

British Heads of Mission at Constantinople 1583-1922

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For Sinan

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Preface

This work began its life as a contribution to a large volume edited by Sinan Kunalalp that was to be published by the Isis Press (Istanbul) under the title *A Biographic Dictionary of Heads of Foreign Diplomatic Missions in Constantinople (1839-1922)*. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons this project had to be abandoned. As a result, I decided to publish separately my own offering but, in order to provide historical background, preface it with a general account (Chapter 1) of the heads of British missions at Constantinople in the earlier centuries. This is supported by six short biographies embedded as boxes in the text that illustrate the sort of people who served as ambassadors in the late sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.

Chapter 1 is a much modified version of Chapter 2 of my *British Diplomacy in Turkey, 1583 to the present*, where all of the sources can be found, while the Appendix is based on Appendix 1 of the same book.

As a general rule, the titles of heads of mission in entry headings in both chapters are those current when they were at Constantinople, and the dates are those of arrival at and departure from that post (see fn. 1 of the Appendix).

For the sake of simplicity, I use ‘British’ throughout Chapter 1 – as in the title of the book – although technically the embassy only represented the British Crown until the Act of Union between Scotland and England was ratified in 1707. In any case, there was a personal union between the two kingdoms following the accession to the British throne (as James I) of James VI of Scotland in 1603. Thus in his credential letter to the Grand Signior (sultan) for Sir Thomas Roe in 1621, King James announced himself as ‘James, by the grace of God, king of *Great Brittain*, France and Ireland, defendor of the christian faith, against all those that falsely professe the name of Jesus’[emphasis added].

I am grateful to Sinan Kunalalp and Laurence Guymer for their assistance with some entries in Chapter 2.

GRB, October 2020

List of Boxes

- 1 William Harborne (1583-8)
- 2 Sir Thomas Roe (1621-8)
- 3 Sir Thomas Bendish (1647-61)
- 4 Sir Robert Sutton (1702-17, 1718)
- 5 Sir Robert Ainslie (1776-94)
- 6 Sir Robert Adair (1808-10)

Abbreviations used in main sources and appendix

Anderson	Anderson, M. S., <i>The Eastern Question, 1774-1923</i> (Macmillan, 1966)
Bell	Bell, G. M., <i>A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509-1688</i> (Royal Historical Society, 1990)
Berridge (2007)	Berridge, G. R., <i>Gerald Fitzmaurice (1865-1939), Chief Dragoman of the British Embassy in Turkey</i> (Martinus Nijhoff, 2007)
Berridge (2009)	<i>British Diplomacy in Turkey, 1583 to the present: A study in the evolution of the resident embassy</i> (Martinus Nijhoff, 2009)
Bindoff	Bindoff, S. T., et al, <i>British Diplomatic Representatives 1789-1852</i> . Camden Third Series, vol. L (Royal Historical Society, 1934)
Bourne	Bourne, K., <i>Palmerston: The early years, 1784-1841</i> (Allen Lane, 1982)
CUP	Cambridge University Press
FO List	<i>The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book</i>
Hardinge	Hardinge of Penshurst, Lord [Charles], <i>Old Diplomacy</i> (Murray, 1947)
HoP	<i>The History of Parliament: the House of Commons</i> https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/
Horn (1932)	Horn, D. B., <i>British Diplomatic Representatives 1689-1789</i> . Camden Third Series, vol. XLVI (Royal Historical Society, 1932)
Horn (1961)	Horn, D. B., <i>The British Diplomatic Service, 1689-1789</i> (Clarendon Press, 1961)
Jones	Jones, R., <i>The British Diplomatic Service, 1815-1914</i> (Colin Smythe, 1983)
Kuneralp	Kuneralp, Sinan (ed), <i>The Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan: Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard's Constantinople Embassy, 1877-1880</i> (Isis Press, 2009)
Neilson & Otte	Neilson, Keith and T. G. Otte, <i>The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946</i> (Routledge, 2009)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan. 2008
Otte	<i>The Foreign Office Mind</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2011)
OUP	Oxford University Press
Pears	Pears, Sir Edwin, <i>Forty Years in Constantinople</i> (Herbert Jenkins, 1916)

- Wood Wood, A. C., *A History of the Levant Company* (Cass, 1964)
- Yasamee Yasamee, F. A. K., *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878-1888* (Isis Press, 1996)

1

The Early Centuries, 1583-1838

By the late sixteenth century the resident diplomatic mission, although still a relatively novel development in the history of diplomacy, was already a well-established institution. There is, therefore, nothing particularly surprising in the appearance of a British mission of this sort at Constantinople in 1583, even though it represented a Christian monarch at the court of a Moslem ruler; Venice and France had had missions there for many years.

Although heads of British diplomatic missions of ambassadorial rank were a rarity until well into the twentieth century (ministers were the norm), from the beginning and throughout the early centuries an ambassador was almost always in charge of the mission at Constantinople; it was an embassy, never a legation. This was partly because the ostentatious display and cachet of regal representation associated with the embassy was believed to be particularly important to prestige and high-level access in the 'Orient', and partly because – until the tradition was too well established to change without paying a high political price – an ambassador at Constantinople came cheaply to the government.

The reason that the British Embassy at Constantinople came cheaply to the government was its second unusual feature. Its initial financing, notably payment of the ambassador's salary and his considerable expenses, was in the hands of a private trading company, although a struggle with the Crown over the *appointment* of the ambassador was not long in ensuing.

A company embassy

While British political concerns with Ottoman Turkey were never trivial, in the beginning and for many years afterwards furtherance of trade with the Levant was without doubt the main British interest in securing diplomatic relations with Turkey; aside from commercial profits, it offered the strategic advantage of fostering the growth of the British fleet. It was

with these aims in mind that in September 1581, following ratification in the previous year of an agreement securing to them special trading privileges in the Ottoman Empire negotiated by their representative, William Harborne (Box 1), that the London merchants interested in the Turkey trade obtained a charter for its exploitation from the government of the British monarch, Elizabeth I. In return for the risks they would have to take, this gave their company, the Levant Company, as it was soon to be called (Box 1), a complete monopoly of the trade. With diplomatic credentials provided by Elizabeth, it was Harborne who was established as the first British ambassador at Constantinople two years later (Box 1). The first priority of his successors was to ensure that the trading privileges he had obtained from the Ottoman sultan were honoured, seek redress for the British traders concerned when they were not, and renew them when necessary and, if possible, improve upon their terms.

Box 1 William Harborne (1583–8)

A Norfolk man born in about 1542, Harborne began his career before he was 20 as a factor for the London merchant and later prime mover in the formation of the Turkey Company, Edward Osborne. Evidently ambitious, energetic and resourceful, Harborne had at some point begun to trade on his own account and become prosperous, and in 1578 was duly recommended by Osborne to seek from Sultan Murad III rights for British traders in the Ottoman Empire comparable to those of their already-established rivals. Having travelled overland to avoid the hostility of the Venetians and Spanish that might have been aroused by a Mediterranean voyage, he arrived in Constantinople at the end of October and remained there for over two and a half years. He was pushing at an open door, for British traders had just what the sultan wanted: commodities of military value at a point when they were badly needed for war with the Safavid Persians. Valuable rights for Osborne, himself and one other were swiftly secured and confirmed in the following March along with the commencement of a friendly correspondence between Murad and Queen Elizabeth. In May 1580 Harborne capped his diplomacy by securing the sultan's agreement to favourable capitulations for the whole of the British nation trading in his domains.

With such achievements to his credit, and notwithstanding the Ottoman anger he had provoked in the intervening period by a mis-step in handling the affair of a British trading ship that had developed a side-line in piracy, it is no surprise that in November 1582 Harborne was chosen as first British ambassador at Constantinople. He arrived at the end of the following March and was granted an audience with the sultan on 4 April.

The new ambassador took a house on the lower Bosphorus close to the arsenal at Tophane. This was in a Muslim area and was perhaps chosen by Harborne, who was known to the Ottomans as 'the Lutheran ambassador', because it placed him at a safe distance from the embassies of the Catholic states in Pera.

Harborne's return as ambassador enabled the British capitulations to be ratified. Assisted by his able secretary and next ambassador, Edward Barton, and still only in his early forties and unmarried, he also laid the groundwork for what was to become a vast network of consuls across the Ottoman Empire and managed relations with the Porte well throughout his term at the embassy's helm – all the while still trading on his own account.

He returned to England in 1588, settling once more in Norfolk and in the following year both marrying and publishing an account of his time in Constantinople in Hakluyt's subsequently famous *Voyages*. He supported the merger of the Turkey Company with the Venice Company that in 1592 produced the Levant Company, of which he was listed as a principal merchant. Harborne is remarkable not just because he was the first British ambassador at Constantinople but also because he got the embassy off to such a good start, and without returning home impoverished. He died in 1617.

Main sources: Bell; Berridge (2009); Skilliter, S. A., *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582* (OUP, 1977); Woodhead, C., 'Harborne, William (c.1542–1617)', *ODNB*.

Harborne's appointment was not unique. The Levant Company's charter from the Crown might have been silent on who was to choose the ambassador at Constantinople – although allowing it to appoint consuls and vice-consuls wherever it should see fit – but this did not prevent it from claiming this right. Until the middle of the 1620s this was tacitly admitted by the Crown, which was in an awkward position to insist otherwise

because of its reliance on the company to bankroll the ambassador. In the event, therefore, the four British heads of mission at Constantinople who immediately followed Harborne (three ambassadors and one agent) were also merchants or servants of the Levant Company in some capacity prior to their appointment.

Box 2 Sir Thomas Roe (1621-8)

Sir Thomas Roe was born in 1581 into a family of landed gentry with strong interests in trade and powerful in the municipal government of London. He was exceptional in the richness of the experiences he brought to Constantinople. He had led an expedition to Guiana, involved himself in Virginia tobacco, served briefly in the army of the United Provinces, been an active member of the House of Commons, and – most valuable of all – had, at the behest of the East India Company, acted from 1615 until 1619 as England's first ambassador to Mughal India, a post at which he had conducted its affairs so well that it voted him a large bonus and 'invited him to assume charge of all its settlements in the East' (Strachan, 2008). Roe was also well-connected. Shortly after the turn of the century he became a lifelong friend and confidante of Elizabeth, the daughter of King James I and subsequently wife of Frederick of the Palatinate and King of Bohemia, a prince evicted from his possessions by Spanish forces in 1620. Well before this event – one that proved so fateful for Roe – he was knighted and made a member of the king's privy chamber.

Roe was the second British ambassador at Constantinople to be appointed without prior bonds to the Levant Company. The first was his short-lived predecessor Sir John Eyre, a well-connected reprobate who should never have been sent out in the first place and whose anxiety to return was equalled only by the company's desire to be rid of him. Roe had wished for high office at home rather than Constantinople but inside and outside of parliament he had been too strong for Elizabeth and Frederick's Protestant cause in the Palatinate for the taste of King James, who at that juncture still favoured rapprochement with Catholic Spain. The remote embassy was, therefore, an offer Roe could not refuse; the alternative to this 'banishment', as he repeatedly called it (Strachan, 1989, 132), might have been arrest. Together this time with his wife, whom he had married shortly before going to India but on that occasion left her at home, he arrived in Constantinople on 28 December 1621.

In the Ottoman capital, Roe was constantly frustrated by the slow and desultory communications he received from London, which sometimes forced him to rely on the Venetian baillo for information on the foreign policy of his own government. In Turkey he was also well served by his Turkish-speaking secretary Timone Domenico and by the good relationship he established with the octogenarian deputy grand vizier Gurdji Mahomet.

Considering the poor support he received from London and the near-anarchic conditions prevailing in Constantinople for much of his time in the city, Roe's successes were considerable. He swiftly galvanized and established his authority over the company's factors, refreshed (in agreement with the grand vizier) and stoutly defended the capitulations they enjoyed, and sent shrewd dispatches on commercial matters that were warmly received by the Levant Company.

On the political front, for which initially Roe had adequate royal instructions, in 1623 – in pursuit of a general command to 'divert' the Grand Signior from attacks on Christendom without threatening war – he mediated a peace treaty between Turkey and Poland and secured the freedom of Polish prisoners of noble birth; and he obtained a modest treaty to suppress piracy from the Ottoman provinces of Algiers and Tunis and secure the release of British slaves. After a long struggle, he also secured the position of the Calvinist-leaning Patriarch of Constantinople, whom the Jesuits and the French ambassador had plotted to depose; and he fostered unity of action in defence of its rights on the part of the then small Constantinople diplomatic corps. His lengthy, richly detailed and pithy 'relations' (reports) to secretaries of state at home and letters to numerous others, including British ambassadors, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Queen of Bohemia in exile deserve special mention. They were so impressive that, together with many replies, over a century later they were published as *The Negotiations ...* by the Society for the Encouragement of Learning (see 'Main Sources' below) and have long been regarded as valuable sources by historians. James I's volte face on the Habsburgs and tardy fresh instructions came too late to enable Roe to secure Ottoman support for military pressure on Hungary by the sultan's nominal subject, Bethlen Gabor, the Calvinist Prince of Transylvania.

It had been agreed that Roe would serve in Constantinople only until December 1625 but, much to his chagrin, by a combination of accident and Levant Company anxiety to keep him there, he was not (gracelessly) relieved until April nor homeward bound until June 1628.

Main sources: Bell; Berridge, G. R., 'The origins of the diplomatic corps: Rome to Constantinople', in Sharp, P. and Wiseman, G. (eds), *The Diplomatic Corps as an Institution of International Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Berridge (2009); Lancaster, H. and Hunneyball, P., 'Eyre, Sir John (1580-1639) ...', in *HoP*; Strachan, M., *Sir Thomas Roe, 1581-1644: A Life* (Michael Russell, 1989); Strachan, M., 'Roe, Sir Thomas (1581-1644)', *ODNB*; *The Negotiations of Sir Thomas Roe in his Embassy to the Ottoman Porte, from the Year 1621 to 1628 inclusive* (1740).

In order to ensure that the ambassador's commercial duties were not overlooked, on his appointment he was always provided not only with instructions from the Crown but also with articles of agreement and a separate set of instructions from the Levant

Box 3 Sir Thomas Bendish (1647-61)

Sir Thomas Bendish was born in Essex, where he inherited modest estates when the second baronetcy fell to him on the death of his father in 1636. When civil war in England broke out six years later, he threw in his lot with King Charles I – and paid for it in 1643 by imprisonment in the Tower of London and the sequestration of his property. He was released by the parliamentarians in the following year but heavily fined and restricted in his movements until 1646.

Having suffered a harsh lesson in politics, Bendish bent the knee to his former gaolers while preserving his connection to the king. This neutrality was probably a key reason why in 1647 he secured the Constantinople embassy, from which the Levant Company was desperate to evict the royalist ambassador, Sir Sackville Crowe, who had been advancing Charles's extraordinary plan to seize the wares of its merchants in order to finance his faltering efforts in the civil war. For the company was pro-parliament but could not obtain Ottoman agreement to Crowe's recall, or to any replacement, without the written assent of the king. With a foot in both camps, Bendish was able to obtain all necessary letters of credence to the sultan: from company, king and parliament. Thus armed, he sailed for Turkey in early summer 1647; he was accompanied by a sizeable retinue that included his wife, whom he had married 20 years earlier, and his numerous children.

The civil war in England was reflected in bitter divisions in the British trading communities in the Ottoman Empire, so Bendish's top priority was to restore order in his nation. On arrival in Turkey, he displayed political and administrative skills in settling and reorganizing the British factories and securing their support in the coming struggle to oust Crowe from the embassy. In the end, however, it also required an enormous bribe and stimulation of the Porte's anxiety for his ships to induce the grand vizier, on 23 November 1647, to have the obstinate Crowe seized and roughly expelled, thereby dramatically confirming Ottoman acceptance of Bendish's credentials. Confident of his position, in the following year, when he believed England's capitulations were being abused, he not only secured the desired redress but also underlined the potency of his ships by having them prepared for battle and positioned menacingly under Seraglio Point.

Another priority for Bendish was to steer a course in the bitter conflict over Crete between the Ottomans and the Venetians – begun only two years before his arrival – that would preserve reasonable relations with both. This was tricky, in the first place because the Venetians were putting the screw on Constantinople's supplies by blockading the Dardanelles and the Ottomans wanted British merchant ships to help them break it; and in the second because freelancing British ships were offering their services to both sides. There were tense moments but Bendish pulled it off.

Bendish's ambassadorship survived for 13 years, despite long periods of exceptional political turbulence – in the Ottoman Empire as well as in England – and many threats to it. These included two serious attempts to replace him, one in 1650 at the instigation of the exiled Charles II, and another in 1652-3 at the prompting of parliament, the power of which was by then consolidated under Oliver Cromwell. The last attempt, which was supported by the then cash-strapped Levant Company in order to save the expense of an ambassador by substituting for him an agent, seemed fatal and was resisted only by a combination of good luck and skilful manoeuvring; thereafter, Bendish achieved a *modus vivendi* with Cromwell's government. In 1651 he was also briefly shackled on orders of the shakh-ul-Islam for refusing to contemplate the immediate removal of the British consul at Smyrna over a commercial dispute believed to have involved one of the senior cleric's relatives. There were also personal tragedies: in 1649 he lost his eldest son and personal physician to drowning at sea and shortly afterwards his wife to the plague.

By the end of the 1650s, however, the writing was probably on the wall for Bendish because animosity towards him in the fractious and independently-minded British factories had been steadily growing; his rule over their affairs, they believed, had been too heavy-handed. The *coup de grâce* was delivered following the restoration of the monarchy in England: in early 1661, against his wishes (and initially those of the company), he was recalled by the new king, Charles II, who wanted a sound royalist at Constantinople.

Bendish was clever, energetic, and resolute in defending his position and Levant Company interests, although his difficulty in obtaining instructions from distracted governments at home gave him little political guidance. By the end of his posting he was regarded with grudging respect by other members of the Constantinople diplomatic corps. This was not only his first but also his last diplomatic post. Aware of Bendish's ability, his successor, the **Earl of Winchelsea**, sought for him the post of consul at Cairo, but the Levant Company did not want anyone there because the trade was too hazardous. He died in 1674.

Main sources: Bell; Goffman, D., *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642-1660* (University of Washington Press, 1998); Saunders, L., 'Bendish, Sir Thomas, second baronet (1607-1674)', *ODNB*; Wood.

Company. Because of the large travelling costs of replacing them, ambassadors were usually required by the company to agree to a minimum stay of five years in

Constantinople; if they were outstanding, they might be kept longer against their will, as in the case of Sir Thomas Roe (Box 2), In the event, a few stayed for only a short time but many remained for up to ten years and not a few – notably Sir Thomas Bendish (Box 3), Sir Robert Sutton (Box 4), and Sir Robert Ainslie (Box 5) – for much longer (see also Appendix).

In sum, to begin with and for many years afterwards the Levant Company was very much the senior partner in the British Embassy at Constantinople, and the ambassador was not allowed to forget it.

The honeypot

Heavy though its diplomatic costs were, the Levant Company could reasonably expect them not to be a cause of constant upward pressure from ambassadors pleading poverty since the Constantinople post soon acquired a reputation for providing boundless opportunities for them to enrich themselves on the side, and at less personal risk than was originally supposed; it was thought to be a honeypot. Even the mediocre Elizabethan ambassador, Henry Lello, managed to supplement his salary handsomely; and some ambassadors, such as the Earl of Winchilsea, frankly admitted that they only accepted the post to clear their debts and put themselves healthily back in the black. It was a reputation that became so entrenched that it long outlasted the original realities upon which it was based. What were they?

The first point to mention is that the sultan, like his Byzantine predecessors, provided a significant annual subsidy to all ambassadors attached to his court, although it is true that the whole of this sum rarely found its way into their pockets. Until 1615, when the Levant Company judged it prudent to prohibit the practice, ambassadors could also trade on their own account. Even after this it was possible for them to deal in jewels and money changing, and sell locally a portion of the large quantity of wine they were allowed to import duty free. And then there were the rewards from both sides for assisting in a successful mediation between the Porte and one or other of its perennial enemies, which could be enormous (see Box 4). Nor is it likely that Sir Robert Ainslie (Box 5), the long-serving ambassador in the late eighteenth century, was alone in receiving handsome payments from the Secret Committee of the East India Company for

certain dubious practices in its interest. Last but not least there was the scandalous harvest to be reaped from the sale by ambassadors of *barats*, documents certifying membership of one or other of the foreign nations in the Levant which entitled the owner

Box 4 Sir Robert Sutton (1702-17, 1718)

Sir Robert Sutton's career trajectory was one that began with the church but soon shifted – via nepotism – to making money.

Born about 1671, Sutton was the son of Nottinghamshire gentry. His mother was a vicar's daughter, and he began his short career in the church as a deacon. He then secured appointment as chaplain to his cousin, Lord Lexington, when the latter became ambassador at Vienna in 1694. However, within three years he had changed course and become secretary of embassy, soon taking charge as resident following Lexington's departure through illness in December 1697.

Lexington had from the first been a strong supporter of the cause of William of Orange and, although the royal favour he subsequently enjoyed seems to have diminished somewhat in Vienna, he retained 'important connections' (Woodfine). And it was through his patronage that his young cousin Robert – still barely 30 years old – was appointed ambassador at Constantinople in December 1700, although he did not arrive until early 1702; he had been knighted in the previous year.

