

## Prehistoric Antiquities and Personal Lives: The Untold Story of Robert Bruce Foote

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### Abstract

Geologist, archaeologist, ethnographer, palaeontologist, museologist and artist. It is not an easy task to define Robert Bruce Foote's contributions in the world of 19th century scholarship in India. A man of many interests, his impressive work established foundations which structured the direction of modern research in Indian geology, and pre-and protohistoric archaeology. The author's ongoing research into the life and work of R.B. Foote, led to the discovery of new information, revealing hidden dimensions of this fascinating personality; a part of which is presented here. This paper puts forward, for the first time, information on Robert Bruce Foote's lineage and family history, and traces how personal lives were intertwined with the quest for India's past.

*"And I appoint my dear wife Eliza Melissa Foote during her life and after her death my trustees to be the guardian and guardians of my infant children. I give (excepting my collections of Indian Prehistoric Antiquities or the proceeds thereof which shall form part of my general estate and the articles hereinafter specifically bequeathed) all my plate, linen, china, glass, books, pictures, prints, wines, liquors, furniture and other household effects and all my carriages and horses to my said wife absolutely".*

*(Extract from the Will of R.B. Foote 1899)*

### In Search of a Hidden History

Prehistoric antiquities are a particularly unusual item to be listed in one's last Will and testament. Perhaps not so in the case of personalities such as that of Robert Bruce Foote, whose life was intimately linked with the many worlds of India's ancient past. His name is stamped across the pages of India's geological and archaeological history, and carries as much weight today as it did a century ago. References to his work form a thread of continuity linking crumbling pages of 19th century journals and reports, with doctoral dissertations and articles churned out today. His prolific publications comprising reports, memoirs, short notes, and catalogues of antiquities, his lectures and his dialogues with interested individuals, geologists and other scholars; place him amongst the foremost intellectuals of the late 19th century. A man of multiple interests and talents, Foote combined in himself the precision of a scientist, with intuitive insights of a man who was deeply involved in the past and present of the land in which he lived. Foote belonged to a time when boundaries did not limit a scholar's interest in the world around him (Grayson 1983; Levine 1986; Sangwan 1994; Wyse Jackson 2007). From observations on geology and archaeology, to those on anthropology and palaeontology, Foote was equally proficient in whatever he chose to investigate. His convincing

establishment of the presence of Palaeolithic cultures in India, (Foote 1866) followed by his extensive documentation of pre-and protohistoric sites in various parts of southern and western India have been aptly summarized elsewhere (Chakrabarti 1979; Ghosh 1963; Khatri 1962; Pappu 1991-92, 2001, 2004, 2007; Paddayya 2004, 2007; Patil 2004; Sen and Ghosh 1966; Sundara 2004).

In addition to a host of archaeologists who followed in his footsteps (see Chakrabarti 1979; Sundara 2004); Foote's contributions were also recognised by his contemporaries and this is seen in the form of reviews of his notes, reports and memoirs and publications, in unpublished documents, as well as in obituaries (Oldham 1913: lxx-lxvi; Haydon 1913, J.M. (anon. review) 1883:313). In addition to praising his geological research, Oldham (1913) in his obituary, specifically refers to him as, '...a most enthusiastic investigator of relics of ancient man in Southern India; ...and was for long recognised as a leading authority on this branch of research.'. It is well known that Foote worked at a time when critical questions on human antiquity, as well as on geological processes, were the focus of interest in the west, with Jacques Boucher de Crevecoeur de Perthes, H.H. Falconer, Joseph Prestwich, Charles Lyell, Thomas Huxley, Rupert Murchison, amongst many others, playing an

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\* These are catalogue numbers of the documents and photographs (original and copies) in the Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, Chennai

important role (Grayson 1983). It is less well known that Foote's international renown is seen in his communication with many of these scholars who discussed his papers, noted his observations in the context of their own discoveries, and sought his collections for purchase or for museums (Pappu 2001, manuscript in preparation).

Apart from his research, little information on Foote is available. In 1979, Chakrabarti (1979:13) admitted that we know very little of his professional life. As late as 2007, Paddayya (2007) commented that no information was available on his family and educational background. Original sources enable us to draw a brief outline of the principal phases in Foote's long and successful career (Archer 1969:197-198; Haydon 1913; India Office List 1894:257; Oldham 1913: lxx-lxvi). Summarising available information, we note that he was born in 1834, was appointed from England as an assistant in the Geological Survey, and joined on 28th September, 1858. Documents obtained by the author, show that he was an elected Fellow of the Geological Society<sup>1</sup> of London (No. 2394), as early as 3rd April, 1867 (Fig. 1). His name was proposed on 6th March by none other than John Evans and Robert Etheridge. He served in various districts of the Madras Presidency, the Nizam's territory, and Bombay, and was later deputed to the Vienna Exhibition in

joint charge of the Survey collections in 1873. He was made a 1st grade officer, in April 1876, and Deputy Superintendent in June 1881; a Fellow of the Madras University and member of the Faculty of Engineering in 1884. He was also a Corresponding Fellow of the Geological Society of Edinburgh. His designation was changed to Superintendent of Survey in September 1885; he officiated as director in 1887; and retired in October, 1891 to settle at Yercaud, Tamil Nadu. He died at Kolkata (Calcutta) on 29th December, 1912, details of which will be discussed later in this paper. After retirement he was appointed as the State Geologist at Baroda, and later as Director to organize the State Geological Service in Mysore in 1894.

### *Who was Robert Bruce Foote?*

Through the years, literature written by and on Foote, help us gain insights into his personality- as a scientist and scholar and as a man standing in front of India's past with a sense of wonder and reverence. But who was Robert Bruce Foote? In this context, it may be noted that genealogical studies investigating links and connections between people working in Indian geology and archaeology in the 19th century are a powerful way of examining the history of a discipline. A good example is that of H.H. Falconer, whose niece Grace McCall later married his collaborator, Joseph Prestwich. She maintained records of correspondence and documents, preserving important evidence of ongoing debates in the quest for human antiquity (Boylan 1979). In the case of Robert Bruce Foote, in addition to his enormous energy and personal effort, many of his discoveries were inextricably linked to a network of supportive family members and friends.

In the course of researching the life and work of Robert Bruce Foote (Pappu 1991-92, 2001, 2004, 2007, manuscript in preparation), the author was fortunate to establish contact with his grandson, Dr. John B. Foote, the son of Henry Bruce Foote (SCHE/RBF/01/02/03/04\*). The Foote family kindly invited the author to meet them, and in the course of mutual correspondence over the years, they were of immense help in providing rare documents and photographs. Subsequently, the author came into contact with Mrs. Florence Ashton, whose great-great-grandfather, John, was the brother of Revd. Peter P. Percival (Robert Bruce Foote's father-in-law), and who provided valuable insights and information on both the Percival and Foote families (SCHE/PER/01/02). Further information was provided by the Late Mr. Tate, who resided for many years in Yercaud, and who was possibly one of the last living individuals in India, who actually remembered Foote. This information was substantiated and supplemented by research in archives and libraries in India and the U.K. Of the vast body of information gathered, this paper presents details which are specifically related to the genealogy and family history of Robert Bruce Foote. In his quest to unravel the mysteries of India's prehistory, we see a tale of great discoveries interwoven with the many joys and tragedies of family life.

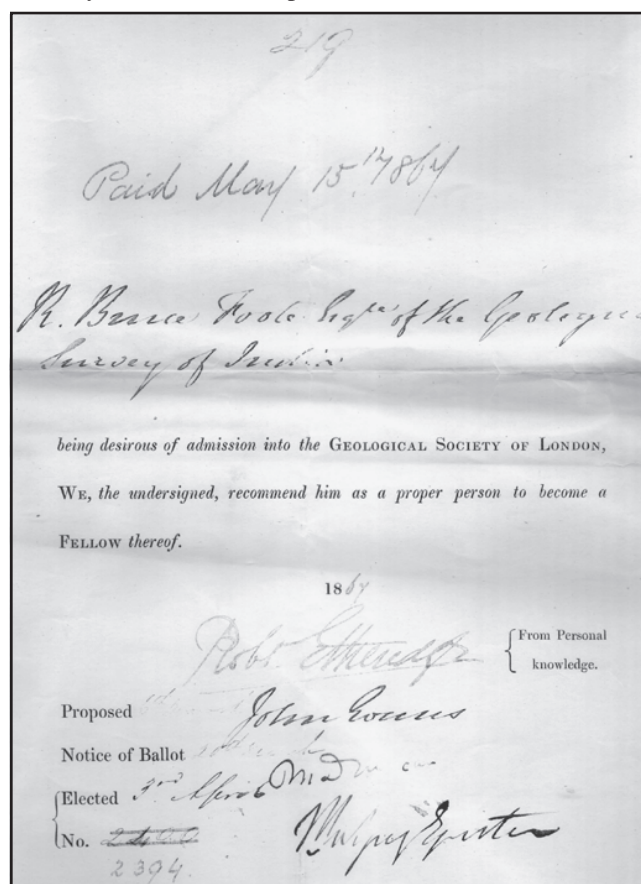


Fig. 1: Certificate admitting R.B. Foote as a Fellow of the Geological Society, London (Courtesy, Geological Society of England)

## Early Ancestors

To begin with, we travel back in time to the 14th century, to William of Wykham, to whom the Foote family trace their ancestry on the side of Robert Bruce Foote's mother, Sophia Wells (Fig. 2). William of Wykham or William Wykeham, (1323-1404), was an English Lord Chancellor and bishop of Winchester. Some information is available on him and he played a crucial role under several kings, involving in both secular and ecclesiastical affairs (see references from [http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/William\\_Of\\_Wykeham](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/William_Of_Wykeham)). In his eventful career, he bought endowments for Winchester and New College, founding "Seinte Marie College of Wynchestre by Wynchestre" in 1388. Figure 2, provides an abridged list of descendents of William of Wykham as traced down to Robert Bruce Foote's parents.

