

## DURBAR Volume 13, No.1, Spring 1996

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### THE FRONTIER SCOUTS

Ashok Nath

"The Scouts were a solution to an insoluble problem. The Pathan tribes of the North West Frontier presented to the British in India in its most extreme form a difficulty that occurs wherever a central power that governs by law and values peaceful agriculture is confronted by tribal peoples who rely on pillage for their luxuries.

The country of the Pathans is much of it craggy and inhospitable, freezing in winter and scorching in summer. It has been called a gigantic slag-heap. It will barely support human life at the simplest level and the Pathan must get the price of a wife or a rifle from somewhere else, either by force or fraud, by raiding or trading, or simply by blackmail - such as a subsidy from the government in the plains. The people are as craggy as the country, unswerving in the most fundamental forms of Islam, bitter in the blood-feud, reckless of life. They have never called any man master ...."

- so writes Philip Mason in his introductory paragraph to *The Frontier Scouts* by Charles Chevenix Trench.

However try where one will, it has been impossible to get descriptions of all the various units and the insignia worn by them. Even an outline history of individual units is not available. Many changes have taken place, new units raised and disbanded while a few have merged into another establishment and can no longer be considered a part of the Frontier Scouts.

In March 1995, together with my colleague John Gaylor, I was responsible for the organisation of a tour which included a visit to the home of the Frontier Scouts. This tour was organised for the Military Historical Society and one of a series which has included visits of military historical interest to different parts of the Indian Sub-Continent. This tour's emphasis was on Pakistan. Unlike India which became a Republic in 1950, Pakistan did not until 1956 - this meant that the latter's association with the Crown was a bit longer and the crown appeared on their regimental badges up to 1956.

In Peshawar the Military Historical Society's team was privileged to visit the HQ of the Frontier Corps (NWFP). This 11th century fortress, locally called Bala Hissar, is not open to the general public. We later inspected the Quarter Guard manned by the 1st Mahsud Scouts, with John taking the ceremonial salute on behalf of the Society.

This article is an attempt to put together what little is known about Frontier Scout insignia and a brief history of some of these Scout units.

## FRONTIER CORPS

This in effect is HQ of the Frontier Scouts, i.e., all Scouts units, Militias, etc. come under the Frontier Corps with Headquarters in their impressive "Bala Hissar" fort in Peshawar. The Frontier Corps themselves are divided into two bodies, independent of each other and each with their own chosen area of operation. These are Frontier Scouts (Baluchistan) with HQ in Quetta and Frontier Scouts (NWFP) with HQ at Peshawar. This article deals chiefly with the latter.

Those serving with HQ wear the badge of The Frontier Corps (NWFP) in white metal. Star and Crescent, mountain terrain below, two crossed Pathan daggers and scroll with "FRONTIER CORPS" as shown in **FS1**. A variation has the scroll in Arabic - **FS2**. Shoulder title in white metal "FRONTIER/CORPS" as shown in **FS3**. **FS4** shows the white metal cap badge of the Frontier Corps - Baluchistan.

## KHYBER RIFLES

Their badge has undergone no change, although the recent badges have their scroll in Arabic script. The Khyber Rifles were raised in 1878 as the Khyber Jezailchis. The title soon changed to Rifles after they were issued with sniders. The Khyber Rifles exclusively recruited Afridis, many of whom were sympathetic to the Afghan cause. Their mutiny during the Third Afghan War of 1919 resulted in a ban on Afridi recruitment and the disbandment of the Khyber Rifles. Afridis were not recruited again until the outbreak of the Second World War when, in 1942, the 1st Afridi Battalion was formed. In 1945 this was reconstituted as The Khyber Rifles.

**FS5** illustrates the earlier badge in silver plate for officers, **FS6** a more recent version in white metal, and larger. **FS7** is another version with straight knives and scroll in Arabic script in white metal. **FS8** is the white metal shoulder title which has remained unchanged in design.

## SOUTH WAZIRISTAN SCOUTS

Raised in 1900 as the South Waziristan Militia, title changed to "Scouts" in the early 1920's as a reward for good work done by them. Different versions of this cap badge exist. **FS9** - cap badge with King's Crown - this unit appears to be the only Frontier Scouts unit which wore the Crown (it is most likely that an earlier badge of this unit existed as the South Waziristan Militia but this has not been seen). **FS10** & **FS11** are also earlier variations of the badge, which is that of a Urial ram - *ovis orientalis* (shape of horns are different) and badges are in white metal. **FS12** is the present badge of the SWS in white metal with the "star and crescent". **FS13** is the white metal shoulder title which has remained unchanged.

## TOCHI SCOUTS

Raised in 1900 as the North Waziristan Militia, converted into Scouts in the 1920's. The cap badge shown in **FS14** has remained unchanged. **FS15** shows the early white metal shoulder title of the North Waziristan Militia and **FS16** the shoulder title that replaced it and is worn to the present day.

#### GILGIT SCOUTS

Raised in 1913 from the existing Hunza & Gilgit Levy. The cap badge of the Gilgit Scouts was the ibex - *capra ibex linnaeus* - a mountain goat found in the higher elevations of Gilgit & Karakoram regions. The cap badge in silver plate is shown in **FS17**, the officers' boss badge on dark green cord in **FS18**. The white metal shoulder title is noted as having had two versions as in **FS19** & **FS20**. The button in white metal is shown in **FS21**. It appears that the Gilgit Scouts did not change their cap badge until after 1956 and the last badge worn by them as Gilgit Scouts is shown in **FS22**.