Sutton's qualifications for the post were not entirely negligible. He had no commercial experience but had served for six years at a major embassy in a state on the borders of the Ottoman Empire; he also spoke Italian, which still went a long way in the Levant. According to the historian of the Levant Company, he was 'a competent diplomatist' (a conclusion supported by the quality of his despatches) and had the kind of 'equable disposition' that served him well both with the Turks and the company; the latter 'never tired of thanking Sutton for his "integrity and candour" in their affairs' (Wood, 132). Be that as it may, the British ambassador had no doubt eyed with envy the honours heaped by the Ottomans and the Habsburgs on his predecessor, Lord Paget, for his role in the mediation that culminated in their peace of January 1699, and lucrative diplomatic activity of the same sort became the eye-catching episodes of his own years at Constantinople.

Together with Jacobus Colyer, the same Dutch diplomat who had jointly mediated with Paget over a decade earlier, Sutton mediated the conclusion of three agreements, the first two between the Turks and the Russians. The first was made in April 1712, although he had no instructions on the matter; in his risible response to a cease and desist letter from London prompted by a desire to avoid giving offense to Sweden but which arrived too late, on 10 May Sutton protested that the Porte had wrongly and without his knowledge named him as a mediator (Kurat, 7-8, 134). The second was the mediation that issued in 'the definitive treaty' with Russia in June 1713 (Shaw, 231; also Kurat, 5). The third was the mediation between Turkey and Austria at Passarowitz which produced a settlement in July 1718 and was preceded by a game of ambassadorial musical chairs in which Sutton still had a seat when the music stopped.

Sutton had been granted his release from Constantinople in 1716 and was replaced by Edward Wortley-Montagu, who arrived in spring 1717 and had scrambled to mediate at Passarowitz himself. But the Austrians believed him to be partial to the Turks and London responded by replacing him as ambassador later in the same year with Abraham Stanyan, hitherto the British ambassador at Vienna who had 'wanted his job' and had been 'undermining him' at the court (Grundy, 155). In late 1717, therefore, Sutton had got no further on his way home than Vienna when he was instructed to mediate at Passarowitz himself, together with none other than the new ambassador to Turkey, Stanyan. This development dismayed and incensed Wortley-Montagu because he believed that his own diplomacy had provided the formula on which the Treaty of Passarowitz was based. It is a reasonable historical inference that Sutton lost no sleep over this.

It was customary for those states benefiting from a successful mediation to reward with presents of great value the third party ambassadors who undertook the work. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sutton 'had become wealthy as a result of his diplomatic career' (Black; also Kurat, 8). After a brief time as reluctant ambassador at Paris, where there was presumably little money to be made, the remainder of his life was divided between parliament and business. His inclination to bring to the latter the 'sharp practice' alleged by George I's Swiss diplomat, Saint-Saphorin (Black), led to him being briefly expelled from the former and ruined his reputation.

Main sources: Black, J., 'Sutton, Sir Robert (1671/2–1746)', rev. *ODNB*; Grundy, I., *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (OUP, 1999); Horn (1932); Kurat, A. N. (ed), *The Despatches of Sir Robert Sutton, Ambassador in Constantinople (1710-1714)*, Camden Third Ser., vol. LXXVIII (Royal Historical Soc., 1953); Sedgwick, R. R., 'Sutton, Sir Robert (?1671-1746) ...', *HoP*; Shaw, S. J., *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (CUP, 1976); Woodfine, P., 'Sutton, Robert, second Baron Lexington (1661–1723)', *ODNB*.

to enjoy the privileges of its capitulations; and the payment to a new ambassador of 300 piastres by the *baratlees* inherited from his predecessor. The price of *barats* – which were supposed to be available only to Ottoman subjects in the service of an

ambassador but in practice were sold to more or less anyone with the money – fluctuated with the prestige of the embassy and was its surest index, and their sale continued until the end of the eighteenth century.

The good ambassador

The good ambassador commanded respect and influence both at home and at his post. To achieve such standing at Constantinople during the early centuries was not easy for British ambassadors, who were remote from home and connected to it only by slow and insecure communications. To help them smother the anger of a sultan or shrug off the ‘insolence’ of a malevolent grand vizier, it was some time before they were able to summon the support of a warship to the Bosphorus; and it was even longer before they could rely on the fear of retaliation against the sultan’s own resident ambassador in London, for such an envoy first appeared only at the end of the eighteenth century (see Box 5). Humiliation was ever a risk, and their liberty itself might be forfeit (see Box 2). Much depended, therefore, on the ambassador’s personal qualities and the contacts he was able to cultivate. Affability, good manners, a striking physical presence, and above all a natural authority based on astuteness, courage, and firm character are the points that stand out as most valuable in accounts of the truly effective ambassadors in Constantinople, especially in the early years. In difficult times timid men such as Henry Lello and Sir John Finch were likely to wilt. It is also no accident that some of the most successful ambassadors at Constantinople, like Barton in the late sixteenth century, were at ease in speaking Turkish – or Italian, for that was for long the lingua franca of the Levant.

Other than by gaining favour as the voice of policies welcomed by the Porte, British ambassadors at Constantinople, like those of other states, also gained respect and influence from the services they could provide to the sultan and his senior officials. One of these derived from the Ottoman view that an ambassador was roughly analogous to the leader of one of the empire’s semi-autonomous religious communities (*millet*s), whose privileges depended on their ability to maintain order among their followers and deliver their taxes. In the first regard at least, the British ambassadors rarely let the sultan down,

Box 5 Sir Robert Ainslie (1776-94)

The third son of a prosperous Scottish merchant, Sir Robert Ainslie was born about 1730 and brought up in Bordeaux. It is a mark in his favour that nothing beyond this is known for sure of his education and early career since what clues exist suggest that he 'worked as a spy', not least for King George III (Grant). It is probable, however, that he also followed his father's trade.

Already in his mid-forties but with his valuable secret service work commending him (Horn, 269, 275), on the same day, 20 September 1775, Ainslie was knighted and appointed ambassador at Constantinople, one of a surprisingly large number of Scotsmen in the British diplomatic service. Arriving at his post in October 1776, he took easily to life in Turkey, reportedly adopting much of the style of a local grandee, indulging his hobby of collecting rare coins and prints, and developing a productive relationship not only with key ministers but also with Sultan Abdul Hamid I.

In 1966, backed by no evidence, Anderson described Ainslie as 'arrogant and incompetent' (Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 17) but by 1989 his opinion of him seems to have softened. He also admitted that he was 'left for often disgracefully long periods, like his predecessors in Constantinople, totally without instructions' (Anderson, 'Change and reform', 455). In fact, Sir Robert survived for almost 20 years at his post and had significant achievements to his credit. He juggled ably the complex and long-running case of the attempts made by assorted free spirits among his countrymen – against determined Turkish resistance – to open up the Red Sea to Christian commerce. In 1784 he secured the abolition of a value added tax of 1.5 per cent (the 'misteria duty') on the import of all British goods, which – courtesy of their then ambassador, the Marquis de Villeneuve – the goods of France had enjoyed since 1740. His urgings contributed – this time with a fair wind from the Foreign Office (formed in 1782) – to Turkey's declaration of war on Russia in 1787. There seems no reason to assume, either, that the Foreign Office was unhappy with his handling of the dangerous Ochakov crisis in 1791, although it did not consult him on the matter (Anderson, 'Change and reform', 455). And it is surely to Ainsley's credit that, towards the end of his post, he encouraged and advised on preparations for the despatch of the first Ottoman resident ambassador to London, Yusuf Agah Efendi.

As might be expected in light of Ainslie's background, his excellent local connections, and the resourcefulness in means of communication that he displayed, the intelligence he supplied regularly to his masters in London was richly detailed and authoritative – if somewhat longwinded. In one of them he memorably referred to the French Revolution as 'unexampled commotions in Paris.'

In mellow mood, Anderson wrote that Ainslie remained 'in many ways a shadowy and enigmatic figure' (Anderson, 'Change and reform', 455). This is certainly true of his life until middle-age, as already mentioned. It is true to some degree of his last years as well. Following the appointment in February 1794 of his successor, Robert Liston, he left Constantinople in the following summer. But what are we to make of the unattributed and unsourced statement in his entry in the *History of Parliament* that 'by 1793 there were complaints of his "absolute unfitness for his situation"' (Thorne). Complaints by whom? Unfitness in what sense: serious infirmity, neglect of duties or political unreliability? It was probably the last; namely, that he had been there too long and 'turned Turk'. As for Ainsley's time at Constantinople, however, Anderson's observation is more dubious, if only because possibly no British ambassador at that post during the Ottoman period has left to posterity more voluminous and – compared to Stratford Canning – more legible records. He died in 1812.

Main sources: Anderson, M. S., 'Change and reform in the Near East', *The Historical Journal*, 32 (2), June 1989 [review article]; Grant, A. H., 'Ainslie, Sir Robert, first baronet (1729/30–1812)', rev. S. J. Skedd, *ODNB*; Horn (1932); Horn (1961); Thorne, R. G., 'Ainslie, Sir Robert (?1730-1812) ...', *HoP*; Wood.

for under their capitulations it was a coveted right to supervise not only the British traders in the capital but also those in the British factories elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, the most important of which were at Smyrna and Aleppo. The ambassador was at once peacemaker between, judge under British law over, and moral chastiser of their members. To enforce his authority, he was permitted to order boycotts of individual factors (agents of merchants), impose fines, imprison them in his own house or those of his consuls, and if necessary forcibly return them to Britain.

The good ambassador at Constantinople also achieved influence by dispensing gifts and acting as a mediator in Ottoman disputes with other powers, as already

mentioned (see Box 4). But perhaps above all they gained it by serving as a source for the Porte of reliable information on foreign affairs, to which special value was attached while the sultan had no permanent embassies of his own abroad; this was also a continuing service. In general, the British ambassadors were as adept in these respects as their diplomatic counterparts in Constantinople, and some, such as Ainslie (Box 5), were especially so.

Box 6 Sir Robert Adair (1808-10)

Adair was born in 1763, the son of the sergeant-surgeon to King George III and the socially more highly ranked Lady Caroline Keppel. He attended the University of Göttingen, had some legal training, and – curious about the wider consequences of France’s revolutionary turmoil – made the ‘European tour’ in 1788-9. His ambitions drew him chiefly to a political career and he became a follower and intimate of the radical Whig parliamentarian Charles James Fox. In 1799 he was eventually able to enter the House of Commons for the opposition Whigs and continued to hold a seat until 1812. However, his background and an interest in foreign affairs also gave him some qualifications for diplomacy.

In February 1806 Fox became foreign secretary in Lord Grenville’s new coalition government and it seemed that Adair’s chance to assist him in office had arrived. But Britain was once more at war with Napoleon and in the previous year he had married a French woman, known in unfriendly circles as ‘Talleyrand’s spy’. Not surprisingly, this marriage proved politically ruinous for Adair: Fox had to distance himself from his ardent follower and could console him in May only with the appointment – minus his wife, from whom he later separated – as minister at Vienna. He arrived in June and, despite the death of Fox in September and the arrival of George Canning at the Foreign Office in Portland’s Tory cabinet in March 1807, remained there until Austria declared war on Britain in early 1808.

Diplomatic relations between Britain and Turkey had been suspended since 1807 but in February 1808 the Porte let it be known that it wished to resume negotiations on ending their undeclared war. Adair learned about this in Malta on his way home from Vienna, persuaded Canning to appoint him Britain’s negotiator, and in mid-November duly arrived in the *Sea-Horse* at the Dardanelles as minister plenipotentiary of a government to which he was ‘openly opposed’ (Adair, xx) – on condition that he might return home once he had concluded his mission. On the face of it, the extraordinary pact between France and Russia at Tilsit in July 1807, which signalled their intention to divide up the Ottoman Empire between themselves, meant that Adair was pushing at an open door: British naval power seemed their most likely saviour. But it was not that simple.

Neutral Turkey was simmering at recent losses at the hands of a British warship and demanded compensation, acute political instability prevailed in Constantinople, the Turks remained in ‘terror’ of Bonaparte (Adair, 27) and consequently wished for more than the simple peace treaty Adair had in mind, and the French chargé d’affaires proved a redoubtable foe. Nevertheless, assisted by the youthful and subsequently more famous Stratford Canning and more so by the former embassy dragoman, Bartholomew Pisani, after eight conferences with the Turkish plenipotentiary rather than the one for which he had hoped, and more than one threat by Adair to give up and set sail for England, the Peace of the Dardanelles was finally signed on 5 January 1809. In Constantinople, to which he was then able to proceed and which he reached on 26 January to reclaim the dilapidated British embassy, Adair was treated as ambassador in all but name and managed to preserve his position despite the threat posed to it by news of Napoleon’s entry into Vienna in May. In July he received from home his ambassadorial credentials and the treaty’s ratifications, together with a ridiculous complaint that the original was rendered in French rather than English. His achievement, which was considerable, was capped by his wise decision to leave the embassy in the charge of Stratford Canning when he departed for home in July 1810. In 1845, a decade before his death, aged 92, he published the despatches he wrote to the Foreign Office from the Dardanelles (among other documents), which give exceptional insight into the mind of a very accomplished diplomat at work.

Main sources: Bindoff; Sir Robert Adair, *The Negotiations for the Peace of the Dardanelles, in 1808-9*, 2 vols. (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845); Thorne, R. G., ‘Adair, Robert (1763-1855) ...’, *HoP*.

To be taken as seriously in London as in Constantinople, the British ambassador had to send home regular despatches that convinced secretaries of state – and until the early nineteenth century the Levant Company as well – that he was following his instructions, such as they were. Among other things, these required him to supply

intelligence on military as well as commercial and political developments, and to conduct *all* negotiations with the Porte because even after an Ottoman envoy became a fixture in London in the nineteenth century it remained for long the custom that all Anglo-Turkish negotiations should be conducted in Constantinople. A model example of the despatches likely to win favour at home is provided by those – prompt and meticulous – sent to the Foreign Office in November and December 1808 by Sir Robert Adair (Box 6) reporting on his negotiations for a peace treaty with the Turkish plenipotentiary. In order to seal his reputation, it was enlightened self-interest for the good ambassador to provide hospitality for well-connected visitors from home.

House and family

In Turkey, as in other countries where British diplomats were resident, it was customary until the early nineteenth century for the ambassador to house with his own family not only an increasing body of servants but also his ‘official family’: his house was a family embassy in this broad sense.

To begin with it seems that the Levant Company also expected the ambassador to share his house with the British merchants and factors trading in Constantinople. Important visitors from home also expected to be lodged at the embassy, since there were no real hotels in Constantinople until the nineteenth century. All of this meant large premises, with some rooms set aside for living and entertaining, and some for business, the ‘chancery’.

Until the early nineteenth century the house itself was always rented, usually close to the Ottoman ministries in Pera, which was the favoured spot for all the foreign missions. A summer residence was also rented in countryside to the north of the city or in villages on the European shore of the Upper Bosphorus. Diplomatic contact as well as pleasure was served by the summer embassy, for Ottoman ministers and other diplomats were to be found in the same vicinity during the summer months. This residence also provided relative safety from the plague, which was a constant threat in Constantinople until the middle of the nineteenth century and regular theme of ambassadorial despatches. The plague killed the wives of Sir Thomas Glover in 1608 and Sir Thomas Bendish (Box

3) in 1649, and a daughter of Lord Winchilsea some years later. Sir William Hussey died of the same disease shortly after arriving at the embassy in 1691.

In the early centuries, houses for ambassadors were usually assigned by the Porte, and were not always found to be satisfactory. Furthermore, fire was a serious threat to their wooden structures. More than one burned down, and others only narrowly escaped. As a result, after Pera was swept by fire in 1799, the Foreign Office accepted the principle that Britain should erect its own purpose-built and more fire-resistant embassy. And so it was that such a building went up in the first decade of the nineteenth century, only to be burned down in 1831. Because of prolonged arguments over the site for a replacement, and subsequent difficulties with the building works, 'Pera Palace' was not fully complete until the beginning of the 1850s.

As for the denizens of these buildings, wives (and children) accompanied most married ambassadors to Constantinople from as early as the time of Sir Thomas Glover at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This was well before the practice became normal in the British diplomatic service and prevailed despite the supposed frailty of wives and their reputation for being a diplomatic liability because too inclined to gossip. It was adopted because of the distance from home and the consequent expectation that the ambassador was likely to be away for a very long time. Sir Thomas Roe (Box 2), who had married in December 1614, just seven weeks before abandoning his new wife Eleanor for nearly five years while on his epic mission to Mughal India, decided that another long separation could not be borne and the Levant Company raised no objection to Lady Eleanor going with him.

The most famous British ambassadress in Constantinople was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who during her time at the embassy with her husband, Edward (1717-18), pioneered the use of antibodies to produce immunity from disease. Just as colourful if somewhat less serious was Mary Nisbet, Countess of Elgin, who was two months pregnant when she set sail from Portsmouth for Constantinople with her husband in a 38-gun frigate in September 1799. A sensible and likeable ambassadress was not just a consolation to her husband but a valuable asset in overseeing his household, counselling his junior staff, and organizing the entertainments that were both a relief to the embassy and often an important asset to its conduct of business.

The ambassador's official family consisted of his secretaries and attachés, although the latter only became numerous at Constantinople much later in the embassy's history.

During the centuries of Levant Company influence over the embassy it was customary for the embassy to have two secretaries. One of these was employed for company business and the other for political and private matters. The former was elected and paid by the company's general court in London and doubled as chancellor (administrator and archivist) of the Constantinople factory. Despite the fact that he did not hold a royal commission he was effectively deputy to the ambassador and served as *chargé d'affaires* in the event of his absence or illness, or in the interval – sometimes considerable – between the departure of one chief and the arrival of another. The private secretary, who was junior to the company-appointed secretary and more poorly paid, was appointed by the ambassador. The end of this anomalous arrangement and emergence of a conventional, Foreign Office-appointed secretary of embassy came with the final assertion of government control over the embassy in 1804-5 (see below).

The attachés were typically a nephew or son of a friend or political ally. They were unpaid but in return for their labour – such as it was – received board and lodging, and the opportunity to learn the diplomatic trade.

In the centuries of Levant Company control, the ambassador's household also included a treasurer, whose duties included collecting all monies due to the company and paying Ottoman tax demands and bribes to officials. It also had a chaplain, who was usually the ambassador's nominee. A doctor was also essential. At a further social remove, the ambassador had a large number of additional staff, some of them locally engaged. Among the latter were a scribe or 'efendi' and above all his dragomans, for long periods as many as five, who – knowledgeable in the languages of the empire and in the ways of the Ottoman bureaucracy, courts and custom house – were the eyes, ears and engine room of the embassy. To assist with entertaining and the general running of his house, he had many servants – a butler, grooms, cooks, housemaids, footmen, and pages, all supervised by a steward. When the British government acquired its own embassy building in the early nineteenth century and re-building, renovation and expansion became constant preoccupations, the ambassador also obtained a commissioner of works. Until their legendary corps was disbanded in 1826, janissaries were provided by the Porte

to act as guards and sometimes as messengers within the confines of the empire, although the ambassador was obliged to pay them.

It was not long before the household staff of the British embassy at Constantinople was unusually large. This was chiefly because of the multiple demands made on it, but also because of the long and firmly held view that it was a capital in which the appearance on ceremonial occasions of a large and magnificently liveried household staff was of special importance in determining a nation's standing in the eyes of the host government. Until the Congress of Vienna in 1815, when the general problem of precedence was resolved, anxiety about this was fired further by the struggle for precedence between the major diplomatic missions in the capital, the more so because ambassadors – unlike ministers – were supposed to have the 'full representative character'. The British embassy vied particularly with the French, which had been established longer in Constantinople and claimed the right of protection over all Christians in the sultan's dominions.

Government secures control

The attraction of the diplomatic berth at Constantinople as a source of Crown patronage, an increase in political interest in diplomatic relations with Ottoman Turkey, and the diminishing ability of the Levant Company to bear the embassy's cost, together led to a growth in its control by the government. This was, however, fitful and sometimes reluctant. As a result, it was the beginning of the nineteenth century before this culminated in complete government ascendancy.

The temptation of the Constantinople honeypot as ammunition for royal patronage had begun to worry the Levant Company as early as 1625, following the request of the then ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe (Box 2), to be allowed to return home. Perhaps it was in part Roe's entreaties to his aristocratic patron, the Duke of Buckingham, that he might help him to get home by finding a replacement, that encouraged the duke to propose to the company one of his dependants, a courtier called Sir Thomas Phillips, as Roe's successor; and in July 1625 King Charles I, claiming royal prerogative, supported the recommendation. Alarmed at this step to overturn its customary right to select the

ambassador and alleging in any case that Phillips was not qualified for the position, the company resisted the appointment.

The Levant Company was in luck. Roe's diplomatic effectiveness at Constantinople was well known in London and he had not found his request to be recalled willingly received. As a result, he did not press it, and the royal nominee, Phillips, died in the following spring. However, the company's success was short-lived because the king responded by producing another candidate, Sir Peter Wyche, whose qualifications for the post were better than those of Phillips; he also offered to pay £1,000 in order to obtain it. By November 1626 Wyche had been imposed on the company.

