

THE MURDER OF OS CREWE-READ, THE ATTACK ON EC CREWE-READ & THE POLITICAL OFFICERS AA CHICHESTER & AC DOUGLAS WHO DIRECTED THE REPRISALS AGAINST THE INSURGENTS.

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By Keith Steward FRGS

In southern Nigeria twin brothers working for the Colonial Office were each attacked by local people, in one case with fatal consequences. EC Crewe-Read survived a serious assault in 1903 but his brother OS Crewe-Read was killed in 1906. Shortly afterwards EC Crewe-Read left Nigeria but continued in the colonial administration in Kenya until 1913.

Athol Augustus Chichester & Offley Stuart Crewe-Read were neighbouring district commissioners in Nigeria when Crewe-Read was murdered in June 1906. Chichester was however a very senior 2nd class DC while Crewe-Read was a very junior assistant. The young Crewe-Read made the mistake of failing to work sympathetically with the subordinate, but essential, native administration. This was the basis of the British colonial policy of 'Indirect Rule' in Sub Sahara Africa. Furthermore, Crewe-Read fatally underestimated the ferocity of the tribes' response in pursuit of their grievances against his temporary administration of the Agbor sub district.

The neighbouring DC (and acting Provincial Commissioner) Chichester was charged with quelling the revolt against Crew-Read and containing the disruption it caused. He was very seriously wounded by the insurgent tribesmen while directing reprisals and retired shortly afterwards with a disability pension. The punitive expedition on which Chichester was political officer saw some of the most unpleasant bush fighting known in West Africa at the time. The casualties represented 34% of the total medals and clasps awarded to the West African Frontier Force.¹ In retrospect, however the question arises, as to whether Chichester had adequately advised and guided the young assistant DC in his dealings with the Africans. A contemporary of Crewe-Read writing twenty later about his early days in Nigeria (1906), stated:

¹ *Computation based on the recorded number of killed & wounded with the issue of medals & clasps from NA (UK) WO100/394*

We of the Political Department numbered about sixty all told. We underwent no painful examination to test the quality of our brains, or our capacity for administration, but were men of some experience.²

A Nigerian historian writing in the late 1970's acknowledged the impact of the new British administration:

Southern Nigeria went through a period of considerable turmoil. British weakness and understaffing gave opportunity for the assertion of resistance. Suppression of rebellion was in most cases violent; this was because available forces had to be rapidly concentrated to inflict a heavy blow on dissidents before troops were rushed to another part of the country where there was trouble.³

Whatever the failings of Chichester's and other senior members of the Southern Nigeria administration, Crewe-Read seems to have neglected basic common sense when dealing with Africans. These were violent and primitive people; the colony was still being brought under effective Colonial Office control. Another contemporary writing in the late 1930s said:

Throughout my experience with Africans I have found that if one is firm and just, or tries to be, within the scope of one's nature, upholding one's position, but at the same time treating them courteously, and not always reminding them of their racial colour, one will get devotion and good work.... It is this sense of inferiority, so constantly thrown in their faces by unthinking Europeans that leads to resentment attempts at self-assertion and agitation.⁴

By all accounts, young Mr Offley Crewe-Read was very much lacking in courtesy on the occasion of his demise. He seems also to have been completely unaware of the precariousness of his position. Unfortunately, little is known about him apart from service in the Wiltshire Imperial Yeomanry⁵ during the war in South Africa 1900-1 and that he entered the Colonial Service in 1903 as an Assistant DC for southern Nigeria. His brother Edward Charles Crewe-Read⁶ served in the same administration at a similarly junior level. He had also been attacked by disaffected Africans in 1903, but survived the experience.⁷

² 'Nigerian Days', by ACG Hastings, pub The Bodley Head 1925

³ 'Nigeria in the First World War', by Akinjide Osuntokun, pub Humanities Press 1979.

⁴ 'Treks and Palavers', by Captain RR Oakley MC BA pub Seeley Service & Co c 1937.

⁵ NA (UK) WO128/1 shows him enlisting on 28th December 1899. He served in South Africa from March 1 1900 until July 5 1901 in receipt of the QSA with clasps for Cape Colony, Orange Free State and Transvaal. His next of Kin is shown as Mrs Crewe-Read, Hotel Augusta, Cannes, France.

