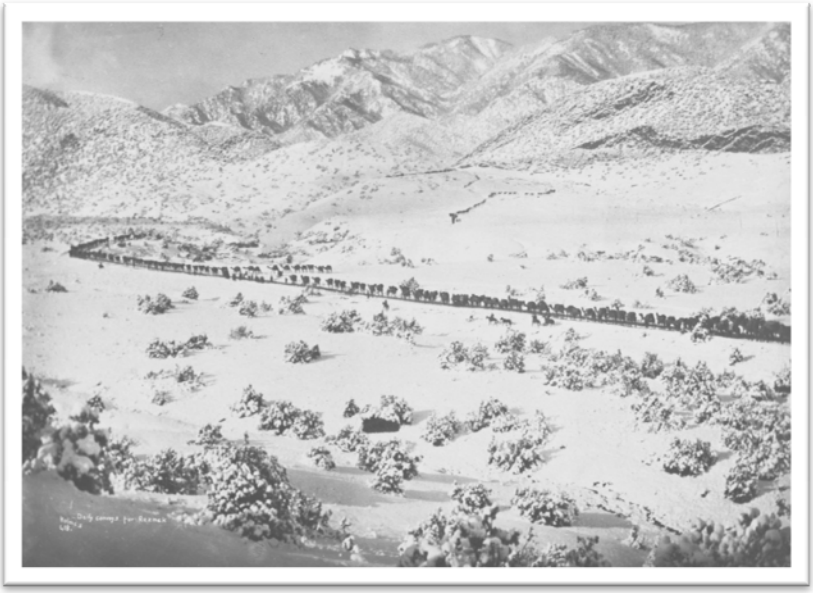
"On the 10th January the battalion scaled the Forest Ridge again, to complete the construction of the picquets. Parties of tribesmen attempted to work round both flanks of this densely wooded hill, and there was some firing. Nevertheless, the building of the picquets was completed by 14:15 hours and the battalion – less C Company – withdrew to camp, after two Gurkhas were killed. Among the enemy casualties was a well-known marauder."

"A really bad spell of intensely cold weather now set in, with heavy snowstorms day after day. It was bad enough in lower lying camps; on exposed elevations such as Forest Ridge – now named Alexandra Ridge in honour of the battalion – it was withering. But worse was to come, for, on the 23rd January, the brigade moved to Razmak Narai in falling snow, which continued all day. The camel transport did not reach camp until 21:30 hours. The battalion was directed to move via Alexandra Ridge with about two feet of snow on the top. Immediately on arrival in camp the Gurkhas had to set to work building picquets for the outer line of defence. This kept the men warm, but proved a very difficult operation in blinding snow, with the frozen ground as hard as iron."

"On the 4th February the 7th Brigade, advancing from Razmak, joined up with the 9th Brigade at Tauda China, 4 kms south of Razmak, the whole force being under Major-General Matheson, commanding in Waziristan. The battalion, less A Company, formed part of the advance guard. Tribesmen snipers were very active all day. Men of C Company cut off the retreat of one party and bayoneted two of them. Just before reaching camp, enemy snipers wounded two British officers, Captain Simpson and Lieutenant Day, who were evacuated to Dera Ismail Khan General Hospital."

"Two other notable incidents on this move were, firstly, the close and very unwelcome attention received by C and D Companies from the machine guns and artillery of the 5th Brigade, necessitating a hasty bolt to cover, until the firers could be warned; and secondly, the heavy casualties suffered by the Welsh Fusiliers in the afternoon and evening from the tribesmen's attack on Split Hill."

"Next day the battalion's task was to establish a permanent picquet on a precipitous hill-top above Tauda China village. The mission was completed and camp reached again 17:15 hours."



"After some days spent in a very thorough destruction of villages, the remainder of February 1923 passed without incident except rain, snow and general discomfit. The Gurkhas were employed on convoy duty and working on the new cart road."

Daily Camel Convoys from Razmak (British Library India Office Select Photos 1076/2)

"On the 12th March, 1923, the 7th Brigade left Tauda China for New Razmak, distant six miles north. Some sniping occurred, as usual, but there were no casualties in the 2/3rd. On the 20th, the first

battalion arrived at Razmak to relieve the second – a weird place for a reunion after over 12 years. The two battalions had never come together since the Delhi Durbar of 1911."

Camp Razmak
(British Library India Office Select Photos 1076/2)

"The very next day, just as the first battalion had taken over all picquets and duties from the second, a SOS message came in from a sapper called Ross to say he was being attacked in the Tauda China and had casualties. In one hour both battalions were on the spot, two miles from camp, and helped Captain Ross and his escort to reach Razmak without any further loss."

