

# Biography of John Wemyss

1835 – 1888

## Birth

John was born in Calcutta India around 1835 to David and Munshoo (Minshoo), he had one sister named Mina.

John's father David was a mariner and captained a ship named 'Brigand' which sailed between ports in the Far East.

<p><i>Departures from Calcutta.</i></p> <p>JAN. 12. <i>Christopher Rawson</i>, Edwards, for Mauritius.—13. <i>Rob Roy</i>, M'Kinnon, for China.—15. <i>Carnatic</i>, Richards, for Mauritius.—17. <i>Fatima</i>, Feathers, for St. Helena and Liverpool.—18. <i>Shah Allum</i>, Evans, for Bombay; <i>Douma Carmelita</i>, Foss, for Mauritius.—23. <i>Brigand</i>, Wemyss, for Penang and Singapore; <i>Elizabeth</i>, Glass, for Ceylon.—26. <i>Marinus</i>, Patterson, for Singapore.—FEB. 6. <i>Robert Le Diable</i>, La Porte, for Bourbon.—13. <i>Snelhead</i>, Fergusson, for Holland; <i>Hydross</i>, Naoda, for Red Sea, &amp;c.; <i>Elizabeth</i>, Manook, for Moulmein and Rangoon; <i>Pero</i>, Gray, for Sydney and V. D. Land; <i>Diana</i>, Ireland, for Havre.—15. <i>St. George</i>, Williams, for Bristol; <i>Emily Jane</i>, Shelstone, for Singapore.</p>	<p><b>SHIPPING.</b></p> <p><i>Arrivals in the River.</i></p> <p>APRIL 14. <i>Lawrence</i>, Gill, from Liverpool; <i>Washington</i>, Thurben, from Philadelphia.—15. <i>Gasper</i>, Pool, from Boston; H.C. steamer <i>Ganges</i>, Dicey, from Rangoon.—16. <i>Rob Roy</i>, M'Kinnon, from China; <i>Elizabeth</i>, Thaidens, from Rangoon.—17. <i>Eugene</i>, Glass, from Boston.—18. <i>Hindoo</i>, M'Gill, from Liverpool.—19. <i>Victory</i>, Blakeley, from Liverpool.—20. <i>Bussorah Merchant</i>, Moncrieff, from Hobart Town.—21. <i>Attaran</i>, Smith, from Moulmein; <i>Thalia</i>, Graham, from Liverpool; <i>Frederick Huth</i>, Toby, from Mauritius.—22. <i>Cherebon Packet</i>, Kenrish, from Batavia and Padang; H.M.S. <i>Victor</i>, Crozier, from Madras.—24. <i>Brigand</i>, Wemyss, from Penang.—26. <i>Recovery</i>, Johnson, from Hobart Town.—29. <i>Samdany</i>, Naoda, from Bombay and Cannanore; <i>Burong</i>, Gordon, from Bombay, &amp;c.; <i>Osage</i>, Heining, from Philadelphia and Madras.—30. <i>David Scott</i>, Spence,</p>
---	--

Figure 1 The Asiatic Journal 1838 May - Aug

John's father died in 1840 in Calcutta when David was a child of 5yrs. In David's will, it is stated that he left two thirds of his estate to John and the remainder to his sister Mina. Both were left in the care of his mother Munshoo but nothing of material value was left to Munshoo. The value of David's estate is not stated in the will but indications are that it was around 10,000 rupees which was a substantial amount of money at the time\*.