## Parents, Siblings, and the Birth of Robert Bruce Foote

Robert Bruce Foote's mother, Sophia, was the third daughter of Diana Giffard a descendent of William of Wykham, who married Jonas/Jonah Smith Wells of Highgate on 9th June 1826, at Hornsey (Figs. 2-3) (Gentleman's Magazine, 1826; courtesy Florence Ashton). Sophia's brother, Giffard Wells, married Mary Anne Beadilieu. In a strange twist of fate, their

daughter Eliza Melissa Wells, later become the second wife of Robert Bruce Foote, and as is seen later, their youngest son was named Giffard Wells Bruce Foote after his grandfather. Foote's mother is referred to as Sophia C. Foote, and listed as one of the witnesses of R.B. Foote's wedding on 7th June, 1862. Sophia Foote died in 1868. She is also mentioned in census reports along with information on her sister and her son (Pappu manuscript in preparation).

Robert Bruce's paternal grandfather was Dr. Henry Wells Foote, a doctor who died on 11th March, 1828. An interesting piece of evidence is seen in correspondence between Robert Bruce's grandchildren, (children of Henry Bruce Foote and his first wife Jeanie Jessett). In a letter<sup>2</sup> from 'Hal' (Major-General H.R.B. Foote) to Vera Violet Jeanie dated 18th June, 1964, 'Hal' states that that Dr. Henry Wells Foote probably became a member of the Plymouth Bretheren, a group of conservative Christians, during the last five years of his life. He died at about 45 years of age. Although this is unsubstantiated, family history mentions that Robert Bruce Foote did not agree with their philosophy, and rejected them. Robert Bruce's father, Dr. William Henry Foote (Fig. 3), was a medical practitioner, who as per family history, was trained under Rene Theophile Hyacinthe Laënnec (1781-1826),

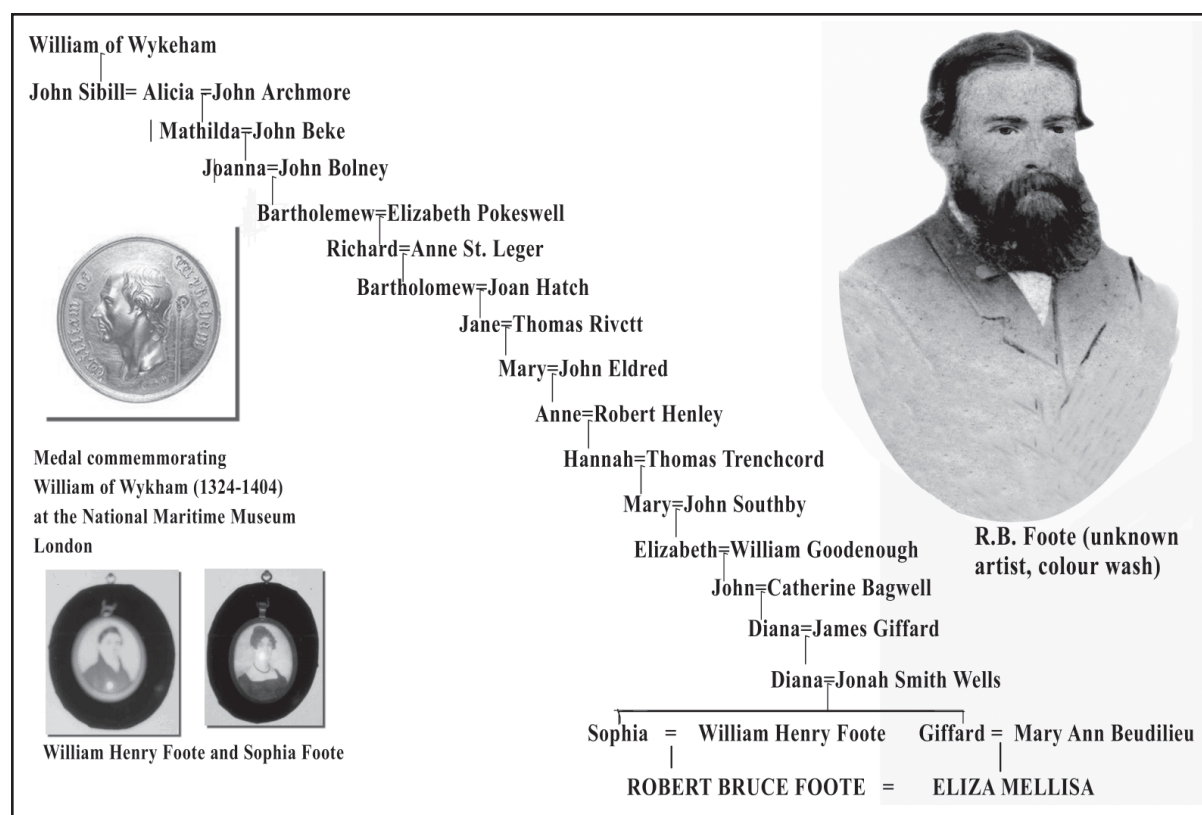


Fig. 2: Early Ancestors: Abridged list of descendents of William of Wykham. (Insets: NSET: E8097-1, Medal commemorating William of Wykham (1324-1404); obverse © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, image from <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=MEC3019>; Early colour wash of R.B. Foote (courtesy, J.B. Foote); Portraits of William Henry and Sophia Foote (Courtesy, J.B.Foote)





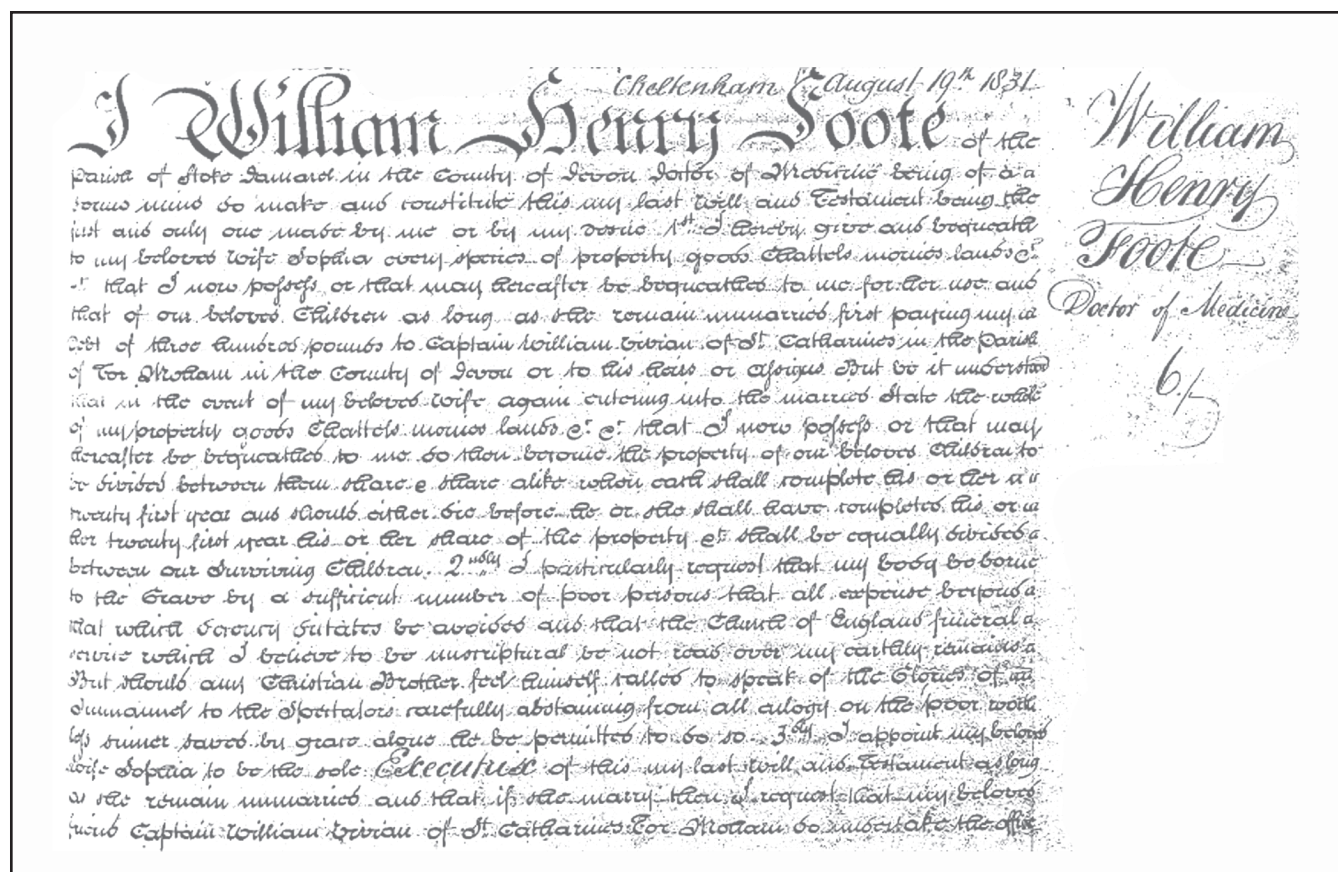


Fig. 4: Extract from the Will of Dr. William Henry Foote (The National Archives, Public Record Office, Catalogue Reference: Prob 11/1853. Image Reference: 415)

reputed to be the inventor of the stethoscope (Roguin, 2006). A copy of the Will of William Henry Foote<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 4), records him as having died on 2nd November, 1835, and lists him as hailing from Devon. He bequeathed all his property to his wife Sophia. This implies that Robert Bruce was just a year old, when his father died. Reference in the Will to a dear friend, Captain William Vivian, is interesting, insofar as both Robert Bruce Foote's brother, and later his son, bore the name Vivian - perhaps in memory of this dear friend?

