

Indiaman

My great-great-grandmother Frances Griffiths was born in 1815 in Southwark, the fourth child of Captain Charles Mortlock of HEIC's Maritime Service. He was the third surviving son of John Mortlock III, land owner, banker, and political master of the town of Cambridge.

Charles was born in the parish of "St Bennett's", Cambridge, but baptised in St Edward's on the 21st October 1782. There is no evidence of any seafaring in his forebears - farmers, surgeons, bankers, grocers, drapers - but in 1796, aged 13, he shipped as an East India Company's midshipman in the *Taunton Castle* (Captain Edward Shudd). It rather follows that his formal education was pretty limited, except that he would have had a thorough drubbing in the mathematics necessary for ocean navigation. *Taunton Castle* sailed for India from Portsmouth on 12th April, in company, for mutual protection, with four others of the 1795-season China Fleet, in a convoy under the orders of Admiral Pringle.

Taunton Castle was a purpose-built merchantman, and was, like other Indiamen, owned by an independent "ship's husband" (in her case, Peter Esdaile - Esdailes were banking associates of John Mortlock) typically fronting a syndicate of investors holding sixteenth or thirty-second shares in the ship, but built to East India Company standards and chartered to the Hon. Company for her working life of maybe six (some made 12) round-trip voyages to the Orient. She was 182' long, 42' in the beam, 1246 tons, square sterned and carried 26 six- and twelve-pounder guns, had a complement of 140 hands, and had been built on the Thames in 1790. She was the size of a ship of the line, and, with her (albeit smaller) broadside guns, and typical Nelsonic chequerboard paint scheme, easily mistaken for one. Whether Charles had a true vocation for the sea is difficult to assess; his father's financial stake in the ship, and a sudden opportunity to settle whichever of his sons happened to be handy and was at the appropriate age (or could be so presented), may have had more to do with the selection of a career for Charles.

However the realities of an 18th century seafaring life were not slow in making their appearance. Off Bali on 29th January 1797 the Fleet had a close call when they were surprised by a 6-ship squadron of French frigates under Rear-Admiral Pierre Sercey. *Taunton Castle* ran out her guns, including some wooden dummies, and paraded on deck, in their red coats, the St Helena regiment that was taking passage from China, in the hope that the French would take them for marines. Commodore Lennox in the *Woodford* had the Indiamen hoist the White Ensign and the French sheered off. Another close shave was in store; on 10th February *Taunton Castle* grounded in Cajeli Bay, at Buru in the Moluccas - where she had no business to be, and which episode brought disgrace on the Captain. It is to be hoped that young Mortlock observed and learned from this.

Sir Alan Villiers (who should know) ranks the East India Company's Commanders as the élite of sailing ship Masters. He ascribes this to HEIC's apprenticeship system. Although Commanders had to pay a high premium for their posts (as much as £5000) all had to start as midshipmen ("Guinea-pigs") and work their way up.

One return in February 1798 Charles received his first promotion, to 5th Mate - skipping an intervening two-year tour as 6th Mate. At 15 he was an Officer, and had charge of men. Still in *Taunton Castle* he sailed again to India under Captain Bond with the 1798 fleet, taking departure from Portsmouth on the last day of the year and returning to moorings in the Thames at the end of June 1800. The voyage was not without incident, for before it had hardly started, four days out from the Downs, on 8th December 1798, *Taunton Castle* took the ground in Sandown Bay, but got off with little damage. In this she fared better than the Indiaman *Henry Addington* which was driven on shore by her pilot on Bembridge Ledge the same day and which became a total wreck. *Taunton Castle* and *Thames* eventually took out East the £167,351 6s.8d. of silver which had (all) been recovered from the *Addington* before the locals descended on her.

Charles was now promoted 4th Mate and appointed to the 1200-ton *Ocean* (Captain Patton), which sailed for Canton on her maiden voyage in January 1801, returning in June 1802. Her eventual fate epitomised the risk of casual shipwreck that was never far away - she was lost with all hands, on her fifth voyage, in the China Seas in September 1810.

As Third Mate in the 1200-ton *Elphinstone* in 1802, Charles now stood his own watch. Off-watch he was the equivalent of the "Sub of the Gunroom" in a later RN ship, messing with the junior Mates and the midshipmen. Cabin space was too valuable to be wasted on junior officers. Charles would have had the management of their mess and which also accommodated those passengers who had not paid maybe £1000 to join the Captain's table. The profit from mess-management would have been a useful supplement to Charles' modest pay of £3 10s per month, hardly more than the £2 5s allowed to a Midshipman. However all East India Company Maritime Service officers traded on their own account, and, being mostly gentry or even of noble stock would in the junior ranks probably have had an allowance from their families. Commanders were allowed fifty-six tons of private cargo, as well as first call on any space not taken up by the Company, and might make £10,000 on a round trip (one made £30,000), as well as clearing perhaps another £10,000 on passage money, cabin rental and table fees from the more affluent passengers. Charles' captain, Milliken Craig, had lost his previous ship the *Queen* by fire in the Bay of Bahia in July 1800; another reminder of the perils Charles was facing which were not shared by his land-lubber brothers. The violence of the enemy is by tradition a trivial addition to the danger of the sea. For instance, in 1809 eight Indiamen were lost at sea, four of them in one hurricane of Mauritius.

An additional ever-present hazard was disease. India was notorious as a place where a man might be bright as a button at breakfast and dead as a door-nail by dinner-time. The *Hugh Inglis* (Captain Fairfax) came out in the same convoy as the *Elphinstone*. In Calcutta in December 1803 her First Mate died, her Second Mate was made up to First, and her Third hand would have moved up to Second, but he was already ill and also died, twelve days after his senior. Charles got his chance; he was transferred from *Elphinstone* and promoted Acting Second Mate, and another officer was brought in as Third. Not the least attraction of this move was the chance of a cabin, which he would have shared with

the surgeon. As it happened, the Fourth Mate, who had not had a share in the promotions - perhaps thought not quite ready to take his own independent watch - died at sea ten months later and the Fifth and Sixth each received a step for the last few months of the voyage.

