The Sherwill Journals, 1840-1843

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Voyages and Encounters in the Eastern Cape of Southern Africa

Introduction and Transcription by

June Harvey

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In Memory of Jane

1929–2018

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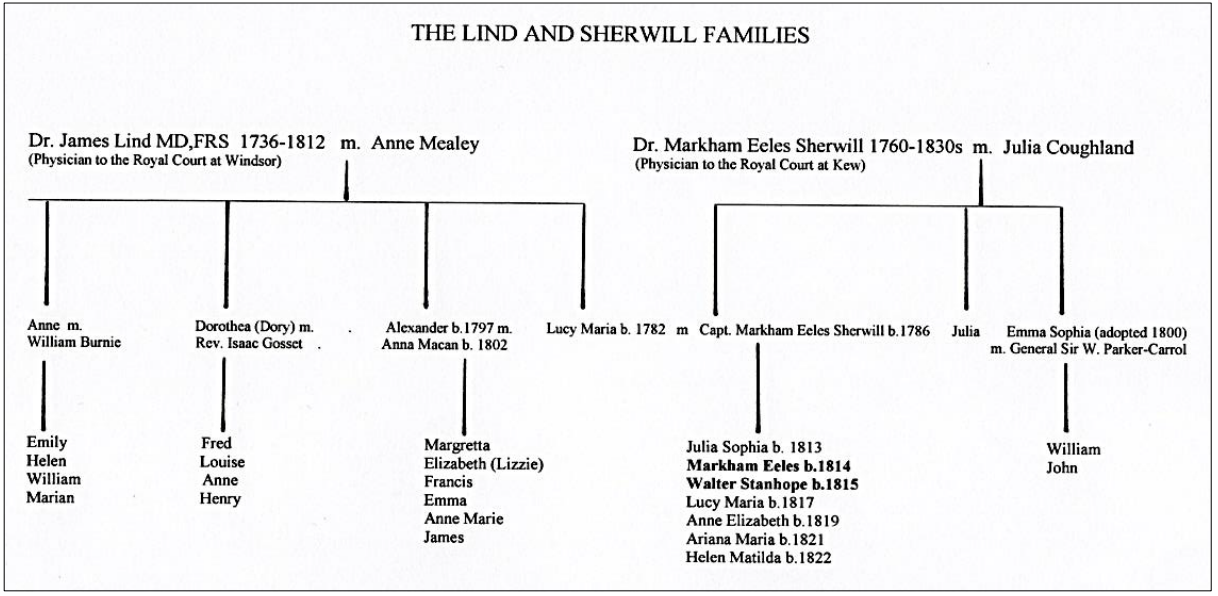
THE LIND AND SHERWILL FAMILIES



FOREWORD

The deciphering of the Sherwill brothers' leather-bound journal, after a period of nearly one hundred and eighty years, began as something of a detective story. It had been handed down within the family throughout that time, until no one had any idea of its historical, or even family, relevance. Only a fit of modern de-cluttering caused it to resurface.

I was asked one day by an elderly friend to examine some papers and a manuscript which she had come across in her attic. They had been left there by her mother in law, Lucy Page, who had been born Lucy Hart. Downsizing her accommodation in the early nineteen eighties in order to live nearer her son, Neil, Lucy had stored a great many possessions in his roomy farm house. These personal effects were left in the attic after her death. They weren't in the way, and the family was too busy to deal with them. A full fifteen years were to go by in fact before Neil's widow, Jane, showed me the old leather bound, quarto sized manuscript book, which she had recently taken to an antique dealing acquaintance for valuation.

The early pages were almost illegible. Even with a magnifying glass it was difficult to decipher more than the odd phrase here and there. The writing was very thin, sloping, small and spiky. I could just make out "Bay of Bengal, March 18th 1840" and "Dear Lucy." Transcribing it would be a long job. The dealer thought, she told me, that along with the other family papers found in the same drawer, it could be really quite valuable; both from a historical point of view and perhaps even from a financial one; but it would be foolish to try to value it without a transcription.

Beginning to be intrigued, I asked if I could see the rest of the material. There were letters, photographs, water colours, an Army Officer's Commission documents, and other family papers, which meant little to me at that time. There was also a folder full of engravings showing the various stages of the refinement of the opium poppy and a slim printed volume entitled: *"Notes upon a Tour in the Sikkim Himalayan Mountains undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining the Geological formation of Kunchinjinga and of the perpetual snow covered peaks in its vicinity"* by *Captain Walter Stanhope Sherwill, Revenue Surveyor."*

My friend indicated that the printed volume had attracted most of the dealer's interest. He had told her that if the manuscript note book was directly connected to it the two items might well be of some value as a "lot"; in the right quarters. I asked if I could take the volume home and read it. She readily agreed to this suggestion and I questioned her as to who she thought Captain Sherwill might be, and why old Lucy would have owned this cache of papers. She did not remember her mother-in-law ever mentioning him. She said she did remember Lucy being interested in her own family history, but she had failed to inspire any enthusiasm in either her son or Jane herself at that time. I took only the printed volume home with me for the moment and left the mysterious manuscript book behind. I thought there was no point in starting to try to decipher the handwriting without reading the printed matter first. I hoped it would present me with some explanations.

