
Note

A Brief Description of the Collection of Rawlinson

Papers at the Royal Asiatic Society

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Abstract

The contents of the Rawlinson papers have now been sorted into a meaningful order and the contents listed, this note contains a brief description of its contents, in order to make clear what it does and does not contain. Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810–1895) is mainly remembered as a pioneer in the decipherment of cuneiform scripts but it will be seen from the documents in the collection that his interests covered a rather wider range of topics.

Since 2004 Roger Parsons has provided generous and valuable assistance to the Royal Asiatic Society library as a volunteer. He has undertaken various projects, including this survey of the Rawlinson papers, with painstaking accuracy and attention to detail. This work opens up a fascinating archive to scholarly research and the Society gratefully acknowledges his substantial contribution to the documentation of its collections.

Kathy Lazenbatt, 2014

Introduction

The collection of the papers of Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810–1895) [HCR] held by the Royal Asiatic Society [RAS] had become rather disordered and was completely undescribed. The contents of this collection having now been sorted into a more meaningful order and the contents having been listed, it seems useful to publish a brief description of its contents, in order to make clear what it does and does not contain. HCR is mainly remembered as a pioneer in the decipherment of cuneiform scripts but it will be seen that the documents in the collection cover a rather wider range.

The Genesis of the Collection

It appears that HCR's papers passed on his death to his elder son Henry Seymour Rawlinson, later Baron Rawlinson of Trent¹ (1864–1925) [referred to as Harry Rawlinson for the sake

¹Harry Rawlinson was a career soldier who was raised to the peerage for his service as a general on the Western Front during the First World War. He died childless and the title became extinct. The baronetcy awarded to HCR passed to Harry's younger brother Alfred and thence to Alfred's sons.

of convenience]. Harry was devoted to his father and seems to have made considerable efforts to organise the collection,² although he did not share his father's scholarly interests nor his facility in languages. It seems most probable that, after his death, the whole body of papers remained in the possession of his widow, Meredith Baroness Rawlinson until her death on 29 September 1951³ when it was divided between the British Museum (now held by the British Library), the Royal Geographical Society and the RAS. The British Library collection principally consists of the notebooks in which HCR jotted down records of inscriptions and various attempts at decipherment. However, these are generally undated and lack any kind of descriptions or headings. The RGS collection is described as containing private journals, political diaries, notebooks etc. It is not clear from the general description available online how great the overlap is between this and the RAS collection.

It is clear that HCR did not keep correspondence – his instinct was to throw it away. The correspondence in the RAS collection was thus assembled by his wife, Louisa Caroline Harcourt Seymour Rawlinson (1829–1889) [Louisa] after their marriage in 1862. She did this by collecting HCR's letters from those of his correspondents who had kept them, notably his elder sister Maria Rawlinson Smith (1804–1897) and Edwin Norris (1792–1872). Accordingly, there are very few letters *to* HCR dating from before his marriage, and most of those are office copies that he sent to Norris for various reasons. Apart from these letters, the collection contains a considerable volume of papers relating to the Seymour family which Louisa presumably brought with her on her marriage or retrieved from the family home subsequently.

Rawlinson's Life and Career

It will be convenient to give an outline here of the main events in HCR's life, as they affect the RAS collection:

- 1) Born 1810.⁴

²When I first examined the collection it contained numerous small labels in Harry's handwriting. Since they were all couched in rather general terms e.g. "Letters before 1860" and had moreover become detached from the materials to which they referred, there seemed no point in keeping them.

³For the date of Baroness Rawlinson's death see *The Times* 2 October 1951. It appears that the RAS has no record of when its Rawlinson Collection was donated, or by whom. The entry in the National Register of Archives for the RGS Rawlinson Collection says "Papers deposited at the RGS by Lady Rawlinson". This cannot refer to HCR's wife, since she died in 1889, and some of the items in the collection postdate this. The entry for the Rawlinson Papers in the British Library's Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue says "Presented by Miss Elmira Wade, as executrix of Meredith, Baroness Rawlinson". It seems most probable therefore that HCR's papers remained intact up to Baroness Rawlinson's death and were then divided between the three institutions. However, Baroness Rawlinson's will contains no explicit mention of her father-in-law's papers and it is at present a matter for conjecture as to who decided on their disposition and the basis on which they were divided up. However, it should also be noted that in a letter written to his wife in 1870 [V/10], HCR briefly mentions offering the British Museum "some of my MSS" but there is no further mention of this, nor any indication of what these mss may have been or what became of them.

⁴According to the Rawlinson family tree [IV/01(02)] HCR's mother had 11 children of whom at least seven survived into adulthood. No doubt because of these repeated pregnancies, HCR and his sister Maria were sent to stay with their "Aunt Smith" in Bristol. HCR estimated that he spent half his childhood in Bristol [see *Annuary* IV/13.] and was subsequently sent away to school. This may account for his rather distant relationship with his father, whom he hardly mentions, and for his much closer relationship with his sister Maria than with any other member of his family.

- 2) 1827. Sailed to India, to take up a cadetship in the East India Company's army.
- 3) 1833. Sent to Persia with other British officers to organise and train the Persian army. It was during his duty in Persia that he first saw the great trilingual cuneiform inscription at Behistun (Bisitun) and began his work on cuneiform decipherment.
- 4) 1839. The British military officers were withdrawn as a result of a change in Persian foreign policy.
- 5) 1841. Joined the British military contingent in Afghanistan, where he was stationed in Kandahar as political agent (consul). When the Afghans rose against the British, he was required to organise the defence of Kandahar, which he did successfully.
- 6) 1842. After his return from Afghanistan, much of his property, including most of his papers, was lost when a river boat caught fire on the River Sutlej. Hence the record of his early career, and his early scholarly work is fragmentary. Items that survived the fire can be recognised by showing signs of scorching and water damage.
- 7) 1843. Posted to Baghdad as political agent, where he spent the rest of his East India Company career, and resumed work on cuneiform inscriptions. He found the climate of Baghdad very trying, particularly in summer, and complained constantly about its effect on his health.
- 8) June 1846. Dr Edward Hincks, rector of Killaleagh, County Down, published three papers on "the three kinds of Persepolitan writing", in which he showed that he had made significant progress in reading cuneiform scripts.⁵ This must have been a shock for HCR since Hincks had not previously shown any interest in the subject. From this point onwards, Hincks and HCR were rivals, publishing quite scathing criticisms of each other's work. In his letters to Norris, HCR accused Hincks of plagiarism and claiming credit for HCR's discoveries.⁶
- 9) 1849–51. Returned to England on sick leave. The portrait, of which an engraving is to be seen in the Society's Lecture Room, was painted at this time and it seems probable that he also met his future wife.
- 10) 1851. Entrusted by the Trustees of the British Museum with supervision of the archaeological excavations at Nimrud after A.H. Layard abandoned archaeology for a career in politics and diplomacy. He also conducted excavations on his own account in other places.
- 11) 1855. After repeated requests, was finally relieved of his post at Baghdad and returned to England permanently. Almost immediately the Trustees of the British Museum applied to the Government for a special grant to fund the publication of lithographic reproductions of the cuneiform inscriptions in their collections under HCR's editorship⁷.

