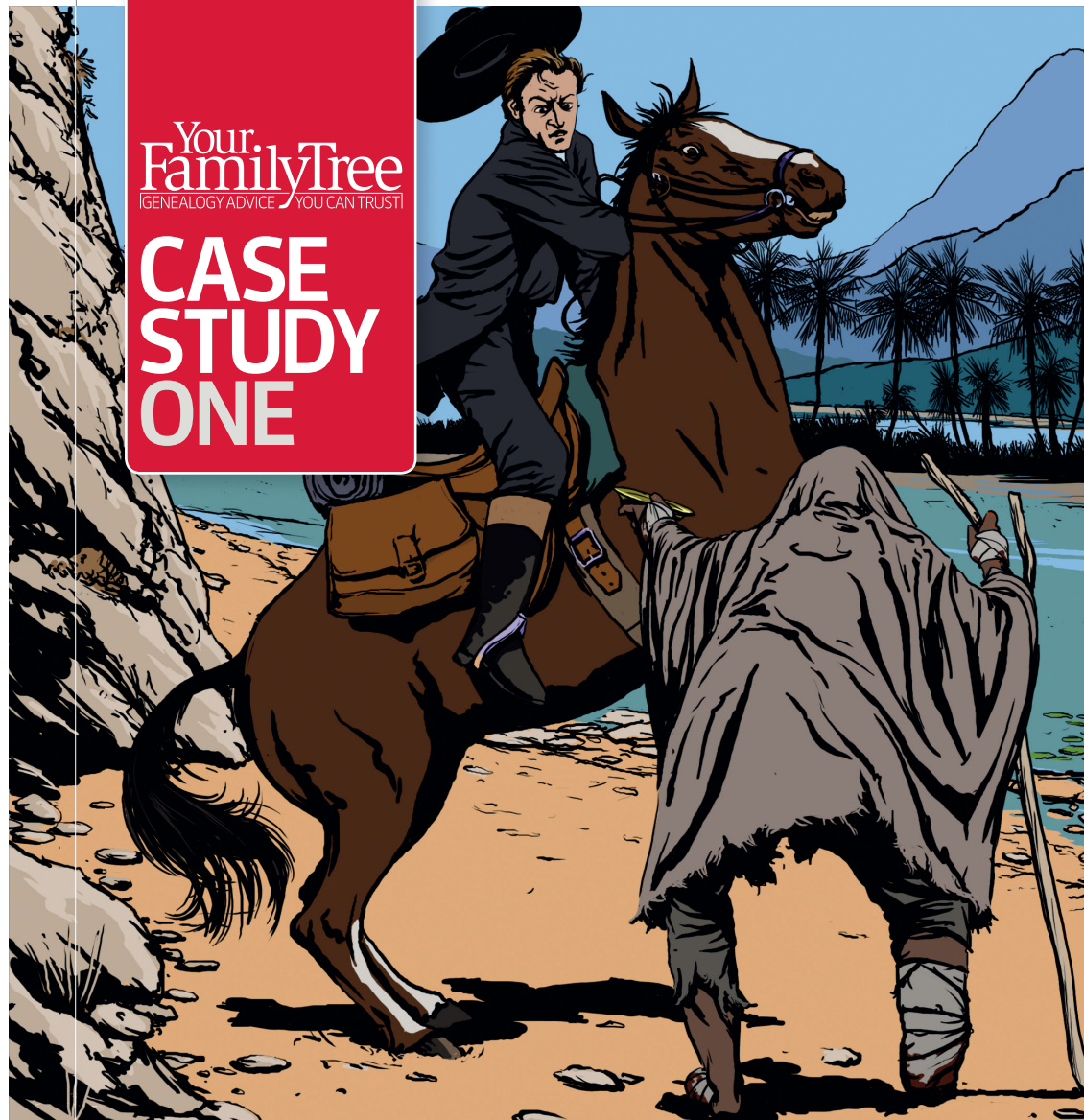


## CASE STUDY ONE



# Man on a mission

The surprise discovery of an eminent and well-respected clerical ancestor who travelled to India

By **Rachel Anderson**



Rachel has been researching her family tree for six years and moderates [www.familytreeforum.com](http://www.familytreeforum.com).

**W**hen I traced my London-born great-grandmother's paternal line back to Brighton, Sussex, I was pleasantly surprised, because I was born just along the coast. Her grandfather, Henry, broke with his family's fishing traditions to take a job as a guard with the newly formed London and Brighton Railway in 1840, and his sons followed him into the company. However, I was in for an even greater surprise when I

found that his youngest son, Edward, left Brighton and the railways behind, and went on to much greater things.

The 1871 Census on Ancestry ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)) describes 17-year-old Edward Guilford as an apprentice blacksmith, living with his widowed mother Eliza and siblings, Charles (my 2x great-grandfather) and Emma, in Terminus Road, Brighton, overlooking the station and locomotive works. The website's probate records show the family returned to Brighton in 1863, after Edward's father's death. He'd died from tuberculosis while working as stationmaster of Henfield on the Steyning line.

