

# The Catalogue of the Hodgson Collection in the British Library

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The long awaited online catalogue of the Hodgson Collection was launched by Michael Palin at a function hosted by Oliver Urquhart, the Head of African and Asian Studies, at the British Library in London on 25 July 2011. It can be accessed via <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/hodgson>. In what follows, we will introduce the Collection, present a biography of Hodgson, and explain how the Catalogue was created.



Ramesh Dhungel shows Michael Palin items from the Hodgson Collection at the British Library in 2006. Photograph by Michael Hutt.

## The Collection and the Catalogue

In the United Kingdom, the papers of Brian Houghton Hodgson are now preserved at the British Library, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Zoological Society of London and the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The Hodgson papers preserved in the African and Asian Studies Reading Room of the British

Library were deposited in the India Office Library in 1864 following earlier deposits (between 1838 and 1845) of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts and the complete Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur. In 1921 the papers were bound into 95 volumes (the numbering of the volumes runs to 108 because of the presence in the collection of 13 scrolls). Decisions about how to order the Collection were taken partly with regard to the physical dimensions of each document, with items of similar size being bound together. Thus, while the content of many volumes can be encapsulated in a single subject heading for the volume as a whole, others contain documents relating to a variety of different topics. In many cases items belonging together (e.g. an original manuscript and its translation) have been bound in different places, simply because they were written on different sizes of paper.

The Catalogue describes a total of 972 items in 108 volumes and rolls, comprising a total of some 15,300 folios, plus scrolls, unnumbered notebooks and loose letters. It is ordered by volume and item, with folio numbers given for each item. Ramesh Dhungel, who prepared the first draft of the catalogue, describes the Collection as ‘an uncategorised encyclopaedic 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century record of Nepal’ and enumerates the following subject categories:

diplomatic correspondence, Nepal’s politics and administration, the military system, the land system, agriculture, geography, natural resources, routes and trails, revenue and taxation, trade and commerce, state expenditure, ethnic studies, Buddhism (Newari and Tibetan), Buddhist art and iconography, traditional Buddhist and Hindu architecture, the Nepali legal and judicial system, border problems and disputes, Himalayan and hill languages (including grammars, dictionaries, vocabularies, epigraphy-script and alphabets), Sanskrit Buddhist literary texts, genealogical accounts, chronicles, institutes or special reforms by different rulers, general and historical accounts of Nepal, prominent temples and deities, accounts of military campaigns and territorial expansion (including details of wars with Tibet and China), originals and copies of academic correspondence, copies of Sanskrit and Newari inscriptions, palm-leaf manuscripts, and medieval and modern royal orders’ (Dhungel 2007: 45).

Of this enormous body of material, only twelve volumes of materials in

English had been fully catalogued (in 1927) before the initiation of the current project. In 2001, Michael Hutt of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and David Gellner (then of Brunel University, now of All Souls College Oxford) proposed that a researcher/cataloguer should be employed to produce a descriptive catalogue of the Collection, and applied to the Leverhulme Trust for funding. This was granted, and the Nepali historian Ramesh Dhungel was employed for a period of three years from 2002. The work turned out to require more time than had originally been estimated, but with the extremely generous support of Michael Palin and the Friends of the British Library the project was able to retain Dr Dhungel's services for a further eighteen months and thus produce a complete first draft of the catalogue. The Leverhulme funding enabled it to secure the services of specialists in Lepcha (Sonam Rinchen Lepcha, Helen Plaisier), Limbu (Bairagi Kainla), Newari, (Shukra Sagar Shrestha), Dehati, Maithili, Avadhi and the Kaithi script (Chandra Prasad Tripathee) and Urdu and Persian (Firdous Ali) in order to assist Dr Dhungel in his work.

The work of editing the catalogue has since been completed by John Whelpton, an independent scholar based in Hong Kong, and Mark Turin, a researcher based at the University of Cambridge, working mainly in their spare time. The complicated technical work of converting the catalogue into an interactive format fit for online posting has been undertaken by Burkhard Quessel.