But there was a worm in the apple - or, more specifically, in the woodwork. There had already been concern aboard the *Inglis*, regarding leaks, in Calcutta. Arriving at Penang in April it was clear that the ship's leaky state was past ignoring. A formal Survey found leaks in the bands just above the coppering, caused by teredo worm. At this point several Lascar (Goanese) crewmen jumped ship; clearly in their (experienced) opinion the ship was unsafe. On 4th May there was a crisis. The carpenter, probing for leaks, poked a stick into a hole near the keelson, and water poured in. Pumping became continuous. Landing of the cargo had already commenced, much into an English prize of the French privateer *Fortune* which prize had been recaptured, by the *Inglis*, en route off the Laccadives while *Inglis* was on a side-trip to Bombay a month earlier. The boats were landed and the guns swung out into another Indiaman in the harbour. By 20th it was discovered that the worm had eaten right through the planking at a place where the copper sheathing had come adrift. The ship was hove down to work on this but, the ship righted on 22nd after repair work, by 26th May she was settling fast. Three of the four cables to which she was riding were peremptorily cut so that the ship swung over a sandbank with only sixteen feet of water over it. Boats were sent to all the ships around to borrow as many pumps as could be cadged or loaned.

It took until 14th June to replace all the bad planks, the carpenter and his crew working, it will be understood, in the dark, in a listed ship, on a surface that was mostly under water. A week later it was discovered that the mainmast was sprung in two places, presumably because of the strain of hauling down and days spent heeled over; it was 4th July before the mast was successfully fished. All this time the landed stores and cargo were being brought back aboard; on 25th in came the guns. Finally on 8th August, after over four unproductive months at Penang, the *Hugh Inglis* sailed for England. The ship was still somewhat leaky and this was aggravated when pitching in a head sea. Other troubles loomed. In October the fresh water began to run short because of leaks from the butts - *Woodford*, in company, had the same problem, which is when *Inglis*, sounding her butts, found she was unable to help. However, a month later *Inglis* was able to send *Woodford* ten gallons of lime juice to alleviate the "deplorable" state of scurvy on board the latter. After over four months at sea *Inglis* made St Helena on 16th December. A tough trip; but good experience.

Hugh Inglis (and *Elphinstone*) arrived back at moorings in February 1805. Charles was then appointed in May to the 861-ton *Streatham* as Second Mate, a step funded by James Thomas' mortgaging his share in the *Streatham*. The ship sailed from Cork at the end of August 1805 under convoy of Sir Home Popham on this, his fifth two-year round trip, this time to Madras via Funchal, Rio and the Cape, returning in April 1807. After Charles had left her, *Streatham*, still under Charles' old Captain, John Dale, and in spite of her thirty 18-pounders, was taken by the French homeward bound on 31st May 1809, although she

was successfully re-taken in one of the many British raids on Mauritius later in the same year. A problem for Dale had been that his Chinese and Portuguese crewmen could not be kept to their quarters in action; only the “European” seaman would stand to the guns. This problem must have been general for Indiamen when up against a professional enemy, although their discipline was enforced in the same way as in the Royal Navy of that time, namely by the lash.

For an account of this voyage, see *Henry Martyn*, Constance Padwick (paperback, London 1959). The saintly Henry, a cousin of the author, went out to India on his first appointment as an HEIC chaplain on board HEICS *Union*, in company. The fleet had numerous soldiers embarked and these were landed in Table Bay where they took the Cape from the Dutch.

England was at war for most of this period and Charles must have had a stimulating boyhood under the Red Ensign, which in 1801 displaced HEIC’s 13-striped red and white ensign (with the Union, which had in 1707 replaced St George, in the top canton next the hoist) which had been worn by Indiamen since 1660. Besides the French, any Indies-bound merchantman might have to contend with well-found and well-manned pirates in the South Atlantic between St Helena and Ascension, and Malay and Chinese pirates in the Straits of Malacca or further East. Against these an Indiaman could give a good account of herself. There was no nonsense then about only being allowed to use fire hoses.

At the age of 26, after “Using the Sea” thirteen years, over 10 years’ accredited seetime, five round trip voyages to India and China and a period in Bengal waters, and after conveniently adding a year to his age, Charles was appointed to his first command, the 26-gun *Charlton*, built in Liverpool by Humble and Hardy in 1798. She would have cost in the region of £40,000. Little did I know, when I set out for Singapore as a Midshipman, 160 years later, how I was following in his wake.

On 27th April 1809, supported as witnesses by his two next brothers, John Cheetham and Thomas, and by the bride’s two next sisters Mary Ann and Eliza, Charles had married Emelia Ann, the twenty-year-old eldest child of his father’s business partner, Captain James Thomas and his wife Ann of 16 Dover Place, New Kent Road, Southwark. Smart work you might think. The couple’s first child, Anne Elizabeth, was born almost exactly nine months later, on 26th January 1810, born with her father far away at sea although her mother had the comfort of the company of her own mother and sisters

As a Commander, Charles had status. On arrival in India he would be greeted with a 13-gun salute; the guard would be turned out whenever he entered or left the Hon. Company’s Fort. Over his buff breeches and waistcoat he would wear a “fine” blue coat with black Genoa velvet collar and cuffs, his gilt buttons bearing the Hon. Company’s arms. Over the coat he could wear a black velvet panteen cape. At the main meal of the day, dinner, served in wartime at 2 pm so that the ship could be darkened at twilight, Charles would preside from the centre of an athwartships table in the cuddy.

The War with France coloured Charles' early service. In 1798 Nelson, by his brilliant and total victory in Aboukir Bay, dashed Napoleon's hopes of a land conquest of India. Successively the French were reduced, but not eliminated. The Marquis of Wellesley and his brother Arthur (later Duke of Wellington) at Seringapatam and at Assaye and elsewhere successfully removed French influence on land in India. In 1805 Nelson went further and at Trafalgar destroyed the main maritime force of France. However there always remained maritime jackals, snapping at stragglers on the fringes of what was now the greatest empire the world had seen. Guerre de Course was always the weapon of the weaker power (that's why it has a French name) but, though little short of piracy, it could still be uncomfortable for its victims. Even in the Channel, Indiamen were not safe. Marryat, who draws from the life, in "Poor Jack" has a spirited engagement between a returning Indiaman and a French lugger operating as a privateer which he dates to 1800.



