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Sikh History on The Streets of London: The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

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*Founder, A Little History of the Sikhs**

Abstract

Across London, in England, United Kingdom can be found a wealth of Sikh and Anglo-Sikh history. This paper presents field and desk research to give a Sikh perspective on the artefacts, collections, memorials, and buildings found in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in West London. The places include the Royal Hospital, the National Army Museum, St. Luke's Church in Chelsea, where artefacts from the Anglo-Sikh Wars and of the Punjab Frontier Force regiments are found. Treasures, jewels, and exquisite fabrics from the Panjab are found at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, where the Imperial College campus is also located and associated with prominent Sikh scientist, Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany. Other sites within the borough include the current location of the Khalsa Jatha British Isles, UK and the residences of Maharaja Duleep Singh, Maharani Jindan Kaur, and Princess Indira of Kapurthala. This paper provides an account of sites, artefacts and individuals to give a history of the Sikhs from the height of the Sikh Empire in the first half of the 19th century through to the modern day.

Keywords: Sikh history, Anglo-Sikh history, Victoria and Albert Museum, Duleep Singh, Jind Kaur

Introduction

The author's childhood, higher education years, and consultancy work have all been spent in the Greater London area. Within this context, the author has maintained and grown his interest in Sikh and Anglo-Sikh history through visits to museums, buildings associated with events and figures related to Anglo-Sikh history, and attendance at a range of commemorative ceremonies. A role as a Panjabi language teacher at Karamsar Panjabi School in Ilford, Essex required volunteers to manage mixed ability groups of children aged 11-15. Groups ranged from enthusiastic students, who had no other access to the Panjabi language in their home environment, to those who presented challenges to the teachers. It was these groups of children that encouraged the author to examine the structure of weekly lessons from the viewpoint of a child – and the author began to implement a story-telling history session at the end of each lesson. Artefacts from the author's collections were explored, including vintage newspapers, stamps of the British Raj, coins of the Sikh Empire, and photos of Sikh regiments in the British Indian Army.

During a *Sikhi* camp for children in 2011, the author presented a lecture based on sites of Sikh interest in London. The presentation detailed stories of the Kohinoor diamond at the Tower of London, Sikh relics at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, and at the Wallace Collection, amongst

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others. However, it became apparent that the young audience was not familiar with the locations in London referred to in the presentation. The author began to use sites on the London Monopoly Board as references, e.g., referring to the Tower of London near 'Fenchurch Street.' With 'Fenchurch Street' being a site on the Monopoly Board, the children could relate to a reference point and better focus on the story of the artefact. Following the initial lecture, the author commenced a personal research challenge to visit all the sites on the London Monopoly Board and draw out stories from Sikh and Anglo-Sikh history associated with these 'familiar' locations. These visits helped to draw out a wealth of information, which was not available easily online; for example, learning about paintings of Sikhs in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace, and researching stories through memorials in churches and cathedrals in London such as Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, the Dissenters' Chapel in Kensal Green, the Pembroke College Mission in South London and St. Luke's Church in Chelsea. These, together with citations referring to Sikhs and the Punjab on the plinths of statues in Central London, links through buildings to notable historical figures and the archives of the numerous museum collections made for an enriching and rewarding research experience.

The research continues and has grown to cover other locations that are not necessarily on the London 'Monopoly Board and is titled 'Sikh History on the Streets of London.' The presentation and lectures have been supplemented by guided tours since November 2014, based on the initial personal research, under a community initiative called 'A Little History of the Sikhs.'

This paper provides an account of the sites in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the associated artefacts and individuals to give a history of the Sikhs from the height of the Sikh Empire in the first half of the 19th century through to the modern day.¹

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Kensington and Chelsea is the smallest borough in London, immediately to the west of the City of Westminster, yet it is one of the most densely populated districts in the United Kingdom. The royal status was designated to the borough in 1965 because it was the birthplace of Queen Victoria at Kensington Palace in 1819. The district contains major museums and universities in South Kensington, embassies in Belgravia and Kensington Gardens, famous department stores in Knightsbridge, as well as the most expensive residential streets in the world. In terms of Sikh and Anglo-Sikh history, the streets of the borough contain a wealth of memorials, artefacts, and events related to Sikh military history, the Kingdom of Punjab and the Sikh people. This paper

¹ This paper restricts itself to documenting aspects of history associated with specific sites. Broader questions of the relationship between the Sikhs and the British during the period associated with these sites is beyond the scope of this research.

presents research from books, online resources, and visits to locations in the borough, intending to centralize those places and characters with a close association for the benefit of researchers, tourists, and students of Sikh history.

The locations presented in this paper are organized in the following categories: Museums, Institutions and Events, Places of Worship, and Residences. Museums in the borough include the National Army Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which houses treasures and art from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Empire. Institutions and events include the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Hyde Park, where the Great Exhibition of 1851 took place, and Imperial College, London, associated with Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany. Places of worship related to Sikh history include St. Luke's Church in Chelsea, where artefacts from the Sikh Empire and the Punjab Frontier Force can be found. St Peter's Church in Belgravia and the current site of the Khalsa Jatha British Isles in Kensington. Two residences of the Duleep Singh family, 53 Holland Park and Abingdon House in Kensington, and Nell Gwynn House in Chelsea, the residence of Princess Indira of Kapurthala are also described.

The National Army Museum

The British Army's central museum on the Royal Hospital Road in Chelsea houses collections that relate to the colonial, imperial and commonwealth land forces of the British Army from its founding in 1660 to the present day. As part of its collections, the museum includes the collections of the British Indian Army, raised by the government of India in 1895.

In 2013, the museum launched a summer exhibition and a social history project, 'War and Sikhs' – a co-curation endeavour with the London-based United Kingdom Punjab Heritage Association (UKPHA). The project worked to raise awareness of the vital contribution of Sikh soldiers to the British Army while giving British Sikhs more ownership around how their history and artefacts have been understood and described. The Museum's rarest items relating to Sikhs were presented, including the earliest known photographs of Sikhs, a *dastar boonga* (fortress turban) complete with miniature *kirpans* and quoits from the collections of the Museum, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's *shamshir* (sword) and photographs of Sikh soldiers in the First World War.

The information gathered during the social history project was incorporated into the exhibits of the 'Empire, Faith & War: The Sikhs and World War One' exhibition, held at the Brunei Gallery of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 2014. The exhibition was curated by the UKPHA, who researched regimental histories, official dispatches, correspondence, and war grave records to provide a detailed picture of the Sikh involvement in World War One.²

²Heritage Fund (2013).