"The second battalion marched out of Razmak on the 31st March 1923, en route to Bannu to entrain for Lansdowne. Lansdowne was reached on the 4th April 1923, after an absence of over two and a quarter years. The rejoicing was marred by the receipt of the bad news that Lieutenant P S Day, MM had died of his wounds in the hospital at Dera Ismail Khan."

"The War Memorial for the British officers of the battalion who had died in the Great War was unveiled by Lt-Col W L Dundas, DSO in St Mary's Church on the 10th June 1923."

2/3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles in Peace

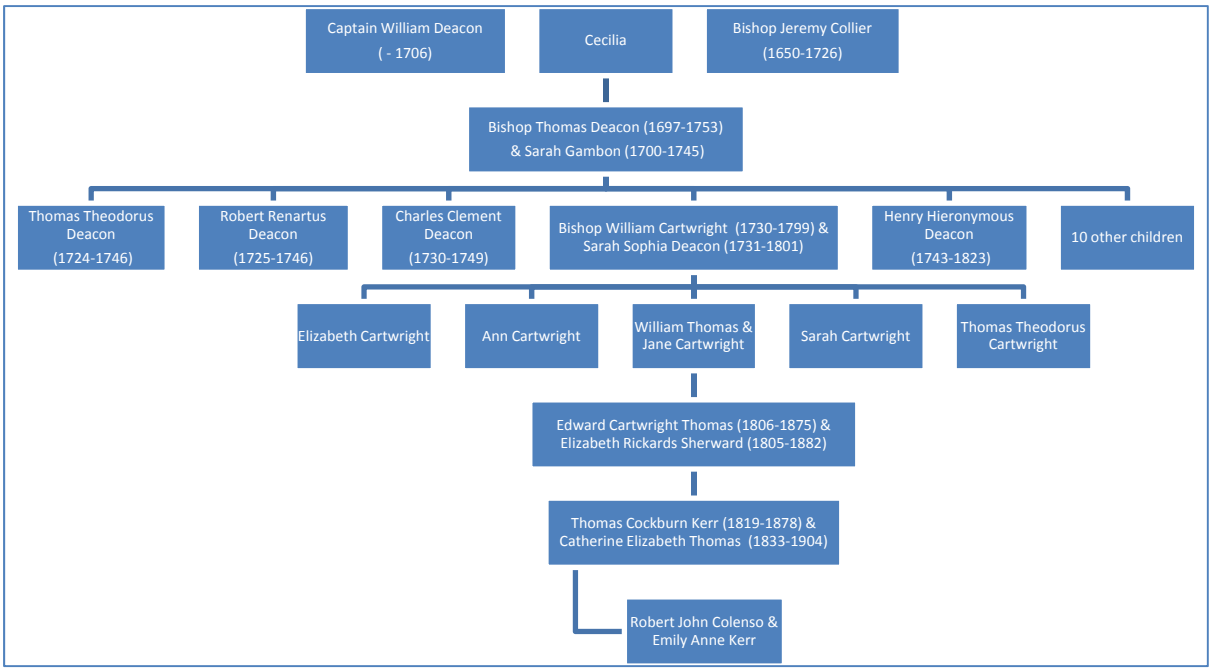
"From November 1923 to February 1924 the 2/3rd carried out battalion, brigade and divisional training, as well as individual and collective field firing , near Roorkee and Najibahad."

On the 30th November 1923 Emily, Eric's mother died. He had last seen her in 1921, when he and Mollie had returned to England. Eric, together with Angela's husband Frankie Thelwall, were appointed executors but in Eric's absence the details were handled by Frankie.

The bequests to Angela included portraits of Bishop Cartwright and his descendents. Bishop William Cartwright (1730-1799) was a nonjuror[62] bishop who had married the daughter of another, Dr Thomas Deacon (1697-1753). The latter had three sons who were officers in the Manchester