⁵See K. J. Cathcart and P. Donlon, "Edward Hincks (1792–1866): A Bibliography of His Publications", *Orientalia*, vol. 52, no. 3 (1983) pp. 325–356.

⁶See e.g. III/03(V) "There is no occasion, however, to mention this [i.e. some discoveries which he has made in the Median script] to Dr Hincks as he would probably claim it before the savans of Dublin as his own discovery". After Hincks's death in 1866, however, he remarked in a letter to Louisa "He was a cantankerous old soul, but peace be to his ashes". HCR also lent his support to a petition for a Government pension for Hincks's three daughters, who had been left destitute by their father's death.

⁷This appeared as *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* and was originally expected to occupy two volumes (see e.g. the Report of the Anniversary General Meeting of the RAS, May 1865) but eventually ran to five, the

- 12) 1856. Appointed a Crown Director of the East India Company. It is not clear whether this was a paid appointment, or how much work it entailed. Also received a baronetcy and other honours.
- 13) 1858. In February he became MP for Reigate, but resigned after a few months to take up a seat on the newly-formed Council for India.
- 14) 1859. In September HCR was appointed Ambassador to Tehran, which involved his resigning his seat on the Council for India. Although he had actively sought this post during his stay in England between 1849 and 1851,⁸ he seems to have accepted it reluctantly when it was finally offered and to have resigned rather abruptly and at the earliest opportunity.⁹ It is not clear why he felt obliged to accept it at all.
- 15) September 1862. Married Louisa Caroline Harcourt Seymour as above.
- 16) 1865. HCR became Member of Parliament for Frome in Somerset. He held the seat until 1868 when he re-joined the Council for India, a post which he held to the end of his life. This was a full-time salaried post, and the income accruing from it was essential to HCR's maintaining his position,¹⁰ although it was generally recognised that it would be incompatible with his continuing his cuneiform work.¹¹

last appearing in 1884. However, HCR's direct involvement ceased before the publication of the third volume though his name continued to appear on the title pages. The transcriptions and translations that were promised in the Preface to Volume 1 never materialised. Apart from the many other activities competing for his attention, cost was no doubt an obstacle. HCR complains to Norris more than once about the cost of using cuneiform types: he was expected to meet the cost of printing the sheets containing the transcriptions and translations as well as the cost of binding the interleaved volumes out of his own pocket – the Government grants were barely sufficient to cover the cost of lithographing, printing and binding the volumes containing the original inscriptions. George Smith's *History of Assurbanipal translated from the Cuneiform Inscriptions* (London and Edinburgh, 1871) gives an idea of the kind of work which HCR was expected to produce. Smith was dependent on financial support from two wealthy amateurs – H.W. Fox Talbot and W. Bosanquet – to cover the cost of printing this work (see e.g. Fox Talbot archive document nos. 4702, 9750, 9778, 9817, 9819). Perhaps in return for this financial support, Smith's *History of Assurbanipal* contains an essay by Bosanquet explaining his theories on the chronology of the Assyrian/Babylonian empires and its relationship to the chronology given by the Egyptian records. HCR would have been too proud to accept financial support from such a source and would certainly not have agreed to the inclusion of another man's work in "his" book, particularly if he disagreed with it. By contrast, the works of HCR's French rival Jules Oppert were published by the official state publishing house, the Imprimerie Imperiale, later the Imprimerie Nationale.

⁸See HCR's letters to Maria [IV/08].

⁹For HCR's reluctance to accept the Ambassadorship, see his letters to Norris [III/14] and also the letter to his future mother-in-law [II/09(01)]. It should be noted that the reasons for resigning that HCR gives in his letters and subsequently in his *Annuary*, viz. that the post had proved to be less lucrative than he had expected and that the increased leisure on which he had counted in order to pursue his scholarly work had not materialised, differ from that attributed to him in the article in the online edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁰There is insufficient information to form a complete picture of HCR's financial situation in the 1860s: his East India Company Army pension was £365 p.a. and remained at that level to the end of his life and no doubt he had income from the investments that he had been able to build up during his service. Summary accounts of HCR's income and expenditure for the years 1879 to 1890 [see IV/14] show that he had at that time an annual income fluctuating between £4,000 and £4,500, and that he was spending all of it; in some years he had to sell investments in order to make up the deficit. This income was made up of about £1,100 salary from his post on the Council for India, £365 military pension and the remainder from investments (some of this was derived from his wife's inheritance, but it is not clear how much). By comparison, Hincks's stipend as rector of Killaleagh was £712, although he probably enjoyed other benefits such as housing and tithes (see Cathcart and Donlon, "Edward Hincks", note iv). There is no information about Norris's income, but, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* J.W. Redhouse received £400 p.a. as a translator at the Foreign Office and £90 p.a. as Secretary to the RAS, and it seems reasonable to assume that Norris, who held the same posts, was paid similar sums. It would appear then that, by the standards of his fellow scholars, HCR was enjoying an affluent lifestyle although probably not grander than his wife's relations – she came from an aristocratic family – would have considered suitable.

¹¹See e.g. letter dated 28 October 1867 from Edwin Norris to William Henry Fox Talbot [Document No. 9264 <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/>].