Some information on Robert Bruce's siblings is seen in a document dated 5th September, 1855<sup>4</sup>, which makes out a Grant of Arms to a Henry Wells Foote, of Harrington Square in the Parish of St. Pancras, Co. Middlesex. He is described as a Gentleman and son of William Henry Foote. The latter is listed as Late of Cheltenham Co. Gloucester, Doctor of Medicine, Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London. The Grant of Arms was made out to Henry Wells Foote and other descendents of William Henry Foote. The descendents included Robert Bruce Foote, his brothers Henry Wells, William Henry, another William Henry, William Vivian, and yet another William Henry, and a daughter. This Grant made over the Arms which comprised;

*'Gules two Chevronels Or Between as many Doves in chief and a Cross patee in base Argent', and the Crest which*

*had 'Two Crosses patee fitchee in saltire Gules thereon a Pelican in her Piety Argent wings fretty Gules'.*

The family tree provided by the Foote family, records Robert Bruce Foote, a brother Joseph, who later became a lawyer, and a sister Annie who married a Mr. Symonds and their offspring (Fig. 3). There is no mention of other brothers, although a Henry Wells Foote, is reported as having been born at the house of Shernad Hurt, No. 41, Beaumont Street, London on March 16th 1828. As seen later, Robert Bruce Foote, mentions a beloved brother 'Hal' in his Will. The 1851 census records mention the son of Sophia Wells Foote, as Henry Wells Foote, aged 22, stock and share broker, born at Marleybone.

It was into this illustrious family that Robert Bruce Foote was born on 22nd September 1834. His birth certificate<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 5) records that he was born at home, which was 10 Promenade Terrace, Cheltenham. This town in Gloucester, England, has an interesting history, and at the time of Foote's birth, was a spa town and a tourist destination. The Promenade is reported to have been laid out and developed by the 1820's. His early life and education are dealt with elsewhere (Pappu manuscript in preparation); and we take up the story with his arrival in India.

No 4987 462

Dated the 11 day of November 1834

**This is to certify and declare,** that  
Robert Bruce the Son  
of William Henry Foote in the County  
of Gloucester, Physician,  
and Sophia his wife (who was  
the daughter of Josiah Smith Wells  
of Highgate Strickbocker in the County  
of Middlesex, Strickbocker) was born at the house  
of the said William Henry Foote, No 10  
in Brunswick Terrace, in Cheltenham,  
in the County of Gloucester  
on the twenty second day of September 1834

William Henry Foote, } The Parents  
Sophia Foote } abovenamed.

We certify and declare that we were present at the Birth of the Child above-mentioned; and that such Birth took place at the time and place aforesaid.

Witnessed by us of Cheltenham, Surgeons  
Mark of + Sophia Foote of Cheltenham, Nurse.

INSTRUCTIONS.—The above forms are to be had at the rate of One Shilling a Dozen at the Library, by application to the Registrar there (if by letter), or at the Vestries of most Dissenting Churches. Fill up both Certificates carefully, 1. with the date when the Certificate is filled up and is the top. 2. The child's Christian name. 3. State whether Son or Daughter. 4. The Father's name, address, and business, or profession, father's name, and the name and residence (if dead, the last residence) and the business and profession, of the mother's father. 5. The birth, describing at whose house, and where the house is: if the house is in a street or square, &c., and numbered, state the number, size of the birth, putting the day of the birth in words, not in figures. Then, let, let both parents, if it can conveniently be done, sign at the bottom of the first certificate, "the mark of . . . . ."; and in case neither of the parents can write, let some near relation who can write, sign his or her name on the line below after the 1, adding to such signature his or her relationship. 6. Let two persons present at the birth sign after the said child's address themselves, or somebody for them. If the witnesses cannot write, let them make their marks, some one writing over each mark "the mark of . . . . .". If the parents cannot sign, let one of them do so. If both should be dead, then let the nearest relation who can write sign, as before directed, 1, and add to his or her signature what relation he or she is to the child. 7. It is to be observed that the witnesses to the birth, or one of them (where it can be) should be relations of the child; and, where any witness is a relation or her name to the name the relationship thus: "As . . . . . (as it may be) to the child." 8. If there are no witnesses to the birth living or to be found, the Registrar may still be made, getting the signature of the parents, or one of them, directed. The Registrar may take place at any time, if the parties are living who can comply with the above requisites. 9. Both certificates, containing both certificates, must be taken to the Registrar, who will keep and affix the first in his book (numbering it next after any received and registered by him), and deliver the second, (the one on this page) numbered and signed by him, to the parties, who can keep, please, cut off these directions. His fee is one shilling, to be paid when the Certificates are delivered to him for registration. These fully and regularly filled up will stand as follows:—

Dated the 10th day of May, 1835.

I hereby certify and declare, that William the son of Thomas Jones, of Stone, in the County of Stafford, Miller, and Elizabeth his wife (who was sister of Humphrey Dyke, of Liverpool, in the County of Lancashire, Grocer) was born at the house of the said Thomas Jones, No 10, Street, in Stone, in the County of Stafford, on the tenth day of May, 1835.

Thomas Jones, } the Parents abovenamed.  
Elizabeth Jones, }  
[when the Parents cannot write or sign, 1. James Jones, Uncle to the child.]

I hereby certify and declare that we were present at the Birth of the Child abovenamed; and that such Birth took place at the time and place as above.

Mary Hill, of Stone, Spinster, Aunt to the child.  
James Gooch, of Stone, Surgeon.

The Registrar attends every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, from Ten till Three, except during August and the Whitsun Week.

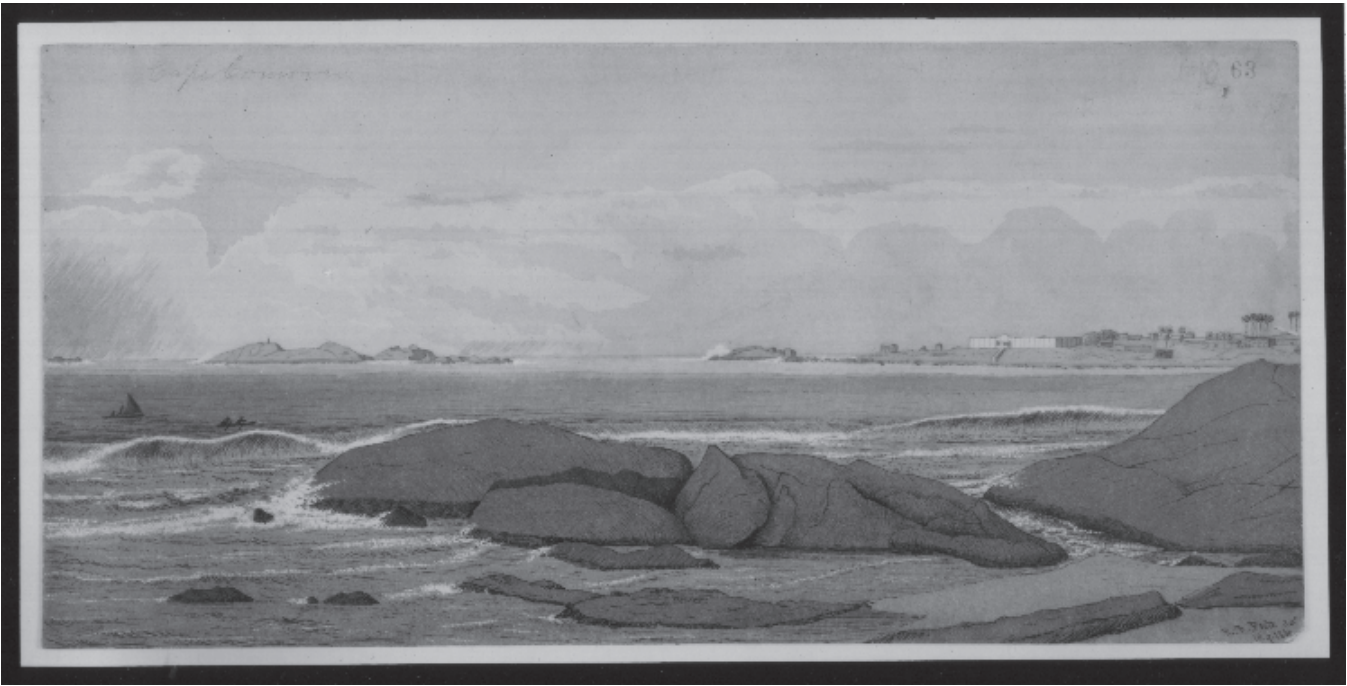
Taylor, Printer, 29, Coleman Street.

**This is to certify and declare,** that  
Robert Bruce the Son  
of William Henry Foote in the County  
of Gloucester, Physician,  
and Sophia his wife (who was  
the daughter of Josiah Smith Wells  
of Highgate Strickbocker in the County  
of Middlesex, Strickbocker) was born at the house  
of the said William Henry Foote, No 10  
in Brunswick Terrace, in Cheltenham,  
in the County of Gloucester  
on the twenty second day of September 1834

William Henry Foote, } The Parents  
Sophia Foote } abovenamed.

Fig. 5: The birth certificate of Robert Bruce Foote (Record No. 4987. Registry of Births, Dr. Williams Library, London. (Courtesy, Mrs. Florence Ashton). Inset is an enlargement of the same showing details

Fig. 6: Robert Bruce Foote's pen and ink and wash entitled 'View of Cape Comorin, the Kumla Kumari Pagoda, and islands-from a point 1¼ miles N.E of the Cape', which is dated 18.9.1860 (Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library)





### Arrival in India and the ‘Kumla Kumari Pagoda’

As a young geologist joining the Geological Survey of India on 28th September, 1858 (India Office List 1894: 57), Foote could never have anticipated the strange fate that was to establish his fame, and change the course of Indian geology and archaeology. In 1857, a year before he arrived in India, C.Æ. Oldham, W. King, and H.F. Blanford, were deputed along with H. Geoghegan, to take up the survey of the Madras Presidency in order to examine the Cretaceous rocks known to exist in Trichinopoly and South Arcot and to obtain, if possible, a fixed geological and palaeontological horizon, establishing a datum to situate sedimentary rocks discovered. H. Geoghegan died of sunstroke in 1858, and Foote was appointed as his replacement (Foote 1882).