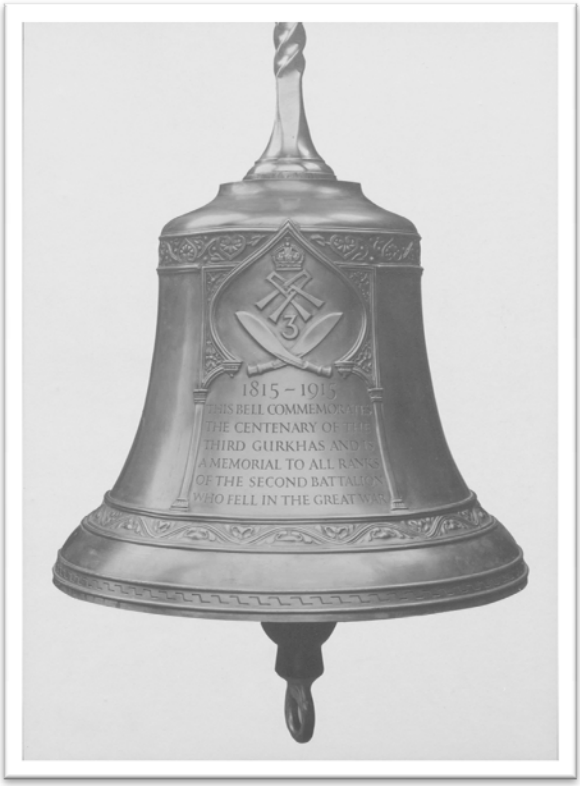
[62] Nonjurors were originally the 400 Anglican clergy who could not swear allegiance to William & Mary in 1688.

Jacobite Regiment in 1745, one was beheaded, another died in prison and the last was exiled to Jamaica dying of fever in 1749.



"On the 28th February 1924 Lt-Col C H A Tuck, CIE, succeeded Lt-Col W L Dundas DSO, as commandant, the latter's four years' tenure having expired." A year later (24th February 1925) Eric was appointed second in command to Lt-Col Tuck.

In 1924, after the death of his wife, Robert had sailed to Natal to spend three months with his sisters Harriette and Agnes. Fortunately in 1925 Eric and Mollie were again on home leave and were able to spend time with their families. Mollie's father died in May 1925 and Robert passed away on the 20th June 1926.



"*Early in 1925 the officers of the second battalion decided to utilise a portion of the balance of the Centenary Fund for the purchase of a bell for striking the hours of the quarterguard. This bell was also to be a war memorial to all the ranks of the 2/3rd.*"[63]

"The design was conceived by Frank Morton Crookes[64] *and the work carried out by the Army and Navy Stores. Eric, being at home at the time, looked after the matter and informed interested parties when the bell was on view; and also the*

[63] Regimental History of the 3rd Gurkhas, Volume 1, page 300.
[64] Sculptor, medallist, ecclesiastical art metalworker, working in London. Died in Fulham in 1946.

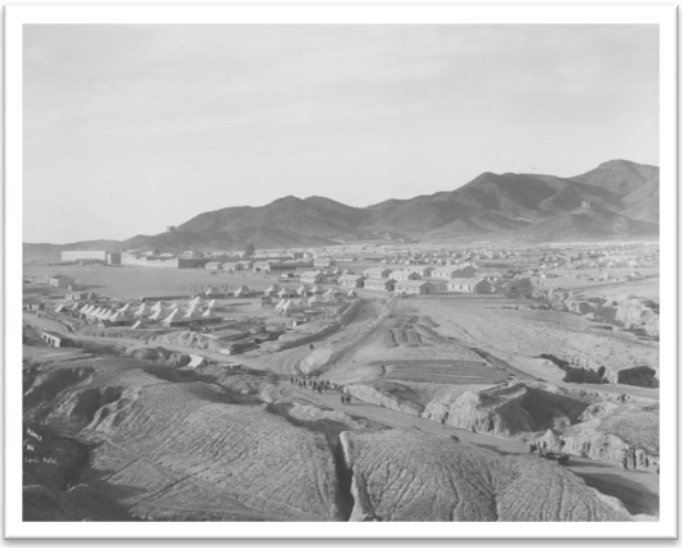
department housing it. A visit to Victoria Street, however, disclosed a crowd around a prominent window on the ground floor, gazing at the memorial and making remarks that were most complimentary both to the designer and the unit." Eric was to have taken the bell to Sandringham for inspection by Queen Alexandra, but, unfortunately, Her Majesty was too unwell for the interview.

"*Shortly afterwards – the 23rd November 1925 – the end came, to the great grief of all ranks of both battalions. Col Edwardes, who was in London, dispatched a telegram of condolence to the King's equerry, in the name of the regiment, and received an immediate acknowledgment – as also happened in respect of a very beautiful wreath which he had despatched to Windsor on the 27th November."*

"At the funeral on the 27th, the following six past and present officers of the regiment attended, and marched in the procession from St James's Palace to Westminster Abbey: Major-Generals Sir W L G Beynon and Nigel G Woodyatt, Colonel J G Edwardes, Lieutenant-Colonel A H R Dodd, Majors J E Colenso and G W P Money."

