



THE IN & OUT

A HISTORY OF
THE NAVAL AND MILITARY CLUB

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Above • Hunting was a favourite pursuit for British officers based in India between the wars and the Club has several relics of this past age. The head of a Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros presented to the Club in 1903 by Lieutenant H. B. Firman, 16th The Queen's Lancers, a Club member since 1873. The magnificent tigers head was presented in 1929 by Mrs Maye. (Khalid Katem)

Stationed near Poona, Daniell's many tasks included administering the officers' mess. He tried to reform the accounts and objected to signing a monthly cheque for 40 gallons of oil merely to serve one small oil lamp in the mess. But when the solitary lamp went out for want of oil in the midst of a toast to the King, he realised that he had disturbed a fragile relationship with the locals who worked for the Army. That 40 gallons of oil was siphoned off to serve the lamps of all the 200 and more family and relatives of the Indian servants in the mess. Having been given a stiff talking-to by the Colonel, he duly signed off the cheque the next month.

'I was most interested in the silver,' Daniell recalled, 'I discovered that it was all silver belonging to the John Company of the Bombay Troop of Horse Artillery and Madras Horse Artillery. It was from the time of Clive and it was all Queen Anne silver. I was very ignorant about silver, I thought it was valuable but I had no idea of its enormous value... not a single knife or fork or any single piece of silver had been lost or stolen.'

Danger came not from military service, but from hunting man-eating tigers and an outbreak of bubonic plague. Or, from boredom encouraging reckless gambling. In Saugor, while instructing officers in horsemanship, Daniell was told the story of a gunner major who drunkenly boasted there was nothing a gunner couldn't do. When a cavalryman slammed 50 rupees on the table, saying he bet he couldn't get two guns to the top of a nearby hill by dawn, he accepted the wager. The Gunner Major went back to his battery and they keenly took up the challenge, quickly erecting a track around the steep hill.

As the sun began to rise in the east, the first gun team galloped to the top of the hill, but when the second dashed after them, the rickety pathway gave way and the horsemen plunged to their death. Distraught, the gunner major, still dressed in scarlet mess kit, rode home to his bungalow and shot himself. 'My friend told me that he often heard the footsteps of this Gunner Major.'

In 1926, Daniell sailed to Tanganyika to join a childhood friend to hunt big game. On the voyage from India to Africa, he was accompanied by a beautiful Javanese opium addict, a melancholy British Indian Infantry officer, and a high-class prostitute thrown out of Shanghai. A storm erupted in the midst of the voyage and the British officer was swept overboard, but Daniell rode it out thanks to falling unconscious after imbibing too much whisky and opium.