The original aim was that the catalogue should not only provide clear information about the contents of each item in the Collection but also include references to any published works which reproduced the text of an item or discussed it in detail. It has not been possible to do this absolutely comprehensively but it is hoped that the indications given will ease the task of researchers. Web publication of the catalogue will make it feasible to incorporate additional information of this sort as it becomes available and the editors invite anyone working on the documents in future to submit details they feel should be added. A good example of what can be quarried from the materials is Ramesh Dhungel's essay on the clash between the Limbu scholar and religious leader Srijanga and the Tibetan lamas of Sikkim (Dhungel 2006).

One particular area where further investigation is needed is the relationship between the various *vaṃśāvalī* texts in the Collection and similar ones published or extant in manuscript form, either in Nepal's

National Archives or in private collections in Kathmandu. The term *vaṃśāvalī* literally means ‘genealogy’ but it is used more generally to denote a class of documents that provide narrative history, as well as for simple dynastic family trees. The labels *Bhāṣāvāṃśāvalī* or *Gorkhāvāṃśāvalī* may refer to specific publications: respectively the two volumes issued by the National Library (Paudel 1965 & Lamsal 1968-9) and the work of Yogi et al published in Benares in 1952. The terms are also used to denote general groups of texts (viz in the first case, any Nepali-language historical accounts of the Kathmandu Valley and, in the second, accounts of Gorkha and its conquest of the valley), as well as the two hypothesised primary texts from which each group is thought to descend.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that as well as original vernacular *vaṃśāvalī* texts the Hodgson Collection also includes English-language translations or summary translations produced by Hodgson and others. Some of these were published in Hasrat’s 1970 anthology, but while Hasrat lists all the documents he consulted he does not give separate references for each of his extracts and may in some cases have combined material from different places in the Collection.

A starting point for researchers is the work of Baburam Acharya, who suggested that the original versions of the *Bhāṣāvāṃśāvalī* and *Gorkhāvāṃśāvalī* were written in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by two brothers, Buddhiman and Sharman Singh (Acharya 1967: 36-38). Ramesh Dhungel, however, believes that a third brother, Jitman Singh, produced the version of the *Gorkhāvāṃśāvalī* found in vol. 51 of the Collection. Researchers should also be aware of the work of Leelanateshwar Baral, who made extensive use of Hodgson’s materials and provides the most detailed discussion available in English (Baral 1964, now available online at [http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Baral\\_1964\\_thesis.pdf](http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Baral_1964_thesis.pdf)).

### **Brian Houghton Hodgson: a short biography<sup>1</sup>**

Brian Houghton Hodgson was born on 1 Feb 1801 at Lower Beech, Prestbury, Cheshire. His year of birth was almost certainly 1801, not 1800 as often stated: the confusion probably arose because Hodgson and his family used inclusive reckoning for age. He was the second of the seven children of

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1 See also Whelpton (1999) and Whelpton (2004). For more detailed accounts of Hodgson’s life and work, see Waterhouse (2004).

Brian Hodgson (1766-1858), country gentleman, and his wife, Catherine (c.1776-1851), daughter of William Houghton of Manchester and Newton Park. The name 'Brian' had also been borne by his grandfather and great-grandfather, landowners in the Midlands and Northwest England.

Following his father's failure in a banking venture, Hodgson's family had to sell their home at Lower Beech but financial difficulties were partly offset by family connections, including a great-aunt's marriage to Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, and also by his mother's gift for making friendships. The family remained for some years in Cheshire before moving to Macclesfield, where Hodgson started his education at the Grammar School under Dr. David Davis, and then to Congleton. In 1814 he transferred to Dr. Daniel Charles Delafossie's seminary at Richmond, Surrey, while the family settled at Clacton, Essex, on his father's appointment as Warden of the Martello Towers through the patronage of Thomas, 2nd Earl of Clarendon. In 1816, James Pattison, Director and later Chairman of the East India Company, who had been a neighbour at Congleton, nominated Hodgson for the Indian Civil Service.