Still from the Pathe movie of Queen Alexandra's Funeral

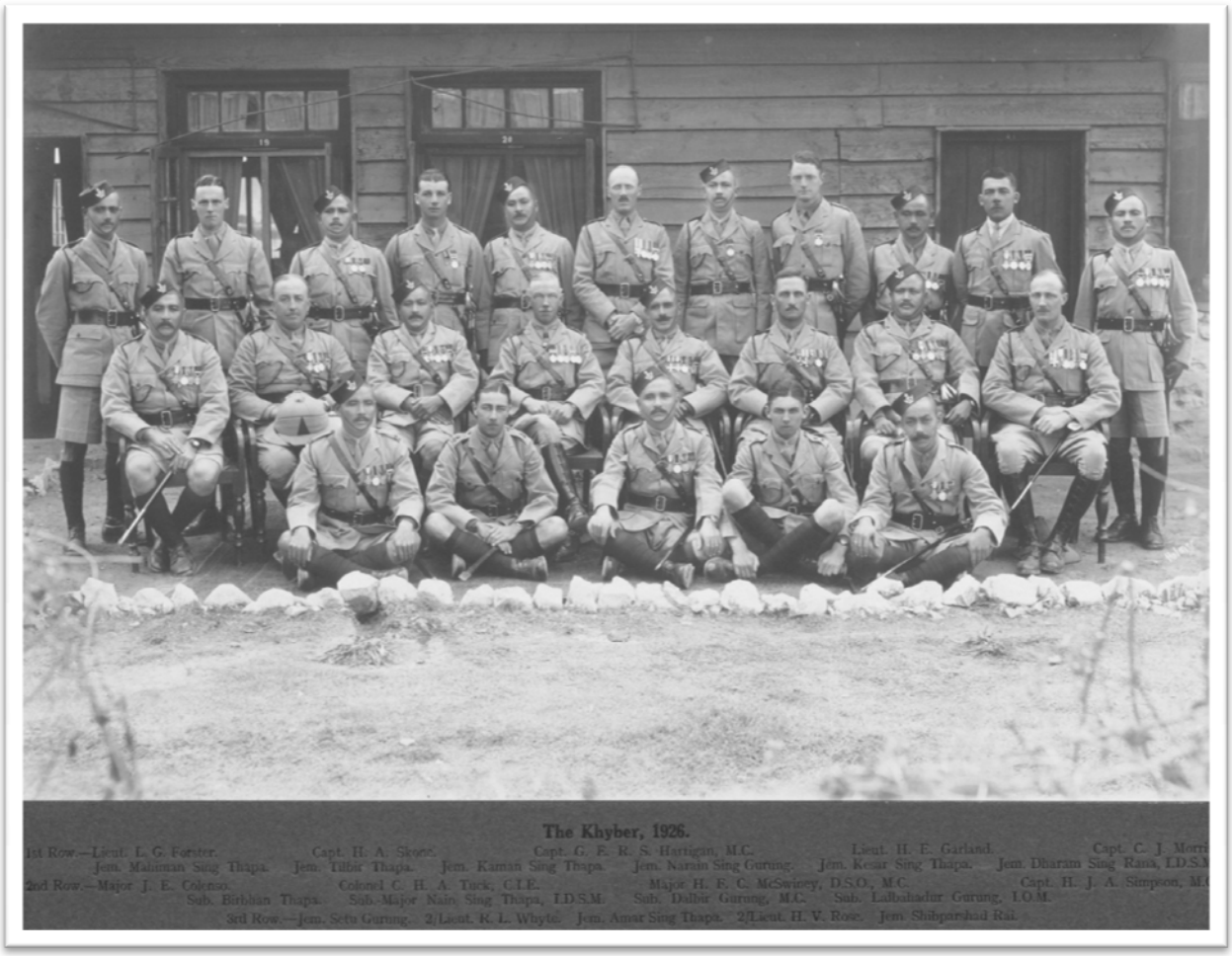
On the 1st October 1925, the battalion moved to the Khyber. It arrived at Landi Kotal on the 7th and relieved the 2/9th Gurkhas there the same day. Four days later the King and Queen of the Belgians, when visiting the Khyber, walked through the 2/3rd lines and spoke to both the British and Gurkha officers.



Landi Kotal
(British Library India Office
Select Photos 1076/2)

Eric returned from home leave and was present at the ceremony for the Centenary Bell in the Khyber area on the 8th February 1926.

Memorial Parade and Bell Presentation at Landi Kotal on the 8th February 1926. Below is a photograph of the officers that attended the ceremony.
(Both from the Beynon Photographic Album in the British Library)



The Khyber, 1926.

