

## SCOTTISH PHOTOGRAPHER'S EARLY VIEWS OF INDIA IN SOTHEBY'S SALE

### *The Photographic Archive of Dr John Murray*

A COMPREHENSIVE photographic archive by Scottish photographer Dr John Murray (1809-1898) documenting many of the important sites and monuments in India is expected to fetch more than £500,000 at Sotheby's in London on Friday, June 18, 1999. The collection, which comprises large format waxed paper negatives, fine salt and albumen prints and Dr Murray's personal papers, memorabilia and diaries, has been preserved by Dr Murray's son and grandson.

Lydia Cresswell-Jones, Director of Photograph Sales at Sotheby's in London, said: "The collection is fascinating in a number of ways. It is a superb representation of the achievements of a Scottish photographer, working in very distant lands at a time when photography in the field represented a considerable practical and technical challenge. It also includes a great many works of breathtaking beauty, in particular Murray's negatives which, by virtue of their size, clarity and good contrast, have a strange, almost ethereal quality. And, of course, the images provide a fascinating document of Mughal culture and history."

Dr John Murray, a man of unflagging energy, endless determination and enormous curiosity, lived and worked in India for 37 years, from 1833 until 1871. He was born at Peterhead, near Aberdeen, in 1809, the second son of Alexander Murray, a farmer, and his wife, Catherine Johnston. At the age of 15, Murray commenced studies at Marischal College in Aberdeen, and seven years later, he graduated from Edinburgh University as a Doctor of Medicine. Murray furthered his medical studies in Paris between 1831 and 1832, and subsequently sailed to Calcutta as an Assistant Surgeon for the East India Company, a post he retained for almost 10 years.

In 1840, Murray married Loveday Marian Parr and in 1842, he obtained the post of Superintendent of the sanatorium at Landour, before becoming Field Surgeon at the battle of Aliwal. His efficient organisation and care of the wounded during the battle was mentioned in dispatches by the Commanding Officer, Sir Harry Smith, and Murray subsequently received the Aliwal Medal.

In 1848, Murray was appointed civil surgeon of Agra and for the next 20 years the main focus of his professional life was the fight against cholera. His research into the prevention and treatment of the disease, as well as the monitoring of outbreaks, led the government of India to commission Murray to write a report which was published in 1869.

The energy and interest that Murray invested into his medical research was offset by his new found enthusiasm for photography which he first practised in 1849. He photographed many aspects of Indian architecture and cultural history and was one of the first photographers in India to have systematically recorded the famous antiquities at the four historic sites of Agra, Mathura, Sikandra and Fatehpur Sikri.

His photographs were first shown to members of the Bengal Photographic Society in May 1856, and were included in the society's inaugural exhibition in March 1857. He took a selection of negatives back to Britain on his first leave in 1857 which were published by Joseph Hogarth as mounted single prints and as a set of 30 in a portfolio. The Morning Post newspaper of November 14, 1857, commented: "These views are not tinted: They are monochrome studies, now golden brown, anon of a rich reddish sepia hue, now grey and lucid, presently almost of a black Indian ink lustre; but still, in one form or another, monochromes, and as such remarkable richness, mellowness, and a beautiful modulation of shade and tone."

Murray's photographs were also exhibited in Hogarth's gallery and eight were shown at the fifth exhibition of the London Photographic Society in May 1858. A further 25 photographs were published by Hogarth in 1859 as single mounted prints and as book entitled, Murray's Picturesque Views in the North Western Provinces of India.

Murray's personal copy of Hogarth's 1859 publication is included in the collection, together with the original manuscript contract agreement between Hogarth and Murray, which allowed Hogarth to publish a selection from 600 negatives by John Murray 'as he may think proper'. The only other recorded copy of this publication is in the British Library.

The volume includes studies of the Tombs of Itiamad-ud-Dawlah and Shaikh Salim Chisti; Akbar's Tomb at

Sikandra; views of Fatehpur Sikri; the Taj Mahal; and Nainital, one of the hill stations to which the British retired during the hottest months of the season. Offered as a single lot, these unique items are estimated at £40,000-60,000.

An extensive group of studies of the Taj Mahal taken from all angles and distances in the 1850s and 1860s is estimated at £50,000-60,000. The 66 negatives include views of the Mosque at the Taj, the river Yamuna and the gardens surrounding the Taj. Another group of 32 negatives taken around Nainital between 1858-62, includes some remarkable landscape studies and is estimated at £25,000-35,000.

Other scenes taken by Murray are offered as individual lots comprising a single albumen print or a print accompanied by its waxed paper negative. For example, a print and its negative depicting a view of the ruins of the Jahangir Mahal, at Agra, is estimated at £8,000-12,000 and a print and negative of the Taj Mahal taken from the east is estimated to fetch between £3,000-5,000. A single print of the city centre of Agra is estimated at £5,000-8,000.

In January, 1862, he took a series of views of the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri, also on paper negative. These were exhibited at the Bengal Photographic Society in July of the same year. Despite the continued quality of his work, the society refused to give him a prize, because he had not achieved the results attained through the use of "more recent discoveries in clearness, sharpness and artistic effect." This was the last time Murray exhibited his work at the society.

From January to March, 1864, Murray took a comprehensive series of panoramas and more detailed studies of the Taj Mahal, as well as more photographs in the fort at Agra and Akbar's tomb at Sikandra. A three-plate negative panorama of the Taj Mahal, taken on March 25, 1864, is estimated at £6,000-10,000. Murray was appointed Inspector General of Hospitals in October, 1865. His final photographs, views of Christchurch and the bazaar and bungalows of the British expatriates at Shimla, were taken between June and October, 1865. From then on, official duties seem to have taken up all of his time until his retirement in 1870.

Murray returned to Britain in 1871 and lived in Westbourne Square, Bayswater, London. He became President of the Epidemiological Society of London before moving to Sheringham, in Norfolk, where he died on July 27, 1898. A number of photographic portraits of Dr John Murray are also included in the collection, including a profile portrait taken circa 1890 by H. S. Mendelssohn, when Murray was aged about 81. It is estimated at £2,000-3,000. Twelve diaries belonging to Dr Murray and his wife are estimated at £2,000-3,000. Five diaries compiled by Dr Murray contain accounts of his various trips in India; records of photographs he took of ancient sites as well as comments on his photographic processes and political events such as the Indian Mutiny and the assassination of President Lincoln. On a more intimate level, he comments on his own personal health and relations with family and friends. In contrast, Loveday Murray's seven diaries record detail of their children, social events and a recipe for curry.

A collection of Dr Murray's papers, letters and personal memorabilia is estimated at £3,000-5,000. It includes a volume of approximately 125 letters to his father and other family members giving extensive accounts of his life and experiences in India between 1832 and 1852.

Other letters regarding family and business matters sent to Dr Murray, or his wife, by miscellaneous correspondents, together with bills, receipts and accounts and a copy of his last will and testament are also included in the same lot, as well as Murray's Sutlej Campaign medal for his service at the battle of Aliwal; a large silver photographic award presented to Murray in 1867; a leather box containing medical and other tools and other personal items.