In 1949 The Northern Scouts were raised and, although The Gilgit Scouts kept their own identity for several years, they were absorbed, together with the Karakoram Scouts, into The Northern Scouts. In 1977 another reorganisation took place when The Northern Scouts became the Northern Light Infantry (see Northern Scouts for more details).

#### CHITRAL SCOUTS

Raised in 1900 from "trained cragsmen of Chitral", officially became Scouts in 1925. The cap badge is the head of the markhor *capra falconeri cashmiriensis* - a goat with distinctive corkscrew horns which can measure up to 123 cms and inhabiting the Hindu Kush mountain range. **FS23** & **FS24** show the two sizes of their cap badge in white metal. The shoulder titles in white metal are shown in **FS25**, the first pattern, and **FS26**, the one in current use. The Chitral Scouts cap badge appears unchanged in the last 95 years.

#### KURRAM MILITIA

A senior unit, they were raised in 1892 by Capt G O Roos Keppel, mainly from Turri tribesmen who are Shia Muslim by faith. Since the Turris were surrounded by Sunni tribesmen the Kurram Militia could always be depended upon and they remained staunch and loyal to the British Raj. The earlier cap badge shown in **FS27** has been replaced by the one with Arabic letters shown in **FS28**. Two versions of their shoulder title have existed - **FS29** and the more recent **FS30**, both in white metal.

#### ZHOB MILITIA

Another senior militia unit, they were raised in 1889 by Sir Robert Sandeman and were initially called the Zhob and Bhorri Rifles. After their debacle of 1919 (Third Afghan War) they were renamed the Zhob Levy Corps but soon reverted to Zhob Militia. The cap badge of this unit in silver plate is shown in **FS31**, and **FS32** shows the white metal shoulder title of the old Zhob Levy Corps. With the dates given to us it appears that this unit ceased to exist as the Zhob Militia with effect from 1973.

#### PISHIN SCOUTS

Raised in 1946 for duties on the Pishin Chaman sector. Their cap badge in white metal is shown in **FS33**, and **FS34** the shoulder title, also in white metal.

#### NORTHERN SCOUTS

Raised in 1949 soon after the Kashmir war. Their job was mainly patrolling the Cease Fire Line in Kashmir between India and Pakistan. The Gilgit Scouts and Karakoram Scouts were absorbed into The Northern Scouts in 1975. The Northern Scouts in turn were reorganised into the Northern Light Infantry in 1977. Their primary role now is defence of the northern Kashmir/Ladakh borders. The NLI is a force which is neither regular Army nor Frontier Corps. They are permanently based and recruited from the northern areas of Pakistan and confront the Indian Army in that sector.

The cap badge of The Northern Scouts was a snow leopard, mountain ranges and the Northern Star - **FS35** - in both white metal and bi-metal. The larger badge in **FS36** was most likely used for a music instrument box. The shoulder title in white metal is shown in **FS37**. Another badge has been noted with Arabic scroll as shown in **FS38**.

#### KARAKORAM SCOUTS

Raised in 1964 and merged later in 1975 into the Northern Scouts. Their white metal cap badge shown in **FS39** was a falcon, mountain ranges and crossed talwars with scroll in Arabic script. Their shoulder title in white metal is shown in **FS40**.

#### KOHISTAN SCOUTS

Had a short existence, raised in 1978 and disbanded four years later in 1981. Their area of deployment was the mountainous area known as Indus-Kohistan. This was one of the last areas to be explored by the British. The tribes along this stretch have always had a reputation for ferocity, and until recently slave trading and caravan raiding were major sources of income. The cap badge shown in **FS41** depicts the typical steep mountain terrain of Kohistan and crossed battle axes, the traditional weapons of the Kohistanis, all in white metal chrome. The shoulder title shown in **FS42** is in white metal chrome.

#### BAJAUR SCOUTS

Raised in 1961 as Bajaur Levies for the Bajaur, Swat and Dir tribal areas and subsequently converted to Scouts. Their first badge shown in **FS43** was an eagle in white metal and their shoulder title in brass is shown in **FS44**. On becoming Scouts the badge underwent a change as shown in **FS45** and represented a fortified tower, crescent below and star above, all in white metal. The shoulder title in white metal was a plain curved BAJAUR as shown in **FS46**.

#### MEKRAN MILITIA

Formed in 1948 from the Mekran Levies. Their cap badge shown as **FS47** depicts the barren terrain in which they operate, a camel and palm tree in the background, all in white metal.

#### CHAGAI MILITIA

Formed in 1948 from the Chagai Levy Corps with the responsibility of looking after the desert country in the extreme west of Baluchistan, along the Iran and Afghan frontiers. Their earlier cap badge shown in **FS48** was in white metal and the more recent one in **FS49** in chrome. Crossed axes on a scroll "Chagai" has been the badge since raising. The crescent and star has recently been incorporated. An example of their shoulder title is shown in **FS50**.

#### MAHSUD SCOUTS

The Mahsud Labour Battalions formed in the 1930's were to be the nucleus of the Mahsud Scouts raised/formed in 1944. In 1960 the Mahsud Scouts were numbered 1st and 2nd Mahsud Scouts with their own badges. The badges shown in **FS51 to FS54** have been worn by them, in white metal. **FS54** is the Arabic version with numeral "2". The shoulder title in white metal illustrated in **FS55** is that worn by the 1st Mahsud Scouts.