1st Row.—Lieut. L. G. Forster. Capt. H. A. Skone. Capt. G. E. R. S. Hartigan, M.C. Lieut. H. E. Garland. Capt. C. J. Morti
Jem. Mahiman Sing Thapa. Jem. Tilbir Thapa. Jem. Kaman Sing Thapa. Jem. Narain Sing Gurung. Jem. Kesar Sing Thapa. Jem. Dharam Sing Rana, I.D.S.M.
2nd Row.—Major J. E. Colenso. Colonel C. H. A. Tuck, C.I.E. Major H. F. C. McSwiney, D.S.O., M.C. Capt. H. J. A. Simpson, M.C.
Sub. Birbhan Thapa. Sub.-Major Nain Sing Thapa, I.D.S.M. Sub. Dalbir Gurung, M.C. Sub. Lalbahadur Gurung, I.O.M.
3rd Row.—Jem. Setu Gurung. 2/Lieut. K. L. Whyte. Jem. Amar Sing Thapa. 2/Lieut. H. V. Rose. Jem. Shibparshad Rai.

In October 1926 the battalion moved to Bareilly for collective training, where it was encamped alongside the 1/3rd Battalion. This was the first time since 1915 that the battalion had been together and the officers took advantage of this to celebrate the centenary of the regiment with a Ball, at which the officers and ladies of the regiment wore uniform of the regiment from 1815.

3rd Gurkhas Centenary Dance 1927, Bareilly, in the uniforms of 1815.

Eric may be in the photograph, seated second from the right. Mollie may be included as well, but I have other photograph to confirm this with.

For the next six years the 2nd battalion remained at Lansdowne, moving during the cold weather to Bareilly or Delhi for collective training and manoeuvres.

Colonel Charles Harold Amys Tuck retired 28th February 1928 and Eric was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel on the 9th January 1928, coinciding with his appointment as commanding officer of the 2/3rd Gurkha Rifles. It was announced in The Times on the 19th January 1928, with following biographical notes.

NEW BATTALION COMMANDER.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Colenso has been appointed to command the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles in place of Colonel C. H. A. Tuck, C.I.E. He originally joined the Royal Fusiliers (The City of London Regiment) in 1900, and has been in the Indian Army since 1905, and has served in Burma, France, and Egypt. He also served on the Indian Frontier in the Marri, Afghan, and Waziristan Campaigns, having commanded a battalion of Gurkhas during the third Afghan War of 1919. He is an expert in Border and Frontier dialects. Major E. G. Tuite-Dalton, M.C., succeeds him as second-in-command of the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles.

The highlight of Eric's tenure as commanding officer was the performance of the battalion's football team. For three years in succession, 1929-30-31, the battalion played in the finals of the three football cups, the 3rd Gurkha Cup, the Nepal Cup, competed for by all units of the Gurkha Brigade, and the Garhwal Brigade Cup, which it won in 1931 and 1932.[65]

1932 marked the 30th year that Eric had been in the Army, and apart for his time in France and Egypt, all his service was in India. Generally a British Officer had long leave of 6 months every three years. The following table summarizes what evidence there is of Eric's trips back to England.

	Start of Leave	End of Leave	Notes
1902		19th Apr 1902	Arrived in India
1907	31st Mar 1907		Letter to aunts announcing arrival
1910		9th Jun 1910	Outward passenger to Karachi
1915			Home & Sick Leave while in France
1920	Dec 1920		Rob's letter to his sisters
1921		22nd Nov 1921	Mollie witnessed Emily's will
1923		23th Nov 1923	Mollie left London for Karachi
1925		1925	Attended Queen Alexandra's Funeral 27 Nov 1925
1931	Sep 1931		Leave before retirement in Feb 1932

Retirement

Eric's retirement was gazetted on the 28th February 1932, but he was in England before that date. In a letter to Eric's aunts in May 1931 Mollie mentions[66] that he has not been feeling well for months and that he needed to get his tonsils removed. In August Eric mentions[67] in another letter that he has just travelled 300 miles to be x-rayed and stones were seen in both kidneys. Both Mollie's sister and Eric's maternal aunt, Mabel Kerr, were reported as unwell also. His other maternal aunt Edith had died in Paris in 1929.

[65] Regimental History of the 3rd Gurkhas, Volume 2, page 97.
[66] Mollie Colenso to Eric's aunts, 22 May 1931, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 60
[67] Eric Colenso to his aunts, 14 Aug 1931, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, A204, Box 60

In September 1931 Eric and Mollie left India for England. His health issues appear to be resolved quickly and he was the expert judge on Tibetan breeds at the Cruft's Dog Show in February 1932.

Harriette and Agnes were keen for him to visit Natal, but this was not possible before they died in 1932 – Harry on the 2nd June and Agnes the 23rd July. Eric was appointed their heir and fortunately for historians donated most of their papers to the Pietermaritzburg Archives.

