

Biographical Sketches of the Family of Henry Charles Prinsep (1844–1922)

Grandparents

John Prinsep

Born Newton Regis 1746; died London 1831; married Sophia Auriol in Calcutta, January 1783; eight sons and four daughters, and at least four illegitimate children, probably to Indian women. John lived in Calcutta between 1770 and 1788, and made a fortune from diverse business interests, including indigo, chintz and copper. Back in London, he established a trading and shipping company, Prinsep and Saunders, and was involved with other imperial projects, including the Sierra Leone Company. Prinsep was elected member for Queensborough in the House of Commons for one term in 1802. He bought properties in Leadenhall St, London, adjacent to the headquarters of the British East India Company, Thoby Priory in Essex, and in Bristol, but lost his fortune and found paid employment as Sheriff of Southwark. He was the author of a number of pamphlets on the trading activities of the East India Company, slavery and the sugar trade.

Sophia Prinsep (née Auriol)

Born Lisbon 1760; died London 1850; married John Prinsep in Calcutta, January 1783; eight sons, four daughters.

Major-General Sir Henry White

Born Scotland; died Bath 1822. White had a distinguished military career with the East India Company army, from recruitment as a Bengal cadet in 1772 until retirement in 1817. He served in numerous campaigns, including the Mahratta and Rohillas wars, the campaign against Tippu Sultan, and the siege of Bangalore.

Parents

Charles Robert Prinsep

Born London 1789; died London 1864; married Louisa Anne White in Calcutta, 1837; three sons, three daughters. Charles graduated in law from Cambridge, entered the London Bar in 1817 and moved to Calcutta in 1824, where he became a member of the Calcutta Bar and standing counsel to the East India Company. He established a lucrative legal business which allowed him to purchase property and set up agricultural enterprises in India, Singapore, Van Diemen's Land and Western Australia, and enter the passenger shipping business. He attained the position of Advocate General of the East India Company in 1852. He was appointed Royal Commissioner to inquire into the conduct of the 'white rajah', Sir James Brooke, in Singapore, 1854. He suffered a severe stroke in 1855 and retired to England, where he lived as an invalid in a succession of properties until his death.

Louisa Anne Prinsep (née White)

Born Calcutta 1819; died Calcutta 1855; married Charles Robert Prinsep in 1837 at the age of 18, three sons, three daughters. Louisa died at the age of 36 after giving birth to youngest son, Jim.

Uncles and aunts

Sophia Charlotte Haldimand (née Prinsep)

Born Calcutta 1783; died London 1861; married George Haldimand, a London merchant, in 1807; no children.

John Prinsep

Born London 1788; died Bolivia 1819. He left England for Argentina in 1807 as agent for his father's firm, Prinsep and Saunders. His life thereafter is a mystery, although it is rumoured that he was engaged in various commercial and military activities in the West Indies and South America, including service with Bolivar's army.

George Alexander Prinsep

Born London 1791; died Calcutta 1839 of cholera; married Catherine Blake in Bombay in 1822; two sons. George initially worked as his father's agent in the West Indies, before transferring to Bombay in 1822. He moved to Calcutta to work with Palmer and Company in 1825 and, after its collapse in 1830, established various enterprises, including salt manufacture in Calcutta and a newspaper in Singapore. George was author of numerous articles on the trade and commerce of the East India Company.

Henry Thoby Prinsep (Thoby)

Born Essex 1792; died Freshwater, Isle of Wight, 1878; married Sara Monkton Pattle in Calcutta in 1832; three sons, one daughter. He entered the East India Company service as a civil service recruit in 1807, initially at Haileybury College in Hertfordshire and then at Fort William in Calcutta in 1809 (at the age of 17). Thoby served in a succession of senior posts in Calcutta and on the staff of five Governors-General. He published a number of historical texts on India and commentaries on Indian affairs, and was involved in linguistic research and translation in Arabic and Persian as a member of the Bengal Asiatic Society. He retired as Chief Secretary in 1843 and returned to England. Elected to the East India Company Board of Directors in 1851, he was later appointed to the Secretary of State's Council for India in 1858, on which he served until 1874. He lived with his family at Little Holland House in Kensington from 1847 to 1871, when he retired to Freshwater. His memoirs were dictated to his son shortly before his death and form part of the unpublished volume 'Three Generations in India', held by the British Library.

