

**COUCHMAN, SIR Harold John** (1882–1956), soldier and surveyor, was born 29 July 1882 in Haileybury, Hertfordshire, the youngest son of the Revd Henry Couchman, assistant master of Haileybury College, and his wife Mary Jane Pooley. He was educated at Haileybury and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.

He was commissioned in the Royal Engineers in August 1900. He was transferred to India in 1902 and appointed to the geodetic branch of the Survey of India in 1906. His initial duties were to assist with fieldwork for the magnetic survey of India and by the 1908–9 field season he was in charge of operations in south-west India. He subsequently took part in the regional gravity surveys of Burma (1910–11) and southern and central India (1912–14). By 1914 he had been appointed deputy superintendent at Dehra Dun. He took the principal part in the synthesis and interpretation of all the gravity observations made in India over the period 1908–13 and made an excellent attempt to interpret these data in the light of evidence recently reported by the American geodesist, J. F. Hayford, as a result of similar surveys in the United States. In both cases, regional gravity anomalies were found to occur, associated with the depression of dense rocks forming the Earth's mantle by the less dense roots of major mountain chains.

In the spring of 1914 Couchman was transferred to the headquarters office of the Survey in Calcutta. He was recalled to active military duty in October 1914. Couchman was promoted to lieutenant, 1903; captain, 1910; major, 1916; and acting lieutenant-colonel, 1917–19. Between September 1915 and November 1918 he served in the 21st, 39th, and 47th divisions of the Royal Engineers in France and Belgium, and fought in the battle of Pilckem ridge in 1917. Wounded in action, he was twice mentioned in dispatches, was awarded the MC (June 1916), and was appointed to the DSO (June 1918).

He returned to the Survey in 1919 and, with the exception of a period as deputy master, security printing (1926–9), he spent the rest of his career with the Survey. He was director in Shillong, Simla, and Calcutta; then in 1933 he was appointed surveyor-general and held this position until his retirement in 1937. He was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1930 and brigadier in 1933, and he was knighted in 1937.

He was a keen tennis player and won the doubles in the 1923 army lawn-tennis championships. In 1925 he married Evelyn Beatrice, the divorced wife of Robert Henry Thomas and youngest daughter of Colonel William Lewis Clinton Baddeley, a retired military officer. They had no children. Couchman died 30 November 1956 in London.

[R. H. Phillimore, *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, vol. ii, 1950; H. L. Pritchard (ed.), *History of the Corps*

*of Royal Engineers*, 1952; *The Times*, 3 December 1956.]

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