

**Department of History**  
**REPORT ON FIELD TRIP TO SOHRA ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2022.**

The field trip for the students of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester, History Department, Shillong College took place at Sohra (Cherrapunji) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2022. The number of historical site visits numbered five in total, at Nongsawlia, Sohra and its vicinity.

8:00 AM Students of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester arrived on campus and their attendance was duly taken. Thirteen students were in attendance along with all faculty members of the Department of History.

8:30AM The party left the college and began making their way to Sohra by bus and arrived at the first site at 10:30AM.

10:30AM After light refreshments, the first site visited was the church at Nongsawlia built in 1846. A brief history of the Welsh missionaries in Sohra was provided with the help of a guide. Rev. Thomas Jones and his wife Mrs. Anne Jones arrived in Sohra on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1841 and began their missionary work from then on. The site of the church was moved to a different location nearby after the devastating earthquake of 1897. Their missionary endeavours resulted in the conversion of two locals, Amor and Rujon, right at the onset thereby laying the foundation for the BalangPresbyterianNongsawlia in 1846. This number grew to 19 in the following four years. It is important to note that the beginnings of Christianity in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills began at this very juncture. Christianity from here on spread to other parts of the region subsequently. Rev. William Lewis and his wife and Dr. Owen Richard arrived after Rev. Thomas Jonestwo years later in 1843 and continued to work for the missionary. Rev. Thomas Jones is credited with having formed the Khasi alphabet prior to which the Khasi language was strictly oral. The visit to the church concluded with the showcasing of rare antique artefacts brought by the missionaries from abroad such as Venice and London.

11:30AM The next site was the Missionary Cemetery at Nongsawlia, Sohra itself. This involved an educational tour of the different graves of the missionary workers including that of Mrs. Anne Jones, the wife of Rev. Thomas Jones, the grave of Rev. John Roberts and the grave of the abdicated *syiem* (king) of Sohra, Bor Sing Syiem. He denied his kingship as a result of his conversion to Christianity which required any *syiem* of Sohra to mandatorily follow the local Khasi religion (*niam Khasi*). Closely situated to the cemetery was the former site of the Nongsawlia church before the earthquake of 1897 destroyed it.

12:30PM The next site that the students visited was the Theological College at Nongsawlia. This was set up by the Welsh missionary body in 1887 and Rev. John Roberts was appointed as its first principal. The students explored the premises and were given a tour of the heritage institution from its classrooms to its library. An interaction between the students of Shillong College with the library staff of the college as well as its management also took place.

1:30PM The next visit was near Nongsawlia to the site of David Scott's monument built by order of the British government in honour of this dedicated British civil servant who died in August 1831 at

the age of 45. A brief history of David Scott's life and administration in what at that time was known as the North East Frontier was discussed at the site.

2:00PM

The party then made its way to a site that is believed to be the grave site of a controversial British civil servant by the name of Harry Inglis. He is rumoured to have demanded his body be buried in a grave above ground at a chosen site in Sohra as a show of British dominance over Khasi society. He was a contemporary of Rev. Thomas Jones and the two of them were known to have frequent disagreements on the administration of the Khasi Hills.

3:00PM

The field trip concluded with lunch at a nearby spot and the party made its way back to campus by 4:00PM.