It seems that Eric had been preparing for his retirement since his last home visit in 1926. He was already a member of the Connaught Lodge in London and was to be its Master in 1933 and again in 1942.

In 1932 Eric and his wife Mollie settled in Rocks Cottage, Uredale Road, Limpsfield, Surrey. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Surrey in December 1934 and the Surrey Mirror[68] published a biography that included some of his life after retiring from the army.

"He has been one of the Oxted members of the Godstone Rural District Council since April 1933, and was elected to the Limpsfield Parish Council in March this year. He is Rector's Warden at the Limpsfield Parish Church, having previously acted as Honourable Secretary of the Parochial Church Council. A keen Legionnaire, he has been closely associated with the Limpsfield Branch, of which he is *one of the two Vice-Presidents, and also the Vice-Chairman. Col. Colenso is also one of the Rural Council's representatives on the Board of the Oxted County Schools, and a Director of the Oxted and Limpsfield Barn Theatre Co. Ltd."*

He and Mollie were also politically active. They invited members of the Limpsfield and Tilsey women's branch of the Eastern Division Conservative and Unionist Association to a Garden Party where Major Gerald Bell, CBE spoke on the subject of "The Threat to Democracy". Major Bell and Eric had already worked together to form the Oxted and Limpsfield branch of the Junior Imperial League.[69]

At the opening ceremony of the Empire Day Sports Carnival for the Limpsfield Church Schools in May 1933 Eric gave an address called "The Empire Story" which was reported in the Surrey Mirror[70].

"Col. Colenso said that the day brought them a special message, that of the British Empire, the history of which was a long story of wonderful heroism, self-denial, privation, endurance and great romance. The Empire stood on the firm basis of absolute justice and freedom for everyone in it. This Empire, of nearly five hundred millions, had to be governed and maintained, protected and developed, for unless it was properly looked after, it would undoubtedly fall into eventual ruin and decay. Who was going to carry on this great work of developing and maintaining the Empire? All of them must help to do this now and when they grew up. They must all strive to do their job, whatever it might be. "Don't do your job with one eye on the school clock," said Col. Colenso. "Never say, 'I can't' Mr Can't never gets anywhere, but Mr. Can always will. There is not very much in this world you cannot do if you only try hard enough." Col. Colenso concluded by asking the children to remember the motto "Stout and steady," which was the motto of the regiment of sturdy mountaineers from the Himalayas which he commanded for many years."

[68] Surrey Mirror 7th December 1934
[69] Surrey Mirror, 17th August 1934
[70] Surrey Mirror, 26th May 1933

In September 1936 he was nominated as a member of the Surrey Council of the British Legion, the newspaper report[71] of this mentions that "*he is the Chairman of three committees of the Rural Council, those concerned with footpaths, fire protection (in Oxted and Limpsfield), and the co-ordination of the local arrangements for passive defence measures in the event of gas attacks from the air.*"

The family tree, that first excited my interest in Eric, mentioned that he served as a Staff Officer in WWII. I have found no evidence to support this, but his knowledge of Burma, where the 3rd Gurkha Rifles were fighting the Japanese, would have been valuable. However his reported activities in Surrey during the War cast doubt on whether he would have had time. They included:

- Sitting frequently as a Magistrate at the Godstone Petty Sessions
- Vice- president of the Limpsfield British Legion
- Membership of the Godstone Rural Council
- Chairmanship of the Limpsfield Parish Council, initiatives included collecting scrap metal and books, magazines and papers for soldiers
- Assistant County Director of the South Eastern Area of the British Red Cross
- Local secretary for the Soldiers, Seamen & Airman Families Association (SSAFA)
- Membership of the committee establishing the Air Training Corps in Oxted
- Governor of Oxted County Grammar School
- Director of the Oxted and Limpisfield Barn Theatre Company

Eric died in Rocks Cottage, aged 65, on the 23rd September 1946. Mollie died at the Mount Alvernia Nursing Home in Guildford on the 11th September 1954, aged 85. Eric left an estate of £10,207 entirely to his wife, who was the executor.

When Mollie died she left an estate of £8,246. She made two bequests in memory of Eric, one of £300 to the United Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of England and the other £250 to Trinity College, Glenalmond to be used to encourage competitive shooting. The rest of the estate was divided between her family and Eric's sister and her daughter.