Sara Prinsep (née Pattle)

Daughter of Calcutta merchant James Pattle and Adeline (née de L'Etang); born in Calcutta 1817; died Brighton 1887; married to Henry Thoby Prinsep in 1832; three sons, one daughter. Sara was known for her energetic social life, particularly her soirees at Little Holland House and her promotion of artist George Frederick Watts.

Julia Margaret Cameron (née Pattle)

Born Calcutta 1815; died Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1879; married to Charles Hay Cameron in Calcutta in 1838; six children. Cameron was educated in France but spent most of her younger life in Calcutta before moving to England in 1848. She lived in London before moving to Freshwater on the Isle of Wight in 1860. She took up photography in 1863 (at the age of 48) and rapidly became one of Britain's best known photographers. In 1875, Julia and Charles moved to Ceylon

where she continued to photograph until her death four years later. 'Aunt Jules', as she was known to the Prinsep children, was a significant figure in their early lives. Henry visited her frequently, and his sisters Annie, Lou and May lived with her for periods after their father's death.

William Prinsep

Born London 1794; died Surrey 1874; married Mary Campbell in Calcutta in 1820; six sons and two daughters. He entered the Royal Navy aged 11, but had his commission bought out by his father two years later. He went to Calcutta as an agent for his brother-in-law, George Haldimand, in 1817, and joined John Palmer's agency house, Palmer and Company, as a partner in 1819. Declared bankrupt after the collapse of the agency house in 1830, he re-entered business as a partner in Carr Tagore and Company in 1835, and was involved in diverse commercial enterprises, including opium, tea and tug boats. A prolific water-colourist and drawer, William left many images of Indian family and social life, street scenes and landscapes. He retired to a country house in Surrey in 1841. His detailed and extensive memoirs are held in the British Library.

Caroline Macaire (née Prinsep)

Born London 1796; died Switzerland 1827; married to Isaac Macaire, an academic, in Geneva in 1824.

Amelia Rebecca Prinsep (Emily)

Born London 1798; died Reading 1860. A productive artist, Emily drew images of her father and brother, and painted watercolours of family life in their London landscape. She lived with her ageing parents in London until her mother's death in 1850 and corresponded regularly with her brothers in India, particularly James Prinsep. Emily was well-known to the Prinseps of Henry's generation, who often used to spend holidays at the house she shared with her parents in Great Cumberland Street, London.

James Prinsep

Born Chelsea 1799; died London 1840; married to Harriet Aubert in Calcutta, 1822; one daughter, Ella. James is one of the great characters and humourists of the Prinsep family, as his warm and expressive letters to family, friends and scientific networks show. He went to Calcutta in 1819 to join the Calcutta Mint, and subsequently to Benares as Assay Master, where he stayed until his return to Calcutta in 1833. He was editor of the Asiatic Society of Bengal journal 1832–

1838, and in this role promoted oriental research and undertook his own projects in archaeology, numismatics and the ancient scripts of India. He was engaged in engineering projects in Benares and Calcutta, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1828. He published *Views of Benares* in 1836, and was a prolific artist, illustrator and letter writer. His *Essays on Indian Antiquities* was published after his death, in 1858. He left India in poor health in 1840 and died soon afterwards. A ghat was erected on the Hooghly River at Calcutta in his memory.

Thomas Prinsep

Born London 1800; died Calcutta 1830 after falling from his horse; married Lucy Campbell in Calcutta in 1827; one daughter, Sophia. He went to Calcutta in 1822 after joining the East India Company Engineers, and was engaged in various engineering works in Burma and Assam, and on water diversion works on the Sunderbands near Calcutta. Thomas was a talented landscape artist.

Augustus Prinsep

Born London 1803; died at sea, Indian Ocean, 1830 of tuberculosis; married Elisabeth Ommaney in Calcutta in 1826; two daughters, Georgiana, born in Batavia, Java, died there a few days later, and Augusta, born October 1830 in Calcutta. He entered Haileybury College as a civil service recruit in 1819 and excelled in his studies. In Bengal, he occupied a succession of magistrate posts at Tirhut, Agra, Ramghur and Shergati, where he contracted tuberculosis. He was forced to turn to a 'sea cure' on a long voyage to Tasmania. Returning to Calcutta, he fell ill again and sought another sea cure and furlough in England, but died off the coast of South Africa. Augustus's short stories, journals and a novel were published by his widow after his death and include *Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land*, *The Baboo, Theodore, or Coelebs the Younger*, and *A Man of Sentiment in the Mofussil*.