⁶ Edward Charles Crewe-Read born 14th June 1877 served in Southern Nigeria 1904-6; transferred to East Africa 1907 and served as a junior District Commissioner until April 1913.

⁷ Unfortunately, the details of this assault on EC Crewe-Read seem to have been lost.

Athol A Chichester was born on 9 May 1861 and joined the naval training ship HMS Worcester in 1876. He subsequently chose a merchant navy career and served as third officer with both P Henderson & Co (Glasgow) from June 1878 until June 1882 and then Peninsular & Orient from June 1882 until 29th July 1890. His service took in the Egyptian War when he was on board HM Hospital-Ship HMS Ganges during the campaign of 1885. He obtained a Master's Certificate No 010227 on 16 October 1890⁸ and served as second officer on a number of voyages. In May 1897, he was appointed Assistant District Commissioner in the Niger Coast Protectorate⁹ under Governor Ralph Moor CMG.¹⁰

Chichester continued to serve in southern Nigeria after administrative control was taken over by the Colonial Office on the 1st January 1900. In the Colonial Office List for 1902 he is shown as one of nine District Commissioners and in the 1908 Colonial Office List, he is shown as a DC 1st class, but he retired on pension on July 15th of the same year. He married Caroline Ethel Gertrude Stewart, daughter of the late Admiral the Hon Keith Stewart¹¹ on July 14 1910. In November 1914, he wrote to the War Office offering his services and was subsequently appointed a temporary captain in the 1st garrison battalion the Devon Regiment. He was not employed as a combatant officer and seems to have served in military records in Cairo and the Near East. His record shows him as having embarked for England from Port Said in Egypt on 16 September 1918.¹²

The details of OS Crewe-Read's death were pieced together from the statements made by the African police and porters who survived the attack. The first report reached the Colonial Office on 13th June (document number 20971)¹³ headed, 'Ekumeku Rising in Benin City District'. The death of OS Crewe-Read is confirmed and the serious wounding of Lieutenant Walmsley-Dresser noted along with the serious wounding of Mr AA Chichester in the chest. There is also a report of the

⁸ NA (UK) BT122/87

⁹ NA (UK) WO339/14979

¹⁰ Sir Ralph Denham Rayment Moor KCMG, District Inspector Royal Irish Constabulary 1881-91, Deputy Commissioner & Vice Consul in the Oil Rivers Protectorate 1892, Acting Commissioner & Consul General Niger Coast Protectorate 1896-1900, High Commissioner Southern Nigeria 1900-3, committed suicide 1908.

¹¹ Admiral the Hon Keith Stewart CB was the 2nd son of the 8th Earl of Galloway; Lieutenant 13 June 1833, Commander 14 October 1838, Captain 1 July 1842, he distinguished himself as a captain in the Baltic campaign of August 1854 and again in China 1857-8 at the bombardment of Canton. He was appointed Rear Admiral (Reserved) on 19 May 1862, Vice Admiral 18 October 1867 and Admiral on 30 July 1875. [Navy Lists & NA (UK) ADM196/37]

¹² Ibid.

¹³ NA (UK) CO520/36

*killing of a Benin City Paramount Chief at Ute, but it does not say who killed him?*¹⁴

The next Colonial Office document (21130)¹⁵ also dated 13th June reports that Captain Rudkin¹⁶ was awaiting reinforcements before attacking the Owa [people]. Also mentioned is a visit by Colonel Chichester (presumably a brother)¹⁷ to the Colonial Office, complaining strongly about the lack of news and demanding that a telegram be sent enquiring about AA Chichester's health. The next document preserved in the files is (26582)¹⁸ is dated 21 July 1906. This includes a statement taken by EC Crewe-Read from PC Gilpin, the Native court clerk who was with OS Crewe-Read at the time of his murder.

I left Agbor on 8 June with Mr OS Crewe-Read for Ute with Sergt. Lawani and six police constables. We arrived at Owanta at 0-30 p.m. [June 9] where we halted for chop [a meal] after which we move on to Owanowa where we arrived at 4 p.m.

