

DURBAR Volume 13, No.2, Summer 1996

THE 2ND OF SEPTEMBER 1945 – and other matters

Tim Ash

2 September 1995 marked the 50th anniversary of Japan's formal surrender to the Allied Powers at the conclusion of the Second World War. The Instrument of Surrender was signed on board the USS MISSOURI anchored in Tokyo Bay; signing for the United Kingdom was Admiral Sir Bruce Austin Fraser, commanding the British Pacific Fleet - the most powerful British fleet ever, the like of which we shall never see again.

Bruce Austin Fraser entered the Royal Navy as a Cadet on board HMS BRITANNIA in September 1902 and had led a distinguished career in the Royal Navy. The event of the Second World War which had brought him his most public fame was the sinking of the German battle cruiser SCHARNHORST, off the North Cape of Norway, on 26 December 1943. He had then commanded what was to be the Royal Navy's last fleet action. He retired in 1952 as Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fraser of North Cape with 49 years' service behind him.

It is hardly likely that Admiral Fraser, on that momentous September morning in Tokyo Bay, would have realised that it was precisely one hundred years and one month since his father, Alexander Fraser, had landed at Calcutta on 2 August 1845 at the commencement of his own remarkable career in the Bengal Engineers. With soldier Alexander Fraser entering Addiscombe Military Seminary on 1 February 1842, and his sailor son, Bruce Austin Fraser being placed on the half pay list of the Royal Navy on 15 April 1952, this represents 110 years from the opening of the father's career to the close of the son's. A remarkably long period by any standards.

The family of Fraser first served in India when James Fraser, the grandfather of Bruce, served in the HEIC Maritime Service in the early years of the 19th century. He retired to England and died in 1832 leaving his widow and seven children poorly provided for. His eldest son, also James, entered Holy Orders and became the Lord Bishop of Manchester 1870-1885; he had declined the appointment as Bishop of Calcutta in 1866.

The second son, John William, entered the Bengal Artillery but died in India at the early age of 20. The third son, Edward, Captain Bengal Engineers, was killed by his own Sappers and Miners at Meerut on 16 May 1857, having marched them from Roorkee at the start of the Mutiny.

Alexander, then Lieutenant Bengal Engineers, the fourth son and father of Bruce Austin, was absent from India during the period of the Indian Mutiny; he had been sent to England on a most important mission, one which even precluded his recall to India at that time, though he had volunteered to return.

At the close of the year 1853 the Marquis of Dalhousie, Governor General of India, sailed on board the Company's Steamer, ZENOBIA, from Calcutta to visit the newly acquired province of British Burma. His attention was drawn to a dangerous line of rocks known as the

Alguada Reef, to the south of Cape Negrais. He wrote, "Passing down the coast of Arracan we found the weather so fine as to admit our passing close to the Alguada Reef. This dangerous and dreaded line of rocks lies to the southward of Cape Negrais, at about ten miles below Diamond Island. It is very low, extends for probably a mile in length and renders a diversion from the direct course between Calcutta and the Irrawaddy so necessary in common prudence, as to cause the loss of usually half a day in passage. The Rear Admiral, before he left the Station, urged upon the Government the expediency of erecting a Light House upon the reef, and the Government promised that the practicability of doing so should be examined as soon as an Officer could be spared for the purpose." Dalhousie himself landed on the reef and recorded his impressions, concluding his note, "If on my arrival at Rangoon I should find an Engineer Officer disposable, I shall despatch him at once to the Reef, in order to his examining it and furnishing me with a preliminary report on the subject while I am still in this part of the world."

Despite Dalhousie's unrivalled energy and drive in bringing new developments to British India this was one project that he was unable even to start on. It was up to his successor, Lord Canning, who on 14 October 1856, appointed Lieutenant Alexander Fraser, Engineers, to be Executive Engineer for the construction of the light house on the Alguada Reef, an appointment of considerable responsibility for a Lieutenant. Fraser was charged with carrying out a survey of the Reef, and taking into consideration all the circumstances that would affect the actual construction, submit a preliminary report. He was then to proceed to England for consultation with Mr Allan Stevenson and other eminent light house engineers, on the conclusion of which he was to prepare his detailed designs.