From February 1816 to December 1817 he attended the Company's training college at Haileybury. While waiting to take the entrance examination, he stayed with T.R. Malthus, who was Professor of History and Political Economy at the College and had been a Cambridge contemporary of his mother's friend, William Smyth. Malthus was a formative intellectual influence, turning him from 'a young aristocrat in social feelings and sympathies' into 'an advanced liberal in politics' (Hunter 1896: 23). Hodgson passed out of Haileybury at the head of his year, with prizes for economics, classics and Bengali.

Arriving in Calcutta in 1818, he led a full social life while continuing the study of Sanskrit and Persian at Fort William College. He was particularly successful with Persian, then still an official language within British India as well as the medium of written communication with independent Indian states, but a near-fatal attack of fever prevented him from completing the three-year course and made it essential for him to obtain a hill appointment if he was to remain in India. Probably through the influence of an aunt's friend, Lady Elizabeth D'Oyly, who was a second cousin of the Governor-General's wife, in late 1819 he was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Kumaon (viz. present-day Kumaon and Garhwal: Kumaon had been annexed from the kingdom of Nepal in 1815, during the war which ended Nepal's expansion

along the Himalaya and deprived it of a third of its conquered territory.<sup>2</sup>) Hodgson worked on the revenue 'settlement' under the Commissioner, George Traill, who was a strong believer in a paternalist administrative style and in detailed study of the land and its people. In 1820, probably on Traill's recommendation, he was promoted to the Assistant Residency at Kathmandu, working under Edward Gardner, who had previously been Traill's own superior in Kumaon. Since the conclusion of the 1814-1816 war between the Company and Nepal there had been peace without cordiality. The country had been compelled to accept a British Resident, but he and his staff were not permitted to travel outside the Kathmandu Valley and, unlike the situation in many of the states within India proper, the Resident was not a *de facto* supervisor of the local administration. Dissatisfied with enforced idleness, Hodgson again used his connections to secure an appointment as acting Deputy Secretary in the Persian Department of the Calcutta Foreign Office. However, in 1823 his health again broke down and he was advised to either return to England or take up a position in the hills once more. Leaving the service of the Company was not an option for Hodgson, whose salary was the main source of income for his parents and six siblings back home. Thus at the beginning of 1824 he had to return to Kathmandu in the subordinate position of post-master, becoming Assistant Resident again when a vacancy occurred the following year.

Advised by a friend on the Governor General's Council that sufficient local knowledge would make even a young man a potential candidate for the full Residency, Hodgson threw himself with renewed energy into

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2 By Hodgson's time the British normally referred to the state formed by Gorkha's expansion as 'Nepal' and to its people as 'Nepalese' or 'Nepali' and this usage is followed here. However, until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the state's own inhabitants normally used 'Nepal' in the old sense, referring just to the Kathmandu Valley. As the king's official titles contained no geographical reference, other than the conventional phrase 'crest-jewel of the circle of mountain kings', it is unclear what name the ruling elite themselves gave to their state during Hodgson's time. The phrase *gorkha sarkār* (Gorkha government) is, however, found in an 1850 document (Dixit 1973/74: 23) and remained in regular use until the 1920s, when it was changed to 'Nepal government' (Gellner 1986: 124), reflecting British usage but presumably intended to stress the unity between the Rana rulers and the indigenous population of the Nepal Valley. Certainly from the 1850s onwards, and probably throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ruling elite styled themselves 'Gorkhas' or 'Gorkhalis', whether or not their own ancestors had actually come from the Shah dynasty's original kingdom of Gorkha, and this usage was followed by Nepalis resident in India,