The appointment of Wyche proved a decisive precedent, although it did not completely end the tug of war between the Crown and the company over the appointment of the ambassador, and when the Crown felt weak the company sometimes won. Sir William Hussey, ambassador in 1691, and Sir Everard Fawkener, who held the post from 1735 until 1742, had both worked for many years in the British trading community in Aleppo before going to the embassy in Constantinople. But as a rule, from the 1620s onwards ambassadors at this post were appointed by the Crown and came to fit the more usual profile of British ambassadors: men of junior aristocratic lineage and a career interest in diplomacy, however short-lived this might sometimes have been.

There were the exceptions to the new rule. Among these were Sir John Finch (1674-81), a physician who had been for six years professor of anatomy at Pisa; Sir William Trumbull (1687-91), who was a leading civil lawyer; and Admiral Sidney Smith (1798-9), who for a while shared the office with his younger brother and was a glory-seeking naval officer. The first peer to be appointed British Ambassador at Constantinople was Heneage Finch, the third Earl of Winchilsea (1661-9). Among other peers who followed him was Lord Elgin (1799-1803), who is remembered chiefly for the lasting enmity of the Greeks he achieved for his role in the transfer of so many of their priceless 'marbles' from Athens (then still a grubby town in the Ottoman Empire) to the British Museum.

As for the political interest in diplomatic relations with Turkey which also caused the government to take a closer interest in the Constantinople embassy, this grew only slowly; it also became more complicated as time passed. A mounting concern for communications with India in the late eighteenth century and the welfare of Christians in Ottoman domains in the nineteenth were two important factors. At the root of the political

interest, however, was the balance of power. While the Catholic Habsburgs were the main threat to England, a friendly Turkey could be encouraged to relieve this pressure by harrying their rear. Later, with the slow eclipse of Spain in the seventeenth century and the new need for Austria to resist the rising power of France, the opposite policy was dictated. And once Russia started to threaten the complete destruction of an Ottoman Empire past its peak in the late eighteenth century and thereby seriously upset Europe's equilibrium, the simple survival of that empire – 'the sick man of Europe' – became a fixed and urgent point of British policy. Constantinople was not the only diplomatic jousting ground where its success or failure would be decided but long gone were the days when it was a distant backwater

Finally, in the course of the eighteenth century the Levant Company weakened and its protests of poverty became loud: it could no longer, it claimed, afford the £10,000 a year required for the maintenance of the embassy and consulates. The ambassadors also found their alternative sources of income unpredictable or disappearing altogether. In the latter category was not only the sale of *barats* but also the ending in 1794 of the Ottoman tradition of subsidising foreign ambassadors at Constantinople. This was prompted by Sultan Selim III's discovery that European governments were not so indulgent towards his own newly appointed permanent ambassadors. It is true that he reluctantly agreed to continue certain payments to allies, among them the British. However, the new regulation was not rescinded and the writing was clearly on the wall, even for them. Serious government money was clearly needed for the Constantinople embassy.

The principle of government financing had in fact been established very early, if only by the provision of token furnishings for the mission, including a bed for the ambassador. Already in 1688 it had also agreed to contribute to the expenses involved in any mediation he should be called on to conduct between the Porte and its enemies, which was clearly not something for which the Levant Company could be expected to pay. During the eighteenth century the government began to make a more significant contribution, and halfway through the first decade of the nineteenth century it had to take over completely the funding of the ambassador and all of his activities. This is because by this time the political work created for the embassy by the French revolutionary wars had so caused the embassy to neglect its commercial duties that the merchants were in a state of open rebellion. At this point, therefore, the exclusive concentration of the ambassador

on diplomatic matters was formally approved and a new post of consul-general, to be appointed and paid for by the Levant Company to look after its affairs, was created.

The first decade of the nineteenth century was thus a momentous one in the evolution of the position of the ambassador at Constantinople, although the break in his relationship with the Levant Company which the innovation of a consul-general suggested was by no means complete. This is because the ambassador appointed at this juncture, Charles Arbuthnot (1805-7), did not regard the new arrangement as an unmixed blessing. While no doubt gratified at being relieved of much tedious commercial work, he believed that if, as it had been agreed, the consuls corresponded not with himself but with the new consul-general, Isaac Morier, it would diminish his office and thus his influence at the Porte. As a result, he opposed the idea and dragged his feet in securing Morier's recognition; and the Levant Company had to enlist the support of the government to force him to accept it. Nevertheless, the company realized that in practice it would always need the support of the political head of the mission as well as the consul-general. As a result, on 19 January 1810, at an important meeting with Arbuthnot – by then back in England as one of the joint-secretaries of the Treasury, having had to beat a hasty retreat from Constantinople in March 1807 – the company stressed its unqualified support for the supremacy of the ambassador. Later in the same year, when he took charge of the mission from Sir Robert Adair (Box 6), Stratford Canning ignored the ruling that the ambassador should not correspond with the consuls.

In 1825 the Levant Company was wound up, and with this event any lingering influence over the British Embassy and its many satellite consulates in the Ottoman Empire disappeared. Government control was complete.

2

The Nineteenth Century and After, 1839-1922

Following the departure of Ambassador Sir Louis Mallet on the outbreak of war in November 1914, Britain did not formally have a mission in Constantinople headed by an ambassador until 1925. During the military occupation of Turkey from 1918 until it ended with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, Britain was represented instead by a high commissioner. Moreover, this did not at once make possible his replacement by an ambassador because the treaty was not ratified for a further two years. The result was that in the intervening period, during which there was no occupation but no condition of diplomatic relations either, the British were represented by an individual with the half-way house title of ‘representative’. Only after Turkey ratified Lausanne on 1 March 1925 – and some agonising in London that eventually saw the idea squashed that in the new circumstances a legation would suffice – did Britain once more have an ambassador at Constantinople.

Ponsonby, John, Viscount Ponsonby (1833-41)

John Ponsonby was born around 1770 into a Whig family with an important position in Irish politics; this eased his entrance into a parliamentary career at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was ‘opinionated and headstrong, vain and with a reputation for indolence’ (Durham) but also able, resolute when motivated, and extremely handsome – although it was the last of these three assets that was most obvious and in his early years most consequential. As it turned out, he had little taste for politics and no prospects for advancement in that career. He also acquired some notoriety from a number of extra-marital affairs and, through his own extravagance, added to the

sizeable debts he had inherited. It was not long, therefore, before he abandoned parliament and went abroad, which was the traditional expedient adopted by the seed-sowing and cash-strapped young aristocrat, for it relieved him of constant exposure to embarrassments at home.

About how Ponsonby occupied himself over the next 20 years or so little is known, except that for a period he held a minor office of some sort in the Ionian Islands. This was possibly secured via the influence of Charles (later Lord) Grey, who was foreign secretary in 1806-7, during the same years became leader of the Whigs – and had been happily married to Ponsonby's sister since 1794. In July 1825, with his brother-in-law still out of office but continuing to be Whig leader and more prominent than ever, Ponsonby readily persuaded the then foreign secretary, George Canning, to give him a diplomatic post. Despite the supplicant's high connection, it was, however, to distant Buenos Aires that he was swiftly despatched. This was because King George IV was fearful that Ponsonby's appearance in London would re-ignite an earlier love affair with the royal mistress, Lady Conyngham. Nevertheless, more attractive appointments followed, and performance in them did not matter unduly because in 1830 Grey had finally become prime minister. Brussels, where Ponsonby was joint commissioner in 1830-1 of the great power conference on the future of newly emergent Belgium, was followed by a few months as minister at Naples; and it appears only to have been an affair with the legendary Princess Lieven that ruled him out of consideration for the important embassy at St Petersburg. It was against this background that in late 1832 Ponsonby was instead appointed ambassador at Constantinople, where he arrived in the following May. This was a critical juncture in the Ottoman Empire's relations with the great powers, for it was just weeks after Russian troops had landed on the shores of the Bosphorus in response to a plea for assistance from Sultan Mahmud II, who was increasingly fearful of the advancing armies of his over-mighty Egyptian subject, Mehemet Ali, and disappointed at the lack of support against him offered by the other powers, not least Britain, where the government was dithering over its response to the situation.

The signature of the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi in early July 1833 and swift departure of Russia's troops afterwards was widely interpreted as signalling generally the de facto reduction of the Ottoman Empire to the status of a vassal of St Petersburg and specifically the handing to its warships of special

privileges of passage through the Straits. Thus alarmed, Grey's foreign secretary, Palmerston, encouraged Ponsonby to do all he could to push back Russian influence and help prop up the Ottoman Empire. To strengthen his hand, he authorised him to summon the fleet in case of a Russian attack – provided this was approved by the sultan as well as the Admiralty – but did not follow this up with generosity in the supply of secret service funds, important everywhere for the purchase of information and influence but especially so at Constantinople. But what the ambassador lacked in money he made up for in passion and energy.

Ponsonby first made waves at his new post – and among the powers – by his vigorous response to the rough treatment by the Ottoman authorities of William Churchill, a British merchant who in 1836 had accidentally wounded a Turkish boy. The ambassador secured the dismissal of one of the two ministers he held responsible – the reis effendi – and compensation for Churchill, but his failure to obtain the sacrifice of the kapudan pasha as well was evidence that he had made no dent in the influence at the Porte of Russia, which had reacted angrily to his language. A greater achievement by Ponsonby was the signature two years later of the important Anglo-Turkish commercial agreement ('Treaty of Balta Liman'), although this built substantially on the proselytising and drafting of his sometime secretary of embassy, the Turcophile and wild Russophobe David Urquhart, and the work on the details by Urquhart's replacement, Henry Bulwer. Less prudent was his backing of Urquhart's scheme to support the Circassians against Russia on the Black Sea coast. His Metternich-leaning colleague at Vienna, Fred Lamb, called Ponsonby a bellicose 'dreamer', and at home there were repeated demands for his recall. Nevertheless, Palmerston stood behind him despite his faults: impatience with embassy routine, inclination to ignore the details of his instructions (as he had at Brussels), tendency to be too aggressive towards Turkish ministers, and determination to thwart the foreign secretary's desire to start the rebuilding of the British embassy in Pera – destroyed by fire in 1831 – because he much preferred to work from the summer embassy at Therapia and persistently argued that this was where the new embassy should be built. Such was Ponsonby's master class in procrastination on this subject that, when he left Turkey in 1841, Palmerston had not secured a decision on the embassy, let alone started to build it. 'Nobody is perfect,' sums up his characteristic attitude to those he employed, and Ponsonby was in general a good servant of his main policy in

Turkey. The eminent historian of Palmerston, Kenneth Bourne, wrote that Ponsonby was probably ‘the right man at the right time’ and ‘did a great deal to re-establish Britain’s influence’ at Constantinople (Bourne, 464). He was rewarded by being created a viscount in 1839 and more tangibly by appointment as ambassador at Vienna in 1846. He died in Brighton on 21 February 1855, not long after seeing to the publication of private letters written to a friend in late 1853 in which he had used characteristically strong language to urge much more robust British support for Turkey against Russia in what were the opening moves leading to the outbreak of the Crimean War.

In the interval between Ponsonby’s departure on 10 October 1841 (nominally on ‘leave’) and the arrival of his successor, his secretary of embassy since 1838, Charles Bankhead, served as head of the mission with the rank of minister plenipotentiary *ad interim*. Bankhead was a diplomatist of 26 years’ experience, having served previously at The Hague, St Petersburg, and Washington, at the latter post as chargé d’affaires for long periods during the 1830s.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); Bindoff; Boase, G. C., ‘Ponsonby, John, Viscount Ponsonby (c.1770–1855)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; Bourne; Durham University Library Special Collections Catalogue, Introduction to ‘Papers of John Viscount Ponsonby’; Frewster, J. M., ‘Lord Ponsonby and the Churchill affair of 1836’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 9(2), 1988; Taylor, M., ‘Urquhart, David (1805–1877)’, *ODNB*; Viscount Ponsonby, *Private Letters on the Eastern Question* (1854).

Canning, Stratford, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe (1842-58)

Stratford Canning was born in 1786, not into an aristocratic family but into that of a merchant and banker. He was, nevertheless, one of the best-known British diplomats of the nineteenth century and a perfect illustration of the influence which, in the pre-telegraphic age, could be wielded by a head of mission who was at once exceptionally able and well connected in governing circles at home – in his case, at least to begin with, via the massive political figure of his first cousin, George Canning, who held high government office in most years between 1804 and 1827, including two stints as foreign secretary. It is with the British Embassy at Constantinople, where Stratford both started and finished his long career, that his name is most famously – and to

some most notoriously – linked.

He was appointed first secretary in the Ottoman capital in 1808 and within two years – as minister plenipotentiary *ad interim* at the age of only 24 – was given charge of the embassy until 1812 (see Box 6). Peace between Turkey and Russia was vital to British interests in the war with Napoleon and this was consolidated with the assistance of Stratford's mediation. This established his diplomatic reputation and after postings in Switzerland, the USA, and Russia he returned to Constantinople in 1825, this time as ambassador (appointed by his cousin George) but much less keen on the Turkey post than on the former occasion. This was because he had long harboured ambitions in home politics and had been promised a seat in parliament and a government post. His mission also became embroiled in the Greek struggle for independence from Ottoman rule and ended in a quarrel with the foreign secretary, Lord Aberdeen. Fearing unrest in the city following Navarino, he had slipped out of Constantinople itself on 29 December 1827 in company with the French and Russian ambassadors, although he did not resign – nor fail to pursue his commission – until early 1829. Thereafter, Stratford made parliamentary politics his priority, confining his diplomacy to special missions at the behest of Palmerston, one to Turkey (again) and another to Portugal. (In 1833 he was proposed as ambassador to Russia but agrément was refused by the tsar.) But eventually, he was forced to conclude that he was not suited to a political career for he was 'a failure' in the House of Commons. 'He rarely spoke, and when he did, he was overcome by nerves' (Chamberlain). In addition, his cousin had died in 1827, and with him his political prop and reference point. Thus it was that in October 1841 he fell back on a full-time diplomatic career and was once more appointed ambassador at Constantinople, arriving in the city – once more without enthusiasm – on 21 January 1842.

Stratford remained in Constantinople until 1858, although on two occasions there was a distinct possibility that he would escape. The first was in 1846, when a change of government caused temporary uncertainty about his position, and he did not return until two years later. For the greater part of this long absence (27 July 1846 until 21 March 1848), charge of the embassy was taken by the secretary of embassy since late 1843, Henry Wellesley (in April 1847 second Baron Cowley), with the rank of minister *ad interim*. Wellesley, whose father had himself done well in the diplomatic service, was not brilliant but he was competent, conscientious, and widely

trusted – and a favourite of Queen Victoria. Only four years after leaving Constantinople and still only in his mid-forties, he was appointed ambassador at Paris, ‘a surprising promotion for a career diplomat without an established reputation’ (Steele). Having developed a special relationship with Napoleon III, he remained at Paris until his retirement in 1867. Between Cowley’s departure and Stratford’s return on 24 June 1848, Charles Alison, the Anglo-Levantine ‘Oriental Secretary’, took charge. Alison was regarded as brilliant if somewhat eccentric and was already something of a legend in the embassy, which – after some years at the consulate-general in Albania – he had served extremely well since 1839. At the beginning of 1857 he became secretary of embassy and covered again for Stratford in the first half of 1858. In 1860 he was appointed minister at Tehran, at which post he remained until his death on 29 April 1872.

The second occasion with real promise that Stratford could permanently leave the Constantinople embassy to someone else came in 1852, following his return on leave to London with his mission left this time in the very capable hands of his secretary of embassy, Colonel Hugh Rose, a brave and brilliant soldier, first-rate linguist (French, Arabic and Turkish), and natural diplomat. Rose’s qualities had been spotted by Palmerston during his service in 1840 on the British liaison mission to the Turkish forces seeking to expel Mehmet Ali’s troops from Syria and thereafter he served as consul-general in Syria until 1848. He was popular with the Turks, and in Stratford’s absence ‘did much to dampen down the smouldering argument between the French and Russian embassies about the Holy Places’ and – with his French colleague – ferret out Russia’s thinking about Turkey (Cunningham, 153, 160). In the Crimean War he performed the delicate task of liaison officer with the French commander-in-chief with great skill, and in the ‘Indian Mutiny’ – despite no local knowledge and never having commanded troops in action – emerged as arguably the greatest British general in the sub-continent and from 1860 until 1865 was himself commander-in-chief India. While carrying the same responsibility in Ireland for the rest of the decade he was created Baron Strathnairn of Strathnairn and Jhansi, and in 1877 raised to the highest military rank, field marshal. He died on 16 October 1885.

While Stratford was in London, he had expectations of being offered either the Foreign Office or the Paris embassy but his credit had ebbed and he was offered neither. Instead, in April 1853 and approaching the age of 70, he was sent back to

Constantinople once more, consoled only for these disappointments by advancement to the peerage with the title of 'Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe', the irresistibility of the city itself, and 'the final chance to give his arduous career design and significance' (Cunningham, 143). One of the first things he did on arrival was order the chargé d'affaires to pack, for there was 'much more to Hugh Rose than Stratford could ever allow' (Cunningham, 153).

Stratford Canning was both a devout Christian and a man with an exceptionally strong sense of justice, which together made him reflexively favour principle over expediency. He was in particular quite obsessed with the task of comprehensively reforming the Ottoman Empire and forever urging that a British alliance should be offered as reward for this. He also enjoyed a striking physical presence and great dignity of bearing, at this period still a significant advantage to an ambassador far from home, especially when the same could not be said of his embassy buildings. He had in addition a highly developed sense that, as an ambassador, he was a true representative of his sovereign, Queen Victoria. Being highly intelligent, conscientious to a fault, and furiously hard-working, Stratford was also on top of whatever subject was before him. These attributes, together with great experience and self-confidence, gave him a marked edge in his dealings both with Ottoman ministers and other members of the Constantinople diplomatic body – and famously earned him the title 'Great *Elchi*', which in his case meant not simply *Buyuk Elchi* (great envoy, or ambassador as opposed to minister) but had the connotation 'greatest ambassador'. The same attributes also made it possible for him usually to interpret his instructions in a manner sympathetic to the designs of his government when rapidly changing circumstances required his initiative. He always had the confidence of Palmerston, 'the politician to whom he was temperamentally closest' (Chamberlain).

But Stratford was also proud, thin-skinned and notoriously short-tempered. It is perhaps as well, therefore, that, in the words of his late-Victorian official biographer, Stanley Lane-Poole, he was 'essentially a desk-negotiator ... [who] ... reserved personal conferences for the last resource' (Lane-Poole, vol. II, 65). He found it particularly hard to conceal his contempt for ministers at home he found lacking in some regard, and was heartily disliked and distrusted by many; these included the foreign secretary, Lord Clarendon. He was also inclined to show much

more of the unattractive side of his personality to his juniors in the embassy, especially as he got older and more gouty, and when he was feeling under great pressure of business. Some were for ever alienated by him. The gifted satirist, E. C. Grenville-Murray, who was fifth paid attaché in the Constantinople embassy in the mid-1850s and published under the pseudonym the 'Roving Englishman', went so far as to lampoon him in *Household Words*, the popular weekly edited by Charles Dickens; and elsewhere – playing on the older term 'ambassador' – called him not the 'Great Ambassador' but the 'great British embarrasser' (Berridge, *Diplomatic Whistleblower*, 25). For this sin, the Roving Englishman was exiled by Stratford to serve as acting vice-consul at Mytilene.

In view of his character and personality, it is hardly surprising that Stratford's style and management of the Constantinople embassy should have been radically different from that of Ponsonby. While the latter was lax in enforcing administrative routine, Stratford was ferociously pedantic; while Ponsonby did not overtax his juniors, Stratford drove them hard; and while his predecessor preferred Therapia to Pera and had stalled plans for the re-building of the 'British Palace', Stratford rightly recognised the importance of staying in the city, although such were the scale and number of the difficulties bedevilling the building work that it was the end of the decade before even part of the new embassy could be occupied and the eve of the Crimean War before it was completely finished. It was also in Stratford's time that the family embassy came to an end at the British Palace, for he refused to dine with attachés imposed on him by the Foreign Office and whom, like Grenville-Murray, he might strongly dislike; this was becoming the norm.

There has never been any serious dispute that Stratford was a very successful ambassador for Britain to the extent that he generally raised his country's prestige at the Porte; or that – his pursuit of comprehensive progress in Western-style Ottoman reform aside – he scored a great many individual successes. Among the last were persuading the Porte in 1845 to allow the building of a Protestant cathedral in Jerusalem, and in 1849 – assisted by the French Ambassador – to refuse Russian and Austrian demands for the extradition of Hungarian and Polish rebels who had fled to Turkey. However, his reputation has always been tarnished by the allegation – to which Grenville-Murray lent colour – that he encouraged the Turks to 'sabotage' the great power diplomacy at Vienna designed to settle the question of religious rights

that had occasioned the fighting between Russia and Turkey in the Danubian principalities in 1853, thereby making inevitable the outbreak of the Crimean War in the following year. But Britain's interest was to support the Ottoman Empire against Russia, and Turkey – unlike Russia – had not even been invited to the Vienna negotiations. So it seems that urging 'caution' (Chamberlain) in responding to the Vienna Note was the least that Stratford could properly have done at the Porte, where the ministers were quite capable of thinking for themselves. There is no evidence that – unlike his predecessor – he was a warmonger, either by design or default. What he was instead was a useful scapegoat, and one the more easily chosen because – taking him at his own words – it was regarded as axiomatic that the 'Great Elchi' pulled all the strings: 'as the Ottomans had chosen to be refractory [relative to the Vienna Note], it could only have been with his encouragement' (Cunningham, 215).