I visited The National Archives in Kew to examine the records

of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, in order to uncover my Guilford ancestors' careers. The ledgers show that Edward started his seven-year apprenticeship as a striker's lad at the locomotive works on 21 September 1870. His wage increased over a few years, however, mentions of him stop abruptly in the late 1870s.

### On a mission

So what happened to Edward? There was a 27-year-old Edward Guilford in the 1881 Census, listed as a theology student at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) College in Islington, London. I then looked at the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses but couldn't find him. I wondered, was this my Edward and had he trained to be a missionary and gone abroad?

I turned instead to *The Times* Digital Archive and found several articles about Edward. The most interesting was his 1937 obituary, which provided a lot of detail about his life, including his date and place of birth and that he was Henry Guilford's son. I also contacted Birmingham University where the CMS archive is held, as well as tracing living descendants. From these sources, I've been able to piece together Edward's life and illustrious career.

I don't know why Edward decided to become a missionary. Maybe someone in the local church saw his potential, and supported him through night school where he studied ancient languages, and became fluent in Punjabi. He appears to have left the locomotive works at the end of his apprenticeship and, after spending a year in a 'preparatory institution', joined the CMS Theological College in 1878.

His 1881 ordination at St Paul's Cathedral was reported in *The Times*, who said Edward had a "special view to officiate in the colonies". By October, he was in

### WEBSITE

#### FIBIS

The Families in British India Society site ([www.fibis.org](http://www.fibis.org)) is useful for sub-continent ancestors. There's a free searchable database and members' benefits include a British Library research service



**Distinguished** Edward Guilford and wife Louisa Compigné Chase c1883

India working in the Sindh Mission in Amritsar in the Punjab. After arriving at Karachi, he made the journey of over 1,300km by horseback. On the way, he was accosted by a leper begging for alms.

In 1884, Edward became Superintending Missionary of the CMS mission to the Sikhs in Tarn Taran. He was also appointed Honorary Superintendent of the Tarn Taran Leper Asylum – a direct

result of his earlier encounter. The asylum was later described in his obituary as a model institution, which he ran with “sympathetic but firm control”.

## Two wives

Edward married Louisa Compigné Chase on 25 January 1883 in Bombay. She appears to have been in India practicing medicine. They had four children: Lilian, born 1884; Edith, born 1886; Edward, born 1888, all in India; and Evelyn, born 1890 in Reading.

According to the records in the CMS archive, the family

*“Edward was affectionately known as ‘Guilford of Tarn Taran’”*

## Villain or victim?

*The hasty decisions and political backlash that led to murder*

Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who wrote so kindly of the Reverend Guilford in his obituary, was the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab between 1912 and 1919. It was a time when tensions were running high between the Indians and the ruling British authorities, which were further stirred up by Ghandi's return to the country in 1915 and his campaign for independence.

On 13 April 1919, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh men, women and children, gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh garden in Amritsar, to celebrate a religious festival. Without warning, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, ordered his troops to open fire on the crowd until their ammunition was almost spent, resulting in a massacre, with hundreds fatally wounded. O'Dwyer supported Dyer's action, as it was felt that the gathering was part of a wider conspiracy of civil unrest. He was assassinated in 1940 in revenge for this decision.

spent most of the spring, summer and autumn of 1889 and 1890 in England. The 1891 Census shows Louisa and the children living with her family in Reading, while it appears Edward returned to India alone.

It seems Louisa got sick and Edward returned to England to be with her in April 1894. However, they were never to see each other again, as she died of double pneumonia at a relative's house in Hastings, Sussex, on 23 May 1895. News of her death must have taken a month to arrive, as his ‘special leave’ didn't begin until 28 June.

He returned to India in November, and married Elizabeth Rose Grimwood in Tarn Taran on 4 November 1896. She'd been working for the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society in India. His children, however, stayed in England, where I've found them in various boarding schools on the 1901 Census.

## High praise

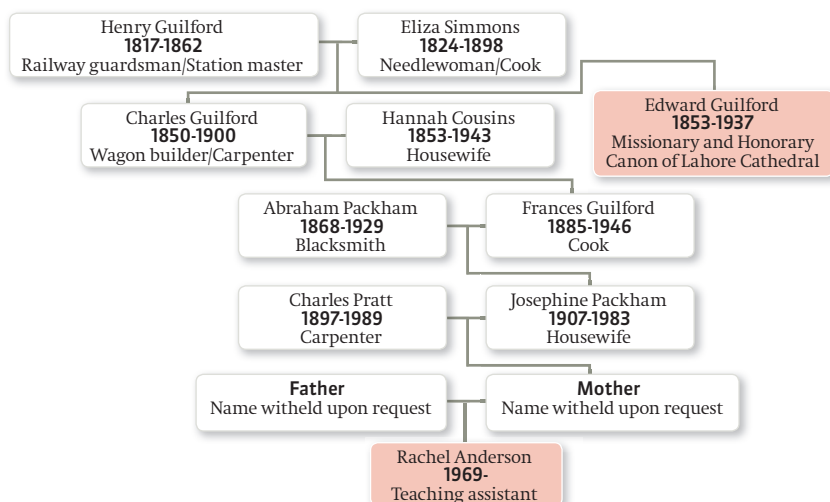
By now, Edward had quite a reputation among the Sikhs in the area and was affectionately known as ‘Guilford of Tarn Taran’. He was often called upon ▶