Between 2014 and 2017, the museum was closed, as significant refurbishment works were carried out. The transformed museum was opened by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on Thursday 16 March 2017 and now is based around five themed galleries. The soldier, army, battle, society, and insight galleries provide spaces to explore and discuss the British Army and its relevance to society from fashion and films to flood defences and conflict.³ The insight gallery includes the British Army's connection with Punjab and includes a *dastar boonga* (turban fortress) on permanent display, which was first presented during the 2013 War and Sikhs project.



Figure 1: A section of the Punjab display in the Insight Gallery at the National Army Museum

The Victoria and Albert Museum

The origins of the Victoria and Albert Museum lie with the Great Exhibition of 1851. Henry Cole, the museum's first director, planned the Great Exhibition with Prince Albert. Cole purchased exhibits at the end of the exhibition to form the first collections of applied art and science, which were displayed at Marlborough House in 1852. By 1855 Brompton Park House, the current site, was extended to include Refreshment Rooms, and the process was underway to transfer the collections. Brompton Park House was renamed the South

³ London Evening Standard (March 2017).

Kensington Museum, and Queen Victoria conducted the official opening on 22 June 1857.



Figure 2: The Chair of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

On 17 May 1899, the setting of the foundation stone of the Aston Webb building was the last official public appearance by Queen Victoria. It was announced on that day that the South Kensington Museum was to be renamed as the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁴ One of the Museum's most prized items is the throne of the Sikh ruler of the Kingdom of Punjab - Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The throne, made of wood and engraved in gold, was crafted by the goldsmith Hafez Muhammad Multani sometime between 1820 and 1830,⁵ during the height of the Sikh Empire. The beautifully decorated chair comprised of two tiers of lotus petals and octagonal is reflective of Mughal furniture,⁶ and was first displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 after the British annexed the Punjab in 1849 following the Second Anglo-Sikh War.

The V&A holds many more treasures. From 25 March to 25 July 1999, The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition celebrated one of the most important anniversaries in Sikh history: the creation in March 1699 of a new order called the *Khalsa* or 'the pure.' Ever since that first *amrit sanchar* (baptism ceremony)

⁴ Victoria and Albert Museum (2017a).

⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum (2017b).

⁶ Stronge (1999), p 82.

in 1699, millions of Sikhs all over the world are still identified by the visual symbols adopted in 1699 - their uncut hair that is covered with a turban, as well as by standard surnames, *Kaur* for women, and *Singh* for men. The museum ruled out an exhibition with a religious theme and chose its historical collections and the cosmopolitan court of the first Sikh Maharaja of Punjab, Ranjit Singh, as the focus of the exhibition. The Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, known as the *Lahore Darbar*, was the most magnificent in the subcontinent at the time, 'he gave employment to defeated foes, honoured faiths other than his own, and included Hindus and Muslims among his ministers.'⁷

Susan Stronge curated the 'Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms' exhibition, and a wide range of material was presented, depicting a fascinating cultural history of the Sikhs through works of art. The opening section depicted Sikhs through miniature painting, 19th-century photographs of the Golden Temple, illustrated manuscripts and coins and explored the artistic heritage of the Panjab region, now divided between India and Pakistan. The next section of the exhibition focused on Ranjit Singh's court. It included paintings of leading Sikh and non-Sikh personalities, some of the maharaja's most treasured jewels and possessions, and items from the Sikh armoury, including distinctive turban helmets. After the great ruler died in 1839, a decade of upheaval and war culminated in the British annexation of Punjab. Despite the problems suffered by the region, the arts of Punjab survived. During the period of the Sikh Empire, the Lahore court supported silk weavers, embroiderers, metalworkers, and woodcarvers across the region. It provided a market for the work of the artisans. After the annexation of the Kingdom, the rulers of the smaller remaining Sikh kingdoms, the cis-Sutlej Sikh Kingdoms, notably Patiala, ensured the survival of these traditions into the 20th century.⁸

The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition was a significant turning point in Sikh/Punjabi representation in Central London: it inspired many Punjabis to research their histories and their place in British society. The V&A has since included other exhibitions following its success, such as Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London (14 January 2017 to 2 April 2017).

The Great Exhibition of 1851, Hyde Park, Mayfair

During the summer of 1851, in London's Knightsbridge district, a palace made of glass was constructed at Hyde Park to house the 'Great Exhibition of the Works and Industry of All.' The '*Crystal Palace*' was the idea of Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, to display the wonders of industry and manufacturing from around the modern world. The exhibition was opened on 1 May 1851 by Queen Victoria, with more than 100,000 objects displayed along more than ten miles of gallery space. Britain occupied half the display space

⁷ Singh and Rai (2008).

⁸ Stronge (1999).

inside, with exhibits from across England and the Empire. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary of ‘every conceivable invention’ with items including every kind of steam engine, elegant carriages, the early version of bicycles, a printing press from the Illustrated London News newspaper, and folding pianos convenient for yachtsmen. Foreign contributions included a display of tapestries, enamels, porcelain and silk from France, gold watches from Switzerland, and a 50kg single lump of gold from Chile. At the end of the Exhibition on 11 October 1851, over six million people had visited, and the Exhibition had made a profit of £186,000. This profit was used to create the South Kensington museums, and the Queen commissioned The Albert Memorial – a statue of Prince Albert sitting under a gilt canopy opposite the Royal Albert Hall.

Amid all the wonders, the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond was displayed in the ‘Works in Precious Metals, Jewellery, etc.’ part of the South-Central Gallery as one of the centre-pieces of the Great Exhibition. The accounts presented sources at the time described the initial reaction to the Koh-i-Noor, which at the time was a recent spoil from the annexation of Punjab. It was reported that:

“The Koh-i-Noor is at present decidedly the lion of the Exhibition. A mysterious interest appears to be attached to it, and now that so many precautions have been resorted to, and so much difficulty attends its inspection, the crowd is enormously enhanced. The policemen at either end of the covered entrance have much trouble in restraining the struggling and impatient multitude. For some hours yesterday, there were never less than a couple of hundred persons waiting their turn of admission, and yet, after all, the diamond does not satisfy. Either from the imperfect cutting or the difficulty of placing the lights advantageously, or the immovability of the stone itself, which should be made to revolve on its axis, few catch any of the brilliant rays it reflects when viewed at a particular angle.”⁹

A French writer gave a vivid description of the exhibit:

“To ordinary eyes, it is nothing more than an egg-shaped lump of glass. They may show us what they please, and call it the Koh-i-noor. On ordinary days, that is the shilling days, it is exposed in its great cage, ornamented with a policeman, and they rely on the sun to make it sparkle; but on the Friday and Saturday, it puts on its best dress; it is arrayed in a tent of red cloth, and the interior is supplied with a dozen little jets of gas, which throw their light on the god of the temple. Unhappily, the Koh-i-Noor does not sparkle even then. Thus the most curious thing is not the divinity, but the worshippers. One places oneself in the file to go in at one side of the niche, looks at the golden calf, and goes out the other side. If the organs should chance to play at the same moment, the illusion is complete. The Koh-i-Noor is well secured; it is placed on a machine

⁹ The Bankers' Magazine (1852), p 246.

which causes it, on the slightest touch, to enter an iron box. It is thus put to bed every evening, and does not get up till towards noon. The procession of the faithful then commences, and only finishes at seven o'clock.”¹⁰

The appearance of the stone and the disappointment it caused was not uncommon. Prince Albert consulted various mineralogists, and, following the approval of the government, it was agreed that the Koh-i-Noor should be re-cut and polished. Mozes Coster, the famous Dutch diamond merchants, were employed for the task and assigned Levie Benjamin Voorzanger, their most experienced artisan for the task. Work began on 17 July 1852 at the factory of Garrard & Co. in Haymarket, using a specially built steam-powered mill.¹¹ The weight of the diamond was reduced from 186 carats to its current 108.93 carats.¹² Although Prince Albert was dissatisfied with the considerable reduction, most experts of the time agreed that Voorzanger had made the right decision and fulfilled his job skilfully.¹³ Following the work on the Koh-i-noor by Voorzanger, the lighter but more dazzling stone was worn by the queen in a brooch and was not yet part of the Crown Jewels. Although the brooch was worn often by Queen Victoria, she became increasingly uneasy about how the diamond had been acquired. In a letter to Victoria, Princess Royal (her eldest daughter), she wrote:

“No one feels more strongly than I do about India or how much I opposed our taking those countries and I think no more will be taken, for it is very wrong and no advantage to us. You know also how I dislike wearing the Koh-i-Noor.”¹⁴

After Queen Victoria's death, the Koh-i-Noor was set in the Crown of Queen Alexandra, the wife of Edward VII. The Crown was used to crown her at their coronation in 1902. The diamond was then transferred to Queen Mary's Crown in 1911, and then finally to The Queen Mother's Crown in 1937. When the Queen Mother died in 2002, it was placed on top of her coffin for the lying-in-state and funeral. All these crowns are on display at the Tower of London in the Jewel House, with crystal replicas of the diamond set in the older crowns of Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary. A glass model of the Koh-i-Noor shows visitors how it looked when it was brought over to Britain in 1850. Replicas of the diamond in the original form and its re-cut forms can also be seen in the ‘The Vault,’ a permanent gallery at the Natural History Museum in South

¹⁰ Tallis (1852), p 150.

¹¹ The Illustrated London News (1854), p 54.

¹² Coster Diamonds (undated).

¹³ Tweedie (2010).

¹⁴ Tarling (1981).

Kensington that opened in 2007.¹⁵ Thus, a substantive symbol of Punjabi sovereignty also sits in the symbols of the sovereignty of England.

The Royal Hospital, Chelsea

Under a 1593 Act of Parliament, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a weekly tax on parishes was levied to raise funds to support soldiers and sailors. In 1681, King Charles issued a Royal Warrant authorising the building of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to care for those 'broken by age or war.' Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to design the building, at a site adjacent to the River Thames in the countryside of Chelsea.¹⁶

On the grounds of the Royal Hospital, which hosts the annual Chelsea Flower Show, is the Chillianwallah Memorial in memory of British casualties in a battle between the armies of the British East India Company and the armies of the Sikh Kingdom. The battle was fought during the Second Anglo-Sikh War in the Chillianwallah region of Punjab, now part of modern-day Pakistan, on 13 January 1849. It was one of the bloodiest battles fought by the British East India Company. Both armies held their positions at the end of the battle, and Sher Singh withdrew to the north. Both sides claimed a victory, with the Sikhs claiming that they forced the British to retreat. Since the Sikhs disengaged first, the British also claimed the victory, although they admitted that the Sikhs had missed an opportunity to gain victory. However, the forcing back of the British - including the rout of the 14th Light Dragoons together with the loss of several guns and the colours of the 24th and two other regiments - dealt a blow to British morale and was testament to the tenacity and martial skill of the Sikh army. A testimony left by a British observer stated:

“The Sikhs fought like devils, fierce and untamed... Such a mass of men I never set eyes on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets and struck their assailants when they were transfixed”.¹⁷

The battle stands out because the British failed to defeat their opponents outright, where the final losses to the army of the East India Company included a comparatively high proportion of the British casualties (rather than native Indians). The repulse of the British during the battle, together with the loss of several guns and the colours of the 24th Foot Regiment and two other regiments, and the rout of the 14th Light Dragoons, dealt a blow to British morale.

¹⁵ What's new at the museum. Available at: https://www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/blogs/whats-new/tags/sir_david_attenborough.html [Accessed 3 May 2020]

¹⁶ Royal Hospital Chelsea (2017).

¹⁷ Randhawa (2002).



Figure 3 and 4: Sikh Cannons from the Anglo-Sikh Wars



Figure 5: Chillianwallah Memorial, Royal Hospital Chelsea

For many years, it was believed and stated that two cannons from the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were on the grounds of the Royal Hospital, amongst a set of eight cannons displayed from the Crimean, Napoleonic and Anglo-Sikh Wars. However, in recent years experts have continued to examine the cannons, and Neil Carleton, Senior Documentation Officer from the Victoria and Albert Museum, presented an account of the Sikh cannons and guns as part of the Anglo-Sikh Wars exhibition at the Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester on 1 April 2017. Neil Carleton provided an account of where many of the Sikh

cannons and guns now reside in the UK and stated that only one cannon on display at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea is from the Anglo-Sikh Wars.¹⁸

Other items of Sikh interest include the panelled wood walls of the Great Hall which detail each of the battles of the first and second Anglo-Sikh Wars, amongst a chronological record of every engagement in War of the British Army. The Great Hall was designed as a Dining Hall with 16 long tables, one for each of the 16 original Long wards, where the Chelsea Pensioners resided.