This rather blurred picture (taken through glass) shows an HEIC Commander's dress coat ca.1820
[NMM]

The *Charlton* sailed from Portsmouth on 7th July 1809 for Madeira and Bengal. Alas, on 18th November, homeward bound in company with the *Windham* and the *United Kingdom*, off the Nicobar Islands (of whose familial significance I had no inkling when I stopped briefly at Car Nicobar in 1957), she fell in with hostile sail, the French frigates *Vénus* (44 guns) and *Manche*, and a corvette, the *Créole*. After initially, a stiff fight (described by the French as "très-opiniâtre") by the *Windham*, the heavily out-gunned Indiamen were taken, and escorted in prize towards Mauritius. On the way all six ships ran into a hurricane, which dismasted the *Vénus* and enabled the *Windham* to escape (she was taken again in another fight in July 1810 .. and recaptured later that year). On 2nd January *Charlton* arrived at Port Louis, to be recovered by British forces later.

However *Charlton's* and the *United Kingdom's* officers and passengers had earlier been dumped by the French at Visagapatam after adverse winds prevented them being landed at Penang. A family story suggests that this decision was expedited by Charles greeting his

captor with a masonic handshake. At any rate they were in Calcutta by Christmas. A report of the action was published in Cambridge in June 1810, copied from American sources. Charles himself was home in July, repatriated in an Indiaman, HEICS *Metcalf*, which was owned by his father-in-law. Charles and Emelia's next child, Amelia, was born in May 1811, in No.17 next to her parents, which modest house had been bought for them by James Thomas. In 1820 the Thomases moved to Clapham and the Mortlocks seem to have joined them until Charles left the sea and was able to settle down. James Thomas had been in business partnership with John Mortlock for some years and the Thomas's and Mortlocks were familiar to each other, as was further demonstrated by Emelia's sister Elizabeth's betrothal to Charles' brother Henry in 1808, whom she married in 1817. From the conjunction of Charles' marriage and Henry's betrothal one might infer some direct arrangement between the Mortlock and Thomas fathers, perhaps prompted by Charles' brother Frederick's elopement to Gretna the previous year.

Charles does not seem to have suffered professionally from the *Charlton* debacle, although he may have lost his pay; freight in merchant shipping - i.e. safe delivery - is the mother of wages; no freight, no pay. However this may not have been the HEIC rule; various payments to *Charlton*'s crew survive in her account book kept by Charles long after the event. It would seem that the investment in private cargo was not his own but his father-in-law's; Charles owed him his position and in some ways went to sea as his agent. No good for the family; the return cargo and specie, aimed to turn a profit of £10,000, would have been forfeit to the French.

In December 1810 Charles was, at East India House, sworn in to the command of the 738-ton *Cambridge*, putting in his first appearance on board on 11th February. There were many fingers in the *Cambridge* ownership pie besides Charles' father and father-in-law; Robert Downie of Calcutta was listed as a co-owner - the *Cambridge* had been built in Calcutta in 1799. Originally the *Porcher*, her name had been changed when bought by the Mortlock interest in 1810. Square-sterned and with a figurehead she bore 80 men, with a cutlass and some form of small arm for each, and twenty 6- and 12-pounder guns backed by 13½ barrels of powder, thirty rounds of great shot and a hundredweight of small. She was victualled for ten months, carried three anchors with seven cables for them, three suits of sails and a ton of spare cordage.

The *Cambridge* sailed from Torbay for Bengal and Amboyna that May, under Letters of Marque. Too much should not be read into that; the practice was general among Indiamen during the War; but it did give legal authority to snapping up any minor French trifle that might happen by. Lestock Wilson and JH Palmer, James Thomas' regular business partners, put up the associated £1500 bond. This was required in case of legal action if the Lettered ship overstepped her authority to act against the property of the French Republic and its subjects "except only within Harbours or roads within shot of cannon of princes and States in Amity with His Majesty". The capability and manning of the ship was carefully guaranteed by the applicant to prove to the High Court of Admiralty that she was at least nominally fit for the service proposed.

The ship returned to moorings in July 1812 and in June 1813 Charles took command of his old ship the *Streatham*. His appointments reflect his father and father-in-law's investments in all three ships - *Charlton*, *Cambridge*, *Streatham* - and in their cargoes. His move from the *Cambridge* reflects the fact that she was not "taken up" by the HEIC for the 1812-13 season and so as an HEIC Commander it would be appropriate to move to another HEIC ship. On the *Streatham*'s return he transferred to command of the 26-gun *Lowther Castle*, as it happened for four round-trip voyages. New into service in 1811, she was a large ship of 1507 tons and therefore a prestigious and presumably lucrative command. She embodied the straight sides that had replaced the traditional tumble-home that had spelt doom for too many Indiamen when large seas came inboard in heavy weather. She would have been smart as paint in spite of the livestock - goats for milking, chickens, all sorts - which cluttered the upper deck at the start of any voyage, until eaten in the great cabin, or perhaps washed overboard. Her husband was John Wordsworth, very probably a relation of the poet whose brother John had been lost in command of an Indiaman wrecked by its pilot off Portland Bill in February 1805.



HEICS Lowther Castle off Table Bay (Huggins) [NMM]

Charles remained *Lowther Castle*'s Commander until 1822, when, after over twenty-six years at sea, two-thirds of them in wartime, he swallowed the anchor and retired to shore. By this time, by seniority, he was commodore of the HEIC fleet. His retirement may have been connected with a grumpy complaint he made to the Court about being ordered to sail for China out of season, or possibly to growing weary of the rough and tumble of life in command. At the time Charles was on his way home on his second *Lowther Castle* trip; James Thomas was bullish about the expected financial returns writing that he hoped Charles would be able to pay off all his debts - the inference is that after all those wearing

years at sea Charles was only barely solvent in his own right. The year before James Thomas had been writing that Charles “appears in the eyes of the World a man of great credit and property accounted against him at the Jerusalem Coffee House” [the venue for business between all the East India shipping people - Commanders, owners and insurers etc.]. However James Thomas also writes, in the same letter “I have been overdrawn by Charles”.

Throughout his service Charles was employed on long-haul round trips to Bombay, Madras or Calcutta, and on to Whampoa, Batavia or Amboyna - the Netherlands having become Napoleonic property, we had taken over the Dutch colonies in the East Indies (to the immense relief of the natives). Calls en route might be made at Madeira, Ascension, St Helena, the Cape, the Comoros or, when it was safely British, Mauritius, and Ceylon. The passage to or from the East might take a year, although eight months was more usual. The frigate *Medusa* once made it home from Bengal to Portsmouth in only 12 weeks.