<p><b>DEATHS.</b></p> <p>Dec. 4. At Kurnaul, Mr. Thomas Fraser, aged 47. 21. At Candahar, Andrew Walker, Esq., Surgeon of the 42d Regt. N.I.</p> <p>Jan. 5. At Moulmein, J. Jamieson, Esq., late an indigo planter in Jessore, aged 24. 14. At Arrah, Shahabad, Mrs. Colonel Bird, widow of the late Colonel J. J. Bird, aged 70. 17. At Calcutta, George H. Swaine, Esq., portrait painter, aged 43. 19. At Samalcotta, S. L. Maunder, Esq., commander of the brig <i>Pyeen Bown</i>, aged 22. 22. At Calcutta, Mrs. Martha Peters, aged 60. 24. At Calcutta, Mrs. McGowan, wife of Alex. McGowan, Esq., M.D., aged 24. 26. At Calcutta, Capt. <i>David Wemyss</i>, of the country service, aged 55.</p>
---

Figure 2 The Asiatic Journal 1840 May - Aug

Little is known about his mother but John has been recorded as being East Indian (Anglo Indian) in his railway employment records and therefore we can surmise that Munshoo was either a native of Calcutta or from one of the countries in the area where David travelled to in his role as a ship's captain. (The name Munshoo/Minshoo is not easy to place geographically so it maybe that the spelling is incorrect.)

There is no marriage record for John and Munshoo in the Indian records available to search.

A decendent of David Wemyss' brother is a noted author in Canada and in her memoirs she has confirmed these details as well as adding some additional family anecdotes below.

The earliest Wemyss document in the possession of Peggy's family concerns the relationship of Robert and Barbara (née Donaldson) Wemyss of Fifeshire; they had two sons of record—and it is striking to follow the focus on pairs of sons in the Wemyss genealogy—John and David. John, a collector of excise taxes in Scotland, married Margaret Morrison in 1817 and became Peggy's great-great-grandfather. Brother David, a mariner in the Royal Navy, had a rather more exotic career that took him to India, where he was wedded—like Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim to his Jewel—to an Eastern bride named Minshoo (a name Peggy clearly remembered). Margaret Laurence tells his story:

He had two children [with Minshoo], a daughter, Mina, and a son, John. The boy was born in 1839, a year before Captain David died in 1840. . . . Soon after Captain David died, Minshoo went off with another man. . . . The infant John was taken away with his mother. . . . Several years after his death, his brother John is still trying to discover what has happened to the young son and to David's personal effects. . . . the child and Minshoo now cannot be traced. . . .<sup>3</sup>

*Figure 3 Extract from the 'Alien Heart The Live and Works of Margaret Laurence'*

*\*1 rupee in 1840 was worth around 24d which would mean that 10,000 rupees would have been worth approx. £1,000 which is equivalent to £100,000 today.*

## Marriages

- 1) John married Rebecca De Cruz in 1858 and had 2 children.

1858	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	John Wemyss.	Age Bachelor	Engineer.	Calcutta.	David Wemyss
		Rebecca De Cruz.	Age Spinster		Calcutta.	Manuel De Cruz

- David Solomon 1861
- Henrietta Rebecca 1864

*Rebecca probably died in childbirth as John remarried the same year as the birth of Henrietta. There is no death record for Rebecca.*

- 2) John married Letitia Langtry in 1864 but had no children.

		John Wemyss	26	Widower	Engineer	Calcutta	David Wemyss
20 <sup>th</sup> September 1864		Letitia Langtry	22	Spinster		Calcutta	Thomas Langtry

*There is no record of Letitia's death.*

- 3) John married Sarah Goulding (nee Hobblett) in 1866 and had 6 children.

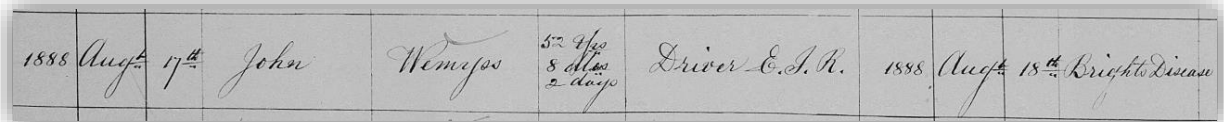
1866	Aug <sup>t</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup>	John Wemyss.	Age Widower	Engine	Calcutta.	David Wemyss.
		Sarah Goulding.	Age Widow.	Driver.	Calcutta.	Henry Hobblett.