This is confirmed in Captain Rudkin's comprehensive report:

On the evening of June 8th [1906] Mr Crewe-Read going round his district reached the town of Owa. He had previously sent a messenger to the Head Chief saying that he wished to see all the people at 5.p.m.¹⁹

The village was deserted when the Crewe-Read party arrived. An investigation revealed that the Head Chief Ektui was not prepared to palaver. After waiting until 7.p.m. for Ektui to appear, Crewe-Read sent a police sergeant with three constables to fetch him. This was a very serious breach of the protocol of 'indirect rule' and taken as a serious insult. The chief refused to accompany the police and during an attempt to remove him by force some of the Owa opened fire on the police escort. This demonstrates the strength of feeling by the tribe against the bullying behaviour of Crewe-Read. The sergeant was wounded and Ektui escaped into the forest.

Crewe-Read with only a small escort (six police constables and a few carriers) in a hostile territory at night might prudently have retreated

¹⁴ *Ibid.* (in fact no chief had been killed at this point).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Brigadier William Charles Eric Rudkin CMG DSO ADC RA, served in South Africa 1899-1901 (QSA with 6 clasps), S Nigeria 1906 (DSO), WW1 mid 7 times, wounded twice, brevet Colonel & temporary Brigadier General.*

¹⁷ *Lieutenant Colonel Alan Chichester (brother) is shown as present at the funeral of AA Chichester, 'The Times', full text database.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *NA (UK) CO520/54 Report by Captain Rudkin*

immediately. Instead, his party camped for the night and the order to march was not issued until 3.a.m. Mr Crewe-Read sent telegrams to the Provincial Commissioner of the Central Province and the Officer Commanding troops at Asaba asking for assistance. The runner, court messenger Omozefi, was driven back and failed to get through with the messages. Court messenger Jamba was then sent with Afopele, a son of Paramount Chief Imaran, to take some telegrams to Agbor. The court clerk Gilpin was of the opinion that these messages were not sent and that Afopele disappeared. His statement continues:

At about 2-30.a.m.the Owas started firing guns around Crewe-Read's camp, wounding two of his followers. The ill-fated party started to move at once, the police replying to the Owa fire. With great difficulty the town of Owanta 6 miles away was reached as day broke. The police ammunition was nearly at an end. Two men had been killed and Crewe-Read and several others wounded.....Crewe-Read was shot through the heart and died in a few minutes.²⁰

*The surviving police and carriers tried to escape into the forest, but many were killed due to lack of ammunition for their guns. Crewe-Read's clerk was among those who survived and he reached Agbor about 9 the following morning June 9 and telegraphed the news to Asaba.*²¹

*One and a half companies of the South Nigeria Regiment WAFF were despatched on June 10. They encountered determined resistance by the Ekumekus between Emunede and Agbor and it took twelve hours fighting to break through.*²² *Among the casualties was Lieutenant Walmsley-Dresser*²³ *with serious wounds to the chest and legs. An incorrect telegram of June 10 stated that the murdered official was Mr EC Crewe-Read not Mr OS Crewe Read. It was corrected on June 11 by the acting governor Mr Fosbery in the following report.*²⁴

Chichester, Travelling Commissioner severely wounded chest, two rank & file killed, six severely wounded, 20 slightly wounded...Agbor occupied same day inhabitants

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *NA (UK) CO520/36 report from W Fosbery Acting Governor to the Earl of Elgin dated 16th June 1906.*

²³ *Lieutenant Henry Joseph Walmsley-Dresser, Imperial Yeomanry (in the ranks) South Africa 1900-1 (QSA), commissioned Royal Warwickshire Regt 1902, WAFF Sept 1905-Jan 1908, still in 1915 Army List.*

²⁴ *Widenham Francis Widenham Fosbery CMG, Consular Agent Niger Coast Protectorate 1893, District Commissioner Southern Nigeria 1896, Resident Benin City 1898, Political Officer punitive expedition 1899 (medal with clasp), Ishan expedition 1901 (AGS and clasp), Asaba hinterland expedition 1902, Igarra expedition 1903, Deputy High Commissioner & Acting Secretary 1904-5, Acting Governor 1906, HBM's Consul for Cameroons 1910.*

friendly. Reinforcements were being sent from Oka, 3 sections and a maxim, a millimetre [75 mm gun, a small piece of artillery] being sent from Calabar.²⁵