- 17) 1889. His wife Louisa died. It appears from the letters in Box V that she suffered from poor health throughout their married life and she was at best a semi-invalid for several years before her death. HCR seems to have been badly affected by her death and never to have recovered from it, although he continued to attend meetings of the Council for India until just before his death. Concern for his father's well-being led Harry to resign his post in India to continue his military career in England.
- 18) HCR himself died at the beginning of 1895.

The Main Divisions of the Collection

The RAS collection is divided into five boxes as follows (it is recognised that these divisions are by no means watertight). A separate more detailed list has been compiled for each box.

Box I Documents primarily relating to the Seymour family, together with various items classified as 'problematical', i.e. it is not clear how they relate to the rest of the collection or, indeed, whether they relate to it at all.

Box II Documents mainly relating to HCR's career, other than his archaeological and linguistic studies.

Box III Documents relating to HCR's intellectual interests, particularly his cuneiform studies. The decision to place this material at this box number was taken for historical reasons.

Box IV Mainly biographical and autobiographical material.

Box V Mainly family correspondence dating from after HCR's marriage. This box had been arranged to a considerable extent before I started work on the collection and I have not interfered with the arrangement unless absolutely necessary. The original intention appears to have been to place in this box only letters between HCR and his wife, but other items were included. Many of the items are similar to those to be found in Boxes II or IV.

NB. HCR consistently spells words like "honour" and colour" as "honor" and color", and I have followed his spelling in quotations. While this is now thought of as American spelling, HCR probably considered it to be following Latin.

Box I

This box contains 723 items, of which the following appear to be of particular historical interest:

I/02: 80 items comprising miscellaneous letters between members of the Seymour and Hopkinson families roughly up to 1840. These include letters from Louisa's father Henry Seymour to his wife Jane Hopkinson Seymour "Jennie" commenting on political events during his time as an MP, although most of these are rather obscure.

Letters in I/02 and I/03 written by Louisa's brother Alfred M. Seymour (1822–88) while he was a schoolboy at Eton might be of interest to students of boys' education in the nineteenth century, particularly when compared with those written from Eton by HCR's son Harry in Box IV.

Some items in I/05 and I/06 relating to Louisa's childhood are of considerable charm and might be of interest to students of the upbringing of young women in the 1830s and 40s. I/05(6) Notebook containing an anecdote showing Marshal Ney's inveterate hatred of the British, observed during the Peace of Amiens 1803. Ends with the note "Written from my father's word of mouth, Oct 24. 1849".

I/07 Contains vivid eyewitness accounts from Louisa's brother Alfred of scenes following the Italian war of reunification in 1860–1 and the Franco-Prussian War 1870, and some other material which may be of historical interest.¹²

I/08 129 letters concerning HCR's marriage to Louisa in 1862, excluding letters between the couple. Most of the letters are to Louisa. There are clear indications that an attachment between the couple had been recognised for a long time and that some of Louisa's friends and family felt that HCR was to blame for keeping her in suspense for so long. There are also hints that HCR's financial situation was at the root of the difficulty.

Among the "problematical" items:

I/13 4 letters to Harry Rawlinson from Field Marshal Lord Roberts (1832–1914) whose aide-de-camp he had been in India. They would be of interest to biographers of Harry Rawlinson as showing the warm friendship which had developed between the two men.

I/14(16) 3 double sheets of an incomplete letter dated "May 4th off quitta" From ??? [the end of the letter is missing] to "My dearest mother". Describes a naval engagement in which the writer was involved.¹³

I/16 A collection of *carte-de-visite* photographs, including one of an adolescent boy in an Eton collar, who is very likely to be Harry Rawlinson when he started at Eton in 1877.

Box II

194 items mainly relating to HCR's official duties. Much of this material is fragmentary and may well not repay detailed study but the following items appear to be more substantial:

II/02(03) "Statement of the claims of Major H C Rawlinson . . . against the Persian Government Teheran July 31st 1838 [?]"¹⁴

II/05 2 account books giving details of expenditure for the "Political Agency of Turkish Arabia" for the period covering the period 1 April 1848 to "February 1855" when HCR finally left Baghdad. There is a gap for the period 31 October 1849 to 1 December 1851 when HCR was on leave.

¹²Particularly striking is his comment that "the Powers" should intervene "to prevent the dismemberment of France" without specifying which powers he has in mind: it is not clear which 'powers' apart from Britain would have been willing and able to act at this moment. It is also noteworthy that he does not know the English word for "machine-gun" and is obliged to refer it by the French name "mitrailleuse".

¹³The letter includes the names of several vessels as well as mentioning the King of Dahomey and the King of Porto-Novo. This letter deserves further investigation as it appears to be connected with the anti-slavery patrols which the Royal Navy mounted along the West African coast in the first half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴It appears that HCR had accepted "warrants" from the local provincial governor for these payments, only to be informed by the next governor that these warrants were not binding on him and that if HCR wanted payment, he must present them in Teheran. In total they represented a substantial sum of money and it is not clear if HCR was ever paid.

- II/06(05) Letter dated 13 February 1853 from HCR's elder brother Abram. There are indications of other letters from him, but this is the only one to survive. Interesting as showing the terms the brothers were on: friendly but not close.
- II/06(06) Dictated letter dated 9 August 1854 from the then British Ambassador to Turkey to HCR, discussing his attitude to HCR's resigning his post in Baghdad before the Crimean War was over. The writer expresses himself in non-committal terms, but the upshot seems to be that if HCR chooses to leave, the writer will not oppose his going.
- II/06(07) Letter from HCR dated 15 November 1854 to "My Lord" - not clear to whom it was addressed. Discusses the possibility of conflicts of interest arising between Britain and France at a time when they are supposed to be allies in the Crimean War and asks for guidance on how to deal with French agents.
- II/07(03) 2 long letters addressed from "42 The Parade", dated 14 and 16 January 1857, from "V Farrant [?]" to "My dear Rawlinson".¹⁵
- II/07(05) Long letter dated 15 March 1868 from "Lord Strangford" to the then Foreign Secretary concerning the authenticity of a document then in the possession of the Foreign Office purporting to be the record of a survey of Central Asia.
- II/08 Official correspondence concerning HCR's appointment as Ambassador to Teheran in 1859.¹⁶
- II/09 Letters to and from HCR during his term as Ambassador to Teheran, including reactions to his resignation.
- II/10 Papers concerning HCR's unsuccessful attempt to re-join the Council for India in 1863.
- II/11 Papers concerning HCR's unsuccessful attempt to re-join the Council for India in 1866.
- II/12 Papers concerning HCR's ultimately successful attempt to re-join the Council in 1868.¹⁷
- II/13 29 sheets of foolscap, some single and some double. None signed or dated, but where dates can be assigned they all relate to the period after HCR's return from Baghdad in 1855.¹⁸
- II/14-26 Miscellaneous letters addressed to HCR and his wife, mainly social but some arising from HCR's political and scholarly connections, dating from 1858 to 1881. They reveal the range of HCR's contacts and the variety of subjects in which he was interested.
- II/25 Letter dated "Oxford, Feb. 1 80" from "[Professor] F Max Muller" to "My dear Sir Henry" containing gossip about the state of oriental scholarship in Oxford.