the thorough investigation of all aspects of his surroundings which he had begun during his first period in Nepal and on which his reputation now chiefly rests. As well as studying local institutions and commerce, he learned Khas or Parbatiya (as the Nepali language was then known), and also Newari,<sup>3</sup> the Tibeto-Burman tongue of the Kathmandu Valley's indigenous inhabitants. Despite family obligations, which kept him in debt until 1837, he retained at his own expense a group of local research assistants and trained himself and some of his staff as naturalists, specialising particularly in ornithology. In later years he would publish some 127 zoological papers and describe 39 new mammalian and 150 new bird species. He was also an avid collector of Sanskrit manuscripts and Tibetan printed volumes and was the first to reveal to the West the Sanskrit literature of northern, or Mahayana, Buddhism, which had been preserved only in Nepal. He distributed around four hundred manuscripts between libraries in India, Britain, France and Germany, and those sent to Paris enabled the Sanskritist Eugène Burnouf to produce his seminal studies. Hodgson himself, with the help of his Nepali friend and helper Amritananda, sought to interpret his Buddhist materials, the results being published in learned journals between 1828 and 1837 and mostly reprinted in his 1874 *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal*. He was mistaken in accepting Amritananda's classification of Buddhist doctrine into four 'schools'—a misinterpretation

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3 Here we use the names for these languages that were current in Hodgson's day, and which he used in his correspondence and research papers. The names 'Khas' and 'Parbatiya', while they remained in colloquial use for longer, appear to have been replaced for official purposes in Jang Bahadur Rana's time (1846-1877) by 'Gorkhali', which was in turn supplanted by 'Nepali' in the 1920s (Clarke 1969: 251; Hutt 1988: 32-34). 'Newar' as a term for the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, who call themselves '*newa(h)*' and their language *newa(h)-bhae*, is not found in the written record until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century (Gellner 1999: 5) but might derive from a hypothetical Prakrit form of the Sanskrit *nepāla*, which was itself probably an aryanisation of a Tibeto-Burman term (Malla 1983). The word was used in the form 'Neuâr' by the Jesuit missionary Desideri, who visited the Valley in 1721, and 'Newar' was employed for both people and language by Kirkpatrick and Hamilton, so Hodgson was certainly not the first non-Nepali to use it, as claimed by Shakyā (2006). He might, however, have popularised 'Newari' for the language, with the 'i' suffix, commonly used in adjective formation in both Nepali and Hindi. Many Newars have for some time objected to the term 'Newari', which had become standard usage among linguists, and more recently there has also been a campaign to replace 'Newar' with the current endonym 'Newa'. Some *janajati* activists have also begun to demand that 'Nepali' be renamed 'Khas Nepali', on the grounds that all languages spoken in Nepal are equally national languages.

that may have been prompted by the design of the questionnaire Hodgson himself presented to the pandit. As he later realised, he was also wrong to argue that the Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures were older than the Pali texts of southern ('Hinayana') Buddhism. Nevertheless, a leading authority could still write in 1987 that 'His perspicacity was truly amazing and much of what he wrote remains valid in terms of the considerable amount of later scholarly work to which his discoveries gave birth' (Snellgrove 1987: 2-3).

Hodgson finally became Resident in his own right on 21 January 1833, having already functioned as Acting Resident between Gardner's retirement in 1829 and Herbert Maddock's appointment in 1831. He brought to the job a strong conviction that Nepal's continuing resentment of the loss of a third of its territory after the 1814-1816 war, its isolationist policy and its maintenance of a large standing army were a continuing threat to peace and that this should be removed by encouraging the growth of commerce and by employing the country's 'surplus military manpower' in the East India Company's forces. He initially shared the belief of the previous Residents that it was best to continue to work with Bhimsen Thapa, the powerful minister who had dominated Nepalese politics since 1806 and, since the war, had sought to present himself to his own countrymen as a bulwark against the East India Company and to the Company as the man who could persuade his countrymen to keep the peace. As the decade progressed, however, Hodgson became convinced that Nepal's outlook would become more pacific if the direction of relations with the British was in the hands of the young King Rajendra rather than Bhimsen, who depended on the goodwill of the army. Hodgson began pressing for direct access to the king and for concessions on trade, but was restrained by the Indian government.