- Alice Maud 1867
- Ida Mabel 1868
- John Percival 1870
- Cecil Herbert 1872
- Lina Beatrice 1876
- Osmond Gerald 1879

*There is no record of Sarah's death.*

## Death

John died in 1888 due to Bright's disease at the age of 52yrs. He was buried at Howrah Cemetery Calcutta.



*Bright's disease is an archaic term for what is now referred to as 'nephritis'. Nephritis is an inflammation of the kidneys, caused by toxins, infection or autoimmune conditions.*

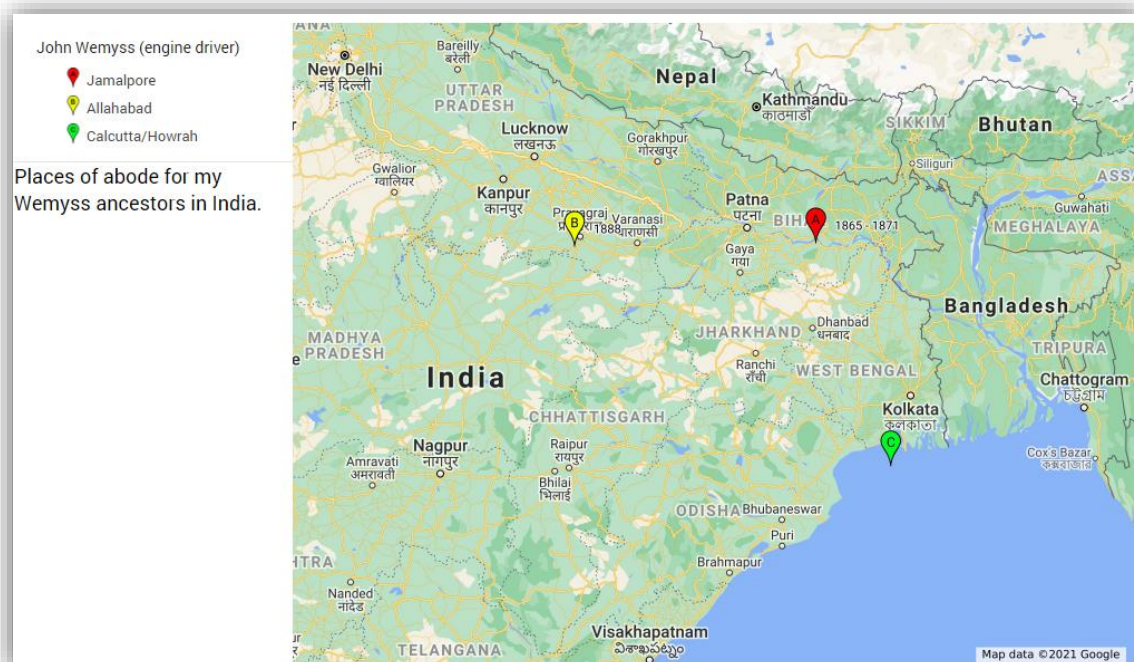
## Employment

John Wemyss was employed from the age of 21 by the East India Railway from the 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1856 until his death in 1888.

From his employment records he was an engine driver from 1862 but his role from when he started in 1856 is not known but is unlikely to have been an engine driver without any previous experience therefore it is possible that he may have been employed by another railway company between 1851 to 1856.

His salary in 1862 was 175 rupees per month rising to 260 rupees on his death in 1888. This was a good salary compared to other roles within the railway industry.

Throughout his career he was mainly stationed between Calcutta (Howrah), Jumalpure and Allahabad.