It proved to be Captain Walter Sherwill's description of a mountain trek which he had made from Darjeeling in the year 1852. The famous Dr J.D. Hooker, best friend of Charles Darwin and author of *Himalayan Journals* (1854)[1], who was later head of Kew Botanical Gardens, had recently explored the area and it appears that, with local, academic and past family contacts in common, Sherwill's further observations were of some value to him. The 'Notes' begin:

---

[1]J.D. Hooker *Himalayan Journals, or notes of a naturalist, in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalaya, Khasia Mountains (1854)* p 245:
"After a two hours' walk, keeping at 13,000 feet elevation, we sighted Jongri.* [I am assured by Capt. Sherwill, who, in 1852, proceeded along and surveyed the Nepal frontier beyond this point to Gubroo, that this is not Jongri, but Yangpoong. The difficulty of getting precise information, especially as to the names of seldom-visited spots, is very great. I was often deceived myself, undesignedly, I am sure, on the part of my informants; but in this case I have Dr Campbell's assurance, who has kindly investigated the subject, that there is no mistake on my part. Captain Sherwill has also kindly communicated to me a map of the head waters of the Rungbee, Yungya, and Yalloong rivers, of which, being more correct than my own, I have gladly availed myself for my map. Gubroo, he informs me, is 15,000 feet in altitude, and dips in a precipice 1000 feet high, facing Kubra, [which prevented his exploring further north.] There were two stone huts on the bleak face of the spur, scarcely distinguishable at the distance of half a mile from the great blocks around them. To the north Gubroo rose in dismal grandeur, backed by the dazzling snows of Kubra, which now seemed quite near, its lofty top (alt. 24,005 feet) being only eight miles distant. Much snow lay on the ground in patches, and there were few remains of herbaceous vegetation"

"An unusually severe earthquake, that occurred at Darjeeling during the month of May, 1852, threw down several thousand square yards of the South Western face of the perpetually snow-covered mountain Kunchinjinga,* exposing a dark mass of rock, rendered darker perhaps by the brilliancy of the snow surrounding it. By the aid of a good telescope, the distance being forty-five miles, I could plainly perceive that the geological formation of Kunchinjinga was not of granite, as I had read it was only a few days previous, but of a highly stratified nature, the strata being, by the aid of a telescope, distinctly visible. The statement that the snowy-mountains near Kunchinjinga were of granite was published in a Botanical Magazine published in England, Dr J.D. Hooker being the author of the statement. Being anxious to settle the question I determined to travel as far North toward the foot of the snowy range as possible, and thus by diminishing the distance between myself and the exposed flanks of the mountain to obtain a clearer and nearer view of its lithological formation.

Being quite aware from the peculiar shape of the mountain and of its neighbouring peaks, that by advancing towards the snows by the valleys leading up towards Kunchinjinga, I should speedily lose sight of the mountain altogether, I determined to advance along the crest of the great meridianal spur, Singaleela, which, from Darjeeling, appears to be connected directly with Kunchinjinga. Dr Hooker's map of Sikkim also leads one to suppose that such is the fact; such however, is not the case as will be shown hereafter."

*For the derivation and meaning of this word I am indebted to Lieut. G.B. Mainwaring of the 16th Bengal Grenadiers, who, with a praiseworthy industry, has mastered the Lepcha language, and was, in 1852, engaged upon the study of the Tibetan. The word is Tibetan and means,

English pronunciation Tibetan equivalent English

Kon	Khng-a	snow
Chin	Chhn	full or covered
Jong	b'jongs	coeval or equal to

(Height above the sea, 28,177 feet [Waugh], the highest mountain in the world)" [2]

Sherwill had set out at 8.30am on 2nd August 1852, accompanied by Mr. Robert Smart (who would subsequently become his son in law)[3] , his

[2] Captain Walter Stanhope Sherwill, Revenue Surveyor. *"Notes upon a Tour in the Sikkim Himalayan Mountains undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining the Geological formation of Kunchinjinga and of the perpetual snow covered peaks in its vicinity"* p. 2

second assistant in the Survey which they had been making of the British Hill Territory, and by several local porters.