¹⁵The writer had held a diplomatic post in Persia between 21 October 1847 and 21 October 1849. He is mainly concerned to air his grievances, but the letters contained much detailed information concerning events in Persia during this period, which included a change of regime.

¹⁶It documents his reluctance to accept the post and his unsuccessful attempt to obtain an assurance that he would be able to resume his seat on the Council for India when his term as ambassador was over.

¹⁷These papers make it clear that HCR had made enemies during his previous period of service on the Council because of his criticism of the way in which India was then being administered, so that his attempts to secure re-election all failed, but he was eventually appointed by the Secretary of State for India.

¹⁸Some appear to relate to speeches in Parliament. The most extensive body of material relates to contemporary events in Persia and Afghanistan, but there are also drafts of an article about the geography of that country.

Box III

229 items relating to HCR's intellectual interests particularly his cuneiform studies (additional passing references will be found in the biographical and autobiographical material in Box IV).

The most important part of the collection is the letters addressed first to the Royal Asiatic Society and later to Edwin Norris personally. These were collected and sorted by Norris in 1865 at Louisa's request.¹⁹ In addition to the letters themselves, the collection includes lists of the earlier letters with summaries and comments by Norris. Further comments occur on the letters themselves, although these are very difficult to read. Detailed summaries of the more important letters will be found in the Box III list, so only a general survey of the material will be given here.

The earlier letters from Baghdad give a vivid picture of the progress of HCR's researches, particularly in reading Babylonian and Assyrian, of his excitement when things were going well and his frustration when they were not. In one or two letters he gives the arguments that had led him to adopt a particular reading for a name, say, or an ideogram, showing the range of sources on which he drew for hints. It is also possible to date the first mention of particular features of the languages, such as determinatives or multiple values for particular signs. It might also be possible to date at least some of the entries in his notebooks in the collection of the British Library by comparing them with the letters.²⁰

Of particular interest is letter III/03(X) dated "Bisitun September 20th 1847" as it contains a first-hand account of the method of copying the Babylonian inscription, about which there has been some uncertainty. HCR first copied the inscription using a powerful telescope from a vantage point on the opposite side of the gorge during the time of day when it was illuminated obliquely, then supplemented this by paper squeezes made for him by two Kurds "who went up the precipice like cats and executed the task . . . from a swinging scaffold . . ."

The letters also devote a good deal of space to various more or less wild speculations, e.g. the locations of the garden of Eden and the kingdom of Sheba. These theorisings were often pursued at length in one letter only to be dismissed out of hand in the next.

In the letters there are numerous apologies for failure to complete pieces of work as promised due to pressure of official duties and – increasingly – ill health.²¹ After his return to Baghdad at the end of 1851, HCR constantly refers to his longing to leave Baghdad, where, he says, the climate in the summer is killing him, and to retire to England for good. Once

¹⁹See the letters from Norris in III/20. Despite his comments, the sequence appears to be complete from HCR's first letter to the then Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, Capt. H. H. Harkness, dated 1 January 1838 to the end of his correspondence with Norris on cuneiforms. This petered out about 1866.

²⁰It will be apparent that HCR did not keep an orderly record of the progress of his cuneiform researches, and hence there are almost no working papers, as this term is generally understood, in the RAS collection or elsewhere. In the letter to Fox Talbot referred to in note 11 above, Norris laments that "[Rawlinson] trusts his excellent memory too much, like poor Hincks, and will leave nothing behind him".

²¹His failure to complete his work on the Old Persian inscription at Bisitun could also have been partly due to the loss of notebooks and other materials in the fire on the River Sutlej already referred to. By the time he was able to return to Bisitun, other workers had already done so much work on Old Persian that he would have felt his time would be better occupied on the much more complex Babylonian and Assyrian scripts.

there, he vows, he will take a small house in the suburbs, shun society, and devote himself to cuneiform studies at least for several years.²²

There are also references to archaeological excavations and discoveries. He was entrusted with oversight of the British Museum's excavations at Nimrud from 1852 to 1854, and he undertook some excavations elsewhere on his own account. As his letters make clear, however, his main interest in these excavations was the recovery of sculptures and other works of art which could be sent back to adorn museums, and texts to further his own researches.²³ HCR does refer to ruins being surveyed after excavation, but clearly regards this as being of secondary importance.

III/11 contains a series of 17 letters documenting an at times acrimonious dispute between HCR, as representative of the interests of the British Museum and William Kennett Loftus, the archaeologist despatched by the Assyrian Excavation Society in 1854.²⁴

After 1854 the number of letters to Norris diminishes sharply,²⁵ and there are difficulties with dating them, since HCR rarely dated his letters in full when in Britain. During this period HCR had to combine his work on cuneiforms with his public duties, first as Director to the East India Company and MP for Frome, then as a member of the Council for India.²⁶

²²This despite the fact that when he was in England during the period 1849 to 1851 he appears to have done little if any work on cuneiforms and to have spent the time socialising and dancing attendance on Lord Palmerston in the hopes of securing a more prestigious appointment. See the letters to his sister Maria at IV/08.