## Timeline

Year	Abode	Event	Job	Notes
<b>1835</b>		Birth		Estimate from his death record
<b>1840</b>	Howrah	Will		Father, David, Parents, David, Munshoo
<b>1856</b>	Howrah	Employment	Driver EIR	First date of appointment
<b>1858</b>	Calcutta	Marriage	Engineer	Wife, Rebecca De Cruz, Parents, David Weymes
<b>1861</b>		Birth		Son, David Solomon
<b>1862</b>	Howrah	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1864</b>	Howrah	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1864</b>		Birth		Daughter, Henrietta Rebecca
<b>1864</b>	Calcutta	Marriage	Engine Driver EIR	Wife, Letitia Langtry, (His age 26)
<b>1865</b>	Jumal pore	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1866</b>	Calcutta	Marriage	Engine Driver	Wife, Sarah Goulding(Hobblett), Parents, David Wymss
<b>1867</b>	Jamal pore	Birth	Engineman EIR	Daughter, Alice, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1868</b>	Jamal pore	Birth	Engineman EIR	Daughter, Ida, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1870</b>	Jamal pore	Birth	Engineman EIR	Son, John Percival, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1871</b>	Jumal pore	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1872</b>	Howrah	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1873</b>	Chowringhee	Birth		Son, Cecil Herbert, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1876</b>	Howrah	Birth	Engine Driver EIR	Daughter, Lina, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1879</b>	Howrah	Birth	Engine Driver EIR	Son, Osmond, Parents, John & Sarah
<b>1881</b>	Howrah	Marriage		Daughter, Alice, Parents, John, Witness, Henrietta
<b>1882</b>	Howrah	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1883</b>	Allahabad	Will		Wife, Sarah
<b>1884</b>	Allahabad	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1888</b>	Allahabad	Employment	Engine Driver EIR	
<b>1888</b>	Asansol	Marriage		Son, David, Parents, John
<b>1888</b>	Tundla	Marriage		Daughter, Henrietta, Parents, John
<b>1888</b>	Howrah	Death	Driver EIR	

## Will of John Wemyss

*In the goods of John Wemyss deceased*

*Will*

*Filled and probate granted to Sarah Wemyss the sole executrix on the*

*19<sup>th</sup> day of November 1888 and*

*Issues this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of November 1888*

*This is the last will and testament of me J Wemyss of Allahabad. Firstly I direct that all my just debts funeral and testamentary expenses be paid and satisfied by my executrix herein after named as soon as conveniently may be after my decease and secondly I give devise and bequeath to my wife Sarah Wemyss all and every my household furniture linen and wearing apparel books plates pictures china horses carts and carriages and also all and every sum and sums of money which may be in my house or be about my person or due to me at the time of my decease and also all other my stocks funds and societies for money books debts money on bonds bill notes or other securities and all and every other my estate and effects wheresoever and whatsoever both real and personal whether in possession reversion remainder or expectancy unto her to and for her own use and benefit absolutely and I nominate constitute and appoint here to be executrix of this my will and hereby revoking all former or other wills and testaments by me at any time here to fore made I declare this to be my last will and testament in wellness(?) where of I the said John Wemyss have to this my last will and testament set my hand the ninth day of September in the year of our lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty three.*

## Will of David Wemyss

Father of John Wemyss died 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1840

*In the goods of David Wemyss deceased*

*Will*

*Filled and probate granted to John Lawrie one of the executors reserving Power this*