There were always more Indiamen than required and each trip had to be pleaded (and bribed?) for. For instance, the 1818 Bombay and China trip for Charles and *Lowther Castle* was only achieved because James Thomas successfully intrigued with one of the Twinings - an old India name - to get the nomination of Jacob Bosanquet (as it happens, the author's maternal four greats uncle), an HEIC Director and ex-Chairman of the Hon. Company.

Charles' voyages are recorded, in intimate navigational and management detail, in his logs - often in his own hand - in the India and Oriental Studies section of the British Library in London. For a double voyage the *Lowther Castle*, besides her 154 officers and ratings, might have on board a military draft of up to three hundred of all ranks from a variety of King's and HEIC European regiments, including maybe three dozen authorised female and infant dependants; a half dozen or so HEIC Civilians or other British gentry or merchants and their families; and perhaps 50 Chinese or Indians being repatriated for whatever reason. Most would disembark at the first port of call in India but there would be others sent aboard for the Oriental legs of the journey, for instance a squad of convicts for the new Prince of Wales Island colony at Penang. (Did Charles perhaps meet the Carnegie or Anderson grandparents of his future Griffiths granddaughter-in-law? I wonder..) The ship would carry mails and an outward cargo of coal and manufactures and European stores and would similarly return but with tea, Chinese porcelain, silks and cottons, jute and indigo, tropical hardwoods and spices, gems and ivories, Trichinopoly silver, oriental lacquer ware and oriental objets d'art (apes and peacocks even). A Captain could turn many pennies trading on his own account, as we have seen, and there was keen competition to be the first of the new year's Fleet to land European goods in India, and after a smart passage to sell off any surplus European victuals. He would also be expected to execute commissions for all his numerous relations. We know, for instance, that Charles commissioned and brought home a complete service of Chinese porcelain for Emelia's sister Frances Phillips, very probably a wedding present.

Ships' Husbands, investors, Commanders, officers and passengers might well be business

partners or blood relations. In 1815 at Madras, still outward bound to Whampoa, Charles embarked his brother Henry who was hoping to recover his health via a sea trip. In the event this did not happen and, granted leave in January 1816, Henry remained on board for the passage home. A painting of *Lowther Castle* with St Helena as a backdrop by John William Huggins (who had served at sea before taking up the brush professionally), may date from this trip; either bought by Henry or presented to him by Charles, and still owned by Henry's family. During this trip there was some unexplained trouble over Charles' purser but as he was a Wordsworth this was all handled *sub rosa* and there may have been some unrecovered financial loss to Charles.



HEICS *Lowther Castle* off St Helena (Huggins)

In the Channel the pilot, as was customary, brought off the latest newspapers. They carried the story of John Mortlock's death in Cambridge three days before. Charles' mother did not long survive her titan of a husband and died in April 1817 what time Charles was again away, this time outward bound for Bombay and again to China.

It is clear that in many respects Charles was not his own master, but an agent for the collective Mortlock-Thomas interests. John Mortlock and James Thomas had lost heavily over the taking of the *Charlton* and the *Streatham*, and later by a débacle over a private voyage by the *Cambridge*, and looked to Charles' turning in £10,000 a trip to bale out them, and also Emelia and Elizabeth and their sisters, whose jointures had been placed on the line presumably to hold off external creditors. There was nothing unfair in this; Charles' positions in Command would have been bought at great expense and were in a sense family investments.

After ineffectually trying to ban it, John Company capitulated over Private Trade and settled for regulating it rather than forbidding it, shrewdly presuming that if allowances were laid down per rank, at least seniors would stop juniors overdoing their entitlement. In early nineteenth century regulations even the midshipmen were allowed a ton of private freight each. Third Mates got three tons, Seconds six, the Chief Mate eight, and the commander, as above, a mighty fifty-six tons of space on shipboard to stow what would fetch a mighty profit at the end of a voyage. There was some restriction on types of goods to protect Company monopolies, but ample scope within that to allow a wide selection of merchandise. This was just one aspect of very detailed regulation which had grown up out of experience, over the years, to govern what went on in HEIC ships. For instance there were penalties on Commanders for carrying undisclosed or disapproved-of passengers, and limits on how much HEIC's and Government's own servants might be dunned for messing en route, and detailed list and scales of stores to be on board and who was to sign for them.

We shall now look in more detail at the four voyages that Charles made in command of the *Lowther Castle*.

For Charles' first voyage in the *Lowther Castle* he had a John Wordsworth as Midshipman and Coxswain - presumably a sprig of the Wordsworth East India dynasty. During the voyage the Second Mate died at sea and also the Master at Arms; people were made up to fill the vacancies, as later when Charles lost his Gunner. His specialists typically included a baker, a poulterer and so forth. A surgeon en route to a shore appointment in Madras was on board with his family; somewhere in the South Atlantic his wife died, leaving him to face a new life in India with a brood of children and no helpmeet.

The 34th Foot was remarked on elsewhere as "wild Irish lads drawn from Ireland's teeming gaols" who were dreaded as much for their savagery as for the disease they brought on board. Charles was lucky in that although he had a draft for the 34th they seem mostly to have been English; his sick lists were modest, initially one and a half dozen each of soldiers and seamen and later maybe only one or two hands. Perhaps it was fortunate that the numbers for the 34th were diluted with men for the 56th.

Charles went on board at the end of January and the ship dropped down to St Helens to await convoy. On 11th February Charles went on board HMS *Acbar* to receive his sailing instructions and on 16th weighed. The anchor broke its ring, and in spite of trying to weigh it with its buoy rope, was lost, so there was a delay while a replacement was obtained from the Portsmouth dockyard. *Lowther Castle* soon lost, or gave the slip to, *Acbar*, and was early in Funchal Roads where she lay waiting for the convoy to concentrate again, and presumably had first bite at an onward cargo of Madeira wine. As a reward *Lowther Castle* was caught by a gale, and had to cut her cable and stand out to sea, and beat on and off until the rather exposed anchorage could again be used.