Despite the anger with Stratford in London, he was allowed to remain at Constantinople for the duration of the Crimean War, and during the conflict he was wholly committed to the exhausting additional burdens of expediting supplies and medical support. He also laboured with a dragomanate that had suffered serious attrition of its Levantine component in consequence of a largely failed experiment with the section's anglicization.

Unfortunately for Lord Stratford, his imperious attitude towards his masters in London had become if anything even more marked during the war. Worse still, he could not reconcile himself to the new influence of France at Constantinople that had been consolidated by its major contribution to victory over Russia and the high ability of its much younger ambassador, Édouard Thouvenel; and there was a local breakdown in Anglo-French relations which had wider implications. Even Palmerston realised that Stratford's time was up, but it proved unnecessary to recall him. He returned to England only on leave at the end of 1857 but decided to resign his post when Palmerston lost office to the Conservatives in the following February. Bored without his embassy work and regretting his decision, at Queen Victoria's suggestion and the annoyance of just about everyone else (including his successor), he was allowed to return to Constantinople in autumn 1858 – but only to settle his affairs and take his formal leave of the sultan. He died on 14 August 1880, aged 93.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); Berridge, G. R., *A Diplomatic Whistleblower in the Victorian Era* (2014); Bindoff; Chamberlain, M., 'Canning, Stratford, Viscount

Stratford de Redcliffe (1786–1880)', *ODNB*; Cunningham, A. (ed. E. Ingram), *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century. Collected Essays*, vol. 2 (Cass, 1993); *FO List, July 1864*; Guymier, L., *Curing the Sick Man: Sir Henry Bulwer and the Ottoman Empire, 1858-1865* (Republic of Letters, 2011); Jones; Lane-Poole, S., *The Life of Stratford Canning*, vols. 1 and 2 (Longmans, Green, 1888); Robson, B., 'Rose, Hugh Henry, Baron Strathnairn (1801–1885)', *ODNB*; Steele, D., 'Wellesley, Henry Richard Charles, first Earl Cowley (1804–1884)', *ODNB*; *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1885.

Bulwer, Sir (William) Henry Lytton Earle (1858-65)

The second son of a general, Bulwer was born in London on 13 February 1801 and enjoyed a spendthrift and dissolute youth – Harrow, Cambridge and Paris – made possible by a large fortune inherited from a grandmother. His youth was remarkable only for spectacular gambling, a murky record in fund-raising in support of the Greek war of independence, and forming a friendship with the famous future Tory prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli.

But Bulwer was no stupid dilettante: he was clever, imaginative, energetic and multi-talented, and throughout his life juggled diplomacy with writing (including much anonymous journalism) and, for a good part of it, parliamentary politics as well, commuting for many years from diplomatic posts in Europe in order to attend debates in the House of Commons. He was first appointed an attaché in 1827 but it was not until 1837, two years after accepting the post of secretary of legation at Brussels from Palmerston, with whom he had become a favourite, that he decided to be a full-time diplomat. Thereafter, his career advanced steadily through numerous important posts until it hit a bump at the first one where he was minister in his own right, as opposed to *ad interim*, in 1843. This was at Madrid, where 'Anglo-French relations became very strained and Bulwer was caught in the fallout' (Chamberlain). In the struggle between Spain's conservatives and liberals, he failed adequately to cover his contacts with the opposition press, a duel with the Spanish foreign minister – albeit apparently on a private matter – was only narrowly averted, and on 17 May 1848 Bulwer was told by the government that he had 48 hours to get out of the country if he valued his life. Suicide not being on his mind, he left Madrid on the following day and was back in London before the Foreign Office knew anything about it. This episode – which attracted international attention – could have ruined Bulwer's diplomatic career but

Palmerston took most of the heat at home and he agreed reluctantly to ‘banishment’ (Chamberlain) to the relative obscurity and uncomfortable climate of Washington. In the event, he liked the United States better than he had expected and enjoyed there three successful years, in the course of which he soothed Anglo-American differences over Central America. Nevertheless, he pined for Europe and in early 1852 swapped Washington for the delights of Naples (with side accreditation to Modena), where he remained without major incident until in January 1855 illness forced him into retirement without a diplomatic pension. But his health – unlike his finances – recovered and he was allowed to resume his diplomatic career in the middle of 1856. Following the assumption of office by the Conservatives in February 1858, it was crowned by his appointment by Lord Malmesbury as ambassador at Constantinople in succession to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe on 10 May.

Bulwer was not installed as head of the new British Palace with only a superficial knowledge of Ottoman affairs. In 1837 he had been diverted by Palmerston from Brussels to Constantinople to replace David Urquhart as secretary of embassy after Ponsonby had fallen out with him. While there for about a year, he assumed the major burden of negotiating the highly significant Anglo-Turkish commercial treaty (‘Treaty of Balta Liman’, 1838), the ambassador, he wrote afterwards, having ‘a horror of details, and above all details in figures’ (Bulwer, vol. 2, 226). Furthermore, for 21 months immediately prior to becoming ambassador, he had served as a commissioner in the Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia under the authority of the treaty ending the Crimean War in 1856, the Treaty of Paris, thereby sharing responsibility for making recommendations for their future. And this subject was ‘to be for the next decade the most important and intractable issue in Near Eastern politics’ (Anderson, 143). It was not, however, only the knowledge he acquired on this commission that helped to recommend him for the Constantinople embassy; it was also the mediating skills he demonstrated in handling his role, which had ‘won him the trust and respect of both Paris and Vienna’ and thus the gratitude of the Foreign Office (Guymer, 45). But Bulwer also brought with him baggage of an unsavoury sort that, embellished by the British press, in the end contributed to his undoing, although Palmerston thought that some of this baggage was actually essential for success in a place such as Constantinople.

Bulwer had acquired a widespread reputation as an active intriguer and for

being altogether untrustworthy, which were views shared by Queen Victoria. This reputation was probably fostered by the suspicion attaching to his anonymous journalism and is unlikely to have been diluted when he became Master of the Constantinople off-shoot of the Grand Lodge of England (Oriental, no. 988) and District Grand Master of all of the British masonic lodges in Turkey when they united in 1861. More prosaically, he was also ‘notoriously untidy with official papers’ and altogether anti-bureaucratic just when the Foreign Office was seeking to go in the opposite direction (Guymer, 16, 46). Add to the mix sarcasm, pettiness, short-temper, and exceptional vanity, and students of his career usually conclude that he was ‘temperamentally unsuited to his profession’ (Jones, 88). He had also become almost a caricature of a ‘man of the world’ – a glutton for sensuous pleasures, their consumption assisted by the charm and salon-smoothness he could turn on. Most notorious was Bulwer’s sex life.

He had been married to a niece of the Duke of Wellington since 1848 and she had accompanied him to Constantinople. But the marriage was unhappy and the ambassador established on Plati Island, an uninhabited spot in the Sea of Marmara bought from the sultan, a second home – complete with castles, residences, and gardens – in which to entertain the woman widely believed to be either his Greek mistress or agent of influence (or both), the much admired and well-connected Eurydice Aristarchi, Princess of Samos. The outspoken and strong-minded judge of Britain’s new Supreme Consular Court at Constantinople, Sir Edmund Hornby, who had earlier known Bulwer in Madrid and of whom the ambassador’s wise coolness to the capitulations had since made him one of his bitterest enemies, said that ‘He had an extraordinary opinion of his attractiveness to women, and gloried in the reputation of being a Don Juan’ (Hornby, 34). Eventually tiring of the Gothic fantasies of Plati Island and no doubt needing the money, in 1864 Bulwer sold his second home to the Khedive of Egypt; but ‘Bulwer’s Island’ – to which the ambassador had commuted on an expensive yacht – has entered into legend. In Disraeli’s novel, *Endymion*, published in 1880, he appears as Mr Tremaine Bertie: ‘He is a Sybarite,’ admits his brother to guests (Beaconsfield, 422).

As to the performance of his official duties, it is easy to conclude that in this department Bulwer did not distinguish himself, and he certainly had his failures, notably in pressing for significant financial reform in the Ottoman administration. But

Bulwer suffered from handicaps not shared by his illustrious predecessor. Prominent among these were Turkey's reduced need for British support against Russia following the latter's defeat in the Crimean War, increased resistance in Turkey to outside pressure for reform, and the marked edge given to French diplomacy in the Ottoman capital by the local belief that France had done better than Britain in the recent conflict and the refusal of the very able Édouard Thouvenel – French ambassador at Constantinople until 1860 – to antagonise the Turks by agitating for reform of their empire. In such circumstances, and in any case sent to Turkey chiefly to keep matters quiet, Bulwer actually did rather well; notably, by his contributions in the early 1860s to preserving stability in the Danubian Principalities and Serbia, and, ipso facto, in great power relations. It was therefore obtuse as well as unfair for him to be derided by Hornby for preferring 'persuasion' at the Palace and Porte to the 'firmness' adopted by Sir Stratford de Redcliffe (Hornby, 144). In actively supporting the British 'concession-hunters' who fell on the Ottoman Empire after the Crimean War, Bulwer also pioneered the kind of commercial diplomacy that a century later was to become a top priority – if not *the* top priority – of the British diplomatic service and the services of many other states.

Unfortunately for Bulwer, after the Syrian massacres in 1860 his views were beginning to foster the conclusion at home that he was too pro-Ottoman as well as morally disreputable. These included his uncomfortable observations that the capitulations 'made nonsense of the central principle of the Treaty of Paris, namely that the Ottoman Empire was an equal member of the European concert' (Guymer, 96), and that religious toleration in the empire was if anything greater than in Europe. His enemies among lawyers, clerics and journalists increased the unease about him in parliament and government, and the Foreign Office had its own reasons for concluding that he would have to go. In 1860, it had been exasperated by his serious falling-out over the division of labour with his new secretary of embassy, Savile Lumley, which was so poisonous that it produced 'over 1200 pages of vitriolic prose' (Jones, 88) and a general ruling by the Foreign Office that was the genesis of the future diplomatic rank of 'counsellor'. (Henceforward, the secretary of embassy was *always* to be treated as the most senior of the ambassador's confidential advisers and not just as a stand-in during his absence, meanwhile being left to serve in any capacity at the head of mission's whim.) Bulwer's extravagance – official as well as

private – also shocked the Foreign Office, and led his complaints about the huge running costs of the new embassy to go largely unheeded. He was also criticized by Palmerston as well the foreign secretary, Lord John Russell, for ‘failing to stiffen the sultan’s resistance to land grabs by the French along the banks of the Suez Canal’ (Jenkins, 252), then being constructed by a French company led by a former French diplomat with Egyptian experience, Ferdinand de Lesseps (although Bulwer’s half-heartedness in this regard was rightly prompted by his view that Palmerston’s attitude to the canal project took insufficient account of its commercial promise). And, striving to shore up his position, he then made one of his ‘biggest mistakes’ (Guymer, 139): he sought to apply more pressure for Ottoman reform than was actually being sought by the foreign secretary. With even Palmerston forced to conclude that the adverse publicity Bulwer invited had now made him a liability, Lord John Russell, who had for some time been turning his mind to a replacement at Constantinople (the ambassador’s health also concerned him), finally recalled him in July 1865 and he departed in October.

Other than acting as an agent in the Levant for the concession-hunting Société des Travaux Publiques et Banque d’Orient, after his recall Bulwer divided his time at home between the two remaining activities available to him: politics and writing. In November 1868 he was elected a Liberal MP, and among his publications were the first two volumes of his biography of Palmerston. In March 1871 he finally engineered the peerage he had for so long coveted, but the new ‘Baron Dalling and Bulwer’ in the county of Norfolk was able to bask in this title for little over a year, for on 23 May 1872 he died suddenly in Naples. Four days later, *The Times* – which a decade earlier had been prominent among British newspapers demanding his recall – announced with regret the passing of a ‘brilliant diplomatist’. This was nearer the mark than has been commonly supposed, partly because his autobiography was never published, partly because his eccentricities overshadowed his achievements, and partly because the most important of his successes were not of the eye-catching sort.

Main sources: Anderson; Beaconsfield, Earl of [Disraeli], *Endymion* (1880); Berridge (2009); Berridge, G. R., *A Diplomatic Whistleblower in the Victorian Era* (2014); Bindoff; Bulwer, Sir Henry Lytton, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston* (Bentley, 1871); Bourne; Chamberlain, M. E., ‘Bulwer, (William) Henry

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Lyons, Richard Bickerton Pemell, Earl Lyons (1865-7)

Richard Bickerton Pemmel Lyons was born on 26 April 1817 and in November 1858 inherited his title from his father, a brave naval officer who made an 'immense' contribution to the Crimean campaign but had been an indifferent diplomatist while earlier becalmed on half-pay (Lambert). After Winchester and Oxford, in 1839 he joined his father's legation in Athens and remained there for an exceptional 13 years, albeit moving to the status of paid attaché in 1844. Then after a few months at Dresden, in early 1853 he was transferred to the legation in Florence, where he rose first to be secretary of legation and then, in June 1858, to be minister. However, he was charged chiefly with the sensitive duties of 'unofficial representative' to the Papal State – with which Britain did not have diplomatic relations – and therefore, under instruction, resided usually in Rome rather than at the Tuscan capital. His final posting before Constantinople was to be head of what was then the seriously understaffed but increasingly important post of Washington, where he arrived in the spring of 1859 and soon found himself having to cope with the well-known difficulties presented to Anglo-American relations by the Civil War; notably, the defence of Canada, the issue of cotton supply to British mills from the southern states, and the Confederacy's demand for recognition, the last of which provoked an incident that posed the real threat of war between Britain and America. Lyons kept the lid on all of this and it made his reputation. However, by the end of 1864, after three years of 'intense pressure, severe strain, and hard work' (Jenkins, 245), he was exhausted and feeling permanently ill – and so, at his request, was reluctantly granted permission to return home.

From the beginning of his career, Lyons was the very model of the modern diplomatist. He was hardworking and capable of adjusting almost imperceptibly the implementation of his instructions to suit local circumstances. He had sound judgement and was resourceful in gathering information without employing

espionage, which he used to write clear and well-reasoned despatches to the Foreign Office. He was highly circumspect in regard to the press, determinedly non-political, and altogether shy of publicity. Tactful in personal relations without being a pushover in negotiations, cool in a crisis, straightforward in his dealings, and a frequent provider of good dinners, Lyons always seemed able to preserve business-like relationships when these were under serious threat, whether from locals or hotheads in London. For example, sent in early 1858 to Naples, where – as in the Papal State – Britain did not have diplomatic relations, he successfully negotiated the release of and compensation for two British engineers falsely charged with complicity in insurrectionary activity. Lyons received regular encomiums from London and towards the end of his career was at least twice offered – and twice declined – the post of foreign secretary.

There were, however, oddities about Lyons, and his personality and character had less attractive features. He was chronically ambitious and seemed to judge all of his moves by the degree to which they would advance his career. He would also be classed as an outright misogynist were it not for the fact that he had a gushing ‘mother complex’ (Jenkins, 28) and doted on his sister. For his ‘close and intense friendships were with men’ (Jenkins, 28), he resisted all pressures to marry, and even went so far as to refuse to accept the appointment of married men to his missions. In marked contrast to his predecessor, Sir Henry Bulwer, women, it seems, were to Lyons just a damned nuisance, although whether this was only because he believed that they provoked quarrels within a mission and required special provisions to be made for them, is not altogether clear. Perhaps, like De Vera in *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (1635), he also believed that they were a diplomatic liability because incapable of keeping secrets. It is hardly surprising that innuendo suggesting homosexuality later emerged in the more daring organs of the French press. This was the man who, having recovered his health but declined to return to Washington (he had resigned in February 1865) was in August promoted to the rank of ambassador and appointed to Constantinople, aged only 48.

Lyons arrived in the Ottoman capital on 12 October. Bulwer departed within a fortnight but left his wife behind and revealed the disturbing idea of returning in the spring as ‘a private citizen’ (Jenkins, 259).

The new ambassador had used his influence to bring with him two younger

men who had served him, and to whom he had become close, in Washington: George Sheffield, his private secretary with the rank of third secretary; and Edward Malet, second secretary. He was also delighted with the fact that William Stuart, another misogynist, was secretary of embassy at Constantinople, since he had served him well in the same capacity in Washington until his transfer a little over a year earlier. With his trusted team with him and expecting to be able to deal directly with the grand vizier and the foreign minister because of their knowledge of French, Lyons – who by this time was plump as well as short and presented ‘a faintly hangdog face’ (Jenkins, 262) – complacently anticipated that the dragoman system would ‘languish’. This, of course, ‘proved completely naïve’ (Berridge, *British Diplomacy in Turkey*, 63).

In addition to disappointment on this score, Lyons found himself confronting the same obstacles to securing influence at the Porte as those experienced by his predecessor, chief among them an increasingly entrenched lack of faith in British support. Nevertheless, he was believed to have made the best of a bad job. Certainly, he made little if any progress in encouraging financial discipline, despite taking a great interest in the subject. And in connection with serious restlessness in the Danubian Principalities he could for the most part only adopt policies of watchfulness and discouragement of armed intervention; and this posture provoked the Turkish charge that Britain cared ‘more for its relationship with France than the integrity of the empire’ (Jenkins, 269). But in the end it was believed in London that he had played an important role – along with the French ambassador – in coaxing the Porte to accept a united Romania under a foreign prince. He also achieved limited success in securing the help of the Ottoman foreign minister in restricting further French land-grabs along the route of the Suez Canal, which remained Britain’s main strategic anxiety in the region at the time. And, unlike Bulwer, he exploited to a much greater extent the intelligence-gathering capacity of Britain’s vast consular network in the Ottoman Empire – so at least his reports reflected a better grasp of what was going on.

It was because of a paucity of the kind of outstanding candidate thought to be needed for the coveted Paris embassy following the announcement of the retirement of the ambassador, Lord Cowley, as well as because of the professionalism and unblemished record of Lord Lyons, that – despite reservations about his aptitude for the social side of the job and lack of a wife – he was appointed to this most important

of British posts, the pinnacle of the career. This could have happened in 1866, when the government in London changed, but Cowley had decided to postpone his retirement until July 1867. Arriving in Paris not until late October of that year, therefore, with Sheffield once more in tow and Malet following in January (he had been appointed a ‘supernumerary’ second secretary six months earlier but had to be prised from the clutches of the Foreign Office), Lyons commenced his posting just a few years before the commencement of one of the most turbulent periods in the modern history of France – and he remained there for an astonishing 20 years. Among the numerous episodes in this period that created tension between Britain and France were French humiliation in the war with Prussia in 1870-1, in which – to the disgust of the French – Britain maintained neutrality, and the ending of Anglo-French control in Egypt with unilateral British military occupation in 1882. Throughout all of these events, Lyons played a key role in preventing any complete rupture in Anglo-French relations, but he paid a price for it. For example, because he followed the French government to Tours in mid-September as the Prussians tightened their grip on Paris, he was (unfairly) criticised for abandoning the large British community in the city to a ‘skeleton staff’ that itself soon disappeared as well (Berridge, *Diplomatic Whistleblower*, 119).

Raymond Jones, speaking of the British diplomatic service, says that Lord Lyons was not only ‘the first major diplomat who owed his appointment to the highest post in diplomacy to professional rather than political considerations’ but also deservedly enjoyed the reputation of being Britain’s ‘greatest mid-century ambassador’ (Jones, 31, 126). The first of these observations is true but the second is more debateable. In any event, it further supports the reputation of Lord Lyons that he was kept at Paris until 1887 and only allowed to surrender his post because he had by then reached the age of compulsory retirement. Exhausted and complaining of ill health, he died only a few weeks later, on 5 December 1887.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); *FO List*, January 1874; Jenkins, B., *Lord Lyons* (McGill-Queen’s UP, 2014); Jones; Lambert, A., ‘Lyons, Edmund, first Baron Lyons (1790–1858)’, *ODNB*; Sasso, B., ‘Lyons, Richard Bickerton Pemell, Earl Lyons (1817–1887)’, *ODNB*.