The report continues with information that the Chief of Agbor had sent messengers to recover Mr OS Crewe-Read's body but that the Owa people were not ready oblige in this matter. Fosbery adds some encouraging words for the family at a time of severe distress.²⁶ At this stage in the proceedings nobody in authority either in Nigeria or Whitehall had the slightest inkling of why the tribes had risen up so suddenly. The following statement by Fosbery almost beggars belief except to provide the Colonial Office with platitudes to pass onto the family. It is quite likely that neither Fosbery nor James had ever met either of the Crewe-Read brothers. The same report includes the following statement:

Mr OS Crewe-Read was a most promising young officer and much liked by those who knew him. His work has been most favourably reported on by the Provisional Commissioner, Mr FS James CMG.²⁷

Captain Rudkin and an advance party of soldiers were ready to move within an hour of being informed of Crewe-Read's murder (about 10 a.m.), but there was a distinct shortage of carriers. The local Asaba people had disappeared into the bush on news of the rebellion. Captain Rudkin sent African police to round up some likely suspects; these were brought in at 3p.m. and described 'as a most unwilling and motley crowd'.²⁸ Meanwhile Lieutenant HC Fox²⁹ and Dr JB Bate³⁰ had returned from Onitsha so the party comprised four British officers, 180 African rank and file, a Maxim gun,³¹ three hammocks (for carrying wounded) and 54 unwilling carriers. It was necessary to place a soldier in charge of each carrier to prevent their desertion on the 40 mile march to Umoende. Initially, the weather was merely hot and very humid, but torrential rain began to fall about 7 p.m. This later obscured the moon and made marching by night extremely difficult in pitch darkness and through mud several inches deep. Fosbery reports that Mr Athol Chichester, the Travelling Commissioner overtook the slower marching

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Sir Frederick Seton James KCMG KBE, District Commissioner Niger Coast Protectorate 1896, Cross River expedition 1898, Divisional Commissioner 1901, Political Officer Aro FF (mid & AGS with clasp), Kwale FF 1905 (clasp), Deputy Governor 1907-8, acted as Governor S Nigeria 1912, Colonial Secretary Straits Settlements 1916-24, Governor Windward Islands 1924-30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Captain HC Fox Royal Fusiliers won the AGS with 5 clasps, died 1911 from Black water fever.

³⁰ Dr JB Bate (still serving in 1922)

³¹ The London Gazette of March 13th 1908 states Captain Rudkin with 3 officers, 1 Medical Officer and 1 Political Officer was present.

soldiers burdened by their reluctant carriers late on the evening of June 9th. The sixteen miles to Issele Eku was completed by 4 a.m. on June 10th.

Fortunately the local chief was friendly and notorious for the large size of his extended family which included '150 wives and a small army of children whose number is beyond count'³². Twenty fresh carriers and 300 yams³³ were provided and within three hours the party was on the move again.

It was not until June 15th that 150 troops under Captain LOW Jones³⁴ and Captain J Wayling³⁵ reached Umoende some 15 miles from Owa. In all they had marched some 120 miles from XXXX. Captain WCE Rudkin had the foresight to request that a field telephone be sent with the column so that he could coordinate the movements of the different patrols. The prospect of using runners to communicate between the various WAFF groups with the area in revolt would have been extremely hazardous.

Captain Rudkin arrived on June 17th and divided the force into two columns. The first was based at Agbor and crossed the river to Ofion, Owanta and on to Aniero. The second marched out from Umoende through Utelokopo, Uteh and Aniero and met the first column for the attack on Owa. They located the enemy position during the night of the 17 June and attacked at dawn. They encountered heavy firing about 6-30am and it continued in a running battle throughout the day. Frequent casualties continuously prevented an aggressive assault. Late in the day the force entered a large yam clearing and assumed a square formation. Determined attacks by the rebels seriously wounded Chichester and Lieutenant Walmesly-Dresser. Shortly before nightfall, a small party under Lieutenant Hopkinson³⁶ joined the weary detachment. Captain Rudkin takes up the account:

About ¾ mile from the River Ehimi... I threw out flanks in extended order, our men charged through the open, the enemy being in full flight south, a good many throwing away their guns.... We had been fighting without break for eleven hours.... Our casualties were three killed, and twenty-five wounded, two of whom died later.³⁷

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *African sweet potato which is cooked and mashed with palm oil and was the staple diet of many Africans at this time (it is something of an acquired taste I am told on good authority).*