²³The following extract from a letter to Norris dated August 24 1854 [III/10(15)] provides an amusing illustration of his attitude: "I commenced work at Birs-i-Nimrud [the ancient Borsippa] about 10 days back and shall now give the place a fair trial. After well examining the exterior indeed and searching for cylinders and clay tablets about the stair cases and doorways, I am half inclined to run a mine into the centre of the mound, and by the help of a few barrels of gunpowder, just turn the whole affair inside out. Do you think this would raise a howl at Exeter Hall or not? [Exeter Hall in the Strand was a venue for religious meetings and provided a home for the offices of religious societies.] If I were sure of finding anything inside, I would brave the fate of Erostratus [some readers may care to be reminded that Herostratos set fire to the temple of Artemis at Ephesus 'in order that his name should be remembered forever'] without hesitation but it would be a pity to destroy the pile for mere mischief – and I shall therefore go cautiously to work."

²⁴This correspondence shows how abrasive and overbearing HCR could be. Initially, relations between the two men were cordial enough, with HCR concentrating on the excavations at Nineveh and Loftus working in the south, where he made important discoveries. However, in February 1854, with the British Museum's funds exhausted, HCR invited Loftus and his team to move to Nineveh to prevent archaeologists from other countries from exploiting the discoveries that the British had made. He tried to make it clear that, if the British Museum received a government grant for further excavations, he would expect Loftus and his team to return to the south and make way for the Museum excavators. However, when this happened a few months later, Loftus refused to withdraw and complained that HCR was going back on his word. There was a period when the two teams were trying to excavate the same area in competition, with almost farcical results. In his letters to Norris, HCR admitted that he felt that the whole affair was a "storm in a slop bowl" and that he was half ashamed of it, but refused to back down. Eventually the situation was resolved by the Assyrian Exploration Society effectively going into liquidation, handing its funds over to the British Museum and instructing Loftus to work under HCR's direction. Loftus promptly resigned, as he had said he would do under these circumstances [in a letter to James Felix Jones (1813/14–78) who was working at this time as a surveyor in Mesopotamia] and returned to Britain. When HCR also left Baghdad the following spring, excavations at Nineveh were suspended.

²⁵There are 22 in 1854, his last year in Baghdad [III/10] compared with 12 in 1855 including his journey to Britain via India [III/12], just 3 for 1856 [III/13] and 18 for the period between the beginning of 1857 and his departure for Teheran in September 1859 [III/14] although this is partly because HCR preferred to deal with questions face-to-face.

²⁶He also undertook to produce translations of a collection of inscriptions on copper plates from Southern Arabia in Himyaric or Himyaritic [see III/14(08)] which never appeared, although this may have been partly due to the quality of the photographs from which he was required to work. The British Museum received the copper plates themselves in 1862 and the inscriptions were published from these in 1863.

In addition, his living conditions seem not to have been conducive to working at home.²⁷ He was also fond of attending shooting parties at various stately homes.²⁸

The 6 letters to Norris from Teheran [III/15] contain a good many references to his attempts to continue his work on cuneiforms in the face of increasingly onerous official duties. His final departure from Teheran seems to have taken place sooner than expected.²⁹

There are also 60 letters to Norris dating from his return from Teheran in 1860 to the end of the correspondence on cuneiforms: 13 up to the date of his marriage in September 1862, 30 between 25 September 1862 and 3 May 1865 when he re-entered Parliament, and 17 from then up to 27 August 1868 when he re-joined the Council for India.

In the *Annuary* already referred to, HCR says that during the period from his return from Persia to his re-entering Parliament he “worked steadily at cuneiforms” and, indeed, the letters contain numerous references to, e.g., work on the first two volumes of *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, but they also show HCR’s waning interest in the subject and the growth of competing interests.³⁰

The case of William H. Coxe (1840?-69), Assistant in the Department of Antiquities at the British Museum, may be mentioned as indicative of HCR’s attitude to his assistants. Between the end of 1862 and 1865, the letters mention “Coxe” as assisting HCR with various tasks, fetching and carrying and also copying inscriptions. In a letter published in *The Athenæum* on 22 August 1863, HCR compliments him on the sharpness of his eyesight in recognising an important inscription. However, it is clear that HCR did not appreciate his real abilities because in November 1865 HCR professes himself to be “astounded” by the news that Coxe is to become “Professor of Sanskrit at Poona College” [III/18(03)]. In January 1866 he mentions seeing Coxe again when the latter passed through London on his way to India. Coxe is not mentioned again in the Rawlinson papers, but the Fox Talbot archive contains a letter from Coxe dated December 1867 addressed from the British Museum apparently about a cuneiform inscription. Further letters in that archive show that by 1 April 1868 he was ill with an ulcerous condition of the leg and that he never really recovered; he died on

²⁷At this period he was living in lodgings at 21 Langham Place. He seems to have been a rather untidy tenant and his landlady was not as accommodating as Mrs Hudson was to Sherlock Holmes. He complains of numerous papers which he has left lying about being thrown away [see III/14(10)].

²⁸See e.g. III/12(07) and (08) from Temple Newsam in October and Woburn Abbey in December 1855. From the latter place he writes “Woburn is half full of Cabinet Ministers at present and altogether we are a very agreeable party”. It seems probable that attendance at these parties, as well as his membership of the House of Commons, were at least partly intended to make the connections that would enable him to secure a paid post and so get married.

²⁹In III/15(05) written on 28 April he looks forward to spending the summer “in camp” and being finally able to get on with the transcriptions and translations. However, in his next letter he says that he left Teheran on 18 May.

³⁰See e.g. III/17(10) dated March 1863, the reference to “being obliged to be at the Persian Minister’s tomorrow morning to settle about the Indian Telegraph”. In July 1863 he mentions “having to see Panizzi about the new Babylonian Excavation grant” [III/17(16)]. In a letter to Fox Talbot dated 20 November 1863, J. W. Redhouse writes, “Sir H. Rawlinson, unfortunately for our Journal, is so much occupied as not to be able, apparently, to contribute any of the translations . . . of which he has frequently held out hopes” [Fox Talbot archive Document No. 8757]. At the Anniversary General Meeting of the RAS held on 29 May 1865 it was announced that HCR was to contribute three papers to *JRAS* Volume 2 N. S. In a letter dated 20 July 1865, HCR says that he intends to spend August at Tunbridge Wells and while there to write the first of these: *Notes on the astronomical knowledge of the early Chaldeans as recorded on the Nineveh tablets* [III/18(01)]. Later in the year he tells Norris that, while at Tunbridge Wells, he spent his time in writing an article on the Russians in Central Asia [III/18(02)]. He refers to the second of these promised articles, on legal tablets, in a later letter but has clearly lost interest in the subject.