Attached to the back cover of the volume was a large map. This was based on Hooker's original map, but contained various updates by Sherwill himself. It unfolded to show the route that they had taken, complete with inset sketches by Sherwill of the surrounding mountain ranges. One of them shows Mount Everest among its accompanying peaks. It was only to be determined as the highest mountain on earth during that same year, of 1852, by the newly formed office of the Geological Survey of India. It was still unnamed by Europeans at the time Sherwill wrote up his Notes and had them printed. The mountain's ancient Nepalese name, Sagarmatha, was not generally known to the British in 1852 as they were not officially allowed into Nepal. Sherwill has scribbled with a pencil beside his description, its new British name and height at some later date in the margin of Jane's copy of *The Notes*. [4]

There was no publishing date on Jane's volume, just the dates of the climb as given in the text. Later I was to discover that the original *Notes* were published in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in Calcutta in 1854 (22. 1-7). *The Alpine Journal* (1950 57(281)395) mentions it as being published in Calcutta in 1852 in a list of "privately printed mountaineering books".

I immediately realised that it was the very early Everest connection that had alerted Jane's antique dealing friend to its possible rarity value. Sherwill's trek took place at the very beginning of what would later be called 'the Golden Age of Mountaineering'. Was it possible that Sherwill was one of the first, or even *the* first European to make a relatively close up sketch of Mount Everest from the Sikkim divide in that pre-photography time? Hooker, I ascertained later, his journey having taken place four years earlier, in 1848, left no immediate sketch of Mount Everest himself, its importance being then unsuspected.

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[3] Ngaire Gardner (their descendant) *Illustrated Pursuits: W S Sherwill in India 1834 -1861* (adivaani, Kolkata 2016) p.8

[4] Another family copy of the Notes is to be found in Invercargill Public Library, New Zealand; placed there by Ngaire Gardner's grandmother. This is also annotated in pencil in the same way as Jane Page's copy.

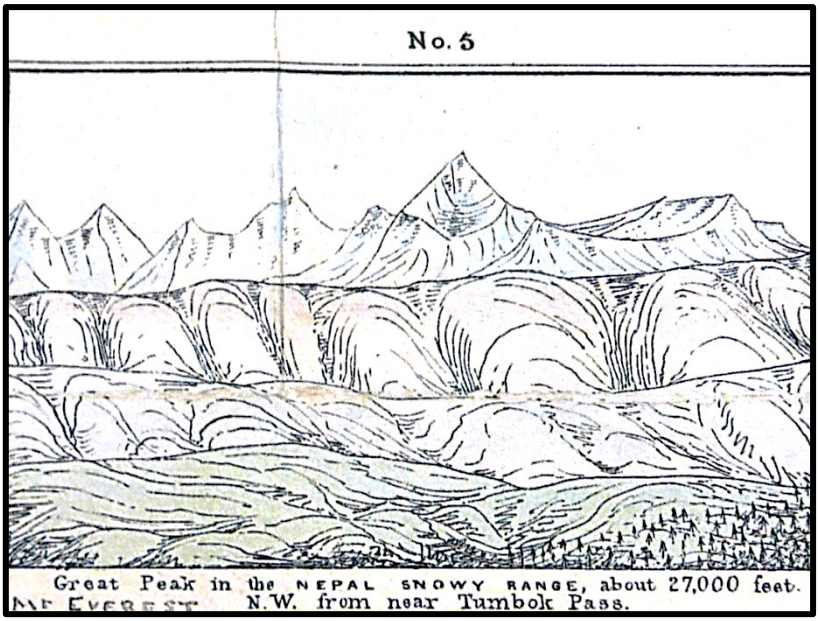

Fig. 1 Walter Sherwill's sketch of Mount Everest made in 1852 looking across Nepal from the Sikkim dividing range

My appetite whetted, I returned the book to Jane and made off with the leather-bound manuscript. Leafing through it I found, between the spidery writing, quite a few beautifully executed illustrations. Some of them were originals and others were engravings made from Sherwill's originals. He was clearly an extremely competent artist; of professional standard rather than amateur.

Meanwhile I scrolled the Internet for "Walter Stanhope Sherwill" and received considerably more information than I had expected. I found immediately, references to a publication by Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India* (The Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006). In its preface it explains:

> "This book examines the complex interface between the political and artistic agencies that authorized, produced, and disseminated to the British public, images of colonial coercion against subaltern insurgency in India."[5]

Rycroft bases his argument on aspects of Sherwill's artistic career, which had run concurrently with his work as a Revenue Surveyor for the East India Company. He argues that sketches and finished drawings by Sherwill, depicting life in India during the 1840s and 50s, engravings of which were printed in the *Illustrated London News* over a period of some years, had had a widely detrimental effect on middle class British attitudes towards those they had colonised.

The Internet next produced a reference to "Grafitti" left by Lieutenant W S Sherwill in 1840 at the Cango Caves, Oudtshoorn in the South African Cape Province.