#### THALL SCOUTS

Raised in 1948 as a general reserve for the Frontier. Their base was Thall in the Kurram bordering Afghanistan. Their badges have undergone changes, although we do not know the exact dates when these changes were introduced. The first pattern is shown in **FS56**, and the present badge shown as **FS57** in chrome. The Thall Scouts have had the eagle with different variations as their badge. The shoulder title in white metal is a curved "THALL" as shown in **FS58**.

#### DIR SCOUTS

Raised in 1970 from the Dir Levies, **FS59** shows the cap badge of the Dir Levies in brass - crossed Enfield rifles with crescent above, at the crossing of the rifles, in Arabic script, "Allah o Akbar". **FS60** shows the early title in brass. The present cap badge shown as **FS61** is a small circular shield at the crossing of the sword and rifle, crescent below shield, a mountain range below with a coniferous tree, and star above scroll reading "Dir Scouts". While **FS62** shows the present shoulder title, two variations have been noted in brass and white metal.

#### SHAWAL RIFLES

Raised in 1972 as part of the Frontier Scouts, but styled "Rifles", their cap badge in chrome is shown in **FS63** and the shoulder title in chrome in **FS64**.

#### MOHMAND SCOUTS

Raised in 1973, their cap badge is shown in **FS65**.

## SIBI SCOUTS

Date of raising is not known. Formed from the Sibi Levies, their cap badge in brass is shown as **FS66**. The present cap badge in chrome is shown as **FS67**. The Sibi Scouts are part of the Frontier Corps (Baluchistan).

## KALAT SCOUTS

Raised in 1965 and disbanded in 1973. The badge of this unit is described as crossed swords and palm tree with scroll "Kalat Scout" below. An actual example of this badge has not been seen.

Badges **FS68 to 75** are strictly not Frontier Scouts but "irregular" irregular forces, under the political agent and independent of the Scouts. However in times of emergency they work in close cooperation with the Scouts of their geographical area.

NORTH WAZIRISTAN KHASSADAR shown in **FS68**, white metal

KHURRAM LEVY FORCE shown in **FS69 & 70**, chrome

MALAKAND LEVIES shown in **FS71**, brass

MOHMAND KHASSADAR shown in **FS72 & 73**, white metal

KHYBER KHASSADAR FORCE shown in **FS74 & 75**, white metal

The author would welcome any correspondence with members concerning the Frontier Scouts.

## Published Sources

Trench, C C *"The Frontier Scouts"*. Jonathan Cape, London, 1985

Farrell, T D *"The founding of the North-West Frontier Militias"* – article

Elliott, J G *"The Frontier 1839-1947"*, Cassell, 1968

Barthorp, M *"The North West Frontier 1839-1947"*

Khan, Imran *"Warrior Race"*

## Other Sources

Military Historical Society's visit to the Frontier Scouts, March 1995.

Badges illustrated here are from the author's own collection. Additional badges have been provided by John Gaylor.



FS1



FS2



FS4



FS3



FS5



FS6



FS7



FS9



FS8



FS12



FS10



FS11



FS13



FS15



FS14



FS16



FS17



FS19



FS21



FS18



FS20



FS22



FS23



FS25



FS24



FS26



FS29



FS28



FS27



FS30



FS31



FS33



FS32



FS34





FS48



FS50



FS49



FS51



FS52



FS53



FS54



FS55



FS56



FS58



FS57



FS59



FS60



FS62



FS61



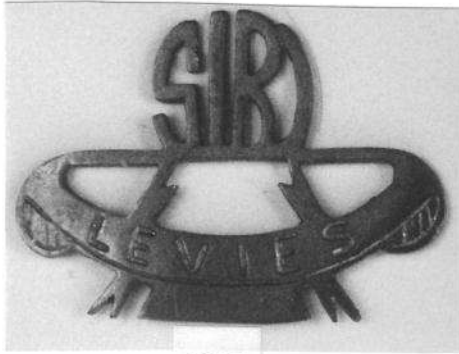
FS63



FS64



FS65



FS66



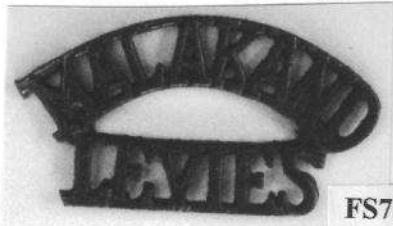
FS67



FS68



FS69



FS71



FS70



FS72



FS73



FS75



FS74

## WATERCOLOUR OF THE 4TH REGIMENT PUNJAB INFANTRY

Alan Harfield

The illustration, similar to that reproduced with this article, has been used in a number of books dealing with the history of the Indian Army. The illustration was used by Boris Mollo in his book "*The Indian Army*" (page 78) and he gives acknowledgement to the (now) Oriental and India Office Collection of the British Library.

From time to time documents, photographs etc. are donated to the UK based charity The British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia and, when appropriate, items are then officially passed to the Regimental or Corps Museum. In some instances, where a similar item is already held and a duplicate is not required, the illustration or document is incorporated into the BACSA archives.

One such item is a copy of the watercolour by Lieutenant Walter Fane which is now held in the BACSA archive. The original watercolour was copied in 1926 and whilst the copy is not of any great significance the manuscript that has been framed with the watercolour is of interest. The text of the paper reads:

"...Copied from original in the Officers' Mess 57th Wilde's Rifles Frontier Force by Major W.R. Boswell, 1926..."<sup>1</sup>

The accompanying text is written and signed "J.W. McQueen"<sup>2</sup> and reads:

"...A Native Officer and men of the 4th Punjab Rifles. Group of men of the 4th Punjab Infantry P.I. Force made by Lt Walter Fane, 1st Punjab Cavalry in 1855. Sepoy on the left, an Adam Khel, Afridi, whose section of his tribe live in the Kohat Pass. The man was killed at Delhi in Sept 1857. I have forgotten his name but he was nicknamed 'The Camel' on account of his rounded shoulders which no amount of drilling could straighten. He was a very powerful and active man and noted for his courage and dash.

[The middle figure] Havildar Kasan Singh, a Jat Sikh. He served throughout the mutiny campaigns in 1857-58, was present at the siege and capture of Delhi, at the action Balandshahr [Bulandshahr], Allyghar [Aligarh], Agra, Kanauge [Kanauj], the relief of Lucknow, the attack on Boya and the battle of Bareilly. He served in several of the N.W. Frontier expeditions and he was severely wounded in Col Charles Keyes' attack on the Bezotie Orakzais [Bizoti Orakzais] in March 1869 and was in consequence of his wounds invalided with a pension as a Jemadar. Some years previously he had been made a Native Officer.

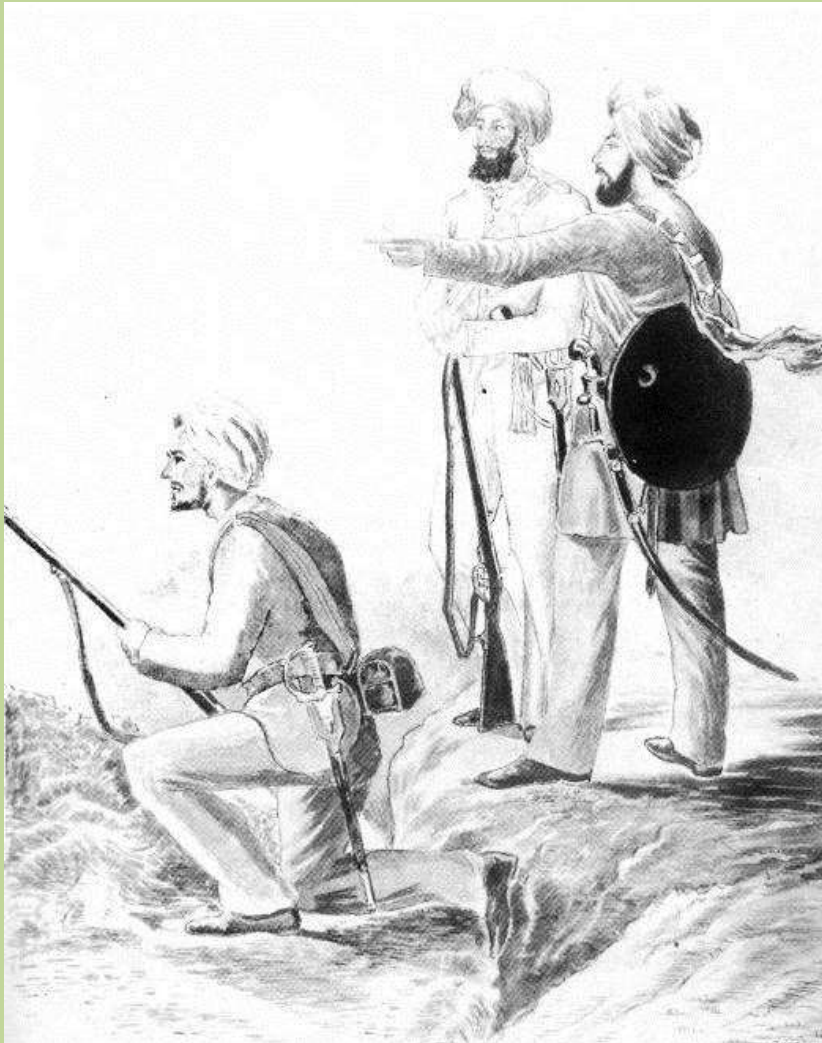
[Right hand figure] Subadar Ayaz Khan, a Moghul of the Peshawar district, served first in the Afghan Wars of 1839-42 in Ferris[s]'s<sup>3</sup> Jazailchis. In 1849 when the 4th Punjab Infantry was raised, he obtained a direct commission in that regiment as a Native Officer and was for many years Native adjutant & saw much active service on the N.W. Borders. At the beginning of the Mutiny of '57 at the request of Major W.T. Hughes Commandant 1st Punjab Infantry he was transferred as a Ressaldar to that Regiment, taking with him several men of the 4th P.I. besides some 20 other followers. Shortly after he joined the 1st Punjab Cavalry at Saharampur he had taken

up such a position by his influence over the Pathans & other soldiers of his corps & he had so strengthened his Commanding Officer's hands that Major Hughes was able to disarm the disaffected Hindustani squadron of his Regt. He subsequently became Rissaldar Major of the 1st Punjab Cavalry and was awarded first the 2nd Class Order of British India & later on the 1st Class of this order with the title of Sirdar Bahadur, for his long and distinguished services.

(Signed) J.W. McQueen...."

#### Notes

1. William Roy Boswell, born 24 June 1885. Commissioned 10 January 1907; promoted Major 16 January 1922
2. Sir John Withers McQueen, KCB. Commissioned 4 April 1854. He served throughout the Indian Mutiny campaign of 1857-58 and served with the 4th Punjab Infantry during this campaign.
3. Joseph Ferris. Born 3 May 1807 at Penzance, Cornwall. Became a Cadet in 1823 and arrived in India 3 April 1825. He raised the local unit 'Ferris's Jazailchis' in October 1839 and saw service throughout the Afghan War. He died at Dharmasala on 14 August 1853.



Acknowledgement. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of The British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia.

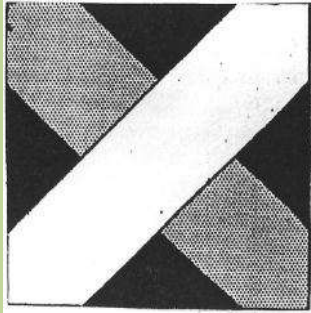
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## INDIAN DIVISIONS of WORLD WAR TWO

Major General Chand N Das OBE

(continued from Vol. 12, No 4)

### 10TH INDIAN DIVISION



A black square with two wide diagonal bands of pink or red and blue, forming a cross

The Division was grouped in Iraq in May 1941 under Major General "Bill" Slim and in four years, covering over 4000 miles from Tehran to Trieste, fought three little wars and two great campaigns. In Syria and Iran against Vichy and rebel forces to bar the road to India, then on to North Africa for the battle for Libya and Halfaya Pass and the bottle-neck at Alamein. Then it moved to Cyprus for regrouping and hill training and finally to Italy under Major General Deny Reid for hard fighting northwards with the Eighth Army. The Gothic Line, Senio and numerous other mountain battles and river crossings; many battle honours were earned, decorations won and casualties suffered before final victory in Europe. Security tasks on the Yugoslav border around Trieste completed the Division's war service.

Naik Yeshwant Ghadge of the 3rd Battalion 5th Mahratta Light Infantry won the Victoria Cross posthumously during the drive along the Upper Tiber towards the Gothic Line in Italy when he knocked out an enemy machine gun post and captured it single-handed.

### 11TH INDIAN DIVISION



An eleven-spoked wheel on a yellow or gold background

The 11th Indian Division less one brigade was formed in Malaya in May 1941, coming under the command of III Corps. At the outset of the Malayan campaign the Division was located in the north of the Malay Peninsula on the Thailand border. It was the first formation in action in North Kedah against the Japanese when they launched their attack on 8 December 1941. Jitra and Gurun in the north area of Malaya saw fighting from 10 - 13 December 1941 in which they suffered heavy losses in men and equipment. They made a fighting withdrawal against heavy odds and flanking attacks by

the Japanese. In Central Malaya they fought at Ipoh, Kuantu, Kampar and Slim River from 26 December 1941 to 10 January 1942. Slim River was the last action in Central Malaya before Kuala Lumpur fell to the Japanese. After violent fighting on River Muar in Johore from 16 to 23 January 1942, it fell back to cover the defences of Singapore where what remained of the 11th and 9th Indian Divisions were amalgamated. Once again the Division found itself in the front line despite their exhausting two month ordeal on the mainland. It counter-attacked and recaptured vital ground between the Naval Base and Causeway with heavy casualties. Due to shortages of water, food and ammunition the garrison surrendered on 15 February, but at the time of surrender the front of the Division was still intact and men fought gallantly to hold their position.

#### 14TH INDIAN DIVISION



A mountain range in black set in a white frame on a dark background, the white frame taking the form of the letter "Q" to link the formation with Quetta. The badge as depicted in most publications is much squarer than the original which was rectangular in shape.

The 14th Indian Division was raised in Quetta in 1942 and moved to the Burma front in September 1942 when the British forces were retreating into India and the Chinese retreating northwards from Burma. The Arakan is separated from the rest of Burma by wide rivers and jungle clad hills. It was evacuated in 1942 and the British troops withdrew to Chittagong just across the Burmese border. A victory was badly needed to boost morale shattered by the reversals in Malaya and Burma. The Division first saw active service in Arakan that year after the impetus of the Japanese advance had expanded itself. Aimed at seizing the airfield at Akyab Island, it was originally planned as a sea-borne operation but abandoned as such due to lack of assault craft. As a result the Division was to advance 150 kilometres from Cox's Bazaar down the Mayu Peninsula and a British Brigade was to capture Akyab by sea. The Division was landed in mid-December 1942 from Chittagong on either side of Mayu Peninsula in an effort to seize the Peninsula (Foul Point) as a preliminary to taking Akyab. Maungdaw, the road across the Peninsula (which passed by tunnel under the Mayu range) to Buthidaung, and Buthidaung itself were all captured. In January 1943 both Rathedaung and Donbaik were reached. At this stage both sides brought in reinforcements. 14 Division now had an unmanageable nine brigades under command. The Japanese crossed the steep Mayu Ridge through thick jungle and counter-attacked Rathedaung and a fierce fight ensued.