18 December 1869. On 20 December 1869 Fox Talbot wrote to Samuel Birch at the BM: "I fear it was that unfortunate Journey to India which was the original cause of his illness". George Smith was recruited by HCR to fill the place vacated by Coxe.³¹

The collection also contains some documents relating to George Smith which are of interest in this respect [III/22]. They concern a discovery made by Smith in 1868 of the earliest verifiable date found up to that time on a cuneiform tablet and of HCR's objection to a point in Smith's interpretation of the text. They are interesting as they show Smith's confidence in his ability to read and interpret cuneiform texts by this date, although he had been working full time on them for less than two years.

In August 1865, Louisa seems to have begun to concern herself with collecting together HCR's correspondence. III/20 contains the letters from Norris to Louisa referring to his collecting and sorting all of HCR's letters that he can find. There is also a letter from Lord Strangford's widow saying that she is fairly sure her husband did not have any of HCR's letters in his possession when he died.³²

III/28 contains 3 letters to Norris from Edward Hincks. It is not clear how they come to be in the Rawlinson collection.³³

From 1866, many of HCR's comments appear to refer to queries from Norris in relation to entries in Norris's *Assyrian Dictionary*, but the answers become increasingly perfunctory, often taking the form "I have always read [a cuneiform sign] as — but I cannot now remember why". Or "I have no time to explain this". Norris was becoming increasingly infirm from this time onwards, complaining of *tic douloureux* [trigeminal neuralgia] and inflammation of the eyes. He nevertheless continued his work on his *Assyrian Dictionary* up to his death in 1872.

Box IV

It will be convenient to consider this material in two groups: those written contemporaneously with the events to which they refer, and those compiled retrospectively.

Contemporaneous material

Diaries

IV/03 and IV/04 contain diaries covering HCR's voyage to India and the first two years of his service.³⁴ These might be of interest to students of the lives of officers in the East

³¹For details of George Smith's life and career, see the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

³²The packet also contains [III/20(05)] the only reply from Norris to a letter of HCR [III/18(02)] in which, among other matters, Norris says that he has checked some signs on a tablet which Hincks says HCR must have misread and finds that Hincks is right.

³³These letters are all dated 1853, i.e. while HCR was still in Baghdad. The first 2, written while Hincks was in London, discuss the names of Assyrian rulers found on a cylinder at the BM, the other contains a detailed critique of Norris's paper on the Scythic version of the Behistun Inscription, eventually published in the *JRAS* in 1855.

³⁴The first document in this group [IV/03(01)] is headed "Henry's account on going out to India" and itemises expenditure totalling £454/14/0. Since it refers both to HCR and his elder brother Abram by their first names, it was presumably written by their father although it is not clear for what purpose. It is sobering to reflect that HCR and his father were not to see each other again, as his father died in 1845. This is followed by "Journal of an Exile"

India Company's armies at this period. They are also revealing of the two sides of HCR's character: on the one hand, they are full of accounts of drinking, gambling, horse-racing and flirtation (he boasts that he is 'general favourite' with the ladies) and, on the other, of his interest in and aptitude for languages and of his expenditure on books. The RGS collection contains "journals" for 1831 and several subsequent years, but it is not clear if they are of the same kind.

IV/07 includes a small notebook [IV/07(04)] headed "Political Diary" covering the period from 14 July [1840] when he took up the post of Political Agent at Kandahar to 29 August 1841, and "Journal 1841" written at one end of a ledger [IV/07(01)] that begins by announcing that he is "recommencing a journal long laid aside", and covers the period from 1 January to 21 January when it was abandoned again, apparently due to pressure of work. These might be of interest to students of the First Afghan War.

IV/10 consists of a draft "Biographical notice of Maj. Gen. Sir H. Rawlinson KCB", unsigned but dated "London Sep. 30 1859". The purpose of this account is not clear but it reads as though intended for publication. It may be mentioned here as it ends with his departure as Ambassador to Teheran, where, it states, he expected to have leisure to produce the transliterations and translations which were to appear in the interleaved edition of *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*. As already mentioned, this expected leisure did not materialise.

IV/11 headed "Journal for wedding tour Sept 1862" covers part of his honeymoon in Italy. It consists largely of descriptions of works of art and architecture.

Account books

IV/14 consists of the annual summaries of income and expenditure already referred to. Along with the accounts compiled as part of his official duties, they show HCR's competence and conscientious attitude towards financial matters.

Letters

There are two groups of letters addressed to his sister Maria.³⁵ 13 [IV/05] date from 1828 to 1833, ending as he was about to leave on his mission to Persia, and 12 [IV/08] cover the period 1848 to 1854. The latter group includes the only material in the collection dating from the period of his stay in England between 1849 and 1851. The letters to his sister are the only ones surviving from before his marriage in which he reveals anything of his feelings and motivations e.g. his feelings of loneliness in Baghdad, his longing to be married, and his ambition to become famous, which he admits is his chief reason for undertaking the cuneiform decipherment.

The letter represented by IV/06 should also be mentioned. It consists of a manila folder with two typewritten labels pasted inside. On the outside is written in pencil: *Autograph*

covering the voyage and "Journal of an Ensign" covering the period to the end of 1828. These documents were written to please his sister Maria and sent home as soon as finished, thus escaping the fire referred to above.

³⁵As already mentioned, he also wrote to his elder brother Abram, but the only letter surviving from this correspondence indicates that they were not intimate. A letter which Maria wrote to Louisa [V/05(01)] indicates that HCR also wrote to his mother, but that Maria had burned these letters.

material of Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson Bart displayed in exhibitions of RAS Sesquicentenary 1973 . . . Feb. '74. Papers restored to various contexts . . . 11/3 1975. Inside is a label describing a letter from HCR to his sister Maria [dated 1836?] announcing that he has sent a translation of the Old Persian inscription at Behistun to the RAS and his feelings of triumph. The folder is the only evidence currently available of the existence of this letter, the present location of which is unknown. It also indicates that HCR wrote further letters to his sister other than those which survive.

Apart from the journal fragment already referred to, the ledger IV/07 contains a register of correspondence giving abstracts of letters sent and received during periods in 1838 and 1839 punctuated by a gap caused by travelling.