While not yet intervening directly in the factional struggle, he sympathised strongly with Bhimsen's opponent Ranjang Pande and was particularly influenced by Ranjang's Brahman ally, Krishna Ram Mishra. When Bhimsen himself sought to buttress his position by moving closer to the British, Hodgson in effect aided the opposition by ensuring that no substantive negotiations took place during a mission to Calcutta led by Bhimsen's nephew in 1835-1836. In 1837, Bhimsen was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the death of the king's infant son; the child had allegedly drunk poison intended for his mother, the senior queen, who was a backer of Ranjang. When the king asked for his advice, Hodgson recommended that Bhimsen be kept in custody while investigations continued. Bhimsen's



fall did not bring increased cordiality with the East India Company, because both the king and the Pande faction were ready to capitalise on anti-British feeling both at home and among other independent Indian states. In summer 1838, Hodgson transferred his sympathies to the Poudyal brothers, Brahmans whose family had long been rivals with the Mishras for appointment as *guru* (spiritual preceptor) to members of the royal family. He had a cynically realistic attitude towards their motives, having characterised them in 1833 as 'men of the world who have been ours, aforesaid, *for a consideration* and are ready to be again on like terms' (Whelpton 1990: 57). Nevertheless, he formed a particularly close relationship with the second brother, Krishna Ram Poudyal, frequently reporting and seconding his opinions in letters to the Governor-General. His collaboration with Brahmans was probably facilitated by the vegetarian and teetotal lifestyle he had adopted after a recurrence of his liver complaint in 1837.

During 1839, moves by Ranjang's faction threatened the financial interests and even the personal safety of much of the nobility and many looked to the Residency for political support. In April, Bhimsen Thapa was rearrested and in July he committed suicide in prison. According to the official report of the Nepali officials who brought Hodgson the news, he wept on hearing it; he had at first refused Bhimsen's smuggled plea to intervene on his behalf, believing himself bound by government instructions not to interfere in the factional struggle, and his request to the Governor-General for permission to speak out had been sent too late.

Instability continued into 1840 with the temporary occupation by Nepal of 200 square miles of British territory and a brief army mutiny that seemed at one point to threaten the Residency itself. As well as successfully demanding a Nepali withdrawal, the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, now authorised Hodgson to press the king to appoint new advisors who were friendly to the British, a policy which had been proposed the previous year by the Governor-General's council but rejected as premature by both Auckland and Hodgson himself. Having committed substantial forces to his ill-judged intervention in Afghanistan, Auckland was not in a position to fight a full-scale campaign against Nepal, but the movement of troops closer to the border and Hodgson's manoeuvrings secured the appointment at the beginning of 1841 of a 'British ministry' headed by a collateral relative of the royal family and including both Krishna Ram Mishra and his more prominent brother, Ranganath. Hodgson was active in the new

administration, which continued until 1842, his task being eased by the death of the senior queen in October 1841 but complicated by the emergence onto the political stage of her son, Crown Prince Surendra. In April Hodgson was involved in a public clash with King Rajendra over a British subject who was party to a commercial dispute with a Nepali and who had taken refuge at the Residency. He subsequently withheld from the king a letter concerning the incident from the new Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, which Hodgson believed would weaken the position of the pro-British ministers. Enraged, Ellenborough initially ordered Hodgson's instant dismissal but subsequently relented and left him in post with instructions to disengage gradually from his entanglement in internal politics.