My final find at that early stage, consisted of the details and a picture of the recent sale of an officer's sword, which had belonged to a Captain W.S. Sherwill:

> "ANTIQUE BRITISH OFFICER MAMELUKE DRESS SWORD-1830's
>
> Sold on e-bay: 7.17.2007: This is a Very Rare and hard to find British Model 1830 Mameluke Officers dress sword that originally came from an auction. The stamp on the handle represents the date, April 1837, and was made by Harmon & Co, Calcutta, India. The hilt, or grip, is missing the ivory slabs and was auctioned like this originally. There is no scabbard with the sword. Note also the damage on one of the languets. On top of the blade is the inspector's mark which is very common for military swords. The overall length of the sword is 37 1/2 inches by 5/16 inch thick by 1 1/16 wide at the guard. The guard, Mameluke, is 5 inches by 5 inches including the handle.
>
> As far as information on Harmon & Co. from Calcutta, India, this is what I have found: A Victorian Officer's uniform of the 66th Volunteers Regiment (Berkshire Regiment), comprising of a scarlet tunic, with white facings, gold lace, and red shoulder cords; a conforming dress tunic, each tailored by 'Harman & Co' ; a crimson silk waist sash; an Officer's shako, the black beaver body, leather top and peak, applied with gilt metal shako plate, chin strap and ball tuft, contained its tin case bearing the name 'Major W.S. Sherwill'; and a rectangular gilt metal shoulder plate with applied devices of the 66th Volunteers.

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[5] Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion, Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India* (The Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006)

> NB; Walter Stanhope Sherwill, was born on 31st August 1815; he was the son of Markham Eeles Sherwill and Lucy Sherwill; he was educated at Christ's Hospital and Addiscombe, (Cadet 1831-33). He was made Ensign, on 11th June 1833 in the 72nd Native Infantry. He arrived in India on 8th January 1834 and was posted to 66th N.I. By 27th July 1838 he was a Revenue Surveyor at Cawnpore. He was made a Lieutenant on 3rd October 1840 and was a Bengal Surveyor 16th May 1842 to November 1856. He married Cecilia Hill at Ghazipur on 24th February 1845 and was made a Captain on 22nd February. He was posted to DAQMG Field Force under Major-General G.W.A Lloyd, Santhal Revolt 1855. He was a professor of surveying in civil engineering college, Calcutta 22nd November 1856 to retirement, and the Boundary Commissioner of Bengal; also a Fellow of Calcutta University. He was made a Major on 2nd April 1859. Sherwill retired (Hon. Lt. Col.) on the 31st December 1861. He died 20th March 1890. His brother was Major-General Markham Eeles Sherwill, of the 2nd Bengal European Regiment. Reference - Hodsons Index." [6]

My findings nudged Jane into further burrowing in the attic, which produced a slightly battered gem. It was an A3 size photocopy of the Sherwill and Lind family tree. When we pored over it, quite a lot became clear. Walter Sherwill had been Lucy's grandfather. He and his wife had had thirteen children of whom Lucy's mother, Helen Obrè Sherwill, was the youngest. He had therefore been great grandfather to Jane's husband, Neil. The "Lucy" to whom his journal was addressed in letter form, appeared to be one of Walter Sherwill's sisters. Lucy was clearly a favourite family name.

I realised very quickly that it was hopeless to try to transcribe the handwriting of the journal straight onto the computer. It would have to be copied painstakingly into my own hand first as I puzzled over difficult words in almost every phrase. Leafing through it at leisure, I noticed immediately that half way through, on page 98 to be exact, the style of the writing changed completely. The second half would be much easier to read. It was a rounder, clearer script. There was no indication at that time though, as to whose hand writing it was.

[6] This was in 2010. There is a great deal more Sherwill information on the internet now.