IV/12(03) consists of approximately 151 miscellaneous items dating from 1870 to 1881 relating to HCR's sons up to the time they left school. The majority are letters to HCR or his wife, either from the boys themselves or about them from nurses, governesses, schoolmasters etc. There are also a few school reports, bills etc. Some of the letters might be of interest to biographers of H S Rawlinson³⁶ or historians of upper class education in the later nineteenth century. There are further letters about the boys in Box V.

IV/15 contains 36 letters to Harry Rawlinson dated from 16 August 1888 to July 1889 while he was serving in India. Mostly from HCR, with occasional enclosures from his younger son Alfred (known in the family as Toby) but there are also one or two from his wife. Topics include: comments on the political and military situation in the Middle East (HCR was at this time serving on the Council for India); Toby's mysterious illness, which led to his return from India and his withdrawal from the Army until the outbreak of the First World War; complaints about Toby's subsequent extravagant lifestyle, which threatened to outrun HCR's resources but which he clearly had not the heart to curtail; Toby's determination to get married and arrangements for his support; concerns over Louisa's deteriorating health; and the visit of the Shah of Persia July 1889. The bond between father and son is illustrated by a phrase in one of HCR's letters "I feel quite lost without you".

Retrospective material.

IV/01 and 02 consist of two genealogies of the Rawlinson family, together with miscellaneous items of correspondence relating to questions of family history.

IV/13 is notebook with ruled pages, the first few pages cut away. The first intact *recto* is headed "Rough Annuary of Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson begun Oct: 31 1884 – 21 Charles St". Underneath [in another hand?] is added "finished Dec. 1884". The next 33 openings contain entries giving the principal events of his life, year by year up to 1884. At the back of the book are five openings listing year by year the honours and appointments that he received. The main entries appear on the *recto* with additional notes written in a much smaller hand on the opposite page. At least some of these entries refer to HCR in the third person and may possibly be by his son Harry. The entries for the early years contain many

³⁶The letters indicate that Harry struggled with the classical curriculum considered *de rigueur* for a young gentleman's education at that time. There is a comment in a letter from Alfred Seymour written while Harry was at Eton: "Harry has a young half-grown steam engine in his room at Eton, he has a decided turn for mechanics". A military career was probably the only acceptable choice for a boy of his class at that time.

lively anecdotes not found elsewhere, but which are probably not of historical significance. It should be noted that the accounts of events given in this book, and particularly of the motivation for HCR's actions, are sometimes at variance with statements in letters written at the time. This is probably the most significant biographical item in the collection.

IV/16 is booklet consisting of nine quarto leaves sewn together along one edge enclosed in a cardboard cover with *Life of Sir H Rawlinson* embossed in gold on the front. It contains an unsigned biographical memoir written in 1877 cut from an unidentified periodical. It can fairly be described as uncritical and the occasion for its publication at that time is not clear. The label "Lord Rawlinson" pasted inside the front cover must refer to HCR's elder son, who was created Baron Rawlinson of Trent in 1919.

IV/17 consists of three documents relating to HCR obituaries. The most interesting of these is a letter from Lord Roberts dated "Glenart, Arklow 9th November 1897" to "My dear Rawly", i.e. Harry Rawlinson, discussing a possible contribution by Roberts to a Memoir of HCR (d. 1895).

Box V

Only a few items of particular interest in this Box need be mentioned. It will be convenient to consider these under the following headings: those relating to HCR's personal life; those relating to his professional career; those relating to his elder son Harry; those relating to his younger son Alfred (known in the family as "Toby" to distinguish him from his uncle Alfred Seymour); and those relating to other members of the family.

Letters relating to HCR's personal life.

V/02 contains HCR's proposal of marriage to Louisa, dated 22 July 1862, plus three further letters to her dating from before their marriage. They show the strength of his feelings for her, and also contain some candid comments about other members of his family. It would appear that she kept him waiting a week for a reply to his proposal.

V/05(01) from HCR's sister Maria to Louisa can be dated from other letters to the summer of 1865. It is primarily about Louisa's attempts to collect HCR's early letters and promises to send her all the letters which HCR wrote from India etc but says that she has burnt those that he wrote to his mother because "they related to the only episode in his life that I considered not creditable to him". It also contains the first mention of "Lewis Pelly" (see below).

V/08 includes letters exchanged between HCR and his wife in 1868 while he was staying at the German spa town of Bad Homburg for some unspecified complaint.³⁷

V/18 includes a letter from HCR to his wife written in October 1878 from Paris while he was attending the Paris Universal Exhibition.

³⁷The full name of the town is Bad Homburg vor der Höhe. According to his *Annuary* HCR and his wife had visited the town a few years earlier because Louisa had been ill. There are 14 from HCR to his wife during this visit plus 14 replies from her – the largest group of her letters in the collection. HCR's letters clearly show how bored he was and how lonely without her. During the interval between the two visits, the town had been annexed by Prussia as a result of the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 and there are some references in the letters to the repercussions of this.

Letters relating to HCR's professional career

V/05 contains among others, several letters to his wife written from Frome, Somerset, in July 1865, giving a blow-by-blow account of the election campaign when he was elected an MP for the second time. There are also references to HCR's public activities, including a lecture that he gave in January to the RAS.

Letters from HCR to his wife datable to 1867 [V/07] contain references to his official duties, including the debates on the Parliamentary Reform Bill of that year, as well as to "my Indian Committee" and to a meeting with Gladstone.

Letters from HCR to his wife datable to 1868 [V/08] include references to his taking up his seat on the Council for India and his first impressions of this. There is also a letter from the Liberal agent at Frome about HCR's decision not to seek re-election as MP for that constituency because he was seeking a seat on the Council for India, and the difficulties that this would cause.

Letters from HCR to his wife, datable to 1873 [V/13] include some written while HCR was attending the Shah of Persia on the latter's State visit to Britain.

V/14(01) is a note to his wife dated "Monday Sep. 14 /74" referring to the inaugural meeting of the second International Congress of Orientalists held in London 14 to 18 September 1874. HCR was the President of the Semitic section.³⁸

V/16 includes 4 letters to his wife written in September 1876 from Brussels where HCR was attending a Geographical Congress held under the sponsorship of the King of the Belgians to co-ordinate efforts to "civilise" Africa. Associated with these is a draft of an agreement to establish a trans-African railway system somewhere south of the Sahara.

