

OBITUARIES

LT.-COL. FREDERICK MARSHMAN BAILEY, C.I.E., 1882-1967

It was somehow characteristic of 'Hatter' Bailey that he was the only living man named in the roll of honour on the Menin Gate at Ypres. The circumstance greatly appealed to his sense of humour; but he related how the error disturbed his mother when first reported to her by a friend, so that she went to the War Graves Commission to seek a correction. She was met with incredulity; the name was there, but the list had been so thoroughly checked that anyone included was undoubtedly dead. When she insisted that her son was at that moment staying in Lhasa with his friend the Dalai Lama, the official attitude quickly changed to one of suave but insincere assurances. Being Bailey, however, that was just where he was. It may or may not have been on the same visit to Lhasa that he organized pony racing, with a 'tote', under the personal patronage of His Holiness.

Frederick ('Eric') Marshman Bailey was born at Lahore on 3 February 1882, eldest son of Lt.-Col. E. Bailey, R.E., and was educated at Edinburgh Academy, Wellington College and Sandhurst. Commissioned in the Indian Army, he served with the 17th Bengal Lancers 1901-03 and the 32nd Sikh Pioneers 1903-05. He was with the Tibet Expedition (Younghusband's mission to Lhasa) 1903-04, and with an exploring party in western Tibet 1904-05. In 1905 he transferred to the Indian Political Department and for the next four years was British Indian Trade Agent at Gyantse, Tibet. In 1911 he made a remarkable journey from western China, through southeastern Tibet to the Mishmi Hills in Assam, as later described in his book 'China—Tibet—Assam' (1945); in that year he was also with the Abor Expedition. In 1913, Bailey and Captain H. T. Morshead, R.E., of the Survey of India, explored some exceptionally difficult country in southeastern Tibet and among other things proved that the Tsangpo did flow into the Brahmaputra. They made valuable reports at the time, and long afterwards Bailey wrote his book 'No Passport to Tibet' (1957).

Bailey was with the Indian Expeditionary Force in Flanders and Gallipoli in 1915. Thereafter he was removed from active service (much to his annoyance), because he was one of the few experts on Tibet that the Government of India had at its disposal, and was posted as Political Officer on the Northwest Frontier 1916-17. He then became Political Officer in Mesopotamia and Persia 1917-18 and was given a very important assignment to Turkestan 1918-20, where a potentially dangerous situation had arisen after the revolution in Russia. Eventually he had to go underground, reappearing from time to time with different identities and talking various languages. This culminated in the fantastic episode of his recruitment to the Bolshevik military counter-espionage service, when part of his assignment was to uncover a missing foreign agent called Bailey! These adventures he described in his book 'Mission to Tashkent' (1946).

After his escape through Bokhara, to Meshed, he was successively Political Officer in Sikkim 1921-28, Resident in Baroda 1930-32, Resident in Kashmir 1932-33, and Envoy Extraordinary in Nepal 1935-38. He retired in 1938 but returned to service as a King's Messenger to Central and South America 1942-43. In his retirement he lived at Stiffkey, Norfolk, where he died on 17 April 1967. In 1921 he had married the Hon. Irma Cozens-Hardy, who survives him. She accompanied him in the outposts at which he was stationed and is said to have been almost certainly the first European woman to enter Bhutan.

Bailey was a notable linguist; as a young man he was examined in Tibetan by the prototype of Hurry Chunder Mookerjee in Kipling's 'Kim'. His gift of tongues served him well in his roles of explorer, secret agent and diplomat. As an explorer, he was apt to travel in the face of official disapproval and to overstay his leave by a generous margin; but the results were his justification. He underwent great dangers and hardships, which he met with calm courage and overcame by outstanding resourcefulness. He received the Gill Memorial award and the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society, and the Livingstone Gold Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. He was made C.I.E. in 1915.

As a naturalist, he made many observations in Tibet, especially of mammals, birds, butterflies and plants. Some new forms were named after him—the well-known blue poppy *Mecanopsis betonicifolia Baileyi*, a rhododendron, a goral, a shrew and several butterflies. He discovered the habitat of a race of Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon harmani* previously known only from an imperfect skin. His account of the breeding of the Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* still merited quotation 45 years later, in Delacour's 'Waterfowl of the World' (vol. 1, 1954). He also described the breeding of the Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*, a bird not well known to this day. Many specimens that he collected were deposited in the British Museum (Natural History) at various dates from 1912 onwards. They include a collection of about 2,300 bird skins (of 270 species) from Nepal and Tibet, received in 1938. A collection of 80 mammals includes five types.

Eric Bailey was a member of the B.O.U.—and surely one of the most colourful—from 1921 until he died; and he attended every International Ornithological Congress from 1930 to 1958, usually with Mrs. Bailey. His published contributions to the ornithology of Tibet mostly appeared in the 'Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society' in the period 1909–15. A less conventional record, in one of his books, is of a featherless parrot that reiterated the prayer "Om mani padme hum".

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