

## The East India Company

Read the following sections and then answer this question: What questions would you like to ask of the sources?

Then discuss whether you think a new information board about the East India Company should be placed in the landscape. If you do, design one with third person commentary and contemporary quotation. If you think a new information board is not needed, write a persuasive speech with your reasons.

The text below is taken from

[www.sootallures.wixsite.com/topographersarms/post/east-india-company-walk](http://www.sootallures.wixsite.com/topographersarms/post/east-india-company-walk) where you will find relevant pictures.

The information boards at Chalford intrigue,  
Because of the lack of information:  
At Chalford Vale and along the canal,  
We are told about the local links  
With the East India Company,  
But we are not told about the practice  
Of the East India Company ...

But shall we let the 'Past Speak for Itself', from the pages of Jack P. Greene's erudite tome, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*:

### The East India Company?

'those shameful triumphs over unwarlike and defenceless nations, which have poured into the laps of individuals the wealth of India ... and driven us to plunder and destroy harmless natives fixed so deep a stain on the English name, as perhaps cannot be expiated.'

'changed, contrary to the intentions of its institution, from a commercial, into a military corporation', so that India – a 'country, late so famous for its commerce, whose rich manufacturers brought to it immense wealth from every corner of the tributary world, and whose fertile plains supplied millions of its neighbours with grain' is 'unable now to yield itself the bare necessities of life. The loom is unemployed, neglected lies the plough; trade is at a stand, for there are no manufacturers to carry it on'; multitudes are 'perishing for want of food.'

'a revenue of two millions in India, acquired God knows how, by unjust wars ... their servants came home with immense fortune obtained by rapine and oppression.'

'and indeed it is clearly proved, that the East India Company is rotten to the very core. All is equally unsound; and you cannot lay your finger on a single healthy spot whereon to begin the application of a remedy. In the east, the laws of society, the laws of nature, have been enormously violated. Oppression in every shape has ground the faces of the

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poor defenceless natives; and tyranny has stalked abroad. The laws of England have lain mute and neglected and nothing was seen but the arbitrary face of despotism. Every sanction of civil justice, every maxim of political wisdom, all laws human and divine, have been trampled underfoot, and set at nought.'

'Pride and emulation stimulated avarice, and the sole contest was, who should return to that home ... with the greatest heap of crimes and of plunder.'

'Asiatic plunderers', 'they had for many years been disgracing us as a nation and making us appear in the eyes of the world, no longer the once-famed generous Britons, but a set of banditti, bent solely on rapine and plunder.'

*'executions, oppressions, blood-shed, massacres, extirpation, pestilence and famine.'*

'Instead of our fleets crowding our ports freighted with the precious commodities of the East ... we have ... the importation of the fortunes of splendid delinquents, amassed by speculation and rapine.'

### **Parallels with the Roman Empire?**

'the dominions in Asia, like the distant Roman provinces during the decline of the empire, have been abandoned, as lawful prey, to every species of peculators; in so much that many of the servants of the Company, after exhibiting such scenes of barbarity as can be scarcely paralleled in the history of any country, have returned to England loaded with wealth.'

### **Clive of India?**

'utterly deaf to every sentiment of justice and humanity ... this insatiable harpy, whose ambition is unparalleled, and whose avarice knows no bounds.'

### **America and India Conjoined?**

'We have abused and adulterated government ourselves, stretching our depredations and massacres not only to the Eastern, but Western world ... the guilt of murder and robbery ... now crying aloud for vengeance on the head of Great Britain.'

'How melancholy is the consideration to the friends to this country that in the East and in the West, in Asia and America, the name of an Englishman is become a reproach', and in 'Europe we are not loved enough to have a single friend ... from such a situation there is but a small step to hatred or contempt.'