Figure 6: The battles of the Anglo-Sikh Wars on the wall of the Great Hall of the Royal Hospital

A small Museum dedicated to the Chelsea Pensioners is located close to the London Gate entrance of the site. The Museum includes a Medal Room where examples of the Punjab Medal can be seen. The Punjab Medal was issued to officers and men of the British Army and Honourable East India Company who served in the Punjab campaign of 1848-49. The medal was authorised for all who served in Punjab between 7 September 1848 and 14 March 1849,¹⁹ and three clasps were authorized:

- **Mooltan** (7 September 1848 – 22 January 1849) - awarded to troops engaged in the siege of Mooltan.
- **Chillianwallah** (13 January 1849) - awarded to troops under the command of Lord Gough, who engaged with the Sikh army of Sher Singh and Lal Singh.
- **Goojerat** (21 February 1849) - awarded to troops under the command of Lord Gough, who defeated the Sikh army of Sher Singh at Goojerat.

¹⁸ The Lions Teeth – Sikh Artillery from the Anglo Sikh Wars (2017).

¹⁹ Joslin, Litherland and Simpkin (1988), p 117.

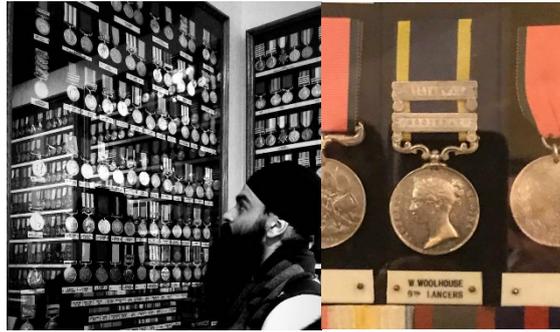


Figure 7 and 8: Examples of the Punjab medal at the Museum of the Royal Hospital Chelsea

Imperial College, South Kensington

Narinder Singh Kapany is an Indian-born American Sikh physicist known for his work in fibre optics, and was named as one of the seven ‘Unsung Heroes’ by *Fortune* magazine in their ‘Businessmen of the Century’ issue.²⁰ A graduate of Agra University, India, he completed his advanced studies in optics at Imperial College, London in South Kensington in 1955. The wedding of Narinder Singh Kapany, whilst a student at Imperial College, to Satinder Kaur, an English literature student at the University of London on 6 February 1954 was one of the earliest recorded marriages at the 79 Sinclair Road site of the Khalsa Jatha, British Isles.²¹

The term ‘fibre optics’ was coined by Kapany in 1956, when he became the first person to demonstrate the transmission of an image through a bundle of glass fibres, earning him the moniker “the man who bent light.” His paper in the science journal, *Scientific American* in 1960 established the new term – ‘fibre optics’, and Kapany became known as the ‘father of fibre optics,’²² whilst his 1960 paper continues to be a reference point for the subject even today. His research and inventions influenced (or advanced) communications, lasers, biomedical instrumentation, solar energy and pollution monitoring technologies. He has over one hundred patents, and his illustrious career has included him being a member of the National Inventors Council; an International Fellow of the British Royal Academy of Engineering and a Fellow of both the Optical Society of America and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

²⁰ *Fortune Magazine* (1999).

²¹ Bance, Paul and Anand (2008).

²² Narinder Singh Kapany Chair in Opto-electronics, University of California Santa Cruz. Available at: <https://southasia.ucsc.edu/endowed-chairs/narinder-singh-kapany.html> [Accessed 3 May 2020]

As a philanthropist, Kapany has been active in education and the arts. He was the founding chairman and a major funder of the Sikh Foundation. In collaboration with international institutions and publishers, the Foundation runs initiatives and projects in publishing, academia and the arts. In 1998, Kapany endowed a Chair of Sikh Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In 1999, his gift of \$500,000 to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco established a gallery in its new building displaying the works he has donated from his collection of Sikh art. He provided paintings and other objects on loan for the internationally acclaimed ‘Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms’ exhibition which proceeded from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, USA and then onto the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada.

St. Luke’s Church, Chelsea

“James Savage’s Gothic Revival ship, sailing parallel to the King’s Road. A massive plot of land with a house of God sixty feet high whose tower pushes 142 feet high into Chelsea’s skyline – what a gift, what a responsibility” – a poetic description of the church, by The Rev Canon Peter Delaney in 1997.



Figure 9: St. Luke’s Church Chelsea

St. Luke’s Church is the tallest parish church in London, and is often referred to as ‘Chelsea’s Cathedral.’ The original parish church on the Chelsea Embankment was proving to be too small for the growing population, and a competition for the design of St. Luke’s took place in 1819. Plans for different styles were submitted by foremost architects of the time including John Nash and James Savage. Savage’s plans were courageous, based as they were on the 16th-century medieval style of building known as Gothic. This style had been

displaced by Greek and Roman styled architecture, as seen in the design of the British Museum, also constructed around the same time. His design was accepted and St Luke's became one of the first Gothic Revival churches to be built in London. The foundation stone was laid on the 12th of October 1820, and the church was consecrated on St Luke's Day, 18th October 1824, by the Bishop of London.²³

It is at St. Luke's Church that a remarkable monument stands in memory of the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF). The PFF chapel commemorates one of the great fighting units of the Indian Army, with a repository of the memories and traditions the PFF, who carved out a notable reputation on the North-West Frontier of Punjab, during the battles of the second Anglo-Afghan War (between 1878 and 1880).

The history of the PFF commences with the formation of the Punjab Irregular Force (PIF), which was formed to protect the Punjab province after the second Anglo-Sikh war in 1848-49. Having faced the Sikh armies on the battlefield, the British recognised the stalwart Sikh soldiers as formidable warriors and began to raise military units in the province.²⁴ During the 1860s, as part of a substantive reorganisation of units after the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, the military units were re-organised into the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF) and comprised specialised units of all arms – Mountain, Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry, with five regiments of cavalry, eleven regiments of infantry and five batteries of artillery besides the Corps of Guides.²⁵ Regiments of the reorganised PFF, known more popularly as the Piffers, served with distinction not only on the North-West Frontier but also during the Indian Mutiny of 1857; the Second Afghan War, 1878 – 1880; the Boxer Rebellion in China, 1900; the First World War, 1914-1918 and the Third Afghan War, 1919.

The Force comprised regiments of different martial classes – Sikhs, Panjabi Muslims, Pathans, Dogra, Hindus and Gurkhas. The Indian Army, of which the PFF was part, was a volunteer regular army with no conscription. Recruitment to the different regiments took place in specific areas, so it became common to find succeeding generations of a family serving through the ranks of the same Regiment. A recorded oath of the 4th Punjab Infantry for volunteer recruits joining the Regiment reads:

“I.....inhabitant of.....son of.....swear by the
Gooroo Grunth Sahibjee (holy scripture of Sikhism) and if I tell a
falsehood may the Gooroo Grunth Sahib cause misfortune to descend
upon me, that I will never forsake or abandon my Colours, that I will

²³ Johnston (1999).