In February 1857 Fraser submitted his first report after having carefully examined the Reef. He fixed for the site of the light house a plateau near the south west extremity - "The reef at this place is a firm solid mass of rock presenting a nearly level surface of 100 feet in width, with an average height of 1.1 feet above high water spring tides." Fraser preferred stone for the construction, as opposed to iron, and suggested the source should be the island of Callagouk, 210 miles distant. He then proceeded to England to confer with Stevenson and others and to visit as many light houses as possible to familiarise himself with their construction.

In November 1857 he submitted his report to the Honourable the Court of Directors in London who expressed "their full satisfaction with the manner in which he had fulfilled the commission entrusted to him by the Government of India." In his long and detailed report Fraser stated that "Of all the Light Houses that I know or have visited, the Skerryvore, designed and erected by Mr Allan Stevenson, on the Western coast of Scotland, is in the position most analogous to that of the Alguada Reef. Every engineer is, of course, desirous of submitting original designs; but so perfect in every way does this structure appear to me, not only in design, but in workmanship, and not only in beauty of appearance, but in accuracy of calculation with reference to stability, that I feel quite sure I can do no wrong in taking it as my model, with, of course, certain interior alterations necessary to the different interior arrangements that will be required to suit it for the dwelling-place of people of different races, and in a different climate; and if I can, with unskilled labour I shall be able to obtain, execute the work on the Alguada Reef in the same successful manner as that has been executed on the Skerryvore, I feel that, though I may have shown no originality in design, I shall be entitled to no small credit in the construction. The diameter of this Tower is 42 feet, the height of the shaft is 120 feet, and the diameter at this height is 16 feet."

Fraser, now Captain from September 1857, returned to Calcutta in April 1858 but financial difficulties, consequent upon the Mutiny, prevented the immediate commencement of work and it was not until the north east monsoon of 1859-60 that work was commenced. Initially this was the cutting out of the foundation to a depth of 7 ½ feet below high water spring tides, about 700 tons of rock being removed. The work was done by common 'classies' picked up in Calcutta and the chief problem was to keep the water out of the foundations.

In the meantime an establishment had been organised on the island of Callagouk whence the granite was to be quarried and conveyed to the Reef in lighters towed by steamer. No little difficulty was encountered in starting such an establishment in a dense jungle on an uninhabited island. Labourers were procured from Madras and Hong Kong and set to work. So difficult was the undertaking on Callagouk that eventually it was found necessary to prepare part of the stone at Singapore. Thus wider and wider were set the bounds of Fraser's responsibilities; his powers of administration and planning must have been phenomenal.

The first granite stone of the Light House was not laid until 14 February 1861, and 104 stones, weighing 74 tons, were laid before the setting in of the monsoon brought to a close the work for the season. Weather was a great problem and caused much anxiety and delay to the construction.

By the end of the third season, 1861-62, the seven lower courses of stone had been laid, each stone varying in weight from half a ton to 3 ½ tons. They were all lifted into position, already cut, by the crane by means of lewises, the outside stones being laid in Portland cement, the inner in lime and soorkhee.

During the fourth season, 1862-63, the work was completed up to the 18th course, or above the lower room, being rather more than half the whole quantity, and by the end of the fifth season, 1863-64, the whole stonework was complete with the exception of the parapet, and the four top courses of the capital, 1,600 tons of stone having been raised in that year.

On 9 February 1865 Fraser landed on the Reef the 35 cases and two casks which contained the light apparatus comprising the holophote frame, revolving carriage and machine. This had been made by Messrs D and T Stevenson, Civil Engineers of Edinburgh. By some oversight there were no packing lists with the cases and no little inconvenience ensued by having to unpack the cases at random.