It is to be presumed that the hands amplified their grog ration with surreptitious supplies

from bum-boats. Out of the bag came the cat (that's where the phrase comes from); two dozen for a seaman - William Mellish - for insolence and mutinous conduct "it being the opinion of the Captain and Officers that he deserved the same". In disciplinary matters and also in severe weather Charles would consult with his officers, bringing them on-side in a very modern manner and also helping his case in the log should the Company be challenged, or seek to challenge him; quite a different style from the heaven-born autocracy of a Captain RN. Shortly after this incident one Michael Ford was given two dozen for theft. Ford was plainly a skate and six weeks later earned three dozen for another theft and for "secreting himself in the hold". Oddly this miscreant was not among the eighteen men pressed by HMS *Minden* as soon as *Lowther Castle* arrived in Madras in July, where *Metcalf* and *Streatham* were already lying. Boredom was a problem; the hands were set to making up junk when the Boatswain had no other tasks for them; for the Chinese on board the real treat was to sit picking oakum day after day.

After three and a half weeks at Madras, *Lowther Castle* sailed for China via Penang and Malacca. At the former at least and probably elsewhere Charles embarked "private trade". The ship had two months in China and then sailed via a stop in the East Indies in the Sunda Strait near Krakatoa, more conspicuous then than now. Usually the ship was in company with the rest of the East Indies fleet of that year and, with a war on or possible, the watch was always cautious when a strange sail was sighted. A British warship encountered would board; and the log meticulously records exchanges of coded signals using the Company's numerical flag codes.

On 9th May after nearly 15 months away the Lizard was in sight; the pilot boarded off Dungeness at 2 p.m. the next day, so they had a smart run up-Channel - not always the case. It was two more months before the ship was snug in Blackwall and then Charles had a 6-month stand-off with his family before sailing for China again, this time via Bombay.

For this next trip young Wordsworth was made up to 4th Mate. Aft there were only five passengers - a financial blow for Charles - but they included a parson to take Divine Service and perhaps to write to the Company and complain if Charles did not facilitate this. Forward, crammed between decks, were nearly a hundred men of the 47th - including quite a few Irishmen - with 12 of their women and 15 children.

In January 1817, still in northern latitudes, the ship was in a severe gale and her rigging was badly shaken. In March the ship put into Table Bay for water. The troops were being served a pint of tea each morning - an expensive luxury but necessary to make the ship's water even barely palatable. In August, still on the run out to Whampoa, the ship made a presumably lucrative call at Penang where Charles' cousin Edward Woodhouse, a Lieutenant in the Company's army, joined the ship for the trip home, which he will have enjoyed since it included a long visit to China from September to January.

James Thomas held a high opinion of his son-in-law, and had high hopes for him this trip, writing on 7th August: "There is not his equal in the service having commanded four different ships and five voyages Captain, to give him his due if he returns as poor as he

went out it is not his own fault either by extravagance or want of execution. Dame Fortune has never smiled on him yet - it will be more than ill luck if he does not make at least 8 or 10,000£.”

In any ship an undetected thief corrodes all relationships between decks. On the run home one of the Quartermasters was caught in this and disgraced and given three dozen with the cat. By March 1818 the ship was again in Table Bay and four months later, home.

For the next voyage, as above again to Bombay and China, instead of King's troops there was a draft of sixty recruits for the company's European regiments, and twenty "Marine Boys" for Bombay, presumably products of Jonas Hanway's Marine Society. The boys were destined for the Bombay Marine, the Company's private Navy and the ancestor of the RIN. The recruits were new to discipline but behaved better after a Private, soon after sailing, was given "only" 1 dozen for striking his corporal. Reading between the lines the officers perhaps persuaded Charles that there was some mitigation. However the spell wore off and in March a Private dared a show of insolence to Charles after refusing to go on sentry duty. In a surprising act of clemency the man was merely put in irons for two days and had his grog (which had probably caused the problem) stopped for two weeks. A month later, at the end of April, a soldier was caught stealing a pair of shoes and for this and other thefts he was given two dozen in front of the other soldiers who were paraded to witness the punishment.

The sailors had already needed their own lesson in discipline. In March a seaman had been insolent and disobedient to the 6th Mate, probably an inexperienced youth. Charles awarded two dozen. At this the seamen came aft in a body and "insisted" on the man's not being punished. This would not do; Charles and his officers armed themselves and had all hands turned up to witness the punishment. To rub home who was running the ship the soldiers were then turned out and exercised with muskets. After landing the soldiery at Bombay there was more trouble and a Quartermaster was disgraced for drunkenness.

By the end of November 1819 the ship was snug in China. Coming home there was trouble with an Irishman who was ordered to be confined for insolence to Charles and to Wordsworth, still shipping as 4th Mate. Below, the man set the Master at Arms a conundrum by seizing the irons and throwing them overboard. This sort of thing contained potential embarrassment, as in China for the trip home Charles had embarked Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, whose importance to the Mortlock/Thomas interest could not be better illustrated than by his eponymous status to James Thomas' ship. The importance of this gentleman, a member of HEIC's Select Committee, is clear from the eleven-gun salute he received from the Company's fort at St Helena.

The isolation of life in an Indiaman is brought home by a log entry for 11th March 1820. *Lowther Castle* speaks the brig *Broughton*, twenty-one days out from Hull, and learns of the deaths of the King (George III) and of his son the Duke of Kent, the bad father of the baby future Queen Victoria. On 9th April the pilot boarded off Dover and took over the ship for her passage to Blackwall Reach.

There is comparatively little foul weather in the logs. This is because of the way the voyages were scheduled. Much of the journey was in relatively sheltered water, up the east coast of Africa via the Mozambique Channel (where, however, sea states can still get pretty high) and then to Johanna in the Comoros for instance, and a fairly long haul down the Malacca Straits. Enough was known to avoid the typhoon season - that is the reason there was anxiety if the Hoppo of Canton delayed giving his chop (clearance) for the return trip from Whampoa.

In the New Year of 1821 the *Lowther Castle* was at Blackwall preparing for her next China trip, this time via Bengal. Captain Mortlock came on board 13th January and the ship dropped down to the Downs. On 23rd she sailed having embarked her passengers - 38 civilians including a parson, large drafts for three King's regiments under only two officers, a colonel and a cornet, and twenty Chinese from other ships whom the company was obliged to repatriate from England. The military draft would, as usual, have made the ship pretty crowded forward but mercifully the soldiers seemed to have been mostly English. Poor Charles! He was leaving behind his new born son and heir, Charles junior, who was born on the day the ship sailed. This was doubly poignant for him because an earlier Charles born in April 1817 had not survived.