²⁴ Raugh (2004), p 268.

²⁵ Moreman (1998), p 21.

march wherever I am directed whether within or beyond the Company's Territories, that I will implicitly obey all the orders of my Commanders, and in everything behave myself as becomes a good Soldier and faithful servant of the Company, and failing in any part of my duty as such I will submit to the penalties ascribed in the Articles of War, which have been read to me."²⁶

With the Partition in 1947, departure of the British, and the subsequent creation of modern-day India, Pakistan and West Pakistan (now Bangladesh), there was some anxiety about the preservation of the memorials that had been set up in the garrison churches of the Punjab region. After disappointing responses following approaches elsewhere, the rector and wardens of St. Luke's Church agreed to receive the memorial brasses, stone plaques, and memorabilia from India. A sanctum was created in the crypt of the Church, and a chapel was designed in a large space within the main church. Both the sanctum and the chapel were dedicated on 3 June 1951 by the Bishop of London in the presence of Field Marshall Sir William Slim and General Lord Ismay. General Lord Ismay was the Indian born British Indian Army officer and diplomat, who was Winston Churchill's chief military assistant during the Second World War.²⁷ In the 1990s, the PFF Association disbanded as the number of survivors began to decline. The memorials and other relics of the PFF were donated to the National Army Museum in 1998 and the sanctum closed in the crypt of the church. However, the PFF chapel is maintained in superb condition, and a crypt to the 3rd Gurkha Rifles sanctum remains intact.²⁸



Figure 10: The Panjab Frontier Force Memorial Chapel

²⁶ Wilde (2009).

²⁷ NATO (2011).

²⁸ Renfrew (2020).

All the regiments that made up the PFF are commemorated in the chapel. The badges of the fourteen units are carved on glass screens, the wooden walls, and on the chapel chairs. The altar frontal is presented in the red, gold and green colours of the regiment. Other items on the wall of the chapel narrate the story of the force, including a plaque detailing the origins of the chapel. Several flags and colours hang in the chapel, including those of the 2nd Punjab Infantry - a regiment that stayed loyal to the British and played a prominent part in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. The union flag that flew over the PFF Brigade Headquarters in Kohat (lowered for the last time on the 15 August 1947) is found here together with a Book of Remembrance listing the names of former PFF officers.

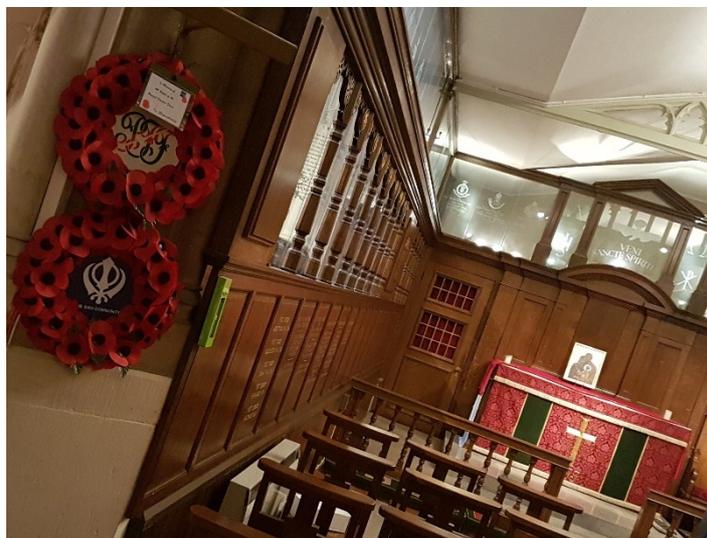


Figure 11: The Panjab Frontier Force Memorial Chapel, with remembrance wreaths

The church is proud of its association with the PFF, with daily prayers for political and religious tolerance taking place within the chapel. Standing and pausing for a moment in the PFF chapel, it is hard not to feel as if one is back in time and standing in a regimental church on the North-West Frontier in the late 19th century.

St Peter's Church, Eaton Square

Prince Victor Albert Jay Duleep Singh was the eldest son of the Maharaja Duleep Singh and Maharani Bamba Duleep Singh, born in England on 10 July 1866.²⁹ The Prince was educated at Eton, and his higher education was at Trinity College, University of Cambridge, where he met his first and true love Lady Anne Blanche Alice Coventry. Prince Victor succeeded his father Maharaja

²⁹ The Open University (2020).

Duleep Singh as Head of the Royal House of Punjab in 1893. The marriage of the Prince to Lady Anne Blanche was not only unusual but rocked Victorian society to its core³⁰ – it was first time an Indian Prince had married an English woman of the nobility. Lady Anne was the youngest daughter of the 9th Earl of Coventry. Equally controversial was the fact that the Prince was declared bankrupt and was seriously short of cash, largely because of financial losses at the casinos of Europe. The Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII, and a friend of the young Prince Victor at Trinity College, Cambridge) was instrumental in calming the concerns about the alliance and was a guest at the ceremony,³¹ and Queen Victoria sent her blessing.

Prince Victor made arrangements for a lavish wedding to be held at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, where many fashionable weddings of the day took place. Invitations were sent to every family of note, and on the day of the wedding, crowds gathered with sightseers and those interested in the Coventry family and Prince Victor of the Royal House of Lahore. The wedding reception was held in Balfour Place, Mayfair at the residence of Lord Coventry, and the wedding gifts included a statuette from Queen Victoria of herself. Lady Anne was a skilled horsewoman, an enthusiastic rider to hounds and a supporter of charitable causes. Prince Victor was the grandson of the legendary Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, who 'unified the warring cheifdoms of the Punjab into an extraordinary northern empire stretching to the borders of Kabul and Tibet, built up a formidable army, kept the British in check to the south of his realm, and closed the Khyber Pass through which plunderer had for centuries poured into India.'³²

The glow of the wedding soon faded as financial problems blighted Prince Victor; in 1890, he was taken to court after failing to pay a £16 bill for stationery despite allegedly "living in a sumptuous manner, keeping several male servants, being a member of two leading clubs, owning a private Hansom cab, being looked upon as a leading member of society and reputedly a rich man."³³ By the late 1890s his debts were at more than three times his yearly allowance from the British government at the time. The couple later moved to Paris, where Prince Victor died on 7 June 1918 at the age of 52. He was buried at the Anglican Cemetery overlooking the gambling casinos of Monte Carlo, where he had spent his time gambling away his wealth.³⁴ Lady Anne Blanche Coventry died in 1956, aged 82.