*4<sup>th</sup> February 1840*

*John Lawrie of the town of Calcutta a member of the firm Messieurs Ahmuty and Company of the same place Provisioners and Hugh Spiers at present of the said town of Calcutta Merchant severally make oath and say and first this the deponent John Lawrie for himself saith that the abovenamed David Wemyss who was a British subject and of late an inhabitant of Calcutta and lately Commander of the ship or vessel called the Brigand departed this life at Calcutta aforesaid on the twenty fifth day of January now last past having first duly made and published his will and testament which is hereunto annexed and marked with the letter A and which this deponent verily believes to be the last will and testament of the said deceased and this deponent further saith that he is one of the executors named in the annexed will of the said deceased and that the said deceased died having property and effects within the jurisdiction of the honourable court to be administered unto and this other deponent Hugh Spiers for himself saith that he was present on the twenty second day of January last past and did see the said David Wemyss sign seal and publish said annexed paper marked A and for his last will and testament and that the named signature "D<sup>d</sup> Wemyss" to the said annexed will and subscribed is of the proper hand writing of the said David Wemyss deceased and that the name and the signatures "W D Messiter" A P Currie" and Hu Spiers" thereto set and subscribed as witnesses thereto are of the respective proper hands writing him this deponent and William Dyne Messiter and Adam P Currie the subscribing witnesses thereto and this deponent further saith that the said annexed will was signed by the said David Wemyss and the signature of the said David Wemyss thereunto was made by him in the presence of this deponent and of the said Willian Dyne Messiter and Adam P Currie the subscribing witnesses thereto as aforesaid who were respectly present at the time the said David Wemyss so sign the said will and that he this deponent and the said Willian Dyne Messiter and Adam P Currie subscribed the said will in the presence of the said David Wemyss and this deponent Hugh Spiers further saith he this deponent by the instructions of the said deceased wrote and filled in in the said annexed will the parts thereof which appears in writing except the signatures thereto and that he this deponent after he had so written the same carefully and truly read over the whole of the said annexed paper marked A to the said David Wemyss in the presence of the other subscribing witnesses thereto and previons to the said David Wemyss signing the same as aforesaid and that he the said David Wemyss fully understood and approved of the same as he informed this deponent and as the deponent verily believes and this deponent saith that although the said David Wemyss at the time of his giving such instructions for his will as aforesaid and at the time the same was so read over too and expected by him in manner also aforesaid was in a weak state of body yet he was of a sound mind memory and understanding.*

*John Lawrie*

*Hu Spiers*

Sworn this 4<sup>th</sup> day of February 1840 before me

*H.W. Seton*

Exhibit A referred to in the annexed affidavit of John Lawrie and Hugh Speirs sworn this 4<sup>th</sup> day of February 1840 before me.

H.W.S

*In the name of God, Amen, I David Wemyss marina at present residing in Calcutta being of sound and disposing mind, memory and understanding, but knowing that it is appoint for all men once to die, do this twenty second day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty make and publish this my last will and testament in manners and form following that is to say I desire to be dead interred at the discretion of my executors herin named. And as to such worldly goods wherewith hath pleased God to bless me, whatsoever and wheresoever, whether real or personal, or of what nature kind or quality soever the same may be after paying of my just debts, funeral expenses, and the expenses of proving this my will. I do hereby give, bequeath, and devise the same in the manners following. That is to say, I do hereby give, bequeath, and devise unto my son John Wemyss now residing at Howrah and to my daughter Mina(?) Wemyss the wholly of my property real and personal of what nature, kind or quality soever the same may be in the manners following, Viz two thirds to my son John Wemyss and the remaining one third to my daughter Mina(?) Wemyss, the expendsof which if not exceeding 10,000 rupees, ten thousand rupees, to be at the discretion of the executors for the maintenance and education of my son and daughter above named and further I should wish that my son John Wemyss as being yet a child should remain under the protection of his mother Munshoo(?) And I do hereby constitute and appoint my brother Mr John Wemyss residing in Edinburgh, collector of excise and Mr John Lawrie merchant residing in Cossitollah Calcutta of this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills and testaments by me at any time heretofore made.*

*In witness, whereof I have to this my last will and testament set my hand and seal the day and year first above written.*