Brothers and sisters

Charles John Prinsep (Charlie)

Born Calcutta 1843; died Melbourne 1898; married to Mrs Fuller. Charlie left Calcutta aged five with Henry Prinsep and was educated at Rugby. He was recruited to the East India Company army in 1857 and served in the 19th Hussars in Tirhut until he resigned his commission in 1867 to take over management of

his late father's Tasmanian estate. Living off the rent of these properties, Charlie moved between Australia and England, but had little to do with his brothers and sisters, apart from one visit to Western Australia in 1870.

Anne Mary Prinsep (Annie)

Born Calcutta 1848; died Ryde, Isle of Wight 1932. Annie cared for her Uncle Thoby and Aunt Sara until their deaths, living at their home in Freshwater, and then with her sisters Louisa and May before establishing her own home at Ryde. Annie was close friends with Julia Margaret Cameron, Alfred Tennyson and George Frederick Watts, and was a regular correspondent with Henry in Western Australia.

Louisa Sophia Bowden-Smith (née Prinsep) (Lou)

Born Calcutta 1850; died London 1922; married William Bowden-Smith, a wealthy Colombo merchant, in 1872; two sons and one daughter. Louisa lived in Ceylon for 20 years before returning to England, where William died. Louisa corresponded with her brother, Henry, regularly over a period of 50 years, a correspondence of immense value for its record of colonial family life.

Mary Emily Tennyson (first married name Hichens, née Prinsep) (May)

Born Calcutta 1853; died London 1936; married first to London stockbroker Andrew Hichens in 1874 and, after his death in 1906, to Hallam Tennyson in 1918. May features in many portraits by Julia Margaret Cameron, Val Prinsep and Frederick Leighton. After the death of her parents, May lived with her Uncle Thoby and Aunt Sara at Little Holland House and Freshwater, before moving to London after her marriage to Andrew. After Andrew's death, she lived in Compton in Surrey before her marriage to Hallam Tennyson, when she moved to the Tennyson home Farringford at Freshwater. She wrote regularly to her brother Henry in Western Australia, though not as regularly as her sisters Annie and Lou.

James Charles Prinsep (Jim)

Born Calcutta 1855; died Bath 1942; married Cecily Molesworth in 1893; two daughters. Jim's mother Louisa died shortly after giving birth to him, followed by the death of his father when he was nine. Educated at boarding schools at Brighton and Bristol, Uncle Thoby and Aunt Sara Prinsep also cared for him at Little Holland House as he was growing up. He moved to Ceylon in 1875 to

work on coffee estates and then to Western Australia in 1881, where he spent a year with his brother Henry. He returned to England for a career in mining administration and worked for a succession of companies until his retirement to Yarmouth and then to Bath. Jim was a regular correspondent with Henry Prinsep over the course of his life, from childhood to old age.

Daughters

Carlotta Louisa Brockman (née Prinsep)

Born Belvidere 1869; died Northam 1960; married Peter Brockman in 1900; three sons (Frank, Harry and Martin) and three daughters (Caroline, Emily and Carlotta, who died at the age of 11 in 1921). Oldest daughter of Henry and Josephine Prinsep, Carlotta features prominently in Henry Prinsep's papers, including many photographs and letters, and detailed descriptions of her childhood and youth in her father's diaries. Later in life, Carlotta wrote her reminiscences, which cover her childhood at Belvidere and Perth, as well as her married life, and is a vivid portrayal of family life in the colony during the later 19th Century. She was a talented singer and artist, as well as a skilled embroiderer.

Emily Prinsep

Born Perth 1875; died Busselton 1960. Emily lived with her parents until their deaths, and continued to live at Little Holland House in Busselton until her death. She travelled with her father to Ceylon in 1898 and then accompanied her parents on their trip to England and the Continent in 1907–08.

Virginia Reynolds (née Prinsep)

Born Perth 1876; died Busselton 1958; married to Thomas Reynolds at Busselton in 1907; three sons (Henry, Charles and Alfred) and two daughters, Virginia and Edith.