## RECORDS

### Railways

The surviving railway company staff records are held at The National Archives. For the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, you'll find [www.lbscr.demon.co.uk](http://www.lbscr.demon.co.uk) particularly useful

## THE GUILFORD FAMILY TREE







*“Edward received the Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire”*



**Top left** Edward Guilford and his children, c1930

**Above** The Christian church in Tarn Taran

to mediate in disputes between rival Sikh factions. One such contention was over the control of the temple at Tarn Taran, when the factions united to request that the Rev Guilford took over the management, although his position in the Anglican Church prevented him from accepting it. Even so, this shows how much respect the local people had for him.

The Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, later wrote in Edward's obituary, “the offer was unique and reveals what the man stood for – the high ideals of a true Christian gentleman united with broad sympathy and sound common sense”. He said his “cheery frank manner, his broad humanity, and his keen sense of humour won their confidence, and his knowledge of Sikh mentality was most valuable to the Punjab Government and the local officers”. He added, “No man understood them better or had a wider influence for good among them”.

His obituary also lists the many positions he held: President of the Tarn Taran Municipal Committee, Chairman of the Punjab New Testament Revision committee, Honorary Chaplain of Dharinsala Cantonments and Vice-President of the CMS.

Edward built the Christian Church in Tarn Taran, which survives to this day. There are plaques either side of the altar dedicated to him and his wives. On the eve of his retirement he wrote that during his time, “3,239 souls had been added to the church by baptism”.

In 1905, the Indian government awarded him

the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal 1st Class for quelling a riot, the first of many honours he received. During World War I, he was a captain in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers and responsible for recruitment and propaganda. In 1916, he was appointed the Honorary Canon of Lahore Cathedral and awarded an OBE in 1919. He went on to receive the Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire in the New Year's Honours list of 1923.

## Back home

Edward resigned from the CMS in 1923, although he continued his duties at Lahore Cathedral up until 1930. By this time, his son Edward was rector of St Nicholas Church in Cottesmore, Rutland, and lived in the village with his wife and family. Rev Guilford and his wife settled there too. His granddaughter remembers this time with fond

memories, although his wife is recalled as a formidable lady who terrorised the village in her invalid carriage!

With his health failing, Edward travelled to his daughter Evelyn's house in Bristol, and died there on 13 August 1937. He was 83 years old. His ashes were placed in the grave of his first wife, Louisa, who is buried at the London

Road Cemetery in Reading. His widow wrote his memoirs, before passing away on 6 January 1938.

Edward had various works published during his life, including a Punjabi translation of the Book of Psalms, and *Sikhism*, of which I have a copy. The Lay Reader Headquarters printed it as part of a series on religions in 1919. The preface, written by HU Weitbrecht, describes the Edward as, “better qualified for the task than any other missionary in India, both by practical experience of Sikhism and by the study of its scriptures. His whole life has been spent in intercourse with the Sikh peasantry, gentry and priesthood and his great and beneficial influence over them”.

This, I feel, is a fitting tribute to a remarkable man, who I'm immensely proud to place into my family tree. ■

## NEWSPAPER

### The Times

The Times Online Digital Archive (<http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive>) provides a database to subscribing members for 1785 to 1985. Your local library may provide free access to it

## Missionary men

*How this religious group spread the gospel*

The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 by a group of clergyman and layman of the Church of England. It was one of many Evangelical British societies that sent its missionaries out to Africa, Asia and China, to preach the gospel, convert the indigenous population to Christianity and build churches. They also provided education and healthcare, and worked towards social reform and economic prosperity.

They saw themselves as continuing the work of Jesus Christ and his disciples, with the care of leprosy sufferers having particular biblical significance. The victims of this disfiguring, contagious disease were treated as outcasts and were shunned by society. By opening asylums, missionaries sought to alleviate their pain by providing food and shelter, for both sufferers and their families, even though there was no known cure. The work of the CMS continues to this day.

## CONTACTS

### Church Missionary Society Archive

University of Birmingham, Information Services, Special Collections Department, Main Library, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT  
[w. www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/44/1215.htm](http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/44/1215.htm)  
 t. 0121 414 5838

### WEBSITES

#### The London, Brighton & South Coast Railway

[w. www.lbscr.demon.co.uk](http://www.lbscr.demon.co.uk)

#### The Times Digital Archive

[w. http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive](http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive)