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A WIDOW'S PLEA – AND HOW HER HUSBAND'S MEDALS WERE PRESERVED

Tim Ash

CHINA 1842 - T.C. RICHARDSON. LIEUT 1st REG BENGAL VOLUNTEERS

PUNJAB 1848-49 - Bt CAPTn T.C. RICHARDSON 18th BENGAL N.I.

The circumstances leading to the death of Captain Taylor Campbell Richardson, together with four other officers of the 18th Bengal Native Infantry were probably as tragic as any in the annals of the Indian Mutiny. I considered it quite surprising that his medals were still extant but never expected to know how this came about.

"He was a volunteer during the China War and I have his medal, and also one for the Punjaub War, he had served nearly 26 years. I hope this may all be taken into consideration for the sake of those he has left to mourn his loss".

This poignant extract is from a letter dated Nynee Tal, August 27th, 1858 from Mrs Ellen Richardson, addressed to the Secretary of the Government of India, Military Department, at Calcutta. In her letter she pleads for the admission for herself and her three children, a boy of 15, a daughter of 13, both fortunately in England, and an infant daughter of 19 months, to the benefits of the Compassionate Fund on account of the death of her husband.

Ellen Richardson's letter, accompanied by her marriage certificate, children's' baptismal certificates, and official documents, form an enclosure to a Military Despatch, No. 144 of 12th November 1858, from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India in London, reporting that she and her children had been admitted to the Compassionate Fund. It was no doubt a relief from financial worries for Mrs Richardson who had by this time been a widow for 17 months.

In May of 1857 the 18th BNI, with the 68th BNI, the 8th Irregular Cavalry and the 6th Company, 6th Battalion Artillery, formed the garrison at Bareilly, the chief military station in Rohilcund. The events at Meerut on 10th May prompted the military authorities at Bareilly to send the ladies and children of the regiments there to the hill station of Nynee Tal, some 70 miles to the north in the foothills of the Himalayas. It turned out to be a wise and timely precaution which undoubtedly saved their lives, and by chance preserved Richardson's two medals.

The mutiny at Bareilly struck on Sunday 31st May. Before the night had closed, all that remained of Bareilly was a heap of smouldering ruins, and on that or the subsequent few days, more than fifty Europeans, men, women and children, were killed. However, a party of forty managed to escape to Nynee Tal the same day; from the 18th there were but three, Lieutenant Hunter, Ensign Barwell and Surgeon Oakley. Bareilly was to remain in rebel hands until 7th May 1858 when it was captured by the forces under the command of Sir Colin Campbell.

Most histories of the Mutiny recount the events at Bareilly that day so I shall not repeat here what may easily be read elsewhere. However, there is a personal account by Lieutenant James Young Gowan, Adjutant of the 18th BNI, which originally appeared in the Delhi Gazette of 12th November 1857 and was repeated in the Lahore Chronicle. As far as I know it has not been published elsewhere. Below is a short extract which gives a unique account of those European ranks of the 18th BNI who did not escape with the main party from Bareilly to Nynee Tal, namely:

Major H E Pearson, Commanding. Captain T C Richardson. Captain H V Hathorn. Lieutenant H R Stewart. Ensign J C Dyson. Sergeant Major Belcham, his wife and four children. Quartermaster Sergeant Cross and one child, and of course Lieutenant Gowan himself, the only officer to survive the events he recorded. (punctuation as in the original. Ed.)

"Being the last day of the month I was busy examining the Muster Rolls, and had gone through them all, (the Pay Havildars saying nothing to me or I to them about the rumour [of impending mutiny] and had commenced taking a copy of a Station Order calling for a Return to be furnished without delay, when my bearer came into my room, evidently much alarmed saying, 'There is a great noise in the 68th lines - the men are shouting'. I told him it was a Company of the 68th going to Budaon, when he went away, but evidently dissatisfied. In a short time he returned saying that the muskets were being fired off, I told him not to be alarmed and asked Major Pearson who came in just then to go out and listen, as I was anxious to finish the order, he went out but could hear nothing. Presently the bearer again returned and said the 68th were firing again, and so are the guns. Having hurried taking the copy of the order, I went out with Major Pearson, and hearing went inside to get my cap, tunic and sword and rouse up Ensign Dyson, who was my chum, whom I desired to follow us to the lines. Major Pearson went on ahead, and I assuring the servants, immediately followed him.

On arriving at the lines we found the men in a state of very great excitement, but unarmed and unaccoutred. Major Pearson ordered them to dress, and to load their muskets, which they did at once, but though frequently directed to fall in they did not obey the order, and were but a rabble professing devotion to their Officers and sorrow for what had occurred. In a very short time I saw the Mess House of the 68th in flames, the lines of that corps were burning when we reached our own lines. Just at this time Ensign Dyson came down and very soon after Captains Richardson and Hawthorn and Lieutenant Stewart, the latter of whom stated that he had seen Lieutenant Hunter and Ensign Barwell mounted on horses and fleeing towards the Cavalry lines.

Soon after our own lines were set on fire from the left, and as there was a strong wind blowing soon consumed. Shots were fired by men of the 68th, at horsemen who rode across their parade. While our lines were burning some Sowars and a Native Officer of the 8th Irregulars came down close to our lines in front, Major Pearson went and spoke to one of them, but he gave a very unsatisfactory answer, the Major afterwards told me, and some of our men pulled him back declaring the Cavalry had sworn to shoot every European. I also went towards the party with the Native Officer, who had a standard in his hand, but the Sipahis begged me not to go near the Cavalry as they would kill me, and just then one of the party raised his carbine to shoot the Sergeant Major, hut he was told by a young Sipahi, who knocked up the muzzle of the piece,

that if he attempted to shoot the Sahib he would be shot. Now came a cry that the Treasury had been plundered by the guard of the 68th, which was over if, and the Artillery fired their guns unshotted.

So things went on until about 2 p.m. when the 8th Irregulars, the Artillery, and 68th assembled together and turned the guns on the 18th, threatening to blow them away if they did not come and join them, at once, the majority then went forward and joined them, while some few, though with the consent of the rest, put us (i.e. the Officers whose names I have given and myself) with Quarter-Master Sergeant Cross and Sergeant Major Belcham with his wife and four children of ages varying from 12 to 2½ years, into one of the Bells of Arms, and shut us up there. The whole Regiment then, or at least most of them went off to the Treasury and the Jail to release the prisoners, while some went plundering the Station bazaar and the Officers' bungalows, to which latter they set fire. The Sowars took all the horses, hastening on horseback from house to house to effect this. My own parade horse was taken by Havildar Kadirbukhsh of my Regiment soon after I had been put into the Bell of Arms, as the groom had brought it down to the lines.

While we were in the Bell of Arms we were supplied with wine and spirits, and food prepared by the natives, and defended from the Sowars and prisoners who came to kill us insisting that we were there, but the soldiers denied that they had anything but their own families and property. In the evening the soldiers returned to the lines loaded with plunder of all kinds, and soon after Khan Bahadoor arrived on the parade, and after appointing Officers and promising large pay, went away.

The whole force then encamped on the 18th parade, the Cavalry on the right and close to the place in which we were concealed. When it was getting dark the Sipahis came to ask us what should be done, and we said escort us up to Nynee Tal, which they said they would do and furnish us with money and clothes for the purpose, but that we must wait until it was dark, as the Sowars were determined to kill every European that they saw, they had already killed Colonel Troup, Mr Hunter, Mr Barwell, Doctors Currie and Oakley, and sent a party on the Nynee Tal road to follow such as had fled on horseback, or stop all who should attempt to get up by the direct road.

They again came with Sipahis red coats and dhotis for each of the men, and said they would bring covering for Mrs Belcham and the children. I aided the Officers in putting on their dhotis, as they knew not how to fasten them and I did, and went to aid the Sergeants and to assure Mrs Belcham who was crying, as well as, if possible, to prevent the youngest child from crying. While doing this the door was opened, and the Officers all went out unknown to me. The Sowars then came and the Sipahis shut the doors, and I, thinking the other Officers were there, called to one or other of them, but received no answer. I then went round the pile of clothing which was in the Bell of Arms, and to my great horror found that they had all gone, knowing that the Sowars were watching the place. I supposed that all would soon be murdered, and I prayed, as may be supposed very earnestly, for deliverance. Soon the Sowars went away from before the door, and other Sipahis came and took me, the two Sergeants, and the family of the Sergeant Major, out of the Bell of Arms, hurrying us along, as they told us, to where the Officers were. Sergeant Cross and one child went on first, I followed, but noticing Mrs Belcham coming slowly I stopped for her to come up, but the Naik who was with us told me we must all go separately, as should the Sowars see a large party they would attack us, and we should all meet where the Officers were. I

consequently went on and was escorted to the rear of the Station, and the Naik then told me he did not know where the Officers were, but that he would escort me to Fureedpore, that I had better make the best of my way to Shahjehanpore, which I could easily reach in two nights, and he would follow me, he also gave me two Rupees which was all the money he had on him, and advised me to keep to the road, going round the villages, and to hide during the day, under a bridge, or if I could manage to get there unobserved, in the house of some poor man.

I was then under the impression that the others who had been with me in the Bell of Arms were being escorted to Nynee Tal, and though my conductor had led me away from the them, yet I had every reason to suppose that he meant kindly by me, both from his accompanying me so far, furnishing me with money, and from his conversation, so I offered him a ring I had, which he refused, saying he could not take it, and that I should need it for our journey. When near Fureedpore I sent him back that he might make what arrangements were necessary for our journey to his home, and went on."

Some four months later Gowan, still a fugitive, was united with Sergeant Major Belcham and his family, but yet a further month passed since that fateful Sunday at Bareilly until they were finally released from their concealment at various places with sympathetic natives. Gowan was still unaware of the precise fate of the companions in the Bell of Arms at Bareilly.

Those companions were not so fortunate for on 6th June their escape was brought to a sudden and tragic end with their murder by villagers at Ram Puttee. It was perhaps ironic that the Officers of the 18th BNI, a Regiment apparently reluctant to mutiny, and whose Sepoys made obvious efforts to protect their Officers who stayed with them, suffered the greatest number of casualties of the Bareilly garrison regiments. Ellen Richardson must have spent many uncertain months without certain knowledge of her husband's fate. Taylor Campbell Richardson has left little to remember him by. But, thanks to Ellen Richardson who, either by purpose or accident took his two medals with her to Nynee Tal thus preserving them for posterity, and by Gowan's account, he is not quite the forgotten soldier he might have been.

References India Office and Oriental Collections

- L/MIL/3/80 Military Despatch from India, No 144 of 1858. Mrs Richardson and children admitted to the Compassionate Fund.
- L/MIL/3/656 Enclosures to Military Letters from India, No 144 of 1858. Mrs Richardson's letters and documents.
- SM/55 The Lahore Chronicle. Lt Gowan's account - "My Escape from Bareilly". [Better read in fall at the National Army Museum. Ace. No. 11892]
- L/MIL/3/685 Mutiny Narrative - Bareilly. Appendix - Note of escape and murder of the Officers of the 18th BNI.

Acknowledgements

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There will be few members of the Society who will not be aware of the recent changes affecting the Brigade of Gurkhas leading to the formation of The Gurkha Rifles. Although as a British Army unit this technically lies outside the scope of our Society, I think it deserves mention. It also leads on neatly to an article by Tony Mains about the division of Gurkha units on Independence. I had thought to hold this over until our special anniversary number but include it now because it's relevance to the recent changes makes it topical.

Under the British Government's plans to slim down the armed forces it is intended to reduce the Brigade of Gurkhas to 2,500 men. Phase I took place on 14th September 1992 when 1/2 GR and 2/2 GR merged to form a single battalion, 2 GR. Phase 2 took place in July of this year with the merger of 2 GR and 6 GR to form 1st Battalion of the new large infantry regiment, The Royal Gurkha Rifles. At the same time 7 GR became 2nd Battalion and 10 GR became 3rd Battalion of the new Regiment. In late 1996/early 1997 the 2nd and 3rd Battalions will merge and reform as 2nd Battalion. Ed.

THE DIVISION OF GURKHA REGIMENTS - 1947

Lt Col A A Mains, late 9th Gurkha Rifles

THE POSITION PRIOR TO 1947

THE GURKHA BRIGADE IN 1939

The regular Gurkha Brigade consisted of ten regiments of two battalions each. Although the Indian Army List showed the class composition as "Gurkhas", each regiment had its own rules as to which of the Nepal clans it enlisted - the 9th Gurkhas enlisted Thakurs and Chettris, mainly from Western Nepal; the 7th and 10th, Limbus, Rais and Sunwars from the East, and the remaining seven regiments, Magars and Gurungs from the West.

WAR TIME EXPANSION

All ten regiments raised a 3rd and 4th Battalion, and the 1st, 2nd and 9th a 5th Battalion to replace their 2nd Battalions captured in Singapore. Two Airborne and two Garrison Battalions were also raised:

153 (Gurkha) Para Battalion.

- 1941 - raised from men of all regiments of the Gurkha Brigade.
- 1945 - re-designated No 2 (Gurkha) Bn, Indian Parachute Regiment
- 1947 - disbanded

154 (Gurkha) Para Battalion

- 1942 - 3/7 GR raised from men of 1/7 & 2/7 GR.
- 1943 - converted to 154 (Gurkha) Para Bn.
- 1945 - re-designated No 3 (Gurkha) Bn, Indian Parachute Regiment.
- 1946 (Oct) - reverted to 3/7 GR
- 1946 (Nov) - disbanded

25 GR - a Garrison unit, raised 1942, disbanded 1946

26 GR - a Garrison unit, raised 1943, disbanded 1946.

(Both raised on special establishment from old and wounded soldiers and surplus recruits for garrison duties in forward areas of the Burma Front. 25 GR was 14th Army's HQ Garrison Bn in 1944).

Training Units. All raised in 1943 and disbanded in 1946. Function - to give field craft and battle training to recruits passing out from Regimental Centres before they joined their active units:

- 14 GR - for recruits to 1 & 4 GR
- 29 GR - for recruits to 2 & 9 GR
- 38 GR - for recruits to 3 & 8GR
- 56 GR - for recruits to 5 & 6 GR
- 710 GR -for recruits to 7 & 10 GR

Other Units

5/3 GR

Formed as a composite battalion in Burma in February 1942 from the survivors - 107 men of 1/3 GR and 227 men of 2/5 GR - of the Sittang Bridge disaster. Could not be named 3/5 GR as such a battalion already existed. It was broken up on its return to India in May 1942, when 1/3 and 2/5 GR were re-formed.

1/3/7 GR

Formed as a composite battalion during the Burma retreat from men of 1/7 and 3/7 GR, when the strength of these units dropped below that required for an active unit. 1/7 and 3/7 GR were re-formed on their return to India.

THE COMMITTEE ON THE POST WAR INDIAN ARMY

This Committee, of which the chairman was Brigadier Enoch Powell, recommended that the post war Brigade should consist of eight regiments of two battalions, by the disbandment of all war raised units and also of the two most junior regiments, the 7th and 10th. That the eight remaining regiments should be grouped in pairs for enlistment and the training of recruits.

Group	Regiments	Class Composition
14th	1 & 4 GR	2/3 Magars, Gurungs 1/3 Limbu, Rai, Sunwars
29th	2 & 9 GR	Thakurs Chettris
38th	3 & 8 GR	2/3 Magars, Gurungs

		1/3 Limbus, Rais, Sunwars
56th	5 & 6 GR	2/3 Magars, Gurungs 1/3 Limbus, Rais, Sunwars

The report of this Committee was overtaken by events, i.e. Independence; it was printed but never published.

The Disbandments

By 1947 only the two regular and the war raised 3rd battalions of each regiment remained in existence.

INDEPENDENCE

THE DIVISION

Negotiations were begun between Britain, India and Nepal for the division of the old Brigade between the British and Indian Armies. The final decision was that eight battalions should be transferred to the British Army, and the remainder would remain with independent India. The regular 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th were selected for the British Army.

The reason why only eight battalions were taken into the British Army and why certain regiments were chosen is still obscure. It seems odd that the two most junior regiments, and the only ones to enlist from Eastern Nepal, were included. That there was a great deal of lobbying is undoubted, but two factors may have been taken into account - first, the British Treasury looked with favour on the transfer of any regiment with a battalion still in the Far East. As British Gurkhas were to serve in Malaya, transport charges would be minimised - second, there was a feeling that the Magars and Gurungs from the West had been over recruited but there was still an untapped pool of potential recruits in the East. There was little to choose between the regiments as regards their soldierly qualities or their battle record in World War II - Limbus and Rais were thought to be better in attack, while the solid Magars and Gurungs were possibly better when things were going wrong in a retreat. One regiment, the 9th, with an exemplary record, had no chance of being selected, although had the division been made after the overthrow of the Government of the Nepalese Maharajas in 1950, their chances would have been much higher. The Thakurs and Chettris would not eat in peace time with the men of the other clans; not because of any personal religious prejudice, but because of the privileged position of these clans in the Nepalese social order and the strict Hinduism of the Maharaja's Government.

IMPLEMENTATION

THE REGIMENTAL CENTRES

Three of the Regimental Centres were in Pakistan and had to be moved to India - the 5th and 6th were at Abbottabad and the 8th at Quetta. All three came to Dehra Dun - the 5th and 8th to the 2nd Gurkha Lines, shortly to be vacated when this Regiment moved to Malaya, and the 6th Centre doubled up in the 9th's Lines for the short period before it too moved to Malaya.

THE "OPT"

This was probably the most unsatisfactory part of the operation. Most people think that all serving Gurkha soldiers were given the option of choosing between service in the British or Indian Armies. This was not so - only men serving in the four regiments going to Britain had the right to make known their preference. It was denied to the men of the remaining six regiments on the grounds that, as their regiment was continuing to serve in the Indian Army, there was no change in their conditions of service. This manifestly unfair procedure probably stemmed from the arrangements made for the Civil Service, Army and Police to express their preference for service in India or Pakistan. To be able to express an option, the individual had to live on the 'wrong' side of the religious barrier - a Moslem living in Pakistan could not opt for India but a Hindu or Sikh could; vice versa, a Hindu in India could not opt for Pakistan but a Moslem could.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the "opt", the actual results surprised everyone; a massive vote to remain in the Indian Army. British Officers had confidently presumed that the Gurkha would wish to stick with his British Officers and with the British Crown. Various attempts to explain away the result have been made - one, that undue pressure was put upon the optees, particularly by a Royal Nepalese Army mission sent to see fair play. The real reason was almost certainly that the average soldier was by now fed up with overseas service and the prospect of going overseas again filled him with dread. Field Marshal Montgomery killed any idea of the Gurkha following his British Officers; they were just not there for him to follow - in his dislike of "private armies" he decreed that only those Regular Officers actually with a battalion selected for Britain could remain of right, usually only the Commanding Officer. Regular Officers of other regiments joining the British Army would be posted to those Regiments or Corps where there was a shortage; 90% went to the Royal Artillery. Gurkha regiments would be officered like the King's African Rifles, with British Officers on a four year secondment, and war time officers selected for Regular Commissions in British infantry could put in at once for their secondment. Thus the one class of person to whom the Gurkha traditionally looked up, the regular officer, was not there.

The only way that the "British" Gurkha battalions could be made up to strength was to invite men of the other regiments to volunteer, which made a nonsense of the original "opt"

TIDYING UP

BRITISH REGIMENTS

The British regiments departed for Malaya where they were named the Brigade of Gurkhas. Certain other changes were made - the ranks were re-designated as Majors, Captains and Lieutenants for Gurkha Officers and Sergeants and Corporals for other ranks. The Regimental Centres were abolished and administration and training centralised under HQ Brigade of Gurkhas and the Training Depot, dealing with all four regiments. The 7th Gurkhas were converted to gunners and the Gurkha Engineers, Signals and Transport Regiment raised. A big change was made by Field Marshal Slim on becoming C.I.G.S. - he re-raised the permanent cadre of Officers by bringing back from the Royal Artillery all old Gurkha Regimental Officers, and a few also from Indian infantry, and converted the 7th Gurkhas back to infantry.

INDIAN REGIMENTS

The Indian regiments continued to be known as Gurkha Brigade, but now spelt Gorkha. India was left with twenty four battalions as against Britain's eight. They were made up of six regiments of three battalions plus the third battalions of the four regiments which had gone to Britain. The two Magar-Gurung battalions presented no problem - the 3/2nd became the 4/8th and the 6th became the 4/5th. The 3rd Battalions of the 7th and 10th were in a different category as the men were Limbus and Rais and India now had no regiment enlisting these clans. It was decided to re-raise the 11th Gurkhas, who had a brief existence between 1918 and 1922, as a Limbu-Rai regiment.

REGIMENTAL CENTRES

About two years later India decided to pair regiments, except the 11th, for administration and training of recruits, into Gorkha Training Centres:-

- 14th Gorkha Training Centre at Sabathu (Simla Hills)
- 39th Gorkha Training Centre at Birpur (Dehra Dun)
- 58th Gorkha Training Centre at Dehra Dun (Cantonment)
- 11th Gorkha Training Centre at Clement Town, later Ghangora (Dehra Dun)

A further move came in the eighties during the tenure of General T.N. Raina as Chief of the Army Staff. He considered that on mobilisation many of the active units were too far back and that they should be moved to cantonments in the western UP and the Punjab to replace the Regimental Centres at present there. This meant a move of the Gurkha Centres out of Dehra Dun:-

- 11th G.T.C. to Lucknow
- 39th G.T.C. to Varanasi (Benares)
- 58th G.T.C. to Shillong

Sabathu was considered unsuitable for Field Army units and so 14th G.T.C. was allowed to remain.



SOME BADGES OF THE BIKANER STATE FORCES

Tony McClenaghan

BACKGROUND

Located in the deserts of Rajasthan and covering an area of 23,315 sq. miles, Bikaner was one of the former Indian Princely States with a particularly colourful military history.

The rulers of Bikaner, who were entitled to a 17 gun salute, were from the Rathor clan of Rajputs. The State founded in 1465 by Rao Bikaji, born in 1439 the sixth son of Rao Jodhaji of Marwar, the founder of Jodhpur. Rai Singh, the fourth in descent from Bika, became a leader of horse in Akbar's service and both Akbar and Jahangir married princesses of the Bikaner Rajputs, thereby cementing ties between Bikaner and Delhi.

In 1808, during the rule of Surat Singh, contact was first made with the British when the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone passed through the State on his way to Cabul as envoy of the Earl of Minto, recently arrived Governor General of India. Elphinstone was treated with great respect and this relationship was to be reflected in subsequent years. A treaty of friendship and amity with the Rajah was first signed at Delhi on 9th March 1818 and ratified by the Governor General, Lord Hastings, in camp near Patrassa Ghaut on 21st March 1818. During the same year, when Pindaris or "free companies" (outlaws and marauders) invaded the territory as part of the Third Mahratta War, British troops came to the assistance of Surat Singh in accordance with the new treaty and suppressed the insurgents.

In 1845/46, during the First Sikh War, Bikaner troops marched with others towards Ferozepore, though they did not cross the Sutlej and were not actually employed. During the Second Sikh War of 1848/49 Bikaner troops were again sent to Ferozepore, and re-supply arrangements from Bikaner for British troops were also made, though not brought into use because of the difficulty of obtaining water. In 1857, during the Mutiny, troops of Bikaner, led personally by Maharaja Sardar Singh, besieged and relieved the strategic town of Hissar until joined by the former Sikh General, Henry Van Cortlandt, now British Deputy Commissioner for Gugera, and his Hariana Field Force. They continued to serve with Van Cortland and after the troubles were over Sardar Singh was rewarded with 41 villages and the right of adoption.

Sardar Singh was succeeded in 1872 by Dungar Singh, after whom one of the Bikaner cavalry units was subsequently named. He in turn was succeeded in 1887 by Ganga Singh (born 1880) who then reigned for fifty-six years and who initiated and carried out many development projects. He was, however, also known as a valiant soldier who led his own troops on many occasions in the service of the Crown. In 1900 soldiers of the Ganga Risala, the famed Bikaner Camel Corps, served in China in an infantry capacity during the Boxer Rebellion. In January 1903 soldiers from the same Corps served in Somaliland and during the First World War in the Middle East, supported and reinforced by the Sadul Light Infantry. Units of the State similarly served overseas during the Second World War with great distinction.

BIKANER CAMEL CORPS, GANGA RISALA

Figure I shows a badge for the Bikaner Camel Corps, the Ganga Risala. The unit had first been raised in 1889 as an Imperial Service Troops unit, taking its name from the Maharaja. As already mentioned, within a year of its formation the Maharaja had offered its services in an infantry capacity for the campaign in China against the Boxers. He led the unit to China but returned to India shortly after their arrival, there appearing to be no further prospect of fighting! (It is worth recording that medals to the unit for this campaign are named to Bikaner Infantry, or Bikaner Imperial Service Infantry, although only Ganga Risala personnel were involved. Similarly, the battle honour "CHINA 1900", awarded under GGO No.276 of 3rd April 1903, was credited to the Bikaner Infantry).

In January 1903, 215 members of the Regiment sailed for Somaliland. On 22nd April, 47 men formed part of a flying column under Major Gough between Bohotle and Walwar Wardair. Adjutant Jemadar Mehtab Singh and two soldiers were killed while Captain Hughes (Special Service Officer), one Jemadar and three soldiers were wounded. Lieutenant William George Walker, 4th Gurkha Rifles, who was serving with the Ganga Risala at the time, won the Victoria Cross for his role in saving a wounded officer while under fire during this action. Subedar Kishen Singh of the Ganga Risala was awarded the Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class,

for the same incident. The Regiment received the battle honour "SOMALILAND 1901-04" under GGO No 663 of 3rd December 1932.

During the First World War the unit served in Egypt as part of 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade. It was brought up to strength with officers and men of Bikaner Imperial Service Infantry (Sadul Light Infantry), which had no war establishment of its own. Throughout the period of the war the Sadul Light Infantry acted as a training battalion for the Ganga Risala and regularly supplied drafts to replace casualties. Nearly every officer and man of the Sadul Light Infantry eventually served overseas with the Ganga Risala.

On the outbreak of the Second World War the unit was not immediately deployed but in September 1940 it proceeded to Aden, though it returned to India in 1942 for service in Upper Sind, returning to the State in 1945. Following Independence the unit was absorbed into the Indian Army as part of 13th (Ganga Jaisalmer) Battalion, The Grenadiers. The distinctive uniform of the Ganga Risala (white with red facings) has been adopted as the basis of the ceremonial uniform of the Border Security Force, seen mounted on their camels in New Delhi every January.

The badge (figure 1) has the monogram GS (Ganga Singh) in the centre of a scroll with the title of the unit around. The whole surmounted by a *Chattri* (State umbrella). Officers wore the camel collar badges (figure 2) in silver while other ranks wore them in brass. The unit also wore a shoulder title - on three lines; top (curved) GANGA RISALA, bottom (curved) CAMEL CORPS, centre (straight) BIKANER (figure 3).



1



2



3 (all photos RCW)

DUNGAR LANCERS

The unit traced its origins to 1465 when it was raised as Khas Risala on the founding of the State. It fought with the British in the First Sikh War 1845-6, the Second Sikh War 1848-9, and the Indian Mutiny 1857. In 1912 it was designated the Dungar Lancers although it was not at the time a part of the Imperial Service Troops scheme. In 1923 it was reorganised as Indian States Forces with an headquarters and two operational squadrons. The unit included His Highness's Body Guard and spent the Second World War years in the State. Two shoulder titles are known, both on two curved lines. One reads DUNGAR LANCERS (sketch at figure 4) and the other BIKANER BODYGUARD (figure 5). I have been unable positively to identify the badge of the unit, though I have a poor photograph of the Regimental Colour (predominantly green) which shows the State Arms in white, gold and blue, with red scrolls either side, the three on the right reading FIRST SIKH WAR, SECOND SIKH WAR and MUTINY. Underneath, in red lettering, DUNGAR LANCERS. With this in mind it may be that the unit wore the general service badge at figure 6.



4



5



6

SADUL LIGHT INFANTRY

The unit was formed in 1839 from selected details of the infantry regiments called "Beras" which had existed since the earliest days of the State. As with the Dungar Lancers the infantry fought with the British in the First and Second Sikh Wars, and in the Mutiny. In January 1910 the unit was brought into the Imperial Service Troops scheme as the Sadul Light Infantry and, as discussed under Ganga Risala, acted as a training and reinforcement unit for that regiment during the First World War. During the Second World War it served initially at Bhopal guarding Prisoners of War but, in October 1941, was transferred to Persia and Iraq Command where it escorted supply trains heading for Russia. It returned to the State in December 1945 and, on Independence, was incorporated into the Indian Army as 19th (Bikaner) Battalion, The Rajput Regiment.

I believe an earlier badge for the unit may have been based on the State Arms (see figure 6). A later badge (figure 7), was in white metal and consisted of the letter "S" over two crossed axes with a wreath of leaves either side. Above, the *Chattri* and below, on two scrolls, SADUL LIGHT INFANTRY/ BIKANER.

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KARNI INFANTRY

Raised in 1939 as an Indian States Force unit but along the lines of a militia, it became 2nd Bikaner Infantry with an internal security role as well as providing a reserve for service outside the State if required. In fact it spent the war years in the State and soon after the war was re-named Karni Infantry after the heir apparent. The badge at figure 8 must date from this period. A falcon with wings spread within a wreath of leaves. Above, the *Chattri* and below, on three scrolls, KARNI INFANTRY BIKANER.

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The State maintained units other than those mentioned (e.g. Bikaner Bijey Battery, Motor Machine Gun Sections, 3rd Battalion, Bikaner State Infantry) but I do not have details of their badges.

BOOK NOTES

● "*BEFORE ENDEAVOURS FADE*". Rose E.B. Coombs MBE. Available from After the Battle, Church House, Church Street, London E15 3JA. £11.95

The 1994 reprint of this book is the seventh edition of what has become probably the most comprehensive guide on the Western Front battlefields of the Great War. Rather than updating the previous volumes the editors have produced what is virtually a new book. Every photograph has been re-photographed, the text re-written and many additions included. Nevertheless the basic features remain. These include guide routes, battlefield plans and maps complemented with aerial photographs and ground shots of then and now. In addition, there are illustrations of special features such as surviving defences, memorials and cemeteries. With each entry there is a potted history. WMT

● "*OFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CHINA. 1900-1901*". Major E.W.M. Norie, Assistant Quartermaster General (Intelligence), British Contingent, China Field Force.

This rare official account of the Boxer affair was released by the War Office in 1903 in a limited edition of 250 copies. The Battery Press, Inc., of Nashville, Tennessee, is to reprint the book in January 1995. As well as a complete account of the hostilities, leading up to peace and the consequent withdrawal of the larger part of the allied forces from China, the book also contains appendices including details of the units comprising the China Expeditionary Force, standing orders for the Force, transportation operations, medical operations, police administration in Peking, and Imperial Chinese edicts and decrees.

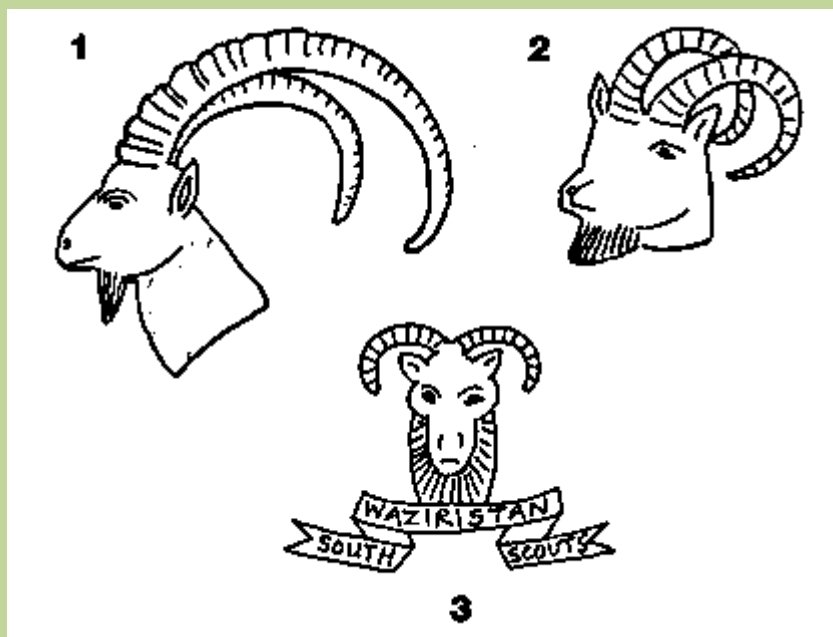
Eventually to be released at a price of US \$59.95 plus \$2.50 postage. The Battery Press was offering an introductory price of \$49.95 plus \$2.50 provided orders placed by 1st December 1994. I received the notification just after the last edition of DURBAR had been despatched and so wrote to the company saying that could not meet the deadline. They have therefore extended it until 1st March 1995 for members of IMHS. Please quote your IMHS membership number when ordering. You can only order direct from the company - payment by cheque/money order. Visa, Mastercard or American Express. Other reprints of Victorian operations, including Indian Army activities, are planned. The Battery Press, Inc., P.O. Box 198885, Uptown Station. Nashville, Tennessee 37219. USA.

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Several members have identified Mr Thornton's badge (Vol. II, No 3, Page120) as an other rank's left badge of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, c. 1914. One member, James Patton (376), has the matching right badge and headdress badge.

● David Harris seeks help in identifying the two badges shown at figures 1 and 2 below. He writes, "They appear to be two variations of the same badge, and probably belong to a pre-1947 Indian Army North West Frontier Scouts or Militia unit. Both are shown full size as seen from the front, and both have the usual two lugs and split pin on the reverse. Figure 1 is made of good quality brass and behind one of the horns is printed what is probably a maker's name (6 letters, unreadable) and "London". Figure 2 is of a lesser quality, probably white metal, without any markings on the reverse. The lugs on the reverse are of a simple style, and I assume the badge is locally manufactured.

By way of comparison I also enclose a drawing of an identifiable South Waziristan Scouts badge (figure 3) but it is facing front and not easy to relate to either figures I or 2."



OBITUARY

V.R.L. Thomas (27 Oct 1920 - 17 Nov 1994) A Salute

Captain Ashok Nath

With the passing away of V.R.L. "Len" Thomas of Underhill, Hambridge, Somerset, the Society has been deprived of a senior member and many of us have lost a good friend.

Len was a true collector; not only did he have a deep interest in the Indian Army, his collection also covered the British, Commonwealth and other armies and police units of the World. It did not stop at that. His interests in collecting spanned arts, curios, coins, stamps - you name it, Len collected it. It was difficult to move around Len's cottage without the danger of knocking some piece of antiquity to the ground.

I was to get to know this remarkable, kind and cheerful Englishman through a common interest in the Indian Army. We had exchanged a few letters when one day he wrote to say that he would be coming to Stockholm, Sweden, where we live. On the day of his arrival we got a call from Norway - it was Len. He had landed up on the wrong ferry and instead of

reaching Stockholm on the Baltic had arrived at Oslo on the Atlantic. This did not deter him and the next morning there was a ring on the door and there stood Len with his red Volkswagon parked outside, cheerful and fresh as ever after his long drive. Len fitted in with our family perfectly and it was a pleasure having him stay with us on other occasions. This was to be the beginning of a great friendship.

Valentine Russell Leonard Thomas came from an English-Irish family, which had settled in Bangalore, South India, in the early 19th Century. Members of his family had served with distinction in the HEIC's Madras European Regiment, one of them being particularly mentioned for bravery in their regimental history. His grandfather was an educationist with the Maharaja of Mysore's Education Department and he apparently must have done good work because we were eventually to discover that Bangalore still has a lane named after him.

Len studied at the famous Lawrence Royal Military School at Lovedale, Nilgiri Hills. In 1939 he left India for Britain - he probably may not have done so if his mother and grandmother were alive. His father had left when he was very small - in fact that was the only time I have known him speak with emotional bitterness, still felt after so many years.

During the Second World War Len served with the Bomb Disposal Squad of the Royal Engineers at Malta. After the war he was offered a commission but refused and later, for many years, was in charge of a brewery in Somerset. Len married a Belgian lady and they spent many happy years together until her untimely demise.

One of the great pleasures I got was to have persuaded Len to accompany us on the Military Historical Society's India tour of 1992 which I accompanied and organised. This particular tour included a visit to Bangalore. Len was returning to India after 53 years and it was great to see him return to familiar grounds. Most of his ancestors lie in the Bangalore Protestant Cemetery and, as he later told me, the trip was a pilgrimage to his mother's grave and he could now peacefully bury the "ghosts" of his childhood.

One of his last wishes was to get photographs and details of all his relatives who lie buried in Bangalore. On my visit there last January I spent most of 2 days in the cemetery photographing all the relevant graves. Some required clearing a small jungle to get to them, but just the fact that it made him happy was reward enough and, as it later proved, there were more relatives buried in Bangalore than Len knew about.

I am sure that many of Len's friends would agree that he was an example of what many of us collectors would like to be. We are all here for a given period of time. Our collections may outlast us, but what is important is the quality and meaning of that time spent. It is the man behind the collecting that makes collecting such a pleasure. Len was such a man.

