

Memorial to Lt Gen Urban Vigors

By V NARAYAN SWAMI

Lt Col Urban Vigors was an officer in the Madras Army in the last quarter of the 18th century. He was involved in a duel with his superior, Col Kelly, in a place called Arni (about 85 miles west of Madras) which proved fatal to the latter. Overcome by remorse, Col Vigors erected a 65 foot monument to Kelly which still stands, minus the ball right on top.



The duel was the result of a remark by Vigors to his wife referring to Col Kelly, who had just been promoted as the Colonel of the Regiment, as an old woman, a remark that Mrs Vigors unfortunately repeated to Mrs Kelly. The latter then insisted that her husband should demand satisfaction with the resultant duel ending in Col Kelly's death.

The East India Company seems to have overlooked or turned a blind eye to Col Vigors's action, although duelling was expressly forbidden by the army high command.



Vigors Crest

Whilst Kelly was a highly rated officer, he was an Ulsterman with no family pedigree to speak of whereas Vigors came of an Irish Ascendancy background and belonged to a landed family in Co Carlow, Ireland. This could explain some of the background leading up to the duel as also the fact that, whilst a popular officer, the career of Vigors was relatively undistinguished compared to Kelly's. Also Mrs Kelly was a common law wife, suggesting she could have been Eurasian (or Anglo Indian as used in India). All this may suggest that there could have been room for some rancour between the two men.

Lt Gen Urban Vigors died in London and that there is a handsome monument to his memory in the church.

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Claude Russell who was a member of the Council of Fort St. George