At Donbaik troops came across the Japanese "bunkers". These were dug-in, well camouflaged, impenetrable by 25 pounder shells, mutually supporting position from which machine guns could be fired through narrow slits. Several frontal attacks during January and March failed. A Japanese force crossed the Mayu River and destroyed a brigade around Donbaik and thereafter infiltrated to the coast causing utter chaos. Maungdaw and Buthidaung were abandoned and the troops were back at Cox's Bazaar after four months. Due to indifferent communications, difficult terrain and the monsoon, the operation was

unsuccessful though its forward troops had actually penetrated through to Foul Point. Administrative difficulties combined to make a withdrawal inevitable which was actively followed up by the enemy.

By the end of March 1943, the Division sadly defeated by casualties and sickness, handed over the front to 26 Indian Division and withdrew to India where it was reformed as a Training Division at Chindwara in erstwhile Central Province and now Madhya Pradesh. It paid special attention to arrangements for supplies, communications and training in jungle warfare and infantry/tank cooperation.

It won two Victoria Crosses: Havildar Parkash Singh - 5/8 Punjab Regiment, and Subedar Ram Sarup Singh - 2/1 Punjab Regiment.

#### 17TH INDIAN DIVISION



Originally a dark blue square, this was replaced in 1943 with a black cat on a khaki square background.

The 17th Indian Division was raised at Ahmednagar in 1941 and was in action in Burma and Assam almost continuously from 1942 to 1945. As the Japanese advance was reaching Singapore they also started advancing from Siam into Tenasserim in South-East Burma. The Indian forces withdrew across the river Salwan and the Sittang Bridge was the first defensive position of choice and was held by 17 Indian Division from 16 to 23 February 1942. Due to a communication gap the bridge was demolished while the bulk of the troops were still on the wrong side. A fair number managed to cross the fast flowing river but the bulk without their weapons and equipment.

The remnants of the Division put up a defence at river Pegu on 6/7 March but were forced to withdraw to Rangoon which, surrounded by the Japanese, soon fell.

In March 1942 the troops in Burma were reorganised into Burma Corps with General Slim as Corps Commander. The Corps was concentrated around Prome to defend the line Prome-Toungoo, but the Japanese advanced up the river Irrawaddy, cutting off the Chinese Division at Toungoo and exposing the eastern flank. The position at Yenangyaung was, however, held long enough to burn down its oil installations. There were heavy casualties and loss of guns near Yenangyaung. Orders to withdraw into India were received on 28 April 1942 and an action was fought by the Gurkha Brigade to cover withdrawal across the Irrawaddy on 28 and 29 April 1942. The last action for the retreat from Burma was fought from 30 April to 2 May 1942 at Monywa.

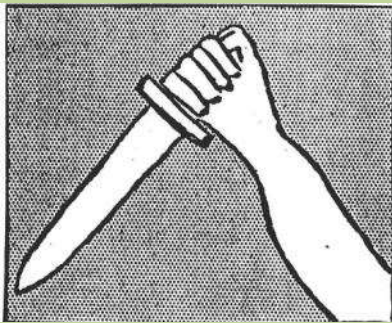
After the withdrawal from Burma and reorganisation, the Division played a significant role in the great defensive battle of Imphal, the seizure of Meiktila and the subsequent thrust to

Rangoon. It was deployed around Tiddim for the defence of Imphal but the Japanese crossed the river Manipur south of Tiddim in March 1944 and advanced northwards in a bid to isolate 17 Division. The Division started withdrawing but the Japanese cut the road further north and established themselves astride Tuitum ridge. When driven off from this position they cut the road still further north. The Division fought actions at Sakawng and Bishenpur where 2/5 Royal Gurkha Rifles had the distinction of winning two Victoria Crosses - Naik Agansing Rai and Subedar Netra Bahadur Thapa.

Eventually the Division fought its way back to Imphal and fought the Imphal Battle. It then advanced to capture Meiktila and, after its capture, operated along the Rangoon road.

Other Victoria Cross winners of the Division were Hav Gaje Ghale, 2nd 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, Naik Fazal Din, 7/10 Baluch Regiment and Rifleman Ganju Lama MM, 1/7 Gurkha Rifles.

#### 19TH INDIAN DIVISION



A yellow dagger held in a clenched hand on a red background

The Division was formed in India in 1941 by Major General J.C. Smyth VC, MC. The Divisional sign was a hand holding a dagger and the Division became universally known as the Dagger Division thereafter. During 1943 and 1944 it underwent frequent transformation as battle experience brought new lessons on the organisation and training to fighting formations in the Far East. When it went into battle it was the first "Standard" Indian Division.

In battle its commander was Major General T.W. Rees CIE DSO MC, a non-drinker and non-smoker, a brilliant tactician and a real leader of men with dash and personal courage of such high order that it was an embarrassment to his loyal staff. To his men General Rees became known as Pete. To his Indian troops he was the "General Saheb Bahadur" - and never was the title "Bahadur" better earned.

It was during the winter of 1944 when the Japanese "Invade India" had been halted that 19 Division was sent into battle. In November 1944, in boats and rafts, the Division with more than a thousand vehicles and all its guns, slipped across the Chindwin at Sittaung in two columns. Once across the Chindwin the Division was deployed in two long range penetration groups - each as a self-contained fighting force, supplied by air, making its own routes across country and leaving no line of communication open in the rear. Japanese encountered en route were liquidated with expedition. The watchword was "Pursue the Enemy".