Elliot, Sir Henry George (1867-77)

Henry George Elliot was the second son of Gilbert Elliot, the second earl of Minto, and was born at Geneva on 30 June 1817. After Eton and Cambridge, in the late 1830s he served as aide-de-camp and private secretary to the governor of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) but then got a flying start in diplomacy via his family's outstanding political connections. His father, Lord Minto, had been a good friend of the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, since their shared school days and had willingly taken on the unpopular legation at Berlin for him in the early 1830s; as First Lord of the Admiralty, he had thereafter become a valuable cabinet ally. Furthermore, in July 1841, the leading Whig and Liberal politician, Lord John Russell – subsequently twice foreign secretary himself and twice prime minister – had married one of Elliot's sisters. It is therefore hardly surprising that, in June 1840, Palmerston should first have taken him on as his *précis* writer and in August of the following year – shortly before leaving the Foreign Office – switched him to a *paid* attaché post (Minto's family was not wealthy) at St Petersburg. In Palmerston's third term as foreign secretary (July 1846–December 1851), Elliot was promoted to secretary of legation at The Hague (June 1848), where he was for long periods *chargé d'affaires*. At the end of 1853, he was transferred to Vienna and in March 1858 appointed minister at Copenhagen. Thereafter, until appointed to succeed Lyons at Constantinople, Elliot was employed chiefly in Italy in an effort to cope with the consequences of Garibaldi – with mixed results, and public controversy over the allegation of 'jobbery' when appointed by his brother-in-law as minister at the court of the King of Italy in 1863.

Sir Henry Elliot might have acquired the reputation of being the 'old favourite of Liberal fortunes' (Jones, 173) but he was conscientious, competent and had at least acquired considerable diplomatic experience by the time he was appointed ambassador at Constantinople on 6 July 1867, shortly after his fiftieth birthday. He was the servant of a Tory government in which Lord Stanley was foreign secretary, while the new ambassador's brother-in-law, Lord John Russell, was relegated to leadership of the opposition in parliament.

Elliot's fortunes in the Ottoman capital – as in Italy – were decidedly mixed, although not always through any fault of his own. Prominent among the misfortunes for which he could not be blamed was the embassy fire of 6 June 1870. This inferno

destroyed all but the stone walls of the new embassy that Stratford Canning had struggled so hard to see completed less than two decades earlier, incinerated his private papers (although not the embassy archives), and brought his family to within an inch of their lives. The result was that Elliot had to live in a rented house on the edge of the embassy site until the British Palace was restored in 1873.

Despite this disruption, and problems with his staff that caused worry in London, Elliot was able at least to arrest the decline in British influence at the Porte and to some degree increase it. Lord Granville, who became foreign secretary just a month after the embassy fire and occupied this post until early 1874, felt that the ambassador held his own against the well-entrenched and formidable Russian ambassador, General Ignatiev, to whose ‘determination and intelligence’ it was commonly believed was largely due the recovery of the influence of the Russian party at Constantinople (Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, 39-40). And in his diary for 17 March 1875 Lord Stanley – who had replaced Granville a little over a year earlier – wrote: ‘I doubt [apparently forgetting Stratford] if at any time the personal influence of a British ambassador has been greater with the Porte than it is now,’ while admitting that it helped that the British were the only friends the Turks had (Vincent, ed., 201).

But influence is as influence does, and Elliot had not long before told Stanley that such influence as he had arose solely from his ‘habit of not interfering needlessly’ (Vincent, ed., 191). This limited the scope for its testing. His Turcophile policy – which followed the Foreign Office line on the need to preserve as far as possible the integrity of the Ottoman Empire – also left Elliot exposed. This is because he was the more easily demonised in the course of the outcry in Britain provoked by the excesses of the Turkish response to Christian violence at the time of the so-called ‘Bulgarian horrors’ in the spring of 1876, which were made so much of by the Gladstonian Liberals. It was, therefore, more or less inevitable that in December – no doubt glossing over for the royal benefit his own role in inflaming the affair – Benjamin Disraeli, the Tory prime minister, should have told Queen Victoria that he intended to recall him. In the event, Elliot was allowed to remain at his post in order ‘to shackle’ (unsuccessfully) Lord Salisbury on the latter’s special embassy to Constantinople at the turn of the year (Matthew), but he was removed in temporary favour of his low-rated secretary of embassy, the hon. W. N. Jocelyn, in late January. However, Elliot’s humiliation was covered because the ambassadors of the other

great powers were recalled at the same time; this was in protest at the amazing refusal of the Turks to obey the orders on the conduct their internal affairs issued to them by the powers at the conference held in their own capital but to which, by some oversight, they had not been invited. It is worth noting that the fair-minded Sir Edwin Pears, whose reporting for the *Daily News* first revealed the atrocities in Bulgaria, did not believe that Sir Henry Elliot – ‘an honest and intelligent British Ambassador’ – had approved them and thought he had been disgracefully misrepresented in Britain, with the result that he had ‘incurred much undeserved obloquy’ (Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, 79). He admitted, nevertheless, that it made him ‘a favourite with the Turks’ (Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, 65).

Despite the circumstances attending his recall from Constantinople, Elliot was not cast aside. At the end of 1877, he was appointed ambassador at one of the other top posts, Vienna, and remained there for six years. This demonstrated that he remained well connected and was not seen as having been rendered altogether useless by the ‘stupidity and caprices’ (quoted in Matthew) he was alleged to possess by Lord Salisbury. After Vienna, Elliot retired, and he died on 30 March 1907.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); Bourne; Elliot, H., *Diplomatic Recollections* (n.d.); Jones; Matthew, H. C. G., ‘Elliot, Sir Henry George (1817–1907)’, *ODNB*; Pears; Pears, Sir Edwin, *Life of Abdul Hamid* (Constable, 1917); Vincent, J. (ed), *A Selection from the Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93) between September 1869 and March 1878*. Camden Fifth Series , vol.4 (Royal Historical Society, 1994).

Layard, Sir (Austen) Henry (1877-81)

‘Henry Austen’ was the name given to the first of four children of Henry Layard, formerly a civil servant in Ceylon with Huguenot antecedents. Together with his wife Mary (a banker’s daughter), Henry senior finally settled in Florence; here, they both enjoyed literary and artistic company. Their son, who was born on 5 March 1817, was given a cosmopolitan early schooling in continental Europe but in 1834 was made an articled clerk in the London solicitor’s office of his uncle, Benjamin Austen. It was at his uncle’s request that the order of the youth’s forenames was formally and – as it turned out – definitively reversed (he was always recorded as ‘Austen Henry’ in the *Foreign Office List*). But the victim of this tinkering still preferred ‘Henry’ and – to

the confusion of posterity – it was this name he used throughout his life.

Rebelling against his dull legal apprenticeship and ‘desperate for fame and exotic experiences’ (Parry), in 1839 – in the company of a new friend with similar ideas – young Layard headed back to Ceylon via the overland route. But he became so fascinated by Persia and Arabia that he never got any further, and the rest is history. Leaving his friend to proceed alone, over the following decade – during which he was often short of money and only narrowly escaped death at least twice – he lived with tribesmen, learned the languages, and developed a special interest in ancient sites near Mosul. Here his discovery of Assyrian remains – especially the city of Nineveh – brought him lasting archaeological fame. He was also acclaimed as a first class example of ‘the type of the fearless, independently minded British explorer’ (Parry); indeed, he makes ‘Indiana Jones’, the cinematic hero of the following century, look like merely an adventurous tourist. Layard was honoured by the University of Oxford and the Royal Geographical Society; and in 1853 he was given the freedom of the City of London because Assyrian references to biblical names and events documented in his publications were held by overjoyed clerics to verify the Bible.

The reputation Layard had acquired was well suited to a political career with a foreign affairs tinge, and it was to such a course that he diverted from archaeology at the beginning of the 1850s. He secured and held a seat in the House of Commons in all but three years between 1852 and 1869. He identified with the Liberals but was really ‘an old-school radical’ (Parry), who resented being tethered by party discipline and stupid voters. Among other things, he urged opposition to Russian influence in the Near East and support for the Ottoman Empire (he established the Ottoman Bank in 1856), lashed with criticism the conduct of the Crimean War by the Aberdeen government and the widespread jobbery that resulted in the occupation of important official posts by incompetents, condemned British chauvinism in the East, supported the Risorgimento, and encouraged the public understanding and appreciation of art, especially that of the Renaissance. From time to time he held minor government posts to which he thought his interests suited, and turned down numerous others. Among the former was that of political under-secretary (what today would be called ‘junior minister’) at the Foreign Office from 1861 to 1866 and first commissioner of works from 1868 to 1869. But in the latter role it soon became clear that he was not to be

allowed the funds needed for the grand public building programme of which he dreamed, and it occurred to him that diplomacy might suit him better. Hence ‘Layard of Nineveh’ became British Minister at Madrid, a political appointment that ‘caused a considerable amount of heart-burning inside the service’ (Jones, 175), although apparently not on the part of the permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, Edmund Hammond.

In 1877, the Tory prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, was looking for a replacement for Sir Henry Elliot at Constantinople who could head off war between Russia and Turkey that was once more being threatened. Such a man would need to persuade the new sultan, Abdülhamid II, that the then state of public opinion would prevent British support for him in the event of such a conflict, that justly demanded concessions would therefore need to be made to prevent it – but that, should this fail and the fall of Constantinople itself be in prospect, decisive British intervention might yet be forthcoming, provided the Turks were putting up a good fight and offering real evidence that in governing their empire they were mending their ways. Such a new ambassador, he said, must have ‘the necessary experience and commanding mind ... and not [be] too scrupulous’ (quoted in Jones, 178). His eye fell on Layard.

As it happened, Layard had acquitted himself so well at Madrid that he had been left there undisturbed. Moreover, his experience of as well as continuing interest in the Ottoman Empire went back a long way, and he was at least as pro-Turkish as Elliot. He believed that Muslims were as entitled as Christians to live in the Balkans, that both had suffered equally from the periodic flare-ups of violence rooted in the region’s religious divisions, and that ‘Russian-inspired complaints about Turkish misbehaviour towards the Balkan Christians’ should be ignored (Parry). These views presented no problems for Disraeli. Layard also had some experience of the Constantinople embassy itself in the decade starting in 1842; that is, in the time of Stratford Canning. Running out of money on his explorations of the ambassador’s fiefdom and attracting Stratford’s attention not only by his knowledge of the disputed Turco-Persian border but also – as his archaeological work showed more promise – because of the national prestige that would attach to his success, he persuaded the ambassador to support him. This took the form initially of payments from his own pocket for intelligence work and then for direct support of the young man’s archaeological work. Later, Stratford coaxed money for him from the British Museum

and in the end also got Palmerston to make him a formal attaché at the embassy – first, in November 1847, as an unpaid attaché to work from Erzeroum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Treaty (although illness prevented this); and then, from April 1849 until February 1852, as a paid attaché. Altogether, this was not a bad curriculum vitae for the ambassadorship at Constantinople.

Layard's summons to take over as soon as possible at Constantinople, which took him completely by surprise, came only on 27 March. He was formally appointed at first only as 'special ambassador *ad interim*' – it having been put about that Elliot had simply been granted leave of absence on account of ill-health – but then as ambassador in his own right when Elliot was transferred to Vienna on the last day of the year. Unfortunately, the new ambassador sailed straight into a crisis, because just four days after his arrival, on 24 April 1877, Russia launched a war on Turkey, the upshot of which was a congress of the European powers at Berlin in the middle of the following year that squeezed the Ottoman Empire further to the benefit of the tsar and his Balkan allies – but not so far as had been promised by their military victories. In all of this, the major contribution of Layard – who was not consulted on the negotiations at the Congress of Berlin – was perhaps the supply of information to London that he acquired not only from his consuls but also from the exceptionally large cadre of military attachés he was allowed. For although he had developed a good rapport with the new, young sultan, he was severely handicapped in pressing on him acceptance of his government's views by the slow and topsy-turvy manner in which Disraeli's cabinet sought to integrate force with diplomacy in the Eastern Crisis. Layard claimed himself to have 'great personal influence' generally with the Turks (Pears, 76), and on this basis Lord Salisbury, who became foreign secretary in April 1878, secured for him an honour in June. On the big questions, then, his direct impact was probably marginal. At most, he could take credit for helping to obtain Abdülhamid's agreement to the acquisition by Britain of Cyprus (this was for the purposes of establishing the military base in the Levant for which the government had recently begun to look – although Cyprus was not the ambassador's first choice), and later for helping to make the Porte if not the Palace, more amenable to the idea of coming to terms with the inevitability of territorial losses in the Balkans. But on reforms in Asiatic Turkey, Layard met increasing resistance in 1879 and quite failed to get his way with the sultan on key appointments.

When the Liberal leader, W. E. Gladstone, returned to office as prime minister in April 1880 it was a foregone conclusion that Layard would before long be recalled, despite the fact that he enjoyed the continued backing of Queen Victoria. He was far too pro-Turkish for the Liberals. Besides, Salisbury thought his influence at Constantinople ‘worn out’ (quoted in Jones, 179). But the ambassador made it easy for the new government by sending a dispatch suggesting he no longer had faith in Turkey’s willingness to reform and claiming that the sultan was a hypocrite. This was published by Gladstone in order to expose the ambassador’s alleged volte face and, chiefly because interpreted as an opportunistic bid for popular favour to save his post, was the cause of much ridicule. Layard was informed of his recall on 6 May – to his fury, in a disingenuous telegram saying he might have ‘leave of absence from Constantinople for some time’ and, to add injury to insult, sent *en clair*, so that it was public knowledge before he received it himself (Layard, in Kunalp ed., 682). He left Turkey on 2 June 1880 but his appointment was not formally terminated until the end of the year. Despite this treatment, it is rather surprising that he hoped for another diplomatic post and was strung along until 1884 with the possibility first of Rome and then Berlin, until on 23 October of that year he bitterly gave up and settled for a diplomatic pension. He died on 5 July 1894.

Main sources: *FO List 1890*; Jones; Kunalp; Neilson & Otte; Parry, J., ‘Layard, Sir Austen Henry (1817–1894)’, *ODNB*; Pears; Yasamee.

Goschen, George Joachim (1880-1)

Born on 10 August 1831, George Goschen was a politician and financier. He was the eldest son of a successful merchant banker who had emigrated from Germany to England in 1814. (The umlaut was dropped from the family name, Göschen, as part of its efforts at Anglicization.) After Rugby and Oxford, George joined the family firm, and in 1858 also became a director of the Bank of England. He was a Liberal and ardent free trader, and a very clever thinker. He also had early political ambitions, and in 1863 was elected unopposed to the House of Commons for the City of London. Seen as a coming man in the Liberal Party, he was made briefly vice-president of the Board of Trade in Lord John Russell’s government in November 1865, and only two months later chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster with a seat in the cabinet. In

Gladstone's first administration, he sat in the cabinet first for the Poor Law Board (1868-71) and then for the Admiralty (1871-4). However, serious differences were arising between Goschen and Gladstone, chiefly over domestic party policy, and it proved impossible for him to be included in the prime minister's new cabinet formed in April 1880; there were fears that he might split the party, and it suited Gladstone to get him out of the country. He was first tempted with the offer of the post of viceroy of India, but probable policy differences blocked this as well. And it was following this that he was offered Constantinople, which he accepted on the understanding that he could retain his seat in the House of Commons, that the posting would be without pay, and that it would conclude as soon as he had achieved certain specific tasks; hence the title 'Special Ambassador' at Constantinople, the appointment effective from the date of Layard's recall, 6 May 1890.

On the face of it, Goschen was an unlikely candidate for any diplomatic post, let alone one as challenging as Constantinople, for he had no diplomatic experience at all and – unlike his predecessor when making the same sort of move – no ambition to build a diplomatic career. On the other hand, as a result of his lengthy term as First Lord of the Admiralty in the first half of the 1870s, he might have been supposed to be comfortable with at least the technical side of that most favoured tool of British diplomacy with lesser states, the 'naval demonstration'. Furthermore, he had recent experience of an important component of the Ottoman Empire because in October 1876 he had been employed by the Council of Foreign Bondholders to negotiate an unforgiving settlement with the profligate khedive of Egypt, following the latter's suspension of payments on foreign loans. He also had a younger brother, Edward, who was a diplomatist, and by 1880 had been in the diplomatic service for over ten years and was already a second secretary; Edward was allowed to accompany his older brother to Constantinople. And, while this probably weighed little if at all with Gladstone himself, the bitter pills the sultan would be asked to swallow by Goschen might have been sugared by the knowledge that the tormentor sent him was among those moderate Liberals who thought that Gladstone's criticism of Turkey over the 'Bulgarian horrors' had been too extreme. In short, whether by accident or design, the choice of Goschen to take over from Layard at Constantinople could have been worse.

The biggest of the bitter pills to be administered by the Special Ambassador –

his specific tasks – were, first, the full implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin on Balkan boundary changes and, second, administrative reforms in Asiatic Turkey that would improve the lot of the Armenians. This programme was the first goal of the ‘Concert of Europe’ successfully revived by the new Gladstone government in order to ‘unite the Great Powers in defence of treaties and the “public law” of Europe’ (Yasamee, 76). In its pursuit, Goschen was its chief man on the spot.

On Montenegro he faced particularly stubborn resistance from Abdülhamid, who by then no longer had a Russian army on his doorstep and was thoroughly disillusioned with and intensely suspicious of Britain. Fortunately for the new ambassador, not only did the ‘Concert’ prove willing to bare its (naval) teeth when the occasion was thought to demand it, but it also turned out that he had diplomatic skills if not diplomatic training. He made an understandably shaky start from the point of view of protocol, but this was by no means altogether his own fault since Granville had omitted to secure *agrément* for his appointment. Thereafter, he achieved moderate success, at least eventually reaching agreement with the sultan on Montenegro without having to occupy Smyrna (although this was threatened), and then on Greece in May 1881, which enabled Goschen to leave when the convention giving effect to it was signed (the ratifications were exchanged a month later). His mission had proved to be not quite ‘the drear and grisly apparition speeding to them from the West’ that the Turks had at first feared but to be one led, the much-travelled Anglo-Irish politician and writer, W. H. Gregory, said in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, by ‘a very able and courteous British gentleman’ (*The Times*). For his part, Edwin Pears said later that ‘Of all the eleven British Ambassadors I have seen in Constantinople, he impressed me most with his thorough business aptitude and tact’ (Pears, 82). It must be admitted, however, that this was something of a gloss on how he was seen by the Turks themselves.

In May 1881 Goschen was relieved of his temporary Turkish attachment and left Constantinople at the end of the month, returning to Britain in order to resume his political career. (His brother, on the other hand, remained at the Pera embassy until promoted secretary of legation at Peking at the end of 1885; by the eve of the First World War he was ambassador at Berlin.) Before long he gravitated to the Conservative Party, although he did not formally join it until 1893. From 1887 until 1892 he served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and from 1895 until 1900 once more

as First Lord of the Admiralty. He was raised to the peerage in 1900 and in 1903 elected Chancellor of Oxford University in succession to Lord Salisbury. He died on 7 February 1907.

Main sources: *FO List 1890*; Kunalp; Pears; Spinner jun., Thomas J., 'Goschen, George Joachim, first Viscount Goschen (1831–1907)', *ODNB*; *The Times*, 14 June 1880, 'Mr. Goschen's Mission', W. H. Gregory; Yasamee.

Dufferin, Earl of (1881-4)

Frederick Blackwood (who later added the surnames 'Temple-Hamilton' to his patronymic) was born on 21 June 1826 and inherited the Irish peerage of his father, the naval officer Price Blackwood, in 1841. However, by the time he arrived at Constantinople he had been advanced to the British peerage with the titles of Viscount Clandeboye and Earl of Dufferin. Marrying in 1862 Harriot Georgina Rowan-Hamilton, who was sister to the mother of Harold Nicolson, he became the much-admired 'Uncle Duff' to that well-known diarist and writer on diplomacy of the following generation.

As was common with his social class, Dufferin – as he usually came to be known – was educated at Eton and then Oxford. Together with 'the manners and sympathies ... of a whig grandee,' he was also extremely handsome – 'almost too handsome,' thought Queen Victoria, who was in a position to know because through the favour of Lord John Russel he served her as Lord-in-Waiting from 1849 until 1852 and again (under Aberdeen and Palmerston) from 1854 until 1858 (Davenport-Hines). Between 1855 and 1861 he began also to sample diplomacy by assisting Russell in an ad hoc capacity but did not enter the service seriously until 1879. In the intervening years, Nicolson's 'decorous' uncle (Nicolson, 4) held a succession of important government posts, which included junior ministerial positions ('parliamentary under-secretary') at the India Office and War Office, and chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster (without a cabinet seat), until in 1872 he was appointed Governor-General of Canada. Here he 'entertained lavishly, travelled incessantly ... and spoke on every possible occasion, encouraging Canadian pride, and promoting Canada overseas,' and is said to have proved 'the most popular' of nineteenth century proconsuls in this white dominion (Davenport-Hines).

Thus well prepared in most respects for an ambassadorial role, in February 1879 Dufferin – a ‘distinguished outsider’ to the diplomatic service (Jones, 175) – was given the embassy at St Petersburg. Here his silky skills were put to good use in preserving normal relations despite the usual tensions between Britain and Russia, not least over the ‘Eastern Question’. This posting, therefore, added further qualifications for his transfer to Constantinople a little over two years later; he was appointed on 26 May 1881.

