

Son of empire

**William Fraser**

**1784-1835**

A string of mistresses and a warrior spirit made the young William Fraser the stuff of legend in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century India.

The family estate at Moniack, near Inverness, was heavily in debt and William and his brothers headed east to make their fortunes – an option chosen by many in Britain's age of empire.

Only one returned.

Over the years William served in a number of military campaigns, and in 1814–15 raised Gurkha irregulars who later helped form regular regiments. The Gurkhas remain some of the most renowned troops in the British Army. While a member of Skinner's Horse, William was praised as being as fine a soldier who ever drew cold steel.

Noted for his fearlessness, he also explored large areas of the Himalayan foothills which were little known to Westerners.

Unlike most Europeans, he learned local languages and customs, which allowed him to mix easily with the people he met.

In 1857, the Indian and European population of Delhi were shocked when William was shot while riding to his house.

The assassin had been hired by the young nawab of Ferozpur who Fraser had alienated during the settlement of an inheritance dispute.

He never married, but took a string of Indian mistresses, including Amiban, and left a number of children.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/10129.html>.