On 23 April 1865 the light was shown for the first time. Fraser in his annual report on light house operations for the season 1864-65 states, in conclusion to his observations and calculations of the effectiveness of the light at various distances, "The Light, therefore, may be considered a very fine one, visible above the horizon at 20 nautical or 23 English miles, from the poop of a large ship." He goes on to state, "This Light House and light is, therefore, now completed and established, and my work is done."

The Alguada Reef Light House may well have been completed but as Superintendent of Light Houses off the Burma coast he still had in hand the Double Island Light House, the Cocos Island Light House and various surveys for screw-pile light houses for the Oyster Reef, the Krishna Shoal and the mouth of the Rangoon River.

The Viceroy and Governor General of India, now Lord John Lawrence, offered "to Lieutenant Colonel Fraser the cordial thanks and congratulations of the Government of India on the successful issue of his labours."

"Lieutenant Colonel Fraser", says the Government Order, "applied himself to the task with great zeal and judgement which have ensured success. To land on the Reef is always a difficulty. For a vessel to be thrown on it at any time is almost certain destruction, and in any but the calmest weather the seas break over it. The forethought, resource, energy and perseverance displayed, and the anxiety, risk, exposure and hardship endured, entitle Lieutenant Colonel Fraser, and all under his orders, to the highest commendation. It is seldom that it falls to the lot of any individual, in India especially, to carry through from beginning to end a work of such magnitude, and extending over so long a period. The work itself is unique, certainly in the East, and, whether regard be had to cost, execution, or rate of progress, may challenge comparison with its somewhat smaller prototype, the Skerryvore on the coast of Scotland."

The whole cost of the construction of the Alguada Reef Lighthouse was calculated at 10 lakhs of Rupees, or £100,000 at that time. Fraser was justifiably proud of his achievement and particularly that throughout the whole operation not a single life had been lost by accident and very few minor injuries sustained. A remarkable achievement considering the very heavy loads of granite and materials that had to be landed and raised aloft. He photographed the light house and sent copies to Queen Victoria, the receipt of which was duly acknowledged by Her Majesty. On 21 March 1866 he was made a Civil Companion of the Order of the Bath.

Fraser continued with active light house construction for some years - not for nothing did he become known as the "Star of India". As late as 1881, as Major General and Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department, he wrote a report on the lighting of the Red Sea coasts and eventually, though well after his time, the Red Sea lights were situated in the positions which he had recommended. Many a ship would be at the bottom of the sea had it not been for the persistence and energy of Alexander Fraser.

In 1929 Bruce Austin Fraser was given his first sea going command as Captain of the cruiser HMS EFFINGHAM, the Flagship of the East Indies Squadron based at Trincomalee, Ceylon. On 5 January 1930, EFFINGHAM, with the C-in-C of the East Indies Station, Admiral Sir Eric Fullerton aboard, anchored off the Alguada Reef and Captain Bruce Austin Fraser landed on the Reef. He left behind with the Lighthouse Keeper a signed document stating that he had visited his father's Light House. This may have given him as much pride and pleasure, at least on a private and personal level, as the signing of the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945 aboard the USS MISSOURI.