We can only imagine the impact which India had on him in the first years after his arrival. At this early stage, he was still struck by the beauty of the landscapes he encountered, which he translated into a work of art. This is seen in the form of a painting of a seascape entitled, ‘View of Cape Comorin, the Kumla Kumari Pagoda, and islands-from a point 1¼ miles N.E of the Cape’, which is dated 18.9.1860, and done in pen and ink and wash (Fig. 6), (Archer 1969:197-198; Oriental and India Office Collections, purchased with the Sir Henry Yules Collection). Although his geological work in this region was conducted later (Foote 1883), his early surveys led him to study the southern districts of Tamil Nadu (King and Foote 1864), and a visit to Kanya Kumari was possibly undertaken. This depiction of a tranquil seascape, was in striking contrast to the hardships he faced from the vagaries of an often cruel and harsh environment in the course of his surveys, and which he described in great detail in a paper published years later (Foote 1882).

### Introduction to Indian Culture: The Percival Connection

Robert Bruce Foote’s first wife was Elizabeth Ann Percival, more of whom will be discussed later. Foote’s choice of a wife, perhaps throws some more light on his early interest in



Fig. 7: Revd. Peter Percival (Courtesy, F. Ashton) (1803-1882)

Indian culture and history. Elizabeth Ann, was the daughter of the renowned scholar, educationist, architect and missionary, Revd. Peter Percival. The importance of Revd. Peter Percival in Foote’s life cannot be underestimated, and it is in this context that the former’s contributions may be briefly summarized below. Revd. Percival married Mary Fletcher on 13th December, 1824 at Prestwich, Lancashire, England, and soon after sailed to Sri Lanka. Starting his career as a Wesleyan Missionary, the Revd. Percival was first in charge of the Mission Institute or College at Jaffna, where his contribution is still remembered (Fig. 7). He arrived at the Jaffna Wesleyan English School in 1826 and in 1834 renamed it as The Jaffna Central School. Mrs. Percival is credited with starting a boarding school for girls in 1834. The couple contributed greatly towards education for girls in Sri Lanka. In addition to this scholarship; he was also an architect and was the first to renovate St. Peter’s Church in 1937, as well as the Lutheran church, which was called St. Pauls. He later moved to Madras, severed ties with the Wesleyans, and became Registrar of Madras University, and Professor of Vernacular Literature in the Presidency College. He joined the Church of England and was ordained at Ootacamund. In addition to this, he was also for some years a Chaplain of the Madras Military Female Orphan Asylum.

Revd. Percival was a noted Tamil scholar and he published the first Tamil translation of the Bible. His book *Land of the Veda: India Briefly Described In some of its Aspects, Physical, Social, Intellectual and Moral* (Percival 1854), was published a few years before Foote landed in India. However, based as it was on a series of lectures delivered at the St. Augustines Missionary College, Canterbury; one may speculate as to whether Foote was already aware of his views. He is also credited with a renowned book on Tamil proverbs, first published in 1842, followed by a revised edition in 1874 (Percival 1874), an Anglo-Telugu dictionary (1867), an Anglo-Tamil dictionary (1938), and aphorisms of the poet-saint Auvayar, amongst other works. During this period, he was also busy preparing maps and books in the vernacular languages for the Director of Public Education. He is credited with starting the Tamil journal *Dinavartamani*, (Percival 1874), organized by the Civil and Military Services of Government, aimed at diffusing amongst the Tamil people, social, political, and literary information, and which was first brought out in 1855. Soon after, he started a Telugu journal of the same name. The address of the Dinavartamani Press is listed as being located at Little Bourne, Luz, Mylapore, and this was the Percival residence as well. It is interesting to note that this residence witnessed the birth of Robert Bruce Foote and Elizabeth Ann’s first daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Mary and later the death of Elizabeth Ann. Revd. Percival later retired to Yercaud. He was shattered by the death of his son, Revd. Samuel Percival, in 1881 and died a year later on Tuesday, 11th July, 1882, at Yercaud, Tamil Nadu (obituary, 1882; Will of Revd. P. Percival 1882; see *Online Sources*; personal communication, F. Ashton).

It is into this illustrious family that Robert Bruce Foote married. In the small British community at Madras, it is very likely that Foote was influenced by, or drawn to Revd. Percival by their common interest in the culture and history of India. Revd. Percival had commented on the great variability in the, '...operation of race, language, religion, and climate, upon the character and social usages of the Hindus who occupy the vast area of India that it is unsafe to assume generally that what is common in one Province is so in others..' (Percival 1874:preface). It is tempting to believe that this is perhaps reflected in Foote's later recognition and emphasis on understanding the geographic and regional variability seen in the pre- and protohistoric communities of India (Foote 1916a). We can only speculate as to whether the two were brought together by their common interests and whether this was how he met his wife.

Revd. Percival's second daughter, Anne Fletcher, married William Alfred Symonds, on 11th July, 1882<sup>6</sup>. Symonds is listed as being a bachelor, Assistant Director, Revenue Settlement Service, and son of Alfred Radford Symonds. Both were reported as living in Madras, and witnesses were listed as P.Percival, H. S. Smith and Alice B. Symonds. Symonds, later went on to become Superintendent Prisons, Madras; and is mentioned several times in Foote's writings and in his Will. In addition to this, Symonds was also noted for his study of Tamil proverbs (Percival 1874). Surrounded by scholars, one may presume that Foote must have been proficient in Tamil and Telugu, and thus able to communicate effectively with local villagers in his quest for antiquities and sites. Both Foote and Percival retired to the pleasant hill station of Yercaud in their later years, and it is very possible that Revd. Percival was the main factor influencing Foote's later decision to retire here.

Foote's close relationship with Revd. Percival, was sustained long after the death of Elizabeth Ann as is evident in their Wills<sup>7</sup> (Will of Revd.P. Percival 1882; Will of R.B. Foote 1899, codicil 1908). Revd. Peter Percival's last Will and testament, gave the power of making grants to both his sons-in-law, Robert Bruce Foote and William Alfred Symonds (dated 8th August 1882). When Revd. Percival died, Foote was in fact, in the midst of his surveys in the Tirunelveli district (Foote 1883). Revd. Percival describes himself in the Will as being from Luz, and a Clerk in Holy Orders. Amongst other interesting details, he mentions one of his executors to be Robert Bruce Foote of the Geological Survey of India. While discussing details of various bequests and legacies, he mentions property given by him during his lifetime to Robert Bruce Foote, to be held in trust for his grandchildren by Foote's first wife (i.e. his daughter, Elizabeth Ann). The long standing relationship with the Percival family, is seen in the fact that as late as 1879, Foote is listed as a witness to the wedding of Revd. Percival's granddaughter, Mary Flora Elizabeth who married Henry Allan at Nagapattinam<sup>8</sup>. Revd. Percival is also seen as the officiating minister at the baptisms of many of Foote's children.

### **Stone Tool Illustrations and Elizabeth Ann Foote**

A year before his famous discovery of stone tools at Pallaveram, Foote married Elizabeth Ann Percival<sup>9</sup>, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 1862. The marriage record lists him as being a bachelor, an Assistant Geologist in the Geological Survey at Madras, and the son of William Henry Foote. The marriage was at St. Thome' (St.Thomas), Madras, and they were married by the Revd. A.S. Symonds. Witnesses included Foote's mother, listed as Sophia C. Foote, and his best friend and colleague, William King (Fig. 3).

Shortly after Foote's phenomenal discoveries of tools at Pallaveram and around Attirampakkam, he published his first major paper on these discoveries (Foote, 1866). This paper, had its origin in a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution on 26th February, 1864, and was supplemented by a number of illustrations of stone tools. In this paper, he confessed that his knowledge of stone tools was limited to illustrations in 'The Geologist'. The author's studies indicate that this possibly refers to the article by S.J. Mackie, F.G.S, F.S.A., published in 'The Geologist', no.35, 37, and later in a book *Cheap Popular Scientific Diagrams', Explanation of Diagram No. VI. Flint Implements from the Drift*, in the year 1861. He commented that he felt '...a little doubtful therefore in unhesitatingly regarding my find as a genuine Stone Implement, so contented myself with mentioning it in a letter to my friend and colleague William King and showing it to different members of my family..' (Foote, 1866: 2-3). Years later, while referring to this paper, Foote wrote in a grateful observation that, '....the great majority of the 27 plates illustrating my paper were drawn by my wife and are excellent likenesses of the implements though very coarsely lithographed...' (Foote, 1916a:109). However, tragedy struck in the midst of all this excitement. On 30th June, 1870, Elizabeth Ann died at Little Bourne, Luz, Madras, of an abscess in the liver, and was buried in St. George's Cemetery (1st July 1870). She left behind four infant children, seven year old Henry Bruce, five year old Elizabeth Sophia Mary, three year old Vivian, with the youngest Violet Anne, being only a few months old (Fig. 3). Foote was left a widower with four young children, whilst in the midst of his survey of remote regions in the southern part of the Madras Presidency. In Foote's long history of prolific writing, we find only one short note published in 1870 (Foote 1870), although there is no trace of this tragedy or the difficulty of raising small children, in any of his later writings. The children of Elizabeth Ann and Robert Bruce Foote play an important role in the events which were to unfold in Foote's life, as discussed below.

### **'Palaveram', 'Atrampakkum', Billa Surgam and Henry Bruce Foote**

The year 1863 proved to be particularly special for Robert Bruce Foote. His discovery of a Palaeolithic artefact at Pallaveram, occurred on 30th May, 1863. The joy of this





Fig. 9: Henry Bruce Foote with other family members

discovery (Foote 1866), came almost immediately after the birth of his eldest and favourite son, Henry Bruce Foote. Birth records<sup>10</sup> list Henry Bruce, son of Robert Bruce Foote and Elizabeth Ann, as born on April 22nd, 1863, and baptized on May 24th, 1863 (Fig. 3). He was born at Hope Villa, Luz. Foote is listed as Assistant Geologist, Geological Survey of India. The baptism was kept within the family, with Revd. P. Percival, the baby's grandfather, being the officiating minister. In the same year, Foote and King discovered tools at Attirampakkam on 28th September, 1863. It is perhaps fitting that Henry Bruce Foote, who later went on to excavate and survey the famous cave complexes at Billa Surgam in Andhra Pradesh, was born in the midst of discoveries which not only changed the face of Indian archaeology, but which played an important role in the ongoing debates on the antiquity of humanity in the west.

