

Reflections

Sir Hugh Dow

Helen Wagner

Editor's Note: Sir Hugh Dow was born on 8th May 1886, an Indian civil servant during the British Empire, he entered the Indian civil Service in 1909 and served in various senior administrative and advisory capacities in pre-war India, and from 1st April 1941 to 14th January 1946 served as Governor of Sindh. The Dow Medical College is named after Sir Hugh Dow of the British Empire. Little is known about early days of his life. He held many high positions during British Raj and played a major role in Middle East region and Indian subcontinent politics. So far research has not revealed further details. Interestingly, however, we found a reference of him in the information about early Sindhi history, where he must have enjoyed some local friends. He laid the foundation stone of Dow Medical College in December 1945, now a constituent college of the Dow University Health Sciences, Karachi. He was also knighted by the Queen for his services. Below is the open letter written by her granddaughter Helen Wagner.

I am the grand-daughter of Sir Hugh Dow. I was born Helen Anne Dow as the daughter of Hugh Peter Dow, the only son of my grandfather. He also had a daughter, Dorothea Dow, who married an Australian doctor and spent the rest of her life in Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia.

I can tell you that my grandfather was in love with India/Pakistan till the day he passed peacefully in his sleep in November 1978. He just never stopped talking about his time there; he had endless stories about the good things he tried to do there and the problems he had with other people from the Colonial Service who did not share his idealism and his vision for a healthier and more prosperous India/Pakistan. I remember that he did not like Mountbatten, who was, I think, his senior. My grandfather had great plans for the irrigation of land, but there was not enough support for the plan from the side of the British.

He and my grandmother refused to use cycle rickshaws because they thought it was degrading for the men. Instead, they walked and had shelters built for the rickshaw men so that they had a place to sleep and to get out of the rain.

Unlike many people with positions such as his, he did not come from an upper-class family. His father became a Methodist Christian minister around the age of forty and the family did not have much money. However, my grandfather did brilliantly at school and was awarded scholarships which funded his studies. As he did not come from an elite family, he was sometimes looked down on by those who did.

I did not get to know my grandmother, Ann, because she died of cancer in 1956, three years after I was



born. My grandfather loved her deeply and never married again or had another woman, spending 22 years as a widower in his central London Flat.

Every Christmas was spent with my parents, my younger brother, John, and me at our home in Wimbledon, London. Granddad, as I called him, was very kind, gentle and generous, but not out-going. In fact, he was rather serious and seldom made jokes. I can imagine that he would have been reserved with

people he did not know well. He was very tall, upright and dignified, but not at all arrogant or snobbish. Although his father had been a Christian minister, he was not at all interested in any kind of church. He set himself extremely high standards in all aspects of his life and I cannot imagine that he would ever have done something against his conscience. He loved books and liked to read me and my brother stories from children's books which were often presents he had given us for birthdays or Christmas. He also loved doing cross-words and playing Scrabble.

Determined not to become an old bent man with shuffling feet, he did exercises every morning and walked to his men's club, the Athenaeum every day for lunch. Breakfast and supper he prepared for himself. My father visited him every Friday evening after work and cooked for him. When he was 85 years old, Granddad went for a medical check-up and was given a clean bill of health and told, "Come back in ten years!" This story made Granddad smile very time

he told it, and by this time he was often repeating the same stories. Therefore, my parents knew his best India stories off by heart!

I never thought of the possibility of Granddad dying because even at 92 years of age, he looked very fit. Therefore, when our family received the news that he had died in his sleep without having been ill, we were all surprised. However, a peaceful passing is indeed a blessing, and I'm happy for him.

John's youngest daughter, Eleanor Dow, is studying medicine at Edinburgh University. John studied History at Oxford and then Law at Law School. I studied Veterinary Science at Liverpool University, but no longer work as a vet. It is a dream of mine to visit your prestigious university, maybe with my niece Eleanor when she becomes a doctor.

I am very happy that the Internet has given me this chance to be in contact with you and to share with you.

Best wishes from Berlin, **Helen Wagner (Grand Daughter)**