Major Sources

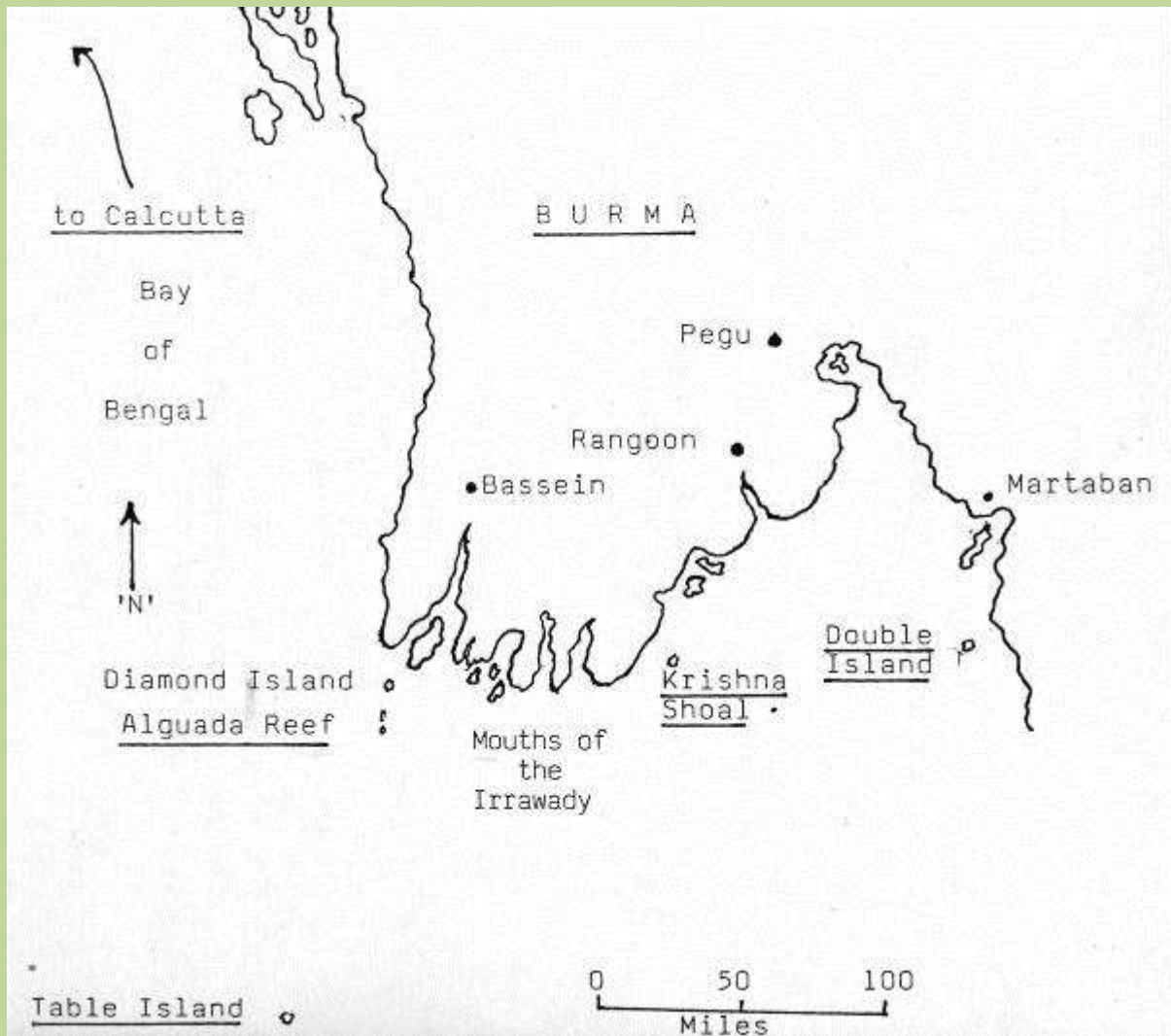
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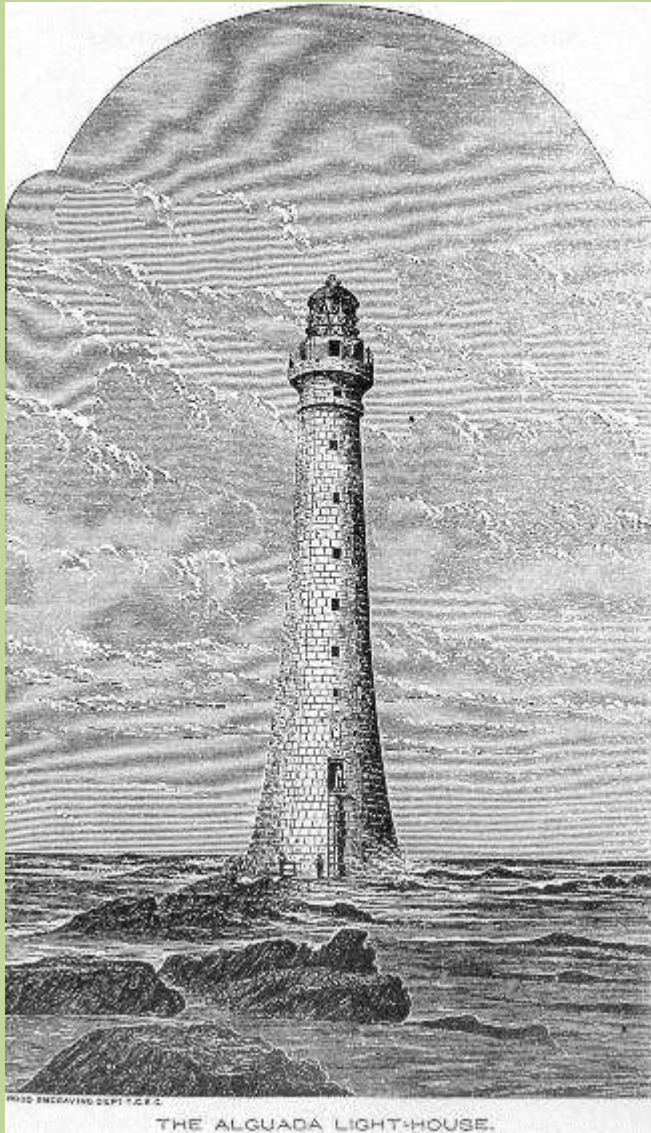
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SURGEONS, CHAPLAINS and CIVILIANS with the KABUL to KANDAHAR FIELD FORCE