The first column, cutting through their way over 150 miles, captured Pinlebu on 16 December. Meanwhile, the other column, after a march of 150 miles, captured Banmauk on

18 December to link up with the 36th British Division. After that the Division advanced towards Shwebo and its first battle was at Leiktu which lasted five days. The road was then opened for the advance on Shwebo and Pinlebu, Pinde and Gada being taken in quick succession. The Division, having covered more than 400 miles, captured Shwebo after a stiff fight.

Within 24 hours of the fall of Shwebo, General Rees had sent patrols across the Irrawaddy 20 miles to the east to locate suitable crossing places. The first crossing was at Thabeikkgin and the Division was established at Kyaukmyaung. In spite of fierce reaction by the Japanese the bridgehead was held by troops who had fought so gallantly for 20 days. It was not until early February that the Kabnet area was eventually cleared. Pear Hill was repeatedly attacked by the enemy but it was held. On Minban Taung there was a fierce fight.

With the support of tanks the push was made down the river from Kula to Singun. The effort to hold the advance on the road to Mandalay was a failure and cost the Japanese more lives. In spite of the difficult terrain and "hard fought battles" Mandaya was captured. Meanwhile, the main force advanced towards Mandalay and surrounded it. Fort Dufferin was captured and soon the two flags, the Union Jack and the Dagger Divisional flag which General Rees had been carrying about ready for the occasion, were hoisted.

Soon after Maymyo was captured. With the fall of Mandalay the Japanese main line of defence on Irrawaddy was turned. At Tomosko a thousand shells from the Field Regiment resulted in the total slaughter of the enemy. At Megingyan more than 2000 Japanese were encircled. The Division, still in pursuit in the Shai Hills, captured Thezre and Hlaing Det.

While British forces occupied Rangoon the Division fought some of the toughest battles for Toungov-Mawchi. Kalaw and Manpadet were captured.

Finally, in June 1945, when the last two Japanese Divisions west of the River Sittang attempted to escape, the Division, in close cooperation with 17th Indian Division inflicted a most crushing defeat on the Japanese on the banks of the Sittang. The Cease Fire found the Division driving the enemy back along the Mawchi Hill road through thick jungle towards Siam.

(to be concluded)



#### BOOK NOTES

● *REGIMENTS - Regiments and Corps of the British Empire and Commonwealth 1758-1995 - A Critical Bibliography of their Published Histories.* Compiled and published by our member Roger Perkins in August 1994.

We carried a review of REGIMENTS when it first came out (Vol. 11, No 3). Members will be interested to learn that it reached the Library Association's final short list of three books considered for the award of The Besterman Medal, a long established annual recognition for excellence in the field of bibliography.

REGIMENTS was also chosen by the British Council as one of its exhibits at the prestigious 1995 Frankfurt Book Fair. In addition, it was the 1995 winner of the 'Best Specialist Reference Work' award which is nominated annually by 'Reference Reviews'. This publication serves the needs of The Literati Club, a worldwide network of 9000 librarians and academics which is sponsored by MCB University Press. Roger Perkins was presented with his winner's plaque in London on 5 December.

REGIMENTS is the first military reference work ever to have received any of these three honours and we congratulate Roger on his achievement.



## LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Mike Blake writes:

When I joined the IMHS I looked forward to Durbar with anticipation, imagining that it would be full of interesting articles on all sorts of aspects of the military history of India.

Naturally I did not expect every issue to contain something on my particular rather narrow field of interest, the 18th century, but I was not prepared for the focus to be quite so exclusively late 19th/early 20th century. Whilst I do enjoy much of this later stuff, largely because it is quite new to me, can I put in a plea in the next issue seeking any other members who share my interests in the earlier periods, and in uniform and clothing in particular? I would very much like to correspond with any other such members, with a view to increasing my own knowledge.

The mid-18th century has always been an interest of mine, particularly the campaigns away from Europe, and especially in India and America. My research currently is focused on the former, India, and in particular the sepoy troops raised and on campaign modifications to regulation dress. The British sepoys are not too difficult and I have details of organisation and uniforms taken from various sources, but if any member has information on the early sepoy regiments I would very much appreciate being able to check it against mine.

However the French sepoys are quite another matter. I have been able to dig up almost nothing of any real use on the clothing or organisation of the French sepoy battalions. The best item I have is from a reply to a request for information in Military Modelling magazine which I quote in full:

"Information regarding the Sepoy units of the 'Compagnie des Indes' (sic) is very meagre indeed. Any information on the subject stems from one source, a contemporary journal of some of the campaigns fought in 1751, and this is now housed in the Bibliotheque National in Paris. The work of Leinhart & Humbert also describes one or two of the uniforms worn by the Companies (sic), but these are probably based on descriptions gleaned from the contemporary work. French Sepoy troops would appear to have worn purely native clothing with European arms and equipment, plus the Indian 'First Knife' or 'Kattary', although some of these troops are known to have worn a uniform coat at least."

Campaign modifications of the regulation dress for the 1730-60 period are also proving hard to find. All the sources I have consulted emphasise how the troops in India had to campaign in the same uniforms as troops in Europe and yet the difficult circumstances would suggest that changes would have to be made? It seems all the stranger in light of the changes being made in North America during the same period.