V/19 includes a letter from HCR to his wife written in October 1879, in which he refers to writing an article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on Herat.

Letter V/23(03) dated 28 July 1885 mentions a suggestion that HCR should "go out as Ambassador to Persia to settle [the] Treaty" but he is not in favour as "I am really too old".

V/24(01) dated in HCR's hand "Friday May 7 1886" refers to his first visit to the "[Colonial and Indian] Exhibition" [South Kensington 4 May – 10 November 1886].³⁹

V/24(02a,b,c) are three letters dated in HCR's hand "Nov^r 24, 25 and 26 1886" describing a large shooting party given by Lord Salisbury [then Prime Minister] at Hatfield House attended by numerous Cabinet ministers etc.⁴⁰

Letters in IV/15 from HCR and his wife to Harry, then serving in India, dated from 16 August 1888 to July 1889, include, among other matters, comments on the visit of the Shah of Persia in July 1889 during which HCR attended on him.

³⁸In this note HCR writes "I went to the Museum & saw Birch, Lepsius and others – and shall see the whole body of savants tonight at the Royal Institution – I shall modify my address a little in order not to appear too hard on G Smith, Sayce & others". *The Times* for 15 September 1874 lists in some detail the scholars attending and their achievements, as well as reporting the opening address by the President Dr Samuel Birch. HCR's address to the Semitic Section is reported in *The Times* for 16 September.

³⁹"Today I have been 4 mortal hours at the Exhibition . . . but it will take another half dozen visits to place me 'au courant' to such a wonderful collection"; according to *The London Gazette* for 18 November 1884, HCR was one of the Commissioners for this Exhibition.

⁴⁰In them HCR says he "feels rather like a fish out of water among all these smart ladies and the house is so hot that I am half suffocated". It is interesting to compare the tone of these letters with those mentioned in note 22 above.

Letters relating to HCR's elder son Harry.

It appears from letters in V/20 dating from 1882 (there are no letters in the collection dating from 1880 or 1881) that both HCR's sons were at Hyde Hall, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, at this time under the tutelage of a Rev. Walter Hiley, who prepared private pupils for examinations—in Harry's case, Army entrance. Harry was about 18 at this time, Toby about 15. Toby seems to have found it difficult to learn in a school environment.

Letter V/21(01) dated 20 October 1882 contains the first mention of a scheme to obtain for [Garnet Joseph] Wolseley the post of Commander-in-Chief India, which he coveted, in the expectation that he would, in return, further Harry's military career in India.⁴¹

Letters relating to HCR's younger son "Toby"

V/19 includes letters from HCR to his wife dated October 1879 referring to serious concerns about the behaviour of his younger son Alfred (Toby) who was about 11 at this time.⁴²

Letter V/23(04) dated "Aug. 4th [1885]" discusses difficulties arising for his younger son Toby who has been denounced for cheating in an examination at Sandhurst.⁴³

Letters relating to other members of the family.

V/05(02) and V/05(03) concern the engagement of Maria's daughter Eudocia to "Lewis Pelly".⁴⁴

⁴¹In a further letter dated "Oct/84" HCR writes to his wife: "I wrote to Wolseley yesterday & enclose you his answer – if he wants me to assist him in getting the India appointment he is the more likely to bestir himself in Harry's favor [sic]". The enclosure reads "Dear Rawlinson I am writing about your son & will let you know the result when I receive my answer. I should like India very well if Stewart came home. Sincerely yours Wolseley" [V/22(03)]. Subsequently, Harry was appointed ADC to Field Marshal Lord Roberts, but there is no indication that Wolseley had anything to do with this, as Roberts was a friend of HCR. Wolseley never did achieve the position which he coveted.

⁴²In these letters, HCR shows himself to be an indulgent parent by the standards of the time, rejecting both his wife's suggestion of giving the boy a flogging and that of his headmaster to send Toby into the Navy in favour of a stern talking-to which "left the poor boy dissolved in tears and myself not much better".

⁴³Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the letter is that it seems to have been assumed, apparently by almost everyone, that cheating in examinations at Sandhurst was general practice. HCR writes: "It seems they said at the College 'it is hard A.R. should suffer alone when cribbing was the common practice – let us look further into the matter'". As a result several "cribbers" had been detected and the matter reported by one of the other students to his father, with the result that a public scandal was created, which meant that the authorities would probably have felt obliged to impose some punishment, for forms sake. An account of systematic cheating in examinations as being the norm at Sandhurst was published in *The Deseret* [sic] *News* Salt Lake City, for 16 January 1904, with the remark that the practice had been even more widespread in the past than it was at that time. [It might, however, be desirable not to take this evidence at face value without further corroboration. RBP] Although, in a letter written later in 1885, HCR appears to despair of Toby's having a military career, his place in the Army seems to have been assured by the beginning of 1886 and he had set his heart on a commission in the 17th Lancers [a glamorous cavalry regiment], but it is not clear when this was settled. Further information about Toby's brief military career and the illness which led to its abrupt termination will be found in HCR's letters to his son Harry at IV/15.

⁴⁴The first is from Pelly to HCR dated 19th September 1865 while he was en route for India, setting out proposed financial arrangements for the forthcoming marriage. The second is from Maria to HCR dated Nov. 1865 expressing outrage at the way Pelly has broken off the engagement as soon as he reached India. It is not clear whether this Lewis Pelly is the distinguished soldier and diplomat Lewis Pelly (1825–1892), but I cannot trace anyone else of that name. The Pellys were related to the Rawlinsons, in his *Annuary* HCR states that he obtained his cadetship in the East India Company army through the influence of a member of that family.

One letter in V/07 refers to the Parliamentary debate of 9 April 1867 on alleged corruption during the election of 1865 in the constituency of Totnes. During this debate HCR's brother-in-law Alfred, who had been the successful candidate, had to defend himself.

The letters in V/13 referred to above include references to his wife's involvement as a witness in the Tichborne Case.

It is hoped that this general description of the collection, together with the more detailed descriptions held by the Librarian, will provide a useful guide to future researchers making use of the Royal Asiatic Society's archives. roger_b_parsons@talktalk.net

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