Major V.E. Simms

Surgeons of the Bengal List of the Indian Medical Service accompanied the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force under the command of Lieutenant General Sir F. Roberts, K.C.B., V.C., C.I.E., on its departure from Kabul on 9 August 1880 until the battle of Kandahar which took place on 1 September 1880. Three chaplains are mentioned and there are also several references to civilians who accompanied the force.

The surgeons, additional to those of the Army Medical Department were:-

George Cochet CHESNAYE, born 29 September 1837 and died at Bournemouth on 12 April 1904. He became deputy surgeon-general on 9 January 1889 and retired on 17 February 1894. He served with the 3rd Brigade Headquarters.

William COATES, born 19 January 1852. He retired on 4 July 1907 but re-joined for war service in 1914. He reached the rank of surgeon lieutenant colonel. He served with the 5th Goorkha Regiment.

Robert Wiseman CUNNINGHAM, born 30 December 1838 and died at Edinburgh on 19 December 1881. He became surgeon-major on 1 July 1873. He served with the 15th Bengal Native Infantry.

Joshua DUKE, born 14 June 1847. He was promoted brigade surgeon lieutenant colonel on 2 April 1898 and retired on 1 November 1902. He re-joined for war service from 1914 to 1917 and died in Guernsey on 13 February 1920. He was the author of "*Recollections of the Kabul Campaign*" published in 1883. (*I would welcome further details of this work and, if held by a member, for the loan or the opportunity to purchase the book*). He served with the 3rd Regiment Punjab Cavalry.

Woodforde FINDEN, born 28 July 1844, he became brigade surgeon-major on 2 November 1891. He retired on 21 December 1896 and died at Harrow on 27 April 1916. He served with 1st Brigade Headquarters.

Henry HAMILTON, born 7 April 1851 and reached surgeon-general on 24 March 1907. He received a CB on 24 June 1904 and was created KCB on 3 June 1913. He served with the 23rd Regiment Bengal Native Infantry.

Denis Francis KEEGAN, born 17 December 1840 and was to become brigade surgeon-major on 11 August 1891. He retired on 1 April 1894 and died at Killiney, Co. Dublin on 1 January 1920. He served with the Central India Horse.