He accomplished this successfully and in December 1842 was an enthusiastic observer of the 'National Movement', a concerted effort by most of the nobility with backing from the army to make King Rajendra curtail the excesses of Crown Prince Surendra and grant authority to the junior queen, Rajya Lakshmi. Because of his failure to save Bhimsen, Hodgson was distrusted by Bhimsen's nephew, Mathbar Singh Thapa. Nevertheless, over the months preceding Mathbar's return to Nepal from India in 1843, Hodgson sought to influence him in Rajya Lakshmi's favour, while declining to give him any direct assurance of his future safety. In May 1843, Hodgson sought Ellenborough's permission to remain in Nepal until 1844. This was ostensibly to complete a general study of the country on which he was now working, but a story still current in Kathmandu's Muslim community suggests that another reason may have been the birth of a third child to Begum Meharunnisha, a Nepali Muslim with whom Hodgson had probably been living since the early 1830s.<sup>4</sup> Although King Rajendra, with the agreement of the leading courtiers, took the unusual step of writing to ask the Governor-General to allow the extension, Ellenborough insisted on his departure and offered him an appointment as Assistant Sub-Commissioner at Simla. Taking this as an insult, Hodgson resigned from the Bengal Civil Service. He was given an impressive send-off by the royal court on 5 December 1843 and sailed for England from Calcutta on 7 February 1844.

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4 For this oral tradition see Joshi 2004. The issue remains controversial and the editor of the volume in which Joshi's essay appears argues that, given the care Hodgson lavished on his openly acknowledged children, Henry and Sarah, he would not have abandoned a third child had one actually existed (Waterhouse 2004: 9-10)

Recent studies have modified the portrait of Hodgson as the complete master of events in Kathmandu which is offered in the biography by his personal friend, William Hunter. It is now known that even Lord Auckland, who allowed him a free hand in late 1840, seemed to sense that Hodgson's sudden enthusiasms could leave him open to manipulation and complained of his writing 'so strongly from slight impressions'. There is also much to be said for the view of Lord Ellenborough and of his successor in Kathmandu, Sir Henry Lawrence, that the East India Company's interests were better served by simple reliance on its own military strength than by involvement in factional politics. Nevertheless, Hodgson did succeed in keeping the peace, and the war with Nepal which Auckland had thought likely to come was avoided. The regret expressed in Kathmandu at his departure was largely genuine and stemmed from a belief that he had saved the country from a clash with British India which would have ended its independence. Hodgson's own popularity amongst many of his colleagues, and the recall of Lord Ellenborough by the East India Company's Court of Directors in 1844, would have enabled him to resume an official career, but he stood by his decision to resign. After spending time with his parents in Canterbury and with his sister Fanny in Holland, to whom he entrusted his two elder children, he returned in 1845 to South Asia to continue his research in the Himalaya. As the Government of India would not allow him to return in a private capacity to Kathmandu, he settled instead at Darjeeling, a hill station established six years earlier just to the east of the Nepal border and under the superintendence of Archibald Campbell, who had been his assistant in Kathmandu. He mixed little with the local European community, perhaps because of his unhappiness at increasingly racist attitudes towards Indians. The botanist Joseph Hooker stayed with him from 1848 to 1850 and he himself usually visited Calcutta during the winter months. He was also joined by his son Henry, who died at Darjeeling in 1856. He maintained communication with Kathmandu and was for a time entrusted with the education of Gajraj Thapa, a son-in-law of Jang Bahadur Rana, who had come to power in 1846 and whose family was to rule Nepal until 1951. In October 1857, he helped persuade the Governor-General, Lord Canning, to accept Jang Bahadur's offer to lead a Nepalese force into India to assist in the suppression of the 'Mutiny'.

He continued his zoological work and wrote on the physical geography of the Himalaya, but concentrated in particular on the ethnology of the