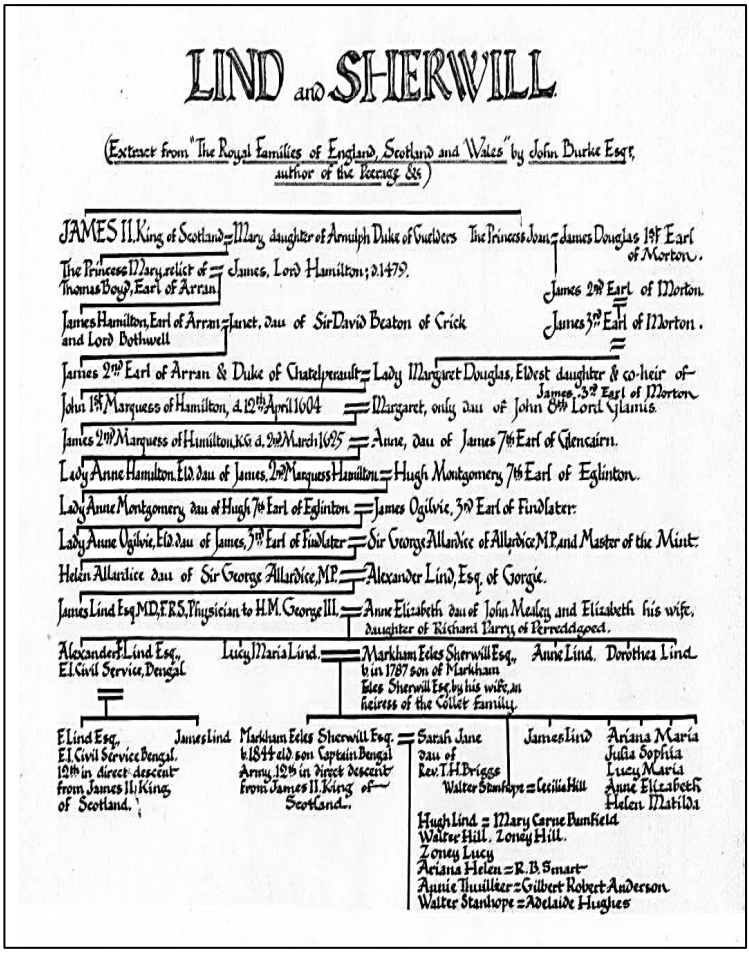

Fig. 2 Copy of the family tree which Jane found in the attic.

The first page of the Journals began:

"W.S. Sherwill Jan 1840 Calcutta
"Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace
Oh! There is some sweetness in the mountain air,
And life, that bloated ease can never hope to share.
Byron"

Walter Sherwill had obviously been obsessed with climbing mountains some years before he ventured up high onto that Himalayan spur between Sikkim and Nepal. It seemed to be a hint of what might be in the journal. The early pages however, penned as his ship made its way down the Hooghly from Calcutta, begin with a promise to his sister Lucy that he will write down and send to her a description of everything that happens to him during his leave in the Cape of Good Hope. He has been given some months leave after six years of service, during which he has suffered considerably from the fevers which then beset most Europeans in the plains of India. The Cape in winter was considered a cool, healthy place to recuperate from the illnesses prevalent along the Ganges, and not as far away in sailing days as England. Indian Army officers could go there for leave on full pay, rather than on the half pay received by those who went all the way home.

Sister Lucy, who was born in 1817, and her older sister Julia, born in 1813, are based in Calcutta as Walter goes on leave. Neither are yet married, although I would discover later that Lucy's marriage to Hugh Troup (who would eventually make Lieutenant General) on 18th June 1840 at Hazareebaugh, was imminent. Julia was to marry John Lowis Lemarchand at Bhagulpur in 1841. The girls may have been living under the protection of Walter's older brother, Markham Eeles Sherwill, already a senior Lieutenant in the East Indian Army. They were typical, and quite early, members of the disparagingly nick-named 'Fishing Fleet'; girls of respectable family but little money, who made the voyage out to India in order to find a husband among the young officers and civil servants of the East India Company.

The journal begins as Walter describes his voyage to Cape Town:

"Bay of Bengal March 13th 1840

Dearest Lucy

After you left Calcutta for Hazareebaugh I commenced in good earnest making arrangements for my departure; the Zenobia was soon ready and we left Calcutta on the morning of Sunday the 8th March 1840 in tow of the steamer "Andrew Henderson". At starting we were within a few inches of running foul of the Thomas Gressike, but by a vigorous tug at the critical moment we escaped collision. Now that I am fairly under weigh I shall, according to providence, give you a true and faithful account of my wanderings, adventures or whatever may befall me."