Arriving at the British Palace in Pera in the middle of June, Dufferin was fortunate to find a strong staff, including two future permanent under-secretaries at the Foreign Office – Arthur Nicolson (future father of Harold), second secretary since 1879; and Charles Hardinge, an attaché on his first appointment only recently arrived. He also enjoyed a somewhat warmer reception from the Turks than Goschen, for he came as the more usual sort of ambassador and with inside his baggage ‘golden opinions’ for ‘genial cordiality’ he had achieved elsewhere (*The Times*); Pears says that the first impression of both Palace and Porte was that he was ‘so complacent and weak that they could do anything they liked with him’ (Pears, 87). This was an exaggeration, although it is certain that he was sufficiently realistic to understand that, as he told the foreign secretary well into his posting, ‘no Ambassador will ever succeed in putting the Sultan in his pocket’ (quoted in Yasamee, 50).

In the event, Anglo-Turkish relations continued to slide during Dufferin’s posting, despite the fact that ‘pressure for reform had subsided into ineffective nagging’ (Anderson, 224). In 1882 it was also decided to end Britain’s experiment with military consuls designed to ‘beef it up’ that had been started only a few years earlier, although despondency in the face of the sultan’s stubborn resistance was not the only reason for this (Berridge, 89). However, Dufferin was hardly to blame for the deterioration and the corresponding drop in British influence. The simple fact is that Gladstone and Abdülhamid loathed each other as much as ever – and Germany (by then happy to supply military advisers) and Russia (indifferent as always to Ottoman domestic affairs) were the beneficiaries. When in mid-September British forces unilaterally occupied the sultan’s Egyptian province and established a permanent garrison to protect the Suez Canal, in the process removing the nationalist leadership and reinstating the khedive, Abdülhamid’s hatred and distrust of the British rose sharply. Nevertheless, in this business Dufferin had at least managed to prevent a

rupture and also helped to soothe the other great powers. He was able to do this because he was the perfect agent for conducting a well-mannered diplomatic ‘charade’ (Yasamee, 99): the lengthy negotiations with Turkish ministers during August and the first half of September designed to obtain a token Ottoman force to collaborate with the British commanders, by this means seeking to convey the impression that the Gladstone government maintained its respect for the sultan’s suzerainty over Egypt. He broke off his negotiations only after it was announced on 18 September 1882 that an Ottoman force was no longer needed, but this did not end his preoccupation with Egypt. At the beginning of November, accompanied by Arthur Nicolson, he commenced a ‘special mission’ to Cairo from which he was not to return to Constantinople until the following May and in the course of which he drew up a new constitution for Egypt.

Dufferin’s handling of his very difficult brief in Turkey produced plaudits at home. In October 1884 he was made Viceroy of India, after tenure of which position he was rewarded with advancement in the peerage from an earl to a marquess (one only below a duke). At the end of 1888 he was made ambassador at Rome, and – three years later – at Paris. By the end of his career, therefore, Dufferin had held the highest positions available to a British public servant in both proconsular and diplomatic spheres. But in 1897 – having never been rich by the standards of his class – he became innocently involved in a company run by a swindler, thereby earning financial disgrace rather than wealth via speculation; in fact, he suffered serious financial losses. This is why Harold Nicolson described him as his ‘tragic’ as well as his ‘decorous’ Uncle Duff (Nicolson, 4). He also lost his eldest son in the South African war. It is an interesting footnote that in July 1891 Dufferin’s second son, Terence, began his own, brief diplomatic career as an attaché at the British embassy in Constantinople. Dufferin died on 12 February 1902.

Main sources: Anderson; Berridge (2009); Davenport-Hines, R., ‘Blackwood, Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple-, first marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826–1902)’, *ODNB*; *FO List 1890*; Jones; Neilson & Otte; Nicolson, H., *Helen’s Tower* (Constable, 1937); Pears; Rose, N., *Harold Nicolson* (Vintage, 2014); *The Times*, 14 June 1881; Yasamee.

White, Sir William Arthur (1885-92)

William Arthur White is said to have been born in Poland in February 1824, the 'natural' son of Prince Adam Czartoryski, the Polish nobleman who had such influence over Russian foreign policy in the early nineteenth century. As often happened in such cases, however, he was brought up by others, and the step-father he acquired, Arthur White, was a British consular officer of Irish stock. William was schooled in England and at Cambridge, and – plausibly enough – is reported to have then worked as manager of a small estate in Poland until Russia officialdom made life too uncomfortable for him (Wilton). Following in his step-father's footsteps, therefore, in 1857 he switched to the consular career. In the course of this he was given early responsibility and achieved its pinnacle well before taking under his authority the British embassy at Constantinople.

It was as a clerk that he was appointed in 1857, and the place of his appointment was the British consulate-general in Warsaw, where, for long periods (some of them exceptionally long), he was acting consul-general until October 1863. Almost three years earlier he had been made a vice-consul and in November 1864 was moved further up the consular ladder when given the rank of consul at Danzig, while simultaneously acting as consul-general at Warsaw until the following February. Hardly idle, in 1866 he had also served as acting Belgian consul, and represented French interests at Danzig during the later Franco-Prussian war. In February 1875 he finally left Poland when promoted to be agent and consul-general in Serbia.

White had obvious ability, great energy (until he became heavier with age), an encyclopaedic knowledge of Balkan politics, and familiarity with Slavonic languages. He was also physically impressive: a big man with a big beard and a big, booming voice – and sometimes a violent temper. While at Belgrade he was temporarily diverted to the service of Lord Salisbury during the latter's participation in the Constantinople conference at the end of 1876. Duly impressed by his qualities, Salisbury transferred him to Bucharest a few months after becoming foreign secretary in April 1878, and White's metamorphosis from consul to diplomat was complete when he was promoted to minister a year later. It was consolidated when he was knighted in March 1885 and in the following month instructed to take charge of the Constantinople embassy, first on his then existing rank and in the year after as

ambassador.

Sir William White's appointment at Constantinople was unusual in three ways. To begin with, he was the first Roman Catholic to be made a British ambassador since the Reformation. Second, the British consular and diplomatic careers remained separate services, and it was very rare for a consul to become a diplomat, least of all an ambassador. And third, White was not supposed to have been ambassador at Constantinople at all. This is because Sir Edward Thornton, then ambassador at St Petersburg, was appointed to this position on 1 December 1884, following Dufferin's late summer departure.

After much experience in Mexico and South America, Thornton had done well as minister at Washington for over thirteen years and then for three years in succession to Dufferin at St Petersburg. His had been 'a career marked by competent handling of important negotiations where a wrong step could have quickly led to a major crisis' (Sanderson): Thornton was a safe pair of hands. Too safe for his own good, as it turned out, because his departure from Russia was postponed in order that he might complete a tense negotiation started some time earlier. It was for this reason that on 18 April 1885 White was given charge at Constantinople – 'during the absence of the Ambassador' (*FO List*). But, as luck would have it, the principle of preference for the diplomat with expert knowledge that *delayed* Thornton's departure from St Petersburg then served to *obstruct* his arrival at the Ottoman capital; for White, with his 'unique knowledge of Balkan questions' (Sanderson), was thought to have become indispensable because a crisis had erupted in the Balkans in the previous autumn and an informal conference of ambassadors in Constantinople had produced no result. It was thus that Thornton did not arrive at the British Palace in Pera until 22 February 1886, a full year and three months following his appointment. And worse for him was to follow. White had planned to return to Bucharest almost at once 'from a desire to put an end to a situation awkward both for himself and his successor' (*The Times*, 8 March 1886), but at the last moment he was told to remain at Constantinople to represent Britain when it was learned that the conference was to resume; and he was unable to return to his own post at Bucharest until 10 April (later going on to England, where he received an honorary degree at Cambridge in June). Thornton's pride having taken one blow by a public demonstration that he was thought incompetent to lead for Britain in a key negotiation, it was not long before

another one fell on his body. On 7 May, poor Sir Edward was thrown heavily from his horse and sustained a serious fracture to his collar bone. This was clearly a sign and, sure enough, the final humiliation was at hand. Britain feared that Abdülhamid would make a Russian alliance and a fresh crisis in Bulgaria started in the autumn that led to periodic alarms about a possible Russian occupation. Thornton himself did not make the former spectre less likely by suggesting ‘a hostile turn in British policy’ when, on 16 August, he demanded substantial administrative reforms in Asia Minor without informing London (Yasamee, 188). He was recalled for ‘consultations’ in early September 1886, and the cabinet – in which Salisbury was by that time prime minister – decided that Sir William White should resume control of the embassy despite a ‘clear hint’ followed by ‘explicit’ objections from the sultan that such a move would be unwelcome (Yasamee, 189, 191). In choreography revealed by *The Times* in its edition of 25 September to be ‘definitely settled’, on 11 October White was appointed ‘Special Ambassador’, Thornton left Constantinople for good a few days later, and on 1 January 1887 – the same day on which Thornton took his pension – White was made ‘Ambassador’. Queen Victoria, who had come to share the view that Sir William was far better suited to this post than Sir Edward, was well satisfied.

White, who had got this post over the bones of a worthy colleague but could hardly be blamed for that, did not disappoint. Certainly, it was the special envoy, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, who handled the negotiations in Constantinople in early 1887 over Egypt (which eventually failed when the sultan – under intense Franco-Russian pressure – refused to ratify the convention signed in May 1887). However, it was Salisbury’s ‘most famous appointment’ (Jones, 184), known to the Turks as ‘the Bosphorus bull’ (Pears, 31), who gave an edge at Constantinople to his policy of encouraging Abdülhamid’s resistance to Russia over Bulgaria and the Straits, significantly reliant as this was on the support for the status quo of Austria, Italy and especially Germany. This derived not only from the ambassador’s ability but also from the fact that he had a German wife and spoke German well. With hindsight, the downside of this from the British point of view was that he encouraged the growth of German influence in the Ottoman Empire, and was ‘subsequently much criticized’ for it (Harris).

White’s role in his last years at the British embassy was less important to Salisbury as the ‘Eastern Question’ became relatively dormant and his interest in

propping up the Ottoman Empire dropped. But at this period there was always commercial diplomacy (especially railways) and in this Sir William took a close interest. But the ambassador – who hated sport – also put on more weight and began to show signs of weakening energy. A cure at the ‘German baths’ in the summer of 1890 revived him and he seemed set to remain in charge at Constantinople until obligatory retirement at age 70 in a few years’ time. However, on 28 December 1891 he died suddenly while visiting his family in Berlin; he was buried with Roman Catholic rites in the city.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); *FO List 1890*; Drummond Wolff, Sir Henry, *Rambling Recollections*, vol. 2 (Macmillan, 1908); Hardinge, Sir Arthur H., *A Diplomatist in the East* (Cape, 1928); Hardinge; Harris, C. A., ‘White, Sir William Arthur (1824–1891)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; Jones; Neilson & Otte; Otte; Pears; Sanderson, T. H., ‘Thornton, Sir Edward (1817–1906)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; Wilton, R. A., letter, *The Times*, 4 January 1892; Yasamee.

Ford, Sir (Francis) Clare (1892-3)

Sir Clare Ford was born in London in 1828 but spent his early years chiefly in Spain. After a brief military career, in 1852 he entered the diplomatic service as an unpaid attaché at Naples. There followed a slow but sure progression up the ladder of diplomatic ranks, and through probably rather more than the average number of postings; these included some in South America and the United States, as well as Europe. He was judged by the Foreign Office to be ‘shrewd and hardworking’ but insufficiently ‘polished’ for the top job at Paris (Jones, 176, 185). The major landmarks in Ford’s diplomatic career were promotion from unpaid to paid attaché at Lisbon in 1857, second secretary at Stuttgart in 1862, secretary of legation at Buenos Aires in 1865, secretary of embassy at St Petersburg in 1871, minister at Buenos Aires in 1878, and – having been appointed to Madrid in 1884 – ambassador at the end of 1887 following elevation of the mission in the Spanish capital from legation to embassy status.

Having made the mistake of acquiring a reputation by the beginning of the 1870s as ‘a specialist in affairs where economic and commercial interests were concerned’ (Seccombe) – a reputation that would have had him made foreign secretary in the blink of an eye a century later – Ford was also required to serve as

British representative on two important international commissions dealing with fish. But at least all of this worthy service by a professional diplomat produced a crop of honours, including his knighthood in 1885.

Madrid, where Ford had already served for eight years by 1892, was his dream posting and it was only reluctantly that he replaced Sir William White at Constantinople, having been chosen not because he was suited to the post but because at the time there was believed to be no-one better. He was appointed in early January but – suffering from influenza – did not arrive until 25 February.

Unfortunately, Ford was far from being a success at Constantinople. For not only was his legendary predecessor a hard act to follow; but also, having dealt so expertly with fish before, Ford was in the Ottoman capital himself a fish – out of water. He had no experience of Near Eastern diplomacy and his health was not good. Matters might have been worse but ‘he came during a time of peace, and had no burning questions to deal with’ (Pears, 148). His second secretary and later permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office and viceroy of India, Charles Hardinge, wrote with typical savagery that ‘The appointment was a deplorable one in every way, for he was wanting both in capacity and knowledge. The political prestige of the Embassy dwindled very rapidly in his hands’ (Hardinge, 47) – the more so, claimed the sententious junior, because it was an open secret that he lived with a mistress, omitting to mention that Ford’s wife had died of cholera while with her husband in St Petersburg in 1872 and overlooking the fact that a far more flamboyant ménage of this sort appeared to have done Sir Henry Bulwer no harm when ambassador at Constantinople over half a century earlier. Nevertheless, on the main points Hardinge was right, and what he said was confirmed by Arthur Nicolson, the new secretary of embassy who arrived at the start of 1893 and had been instructed by the Foreign Office to report confidentially on his ‘amiable’ chief (Nicolson).

Thomas Seccombe, the assistant editor of the nineteenth century *Dictionary of National Biography*, summed up the situation well. Ford, he wrote, ‘soon found himself unequal to the strain of so difficult a position’ (Seccombe) and bent his mind to escape. On 15 June 1893 he left on leave and did not return until early October; only a month after this it was public knowledge that agrément was being sought for his transfer to the ‘much easier and much more agreeable’ post of Rome (*The Times*). There is evidence to suggest that the foreign secretary was ‘forced’ to take this step

because of the rumours about Ford's mistress (Otte, 188) but a more reasonable inference is that this was a pretext used by the foreign secretary (or Ford himself – or both of them) to effect the move without loss of face; that is, without casting aspersions on the ambassador's ability. Agrément was duly granted, and he was heading a new embassy before the end of the year. Ford remained at Rome until his retirement in 1898. He died in Paris, on 31 January 1899, a worthy diplomatist who through no fault of his own had been misplaced.

Main sources: *FO List 1890*; Hardinge; Jones; Nicolson, H., *Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart. First Lord Carnock. A Study in the Old Diplomacy*, second ed. (Constable, 1930); Otte; Pears; Seccombe, T., 'Ford, Sir (Francis) Clare (1828–1899)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; *The Times*, 1 Feb. 1899.

Currie, Sir Philip Henry Wodehouse (1893-8)

Sir Philip Currie, later Baron Currie of Hawley, was born in London on 13 October 1834, the fourth son of the wealthy banker and Liberal MP, Raikes Currie, and his wife, Laura Sophia, eldest daughter of Lord Wodehouse, patriarch of an old family of landed aristocrats in Norfolk. After Eton and until appointed at Constantinople, Currie made his career exclusively as a permanent official in the Foreign Office, rising eventually to the top position, permanent under-secretary, in 1889.

Currie's work in London had been leavened by occasional forays on official duty abroad, the most significant of which for his future ambassadorship, as well as for his career generally, was his much-appreciated service as secretary to Lord Salisbury at the Constantinople conference in December 1876. (It was also on this occasion that Currie investigated consular arrangements in the Eastern Mediterranean, subsequently producing a report that led in the following year to the creation of a specialised service staffed by properly trained, natural-born British subjects – the Levant Consular Service.) This conference was also 'the beginning of a friendship and close professional relationship between the two men' (Steiner). When Salisbury became foreign secretary in April 1878, Currie became his private secretary and, in foreign affairs, virtually his alter ego. Among other duties that were to prove invaluable preparation for Constantinople, he was joint secretary to the British delegation at the Congress of Berlin in June 1878; official in charge of the

correspondence on Cyprus until April 1880; head of the newly created Eastern Department, the most prestigious of all Foreign Office departments, with responsibility for the Ottoman Empire; joint protocolist to the London conference on Egyptian finance in the summer of 1884; and, of course, permanent under-secretary from 1889, which gave him the perspective to see policy to the Near East in the context of British foreign policy in general, not least because he ‘retained ultimate supervision over the Eastern Department’ (Neilson and Otte, 83).

Sir Philip Currie was appointed to replace Ford as ambassador at Constantinople at the end of 1893, not – as it turned out – by his great patron, Lord Salisbury, who had lost office in August 1892, but by Lord Roseberry, the foreign secretary in the succeeding, fourth and final government of William Gladstone. He was the first choice neither of the Queen nor of Roseberry, although the new foreign secretary was ‘anxious to maintain continuity with Salisbury’s policy’ and had been receptive to his permanent under-secretary’s advice (Neilson and Otte, 85). Currie’s appointment, following that of Sir Julian Pauncefote as minister at Washington in 1888, began the ‘slow, hesitant’ consolidation of a new norm: the assumption that senior positions in the diplomatic service and the Foreign Office were interchangeable (Jones, 187), which in the following century eventually led to their complete administrative integration. Currie took to Turkey Salisbury’s views: the need to block Russian expansionism in the Balkans and Central Asia, encourage reform without being hysterical about it, and pessimism about the long-term viability of the Ottoman Empire.

On 24 January, shortly before leaving for Turkey, Currie married the ‘scandalous’ poet and writer Mrs Mary Montgomerie Singleton, a ‘beautiful and charming woman’ and ‘well-known figure in London society’ (Small), whose much older husband of 30 years, an Irish landowner, had died in the previous March. ‘Violet Fane’, as she was better known, specialised in passionate love poems inspired by her own numerous and only thinly disguised affairs, the most persistent of which since the early 1870s – had been with Currie himself. ‘Their liaison,’ says her well-sourced entry in the *ODNB*, ‘rapidly became an open secret, and she acted as his hostess at entertainments for foreign dignitaries’ (Small). In light of this, and the spectacular prudishness of Victorian society, it is only too likely that the rumour was true that Currie’s ‘very quiet’ wedding in Kensington (*The Times*) was ‘due to the

pressing request of Queen Victoria' (Pears, 181), with whom the freshly appointed ambassador had 'kissed hands' at Osborne just a week earlier.

With a quick and subtle mind, Currie was self-confident and decisive. He was a skilful, hard-working and conscientious administrator; and to his credit, too, his personnel policy placed ability before seniority. But he was also 'long accustomed to have his own way' (Waugh, 36) and could be high-handed, lacking 'the patience, infinite tact, and indirectness of approach needed in the Ottoman capital' (Steiner). Furthermore, while he had gained great knowledge of the 'Eastern Question' from his long Foreign Office years, his first-hand experience of Near Eastern diplomacy verged on the non-existent. Arriving in Turkey on 10 February, he got off to a bad start that set the tone of his embassy.

At Adrianople, where it was a long established custom that new ambassadors were greeted by Turkish officials, it was still the early hours of the morning and Currie refused to emerge from the sleeping berth on his train.

Sir Philip Currie was Conservative in his own politics but at this juncture found himself serving a Liberal government. This made it the more necessary for the new master of the British Palace at Pera to preoccupy himself with the violence of Muslim fanatics against Armenian Christians and their forced conversion to Islam that began to gather pace in the autumn of 1894 and reached a crescendo in the winter of 1895-6. Nor did it make much difference when Salisbury was once more his master by the middle of 1895 because the public outcry in Britain against Turkish treatment of the Armenians was intense. Accordingly, Currie was forthright and insistent in demanding – in personal interviews with Abdülhamid as well as with his ministers – not only implementation of the long-promised reforms in the predominantly Armenian *vilayets* but also urgent investigation of the atrocities by official commissions on which there was consular representation, punishment or banishment of the offenders, and the safe return to Christianity not only of forced converts to Islam but also mosques that were formerly churches. Prominent and widely publicised in the investigations he eventually secured was Gerald Fitzmaurice, a member of the same Levant Consular Service the ambassador had inspired almost 20 years earlier and at the time a lowly member of the embassy dragomanate. Unfortunately for Currie, despite resorting to bribery at the Porte, the impact of his campaign on behalf of the Armenians was very limited. He had little if any support

from the other ambassadors, Salisbury had to admit that naval demonstrations would be useless, and Abdülhamid was obdurate. A five-day stand-off at the end of 1895, when a former grand vizier fallen from grace, Sa'id Pasha, was granted asylum in the embassy, did nothing to improve matters either.

British ambassador and Ottoman sultan had come to loathe each other. For a whole year they never met, and Abdülhamid 'made no secret of his wish to have Currie replaced' (Steiner). Further strain was placed on him by the consequences of the revolt in Crete in 1897 and – in the face of mounting competition – the need to give additional support to British commerce in Turkey. (His mission was one of the first British embassies to 'receive' a commercial attaché, in 1895, but this was significant more as an index of concern than for the help actually provided because the appointee had already been head of the commercial section of the consulate-general in Constantinople for over 20 years.) Accordingly, his health began to deteriorate. The ambassador, 'who had come out so full of fire and determination, had become old and broken down' (Hohler, 27), and was duly promised the same diplomatic convalescence as Ford: the Rome embassy. Together with his wife, who had found her diplomatic duties 'sorely' wearying and usually fell asleep at formal dinners (Hohler, 3), Sir Philip Currie left Constantinople in late May 1898 and arrived in Italy in July. He served there until his retirement at the end of 1902. He died on 12 May 1906.