peoples of northern India, making extensive use of the comparative study of their languages to argue for common origins. His belief that all the 'non-Aryan' peoples of India belonged to one great 'Tamulian' family was misconceived, but he successfully demonstrated that many languages of Nepal and north-east India belong to what is now known as the Sino-Tibetan language family. These studies also reflected his concern with the position of 'aboriginal' ethnic groups in relation to later, Hindu settlers and a belief, first formed in Nepal, that less Hinduised peoples were more reliable supporters of British power than the higher castes from whom the old Bengal army had been largely recruited. At the same time, however, he also advocated mass European settlement in the hills. Hodgson also continued the advocacy of mother-tongue education for the people of India which he had begun at the height of the controversy between 'Orientalists' and 'Anglicists' in the 1830s. He maintained that the modern Indian languages were capable of use for scholarly purposes, in the same way that modern European languages had supplanted Latin for learned writing, and stressed the desirability of enriching them from Sanskrit or Persian rather than by importing loans from English. Lord William Bentinck had in 1835 decided the issue in favour of the use of English as the medium of both education and administration, but opinion had begun to swing Hodgson's way and his view that public funds should support mass education in vernacular languages was officially accepted by the government in 1854. During a visit to Europe in 1853, Hodgson met and married Anne Scott (c.1815-68). His Nepali partner, Meharunnisha, who remained in Kathmandu in 1843, had probably died shortly before this. His wife returned with him to Darjeeling, but in 1857 her health broke down and because of this and also his father's illness, Hodgson returned to England in 1858. He settled down to the life of a country gentleman in Gloucestershire, first at Dursley and then at Alderley, but after 1883 he wintered at the 'Villa Himalaya' at Mentone on the French Riviera. His wife died in January 1868 and the following year he married Susan Townshend, a clergyman's daughter from Co. Cork. His children born in Nepal had all died at an early age and there were no children from either of his formal marriages. Although Hodgson himself had been plagued with ill health in Nepal and India, he enjoyed a long and vigorous old age, continuing to hunt until he was 68 and to ride a horse until he was 86. He remained intellectually active, receiving visits from his old friends and fellow scholars and also holding a candle for Gladstone and (after 1886) for

Irish Home Rule amongst the largely Tory local gentry. He died peacefully at 48 Davies Street, London on 23 May 1894 and was buried in the grounds of the church of St Kenelm at Alderley. A plaque on the inner wall of the church is inscribed as follows:

TO THE BELOVED MEMORY OF BRIAN HOUGHTON HODGSON OF THE BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE. HON. DCL OF OXFORD. FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY. CORR. MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE. HON. MEMBER OF THE GERMAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY ETC. ETC. AS RESIDENT MINISTER AT THE COURT OF NEPAL HE RENDERED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY AND TO THE CAUSE OF ORIENTAL LEARNING. HE DIED 23 MAY 1894. HAVING LIVED MANY YEARS AT ALDERLEY GRANGE IN THIS PARISH HE WAS BURIED IN A VAULT NEAR THIS CHURCH. IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF TWENTY-FIVE HAPPY YEARS THIS TABLET IS PLACED HERE BY HIS WIFE SUSAN HODGSON. REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

Hodgson published around 200 articles in journals and newspapers. His most important writings were re-issued as *Essays on the Languages, Literature*



John Whelpton, Michael Hutt and David Gellner beside the Hodgson memorial plaque in the church of St Kenelm at Alderley, July 2011. Photograph by Michael Hutt.

and *Religion of Nepal and Tibet* (1874) and *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects* (2 vols., 1880), which are regularly reprinted in India and Nepal. He donated over 400 Sanskrit manuscripts and several hundred Tibetan wood-printed volumes to European libraries and to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, and in 1864 turned over his collected materials on Nepal to the India Office Library. He presented over 10,000 specimens (mostly birds) to the British Museum and also a folio of almost two thousand zoological drawings by himself and his assistants.

Among many other distinctions and honours, he was made a Corresponding Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain (1828), Fellow of the Linnaean Society (1835), Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (1838), Fellow of the Royal Society (1877) and Honorary D.C.L. of Oxford University (1889).

Surviving photographs and the busts in the Asiatic Societies in Calcutta and London confirm his biographer's reference to his finely-cut features and dignified bearing. He could be over-impressionable and over-sensitive while, to a modern reader, his writings sometimes show signs of pomposity and, less frequently, of a patronising attitude towards the South Asian peoples among whom he spent so much time. These failings were more than offset by a strong sense of personal responsibility, prodigious intellectual energy and enthusiasm, and an obvious ability to inspire affection and often fierce loyalty among many of those around him.

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