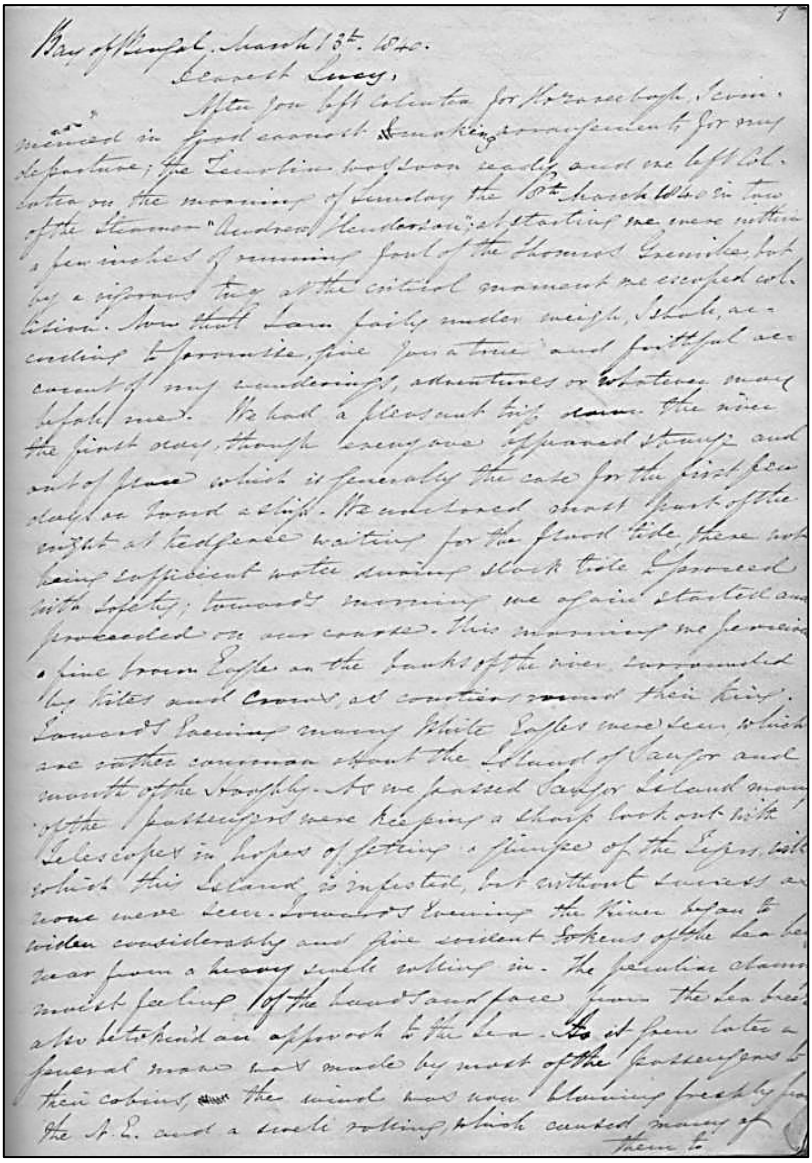

Fig. 3 The first page of Walter Sherwill's 1840 Journal

Walter Sherwill's story did not divulge itself to me in any kind of order, in fact it seems looking back, that I quickly discovered a considerable amount about the older, more mature Sherwill, well before I had pieced together the background of the young man who wrote the letters to his sister, or had got any idea of the context in which he wrote.

Once I had obtained a copy of his book, I found that Daniel Rycroft had been interested mainly in Walter's talented 1850s depictions, in watercolour and ink, of life around him as he surveyed rural India, and their possible political bearing on his times. His interest in the man himself was superficial because it was the political aspects of Sherwill's input that was of importance to the main argument of his book. Rycroft was keen to show how pictorial representation might be as influential as the written word in this context. In his Introduction he suggests that following a brief period of active service, during which a local insurrection was dealt with by the East India Company's army, Sherwill's sketches, which were turned into wood engravings by artisans once they reached England, indirectly caused a faulty perspective for readers at home in Britain:

> "By combining his textual narratives and visual images of counter-insurgency, the *Illustrated London News* allowed Sherwill's observations of colonial coercion to enter into the cultural administrators' perceptions of the Santhals-as-criminals." [7]

His brief account of Sherwill's background tallied with that which I had already found on the Internet and reads as follows:

> "Walter Stanhope Sherwill was born into a large military family, residing first in Surrey and then in Berkshire, southern Britain. His father, Markham Eeles Sherwill, was a celebrated explorer who regularly published romanticized accounts of his mountaineering adventures. Walter was schooled at Christ's Hospital, London, and began college at the East India Company's Military Seminary, Addiscombe House, in 1831. As a cadet within the Artillery and Engineering division he pledged his loyalty to the ideology of 'Rules, Orders and Regulations' that would shape his career in India, first with the East India Company and later with the British Raj."[8]

It would take me months to decipher the whole journal, but by the time I had got to the second half of the book with its change in handwriting, I had come across further clues as to the identity of the second diarist. Once

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[7] Daniel J. Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion, Visual Aspects of Counter-insurgency in Colonial India, (*The Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006) p.19
[8] Ibid p. 19

I had read a little way into it, these clues were confirmed. Lieutenant Markham Eeles Sherwill was Walter's older brother who had sailed for India before him, in 1830, and who decided to write an account of his first long leave, voyaging back to Europe after thirteen years of service as a soldier in the East India Company. For this he used the remaining half of Walter's thick, elegantly bound and still half empty, journal.

Whereas Walter gives a very brief account of the excitements of the voyage on a sailing ship from Calcutta to Cape Town, and concentrates most of his part of the journal on the description of his adventures in Cape Colony, his brother's part of the journal (in the form of a diary addressed to his younger, Parisian sisters), which begins in February 1843, is a day to day account of his voyage from Calcutta to Southampton. He notes in detail its perils, excitements, discomforts and tedious hours of boredom. Addressed to his younger sisters, then living in Paris, it has its own highlights, be they scientific (he makes enthusiastic observations of the Great Comet of 1843 as he sails South through the Indian Ocean), self-examining, or merely descriptions of his fellow passengers. Because of his readiness to share his deepest thoughts with his sisters, he adds unusual and valuable insight into the mentality of a young Indian Army officer in the early days of Queen Victoria's reign.

