

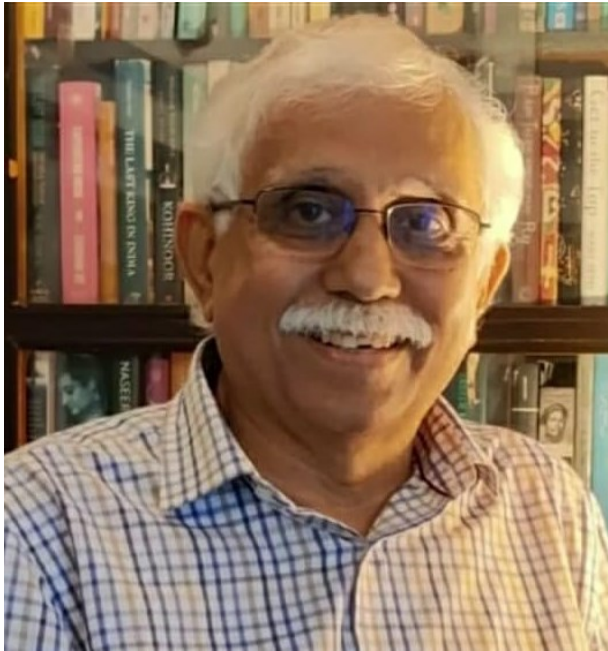
The CHC Journal

Volume I Issue III
November 2021

Fort William with St Anne's Church by George Lambert. c.1730.

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Point of View

POV- Protecting Our Vision!

If lessons are to be learnt from other cities and I do not mean abroad, Kolkata has a lot to learn. On one hand, no other city can boast of edifices that represent the history of India of the last 350 years so well and on the other, no other city is being demolished as fast.

These, once stately homes, stand in testimony of the true expressions of a kitsch in architecture and culture that surround the areas from Bandel to Calcutta. The areas where the Portuguese, the Dutch,

the Danes, the French and later the British established their settlements.

These were also the palaces and abodes of nawabs and rajahs, the zamindars and the knighted. These many pillared structures speak of an architecture that is a blend of Greco-Roman, Indo-Saracen and other European styles but incorporates the Indian verandah, the courtyard, the puja dalan and the zenana ghar. High ceilings, huge halls, long plazas with the exterior coated with chunam, that once shone in the sun masquerading as marble.

In the day, the teeming thousands shroud these magnificent structures with the purpose of business or hide them from what they were once built for. At night they stand as silent sentinels guarding their space in history. At the break of day they seem to talk to us, almost imploring us to spend time with them, to love them as they had been loved once, to live in them and enjoy the comfort they had once offered.

Almost all are under the constant threat of the wrecker, but they await care and respect that they so deserve. They also await a mindset or a needed legislation that will protect them. The responsibility of changing that mindset by creating awareness, bringing out a legislation for their protection, is ours.

I do not say that our city should be like a series of museums. Planning and progress will result in some old structures to go but those that represent history, architecture, national pride and monuments must stay.

A city without its built heritage is a zebra with no stripes.

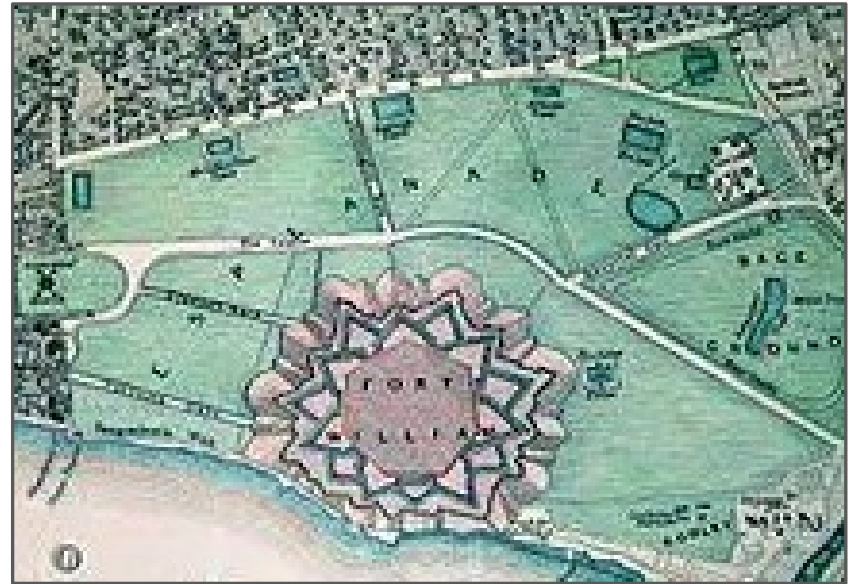
We have a task on hand and all of us must play their part to fructify the vision of CHC.

~ **Rajiv Soni**, recent recipient of the Fulcrum Award for Lifetime Achievement

The Bengal Story

The Fort that never fired a single shot

The site of the old Fort was located at the present GPO, the Eastern Railway Office, Custom House and the Government Office complexes on the banks of river Hoogly. Construction started at Sutanuti in 1698 and was completed in 1706. The old Fort William was built sporadically depending on available resources and motivation of those at the wheel. The earliest part of the Fort was the south-east bastion and the adjacent walls, followed by the north-east bastion. It was



named Fort William in honour of the King of England. Though built for defence, there was no moat around this fort. The fort was built to provide security and safety to the East India Company trading interests in Bengal. The New Fort was finished in 1770, built on 177 acres at an approximate cost of 2 million pounds. Many Governor Generals lived and worked in the old government house. The Granary Barracks stored great quantities of grains during the famine (the building was used as a prison in later years). The Kitchener's house with its magnificent colonnades was a residence of the British Commander-in-Chief in India. The bell tower communicated messages to the ships on the Hooghly. St Peter's Anglican Church, presently the Command Library, was built in 1784. The Fort has a regular octagonal shape with 5 sides towards the land and 3 sides towards the Hooghly river. The ramparts around the fort housed hundreds of guns to counter any attack. However, the ascendancy of the East Indian Company in Bengal had been established. Thus in the entire history, not a single gun was ever fired from its ramparts.