Of all his children, Robert Bruce Foote, had a great deal of affection for his first born son. This is discussed later, when we examine his Will, but it is also seen in the close companionship built up in the course of their common interest in archaeology. Henry Bruce Foote had an illustrious career. He was a Gentleman Cadet Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, on 1st October, 1880, a Lieutenant on 1st October, 1882, Captain (12th October, 1891), Major (1st April, 1900), and Lieutenant-Colonel (1st April 1911). He was transferred to the Indian Ordnance Department in March, 1893, and was Superintendent of the Ishapore Rifle Factory (Ishapore, West Bengal), from 6th January, 1904. He was also posted as Assistant Director, Ordnance Inspection, on 30th March, 1904, in Nainital, and was appointed Assistant Ordnance Collecting Officer for India, on 11th October 1917, after which he spent time between India and England (Figs. 9-10). He retired with pay on Indian pension (7th September, 1919), and died at Farnham Common, on 8th June, 1932.

Henry Bruce Foote is the most well known amongst archaeologists, primarily owing to his work in the Billa



Fig. 10: Henry Bruce and Frances Grace Foote at Ishapore

Surgam caves, Andhra Pradesh (Foote 1884a, 1884b, Murty 2004). During his leave, Henry accompanied Robert Bruce Foote when the latter was asked to investigate the Billa Surgam caves and follow up the work of Capt. Newbold as instructed by Grant Duff, the Governor of Madras. Robert Bruce and Henry Foote, proceeded to the Kurnool area, but Foote's information on the location of Billa Surgam proved to be wrong. He could thus only work at Yerra Zari Gabbi and did not meet with any success (Foote 1884, 1916a:191). Father and son later discovered the exact location of Billa Surgam (Foote 1916a : 191). In 1884, he was called off for other work, but as Grant Duff, the Governor of Madras was very keen to continue the work, it was entrusted to his son, Henry Bruce Foote. A Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, Henry Bruce was temporarily attached to the Department, and took up excavations at Billa Surgam, where it had been left off by his father. Henry had already spent several weeks with his father, and Foote writes that he, '...had afforded me great assistance in exploring and excavating different caves, and had thereof gained a knowledge of the country and of the people whom he had to employ in the further explorations' (Foote 1884b : 200). Henry worked from March till May, commenced excavating Purgatory Cave and Cathedral Cave, and his discoveries are well known (Foote 1884b). Foote's emphasis on precision and accuracy in documentation is well evident throughout his writings, where he often criticized hasty excavations, and improper recording (Foote 1916a). He thus took great pride in his son's work; and when he revisited the caves in May to see how the exploration was proceeding, he was very gratified to find that, '...Mr. Henry Foote had organized his band of excavators very thoroughly, so that the work proceeded steadily and safely' (Foote 1884b: 208). He did not fail to put in a good word for his son, in the paper writing that, '...The efficient way in which he carried out the very arduous piece of work confided to him fully justified the confidence with which I had recommended him to His Excellency Mr. Grant Duff, and will I trust be recognized by the authorities.' (Foote 1884b:208).

Henry Bruce Foote later married Jeanie Elizabeth Jessett<sup>11</sup>. Their first child's birth certificate registers her as Vera Violet Jeanie, born on 3rd March, 1899 at 10, The Mall, Dum Dum<sup>12</sup>, and the record clearly indicates that Henry Bruce Foote, was Captain, R.A., Dum Dum. A son, Henry Robert Bowerman Foote, called 'Bob', was born in India on December 5th 1904, at Dum Dum, Bengal<sup>13</sup>. At the time of his birth, Henry Bruce Foote was stationed at Ishapore, Bengal. Major-General H.R.B. Foote, 'Bob' VC, was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1942, while a Commanding Officer of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment posted in the Western Desert Africa, for extreme bravery while facing Rommel's forces (Foote H.R.B. Obituary, 1993). After the death of his first wife, Henry Bruce Foote married Frances Grace Sator (1876-1955), on 26th April 1911, at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. Henry Bruce Foote retired in 1919, and lived in the 1920's at Dinnard in Brittany, taking advantage of the favourable exchange rate. He returned to England and lived at Farnham Common, and died in 1932. Henry and Frances Foote had two children, Dr. John Bruce Foote (b. 1918, (M.A, M.D., F.R.C Path, ordained 1979); and Margaret Sybella, who also had a distinguished career in the field of education (Figs.8a,b,c).

#### **'Two Red Earthenware Figurines' and Elizabeth Sophia Mary Foote**

Robert Bruce and Elizabeth Ann's second child was a daughter, Elizabeth Sophia Mary (Lily), born on 28th December, 1865 at Little Bourne, Luz, Madras, and baptized on the 21st of January at St.Thome' (St.Thomas). During this period, Foote and his family were stationed in the Madras Presidency, while he was engaged in the completion of his important publication on tools found in lateritic formations in the Madras and South Arcot districts (Foote 1866). Elizabeth later married Herbert W. Leeming, a coffee planter, of Scotsforth Estate, Shevroy Hills, Yercaud, on 12th August,



Fig. 8a: Dr. John Bruce Foote and Mrs. Mary Foote



Fig. 8b: Dr. John B. Foote standing next to R.B. Foote's cabinet for storing antiquities and geological samples

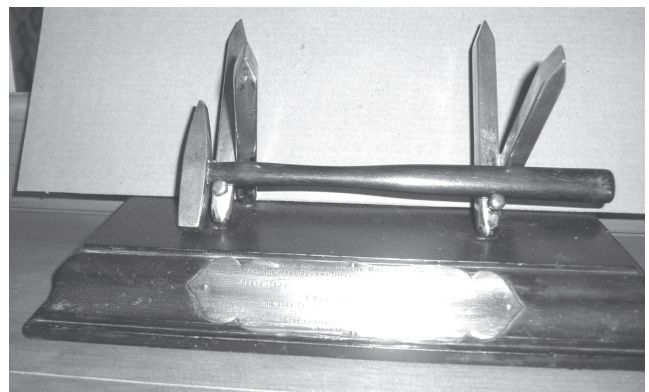


Fig. 8c: Photograph of a geological hammer presented to R.B. Foote with the inscription; 'This Effigy of the Most Ancient and the Most Recent Implement of the Geologist is Presented by the Officers of the Geological Survey of India to R. Bruce Foote Esq. F.G.S. the Most Senior and Distinguished Authority — On Both Aspects Of Indian Geology On The Completion of 50 Years Work In India', September, 27th, 1906 (Courtesy, Dr. J.B. Foote and Mrs. Mary Foote)





Fig. 11: Robert Bruce Foote in his later days



Fig. 12: inset: enlargement of fig. 12 showing R.B. Foote



Fig. 12: A family gathering showing Robert Bruce Foote (middle row, seated, 5th from left, and Henry Bruce Foote, last row, standing, first from left), along with other family members, at the wedding of Foote's granddaughter, Iris, 'Binks' with Angus Urquhart. Foote's daughter Violet Anne can be seen standing to the right of the bride

1890. This was just a year before Foote's retirement from the Geological Survey of India. Writing in 1888, Franesca H. Wilson (1888:42) noted that the view from Mr. R. Bruce Foote's house, in Yercaud, was very pretty, indicating that by this time, Foote had already acquired his home in the hills, following in the footsteps of his father-in-law, Revd. Percival.

It is of particular interest, that Foote specifically mentions discoveries made by Herbert W. Leeming of Scotsforth Estate, at Mulavi, (Salem district) and refers to him as being his son-in-law (Foote 1916a: 62, 1916b: 10). Leeming had discovered two red earthenware female figurines, while digging a trench for the foundation of a wall. They lacked legs, being on small

cylindrical stands resembling 'little upright vases', they measured '5 3/8 inches', and were listed as antiquities nos. 1924k and 1924l figured in plates 21, 22 and 23. Although Foote found them '...very plain not to say ugly', he recognized their importance particularly owing to their unique headdress. They had hair dressed in short ringlets all around the head and wore high combs on top (Foote, 1916a: 62, 1916b: 10). He believed that these threw light upon neck rests (noted at the Iron Age site of Tiruma Kodlu Narsipur, Mysore), and inferred that they were possibly used by women to preserve their curls intact while sleeping. M.S. Hight, E. King Harman, F.D. Short, R.F. Carey, Thurston Short, and other planters



Fig. 13: R.B. Foote at a family function

and residents of the Shevroy Hills were inspired to search for sites and send antiquities to Foote, almost all of which were collected after 1890 (Foote, 1916a, b). It is thus possible that most of Foote's interesting documentation of antiquities of the Neolithic and Iron Age in Salem district, occurred after his daughter's marriage in this region and very possibly much after his retirement (Fig. 11). This was despite the fact that he had surveyed the region earlier, at a time when he admitted that he was unable to recognize artefacts or sites (King and Foote 1864). After the death of H.W. Leeming, Elizabeth Sophia Mary married Walter Cherry, a tea planter from whom she had no issue.

#### **International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology and Vivian Percival Foote**

Robert Bruce and Elizabeth Ann's second son, Vivian Percival was born on 30th November, 1867, at Charmwood, Streatham Common, Surrey and was baptized on 25th January, 1868. The International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology, was held at Norwich, from 20-28th August, 1868. Foote's paper was in the Fifth Meeting on 25th August (Foote 1869). However, Foote was listed as being one of the four Secretaries of the Congress, and a Corresponding Member on the Committee of Organisation, representing India (International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology 1869). It is unclear whether he was present at the time of this child's birth, but considering the importance of the Congress, it is very likely that Foote was in England at this time. His interactions with

scholars and visits to view their antiquities are clearly mentioned (Foote 1916a:110), and it is clear that he spent a while in England. This child however, was to bring great unhappiness to the family. Vivian Percival was the black sheep of the family, and caused Foote and his family great despair. This is very clear from statements made in his Will, as seen later. Family sources say that Vivian was provided for a largely by his brother Henry Bruce Foote.