Walter's description of his visit to the Cango Caves at Oudtshoorn has already been mentioned and I would find that it provided the grand finale to his South African travels. Just the journey to get there was in itself an adventure in those days and I was delighted to discover that he had written a detailed account of this visit, taking up several closely written pages. I e-mailed the Cango Caves, explaining what I had just transcribed, imagining that I had a here-to-fore unknown early description. I received an answer immediately from the Chief Guide, Steve Mouton, who was excited by my discovery. He referred me to the caves' keenest historian, a medical doctor and Speleologist, originally from Yorkshire but long resident in Cape Town. Dr Stephen Craven would become a good friend and dedicated helper with the South African areas of the journal. To my disappointment he explained that he already knew all about Walter Sherwill because his description of the Cango Caves had in fact been published soon after Walter's return to India by an Eastern Cape newspaper, *The Graham's Town Journal*. It had been the best and most read description for some seventy years until superseded in the 20th century. Dr Craven, however, was extremely pleased to find there was an original manuscript for it (indeed he had sought one for some years whilst obtaining his PhD in Environmental Science on the subject of the Cango Caves) and suggested

immediately that we must publish the finding of it in a joint article.[9] This was followed by another on Walter Sherwill's Eastern Cape climbs.

Through Daniel Rycroft and Stephen Craven other contacts appeared. These were originally family researchers connected to the Sherwill and Lind families. Through them I began to find out a great deal about the families into which Walter and Markham had been born and so was able to fit the transcribed journals into a more complete context. One of them, Ngaire Gardner, I discovered later, was already collecting material for her own book about her great-great grandfather, Walter Sherwill, and this was published during 2016 under the title *Illustrated Pursuits: W.S. Sherwill in India 1834-186* (adivaani, Kolkata, India 2016).[10] Her book concentrates on the later career of Walter Sherwill, liberally illustrated by reproductions of his highly professional drawings and paintings. Some of these were published during the 19th century and others, which have descended in her New Zealand branch of the family, are still privately owned. A number of Walter Sherwill's illustrations can be seen on the internet.

Ngaire Gardner put me in touch with Sue Donlea, who was researching her husband's connections to the Sherwill and O'Caroll families. Together with Stephen Craven, I would like to thank all three of them for valuable information donated. Sadly Jane has now died but I am grateful to her son, Jonathan, the new owner of the material, for his continued support.

It is unclear and confusing as to exactly how the leather bound journal itself came into being. Markham Eeles Sherwill, who mentions it to his sisters, is irritatingly vague on the subject. Almost at the end of his voyage when his ship is about to put in to Portsmouth, he threatens to denude it of its heavy leather binding in order to escape expensive postage prices to France from England; but fortunately he does not, in the end, commit such a crime and keeps it by him; adding to it until he gets to Paris. Since this gives us a priceless account of the effect the earliest rail travel (and other

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[9] Stephen Craven and June Harvey, "The visit of Lieutenant Walter Stanhope Sherwill (1815–1890) to Cango Cave, South Africa, on 9 November 1840," in *Cave and Karst Science, Vol.39, No.3, 2012 Transactions of the British Cave Research Association.* pp. 127-131
Stephen Craven and June Harvey, "An Early Cape Mountaineer: Walter Stanhope Sherwill in 1840, concerning Walter's climbing of two well-known South African peaks." *In Die Joernaal van die Bergklub van Suid-Afrika, Nommer 116 vir die jaar* 2013 pp. 25-30

[10] Ngaire Gardner, *Illustrated Pursuits: W.S. Sherwill in India 1834-186* (adivaani, Kolkata, India 2016)

novelties such as the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the SS Great Britain and the first tunnel under the Thames) has upon a bemused, out-of-date colonial visitor, it is an extremely lucky escape.

The first half may be a neat, if rather illegible, copy of Walter's original letters to his sister Lucy. More than once Walter mentions various drawings and at least one article that he is going to send her, which do not appear in the journal, nor is there is any space left aside for them, so it seems safe to assume that the copy was made after he got back to India and the best of intentions to complete it went astray. Two of the illustrations are lithograph prints which he has had made from his more finished drawings. Space was left for these to be stuck in to the journal, which also prompts me to assume that the journal's copy of Lucy's letters was carefully planned in advance and put together sometime after he got back to India; towards the end of 1841, but before March 1843 when his brother sailed for Europe. The two newspaper articles, just as they were printed in *The Graham's Town Journal* during Walter's stay in the Cape, are carefully pasted into the journal instead of being entered in manuscript form; the original manuscripts having, presumably, been retained by the newspaper; whereas the article covering his visit to the Cango Caves is included in manuscript form because a copy of it was sent to *The Graham's Town Journal* at a later date. This article in the manuscript has various discrepancies and additions when compared with the published copy. It is assumed that he sent the edited copy through to Graham's Town by post quite a lot later, as it was not published until 20 October 1842.

I have not edited the diaries in any way except to add occasional punctuation, the lack of which was apt to leave one breathless. I have however, included readable copies of Walter Sherwill's climbs, since the old, pasted-in, newspaper cuttings were difficult to decipher. I have also inserted headings and dates to give Walter's travels some geographical clarity. Markham's journal did not need these.