³⁴ *Brigadier General Lumley Owen Williams Jones DSO Essex Regt., served in South Africa 1901-2 (QSA with 4 clasps), S Nigeria 1905-6, WW1 mid 3 times, Legion of Honour, DSO.*

³⁵ *Major J Wayling Canadian Militia served with the WAFF from Feb 1902 receiving the AGS with 5 clasps (S Nig 02, S Nig 04/05, S Nig 05/06, W Africa 06, W Africa 1909/10)*

³⁶ *Captain Charles Reginald Thompson Hopkinson, Lancashire Fusiliers & East Surrey Regiment.*

³⁷ *Captain Rudkin, NA (UK) CO520/54 Ibid.*

Captain Rudkin received reinforcements throughout the following four weeks to replace killed and wounded until he had some 450 soldiers supported by 300 carriers. The Owa were eventually routed by two columns under Captain E de H Smith ³⁸ (killed on 17th November 1906)³⁹ and Captain J Wayling. Crewe-Read's uniform and unmutilitated body was recovered and buried at Benin. All the ringleaders and murderers were handed over to the civil authority for trial. Five were publicly hanged at Agbor, the remainder were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. The WAFF casualties totalled nineteen killed and 113 wounded: the rebels losses were estimated at 150 killed and 1500 wounded.

The Nigerian press was very active in 1906 and events like this made very good copy. The educated Africans were totally against the policy of indirect rule to which Lugard was committed. 'The Lagos Weekly Record' carried many reports about alleged and actual ill-treatment and enslavement of Africans by Europeans and indeed other Africans.

The reason for the belligerency of the Nigerian press is better understood when it is realised that the newspapers were all owned and edited by educated Africans in Lagos, the very element that was excluded deliberately from participation in government.⁴⁰

Another factor was the comparative popularity of German customers to the Lagos traders who granted very generous credit terms to their suppliers. It is not difficult to understand this as a deliberate attempt by Germany to undermine the fledgling British administration.

The press reports were picked up by various liberal and Methodist institutions in London. The secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Right Hon the Earl of Elgin ⁴¹ on 19 September quoting a letter from a native of West Africa who held a 'high position', but asked that his name may be withheld. This was not an unusual occurrence.

Although the Committee [of the Aborigines Protection Society] has not information from other sources sufficient to warrant it in taking responsibility for all the details in its correspondent's statements, it submits that the state of affairs here disclosed bears out the representations that have on several occasions been made to His Majesty's

³⁸ *Captain E de H Smith Royal Artillery*

³⁹ *'The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force', by Colonel A Haywood CMG CBE DSO & Brigadier FAS Clarke DSO, Pub Gale & Polden 1964, p 62.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid Akinjide Osuntokun.*

⁴¹ *Victor Alexander Bruce KG GCSI GCIE PC LLD DCL, 9th Earl of Elgin & Kincardine, Lord Lieutenant of Fifeshire 1886 -, Viceroy of India 1894-9, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1905-8.*

Government as to the dangerous incident to the methods [sic] by which in some cases and by some administrators ...⁴²

The letter which is long and laborious complains about the use of forced African labour used to maintain and repair roads. The issue here concerned the provision of food for the labourers. This was supposed to be provided by the African Chiefs to whom a certain amount of direct administration was delegated. Clearly there were some devious political games in play and the young ADC Crewe-Read had upset people. The chiefs caused resentment by not supplying food to the labourers, who in protect absented themselves from the labour group. The imposition of heavy fines (usually yams) on the labourers was also mentioned as well as the use of flogging.

Corporal punishment was one the issues where there were neither written rules nor guidelines. Notwithstanding, some members of the Colonial Administration had very liberal views about this sort of thing.⁴³ It was very easy to hold such noble sentiments in Whitehall, but those dealing with wily and truculent Africans had the problem of maintaining and administering an indigenous population larger in the ratio of 30,000:1. The Colonial Office memorandum 40211 of 31 October 1906⁴⁴ registered concern about the use of unpaid local labour. Sydney Olivier,⁴⁵ a first class clerk at the Colonial Office minutes, 'Captain Crewe-Read⁴⁶ showed a lamentable want of discretion'.⁴⁷

The other Crewe-Read incident has left a much smaller imprint in the Colonial Office records of the time. Fortunately however, Archibald Campbell Douglas, to whose district Edward Charles Crewe-Read was appointed left a memoir which he published privately some thirty years later. The account of the author's experiences in West Africa is both

⁴² NA (UK) CO520/40

⁴³ Captain William Daniel Byrne, South Nigeria Regiment WAFF while on active service in the Ibibio district was nearly cashiered after beating a chief. A subordinate Lieutenant GM Barrow (son of General Sir Edmund George Barrow GCB) had been ambushed while on patrol; the chief was uncooperative when questioned about the attack and received a few strokes of a cane.