#### **Chalcedony Flakes and Violet Anne Foote**

The youngest child of Robert Bruce Foote and Elizabeth Ann, was Violet Anne (1870-1958) who was born in the bungalow of the great tank at Darojee (Daroji) in the Bellary district in 1870, and baptized by her grandfather on 5th May, when she was dangerously ill, and later at St. Thome' (St. Thomas). In one of Foote's research papers (Foote, 1873a), he discusses discoveries near Bellary, and it is possible that she was born during the course of his survey. Foote's memoirs on the geology of the south Maharatta country and adjacent districts (1876) was much later, but it is interesting to note that years later on 23rd April 1885, he mentions finding an oval palaeolith on the surface at Daroji (Foote 1916b:35). Violet Anne was only a few months old when her mother died, and as per family information, she was looked after by Revd. Peter Percival's family.

Violet Anne appears later in Foote's writings, and apparently shared his interest in the subject. We next hear of



her, when he mentions antiquities collected by him in Baroda along with his daughter, Miss. V.A. Foote, on 19th February, 1892, from Vyara, Waghoria Taluk, near Baroda. This was evidently when Foote was appointed as the State Geologist of the princely state of Baroda in 1891, where he apparently shifted with his entire family. On this occasion, the antiquities collected by father and daughter (nos. 3049-3057), included Neolithic objects comprising a bulls head?, hammer, ball, cores and flakes, of chalcedony and agate, stoppers, lips of vessels, a cone phallus, and a slickstone or muller. She also found 'A curious little carved piece of hard green chlorite schist, No.3049....., bears a certain resemblance to the head of a hornless bullock..' (Foote 1916a:145, 1916b:196-197). He also states that Miss V.A. Foote collected, from the banks of the Gooma river, south-east of Sandasal (Baroda State), flakes of chalcedony, with glassy lustre, milky flakes, and agate cores (nos. 3059-3064). On the left or the south bank of the Gooma river in Sauli taluk, Miss. V.A. Foote found '...a very choice little chalcedony core..', milky with glassy texture (no. 3058), (Foote 1916a:145, 1916b:196-197). We next hear of her when she married Christian Gottlob/Gottlieb Lechler, also from an eminent family, and of the Brooklyn Estate, Shevroy Hills, on 26th January, 1893 at the Holy Trinity Church, Yercaud (Fig. 3). Violet's daughter's wedding brought together family and friends as seen in Figures 12 and 13.

#### **Archaeology as a Family Passion: Eliza Mellisa Wells**

As mentioned earlier, Foote's first wife, Elizabeth Ann died in 1870. By 1873 he was busy completing his report on the geology of parts of Madras and North Arcot district (Foote 1873b). During the period 1872-1873, Foote was tremendously busy, getting ready for the Vienna Exhibition. He was in charge of the large collection of minerals and fossils to be displayed by the Geological Survey of India. Foote also exhibited some of his collections of South Indian stone implements, which were extremely well received. Prior to his return, on 22nd September, 1874, Foote married Eliza Melissa Wells, his first cousin on his mother's side, at Fittleworth, Sussex England<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 3). Eliza was the daughter of his mother's brother, Giffard Wells (see Fig. 2). This marriage lasted till his death, and Eliza Melissa's involvement in his work played an important role in his life. She moved to Little Bourne, Luz, Mylapore, Chennai. Not only did she look after the children from his first marriage, but also had four children of her own. Eliza's involvement in Foote's work is mentioned several times. During his explorations in Bellary, on the left bank of the river Tungabhadra, opposite the town of Hampasagar, he found, what he called, a neolithic burial place. It is in this exploration, that he mentions his wife, who along with him, searched very closely, for pieces of the 'elephant shaped funeral vase' (No. 2886/7) (Foote 1916a:185). The couple could not locate the missing animal's head '....though we devoted many hours to the hunt, a whole day and a long morning the next day..' (Foote 1916a:185).

Eliza Melissa and Robert Bruce's first child, Melissa Wells Foote is reported to have been born on 5th October, 1875, at Little Bourne, Luz, was baptized on 7th November, at St. Thome' (St.Thomas), but died and was buried on 1st November, 1876, and later re-interred at Yercaud, on 23rd November, 1877. Mary Agnes Bencraft Foote, was born on 11th March, 1877, once again at the family home at Little Bourne, Luz, but was baptized later at the Holy Trinity, Yercaud. By this time, we can assume that Revd. Percival had retired to Yercaud, and that under his influence the baptisms were carried out there. She married Charles Eccles Nixon Priestly (a Lt.Col. in the Indian Army and Acting Military Police, Burma). Constance Ruby Foote was born on 18th July 1878, and baptized on 13th September of the same year<sup>15</sup>. Records list the parents as Robert Bruce and Eliza Melissa Foote as being of Yercaud. James Sharp, was the officiating Chaplain. This was years before Foote retired to Yercaud, but we may presume that the family maintained a residence here. Constance Ruby later married William Markham Pritchard (a superintendent in the Kolar Gold Mines, 1881-1934). Pritchard features again in the list of individuals who contributed antiquities to Foote's collection. He is described as having found the spout of a red earthenware vessel with a button lip, on the surface of Wollagamadi Hill, Kolar Gold Field (Foote 1916b:31; antiquity no. 264h). It is significant to note that Foote's Will refers to his shares in the Mysore Gold Mines, very possibly owing to this relationship. By 1901, Pritchard is listed as the Chief Residential Officer, Kolar Gold Fields ([www.geocities.com/atheus/2960/kgf/1905.html](http://www.geocities.com/atheus/2960/kgf/1905.html)). Helen Zóé Foote married Neville Harrison. Foote's youngest son, Giffard Wells Bruce (1885-1954) was a rubber planter in Ceylon and remained a bachelor (Fig. 3).

#### **'..Prehistoric Antiquities or the Proceeds Thereof...': Last Will and Testament**

'I Robert Bruce Foote a European British subject at present residing in the Presidency Town of Madras in British India, .....declare this to be my last Will and testament' (Extract from the Will, 1899, codicil, 1908). Foote's last Will and testament<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 14). provide remarkable insights into his personality. Names and relationships are clearly defined, likes and dislikes are aired, and the varied nuances of family life are glimpsed at amidst the stilted legal language. A clear division of possessions and finances, including stocks and shares held, and debts and amounts to be recovered from various children and relations, all portray a practical man; - a man whose passion for the past did not translate into otherworldliness and vague abstraction.

A note in the margin on the first page of the Will, written in a hand different to that in the main text, informs us that he passed away at Presidency Hospital, Calcutta, on 29th December, 1912. In a letter written by Commonwealth Relations Office, London to Major General H.R.B. Foote, (his grandson), dated December 1962, (Ref. R. 2354/62),

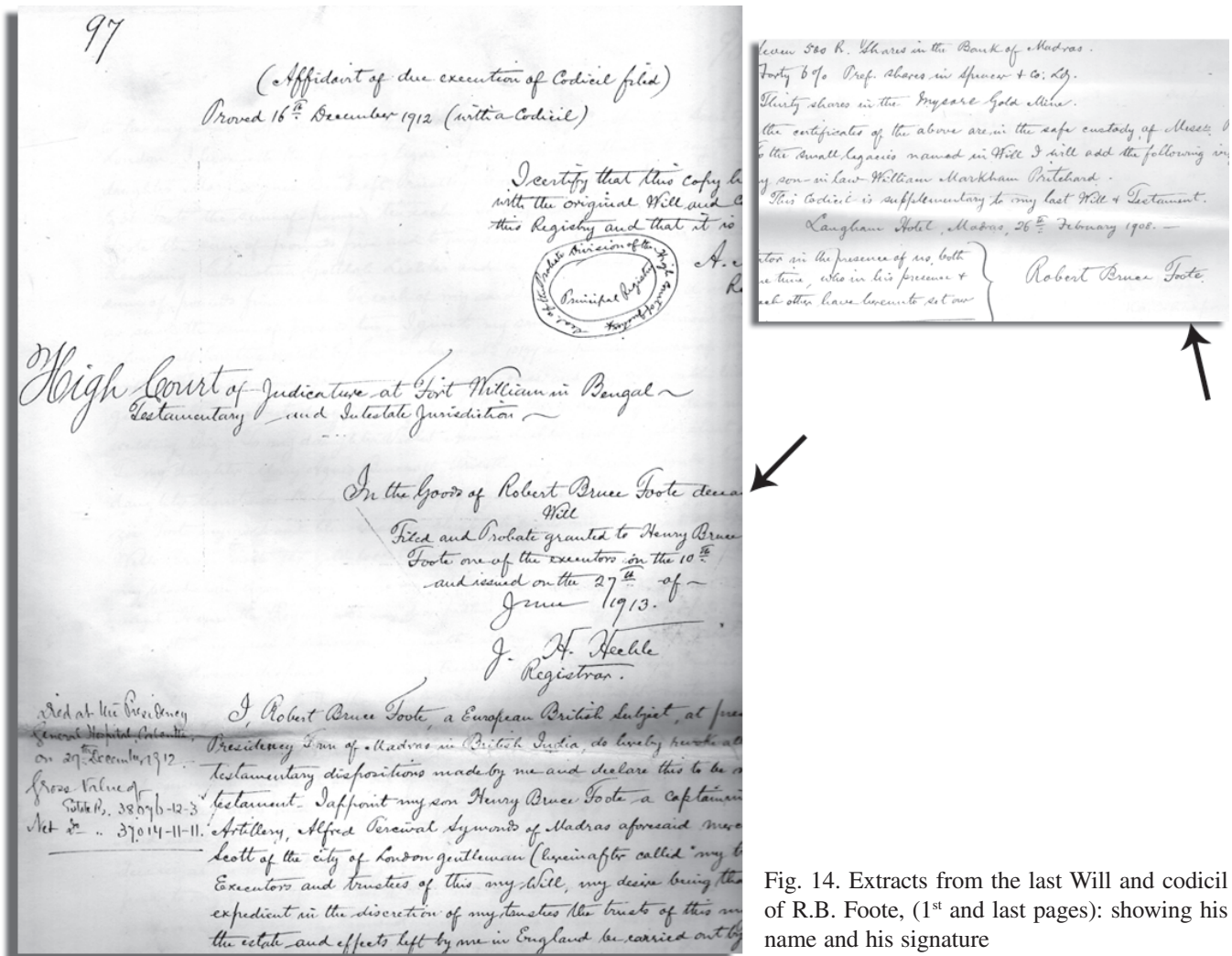


Fig. 14. Extracts from the last Will and codicil of R.B. Foote, (1<sup>st</sup> and last pages): showing his name and his signature

there is a handwritten note by the latter, stating that Robert Bruce Foote was cremated in Calcutta (Kolkata), on 3rd January, 1913. The Will was filed and probated by his son Henry Bruce Foote, (who was also one of the executors), on the 10th and issued on the 27th of June, 1913. This was done at the High Court of Judicature at Fort William, Bengal (Testamentary and Intestate Jurisdiction), by J.H. Heckle, Registrar.

