



OUSELEY, GORE

OUSELEY, Sir Gore, entrepreneur, diplomat, and orientalist (b. 24 June 1770, Monmouthshire, Wales; d. 18 November 1844, Hall Barn Park, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, England). He was the younger brother of the officer and orientalist [William Ouseley](#) (1767-1842).

The Ouseleys were an Anglo-Irish family who, although impoverished, afforded their two sons a sound private education. In 1787, Gore Ouseley moved to India, became a successful trader, and established in 1792 a textile factory in the Dacca province, Bengal. He was, however, not associated with the East India Company. Ouseley used his leisure time to study languages, especially Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic, became well-versed in Persian language and customs, and was introduced to the renowned orientalist [William Jones](#) (1746-94) who since 1784 had served as judge at the supreme court in Calcutta. Between 1795 and 1796, Ouseley moved to Lucknow, where the Nawwāb-Viziers of Oudh (Awaḍ) maintained their court. Ouseley made the acquaintance of Sa'ādat 'Alī Kān (r. 1798-1814), who in turn appointed him as major-commandant. Ouseley used his position with the nawwāb-vizier to further British interests, and his services were rewarded by Lord Richard Wellesley (1760-1842), the Governor-General of India (1787-1805), who appointed him as aide-de-camp to Sa'ādat 'Alī.

In 1805, Ouseley returned to Britain; and a year later married Harriet Georgina Whitelocke. The couple had two sons and three daughters. Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley (1825-1889) was a musical prodigy who became a composer and influential educator.



Commended by Wellesley, Ouseley was made a baronet in 1808, appointed in 1809 as the *mehmāndār* (official host) of [Abu'l-Ḥasan Kān Ilči](#) (1776-1845; Wright, 1985, pp. 53-69), the Qajar envoy to George III (r. 1760-1820), and designated as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Qajar court, although he was not a nominee or an official of the East India Company. The British and the Persian governments had concluded their first political and commercial treaties in 1801, the purposes of which was to prevent the French from settling or residing in Iran and the Afghans from invading India. On the British side, these treaties were negotiated by men who were employed by the East India Company. The course of the Napoleonic Wars and its consequences for British interests in India convinced the British government of the need for permanent diplomatic representation at the Qajar court. When Abu'l-Ḥasan returned to Iran in 1810, Ouseley, traveling with wife and daughter as well as his brother William, accompanied him. They reached Shiraz in April 1811, and Ouseley was received by [Fath-'Ali Shah](#) (r. 1797-1834) in November 1811. The British government had issued Ouseley detailed instructions concerning the collection of intelligence about Iran and the construction of the British Mission House, which remained the seat of the British ambassador in the Qajar capital Tehran until 1871. Ouseley's diplomatic activity (Wright, 1977, pp. 12-15; idem, 1986, pp. 61-63) is marked by the conclusion of the Anglo-Iranian Treaty in March 1812, though this version was never ratified, and the peace negotiation between Iran and Russia that led to the [Golestān Treaty](#) in October 1813. The new-drawn border between Russia and Iran was so disadvantageous to Iran that Ouseley suffered for a time the shah's anger. Ouseley and his family left Iran in April 1814, setting out for St. Petersburg where in August 1814 Ouseley was presented with the Grand Cordon of the Russian order of St. Alexander Newski, and arrived in England in July 1815. Ouseley's return was overshadowed by the Waterloo victory, and he failed to receive the peerage for which he had been recommended by both the Qajar shah and the Russian emperor. Ouseley was left quietly to retire on a pension, but he proved a helpful friend to students from Iran and remained involved with Persian-British politics. In 1839, he intervened on behalf of Ḥosayn Kān Neẓām al-Dawla when the Qajar envoy visited England after Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837 (Wright, 1987, p. 107).

The Ouseley brothers continued the pioneering work of William Jones in the field of Persian studies in Great Britain, and their contributions in turn paved the way for [Edward Byles Cowell](#) (1826-1903) and [E. G. Browne](#) (1862-1926).



But while William Ouseley was a prolific author, Gore Ouseley did not publish during his lifetime; his *Biographical Notices of Persian Poets* appeared posthumously in 1846. Ouseley was a gentleman–scholar who independently encouraged the study of Persian. He was a founding member of the London Travellers Club (1819) and the Royal Asiatic Society of London (1823). He possessed a valuable and discriminatingly chosen collection of oriental manuscripts, and assisted in establishing the Oriental Translation Committee. In 1842, he was appointed president of the new-founded Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts. Ouseley was a fellow of the Royal Society as well as of the Antiquarian Society. His widow erected a monument to his memory in Hertingfordbury Church, Hertfordshire.

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