⁴⁴ NA (UK) CO520/37

⁴⁵ Sydney Olivier, 1st Baron Olivier of Ramsden PC KCMG CB BA LLD Acting Colonial Secretary British Honduras 1890-1, Auditor General Leeward Islands 1895-6, Colonial Secretary Jamaica 1899-1904, Principal Clerk Colonial Office 1904-7, Governor of Jamaica 1907-13, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Agriculture & Fisheries 1913-17,

⁴⁶ It is not clear where OS Crewe-Read gained the right to this rank (if it is indeed correct?). There is no mention of him in the Army Lists for the South African War of 1899-1902; indeed he served in the ranks of No 1 company the Royal Wiltshire Imperial Yeomanry as trooper No 4. [The author is indebted to Kevin Asplin's roll of the Imperial Yeomanry, Scottish Horse & Lovat's Scouts available on-line. The hard copy records for both brothers South African war service are in NA (UK) WO128/1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

frank and forthright. As the elder and only surviving son of a wealthy admiral⁴⁸ with his own secure colonial service pension he did not need to pander to the susceptibilities of the mandarins. He was not at all impressed by EC Crewe-Read. After accompanying the Aro punitive expedition, Douglas was due a long home leave and handed over responsibility for Eket province to Crewe-Read. He wrote in the third person as 'Nemo':

Read had a twin brother who was appointed at the same time, and he poor fellow, was killed by natives in the Benin country. [Douglas] had never met the twin brother; but this one to whom he handed over the political affairs of the district, he, of course got to know quite intimately before he left for home. This was a red-haired youth, rather quick tempered and impetuous, but in every way a Sahib, and, although new to the country, he had his own ideas of how natives should be treated generally, and Ekets in particular.⁴⁹

This first hand description of the Crewe-Read twins by Douglas coincides with what a historian might deduce from the facts available. They were rather arrogant former public school boys who because of their war time experience in South Africa thought they knew how deal with native Africans. Rural southern Nigeria at this time was very a different place to the urban Johannesburg or Durban. The natives in South Africa had been beaten into submission by a century of Boer domination. Consequently in the absence of proper training, the Crewe-Read brothers lacked the relevant experience for the positions they had obtained. Unfortunately, they were also left without adequate supervision. This lack of guidance resulted in trouble for both the indigenous people and their colleagues in the administration. Without the arrogance, they would have probably survived unscathed, Hastings⁵⁰ adds;

Mistakes, muddles, and miscarriages of justice there were in plenty, as was natural. As commissioner of the Provincial Court, armed with fortunately the smallest powers, I awarded sundry punishments which possibly did not fit the offence in all cases; but my efforts were subject to superior revision, and little harm resulted in the end.⁵¹

As in the case of his brother, Edward Charles Crewe-Read ran into trouble enforcing the Administrations road building policy. There was no hut tax in Southern Nigeria at this time, but the Africans were expected to build roads. While attempting to enforce this policy Crewe-Read was

⁴⁸ Admiral Sir Archibald Lucius Douglas GCB GCVO LLD Legion d'Honneur, Order Rising Sun 1st class, Director of Japanese Imperial Navy College 1873-8, Captain 1880, C in C East Indies 1898-99, Vice Admiral 1901, C in C Portsmouth 1904-7.

⁴⁹ 'Niger Memories', by AC Douglas, pub James Townsend & Sons c 1935

⁵⁰ ACG Hastings Southern Nigeria Administration 1906 -1924; retired as a Resident.