~ Referenced from Indianarmy.nic.in and puronokolkata.com

Conservation Trivia

What is a Heritage Precinct?

A Heritage Precinct may be defined as the neighbourhood or environs of a place or a group of buildings that share wholly or partly certain common physical, social, cultural significance worth preservation and conservation. Ambience can be defined as the quantitative, qualitative aspects attached to a heritage building necessary for its appreciation of the space and viewing corridors. It may include any space that calls for conservation and preservation of the historical, architectural, aesthetic, cultural and environmental reasons. The walls or other peripheral constructs of a vicinity may surround a “heritage precinct”. It may also be a non existent edge. In Kolkata the Dalhousie area is a perfect case of a Heritage precinct but it is being denied this status for the Telephone Building which destroys the authentic heritage status of this area

<https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/HeritageBuildingHome.jsp>

Down Memory Lane

I spent many years of my childhood in my Nani's house in a heritage building in Nando Mallick Lane in the Chitpore area. My grandfather was an avid collector of curios and antiques, paintings, grandfather clocks, porcelain and statues. As a young boy I spent many awestruck hours looking at these items and slowly my own interest in these objects of art got piqued. Years later when I was in my twenties I inherited an original hand written /hand painted Ramcharit Manas composed by Saint Tulsidas which had been in the family for several decades. I was indeed thrilled beyond words and this manuscript remains to be my most prized possession. The manuscript comprises the entire text all hand painted in neat black Devanagari with beautiful illustrations depicting the scenes. The quality of the paintings is such that they appear as if they were painted just yesterday ~ **Gaurav Gupta**



The opening verses of the Manas

Heritage in the News

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/alipore-jail-to-house-museum-on-independence-movement/articleshow/86879626.cms>

Story of losing listed heritage is everywhere

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/citys-heritage-in-cross-hairs/article28254816>.

<https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.telegraphindia.com/amp/culture/how-sweet-portuguese/cid/1834853>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/crumbling-cradle-of-bengal-renaissance-may-get-new-lease-of-life/articleshow/15636697.cms>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/bow-barracks-gets-healing-touch-ahead-of-christmas/articleshow/87230409.cms>

Know your CHC Members



Dr Rupali Basu, is an expert in the healthcare sector in India and is currently Managing Director & CEO, Woodlands Multispeciality

Hospital Ltd, Kolkata. A graduate of R G Kar Medical College, Kolkata, she has done her post graduate training in Health and Hospital Management from Harvard University and Delhi University. She is known for her pioneering work in bringing Quality Systems and Accreditation in Healthcare in India. Her contribution in developing Superspeciality Tertiary Care hospital services in Eastern India, specifically Cancer, Cardic and Emergency care, is noteworthy and she is considered a Turn-around Specialist in hospitals. Dr Basu is on the Board of Directors of Tata Metaliks Ltd, Tata Tinplate, Goodricke Group Ltd and is a Management Committee member of BCC&I. She leads several committees in CII, BCC&I and ICC and is the chairperson of the Lifestyle Committee of BCC&I. She is the Founder Director of The Bengal Fashion Heritage and a Trustee of Calcutta Heritage Collective.

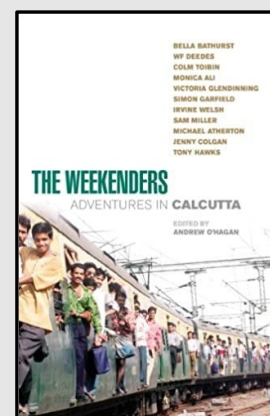


Ayan Sen is the principal architect at Ayan Sen Architects. A graduate of CEPT Ahmedabad, he has done his

post graduate from MIT. Ayan is the recipient of several national and regional awards including the much coveted and prestigious Construction World Architect and Builder awards, 2021. Ayan's Design Studio works on a range of projects in various sectors from hospitality, health care, housing, institutional and industrial. His works include The Ibiza Resort, Bengal Rowing Club, ILS Howrah Hospital and the New Town Community Center to name a few. He is a visiting faculty at CEPT Ahmedabad, IIT KGP, KRIVIA Mumbai and Jadavpur University. Ayan is keen on heritage conservation and restoration and is working on a few projects in this arena. He not only works on heritage tagged buildings but also on the broader concept of critical regionalism creating an evolved architectural style for contemporary Kolkata.

In 2001 a group of authors visited Sudan, one of the world's most inaccessible countries. They wrote *The Weekenders - Travels in the Heart of Africa*. It was an award-winning triumph, combining fiction and non-fiction. They are now taking on one of the world's most fascinating and contradictory cities - Calcutta

<https://www.amazon.in/Weekenders-Adventures-Calcutta-Andrew-OHagan/dp/0091895782>



The CHC Connect

We celebrated CHC member **Rajiv Soni's** achievements at The Zs' Precinct. There was warmth and camaraderie and a sparkling energy for him.



CHC member **Kounteya Sinha** met Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, to discuss pathbreaking projects on Tourism and prospects of making his state a global player. They had a long meeting in which the footballer turned politician CM spoke about the state's sports movement and his war against drugs



CHC member **Navpreet Arora** was invited by LinkedIn to do a virtual walk for their employees. The smiles show the huge success of the event



Members are welcome to contribute for any of the journal sections. We would love to publish your articles/notes. Please message Vibha Mitra at **+919830933434** or send an email to vibhamitra@gmail.com

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