

Albert Andrew Ernst Franklin CVO, CBE

1914 -2002

In 2003, the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was bequeathed a collection of 693 pieces of historic Chinese ceramics, paintings, books and maps from the estate of Andrew Franklin, under a scheme which allows people to donate cultural items as a way of offsetting inheritance tax.



**(Left) A saucer from the Qing Dynasty decorated with Western Christian motifs
(Right) Figure of a dancing girl c206 BC - AD 220**

Albert, known as Andrew, had a most interesting start in life as he was born to a British father, Albert John Henry Franklin, and a German born mother Anna Katarina Leitzen in 1914. This came about through his father meeting Anna in Koblenz, where he had been studying to be an engineer. Anna was a student at the business school, learning the art of office management. After their marriage, the couple almost immediately returned to England where Anna applied for and obtained British citizenship. As part of this process Anna had to produce her marriage certificate, on which there was an amusing piece of mistranslation describing her occupation as a 'typewriter' rather than a 'typist'!

In 1912, their first child, Frederick, was born. Anna, now a British subject, was very insistent that she became fully immersed in the British way of life and English was always spoken.

In 1914 Anna was pregnant again. As the family was due to sail to South Africa, quite understandably, Anna wanted see her family once more before she set sail. Despite the possibility of war being declared at any moment, Anna insisted that "she wasn't interested in war, I just want to see my family". Having arrived at her family home in Neumagen in the Moselle Valley, all Albert's worst fears were realised, when Germany invaded Belgium, trapping Anna in Germany where four months later, Andrew, her second son was born on 28th November 1914.

Anna holding Andrew (far right) at his Christening in 1914, at Neumagen, Germany



The Moselle Valley has very ancient roots, and the frequent fluctuation of the border between France and Germany, made for a very independent community of people. For the duration of the war, the villagers kept the secret that Anna was a British citizen. The family, however, often had to hide away the eldest boy Frederick when the German army were patrolling. This was because, having been born in England, he spoke only English which could have given the game away. Andrew had the good fortune of only knowing German from birth and

consequently was allowed out to play with the local children. Anna was one of the younger children from a large family. As she needed to earn a living, Anna's older sisters rallied round and looked after the two boys while she went to work in Trier.

In 1918, after four years apart Anna was reunited with her husband Albert and they were able to readjust to being a family again in England. For Andrew, now aged four it was the first time he had met his father.

Andrew attended Merchant Taylor's School, an independent school located in the City of London. From there, as a 'Kitchener Scholar', he went to St John's College, Oxford to study modern languages. This was followed by a postgraduate diploma in philosophy, politics and economics (PPE), before he joined the foreign service.



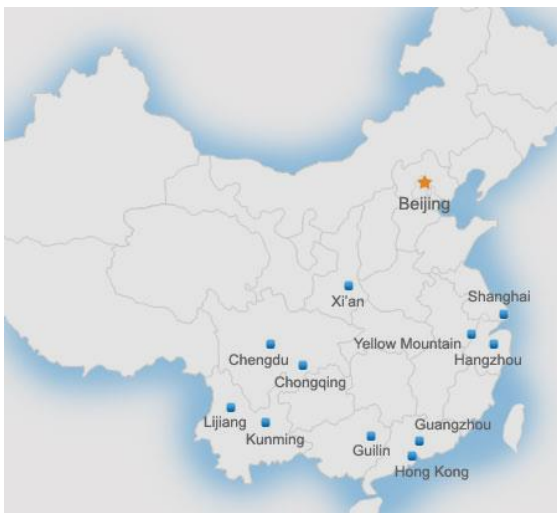
**Andrew as a monitor at Merchant Taylors' School
(front row, fourth along from the left)**

At his foreign service interview in 1937, Andrew recalled that he had been given ten minutes to think about which language he would like to specialise in given the availability of postings in Tokyo, Montevideo, Istanbul, Bangkok and Peking (now Beijing). He choose the Peking posting, partly because of his interest in Chinese ceramics sparked by the acquisition as a student of a small powder blue pot originating from China.



The pot kindled in him a strong desire to learn more about the Chinese civilisation and the people who made it and the historical links between Europe and China. In particular he wanted to understand the cross-fertilisation developing between cultures despite their inherent differences.