Significant cousins and in-laws

Sir Henry Thoby Auriol Prinsep

Born Calcutta 1836; died Wales 1914. Brought up and educated in London after the retirement of his father Thoby in 1843, Henry returned to Calcutta in 1855 as magistrate in the Supreme Court and eventually rose to become Chief Justice. He retired to England in 1904. He is author of 'Three Generations in India', which he compiled to show how British India had changed during the careers of his grandfather John, father Thoby, and his own 27-year career in Calcutta.

Valentine Cameron Prinsep (Val)

Born Calcutta 1838; died London 1904; married Florence Leyland in 1884. Second son of Thoby and Sara Prinsep, Val entered Haileybury College as an Indian Civil Service recruit but decided instead on a career as an artist in London. He was closely associated with the Pre-Raphaelite school of painters, particularly Millais and Burne Jones, as well as G.F. Watts. He exhibited his own work widely, including at the Royal Academy. In 1877 he was commissioned to illustrate the Delhi durbar, and later wrote about his year in India in his book *Imperial India: An artist's journal*.

Augusta Becher (née Prinsep)

Born at sea in 1830, ten days after the death of her father; died in London 1909; married Septimus Becher, an Indian Army officer. Daughter of Augustus Prinsep and Elisabeth (née Ommaney), Augusta lived for some years in India and witnessed events in the Indian Rebellion in 1857, which she later wrote about in her posthumously published *Personal Reminiscences in India and Europe, 1830–1888*. She returned to England soon after these events and lived for a short time as housekeeper with the family of Charles Robert Prinsep. Her memoirs provide a rich portrait of family and social life in India and England.

John Garrett Bussell

Born in Hampshire in 1803; died in Busselton in 1875; Henry Prinsep married his youngest daughter Josephine in 1868. After an education at Winchester College and Trinity College, Oxford, John emigrated to the Swan River Colony with most of his siblings in 1829, where the family first attempted to establish holdings at Augusta on the colony's south coast. They later moved to take up land on the Vasse River, rapidly establishing farms and homesteads. Bussell was

active in the political, commercial and religious life of the colony, and became a successful farmer at his home, 'Cattle Chosen'. He was elected as MLA for the Vasse in 1870. Bussell had four daughters, Capel, Emily, Caroline and Josephine after marrying Charlotte Cookworthy while on a trip to England in 1837.

Charlotte Bussell (first married name Cookworthy, née Spicer)

Born in England in 1808; died in Paris in 1899. Charlotte was a widow when she married John Garrett Bussell at Plymouth in 1837, and accompanied him to Busselton with her three children, including daughter Frances Cookworthy. She had four daughters with Bussell: Capel, Emily, Caroline, and Josephine. After John's death in 1875, she returned to Europe, accompanied by Caroline, where she lived first in London, before moving to Paris. A regular correspondent with Henry and Josephine Prinsep, Charlotte continued to oversee the financial affairs of the family and received many visitors from Western Australia. Her grand-daughter, Carlotta Prinsep, lived with her for two years as a young woman, and another grand-daughter, Flora Brockman, lived with her for many years.

Caroline Bussell

Born Busselton 1846; died Busselton 1913. Caroline accompanied her mother on her return to Europe after the death of John Garrett Bussell and lived in London and Paris until her mother's death in 1899. She then returned to Western Australia, where she lived the remainder of her life at 'Cattle Chosen' in Busselton. She was a tireless correspondent and her letters to Henry and Josephine Prinsep over her 20-year stay in Europe provide a vivid commentary on social and family life in Paris as well as detailing her perceptions of the progress of the faraway Western Australian colony.

Capel Carter Brockman (née Bussell)

Born Busselton 1839; died Busselton 1924. Capel married Edward Reveley Brockman in 1863 and went to live at the isolated farm 'The Warren', near the south-western town of Pemberton. She and Edward had 10 children, one of whom, Peter Spicer Brockman, married Carlotta Prinsep (her sister Josephine's daughter with Henry Prinsep) in 1900. Capel was a regular correspondent with her sister, Josephine. Capel's letters provide a detailed account of life on an isolated property far from Perth and Busselton, including her perceptions of Aboriginal people in the region.

Peter Spicer Brockman

Born at 'The Warren' in 1874; died Dalwallinu, Western Australia in 1944; married Carlotta Prinsep, oldest daughter of his aunt Josephine and uncle Henry Prinsep, in 1900. After spending his childhood and youth at 'The Warren', Brockman moved to a farm near Busselton and, after marrying, to the isolated wheat-belt hamlet, Buntine, where many of his children were born.

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