Finally, there are undated, hand written, biographical notes, lacking any sources, to be found in the Cape Archive, entitled "W.S. Sherwill at the Cape", made by R.R. Langham-Carter. These state that Walter Sherwill took sick leave to the Cape and Australia from 10 March 1840 to 15 November 1841. His journal begins on 13th March 1840 in the Bay of Bengal and ends on 17th November 1840 in Cape Town, but he makes it clear he has every intention of writing more.

Unfortunately these intentions remained unfulfilled as far as the existing bound journal is concerned but there must have been more letters to Lucy that he had planned, but failed to copy into the journal, as seems to be borne out by the empty pages later filled by his brother. There is a note inside the front cover of the journal dated 2nd March 1841 which lists cryptically, "Thompson, Tucker, Moore, Ward: ascent to Table Mountain". This may indicate that if he went to Australia, it was before or after March 1841. On the other hand, he tells Lucy he is sending her an account of a Table Mountain climb "by four Blue Jackets" in which, one assumes, he was not involved. Three months would have left him little time in Australia, with the voyages included. Langham-Carter records him taking part in a play at the Gaiety Theatre in Cape Town on 25 June 1841 and calling for his bills to be sent in prior to his departure on 31 July 1841. However, according to Dr Stephen Craven, who kindly researched the archive for me, Langham-Carter cannot always be completely trusted, since general discrepancies in some of his biographical details have been found in the past.

June Harvey

INTRODUCTION

Walter Sherwill's Journal

Cape Colony in 1840

As an army officer and Revenue Surveyor Walter Sherwill would spend his working life writing official reports. His *"Notes on a Tour in the Sikkim Himalayan Mountains"* show that these were careful and very comprehensive. His letters to his sister however, written at a still fairly tender age, naturally show a more domestic and playful side to his nature. He was after all, on holiday. As a visitor and early tourist he makes no particular effort to give his opinion on the rights and wrongs of the political situation in the Eastern Cape, although he has clearly done his reading of earlier travellers' reports and seems ready to listen to all sides. His sister has been a recent visitor to Cape Town herself, so perhaps it was not necessary to burden her with his opinions on a political situation, the general outline of which must have been familiar to her. He writes as he finds; about what happens to him; and it is from this that one must draw conclusions. At times he is remarkably open-minded, given the influences that would have been brought to bear on him by the essentially capitalist Cape Town merchant community, with whom he had been fraternising:

> "By the late 1830s, liberal opinion in Cape Town had begun to move away from the racial discourse of universal humanitarianism."[1]

Only by comparing his reportage with that of other primary sources; travellers who went on a similar tour before him; can one get some idea of the ways in which life, mid-century, in the more rural areas of the colony was beginning to change; both for better and for worse. His view is undoubtedly influenced by his own reading of them.

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[1] Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge University Press 2005) p. 128

Between the years 1800 and 1840 the British East India Company itself had changed out of all recognition. Its role in the 18th century as a rich trading company with which adventurous young clerks sought overseas employment in order to make their fortunes, had become one of an almost autonomous state, a fast expanding extension of the British Empire. If the American colonies had been mislaid by Britain with considerable loss of face, she was by now extremely proud of her jewel in the Indian Ocean. This was part of a wholesale expansion of a sea-borne trading empire which had grown more by accident than design; partly through war with France, her competitor, and partly through commercial agreements with weakened Indian princes. Protection of trade was its main aim and if this demanded a private army, paid and maintained by the "Company", the money *would* be found, if with a certain amount of parsimony. It was as officers in this private army that the Sherwill brothers built up their careers.

By 1815 Britain was mistress of the seas, with a Navy second to none. She was well able to protect the shores of India and Africa. *Pax Britannica* would prevail until the turn of the next century. The Dutch, over-run by the French under Napoleon, had finally relinquished its colony at the Cape of Good Hope to Britain after the 1815 negotiations at Vienna. It was a valuable acquisition for an Empire which could still only access its far-eastern territories by sailing around the south of Africa. To have complete control over the Cape, rather than having to pay the Dutch East India Company for its use, was obviously desirable. Unlike India, which remained under the administration of the British East India Company, the acquisition at the tip of Southern Africa would be administered directly by the British Crown.

South African territory however, was very different to that of India and on the whole the immediate instinct in Britain was to use Cape Town as a necessary re-victualling port for its ships, rather than lumbering itself with ideas of building up a settlement colony. These notions quite quickly began to change however, particularly in the light of Sir John Barrow's[2] encouraging report on the interior. This had been published as early as

[2] Sir John Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798 Including Cursary Observations on Geology and Geography…the Natural History of Such Objects as Occurred in the Animal, Vegetable and Mineral Kingdoms, and Sketches of the Physical and Moral Characters of the Various Tribes* (G.F. Hopkins, London, 1802)