The Will was however, drafted years earlier, on February 2nd, 1899, in the presence of T. Rowlandson, Solicitor, Madras; and J.S. Hendricks, Manager, Buckingham Hotel, Madras. A codicil to his last Will was drafted on 26th February, 1908, when stationed at Langdon Hotel, Madras. Here witnesses were Cecile Bertha Kidd, Spinster, Yercaud, Arthur Neville John Harrison, Assistant Examiner, Public Works Accounts, Madras. The affidavit of due execution of codicil filed, was proved on 16th December, 1912. These dates are important as they explain many statements in the Will, as discussed below which would otherwise remain puzzling.

His son Henry Bruce Foote, at that time a Captain in the Royal Regiment of Artillery, was one of the executors. The two other trustees and executors were Alfred Percival Symonds, listed as a Madras merchant, and Howard Scott of the city of London, listed as 'gentleman'. It is evident that Foote left behind property in England as well, 'estates and effects', which were to be dealt with by the trustee or trustees resident in England. His effects and estates in British India were to be handled by the trustee/s resident in the country at the time of execution. A note in the margin of the Will states that at the time of his death, the gross value of his estate was Rs.38076-12-3 (i.e. in rupees, annas and pice), and the net value being Rs. 37014-11-11. Foote was thus a wealthy man at the time of his death.

In addition to the trustees, he writes, '....And I appoint my dear wife Eliza Melissa Foote during her life and after her death my trustees to be the guardian and guardians of my infant children'. At the time of drafting the Will, his youngest son, Giffard (b.1885) would have been only around 14 years, whereas at the time of Foote's death, the children were no

longer infants. Foote left everything to his wife, with one notable exception.

In the Will of 1899, it is significant that in the distribution of his property he specifically left out, ‘...my collection of Indian Prehistoric Antiquities or the proceeds thereof which shall form part of my general estate..’. Very clearly, he had definite plans on the future of these antiquities. Here, it is significant to note that as early as 1868, in the course of the International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology at Norwich, the Swedish archaeologist, Prof. Nilsson, was said to have greatly admired and desired to purchase artefacts No. 2204-9; an offer turned down by Foote. However, in the same year, Foote allowed the greater part of his early collection of tools to be distributed by John Evans, to Charles Lyell, John Lubbock, Colonel Lane-Fox (Pitt-Rivers), C. Wickham Flower, and James Wyatt (Foote 1916a:109-110). Later his collections also found their way to the Blackmore Museum amongst many others (Stevens 1870).

In 1873, during the International Exhibition in Vienna he received many offers to purchase some of these antiquities from Prof. Hochstetter, and other German scholars, but refused on the grounds that he wished these to remain in India. These were later presented to the museum of the Geological Survey of India, and then transferred to the Indian Museum, Kolkata. After Wood-Mason’s time, however, these collections were much neglected (Foote 1916a:110), and it was only when Foote officiated as Director of the Geological Survey in 1887, that he had a chance to recover and exchange some of the old ‘Vienna’ specimens in return for more recently collected antiquities. When the codicil to the Will was drafted in 1908, Foote had already sold his collections to the Madras Museum. This was done in 1904 for a sum of Rs.33,000 (Devasahayam 2004:111) when Edgar Thurston was Superintendent (Centenary Souvenir 1951:35).

With this exception he left everything to his wife, ‘.....all my plate, linen, china, glass, books, pictures, prints, wines, liquor, furniture, and other household effects and all my carriages and horses’. He also left her the sum of two hundred pounds to be paid within one calendar month of his decease. His share in the Army and Navy Co-operative Society of London (share no. 54661) was also bequeathed to her.

In addition to his wife, the Will specifies individual legacies to various family members. Here he enumerates sums to be paid to his daughters, Mary Agnes Bencraft Priestly, Constance Ruby Foote and Helen Zóé Foote, his daughter-in-law Jeanie Elizabeth (wife of Henry Bruce Foote), and to each of his sons-in-law, as well as to his executors. The deep affection for his first born, Henry Bruce Foote, is clearly evident. Foote left Henry Bruce his ‘...silver half hunting watch by George Moore No.13177 in remembrance of my dear brother Hal’. He also left him his gold pencil case, and an old cable link watch guard, which were obviously prized possessions. Similarly, his youngest son Giffard Wells Bruce Foote, was left, ‘....the gold locket

his mother gave me on our engagement, also my bloodstone signet ring, also my red carnelian intaglio ring left me by my aunt Henrietta Rogers, also my dear fathers’ old dressing case and its contents and also my gun’. Other personal belongings including his first wife’s wedding ring, gold and agate shirt studs, gold and blue enamel shirt studs, and gold wrist links, were bequeathed to his daughters from both wives.

The Will also contains detailed instructions to his trustees on matters related to the management of his finances and estates, instructions to pay for the funeral and other debts, and managements of legacies specified. As regards financial bequests, Foote specified that the children of his first wife, Elizabeth Ann Foote, i.e. Henry Bruce, Lizzie Sophia Mary Leeming, Vivian Percival and Violet Annie Lechler, were to be paid the sum of Rs. 20,000 (equally divided amongst them) and which represented the money which came to him, as a result of his marriage to their mother. For Vivian, he specifies that this was to be the ‘..only provision I feel it incumbent upon me to make for him by this my will’, reasons for which are made clear later on. An interesting note concerns details related to an insurance taken on Madras Equitable Assurance Society on the life of his brother-in-law, William Alfred Symonds, clearly indicating that the latter was at some point in time in debt to Foote. Details on amounts to be paid to his second wife, Eliza Melissa during her lifetime were laid out, as also instructions on the status, rents and eventuality of sale of his house in Yercaud, Ivy Cottage (Fig. 15). Permission was also granted to his trustees, to invest money in stock funds or securities as per existing laws of the time.

In a codicil drawn up on 26th February, 1908, when at Langham Hotel, Madras, he again emphasized the nature of the division of the legacy of Rs. 20,000 which came to his first wife, Elizabeth Anne Foote, from her uncle Daniel Percival. This is confirmed in the Wills of both Revd. Peter Percival and that of his brother Daniel (courtesy, F.Ashton). Foote specified that this legacy was to be divided equally amongst Elizabeth Ann’s four children, after debiting the loans they had taken from him. An interesting account is given, of the exact amounts loaned to his children along with details of the debts they had repaid till date, and the balance due. He also specified the division of funds in the event of a sale of his house, Ivy Cottage. Once again one notes the despair and anger at his son Vivian’s behaviour, ‘..whose systematic misconduct for many years has caused him to forfeit all feelings of goodwill on my part’. Shares alluded to in the Will as being held by Foote, included those in Messrs. Parry and Co. Madras, debentures in the Deccan Sugar and Abkari Company; shares in the Bank of Madras; shares in Spencer and Co., Ltd., and in the Mysore Gold mine.

The Will is a powerful testimony to the many hidden facets of Foote’s personality. His skill in finances and careful track of investments, shares and debentures; methodical recording of loans taken by his children, interest rates, and the like, testify to a man with a shrewd sense of business. His





Fig. 15: Ivy Cottage, Yercaud, showing R.B. Foote near the entrance

anticipation of the sale of antiquities is clear in the main text of the Will, even though the actual sale was only later. The hardships of a life in the field (Foote, 1882), stand out in striking contrast to his mention of a house, evidently situated in a scenic locality (Wilson 1888:42), stocked with fine wine, furniture, linen, carriages, horses, and guns. His disgust for the trouble caused by his second son Vivian, and deep affection for first born Henry Bruce and last born Giffard are clear, as also his attempt to divide various legacies in a fair and just manner between all his children, keeping in mind promises made to his father-in-law Revd. Percival.

During the period ranging from drafting his last Will in 1899, codicil in 1908, and death in 1912, Foote was busy completing his monumental catalogue for the Madras Museum (Foote 1916a,b). As noted by others (Centenary Souvenir 1951; Paddayya 2007), the first version of this appeared in 1901. A journal in possession of the author, (SCHE/RBF/02) (Fig. 16), provides the first rough notes of chapters which were to appear in the final volumes published later. Although this is not the subject of this paper, it may be briefly mentioned, that it here that Foote listed ideas, observations, references to other articles, as also rough drafts and illustrations which were to take their final form in the completed volumes.