⁵¹ Nigerian Days Ibid.

attacked by Ekets and by narrowly escaped with his life. Fortunately, Douglas returned from leave and joined Brevet-Major ANM Mackenzie's⁵² punitive patrol as Political Officer. He knew the Eket district intimately, having served there since June 1898.⁵³ The official dates in A.O.1/1906 are between 16th and 25th September 1903. The trouble started at Okwa on September 24th, when Captain EL Roddy,⁵⁴ leading the advance party was shot in the leg. Douglas recalled:

Although severely wounded and suffering from loss of blood, he held his ground until relieved by Captain Hume,⁵⁵ who then led the advance. The enemy firing with great determination on the Column subsequently killed two men and wounded nine others.⁵⁶

Archibald Campbell Douglas FRGS was an 'old coaster'; who had been in West Africa since December 1894, serving under the Foreign Office in the Niger Coast Protectorate until 1900. He saw active service as Transport Officer for the Kwa Ibo (officially known as Bula) punitive expedition of February to March 1899. He continued under the Colonial Office in the Crown Colony of Nigeria until 1909 retiring as a District Commissioner 2nd grade. He had served with the Aro Field Force as one of several Political Officers.⁵⁷

Douglas became a Member of the honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn in 1889 and was called to the bar in 1912. He served as a magistrate for much of the next twenty years both in London, North Africa (Juge Britannique de la zone Tangier), the West Indies (British Consul Port Limon 1928-9), Trinidad and Colonial Bar.⁵⁸

In the 21st Century when many African leaders criticise the period when their countries were administered by Great Britain and France, this piece of history is relevant; it clarifies the misinformation. At a rough estimate, I would suggest that those African countries administered by Great Britain and France profited from the experience in the ratio of a least 100:1. The Colonial Service administrators for the most part were dedicated to helping the Africans in their care. It might have been 'noblesse oblige', but the results were positive and the sentiments

⁵² Brevet-Major Arthur M Nutt Mackenzie Royal Artillery.

⁵³ NA (UK) CO520/48 f113.

⁵⁴ Major Edwin Louis Roddy Cheshire Regt., Aro Expedition 1901-2, S Nigeria 1902, S Nigeria 1902-3, Eket 1903, 1914-18 mid.

⁵⁵ Major Walter Vernon Hume DSO South Lancashire Regiment; South Africa 1899-1901, Aro 1901-2, S Nigeria 1902-3, S Nigeria 1903, S Nigeria 1904, WW1 (DSO).

⁵⁶ 'Niger Memories' Ibid

⁵⁷ NA (UK) WO100/390

⁵⁸ 'Who's Who' 1937.

genuine. Hastings, writing in a novel⁵⁹ in 1929, set in Nigeria portrays a similar situation to that facing the young Crewe-Read brothers. An experienced District Commissioner advises a young probationer:

Before you go, the first thing you have to do is to re-arrange your values. You have a number of preconceived ideas in your mind, just now, about the district, and the men-white and black-up there. Get rid of them. Preconceived notions are rarely of much use. Start afresh, with an open mind and form your opinions on the facts as you find them.

The situation is one where a young and inexperienced ADC is being briefed by his superior after a predecessor has been killed by the local African population. Cardew the senior reflects:

I know these people better than most....I see them from a different angle. They are sore and irritated. Last year they were annoyed too and like primitive, virile folk they took the direct way and destroyed the immediate cause of the irritation- Latham. I'm not reflecting more than needful on a dead man, but I suggest that you enquire more closely into the facts. Latham after all was of his type-not a good one for this country-yet if I quarrelled, it would be as much with the policy as the administrator in this case.⁶⁰

It is not difficult to imagine Hastings being concerned that his factual account of his eighteen years in Nigeria failed to mention the Crewe-Read story. Hastings was successful in making it almost to the top of the colonial administration. He was careful not to rock the boat too obviously in his memoir, but perhaps felt the need to be more forthright in what one might assume is his largely autobiographical novel.

The last word belongs to Oakley⁶¹

Generally speaking the Hausawa and the Fulani recognised two grades of turawa (white man). To them the distinction was not of social caste or even of official rank so much as-the man who knew how to treat natives (sic) properly-and-the man who did not. By, the former is meant, not the man who is weak and easy with the native, but the man who understands their prejudices, is sympathetic to their outlook, treats them with courtesies due to their rank, and is just, even when severe, as against the man who bullies them.

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⁵⁹ 'Gone Native' by ACG Hastings pub The Macaulay Company New York 1929.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ 'Treks & Palavers', Ibid.