³⁰ Pryce (2009).

³¹ Countess of Carnarvon (2011).

³² Singh and Rai (2008).

³³ Pryce (2009).

³⁴ Bance (2009), p 115.

The Khalsa Jatha British Isles

During the reign of Edward VII (1901 – 1910), there were a significant number of Sikh students in the UK, many of whom were children of aristocratic families in Punjab. In 1906, a group of five young *amritdhari* (baptised) Sikhs were sent to England by Sant Attar Singh Mastuana, to implement his vision of establishing *Sikhi* in the western hemisphere.

Sant Attar Singh Ji was born on 28 March 1866 and joined the Indian Army when he was 17. In 1888 he left the army and undertook a journey on foot from Dera Ghazi Khan (now in Pakistan) to Hazoor Sahib in Maharashtra, India. Attar Singh Ji was committed to educating children and established a series of schools and colleges across India, while also attending many educational conferences.³⁵ In addition to expanding *Sikhi* in India, Sant Attar Singh Ji also wanted to reverse the trend of Sikhs cutting their hair and embracing the consumption of alcohol upon arrival in Western countries, and so begin to lay the foundations for *Sikhi* to be practiced in the West. Attar Singh's work and vision introduced him to Niranjan Singh Mehta, Principal of the Khalsa College in Amritsar. In time, Niranjan Singh Mehta was initiated to the Khalsa with an *amrit sanchar* (baptism) by Attar Singh Mastuana Ji, who changed his name to 'Teja.'³⁶ Attar Singh Ji then instructed Teja Singh and a group of Sikhs to go abroad, to implement his vision.

Teja Singh, Amar Singh, Hari Singh, Bhagat Singh, and Dharmanant Singh arrived in London on 24 August 1906.³⁷ These young Sikhs enrolled at Universities, including University College London and Downing College, Cambridge, where a small congregation formed and met every Sunday, laying the foundation for the formation of the Khalsa Jatha British Isles in 1908. Prominent founding members of the *Jatha* (a 'military detachment' commanded by a jathedhar, the chief officiant of a Sikh institution)³⁸ included Sardar Narain Singh Sargodha and Hardit Singh Malik, who was the first Indian in the Royal Flying Corps, and fought with the 28th Squadron in the First World War. The founding members of the Khalsa Jatha contributed a monthly sum of £1 for the running costs of the Jatha and sought a location that would serve as a Gurdwara. The Sikh students met with Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, who was on a tour of England with the Indian cricket team while also attending the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in June 1911. A notice from the Times, 3 July 1911 read:

“A deputation of the British branch of the Khalsa Jatha and of military officers from Hampton Court has waited on his highness the Maharaja of

³⁵ Sant Attar Singh Ji (Mustuana Wale) (undated).

³⁶ Fenech and McLeod (2014), p 306.

³⁷ Bance, Paul and Anand (2008).

³⁸ Fenech and McLeod (2014) p 167.

Patiala to urge upon him the necessity of having a Dharamsala (Sikh Church) in the metropolis, and for that purpose to request him, on behalf of the Sikh community, to perform a preliminary ceremony in commemoration of the Coronation of their Majesties. The Maharaja acceded to the request, and promised a donation of £8,000 towards the project.” The Times, 3 July 1911.³⁹

Following receipt of the donation, the Jatha was able to lease a house in Putney (South London). The exact location of the house, street, or area is not known, and so the site which served as a base for the first Sikh congregations is currently unknown. In 1913, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh was again in London, and together with Teja Singh, he obtained a 64-year lease on a large three-story Georgian terraced house at 79 Sinclair Road in Shepherd’s Bush in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. This site in West London would serve as the first Sikh place of worship in Europe, and the Khalsa Jatha remained based there at the site for the next 63 years, serving the small but growing Sikh community. The Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Dharamsala/Gurdwara would quickly become a welcome base for many illustrious visitors who would help settle London, England and the wider British Isles.

The founding members of the Jatha and those that served in the early management committees included Maharajah Bhupinder Singh, who would visit the Dharamsala from his London base at the Savoy Hotel, the renowned Sikh scholar, Kahn Singh Nabha, who served as part of the 1913 committee and Hardit Singh Malik, the first Indian in the Royal Flying Corps who served with the 28th Squadron in the First World War, and served as President of the Khalsa Jatha.⁴⁰

Manmohan Singh, who trained as a civil engineer and completed a course in flying, was one of five Sikh Indian Air Force pilots who supported the British in 1940 in the Second World War, Khushwant Singh, who arrived in 1934 as a law student at Kings College London and would later become a prominent author, historian and writer and Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, the youngest daughter of Maharajah Duleep Singh, were also a regular visitor to the Khalsa Jatha.⁴¹

Udham Singh, arrived in England around 1933. On his arrival in London, Udham Singh moved to 79 Sinclair Road and stayed at the Dharamsala for around a month. Although he constantly moved addresses, he was a regular visitor to the Khalsa Jatha headquarters. He is renowned amongst the Sikh and Indian community for the assassination of Sir Michael O’Dwyer in London on

³⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the subsequent discussion in this section draws generally on Bance, Paul and Anand (2008).

⁴⁰ Bance, Paul and Anand (2008), p 3.

⁴¹ Bance, Paul and Anand (2008), Chapter 3.

13 March 1940. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was the former Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab in British India, who approved General Dyer actions at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, Punjab, in April 1919.⁴²

It was in 1953 that weekly *diwans* (religious discourses) commenced and in 1954 a full time *giani* (someone learned in the Sikh religion or knowledgeable in 'dharam' or 'path of righteousness') was employed. As funds were raised, the Jatha purchased a building known as Norland Castle, 62 Queensdale Road, London, in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, and in 1969 the *Jatha* moved into the building where the current Gurdwara now stands.⁴³

53 Holland Park, Kensington

An English Heritage blue plaque was placed at 53 Holland Park in Kensington on 1 January 2005, to commemorate Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last ruler of Lahore, who lived at the address between 1881 and 1886 (Figures 12 and 13). Maharaja Duleep Singh was the last Maharaja of Lahore and the Sikh Empire. He was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's youngest son and the only child of Maharani Jind Kaur. Following the death of his father in 1839 and after the death of his predecessors amongst turmoil in the Court of Lahore, he came to power at the age of five in September 1843. For a while, his mother ruled, as Regent, but after the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1846, Article 10 of the Treaty of Bhyroval⁴⁴ provided for the Maharani to be awarded a pension of 150,000 rupees and be replaced by a British resident in Lahore supported by a Council of Regency, with agents in other cities. After the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849 and the defeat of the Sikh Army, the terms of the annexation of Punjab were read out to Maharajah Duleep Singh on 29 March 1849. The Terms of 1849 stated that all property of the Punjab Kingdom, 'of whatever description and wheresoever found, shall be confiscated to the Honourable East India Company, in part payment of the debt due by the State of Lahore to the British Government, and of the expense of war.'⁴⁵ On 6 April 1849, the Maharajah was introduced to his new guardian, a British Army surgeon from Calcutta -- Dr John Login. John Login wrote to Queen Victoria, stating:

"...although the young Maharaja could not but feel that the terms which had been imposed on him were hard and severe, especially when the loss of the throne was occasioned by no fault on his part, but entirely from the treachery of those whom we had placed in power around him, the difficulties with which he had been surrounded in his precarious position, before he was received under the protection of the British government, were too strongly impressed on his mind to cause any hesitation on his

⁴² Wagner (2019).