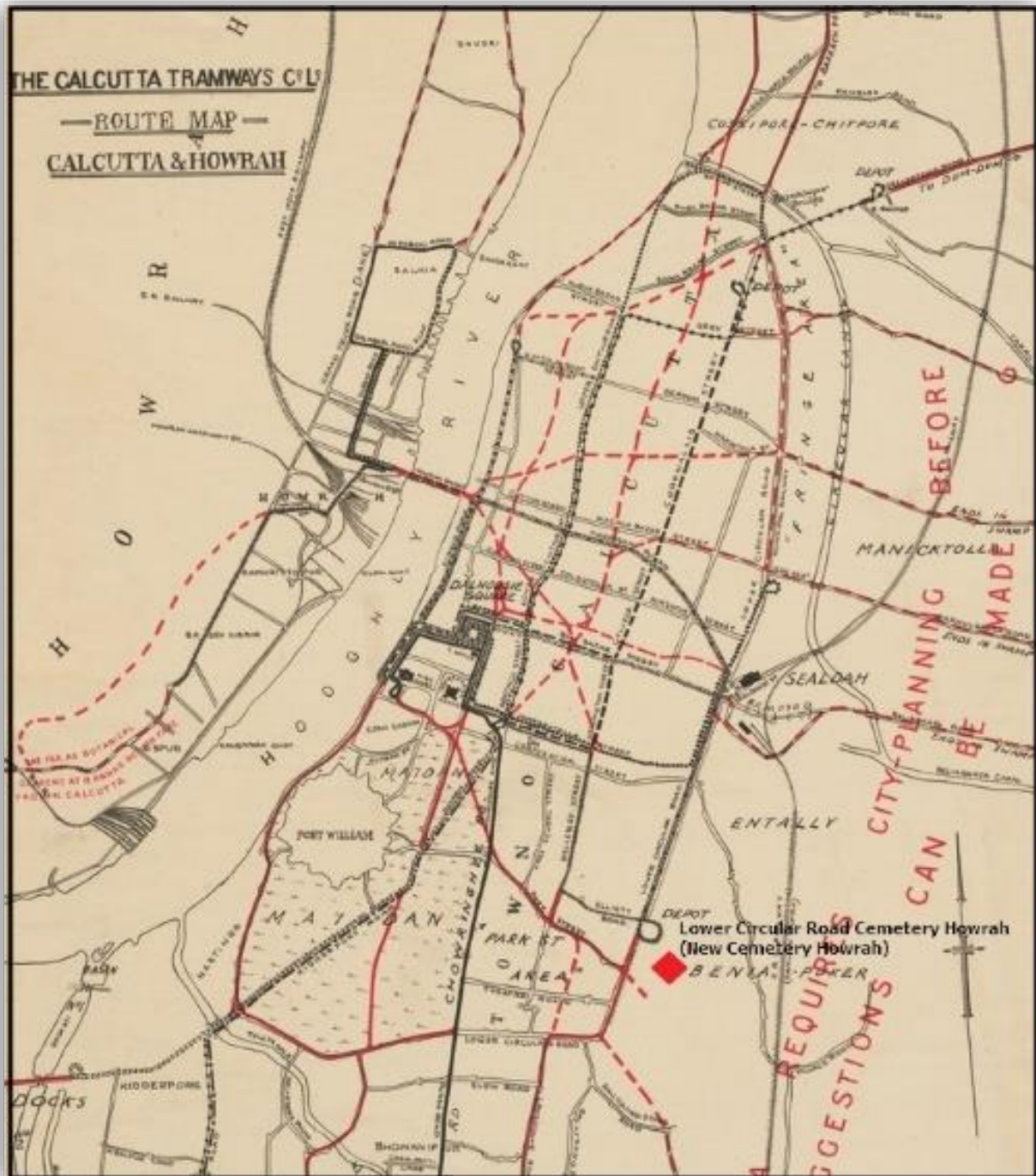
*David Wemyss*



PART III.] <i>Administrations to Estates.</i>		469	DEATHS—JANUARY.
ESTATES.	EXECUTORS, &c. AGENTS.		
Sreemutty Rammony Raur .....	Collypersaud Doss.		1 Miss Mary Anne Baxter, aged 22 years
Sreemutty Samasoodery Dabee .....	Registrar Supreme Court.		1 Mrs Nancy Edward, aged 84 years
Stewart, Robert .....	Thos. Lewis Thornton, Esq.		1 Mr Jerome Biale, aged 23 years
Stuart, Michael Qr. Mr. Sergh.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		2 Mr assistant surgeon George Temple, aged 42 years
Taberd, the Rt. Revd. J. L. ....	Theodore Dickens, Esq.		2 Dacca, Ellen Jane, the infant daughter of Mr W H Jones, aged 10 months
Taylor, Thomas.....	Henry Meredith Parker.		3 Mrs Elizabeth De-vonza, aged 80 years
Tetrameau, J. C. De.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		3 The infant son of Mr E F Barker, aged 3 months
Thomas, John, Capt. Engineers.....	Major G. Thomson.		4 Mr Peter Conway, aged 27 years
Thomson, John, Captain.....	George Thomson.		4 Miss Diana Rochford D'Oily, aged 18 years
Thompson, E.....	Theodore Dickens, Esq.		5 Charlotte Leicester Gordon, the beloved child of G G Macpherson, Esq
Thompson, W.....	Theodore Dickens, Esq.		aged 1 year, 3 months and 15 days
Timius, D. T.....	Mrs. Mary Ann Timins.		11 Mrs Margaret Ann Travers, aged 56th years
Timings, Henry, Capt. Horse Artg....	Registrar Supreme Court.		11 Lucknow, Mr George Duhan, son of the late Mr James Duhan, of Cawn-
Tripp, C. U., Lieut. 36th N. I.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		porc
Tippin, William.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		11 At Chinsurah, Emily Cecelia, infant daughter of J E Codd, esquire, H M
Toulon, John.....	Edward Tomlin.		3d Lt D
Vanthart, John N. Calcutta.....	Mr. Isabel Carolina Verplough of		14 Arrah, & hahabad, Mrs colonel Bird, relict of the late col J J Bird, aged 70
Ward, George Revd.....	Calcutta.		years