#### **Family versus ‘The Weariness of a Solitary Life’**

Robert Bruce Foote joined the Geological Survey of India, only a few years after its foundation, at a time when amongst other pressures, geologists were expected to rise above field surveys and conduct research as well (Sangwan 1993). As

Foote rightly observed, this was practically extremely difficult, as the geologist being for the most part in remote areas, ‘....cannot enjoy the luxury of a library, although he may constantly need to refer to his books with reference to his current work’ (Foote 1882: 326). In these difficult conditions the mortality of geologists was still quite high (Foote 1882:327), and they were subjected to the dangers of the climate, disease and wild beasts. In this context, Foote had the ability to balance the pressures of mapping, documentation for ‘economic geology’, and the need to produce ‘scientific’ results and research. After morning rounds from ‘...fifteen to twenty-five miles, partly performed on foot under exposure to the sun for from six to eight hours...’, (Foote 1882:326), he spent the afternoon mapping and writing up the day’s work, and in his rare spare time, kept himself informed on the progress of science. Moreover, these skills were also applied in the mapping, documentation and research of pre-and protohistoric sites. In the history of colonial geology or archaeology, Foote stands out as a man who was keen to aim for the highest standards of perfection, although often frustrated at being so distant from the centre of exciting developments in England and Europe (Foote 1882, 1916a).

In addition to his scholarship, Foote stands out as a family man: whose family was supportive and involved in his passion for studying India’s past. His wives, children and an extended network of family and friends helped him in his passion for research, documentation and collection of antiquities. As a young man, Foote was influenced by his father-in-law, Revd. Peter Percival, whose scholarship in the field of Tamil and



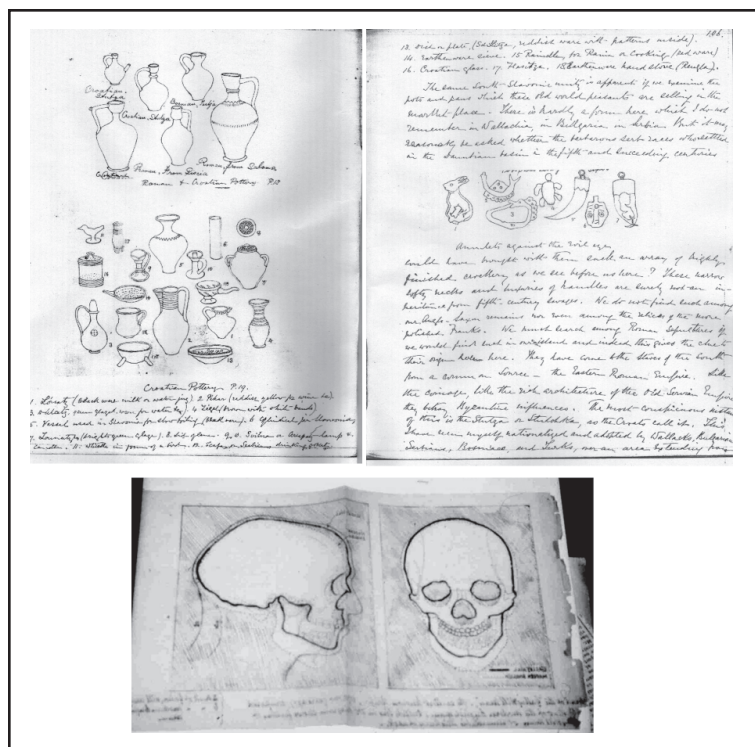


Fig. 16: Pages from the journal of R.B. Foote

Telugu studies, and other aspects of Indian culture; placed Foote within a circle of intellectuals interested in the study of India's past. The untimely death of his first wife, Elizabeth Ann, leaving behind infant children, is never mentioned directly; although the depth of this relationship is clearly seen in the long and sustained contact he had with his father-in-law Revd. P. Percival. Of all his children, Foote placed great trust and faith in his eldest son, Henry Bruce, as is seen in his decision to nominate him as being a suitable candidate to conduct excavations at the Billa Surgam complex. This also reflects the immense respect and trust which Grant Duff, the Governor of Madras, placed in this decision, very possibly overriding other more qualified scholars involved in archaeological studies. Further, marriage alliances entered into by his daughters, led to the widening of a network of individuals who were to contribute antiquities and information on sites. This is seen clearly in the case of discoveries made in the Shevroy Hills of Tamil Nadu, and in Mysore. Foote's first wife, Elizabeth Ann illustrated stone tools, published in Foote's seminal paper of 1866. These were referred by contemporary scholars as proof of the antiquity of humanity in India. They still remain important as a source of information on tool types discovered by Foote. His second wife, Eliza Melissa, was evidently present at several occasions during his field surveys and knew enough to discover important antiquities. His daughter Violet Anne, collected artefacts in the Baroda State, displaying a knowledge ranging from chalcedony flakes to Neolithic tools. Despite the unhappiness caused by his son Vivian, we see Foote as a man surrounded by the love and affection of his family members, who did

their best to contribute in their own small way towards building up a picture of India's past. Foote's family, may thus be viewed within the context of his untiring quest for understanding processes underlying India's geological and archaeological past.

Despite the family's involvement in his work, it is evident that much of his life was spent alone. As late as 1882, he mentions the extreme loneliness which formed a part of his job as a geologist (Foote 1882). Although a large part of his work was done along with William King, Foote writes, '...Then too is the weariness of a solitary life in outlandish places where a white face is sometimes not met with for months together' (Foote 1882:325). Foote states that the '...severance, though temporary from civilization, means separation from wife, family, and friends.' (Foote 1882:326).

This abridged genealogical study drawn from data in possession of the author, while exciting by itself, serves several purposes. It fills in large gaps in our knowledge of Foote's family history, provides glimpses into his personal life, and the importance which family links and networks had in his work. It may be fair to say that Foote's contributions in various fields of scholarship, his collection of antiquities and discoveries, owe as much to his family and friends, as to own his initiative and diligence. In the study of any great personality, such as Robert Bruce Foote, there is a subtle interplay between personal and professional spheres of life, and it is in understanding this complexity, that one can achieve a true biographical study of this fascinating personality.

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## Notes

1. Certificate of Fellowship of the Geological Society, London, Courtesy, Geological Society, London.
2. Correspondence between 'Hal' (Major-General Henry Robert Bowerman Foote) to Vera Violet Jeanie dated 18th June, 1964, Church Cottage, Sidlesham Susse, Sidlesham 231 (unpublished letter).
3. The National Archives, Public Record Office, Catalogue Reference: Prob 11/1853. Image Reference: 415.
4. Letter from College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.4, (J.R.B.Walker, M.V.O., M.C.), dated 1st September, 1863, to Miss. Foote.
5. Record No. 4987. Registry of Births, Dr. Williams Library, London. (courtesy, Mrs. Florence Ashton).
6. San Thome' Marriage Vol. 43, Folio 198.
7. Will of Revd. Peter Percival. Courtesy, Mrs. Florence Ashton.
8. Madras BMD 1878 & 1879 Film # 0521866 Vol. 59 1878, and LDS Film #0521867 Vol. 60 - 1879.
9. San Thome': Marriage Vol. 43, Folio 118.
10. St. Thome' (St.Thomas)' Birth Records: Vol. 44, Folio 99.
11. Jeannie Elizabeth was the eldest daughter of Frederick Bowerman Jessett, FRCS, England and Fanny E.O. at St. Peters, Eaton Square on 22nd February 1893. They were married by Rev. Thomas Hardy, Vicar of Firth, assisted by Revd. J. Armitage, Army Chaplain.
12. Certified Copy of an entry in an Army Register Book of Births deposited in the General Register Office, Somerset House, London, App. No. S.R. 53654/30 and Baptisms. Vol. 74, Fol. 79. Bengal; Secretary of state for India Register of Baptisms at Dum Dum, 1899.
13. Major-General H.R.B. Foote, 'Bob' VC, went on to become a well known name in England, even being featured in the popular Television Serial 'This is Your Life', owing to his distinguished career. In 1942, he was Commanding Officer of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment posted in the Western Desert Africa, facing Rommel's forces. His extreme bravery in the course of this famous battle, earned him the Victoria Cross (Obituary, Daily Telegraph, 25th November 1993) in 1942, and this reads, '...His name was a byword for bravery and leadership throughout the brigade'. He held various posts including Director-General of Fighting Vehicles at the Ministry of Supply, Director of the Royal Armoured Corps at the War Office. After retirement he was military advisor to Leyland. He was awarded the DSO in 1942 and appointed CB in 1952, and was also chairman of the Tank Museum at Bovington. He married Anita Flint Howard on December 28th 1944, at the Church of St. Thomas-on-the Bourne, Farham. He is listed as the son of the late Lieutenant-Colonel, H.B. Foote, R.A, and Mrs. Foote, while his wife is noted as the daughter of the late Carey Howard and Mrs. Howard of California, USA (The Times, Monday, Jan 01, 1945, pg.7, Issue 50029, col. B. (The Times, Digital Archive, 1785-1985). Anita Flint Howard died in 1970, and he married Mrs. Audrey Mary Ashwell in 1981. He died on 22nd November, of bronchopneumonia and a stroke, 1993, at Southlands Hospital, Shoreham by Sea. They had no children. (Certified Copy COL529465), General Register Office
14. Oriental and India Office Library. Batch: MO70501 Dates: 1559-1875, Source: 416757, Call No. 918252, Type: Film.
15. Madras BMD 1878 & 1879 Film #0521866; Vol. 59 1878, and LDS Film #0521867 Vol. 60 - 1879.
16. Will of Robert Bruce Foote. Affidavit of Due Execution of Codicil Filed, proved on 16th December 1912, Issued on 27th June, 1913.

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### **Catalogue of Records (with Sharma Centre for Heritage Education)**

SCHE/RBF/01: List of Correspondence with Dr. John Bruce Foote and Mrs. Mary Foote.

SCHE/RBF/02: Personal Journal/Notes of Robert Bruce Foote, donated by Dr. John Bruce Foote and Mrs. Mary Foote.

SCHE/RBF/03: Family trees, birth, marriage and death records, and other documents, donated by the Foote family.

SCHE/RBF/04: Photographs of the Foote family donated by Dr. John B. Foote and Mrs. Mary Foote.

SCHE/PER/01: List of photographs of the Percival family (donated by Mrs. Florence Ashton).

SCHE/PER/02: List of correspondence with Mrs. Florence Ashton.