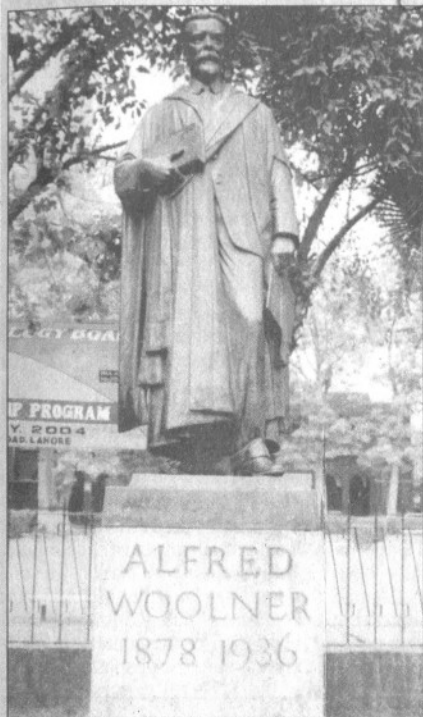


# Now you see them, now you don't

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 Medical College.



By Mariam Qureshi

**LAHORE:** As you stroll past the Punjab University old campus on The Mall, you cannot miss the sole bronze statue of a man that stands on the sidewalk. The inscription below the statue reads: "Alfred Woolner (1878-1936), a great and beloved leader."

Alfred Woolner was the vice chancellor of the Punjab University from 1928 to 1936. His is the only statue left of many that were positioned in front of prominent buildings during the British Raj in a wave of imperialistic civic zeal. Now, with the title of 'colony' no longer hanging over our heads, we are in a better position to appreciate the aesthetic value and historical importance of these effigies. That is if it's not too late.

"The statues were a significant part of my youth," said Sajjid Abbas, a septuagenarian Lahori who knows the city like the back of his hand. "I would often walk down The Mall and take photographs of these beautiful sculptures because I knew that they would disappear one day." There were a total of ten such statues, each narrating the grandeur and the might of British rule, said Mr Abbas, taking a walk down



memory lane and relating the history of each of the sculptures. The first on Mr Abbas's list of these "emblems of British authority" is the bronze statue of Queen Victoria that was placed in the pavilion of the assembly chambers.

"Her Majesty would stand there cradling the sceptre and holding an orb, dressed in her long imperial gown with a veil of hornito lace covering her face," said Mr Abbas. "The statue was removed from Charring Cross in September 1951 and taken to the Lahore Museum but the marble pavilion remains, displaying a bronze replica of the Holy Quran." The queen's statue was cast in 1900 in London by B MacKennal and the grand marble pavilion, with its Oriental design in stark contrast with the anglicised statue, was designed by Bhai Ram Singh Mistri, the deputy principal of the Mayo School of Arts.

"At the Lahore Museum, one could see Queen Victoria's statue with the busts of her sons, George V and Edward VII, displayed alongside," said Mr Abbas. "There was also a full figure statue of King Edward VII, riding a horse, which used to be displayed near King Edward

However, the most significant and controversial of these statues was that of Lord John Lawrence, who was viceroy (1864-69) and also served as the governor general of Punjab. The statue, placed in a small garden near the Punjab High Court, displayed the following inscription: "By which will ye be governed: by the pen or the sword?" In the 1920 protests against the British, many nationalists objected to the offensive caption.

"The agitations were started by the All India National Congress and Islamic fundamentalists who demanded that no statues should be displayed on roads," said Mr Abbas. "The presence of these statues became a quasi-political issue at that time and though no action was taken then, after Independence in 1951, the statues were formally removed by the authorities."

Lord John Lawrence's statue was initially stored in the Lahore Fort and later sent back to England in exchange for a model of the Taj Mahal. Mr Abbas said that besides statues of British officials, statues of local figures were also placed on roads and outside buildings. A statue of a seated Sir Ganga Ram, a prominent philanthropist described as the engineer of Lahore, used to be on display outside the Lahore Museum, said Mr Abbas.

"It was a rare piece because it was not made of cast bronze but was actually carved out of bronze," he said. "It is said that Sir Ganga Ram's statue was later dumped into the parking lot of the National College of Arts. Where it went from there, nobody knows."

Mr Abbas also remembered a statue of Lala Lajpat Rai, a famous politician at the time of independence. The statue was displayed in front of Gol Bagh, which is now Nasir Bagh. According to FS Aijazuddin's book 'Lahore Recollected: an Album', the current whereabouts of this statue are not known.

"A marble bust of Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia was placed in the Dyal Singh Library," said Mr Abbas. "He was a wealthy man, a philanthropist, the founder of Dyal Singh College and Library and the one-time owner of Dyal Singh mansion."

The statues of local figures have disappeared, but Alfred Woolner's statue still stands outside the old Punjab University building and continues to remind us of our colonial history.