

Seroor Cemetery - A report of visit on 11th September 2015

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Details about the cemetery

Seroor (now "Shirur", but also spelt "Sirur" and "Serroor") was a garrison located approximately 40 kilometres away from Poonah (now "Pune"), about half way towards Ahmadnagar. Another name for the town is "Ghodnadi", which means "River Ghod" in the Marathi language.

The file F370/185 held at the British Library contains a location map and written directions. The British Library's photographic collection has 30 images of Seroor taken by George Crawford Hogg in the 1890s.¹ This includes one of the cemetery.²

The FIBIS Inscriptions Database (Volume 3), compiled from the records of genealogists Lt.-Col Hubert Kendall Percy-Smith, FSG, and Brigadier Humphry Bullock, CIE, OBE, lists 59 graves at Shirur (Seroor). The earliest grave in this set was in 1807, and the most recent was 1904. Of these, we were able to find only ten that could be recognized as at 11th September 2015.

As far as we were able to learn, Seroor Cemetery possibly was used for burials of Indians later than 1904, but generally the site gives the appearance that it is in a state of neglect. There are some signs of vandalism, and we were told that the young men of the town are in the practice of holding parties there. We saw evidence of this with broken bottles and playing cards strewn around the graves.



¹ www.bl.uk/catalogues/indiaofficeselect/JointEnqList.asp?txtPlace=Sirur&strCat=1.

² Photo 806/1(48).

Entrance to the cemetery

The following image shows the entrance to the Cemetery. It appears that the adjacent sites have been hoarded off pending development.

File: SC01 Seroor Cemetery entrance
Latitude: N 18°49.764' (18°49'45.8")
Longitude: E 74°21.821' (74°21'49.2")
Altitude: 573.00m



A recent grave

As indicated above, it is clear that the part of the cemetery set aside for the graves of Europeans was used for burials later than 1904. The blue tomb in the photograph below is conspicuous evidence of this. The inscription reads:

“In ever loving memory, Rev. Sadanand S. Gaikwad, born 13th November 1922, died 1st February 1984. [This memorial is the most recent in the Cemetery.]”

Note that P.R. Gaekwad was on the list of Reverends who served St Mary’s Church, Poona, 1974-1976.



The grave of Colonel Wallace

Note the tall obelisk to the immediate right of Reverend Gaekwad's grave in the above image. This is the last resting place of Colonel William Wallace. The inscription reads:

Sacred to the memory of Colonel William Wallace of His Majesty's 74th Regiment of Foot and Commander of the Force Subsidized by His Highness the Peshwar. A man respected and beloved for his ardent gallantry devoted public zeal, honorable rectitude and noble candor. He died at Serroor on the 11th May 1809 aged 47 years

The coordinates of the image below are:

Latitude: N 18°49.810' (18°49'48.6")

Longitude: E 74°21.775' (74°21'46.5")



Colonel William Wallace's name can be found easily in online searches since correspondence between him and Major-General Arthur Wellesley shed insights into the thinking of the man more widely known as the Duke of Wellington. Wallace was one of Wellesley's most trusted officers, and much revered by his men. There is an account of his military successes in the Gazette mentioned below, and this also reveals how people came to the tomb to worship as the "guardian of Sirur" as late as 1884. The folklore that grew up around Colonel Wallace attributed him with supernatural powers and it was said that his ghost inhabited the cemetery. One report in 1852 said that:

"Whenever a public calamity is about to occur the ghost of Wallace Saheb is seen restless and wandering about the limits of the camp. Unless ceremonies are performed at the tomb to appease his spirit and avert impending danger, the most dreadful consequences are sure to follow."

See:- Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency (Facsimile Reproductions). Poona District Volume XVIII Part III. Originally printed in 1885. Reprinted in 1992. E-book edition 2006. Published by the Executive Editor and Secretary Gazetteer Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay. E-book prepared by Nirmal Software Services. http://pune.nic.in/puneCollectorate/Gazette/places_s.html#.