The small Chinese powder blue pot that inspired Andrew's interest in Chinese culture



On 18th November 1937, Andrew boarded the *SS Corfu* for Shanghai.ⁱ Andrew's remit was to be a full time student in Chinese languages. After a year and a half in Peking, having learnt Mandarin, Andrew travelled around China, arriving in Shanghai just at the outbreak of World War II. On 9th November 1939 Andrew was appointed to the position of His Majesty's Vice-Consul in China.ⁱⁱ

Map showing Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming and Chongqing

He was subsequently posted to Kunming and later to Chungking (the romanized version of Chongqing), which became the wartime capital. There he met his wife to be, Henrietta Irene Barry (Babs), whose knowledge of Mandarin and Sichuanese together with her typing ability made her a very useful member of the British Embassy staff. Her father was a British businessman and her mother the China-born daughter of British missionaries. (Babs was awarded an MBE for her services as a 'Shorthand-Typist in His Majesty's Embassy at Chungking' in the Birthday Honours List on 2nd June 1944)



Andrew Franklin

In 1942 Andrew was posted to the British Embassy in Calcutta. He returned to the Foreign office in London from Bombay via Suez to Liverpool on the passenger ship *Britannic* owned by Cunard White Star in November 1943.ⁱⁱⁱ During his next posting to Algiers in 1944, Andrew and Babs were married. Postings to Marseilles and then the Foreign Office in London followed.



(Above) *Britannic* alongside her berth in Liverpool docks

(Right) Andrew and Babs in Marseilles 3rd January 1945



In 1946, Andrew and Babs returned to China and took up his Foreign Office post as Consul-General in Amoy, (now Xiamen) located by the Formosa Strait and a year later, on 28th April 1947, as 'His Majesty's Consul at Tientsin'^{iv} (now Tianjin), a major port in northeastern China, until the Communist takeover in 1949, when they had to make their escape and return home quickly under very difficult circumstances with their two children, Anne, aged two and Sally just a babe in arms.

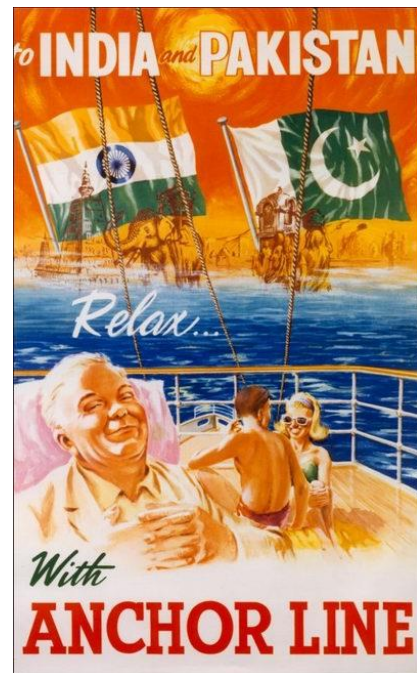
Newspaper cutting from the *Western Daily Press*, 3rd November 1948

On his return to England, Andrew was awarded an OBE on 2nd January 1950 for his services as 'His Majesty's Consul in Tientsin.'

On 16th June 1951 Andrew, Babs and daughters Ann and Sally were off again, leaving Liverpool on board the *Caledonia*, this time to Karachi en route to Kabul returning fifteen months later on 20th October on board the *Cilicia* so that Andrew could take up his next posting as 'His Majesty's Consul at Basle, Switzerland' commencing 5th November 1952.^v

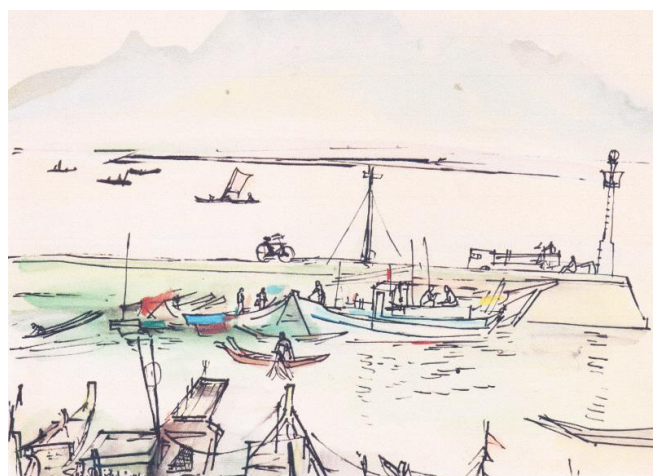


The *Caledonia* and *Cilicia* were two of three very popular sister ships owned by the Anchor Line on the UK to India/Pakistan run