Whilst no source found mentions any modifications to regulation dress, later changes, e.g. white hats, which were incorporated into the regulations suggest that the changes themselves must have started much earlier. On the march, the rigours of campaigning (and the shortage of supplies so frequently referred to) must surely have led to variations in clothing and the incorporation of local clothing and material, e.g. native white pyjama trousers to replace worn out breeches, silk scarves for officers' or NCOs' sashes and no doubt turbans and native hats to replace tricorns which had disintegrated in the heat or been eaten by ants! However I am determined to continue to search for contemporary accounts for any descriptions like those of Munro that:

"...discipline [was] very slack in Hindustan ... officers wore their epaulettes drooping over the chest and not square on the shoulders" but even then he adds that the "...fashion [was] to dress exactly as at home ... three-cornered hat, periwig, scarlet coat with epaulettes, Kerseymere waistcoats, silk stockings with buckle shoes and knee breeches...rapier (sic)...to hand."

My purpose in writing is, then, to ask whether there is anyone in the society whose researches have turned up any information on campaign modifications (perhaps similar to those made for the campaigns in America during the same period)? I really would be most grateful for any information that they might have and which they would share with me. Who knows, we may turn up enough to make an article for Durbar!

*(Excellent. The point about existing content of Durbar is well made but I can only use material submitted for publication. I have often said to members who specialise in a narrow field of interest, but who feel they lack sufficient information to merit an article, that you probably already know more than any of the rest of us. Share it with us, even if the research is incomplete. That is what Durbar exists for. I will certainly publish the results of Mike Blake's research if it is submitted. Ed.)*

● H King writes: Further to the article in DURBAR Vol. 12, No 2 about William KING of the Bombay Horse Artillery, I should be grateful to hear from any member who might know of a researcher or someone who would be prepared to carry on some hands on research work, photographs of gravestones etc., living in the Marrut, Lahore, Lucknow area of India.

● Jim McDougall writes:

Further to my note in Vol. 12 No 4 (p163) I would appreciate hearing from other members with any examples, data, photos, articles, books etc. of swords, especially of India, China, Russia, Poland, Turkey and Persia. I am compiling research data on the development of swords from very early to the 19th century in different areas and the influences of various types.

● Michael Garnett writes:

Further to my letter published about my grandfather in DURBAR Vol. 11, No 4, I am still anxious to obtain an example of the badge of one of the Volunteer regiments with which my grandfather served in Cawnpore (see illustration – Figure 1). The three regiments were, to a large extent, amalgamated as one and Major Garnett MBE served with all three - Cawnpore Volunteer Rifles, Cawnpore Light Horse and/or United Provinces Light Horse. Major Garnett was actually a sergeant in the 6th Dragoon Guards when this regiment returned to the UK and he then transferred to the Bengal Unattached List and was posted to Cawnpore. It was through this route that he obtained his honorary commission. On the other hand he was one of the initiators of the Volunteer regiment when it was formed in the 1880's and in this capacity he served as Staff Sergeant Major.

I also enclose a photograph of my grandfather (see Figure 2). I would welcome any help in identifying the uniform. I assume it is either the tunic of the Volunteer regiment, or the Bengal Unattached List, or 6th Dragoon Guards. I would also appreciate help in identifying the second of the two medal ribbons. I know one to be for the 2nd Afghan War but he did not receive either his Long Service medal or his MBE until much later - so what does the second ribbon represent?



Figure 1



Figure 2

●LTc R Le Chantoux (420) seeks help in identifying the following badges which may or may not be Indian Army or British Army in India:

- (1) The letter "S" pierced by an arrow, in yellow cotton thread on a black felt background. Size 45mm x 75mm. The reverse has a glued piece of newspaper with references to Simla, Bangalore and Mysore (apparently an English language Indian newspaper).
- (2) Similar to (1) but with the letter "S" and arrow in silver thread, although given its age it may originally have been gilt thread.
- (3) Panther's head in black cotton thread.
- (4) Black felt diamond - size 75mm x 45mm. This appears on a slouch hat bearing the cap badge of the Leicestershire Regiment and, on the opposite side to the diamond, the badge of 36th Division (inter-locked circles, one red and one white, set on a black rectangle). Is the black diamond a regimental, battalion or brigade flash?



● Barry Hammond seeks help in identifying the following shoulder titles:

IAR - non-British made, brass with serifs

I.F.R. - as above

C.P.P. - non-British made, wm, with serifs. Joined only at the bottom (possibly Central Province Police.

W.V.S. - non-British made, wm, with serifs. The V.S. appears to be slanting to the right (italicized)

A.F.M.C. - possibly British made, brass, with serifs

CP.F.S. - non-British made, brass, with serifs. The C is very crude - possibly was another letter but altered.

JKFS - initials on brass button. The J and S are smaller than the two centre letters (?Jammu and Kashmir)

ML - non-British made, brass, extra-large - eleven sixteenths of an inch in height.

● Shamus Wade writes:

There is one small error in Peter Chapman's otherwise excellent article on Lumsden's Horse (Vol. 12 No 4, p161). Lumsden's Horse was not the only Indian unit to serve in the Boer War. The following units were specially raised in India to serve in South Africa: Indian Subordinate Veterinary Department, Ambulance Establishment, Rohilkand District (Bengal), Indian Mule Pack Train, Messrs. C. Dhanji Bhai & Coy's Tonga Train, Syces, Dooley Bearers, Nalbunds, Dhobi Corps and the 1,979 strong Bhisti Corps. Altogether they received 3,718 Queen's South Africa Medals. Possibly they were not as glamorous as Lumsden's Horse but they are worth remembering.

*(I also know of a bronze QSA, no bar, to the Jodhpur I.S. Lancers. Apparently some of them took remounts to South Africa. Ed.)*