Other identifiable graves as at 11th September 2015

Constance Fraser

Current legible inscription:

Constance, infant daughter of T & O Fraser March 12th 1844



Jane French

Current legible inscription:

In memory of Jane, daughter of Rev. O. French, American Missionary, who died at Seroor May 10th 1842, aged 15 months and 3 days. "Such is the Kingdom of Heaven"



William Hotchkiss French

Current legible inscription:

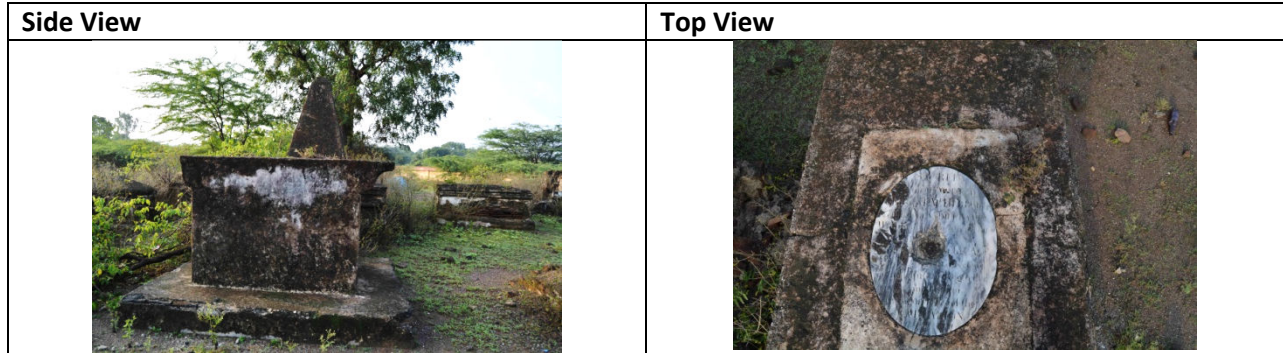
In memory of William Hotchkiss, son of Revd O. French, American Missionary, died July 25th 184? (no longer legible– but FIBIS database gives the year as 1845), aged . "Thy will be done"



Emmanuel Herbert

Current legible inscription:

Sacred to the memory of Ensign EM^l. Herbert who died on 9th ?? of April in the ?? of his age. ??? erected ... of regard and esteem by the officers of the battalion



Robert Hamilton Miller

Current legible transcription:

For the memory of Robert Hamilton son of Dr Miller Esq. Poona Irr Horse Born July 31st 1847, died July 12th 1848



Captain Garrick Read

Current legible transcription:

Sacred to the memory of Capt Garrick Read of the 2nd Regiment Madras Cavalry. This ?? erected by his ... in testimony ... for him and affection ... his death took place at only a few hours ?? at Sirroor August 14th 1807 and in the 26th year of his age



Helen Elizabeth Sykes

Current legible inscription:

In memory of Hel eth , ..., aged six months

The FIBIS Inscriptions Database record provides the missing details, namely:

Helen Elizabeth, daughter of Capt & Mrs Sykes, died 5 August 1825, aged 6 months 7 days



Georgina Augusta Tapp

Current legible inscription:

Sacred to the memory of Georgina Augusta wife of Lieut Col Thomas Tapp First Bombay Fusiliers and Commandant of The Poona Irregular Horse who died at Seroor on the 6th November 1847 In the 38th year of her all deservedly beloved and sincerely regretted by her relatives and friends



First Lieutenant Henry Thomas Walker

Current legible inscription:

Sacred to the memory of First Lieutenant Henry Thomas Walker of The 1st Bombay Fusiliers who died at Seroor of small pox on the 19th day of February 1851, aged 26 years. Most deeply loved by his brother officers



Unidentified graves

The memorial below had been knocked off its pedestal and the only information showing on the inscription was “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. H. Brewer, Poona”. Note that there was an H. Brewer who was a sculptor in Poona. This information was found on the memorial to his wife, Mary Brewer, situated in St Mary’s Church Poona. She died in 1866.



The images below show the general condition of the remainder of the European section of the cemetery.