Main sources: Berridge (2007); Berridge (2009); *FO List 1903*; Burman, John, *Britain's Relations with the Ottoman Empire during the Embassy of Sir Nicholas O'Connor to the Porte, 1898-1908* (Isis Press, 2010); Hohler, Sir Thomas, *Diplomatic Petrel* (Murray, 1942); Jones; Neilson & Otte; Pears; Small, H., 'Currie, Mary Montgomerie, Lady Currie (1843–1905)', *ODNB*; Steiner, Z., 'Currie, Philip Henry Wodehouse, Baron Currie (1834–1906)', *ODNB*; *The Times*, 25 Jan. 1894; Waugh, Sir Telford, *Turkey: Yesterday, to-day and to-morrow* (Chapman & Hall's, 1930)

O'Connor, Sir Nicholas Roderick (1898-1908)

Sir Nicholas O'Connor was an Irishman and devout Roman Catholic, and lineally descended from the last Irish king. He was born on 3 July 1843 and given a firm Catholic education, notably at the important Jesuit college of Stonyhurst in the British north-west and then at universities in Belgium and Germany – Oxford and Cambridge

being barred to him because of his religion. In 1877, he inherited his family's large estate at Dundermott in County Roscommon.

Entering the diplomatic service in 1866, O'Connor served successively at Berlin, Washington, and Madrid – and back again at Washington in 1874, by which time he was a second secretary. A year later he was transferred to Rio de Janeiro, and then in 1877 to Paris, where he had another education: six years under the new model bureaucratic ambassador and former head of mission at Constantinople, Lord Lyons. After this, at the end of 1883, he was promoted secretary of legation at Peking and began a 15-year period prior to his own appointment at Constantinople in which – in the words of his friend, permanent under-secretary Thomas Sanderson – he established his reputation in the Foreign Office as 'a safe pair of hands' in the conduct of complex negotiations (Sanderson). He was not only extremely shrewd, cautious and attentive to detail but also had the prized knack of being blunt without causing offence; in fact, he was generally quite tactful. As a result, he rose relatively quickly to the top of the profession: agent and consul-general in Bulgaria, a prized post for the ambitious British diplomat (January 1887-March 1892), minister at Peking (April 1892-October 1895), and ambassador at St Petersburg (October 1895-June 1898), gathering the usual honours en route.

In 1895, Lord Salisbury would have sent O'Connor to Berlin had he not been a Roman Catholic. But this had not obstructed his appointment to St Petersburg instead, and nor did it cause hesitation in his selection for Constantinople. This is probably because it was assumed that in Turkey one sort of unbeliever was regarded as much like another. In the event, however, it seems that O'Connor's Catholicism (and Irishness) actually made him more attractive to Abdülhamid because of the latter's hostility to 'fanatical British Protestantism' (Burman, 34). The other reason why the new ambassador's arrival in the Ottoman capital at the end of September 1898 produced a great sigh of relief is easier to understand: he was not Sir Philip Currie. In the embassy, too, he was welcomed, for not only was he – unlike Currie – a professional diplomatist with a formidable reputation but also one with recent experience of two countries that always impinged greatly on Britain's attitude to the Ottoman Empire: Bulgaria and Russia.

Unfortunately, however, O'Connor was past his peak. He was still only in his mid-50s at the beginning of what turned out to be almost ten years in Constantinople

but he was ‘never physically strong’ (Pears, *Forty Years*, 215) and his years in the Far East had taken a toll on his health. This began to deteriorate mid-way through his tour and was exacerbated by the gruelling demands of the Constantinople embassy. It sapped his energy, provoked occasional petulance, and made him prone to wishful thinking. His manipulative treatment of key members of his embassy staff and reflexive monopoly of the credit for their achievements caused lasting enmity. In confidential communications with his young disciples in the embassy, the chief sufferer and increasingly influential dragoman, Gerald Fitzmaurice, referred to him as ‘the Beast’, despite the fact that he was also an Irish Catholic.

Writing long after O’Conor’s death, Charles Hardinge, who in 1906 had replaced Sanderson as permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office and thought that O’Conor had got ‘too close to the Ottomans’ (Burman, 152), said: ‘I was glad that he never knew that his recall had been decided upon. He had done excellent service in the past, though he had not been a success at Constantinople’ (Hardinge, 151). But this was too harsh a judgement, for it overlooked the weak hand he was given to play: in particular, the entrenched Turcophobia in Britain that could cause the sultan to launch into a ‘bilious rant laced with wrath and scorn’ at ‘the very mention of the British’ (Burman, 221); and its corollary, the great surge in German influence at this time, in which the formidable German ambassador, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, played no small part.

In these circumstances, there was not a great deal that O’Conor could do apart from quickly establish a good personal relationship with Abdülhamid, which he did; strive to ensure that the sultan did not lose face in any negotiation when this was avoidable, which by and large he did as well; and, to these ends, press the Foreign Office to allow him as free a hand as possible – and while Lord Lansdowne was foreign secretary and Sanderson remained permanent under-secretary, the ambassador ‘tended to write his own instructions’ (Steiner, 176). But it remains hardly surprising that none of this – nor even his great diplomatic gifts – was adequate to achieve a solution with the British flag on it to the then insoluble Macedonian problem, which reached a critical stage in 1903. Nor was it sufficient to brush aside the Germans in the commercial field; O’Conor was ‘deeply disappointed’ with the failure of the Baghdad Railway negotiations in 1903 and 1905. It is also glossing his role somewhat to say, as Sanderson does, that ‘Among the more important questions which he

succeeded in bringing to a settlement' (Sanderson) were those of the Yemen-Aden boundary in 1905 and the Turco-Egyptian boundary in the Sinai peninsula – the 'Aqaba' or 'Tabah crisis' of 1906, which could have led to war. In both cases, especially the first, a great deal of the credit should go – and was at the time given – to Gerald Fitzmaurice, the man who took the lead in the field. In the second, having been made acting chief dragoman just five weeks before expiry of the ultimatum issued to the Turks to evacuate Tabah, it was he who negotiated directly with the grand vizier and other ministers at the decisive meeting which recommended the sultan climb down. Having said this, it is no doubt true that the 'soothing' influence of O'Connor was valuable to the management of both issues (Burman, 220). Furthermore, as Sanderson reminded O'Connor's detractors, he had also 'cleared a large number of long outstanding claims and subordinate questions which had been a permanent burden to his predecessors' (Sanderson).

Sir Nicholas O'Connor died in Constantinople on 19 March 1908, the first ambassador to die at this post since Edward Barton in 1598. Although one of his recent predecessors – Sir William White – had also been a Roman Catholic, it was still rare for any British ambassador to be of that religion. It was because he was a Roman Catholic that O'Connor had prayed in the chapel of the French embassy and his funeral service could not be held in the chapel of his own embassy either.

Main sources: Berridge (2007); Burman, J., *Britain's Relations with the Ottoman Empire during the Embassy of Sir Nicholas O'Connor to the Porte, 1898-1908* (Isis Press, 2010); *FO List 1906*; Hardinge; Otte; Sanderson, T. H., 'O'Connor, Sir Nicholas Roderick (1843–1908)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; Steiner, Z. S., *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (Ashfield, 1969); Waugh, Sir Telford, *Turkey: Yesterday, to-day and to-morrow* (Chapman & Hall's, 1930).

Lowther, Sir Gerard Augustus (1908-13)

The family of Sir Gerard Lowther, who was born on 16 February 1858, had long been powerful landowners in the north-west of England with a record of diplomatic and political service. His father, William Lowther (brother of the third Earl of Lonsdale), was a diplomatist and politician; from 1905 until 1921 his elder brother, James William, was speaker of the House of Commons; and a younger brother, Cecil, was a general in the Scots Guards and had been a military attaché earlier in his career.

Gerard was educated at Harrow and in 1879 began a career in the diplomatic service that saw him twice at Constantinople.

Lowther first went to Madrid, where he was promoted from attaché to third secretary in 1881 and transferred to Paris. It was three years after this that he first went to Turkey, where he served as second secretary at the British Embassy, for the greater part of his time under Sir William White. Charged in March 1886 with supervision of the Levant Service student interpreters installed at the small school at Ortakeui, it was here that he first encountered – and was impressed by – Gerald Fitzmaurice. This made the young Irishman an exception, for Lowther, who was powerfully built and had the habits of a country gentleman as well as the self-confidence of his class, was in general dismayed by the ‘extreme nervousness’ and poor physique of the middle class boys who had gained entry to the Levant Service through the new system of open competition.

After a full six and a half years in Turkey, at the beginning of 1891 Lowther was transferred to Vienna, from where in quick succession he was sent to take charge for short periods at Bucharest and Sofia. In October 1894, he was promoted to be secretary of legation at Tokyo and in October 1898 made consul-general at Budapest. Shortly after this he commenced an interlude in the Americas: first as secretary of embassy at Washington (where he was a social success); and then as minister to Chile, where he remained until the end of 1904. In February 1905 his successful American period was fittingly capped when he married Alice, daughter of the Philadelphia lawyer, Atherton Blight. A strong rumour in the United States that Lowther was to be the new ambassador in Washington proved, however, to be unfounded. Instead, he was appointed minister and consul-general at Tangier, where he arrived in the middle of April 1905 to find himself in the middle of the crisis which had just broken out as a result of the surprise visit designed by the Kaiser to challenge the British-supported ambitions of France in Morocco. As a result of good work at Tangier, including his contribution to following up the Algeciras Conference in early 1906 (dealing with which in London was Sir Charles Hardinge’s first main task on becoming permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office), Lowther was rewarded with his knighthood in June 1907 and a year later with a return to Constantinople, this time as ambassador.

It seems to have occurred to no-one in the British embassy in Constantinople

that the successor to their chief, Sir Nicholas O'Connor, who died in March 1908, might be Sir Gerard Lowther; and Gerald Fitzmaurice, by that time the influential chief dragoman, lobbied hard for Maurice de Bunsen. Nevertheless, Lowther had plenty of 'Oriental' experience, and was believed to have shown the ability and high standards of public service of his family; like O'Connor at the time of his own appointment, he was believed to be a safe pair of hands. When, therefore, at the instigation of the powerful Hardinge, Lowther's name was announced, Fitzmaurice was content. It is true that he recalled him as stout, placid and rather indolent, and wondered whether the Foreign Office would 'put enough pitch under his tail to keep him going for a decade in this capital' (Berridge). Nevertheless, he thought that he was a straightforward, level-headed, no nonsense sort of person, and thus a vast improvement on O'Connor. He felt he would get on well with him, and he did.

As the new representative of the leading 'liberal' nation in Europe, Lowther received a rapturous popular welcome in Constantinople. This was because he arrived at the end of July 1908, shortly after the Young Turks' revolution which – in the name of constitutionalism and equal rights for all groups within the Ottoman Empire – had effectively overthrown the autocratic regime of the sultan and caliph, Abdülhamid II. Inevitably, however, it was not long before this honeymoon came to an end. Encouraged by his chief dragoman, and exhibiting the usual prejudices of his class, Lowther became suspicious of the influential Jewish presence among the Young Turks, as also of their predilection for manipulating the new constitutional regime from behind the scenes by secret methods learned in their long years of opposition, including meetings in masonic lodges. Indeed, he soon concluded that one autocracy had simply been replaced by another, and without the saving graces of the former; notably, respect for native traditions. In short, the brash Young Turks had not only thrown out the Old Turks' baby with the Hamidian bathwater but replaced the latter with their own. Accordingly, Lowther believed, it was prudent to avoid over-committing to them.

In April 1909, Lowther gave discreet support to a counter-revolution against the Young Turk-supported regime. This manoeuvre was not obvious to the outside world but was so within Turkey. The counter-revolution failed, the Germans were able slowly to rebuild at the expense of the British the position they had lost in 1908, and in London Lowther's judgement was called into question. In consequence, he had

to endure some barbed and patronising advice from Hardinge, who, like the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, was under pressure from parliament to be more sympathetic to the Young Turks, and was now regretting the support he had given to Lowther's appointment. This advice included the suggestion that the ambassador might need additional secret service money to find out what was actually going on.

In the merry-go-round of Turkish politics over the following years, Lowther was never able to shake off the view that he was too much identified with the opposition to the Young Turks. As far as the Foreign Office was concerned, therefore, his fate was effectively sealed when the ruthless and charismatic Young Turk leader, Enver Bey, overthrew the government of the anglophile Kiamil Pasha in the coup of January 1913, thereafter consolidating the regime that took Turkey into the First World War in November 1914 on the side of Germany. He also suffered increasingly from ill health. In April 1913, therefore, Grey decided that he would have to be recalled. In early July he left Constantinople, and on 1 September retired from the diplomatic service.

In the Foreign Office, Lowther was seen as a failure in his last post but this judgement – as in the case of his predecessor at Constantinople – was a shade too harsh: he was to some extent another ambassadorial scapegoat. The political situation in Turkey was almost always fluid and extremely difficult to predict, while British policy on Ottoman questions and the new entente with Russia, Turkey's traditional enemy, did not exactly give him an easy hand to play; neither did the military magnet exerted on the Young Turks by Germany. In the circumstances, Lowther was an adequate helmsman in Constantinople, colliding with the odd rock in white water but never fatally; and generally steering a safe course in spite of the vacillating directions he sometimes received from home. He was also loyal to his staff, not the least his alter ego, Fitzmaurice.

Lowther died on 5 April 1916, aged only 59. He left no memoirs.

Main Sources: Berridge, G. R., 'Lowther, Sir Gerard Augustus, baronet (1858–1916)', *ODNB*; Berridge (2007); *FO List 1914*; Jones; Neilson & Otte.

Mallet, Sir Louis du Pan (1913-14)

Sir Louis Mallet was born on 10 July 1864, a descendant of a Huguenot family of Geneva that soon came to be prominent in British public service. He was the great-

grandson of Jacques Mallet du Pan, a well-known journalist and pamphleteer who supported the royalist cause in the French revolution and was the first member of the family to settle in England, in 1798. Louis' grandfather, J. L. Mallet, was given a place in the Audit Office by Pitt; his father (also Sir Louis Mallet) was permanent under-secretary at the India Office from 1874 until his retirement in 1883; and his older brother, Sir Bernard Mallet, a political economist, having served at the Foreign Office, the Treasury, and the Inland Revenue, ended his career as Registrar-General from 1909 until his retirement in 1920.

After Oxford, Louis Mallet joined the Foreign Office as a clerk in June 1888 and – other than temporary attachments over the next 12 years in Rio de Janeiro (5 months), Rome (12 months), and Cairo (18 months) – remained there for the whole of his career. In October 1892 he was promoted to assistant clerk in the Foreign Office and, in that capacity, was précis-writer to foreign secretary Lord Lansdowne from April 1903 until December 1905, at which point he became private secretary to the new foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey. By this time a favourite of the equally new permanent under-secretary, Sir Charles Hardinge, his rise was swift: senior clerk in April 1906, assistant under-secretary a year later, and his knighthood in June 1912. And Hardinge, by this time viceroy of India, was backing him to replace Sir Arthur Nicolson in the top job – permanent under-secretary.

Despite the fact that since 1907 Mallet's responsibilities had included superintendence of the Eastern Department, therefore, the revelation that he was to replace Sir Gerard Lowther as ambassador at Constantinople came as 'a thunderbolt to nine men out of ten' (quoted in Neilson and Otte, 147), as Lancelot Oliphant – whose first posting had been at Constantinople under O'Connor and was by this time also in the Eastern Department – told Hardinge. However, others – not least Nicolson himself – thought that Eyre Crowe would be a better man at the top of the Foreign Office bureaucracy, so Mallet was sent to Turkey to clear the way for him – or possibly for another good candidate (William Tyrrell) who would not have liked to work under him. For Mallet it was a second prize. As for Grey, he appears to have consoled himself with the feeble thought that the new ambassador's lack of experience of Constantinople meant that he had no prejudices about Turkey.

The appointment to the Ottoman capital of Mallet, who was unmarried, had been announced in the middle of June, in reporting this *The Times* itself having

picked up that it was ‘somewhat of a surprise’ (17 June 1913). This was three weeks before Lowther’s departure, but the new ambassador did not arrive in Constantinople until 24 October; in a slightly desperate attempt to impress and flatter the Turks, he was delivered on a warship as far as the Dardanelles.

In Turkey, he found the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) – buoyed by the recent recapture of Adrianople in the second Balkan War – firmly in power, and German ascendancy advertised by the appointment of General Otto Liman von Sanders to overhaul the Turkish military machine. The British Embassy inherited by Mallet was also in very poor shape. The body of its staff – the second dragoman, the able but rather plodding Andrew Ryan apart – was either lacking in experience of Turkey, or absent – or both. At the top, the chargé d’affaires, the able and experienced Charles Marling, was in consequence overwhelmed with work. As for the actively anti-German and anti-CUP chief dragoman, Gerald Fitzmaurice, he was demoralized and unwell, and the CUP government was agitating for his recall to an increasingly receptive Foreign Office. The situation became critical when Marling left for good only three weeks after Mallet’s arrival and the equally experienced military attaché, Colonel Tyrrell, just three weeks after that.

Mallet was clever and had a strong intellectual grasp of the problems he would confront. In the Foreign Office, he had taken the hardest line against Russia in the recent great power negotiations on Armenian reform and – although an official of established hostility to Germany – shown a distinct sensitivity to Berlin's point of view on this issue. He had applauded the re-taking of Adrianople, and was determined to make a fresh start with the Young Turks. On all of these points Fitzmaurice was not just in the opposite camp; to a great extent he led it. But so weakened was the embassy and so out of his depth did Mallet feel on his arrival that he soon realized that his chief dragoman was indispensable. Having repeatedly made this clear to the Foreign Office, he was told that he could keep him as long as he wished.

By early December, however, Mallet thought that he was at last beginning to master his post, a conclusion assisted by the fact that the Porte was flattering him with long-practised expertise and the Foreign Office was doing likewise. In February 1914, therefore, having also received a new counsellor of embassy, he was content to gratify the CUP government and the German embassy – both of which he was already

successfully cultivating – by giving his blessing to Fitzmaurice's return to Britain on a sick leave from which, in the event, he never returned. Meanwhile, the ambassador's line on Turkish procrastination over Armenian reform was that the powers should take what they could get without resorting to threats. As for the Liman von Sanders mission, he was disposed to minimise its practical significance while arguing logically enough that in effect it served Britain's interest since a revived Turkish Army was essential to the integrity of what was left of the Ottoman Empire.

Mallet went home himself in late July 1914 but because of the dangerous international situation his leave was cut short and he was back at his post by 16 August. But it was too late. Britain had already declared war on Germany, and Turkey had signed a secret treaty of alliance with the German Empire. Relations between Britain and Turkey thereafter deteriorated markedly, and following the incursion into Egypt of Bedouin levies and the surprise Turkish naval attack on the Black Sea ports of Britain's Russian ally, both of which occurred on 29 October, Mallet's embassy hurriedly made its final preparations to shut up shop. Some of its papers were burned, some were placed in a locked room on the top floor, and some were transferred to the American Embassy, which had agreed to take over protection of British interests. On 1 November, Mallet closed the embassy and, together with most of his staff, left Constantinople. He had been at his post for just a year. Four days later the Asquith government in London announced that a state of war existed between Britain and Turkey. Mallet's brand of diplomacy had not been successful but it had probably always been doomed. An unanswered – and unanswerable – question is whether things might have turned out differently had Fitzmaurice returned. Some thought so.

Mallet was attacked at home for the 'failure' of his embassy and – despite being defended by Sir Edward Grey – his diplomatic career fizzled out. During the Great War he assisted the British Red Cross, and worked in London on behalf of British refugees from Turkey and Russian prisoners of war in Germany. In May 1915 he had been granted a temporary allowance by the Foreign Office and in 1918 was recalled to serve briefly at his old rank – assistant under-secretary – on attachment to the British delegation at the Paris peace conference. He retired in April 1920 and died on 8 August 1936. He had an insufficiently strong personality for a great ambassador, thought the obituarist in *The Times* (10 August 1936). His outstanding gifts, he

concluded, were ‘rather of the kind required by a Chief of Staff than by a Commander.’

Main sources: Berridge (2007); Neilson & Otte; *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1932; 10 Aug. 1936.

Calthorpe, Admiral Hon. Sir (Somerset) Arthur Gough- (1918-19)

Admiral Calthorpe (or ‘Gough-Calthorpe’) was born on 23 December 1864 into an army family but, in January 1878, chose to enter the navy. In 1886 he was promoted lieutenant and in 1896 commander, having excelled when serving in naval brigades landed for ‘punitive expeditions’ on the West and East African coasts (Halpern). In 1902 he was made captain, in 1911 rear-admiral, in early 1915 acting vice-admiral, and in 1917 admiral.

