

British soldier's photograph album of India

Ms. Coll. 1195

Finding aid prepared by Alexandra M. Wilder.

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2017 February 16

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Title	British soldier's photograph album of India
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1195
Date [inclusive]	1930-1934
Extent	0.1 linear foot (1 volume)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>This collection consists of about 170 photographs, placed in an album, taken in India between 1930 and 1934 by an unidentified British soldier. Though the soldier is unknown, it is almost certain that he served in the Royal Fusiliers. The photographs in the album largely depict the every day life of British soldiers and their social activities, as well as providing evidence of British interest in Indian life and customs.</p>

Cite as:

British soldier's photograph album of India, 1930-1934, Ms. Coll. 1195, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Though the British soldier who put together this album of photographs from 1930 to 1934 in India is unknown, his first name may be "Ted," as that is the name signed to a message on the back of a military portrait postcard included in the album. The message and signature has been crossed out. Insignia on the soldier's hat indicates that he served in the Royal Fusiliers, but his rank is unclear-- in some photographs his uniform has no insignia; but in others, there is a lance corporal stripe. It is possible that this soldier played the drums in his regiment's band.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of about 170 photographs, placed in an album, taken in India between 1930 and 1934 by an unidentified British soldier, who served with the Royal Fusiliers. Most of the photographs are affixed to the album pages with photo corners, with the photographs towards the back of the album glued into the pages. Most of the photos have descriptive writing on the back, though not all of them are dated. There are a number of blank pages, as well as photo corners that are missing photos.

The photographs in the album depict such scenes as riots in 1932 Bombay-- with soldiers, dead bodies, and trash and furniture piles in the street-- as well as scenes of daily life for the British soldiers and the Indian villagers they encounter. Scenes depicting daily life for the British soldiers include: team sports, fishing, hunting, platoon demonstrations, weddings, a Christmas day dinner, Indian tours of such sites as the Taj Mahal and the Agra Temple, as well as many group portraits. Scenes depicting Indian villagers include: a milkman, a female "snake charmer," and portraits of children and adults. There are numerous photographs of animals in the villages and in the countryside.

While most of the photographs show a soldier's off-duty life in India, there are photographs showing soldiers marching in formation, the band, traveling in convoy to the "Frontier of India" (including the entrance to the Razmak Brigade), soldiers in camps (sleeping tents and mess), and reading mail on "mail day." There are a few photographs of prominent British army officers including a reprint of a portrait of Field Marshal William Riddell Birdwood, 1st Baron Birdwood (1865-1951), who served as General Officer Commanding the Northern Army in India in 1920 and Commander-in-Chief, India, in 1925 and Field Marshal Philip Walhouse Chetwode, 1st Baron Chetwode, 7th Baronet of Oakley (1869-1950), who became Chief of the General Staff in India in 1928 and Commander-in-Chief, India, in November 1930. As Chetwode returned to Britain from India in May 1934, he would have been in command during most of the period depicted in the album. There are also several photographs of the headstone of Percy Norton Waitestone Wilson, lieutenant colonel in the Royal Fusiliers who died on March 4, 1933, at the age of 47. In the album, there are two double-exposure portrait photographs, which are the only photographs showing experimentation with the form, other than one colorized photograph of a fishing scene.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

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Finding aid prepared by Alexandra M. Wilder.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Purchased with assistance from the Anne and Joseph Trachtman Memorial Book Fund, 2013.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Great Britain. Army.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Photograph albums
- Photographs

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- India--20th century--Photographs
- India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947--Photographs
- India--Photographs
- India--Social life and customs

SUBJECT(S)

- Military
- Voyages and travels

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Photograph album, 1930-1934.	1	1