The outward voyage was initially expeditious and uneventful. There were no intermediate calls outward bound to relieve the monotony. Divine Service was held regularly on board, possibly conducted by the parson, Rev. Dr Parish (true!) although Charles does not say so. In inclement weather it was held in the cuddy, which rather suggests that religious observance was conducted for the benefit of the afterguard and not for the edification and salvation of the foremast hands. Only occasionally was Divine Service cancelled due to bad weather and if so, that was logged. When there was no parson on board Charles officiated according to the custom of the sea, and indeed the instructions of the Company that Divine Service should be regularly held. It would fall to Charles to conduct the burial services - deaths through sickness, or falls from aloft. He also baptised several babies born to the soldiers' women, usually with Lowther as a second Christian name. On one voyage however a baptism was held over to await a proper parson, and a child brought on board at the Cape was christened by a clergyman who embarked at St Helena.

The first hint of trouble came on 31st March when a seaman, Henry Horton, jumped overboard (in light airs an Indiaman sailed but slowly), compounded this by disobedience, and aggravated that by using "disrespectful language" to his Captain. Mortlock jumped smartly on this and Horton received four dozen lashes after which the cat was not further required on the voyage. On 4th April a comet was remarked; so also was malicious damage to several ropes in the rigging. Mortlock offered a hundred dollars reward for information or for catching anyone in the act; no information resulted, but neither was there further damage, as the bait was clearly sufficient to make the miscreant think he would be given away if he tried anything like that again.

All was then quiet for a while until on 11th May four hands came aft and addressed the

Chief Officer in a “most mutinous manner” and refused, when ordered, to go forward again. Mortlock had them confined and they appear to have remained so until the ship reached Bengal, where she anchored in soundings on 22nd and berthed up-river several days later. Over a few days from 15th June a dozen or so seaman, including the named malcontents, were discharged to shore and there was no more trouble. Peace having broken out, there was no Press, and therefore little opportunity to skiff troublemakers into a King’s ship where they would learn manners the hard way.

On 10th June Charles had written home to his father-in-law that he had had a VERY SERIOUS mutiny on board, but gave no details. James Thomas was miffed at not being fully put in the picture but, in a letter to Charles’ brother Thomas Mortlock, wrote that he had an account from one of the passengers. It is not clear from the passenger list who this might have been. The account in the log sounds pretty minor but that was written for review by Company management back in London at the end of the voyage. There is no indication of what the seamen’s grievance was but then even a heavily manned Indiaman was a merchant ship. While aping Royal Navy ceremonial and other practices, there is no indication that the paternalism of Kempfenfelt’s Divisional system, whereby officers took specific responsibility for the welfare of groups of men, was in any way in place. The Merchant way is that hands are paid to do a job and would they kindly get on with it. However it was the custom to muster the hands every Sunday forenoon which was presumably an opportunity for some Officer contact.

There was the odd happy event - on 16th May one of the soldiers’ wives was delivered of a baby girl, presumably with the assistance of the ship’s surgeon and women belonging to other soldiers on board.

The ship returned to moorings at Blackwall on 17th August 1822. On 17th January 1823 the court wrote to Madras, copy to Mortlock, that the *Lowther Castle* would be one of the ships taken up for the China round that season. But she sailed under a Captain Baker; Charles Mortlock had swallowed the anchor for full due. The timing of the Company’s letter is curious, as they already had to hand his own of 28th November in the previous year in which he stated that it was “not his wish to continue in command of *Lowther Castle*”. His seniority as a Commander is given as 21.4.1809. *Lowther Castle* for her part sailed on, eventually being sold in 1833, for £13,950, to the shipowner Joseph Some.

James Thomas wrote that Charles had “a happy knack of meeting misfortunes half way”. In an earlier letter Thomas had written of Charles’ “many miseries and narrow escapes”. But as they say in the Navy, if you can’t take a joke you shouldn’t sign on. Two escapes - from the French as a Midshipman and later as a Commander - two mutinies and a grounding, and a twelve-thousand mile voyage home in an unsound ship have been touched on. However James Thomas survived just as much, if not more, during his own career. The miseries remain obscure, as does Charles’ character; he is a well-recorded person but little personality comes through although one is often tantalised into reading between the lines. I am reinforced in this impression by a throwaway in a letter written by his niece Louisa Leathes Mortlock, relating to Christmas 1840 which Charles and three of

his sons and three of his daughters spent in London with the family of Louisa's father, Sir John Cheetham Mortlock, Charles' senior brother. Louisa writes "My cousins .. actually danced! so did my uncle Charles!! Wonders will never cease."

An Indiaman's large crew (clippers could round the Horn with twelve on deck) was needed to serve the guns as well as to handle her sail, and was allowed at the rate of roughly one man for every ten tons burthen. There would be the odd desertion in harbour, and losses at sea: deaths (in spite of Mortlock's typically small sick lists) and drownings, and fatal falls from aloft. Her men might be pressed into the King's service if she fell in with a British warship. This last may have been a powerful disciplinary resource for her Commander (although some were cat-happy psychopaths) as no well-paid merchant seaman would ordinarily wish to be selected for the Press. His Majesty however would at least get a trained man, and any malcontent off-loaded by a merchantman would soon be straightened out by a warship's more generous application of the lash. But being left short-handed was a permanent problem and in 1810 the Company at last reached an understanding to control pressing in Indian waters.

Each voyage lasted between a year and eighteen months, with a period of a few months' storing and preparation at home beforehand, for which Charles did not personally have to be present on board, at the East India Docks, Blackwall. It took a few days on return to prove his log and close his account book, and then Charles was free until his next trip. This gave him, say, six months at home every two years. He had no base outside England. The discomfort of shipboard life, not to mention the dangers of the sea, and let alone the risks of War, discouraged most wives from accompanying their husbands in the Cuddy, even when not (like Charles' spouse) rapidly beset by small children.

The pattern of Charles' spells at home can be traced in the births of his first seven children, in order Anne Elizabeth, Amelia, Caroline, Frances, Charles (who, as above, died in infancy, a sadness for his sisters who, according to their Thomas grandfather were "not a little proud of a brother"), and Mary Ann, born at Dover Place, Southwark between 1809 and 1819; and the replacement Charles born in 1821 in the new suburb of Clapham, "London's original stockbroker belt", to which James Thomas had removed in 1820.