Calthorpe was known in the Navy as a good but by no means exceptional all-round officer. There was, therefore, some surprise when in August 1917 he was made commander-in-chief of British forces in the Mediterranean, a position only then revived following surrender of command of that sea to the French at the beginning of the war. But relations with French naval officers in the Mediterranean and Aegean were often difficult, so his promotion is suspected to have had something to do with the fluency in French he acquired while ‘spending part of his boyhood in France’ (Halpern). He grew in confidence in this command but was no prima donna. Without irreparably damaging relations between Britain and France, he also managed to exclude the French from the armistice negotiations which he alone concluded with Turkey at Mudros Bay on 30 October 1918.

A fortnight after this, Calthorpe’s flagship led the Allied fleet through the Dardanelles to Constantinople and the admiral was installed as ‘British High Commissioner’ in the former embassy building. This had duly morphed into a species of special mission known as a ‘high commission’ rather than an ‘embassy’ in order to signify that normal diplomatic relations could not be resumed until the armistice was ended with the signing and ratification of a treaty of peace. Until well into the transition to this point, the high commission had a strong colouring of naval staff and service uniform was much in evidence: ‘it resembled nothing so much as a battleship on shore’ (Ryan, 121).

Admiral Calthorpe was by no means wholly unqualified for his new, quasi-

diplomatic role. Apart from his recent Mediterranean experience and being a French-speaker, he had much earlier served for three and a half years as a naval attaché. In March 1902 he was appointed to the ‘Maritime Courts’ (Russia, Sweden and Norway) and Rome, with residence at St Petersburg. But after a separate attaché was appointed for Rome in June 1903 he was able to concentrate almost entirely on Russia. He remained there until October 1905, thereby serving under Hardinge after he arrived as ambassador, and throughout the Russo-Japanese war. He was also not a complete innocent in the conduct of business at home, where diplomats often find their skills more taxed than in their foreign postings. In 1912 he was a member of the court of inquiry charged with investigating and reporting on the sensational loss of the ‘unsinkable’ passenger liner, the *Titanic*, and a member of a Board of Trade committee. And in the course of 1916 he was also for some time Second Sea Lord at the Admiralty; this is while Arthur Balfour was First Lord (political head), although he was shortly to become foreign secretary.

Having some qualifications for the post of high commissioner was the more necessary for Calthorpe because he retained his duties as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet and actually spent most of his time on his flagship – which ‘he obviously preferred’ (Graves, 323) – rather than at the British Palace in Pera. Fortunately, he had a very able assistant high commissioner in Rear-Admiral Richard Webb, who had been highly regarded as director of the trade division at the Admiralty for most of the war and was permanently based in Constantinople. Old ‘Turkey hands’ who had served in the embassy before the war – headed by Thomas Hohler (‘chief political officer’) with the rank of minister – were also recruited to serve as a political section providing guidance and help for the sailors. However, it was well into 1919 before the civilian element of the high commission was anywhere near serviceable and there was tension between Hohler and Webb in view of their de facto equality in position and very different styles. Webb was generally thought of very highly by his political staff, except for his great difficulty in seeing Turks as anything beyond enemies.

The main instructions given to Calthorpe by the foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, made clear the very limited role he was expected to play. Apart from political reporting, his mission was to confine itself to two chief objectives: first, to encouraging execution of the terms of the armistice by serving as political adviser to,

and political intervener on behalf of the British forces in Turkey led by General Sir George Milne, meanwhile committing Britain to nothing that could compromise its attitude on matters pending at the peace conference; and second, to the essentially consular function of protecting British interests in ‘Constantinople and Turkey proper’, the restricted territorial remit underlining that it was a ‘fixed’ part of Britain’s policy that the Arab lands it had seized from the Ottomans were lost to them for good.

None of this was easy for Calthorpe because Constantinople itself was virtually bankrupt, public services were on the verge of collapse, security was an acute problem, and it was heaving with White Russians fleeing from the Bolsheviks. The high commission was as a result dragged into assisting the administration of the city, an onerous responsibility since the British had care of Pera and Galata. Added to this were inter-Allied tensions (especially with the French) and endemic political instability in the country stirred by rising Turkish national resistance centred on Ankara, especially after the Greeks were allowed to occupy Smyrna (Izmir) in May 1919. Political reporting was particularly hindered by the disappearance of the mission’s consular outposts, with the result that reliance had to be placed instead on relief officers, American missionaries, and voluntary organizations. In the circumstances, Calthorpe did well enough for his country, while admitting to the Foreign Office in July 1919 that – with relief funds rapidly drying up as well – there was little the freshly-established Armenian-Greek section of his high commission could do for these minorities.

The term of Calthorpe’s naval appointment coming to an end in July 1919, on 26 August he formally surrendered his post as high commissioner as well (he was actually not seen again at the high commission after 5 August). He had served in Constantinople for barely 10 months, for most of the time afloat. Afterwards, he was appointed commander-in-chief at Portsmouth and first British naval representative on the Armaments Commission of the League of Nations. From July 1924 until May 1925 he was first and principal naval ADC to the King, after which he was promoted to the highest rank in the Royal Navy, admiral of the fleet. He retired in 1930 and died on 27 July 1937.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); *FO List 1921*; Graves, Sir Robert, *Storm Centres of the Near East* (Hutchinson, 1933); Halpern, P. G., ‘Calthorpe, Sir Somerset Arthur

Gough (1864–1937)', *ODNB*; Ryan, A., *The Last of the Dragomans* (Bles, 1951); *The Times*, 28 July 1937 [Calthorpe obit.], 21 Jan. 1950 [Webb obit].

Robeck, Admiral Sir John Michael de (1919-20)

John de Robeck, who was born on 10 June 1862, was an Irishman descended from the Swedish nobleman, John Henry Fock, Baron de Robeck, who had migrated to Ireland and was naturalized by an act of parliament in 1785. His father was the fourth Baron de Robeck, 'the only British subject holding a Swedish title of nobility' (*The Times*).

De Robeck entered the navy in July 1875, and was promoted to lieutenant in 1885, commander in 1897, and captain in 1902. He was regarded as 'a natural leader, handsome in appearance, gentlemanly in manner' (Halpern), and in 1911 was made rear-admiral.

There had been nothing remarkable about de Robeck's naval career prior to the second year of the Great War. This all changed when he was plucked from obscurity at the beginning of 1915 and appointed second-in-command of the eastern Mediterranean squadron. This was commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Sackville Carden and its destination was the Dardanelles. On 17 March, Carden, whose health had broken down under the stress of the campaign, had to relinquish his position, and de Robeck was given his place with the acting rank of vice-admiral. The Dardanelles expedition was, of course, a British military disaster but, although de Robeck did not escape criticism for being insufficiently aggressive at the beginning, there was no consensus on this and most of the blame for the failure was placed elsewhere; he also earned praise for the way in which he assisted the evacuation at the end. In June 1916, he left the Mediterranean command and shortly afterwards – as full vice-admiral – took over the Grand Fleet's 2nd battle squadron, in which he saw out the rest of the war. In July 1919, however, he was back in the Mediterranean, taking over as commander-in-chief from Admiral Calthorpe, together with his post as high commissioner at Constantinople.

Unlike his predecessor, de Robeck had served neither as a naval attaché at a diplomatic mission, nor on the Board of Admiralty in London. On the other hand, he inherited a mission that was beginning to acquire more diplomatic and consular staff and thus look and function more like a genuine embassy, especially after the middle of 1920. He was also able to retain as his number two until the end of August Rear-

Admiral Webb, who was knighted in January and by this time was more used to the job; while Webb's rival, Thomas Hohler, was replaced as chief political officer at the end of 1919 by a 'seasoned' Levant Service officer, Sir Harry Lamb, thereby easing a debilitating tension in the mission. It seems that he was also able to spend a little more time himself at the high commission. 'I saw much of de Robeck ...,' wrote his second political officer, Andrew Ryan, 'far more than I had done of his predecessor. He was a most remarkable man,' Ryan added, 'with an amazing ability to grasp the essentials of two important jobs and to leave the rest to his subordinates' (Ryan, 135). His absences at sea nevertheless remained 'frequent and protracted' (Graves, 327).

But de Robeck had to cope with a growing popular hostility. This was fed by the formal occupation of Constantinople by Allied – overwhelmingly British – troops in March 1920 and the signing in August of a peace treaty between the Allies and their weak government that was humiliating to the Turks – and instantly rejected by Mustafa Kemal and the increasingly numerous members of his movement, who were simultaneously at war with the Greeks. All that de Robeck's mission could do was seek to keep the lid on all this – not least by preserving the appearance of Allied unity and keeping Britain's own soldiers in check – while peace negotiations were conducted elsewhere. On 17 November 1920 he passed the uncomfortable baton, which he had held for 15 months, to a diplomat.

In March 1920, while still at the high commission, de Robeck was promoted to admiral. In 1922 he was transferred from the Mediterranean to command of the Atlantic Fleet, a position which he retained until August 1924. He was promoted Admiral of the Fleet in November 1925 and died of a heart attack on 20 January 1928.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); *FO List 1921*; Graves, Sir Robert, *Storm Centres of the Near East* (Hutchinson, 1933); Halpern, P. G., 'Robeck, Sir John Michael de, baronet (1862–1928)', *ODNB*; Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation* (Brill, 1999); Ryan, A., *The Last of the Dragomans* (Bles, 1951); *The Times* [Robeck obit], 21 Jan. 1928.

Rumbold, Sir Horace George Montagu (1920-4)

Sir Horace Rumbold was born on 5 February 1869 at St Petersburg, where his father – also Horace Rumbold but better known later as 'Sir Horrid Grumble' because he

was forever complaining – was at the time secretary of embassy. After Eton, Horace followed in his father's footsteps in more ways than one. On 12 June 1888 he entered the diplomatic service and did so at The Hague, where his father happened by then to be minister. Thereafter, his career took him to Cairo, Tehran, and – in July 1897 – to Vienna, where once again he found himself directly under the paternal gaze. By this time he had achieved the rank of second secretary. In November 1900 he returned to the Cairo Agency, where he was promoted first secretary in April 1904 and remained for a further two and half years, meanwhile looking with vintage upper class British distaste at Cromer's policy of giving Egyptians responsible government positions. Madrid and Munich followed, until in February 1909 Rumbold was promoted to counsellor of embassy at the important post of Tokyo, remaining there until November 1913 and serving for 11 months in total as chargé d'affaires. On 1 November 1913 he was transferred to the even more important post of Berlin, where he served as chargé d'affaires in the critical days from 1 to 27 July 1914, leaving for London on 6 August, following the British declaration of war against Germany two days earlier.

During the war, Rumbold handled prisoner-of-war affairs in the Foreign Office until appointed minister at Berne in September 1916. With the war ended, in September 1919 Rumbold was made minister to the newly independent Poland but the diplomatic complications of the fighting with Russia made his position extremely difficult, and after a year he was anxious to leave. The proposal that he should become Britain's first post-war ambassador to Berlin having been blocked by the prime minister, Lloyd George, and Lord Curzon, the foreign secretary, he was sent instead to Constantinople.

It was in the course of his service in neutral Switzerland during the First World War 'that Rumbold had won his reputation as an extremely able diplomat' (Otte). This was embellished afterwards by his former colleague, the well-known writer on diplomacy, Harold Nicolson. In 1939, Nicolson dedicated to Rumbold the first edition of his famous book, *Diplomacy*, adding after his name the words 'An Ideal Diplomatist'. And in a lengthy eulogy written as an introduction to a 1944 edition of his model diplomat's *War Crisis in Berlin, July-August 1914* (1940), Rumbold having died a few years earlier, Nicolson elaborated on this description. He also added to Rumbold's tally another quality of advantage to the ideal diplomatist:

he might have looked stupid but he was far from it. Much of what Nicolson wrote about Rumbold was based on his work with him during the peace treaty negotiations with Turkey.

The departure of Admiral Webb at the end of August 1920 and the arrival of the diplomatist, Sir Horace Rumbold, as new head of the British high commission in Constantinople in November, with the personal rank of ambassador, completed its de facto metamorphosis into an embassy. But since there was still no peace treaty, he could not escape completely the title 'high commissioner': he was formally described by the Foreign Office as 'Ambassador and High Commissioner'. (It was shortly after this that Reshid Pasha was accepted as Turkey's 'unofficial representative' in London.)

In Constantinople, Rumbold found himself at an 'immensely difficult' post (Rumbold, intro. by Nicolson, xxv). – if anything, 'even more difficult than Warsaw' (Otte). The peace treaty of August 1920 (the Treaty of Sèvres) had been still-born, and he was accredited at the wrong place: the sultan's government in Constantinople was tottering and the real power in Turkey now lay with Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. And acute tension developed between Britain and Ankara. The 'ideal diplomatist' faced severe tests during the subsequent Chanak crisis and then at the Lausanne Conference.

Following the rout of the Greek army in the summer of 1922 and the subsequent burning of Smyrna, the threat posed by Mustafa Kemal's exultant forces to Britain's important defensive position at Chanak on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles was thought considerable. This led Lloyd George to require reinforcements and, on 29 September, order an ultimatum to the Turks: pull back, or face war. But peace talks with Kemal had already been proposed and not yet rejected, so General Harington, then commander of British forces in Turkey, was not disposed to deliver the ultimatum, and Rumbold supported him. The information, arguments, and compromise proposal on Eastern Thrace that he telegraphed to the Foreign Office also stiffened the position of Lord Curzon, who was the only vocal opponent of the war party in the cabinet, but exhausted and unwell. During the subsequent negotiations with the Turks at Mudanya, Harington took the lead while Rumbold remained in Constantinople, but the latter's role was critical to the agreement – the Mudanya Convention – that was reached on 11 October 1922. Under this the Turks

agreed to withdraw from the neutral zone and delay their occupation of Eastern Thrace. The crisis had been defused and the ground prepared for a definitive peace settlement, the search for which began at Lausanne in Switzerland a little over a month later.

Lord Curzon, who was leader of the British delegation and president of the Lausanne conference, had been so impressed with Rumbold's role in the Chanak crisis that he chose him to be his deputy, and on 23 April 1923 take his place altogether when – following a worrying interruption on 4 February – the conference resumed. The talks were extremely difficult but concluded successfully on 24 July. Rumbold, who had been supported throughout by his chief dragoman from Constantinople, Andrew Ryan, signed the Treaty of Lausanne as British plenipotentiary. It registered many British defeats on questions concerning Turkey proper but this was hardly Rumbold's fault: its provisions reflected the changed realities of power and public mood on both sides.

On 2 October 1923 the Allied occupation of Constantinople had come to an end but it was 6 August 1924 before all instruments of ratification were deposited and the state of war with Turkey was formally terminated; meanwhile, the British 'High Commissioner' was to be styled instead the British 'Representative', since the former title was too redolent of the occupation.

But two question marks still hovered over the British high commission: first, should it in due course resume its status as an embassy or – as others in London thought more appropriate to the shrunken and hostile Turkey which had emerged from the war – as a mere legation headed by a lowly 'minister'; and second, whatever its status, should it remain in Constantinople or follow the Nationalists to Ankara? In the end, it became an embassy – but not until March 1925 – and later shifted to Ankara.

This was all very interesting but Rumbold, who had by the winter of 1923-4 spent three years as head of the British diplomatic mission in Constantinople and endured Chanak and Lausanne, had clearly had enough. After leave, he asked Curzon if he might return to Spain, where the Madrid post was both less arduous and unambiguously an embassy, and where he had spent two years before the war. This was agreed and, on Curzon's recommendation, he was appointed to Spain in February 1924 by Ramsay MacDonald, prime minister and foreign secretary of Britain's first

Labour government. Here he ‘largely confined himself to observing how de Rivera’s dictatorship developed, while trying to do what he could to shore up what remained of monarchical power’ (Otte). His last post, at which he arrived in August 1928, was Berlin – of less fond memory – where he sought to prevent a return to militarism by urging settlements of German grievances over the Versailles peace treaty of sufficient generosity to bolster support for the democratic Weimar regime. In this he failed, although he gave clear warning of the character – evil – of the Nazis.

To his disgust, Rumbold was retired from diplomacy in August 1933 – just as the Nazis came to power – but his career in public service did not end there. In 1935 he served as Britain’s chief representative at the Geneva refugee conference; in the following year as vice-chairman of the Peel commission on Palestine; from September 1939 until April 1941 as chairman of the ‘black list committee’ of the Ministry of Economic Warfare; and – over roughly the same period – as a member of another committee (which included Harold Nicolson), the aim of which was to stimulate internal opposition to Hitler by advertising the availability of an alternative government composed of influential German political refugees that it had cultivated. But Rumbold’s contribution to the war effort against the Nazis did not last long. He fell ill in July 1940, more seriously (with heart trouble) in the new year, and on 24 May 1941 he died.

Main sources: Berridge (2009); Chirol, Val., ‘Rumbold, Sir Horace, eighth baronet (1829–1913)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB*; *FO List 1924, 1934, 1942*; Gilbert, M., *Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a diplomat* (Heinemann, 1973); Otte, T. G., ‘Rumbold, Sir Horace George Montagu, ninth baronet (1869–1941)’, *ODNB*; Rumbold, Sir Horace, *The War Crisis in Berlin, July-August 1914*, New ed, with an Introduction by Harold Nicolson (Constable, 1944).

Appendix

List of British heads of mission at Constantinople, 1583-1838¹

Harborne, William*	1583-8
Barton, Edward ² *	1588-97
Lello, Henry ³	1597-1607
Glover, Sir Thomas ⁴	1606-11
Pindar, Paul*	1611-20
Eyre, Sir John	1620-22
Roe, Sir Thomas*	1621-8
Wyche, Sir Peter*	1628-39
Crowe, Sir Sackville*	1638-48
Bendish, Sir Thomas*	1647-61
<i>Lawrence, Richard</i> ⁵	<i>1653-6</i>
Finch, Heneage, 3rd Earl of Winchilsea*	1661-9
Harvey, Sir Daniel	1668-72

¹ I have, where possible, dated the commencement of postings from the year of first arrival at Constantinople (usually the year of presentation of credentials), rather than from the often misleading year of formal appointment by the British government. (For example, Sir Sackville Crowe was appointed in 1633 but did not arrive in Constantinople for another five years, while Robert Sutton was appointed in December 1700 but did not arrive until early 1702.) I have also dated the termination of the posting from the year of departure from Turkey rather than from the formal ending of the appointment. (For example, Fawkeners left Constantinople in 1742 but was not formally deprived of the embassy until September 1746.) Purists may wish to consult Bell (pp. 6-7) on the difficulties of establishing the beginning and ending of missions. The list excludes the names of chargé d'affaires except in the remarkable case of secretary of embassy Aspinwall (1742-7), who was left in charge by Fawkeners. (The ambassador, believing that the embassy was ruining him, departed ostensibly for a short leave to attend to family business but was never seen by Aspinwall again.) All heads of mission had the rank and style of 'Ambassador' unless otherwise indicated. Those marked with an *asterisk appear in the *ODNB*.

² Agent to 1593.

³ Agent to 1599.

⁴ Agent.

⁵ Lawrence was given a commission as an agent to secure Bendish's recall and act until the new ambassador, Major Richard Salway, should arrive. In the event, Salway withdrew and Lawrence refused to return until finally outwitted by Bendish, Goffman, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 185-90.

Finch, Sir John*	1674-81
Brydges, James, 8th Baron Chandos of Sudeley	1681-7
Trumbull, Sir William*	1687-91
Hussey, Sir William*	1691
<i>Harbord, William</i> * ⁶	<i>1691-2</i>
Paget, William, seventh Baron Paget*	1693-1702
Sutton, Sir Robert*	1702-17
Wortley-Montagu, Edward	1717-18
Stanyan, Abraham*	1718-30
Hay, George, eighth Earl of Kinoull*	1730-6
Fawkener, Sir Everard*	1735-42
Aspinwall, Stanhope (agent)	1742-7
Porter, James*	1747-62
Grenville, Hon. Henry	1762-5
Murray, John*	1766-75
Ainslie, Sir Robert Sharpe*	1776-94
Liston, Robert*	1794-5
Smith, John Spencer ⁷	1795-8
Smith, Adm. Sir (William) Sidney* ⁸	1798-9
Bruce, Thomas, seventh Earl of Elgin*	1799-1803
Drummond, William*	1803
Arbuthnot, Rt. Hon. Charles*	1805-7

Diplomatic relations suspended 1807-8

<i>Paget, Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur</i> * ⁹	<i>1807</i>
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⁶ Harbord never reached Constantinople, dying at Belgrade on 31 July 1692.

⁷ Secretary in charge of affairs, 1795-8; secretary of legation, 1798; secretary of embassy and minister plenipotentiary *ad interim*, 1798-1801.

⁸ Joint plenipotentiary with his brother, John Spencer Smith.

⁹ Paget was 'Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary on a Special Mission', July-October 1807.

Adair, Robert*	1808-10
Canning, Stratford*	1810-12
Liston, Sir Robert*	1812-20
Smythe, P. C. S., sixth Viscount Strangford*	1821-4
Canning, Stratford*	1826-7

Diplomatic relations suspended 1827-9

Gordon, Sir Robert*	1829-31
Canning, Sir Stratford*	1832
Ponsonby, John, Viscount Ponsonby*	1833-41