Wallace, David.....	Mrs. C. B. I. Ward.		15 Mrs Barbara Eede, aged 55 years
Wemyss, David.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		16 Elnora Georgiana, daughter of John Page, esq. aged 5 months
Whiffin, Charles, Mariner.....	Mr. John Lowrie of Calcutta.		16 Necmuh, lieutenant G J Brietzke, 49th N I
White, A. Merchant.....	Mrs. Mary Whiffin.		17 Mr George H swaine, portrait painter, aged 43 years
Wilkinson, H. R.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		18 Berhampore, the infant daughter of A Kean, esq. M D
Williams, J. F.....	Theodore Dickens, Esq.		18 Allahabad, Mrs Elizabeth Hayward, aged 53 years
Williams, Mary.....	George Dawson, Esq.		20 Howrah, son of captain T W Tingate, aged 3 years
Williams, Rhoe.....	Registrar Supreme Court.		22 Mrs. Martha Peters, aged 60 years
Woodbridge, R.....	J. N. Smith.		23 Mrs. Catherine DaCosta, aged 64 years
Wyly, E. M. Ensign 49th N. I. ....	Registrar Supreme Court.		24 The wife of Alexander McGowan, esq. M D aged 24 years
Young, H. Ensign 63d N. I. ....	Registrar Supreme Court.		25 Dum-Dum, Hospital Apprentice William Johnson, aged 24 years
			25 captain David Wemyss, country service, aged 55 years
			26 Serampore, Mr. Cachatoor Mackertoom, aged 70 years.
			26 Barrissaul, William Henry, son of Mr. R Ince, aged 6 years
			27 Mr H Savryell, aged 67 years
			27 Gwalior, Mrs Caroline Hyde, aged 32 years
			27 Meerut, Henry Milford, esq C & aged 20 years
			28 C Lucas, esq aged 24 years
			28 Mr J H Michael, aged 20 years

Figure 4 The Bengal &amp; Agra Annual Journal 1840

Map of Calcutta (1910)



### Unanswered questions:

- What was his role when he started at EIR?
- Did he work in the railways before joining the EIR?
- When where was John born?
- Birth records for Dave Solomon, Henrietta Rebecca, Cecil Herbert.
- Death records for Dave Solomon, Henrietta Rebecca, Alice Maud, Lina Beatrice, Osmond Gerald, Rebecca, Letitia, Sarah.
- Marriage records for Ida Mabel, John Percival, Lina Beatrice, Osmond Gerald.