Further sons, John and Edward Thomas were baptised in Pampisford in 1823 and 1826, what time Charles and Emelia were lodging at the family seat of Great Abington. John went out to India to join the Madras Army and died at Dharwar in March 1845 as a Lieutenant in the 35th Madras Native Infantry, a sorry blow for Charles. Charles' second daughter Amelia also went out to India, presumably to look for a husband as part of what was later unkindly known as the "fishing fleet", and died there while still young.

Charles' third daughter Caroline was married, by her uncle Edmund Davy Mortlock, from Great Abington in 1834, to John Benward Travers, the son of John Benward Travers snr of Fitzroy Square, a scion of another "East India" dynasty. JBT snr made at least one homeward-bound trip, in 1816, in the Mortlock/Thomas *Streatham*. JBT jnr was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, graduating as a Senior Optime. In 1840 he became vicar

of Mumby, Lincolnshire, and stayed in that post until he died there in January 1887. In a parallel university post he had been tutor to Caroline's baby brother Edward Thomas Mortlock. Caroline and JBT junior were ultimately grandparents, by Walter Benward Travers, to Sir Walter Lancelot Travers KCIE, who married his second cousin Caroline, daughter of Henry Mortlock, youngest son of Charles junior. One of Walter Benward's sisters, Isabella - there were nine siblings in all - also married a (second) cousin, Robert Phillips, doubly related through his grandparents Henry Mortlock and Elizabeth Thomas, and went out to India where her husband, a tea and coffee planter, was to manage a plantation for a Thomas connection, George Arbuthnot. The couple had three children, Harry who became a Superintendent in the Madras Police, but the description of his wife Daisy as the daughter of an Indian doctor leaves one wondering what the surrounding memsahibs whispered behind their fans, and two daughters, of whom May, widowed of one Indian Army captain, married another. One of Isabella's sisters married a Gilliatt, (see below). Charles jnr's Henry, earlier of Stanford Bridge, Worcestershire, was educated at Repton (as was his brother Herbert) and Peterhouse, where he graduated in Mathematics as 16th Junior Optime, that is to say near the bottom of his year. This did not prevent him obtaining a post to teach the subject as a schoolmaster in Malvern, although he also seems to have been a solicitor. He was a Captain in the Herefordshire Rifle Volunteers and in the Great War served as a Captain in the Herefordshire Regiment; by the time of his daughter's marriage in 1922 he was living at Cornwallis House, Hastings. Caroline was the only fruit of his first marriage, his wife, Caroline Gilliatt, dying shortly after the birth; a second marriage was childless and short; he then had four children by his third wife, Emily Blackburn, none of whom left issue and of whom Alfred (1910-1977) was the last descendant of Captain Charles in a male line.

Captain Charles' will leaves £1,000 to each son, to put them on a par with the daughters who had already been dowered on a commensurate scale. It also tries to put right the careless omission (or was it more?) whereby Anne Elizabeth, now wife of Alexander William Phillips, had been left out of the appointments made against Charles and Emelia's marriage settlement.

AW Phillips was born on 6 April 1819, the son of a Scotsman, William Edward Phillips, Governor of Prince of Wales Island (Penang) and Janet Bannerman whom he had married in Penang in June 1818. AWP went to Haileybury in 1837 and came "out" as a Madras Writer in 1839. He rose through various judicial appointments to become the Acting Civil and Special Judge of Ootacamund in 1864. He is recorded as being on furlough 1850-3 which is presumably when he married. It must have been one of the Thomas brothers who pointed him towards Anne Mortlock. He was sent home from on sick leave - it would appear that retreating to the hills to obtain respite from the heat was something usually open only to the memsahibs, Anne Elizabeth taking a bungalow at Coonor during the hot season - from June 1862 to October 1863 and was granted three months' special leave in 1866. He and his wife came home with Anne Elizabeth's Indian Civil Service uncle Edward Brown Thomas and mutual cousin Jane Phillips, by steamer to Suez and across the desert by rail to Alexandria. There after a couple of days to rest and explore the city the party took a steamer to Marseilles and so overland across Europe. It had been

arranged to visit Naples, Florence and Rome but the “elderly” (Jane’s word) Phillips “took fright at the fever in Rome” and whiled away three weeks at Geneva and Lausanne in order to avoid arriving (unacclimatised) in England before June. Continuing in England, AWP resigned the Indian Civil Service and was awarded a pension in April 1869. The couple had no children. AWP was quite an artist; prints of four paintings he made of an Indian boar hunt were published in London in 1851 - they are somewhat grisly to the modern more humane taste. Latterly, after initially retiring to Guildford, the couple lived at Burton Rough, Petworth, a site later absorbed by the (now defunct) St Michael’s girls’ school. At the close of his life AWP moved to Richmond House, Ryde. He died 26 February 1883 at Cambridge House, Clarence Parade, Southsea. Annie’s nephew Charles Mortlock II was one of his executors; the others his brothers Major-General AC and the barrister Charles Palmer Phillips.

Captain Charles’ removal to Great Abington is also evidenced by his subscribing to an anti-slavery petition there in 1826. However, by November 1837 when Mary Ann was married, and in 1839, when Charles junior was being entered for a Madras cadetship, the family was at 14, Northwick Terrace, St John’s Wood, and were still there in 1841, except that at census time Emelia and her sisters were away, leaving Charles alone with two female servants in their twenties. Eliza and Frances were in Hove with their grandmother Ann Thomas, and several Thomas cousins, daughters of the Thomas sons who were in India. Mary Ann was married off in 1837 to Mr W Blyth, Rector of Fincham, Norfolk. The couple seem to have had ten children of which the boys were sent to Christ’s College, Cambridge and on into the church, except for William Edward Blyth who died in South Africa aged 22 and is buried at Rondebosch.