The Kennel Club

In the London Times on the 8 February 1932 there is an article, by their Kennel Correspondent, on the upcoming Cruft's Dog Show which includes the following…."*Lhasa terriers, Tibetan terriers, and Tibetan spaniels are numerous enough to have classes of their own, which will be judged by such an authority as Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Colenso. It was not until later*

[71] Surrey Mirror, 25th September 1936

years that Tibetan and Lhasa terriers were subdivided, much to the relief of judges, who realised they were different types. Colonel Colenso, as president of the Lhasa and Tibetan Terrier Association, had much to do with bringing about the desirable distinction between the two. The standard that has been adopted in India explains that, while the Lhasa is a toy, the Tibetan terrier is bigger and more of a terrier."

In fact by 1934 Eric was the Vice-Chairman of the Kennel Club and was the first Chairman of the Tibetan Breeds Association formed in that year. He retired through pressure of work and was succeeded by Mrs Irma Bailey.

"*In 1928 when I brought our Apsos to England, there were only a few Tibetan dogs of this breed in this country, descendants of dogs brought from Tibet by members of the Younghusband Expedition of 1904. They were known at that time as Lhasa Terriers. Owing to the difficulty of importing fresh blood these had deteriorated from typical Tibetan specimens and had probably been crossed with other dogs in England to maintain the breed. In fact the whole question of Tibetan dogs was in a muddle, and the Kennel Club asked me and my husband Col. F.M. Bailey, to form an association to control the matter of Tibetan breeds in England.*"[72]

Eric's grandfather had always been accompanied by a dog, the last being Guy, who transferred his loyalty to Eric when he was a child at Bishopstowe. Eric is also pictured with Laddie and his fellow officers in 1908. In 1931, when he was preparing to leave India, his aunts were encouraging him to visit Natal and suggested that he should not let his puppies stop him from making the journey. Eric assured them that he had no puppies at the time, but even if he had they would not have stopped him from going to Natal. Obviously dogs played a large part in Eric's life.

Concluding Remarks

The brief description of Eric's life in the initial family tree was almost completely misleading. He was a Lieutenant-Colonel is a Gurkha Regiment. He did get married in Burma, but to a Canadian-born Englishwoman (whose father had spent time in India), who he did not desert. He did not arrive in India until 1902 and he retired in 1932, leaving India in 1931.

One aspect of his life that fascinated me was how he cut his own path through life, despite the family pressures exerted. The letters in 1931 display the love and respect that he had for his aunts and his response to their love for him – even though he joined the army against their wishes and did not carry on his grandfather's work.

His childhood friends were the natives of the Mission and he grew up there isolated from the colonial community and speaking at least one language other than English. On moving to London his grandmother's family helped him develop links within British society by sponsoring his schooling at Glenalmond. The consequence of this was that he became a "soldier of the empire" – but in a way that utilised his empathy for other races and his linguistic abilities.

He did not demonstrate the intellectual capacity of his grandfather, father, uncle or aunts. But he did demonstrate a capacity for leadership and organisation – in the army, in war, as a freemason, as a dog fancier, a justice of the peace and as a member of his local community.

[72] Notes of the Honorable Mrs Irma Bayley on the origins of the Lhasa Apso Club in England.

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Appendix A – Military Appointments

A list of notices for J E Colenso found in the London Gazette Archives and Regimental Histories.

Date	Gazette Information	Regiment
20th Sep 1900	John Eric Colenso, gent., to be Second Lieutenant (LG: 2nd Oct 1900)	6th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers (City of London) - Militia
27th Mar 1901	Second Lieutenant J.E.Colenso to be a Lieutenant (LG: 26th Mar 1901)	6th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers (City of London) - Militia
29th Jan 1902	Lieutenant John Eric Colenso, from 6th Battalion, in succession to Lt. R.A. French-Brewster, transferred to the Irish Guards (LG: 28th Jan 1902)	The Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)
6th Mar 1904	Second Lieutenant John Eric Colenso to 87th Punjabis from Royal Fusiliers. Dated 6 March 1904 but to rank from 29th January 1902 (LG: 8th Jul 1904)	Royal Fusiliers
29th Apr 1904	John Eric Colenso to be promoted to Lieutenant (LG: 23rd Sep 1904)	87th Punjabis
20th Jun 1904	Attached to 1/7th Gurkha Regiment (Batt Digest)	1/7th Gurkha Rifles
2nd Jul 1906	Rejoined after Musketry Course (Batt Digest)	1/7th Gurkha Rifles
27th Sep 1907	Appointed to 2/7th Gurkha Rifles when it was reformed (Batt Digest)	2/7th Gurkha Rifles
29th Jan 1911	John Eric Colenso to be promoted to Captain (LG: 17th Mar 1911)	7th Gurkha Rifles
23rd Sep 1910	Seconded as Assistant Commandant Myitkyina	Burma Military Police
10th Dec 1914	Attached to 2/39th Garhwal Rifles	2/39th Garhwal Rifles
18th Apr 1915	Drafted to 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles	2/2nd Gurkha Rifles
29th Jan 1917	John Eric Colenso to be promoted to Major (LG: 22nd May 1917)	7th Gurkha Rifles
22nd May 1919	Maj J.E. Colenso to be acting Lt-Col while commanding a Battalion till 5th July 1919 (LG: 28th Nov 1919)	2/7th Gurkha Rifles
8th Aug 1919	Maj J.E. Colenso to be acting Lt-Col while commanding a Battalion till 24th September 1919 (LG: 10th Feb 1920)	2/7th Gurkha Rifles
29th Oct 1920	Major J E Colenso commandant 2/7th from 22nd May 1919 to 29th Oct 1920 (Regimental history 7th Gurkhas)	2/7th Gurkha Rifles
1920	Commandant Shwebo Battalion BMP	2/7th Gurkha Rifles
1922	Transferred to 3rd Gurkha Rifles at Dardoni (before 31st December) as second in command	2/3rd Gurkha Rifles
24th Feb 1925	Appointed second in command of 2/3rd	2/3rd Gurkha Rifles
29th Jan 1928	John Eric Colenso to be Lt-Col (LG: 16th Mar 1928)	2/3rd Gurkha Rifles
28th Feb 1928	Commanding Officer at Lansdowne	3rd Gurkha Rifles
28th Feb 1932	Lt-Col J.E. Colenso will retire (LG: 4th Mar 1932)	Indian Army