On 11th June 1955 Andrew was witness to the marriage of Dr Roger Bannister to Miss Movra Jacobsson, daughter of Mr Per Jacobsson, a director of the Bank for International Settlements, at a civil ceremony in Basle. Roger was the first man to run a mile in under four minutes which made him a British national hero.^{vi}

On 29th December 1955, Andrew was posted back to the Far East to serve as 'His Majesty's Consul for the Island of Formosa and its dependencies to reside at Tamsui'.^{vii} During his time there, Andrew became acquainted with the Sichuan artist Shiy De-jinn and became the artist's friend and patron.



Tamsui River, Guanyin Mountain, 1956, watercolour on paper, by Shiy De-jinn

Two years later, having completed his mission, Andrew returned to the Foreign Office in London via Hong Kong on the passenger ship *Glenartney* with Babs and his two daughters, arriving in London on 10th February 1958.^{viii} Andrew was subsequently appointed Consul-General in Dusseldorf from 30th October 1958. Andrew was awarded a CBE on 10th July 1961 and on 22nd June 1965 appointed Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO) during his time in Germany.^{ix}

Andrew's final posting was as Consul-General to Los Angeles from 1966-74 before retiring and returning home to the UK.

Andrew's time as a British diplomat in China and, in particular Formosa, enabled him to enhance his knowledge and appreciation of the history of Chinese art under the tutelage of local experts. Andrew started his collection of Chinese books, maps, paintings and ceramic items in a small way, as funds permitted. He bought items that interested him that were for sale on the open market in London, Europe and America. Over his lifetime he acquired a substantial collection.



Andrew and Babs in retirement

In retirement, Andrew was able to continue with his interests, including the historical and cultural links between Europe and China. He read extensively about early travellers to China and left an unpublished manuscript, written over many years, which includes the story of the Nestorians Christians' mission in China in the 11th and 12th centuries, and the first British embassy to China in the 18th century. He was also a member of the Oriental Ceramics Society. Andrew's collection of paintings, prints, scrolls and ceramics was described as one of the 'most extensive and thoughtfully put together collections of Chinese art and design'.^x

When Andrew died in 2002, his collection was catalogued by Christie's and independent Government experts and referred to as the 'Franklin Bequest'. It represents a remarkable and authentic record of Chinese art and design from the 3rd century BC to the mid 20th century. Two hundred and twenty-seven items were sent for auction at Christie's with an estimated value of over £300,000 on 10th May 2006. A few items were kept by the family for sentimental reasons

and the remaining 693-piece collection was left to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG). It was valued by Christie's at £216,818. Birmingham received the bequest because Andrew used to visit BMAG while visiting his daughter in Birmingham and noticed that this great multicultural city had only a relatively small number of items to represent Chinese Culture in their collection.

From February 2008 to January 2009, BMAG mounted an exhibition entitled 'Aspects of China' as part of the national China Now festival organised to coincide with the Beijing Olympics and Chinese New Year. It showcased some of the major pieces in the Franklin Bequest

A small display of the Franklin Bequest is currently on display at BMAG. The remainder is in storage. Some of the collection can be viewed online at:-

<http://www.bmagic.org.uk/browse/collection/Applied+Art+--+Asian>

On 8th December 2015, the Moseley Society Local History Group organised a visit with Andrew's daughter, Anne, to see some of the Franklin Bequest that is currently in storage. The pictures below were taken at the time of the visit.



**This article was written by Edwina Rees,
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with the collaboration of Anne Vaija, Andrew Franklin's daughter**

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Footnotes

- i Passenger Lists leaving UK 1890-1960
- ii *London Gazette* 29th October 1940
- iii UK, Incoming Passenger Lists 1878-1960
- iv *London Gazette*, 25th June 1948
- v UK, Incoming Passenger Lists 1878-1960
London Gazette, 20th March 1953
- vi Coventry Evening Telegraph, 11th June 1955
- vii *London Gazette*, 21st February 1956
- viii UK, Incoming Passenger Lists 1878-1960
- ix *London Gazette*, 10th June 1961
London Gazette, 22nd June 1965
- x *Birmingham Post* 9th February 2008