Young Charles received a “Classical and Mathematical” education at High Wycombe, and was entered at St John’s, Cambridge in 1839. Then, almost immediately, he embarked on an Indian military career, but only soldiered (as an officer of 23rd Madras Native Infantry) until he came home in 1842 to resume his place at St John’s, formally resigning from the Madras Army in 1843. He was taken on in the Bank by his uncles, but some “unfortunate incident” led to him being sacked. Otherwise he, rather than Henry’s Edmund John, might have succeeded to it. Whatever that happenstance was, though, it did not prevent Charles jnr making a later modest success of a career as a banker outside the family envelope, initially in Bungay. He then settled as a landowner at Denton Lodge in Norfolk (now in Suffolk; rented from Rev.G Sandby) where he and his wife Hannah (née Webster, previously widowed of a Mr Allott) produced six children. Alice (1855) married Dr Marmaduke Prickett and had three children of whom Charles Henry became a Brigadier and won the DSO. Ernest (1859) went out to Winnipeg and, his wife (an Allott) dying there, came back from Canada very ill to his married daughter in Douglas, Co. Cork where he died in 1935. Henry (1865), whom we have met, like Herbert (1854) followed Charles jnr to Cambridge. Herbert was later described as a tutor, and died unmarried in London in 1884. In later life he had been living in or near Grantham, Lincolnshire, where he served on the town council, resigning 10.5.1883. Charles III (1862), a surgeon, we shall meet shortly.

By 1871 Charles II had retired to South Crescent Villa, Filey, Yorkshire - his wife was from Morley in that county - where he became a JP. He and Hannah both died at their London home in Ladbroke Gardens on the same day, 17th April 1893; Hannah of pneumonia and Charles "suddenly". Charles III, as executor to his brother and parents then had to tidy up estates worth together over £37,000 - three and a half million in late twentieth-century terms.

Charles II's youngest son, Henry, latterly of Cornwallis House, Hastings, married three times, the first two wives dying in childbirth, and the third being the sister of the wife of the second's brother. By her he had Alfred, a skilled chess player who was British Boys' U18 Chess Champion in 1928, was runner up in the Sussex Championship in 1933 and 1936 and was still playing for Sussex in 1966. He had attended University School, Hastings and later took a BSc. Alfred served in the war as a Lt Cdr RNVR and afterwards was a Radio Engineer with Standard Telephones & Cables of New Southgate, London, living in New Barnet until he retired to 'Abington Lodge', 17 Holmesdale Gardens, Hastings.

Edward Thomas Mortlock went to Uppingham (where he was followed by his nephew Herbert, and, much later, by a descendant of Captain Charles' brother Henry) and Caius. After curacies in Manners and then Kaye territory (Rutland and Lincolnshire) he became vicar of North Frodingham, Yorkshire 1854-6 and then of Rudston near Bridlington 1857-75. While at Rudston Edward was the victim of a piece of malicious perjury in which he was accused of forgery: he was handsomely cleared as reported by the *Leeds Mercury* 28.11.1861. Edward Thomas was then Rector of Snailwell from 1878 to 1895 and died in retirement at St Leonard's on Sea in 1908. He married Jane King who died in 1883. They had two children, Edward, and Annie Gertrude, who married Judge Francis Roxburgh and had a son who also became a judge and who was knighted in 1946. Edward (1859-1945), after Haileybury (an HEIC foundation) and Trinity, Cambridge, became a Canon of Chichester Cathedral, where he has the odd distinction of being immortalised as a corbel (5th from the West above the great window of the south transept). In 1900 he married Katherine Daniell Cuddy; she died in 1939; the marriage was childless. Edward Thomas' second wife, Gertrude Lydia, widow of Robert Openshaw, died in 1886 and Edward Thomas remarried to Charlotte Mary, widow of Rev. CF Rich. She survived Edward Thomas and died in Chailey, Sussex in 1920, leaving a daughter Mary who had married Rev. Alfred Allen.

Captain Charles had yet to find a husband for the rather plain Frances, still a spinster at 28 when my great-great-grandfather John Griffiths appeared on the Sussex social scene, Charles having retired to 18, Montpelier Road, Brighton in the early 1840s, the railway having come to that town at the start of that decade. John, two years' Frances' senior, a Christ Church (and therefore Oxford) man, had only recently been inducted as Rector of Barcombe after coming home invalided from working as a missionary in Cochin. A package was rapidly wrapped up in which Charles put up a bond (presumably accounted as Frances' marriage settlement) in which he was supported by Alexander Nairne, a fellow HEIC Commander; an HEIC chaplaincy was found for John, and the happy pair were

safely packed off to India.

In spite of the opportunities to amass wealth that his career had apparently offered, Charles seems to have become no sort of Nabob and can safely be described as middle class, living in comfort among professional people but in a household boasting only two living-in servants. He had been left only two thousand pounds in his banker father's will, his appointment to the Lowther Castle being described by his nephew John Frederick Mortlock as "a certain fortune for a prudent man". To his father, Charles must have been out of sight and out of mind while younger siblings were growing at home. Charles was clearly expected to shift for himself once his father had put up the money to install him in a command. Even after he had left the sea there were nasty surprises, such as a £500 award against him in favour of the widow (ironically, a Mrs Steward) of his late purser. Whether he was indeed prudent, or a good investor, is moot; his estate was ultimately marked as "less than £5,000" but that may of course have been some Mortlockian fiddle. The indications are that most of his dispositions to his heirs were done by assignment of Trusts that are invisible to us. There is an occasional financial glimpse; for instance in 1845 Charles was listed among owners of East India stock.

In quiet retirement in 1851 Captain Charles described himself as a "landholder"; by this time he and Emelia were on their own. He died in 1864, three days after his 82nd birthday. His executors were his sons Charles jnr and Edward Thomas. Emelia survived him, dying at 15, German Place, Brighton where she had lodged some years with a family that included seven teenagers - which for an octogenarian must have been something of a strain - on 30th October 1873, supported by her young lady's maid Selina Dawson.

Charles Mortlock III was, as above, born at Denton in 1862 but was brought up at Filey. On 13th October 1881 he entered the medical school of St George's Hospital, then at Hyde Park Corner. He took his MRCS in late 1886, from his family's London home at 9 Ladbroke Gardens, passing his LRCP in the same year.

After service as Assistant Medical Registrar at St George's he, still based at Ladbroke Gardens, obtained a position as House Physician and House Surgeon at the Great North Central Hospital. By 1891 his career had taken an obstetric path and he was Resident Medical Officer at the Chelsea Hospital for Women.

By 1897 he was living at 27, Oxford Square, Hyde Park. He had his Fellowship of the Obstetric Society and was anaesthetist at the Samaritan Free Hospital, combining this with being District Surgeon for the Royal Maternity Charity, whose royal patronage probably owed something to Queen Victoria's renowned distaste for childbirth. By 1917 Charles Mortlock III had retired to Bunsen House, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire. He died, unmarried, in 1942.

It fell to Frances to be ancestress to the only three of Charles' descendants to "Use the Sea".

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