Appendix B – Campaign Medals

1914/15 Star
Authorised in 1918, the 1914/15 Star was awarded to personnel who saw service in France and Flanders from 23 November 1914 to 31 December 1915, and to personnel who saw service in any other operational theatre from 5 August 1914 to 31 December 1915.

British War Medal
The British War Medal 1914-1920, authorised in 1919, was awarded to eligible service personnel and civilians. Qualifications for the award varied slightly according to service. The basic requirement for army personnel and civilians was that they either entered a theatre of war, or rendered approved service overseas between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. Service in Russia in 1919 and 1920 also qualified for the award.

Victory Medal
The Victory Medal 1914-1919 was also authorised in 1919 and was awarded to all eligible personnel who served on the establishment of a unit in an operational theatre.

Indian General Service Medal
The Indian General Service Medal (1909 IGSM) was a campaign medal approved on 1 January 1909,[1] for issue to officers and men of the British and Indian armies. In 1925 it was also awarded to officers and men of the Royal Air Force. The 1909 IGSM was awarded for various minor military campaigns in India, during 1908 to 1935. Each campaign was represented by a clasp on the ribbon; 12 were sanctioned. Eric received Afghanistan NWF 1919 and Waziristan 1921-24. No clasp was awarded for the Marri Campaign although it was called “Baluchistan” as a regimental battle honour.

Appendix C – Freemason Lodge Membership

On the 12 February 1914 Captain J E Colenso sent out the invitations to the consecration of the "Colenso Rose Croix Chapter" at Maymyo, Upper Burma on the 6th March[73].

Other branches of the family have been active in Freemasonry, but there is no evidence of Eric's grandfather, father or uncle being involved. However there was (and still is) a significant membership in military circles. His membership records provide information about his postings during his army career and the preparation for his retirement.

Lodge	Location	Joined	Address	Occupation	Resignation	Comment
Lodge Mayo No.2904	Maymyo	4/02/1905	Maymyo	Lieutenant	12/12/1914	
Prinsep Chapter No.413	Meerut	25/11/1905	Meerut	Lieutenant	31/12/1907	
Quetta Lodge No.2333	Quetta	20/01/1908	Quetta	Lieutenant	31/08/1910	
Quetta Lodge No.2333	Quetta	17/07/1916	Quetta	Captain	31/12/1916	
Lodge Invicta No. 2440	Chakrata	19/05/1917	Chakrata	Major		Master lodge 1917, Hon Mem 1921
Lodge Siwalik No. 2939	Dehra Din	21/05/1918	Dehra Dun	Major	1/01/1919	
Rangoon Lodge No.1268	Rangoon	26/02/1920	Shwebo	Army Officer	25/08/1921	
Garhwal Lodge No. 4439	Lansdowne	1/05/1922			1/10/1933	One of founders of Lodge, master 1931
Connaught Lodge No. 3270	London	15/10/1926	Lundi Kotal	Major	23/09/1946	Master 1933 1942
Connaught Lodge No. 3270	London	11/01/1944		Retired	23/09/1946	Till his death

[73] Gwil Colenso had a copy of the program in his papers and he researched and shared the lodge membership history.