

Brief report on libraries, archives and museums in Dehra Dun, September 2013

By Dr Anna Winterbottom, with Arnab Rob

Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun

The library contains the 'work plans' for forests in all Indian states and Assam and Burma. Also contains the reports of the Botanical Survey of India. Several works relating to climate and environment including the 'Indian Meteorological Memoires' (also available online). There are several older works of botany, including an early edition of the *Hortus Malabaricus* and many nineteenth and early twentieth century works.

Survey of India

The museum contains made of the original instruments used in the botanical surveys by George Everest, including theodolites, sundials, transit telescopes, the baselines and standards used, including 'Lamberton's standard of length'. Several instruments were made by Saiyad Mir Moshin, originally from Arcot, worked in Calcutta with Valentine Blacker, Survey General (1823-7).

Some of Everest's correspondence and the field note book of George Lambertson are in the museum cases. Some of this has been published by the museum in their Centenary volume on Everest.

Photographs of explorers Pandit Nair Singh (1865-75), who explored from Nepal to Lhasa; Kishan Singh (1869-83), who covered Western Tibet and Mongolia; and Kinthrup (1880-83), who followed the course of the Tsan-Po through the Himalayas and identified it with the Brahmaputra. Selected articles relating to these and other explorers are in the library and listed in the card catalogues in the drawers marked 'exploration'. The prayer wheel used by explorers to conceal their data, and later fitted with special compartments for compasses and other equipment is also photographed, as are scenes from the surveys.

There are some cases of archaeological finds during the surveys including terracotta figurines and coins.

Interesting instruments include a sidereal chronometer for recording the passages of stars in time; solar compasses, useful for navigation in high latitudes where the abundant minerals make normal compasses unreliable; two 'tide predicting machines', the first made in 1877. They record several lunar and solar measurements (diurnal, semidiurnal, ecliptic, etc.).

Some details are given about the tidal observatory constructed in 1880 at Port Blair, Ross Island and destroyed by the cyclone of 1 Jan 1892.

The older tidal data has been digitised, along with other meteorological data. This can be accessed for a fee by applying to the Research Director, Dr Anand Sharma (anands_92@hotmail.com).

The library has several rare books on exploration from the nineteenth century onwards, covering several parts of the world. It has the gazetteers for the states of India (which are duplicated

elsewhere but may fill in some gaps). The library has the first and third editions of Rennell's 'Memoir of a Map' and another item catalogued as 'Asia, China, Mogul history of, with maps, Rennell, 1793'.

There is also a notebook by Joseph Dalton Hooker containing a few letters, the first from 'N.S. Sherwill at Berhanpoor, 10 April 1853' and scattered notes on monthly temperatures and their variation from the mean annual; boiling points in different locations; astronomical observations and a printed pamphlet, 'A treatise on the new dry and wet bulb Hygrometer'.