⁴³ Central Gurdwara (Khalsa Jatha) London (2017).

⁴⁴ Singh A (2014).

⁴⁵ Singh A (2014).

part to retire into private life, and he accordingly submitted to the force of circumstance with very becoming dignity.”⁴⁶

The Maharaja was exiled to Britain at the age of 15, arriving in Southampton in May 1854. The Maharaja’s first meeting with Her Majesty Queen Victoria took place on 1 July 1854 at Buckingham Palace. Queen Victoria described the Prince following his visit as “extremely handsome and speaking perfect English, having a graceful and dignified manner”, and decided that his rank should be equal to a European Prince. He grew to be much admired by the Queen and became a regular at Buckingham Palace, Windsor and at the Queen’s summer retreat at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. In 1861 the Maharaja returned to India to meet his mother, Maharani Jind Kaur. No longer seen as a threat to the British, Duleep Singh was granted permission to bring his mother to London, where she died in 1863. On the journey to take her body back to India, Duleep Singh met Bamba Muller, who became his wife in 1864. They lived together at Elveden Hall Estate on the border of Suffolk and Norfolk with their children.



Figures 12 and 13: Residence of Maharaja Duleep Singh, 1881 - 1886

Later in life, he became increasingly alienated about the loss of his kingdom. He reconverted to Sikhi, influenced by the stories his mother told him of his past. In 1881, the Maharaja rented 53 Holland Park in Kensington, so that he could be close to the British Library where he researched the papers connected with the annexation of his Punjab Kingdom. The result of his research whilst in London was a publication titled *The Annexation of the Punjaub*, written with the help of a professional agitator, Major Thomas Evans Bell. The Maharaja’s publication reflected his embitterment about his kingdom, which was also demonstrated when he stated he was not interested in a peerage offered by Queen Victoria and Prime Minister William Gladstone. Lord Argyll visited the

⁴⁶ Lady Login (1890)

Elveden Estate to make an alternative offer of peerages for his sons in 1880. Prince Victor's tutor, Rev J. Osborne Jay, witnessed the meeting between the Maharaja and Lord Argyll, and recorded the response:

“I thank Her Majesty. Most heartily and humbly convey to her my esteem affection and admiration. Beyond that I cannot go. I claim myself to be royal; I am not English, and neither I nor my children will ever become so. Such titles—though kindly offered, we do not need and cannot assume. We love the English and especially their Monarch, but we must remain Sikhs.”⁴⁷

This polite refusal to accept a peerage reflects a Maharaja, who was then very aware of his identity as the “son of the ‘Lion of Punjab.’”

Abingdon House, Kensington

Jind Kaur, known affectionately as Jindan, was the daughter of the Manna Singh, the kennel keeper at the Royal Palace in Lahore. She came to the attention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who married Jind Kaur in 1835. In 1838 she gave birth to Duleep Singh, who became the Maharaja of the Sikh Empire in 1843 after the death of three successive monarchs following the death of his father Ranjit Singh in 1839. The story of Jind Kaur sees the Kennel Keeper's daughter become the most powerful woman in Northern India, as Regent to the young Maharaja Duleep Singh.

Upon the provocation of war by the British East India Company in 1845, the unsettled Sikh Army fought the First and Second Anglo-Sikh Wars between 1846 and 1849. The Sikh armies were led by Generals who had little appetite to fight for the interests of the Empire. They acted in a way that was more focused on meeting their individual needs and maintaining their localised power in the regions. Maharani Jind Kaur was imprisoned in 1847, and by 1849 Punjab was completely annexed by the British. The 11-year old Maharaja Duleep Singh taken under the care of army surgeon Dr. John Login and exiled to England in 1854. By 1860, her son Duleep Singh was living the life of an English aristocrat and contacted his mother via Col Ramsey in Kathmandu. Col Ramsay stated that:

“The Rani had much changed, was blind and lost much of the energy which formerly characterised her, taking apparently but little interest in what was going on.”⁴⁸

The Maharani was granted permission to travel to England and arrived in February 1861 – the first recorded Sikh woman in Britain.⁴⁹ Dr. Login arranged

⁴⁷ Wainwright (2013).

⁴⁸ Bance (2009), p 50.

⁴⁹ Nicholson (2018).

for a residence to be taken up upon arrival at No. 1 Lancaster Gate, two doors away from his own home. On meeting Jind Kaur, Dr. Login's remarked:

Jinda Kaur was truly an object of commiseration when one contrasted her present with her former state... Health broken, eye sight dimmed, her once famed beauty vanished, it was hard to understand the power she had wielded through her charms. It was only when she grew interested and excited in conversation, that one caught glimpses, beneath that air of indifference and the torpor of advancing age, of that shrewd and plotting brains which had distinguished the famous 'Messalina of the Punjab'.⁵⁰

After a short spell at Mulgrave Castle in Yorkshire, she returned to London to reside at Abingdon House, Kensington, under the care of an English lady. It was at Abingdon House that Duleep Singh commissioned George Richmond, an artist who painted the British gentry, nobility, and royalty, to paint his mother's portrait. Duleep Singh had negotiated the return of the Maharani's jewellery, which arrived just before the Maharani was due to meet Lady Login. The Maharani's delight was so great that "she forthwith decorated herself, and her attendants, with an assortment of the most wonderful necklaces and earrings, strings of lovely pearls and emeralds," to wear during the visit. The portrait of the Maharani by George Richmond shows her wearing some of the jewels, including the emerald and pearl necklace, which was sold at Bonhams in 2009 for £55,200.⁵¹ After just two years of being reunited with her son, on the morning of 1 August 1863, Maharani Jind Kaur passed away peacefully at Abingdon House. Duleep Singh was in Scotland at the time. Dr. Login arranged for the Maharani's 'sumptuous white velvet-draped and jewelled coffin' to be housed beneath the Dissenter's Chapel in Kensal Green Cemetery. The Kensal Green Cemetery dates from 1832, is an early example of a 'garden cemetery' and is the resting place for many famous people.⁵² The Maharani was laid in rest at the chapel through to the spring of 1864. This was to allow for Duleep Singh to make necessary arrangements for her body to be transported to India for cremation (as cremations were not legal in the United Kingdom at the time). It is recorded that Charles Dickens visited the Maharani's coffin whilst it laid in state, and wrote:

Down here in a coffin covered with white velvet, and studded with brass and nails, rests the Indian dancing woman whose strong will and bitter enmity towards England caused Lord Dalhousie to say of her, when in exile, that she was the only person our Government near feared.⁵³

The final home of the Maharani was Abingdon House, a grand house on Wrights Lane close to the Abingdon Villas and Scarsdale Villas area, which was built

⁵⁰ Bance (2009), p 51.

⁵¹ Bonhams (2017).

⁵² Dissenters Chapel, History and Architecture (undated).

⁵³ Bance (2012).

between 1850 and 1864, now known as Kensington Village. Today, the area has many buildings whose names are associated with Abingdon, linked to the Benedictine Abbey of St Mary at Abingdon. The abbots at the Abbey in Abingdon looked after the son of Aubrey de Vere I (who died circa 1112-1113), a Norman knight rewarded with estates including the manor of Kensington. Research by Peter Bance, has concluded that the original Abingdon House was demolished in the late nineteenth century and Wrights Lane is now known as Marloes Road, where a new row of houses and apartments now stand.⁵⁴ Today, Wrights Lane in West Kensington also associated with Anglo-Sikh history, with it being the location where the once-powerful Maharani of the Kingdom of Punjab died peacefully in 1863 at Abingdon House.

Nell Gwynn House, Chelsea

Maharajkumari Indira Devi, known as Princess Indira, was born on 26 February 1912 to Maharaja Paramjit Singh and Maharani Brinda of the Princely State of Kapurthala, Punjab⁵⁵. Princess Indira arrived in Britain in 1935 at the age of twenty-three to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London. The princess resided at apartment 512a in Nell Gwynn House, Sloane Street, Kensington.⁵⁶ Nell Gwynn House is a ten-storey residential art deco style residential building completed in 1937. Above the main entrance is Nell Gwynn's statue, with a Cavalier King Charles spaniel at her feet. Nell Gwynn (1650–1687) was one of the first actresses of English stage, and became best-known for being the long-term mistress of King Charles II. The statue is believed to be the only statue of a royal mistress anywhere in London.

Interestingly, Princess Indira had ambitions to work in the arts, as a film actress, similar to Nell Gwynn as actress on the theatre stages of London. Princess Indira worked briefly with Alexander Korda at London Films, who wanted to launch her as his next big star after Merle Oberon (the Anglo-Indian actress who was nominated for an Academy Award for her performance in *The Dark Angel*, 1935). However, the difficulties of the film industry in the late 1930s, primarily due to the onset of World War II, meant that ultimately Princess Indira did not get her big break in the movie business.

Her sisters, Princess Sushila and Princess Ourmilla would often come to visit her in London and stayed with her in Kensington. The three Kapurthala princesses were well-known amongst London socialites in the 1930s, and their visits were covered by all the fashion magazines of the time. In 1942, she joined the BBC and became known as the 'Radio Princess', hosting a radio programme in Hindi for Indian forces stationed in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. She also presented a program called the 'The Debate continues', a weekly report

⁵⁴ Bance (2009), p 167.

⁵⁵ Bance (2012) pp 23-24.

⁵⁶ Making Britain (undated): this is the source for much of the information in this section.

on the proceedings in the House of Commons, where she was the only woman in the Press Gallery. She was offered a permanent contract with the Overseas Service Division in 1943 and continued to work for the BBC until 1968. Princess Indira died in Ibiza, Spain in September 1979.

Conclusion

Sites in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have been presented here to provide a narrative of Sikh and Anglo-Sikh history, revealing the borough to have significant cultural and historical significance to the Sikh community in London.

In addition to the world-famous Victoria and Albert Museum, located in the borough's Museum quarter in South Kensington, and its wealth of Sikh treasures kept within its collections are the lesser-known military museums in Chelsea – the National Army Museum and the Museum of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The National Army Museum houses records and collections of the British Indian Army within the broader history of the British Army, including a display of a Sikh *dastaar boonga* (warrior turban) amongst a showcase of Sikh armour. In the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea stands the Chillianwallah Memorial, in memory of the British casualties of the battle which took place between the British East India Company and the Sikh armies in 1849. The Museum and Medal Room contain examples of the Punjab Medal, together with details of its history.

Events held in the borough include the Great Exhibition of 1851: amid all the wonders was the center-piece -- the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond, and more recently, in 1999, the Victoria and Albert Museum held the Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms exhibition to commemorate the tricentenary of the first *amrit sanchar* held in March 1699 in Anandpur Sahib, India. Institutions in the Borough include the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, where the Chillianwallah Memorial and cannons from the Sikh Empire can be found in the grounds, and Imperial College, London, where Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, the Indian-born American Sikh physicist known for his work in fibre optics completed his post-graduate studies.

Places of worship in the borough include St. Luke's Church in Chelsea, a neo-gothic designed church built in the 1800s in which is found the Punjab frontier Force Memorial Chapel. Nearby is St Peter's Church in Eaton Square, where the marriage of Prince Victor Albert Jay Duleep to Lady Anne Blanche took place in January 1898. The history of the first Sikh gurdwara in Europe is also closely associated with the borough, with the Khalsa Jatha British Isles UK moving from Sinclair Road in Shepherd's Bush to a building in the borough known as Norland Castle, 62 Queensdale Road, Kensington in 1969. Prince Victor Albert Jay Duleep Singh was married at St. Peter's Church in Eaton

Square in Belgravia. The wedding and the first time that an Indian Prince had married an English woman of the nobility.

Residences of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Holland Park and that of his mother, Maharani Jindan Kaur, who lived at Abingdon House, can be found in the West of the borough, as well as the flat of Princess Indira of Kapurthala who stayed at flat 512a in Nell Gwynn House in the South of Kensington.

Through the museums, the institutions, the churches, the gurdwara and the residences of notable individuals from the Panjab, the Streets of Kensington and Chelsea reveal fascinating stories from the history of the Sikhs, from the height of the Sikh Empire in the first half of the 19th century through to the modern day.

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