Henry James LINTON, born 18 January 1843. He was promoted surgeon-major on 1 April 1881 and died at Peshawar on 4 April 1892. He served with the 24th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry.

Alexander William MacKENZIE, born 5 February 1853. He reached surgeon lieutenant colonel on 31 March 1877 and retired on 31 January 1903. He died at Plymouth on 11 May 1913.

Jeremiah MULLANE, born 4 March 1850. He reached surgeon lieutenant colonel on 31 March 1897 and died at Dibrugarh on 10 November 1897. He served with the 25th Regiment Bengal Native Infantry.

James Alexander MELIS, born 23 May 1854 and reached surgeon lieutenant colonel on 31 March 1879. He retired on 4 July 1902 and died at Dublin on 2 January 1917. He served with the 2nd Regiment Sikh Infantry.

Edward PALMER, born 8 October 1846 and reached brigade surgeon lieutenant colonel on 28 January 1898, retiring on 31 March 1901. He died on 23 July 1906. He served with the 3rd Regiment Bengal Cavalry.

Frederick William WRIGHT, born 7 December 1850. He was promoted surgeon lieutenant colonel on 1 April 1893 and had been awarded the DSO on 1 July 1887. He retired on 7

December 1905 and died at Bournemouth on 9 September 1927. He served with the 3rd Regiment Sikh Infantry.

These very professional and dedicated surgeons were responsible for the health of a force of over 10,000 men under the most trying circumstances and their services deserve the utmost recognition.

Of the three chaplains, the Reverend James William ADAMS VC is very well documented. Apart from the Victoria Cross, which he received from Queen Victoria for risking his life in rescuing several men of the 9th Lancers at the action of Killa Kazi on 11 December 1879, he also received the Afghan Medal with clasps Peiwar Kotal, Charasia, Kabul and Kandahar, and the Burma Field Force Medal.

The Reverend C.W. MANSON, a Presbyterian Chaplain, is reported of having a long association with the 92nd Regiment of Foot.

The third name which has been mentioned is the Very Reverend Fr. G. BROWN, Roman Catholic Chaplain. No mention is made of either MANSON or BROWN receiving any medals or other recognition.

One member of the Press is reported but no name given. However, it appears most likely that Howard HENSMAN, Special Correspondent of the 'Pioneer' (Allahabad), and the 'Daily News' (London) is the pressman concerned. He is the author of "*The Afghan War of 1879-80*" published by W.H. Allen & Co.

The last civilian I am interested in is the Postmaster, said to be of non-commissioned status.

I would appreciate any additional information to complete the above particulars, or details of sources which would enable me to learn more about these participants. Apart from the Reverend J.W. ADAMS, were medals awarded to the other chaplains and civilians mentioned? Finally, does any member have a copy of "The History of the Indian Medical Service", which I understand is in two volumes. I would welcome the loan of this work and will defray any expense involved.

THOMAS WEALE

Peter Chapman

Thomas Weale took an uncommon long time to reach India, so long that he didn't qualify for the Mutiny medal. But he did find a bride; and a bride with the most exceptional antecedents.

Weale, born in 1840 in Greenwich, joined the 95th Foot (The Sherwood Forresters) at 18 and sailed for India. So stormy was the passage he arrived four and a half months (!) later, the troop ship having been given up as lost. It was at Karachi in 1865 (and with the rank of Colour Sergeant) that he met Ada Louisa Bedford, the only daughter of Sgt Bedford of the St Helena Regiment, and they married in December that year.

Ada Louisa's maternal grandfather, a Mr Walton, had been coachman to Colonel Hudson on St Helena. Napoleon Bonaparte, although he had a coach of his own, preferred Hudson's carriage and so it was that Mr Walton became the First Consul's coachman.

Sgt Weale and his new bride marched to the sound of the drum for a further 13 years in India and, with the Long Service Medal, returned home after 23 years' service and to Grimsby in Lincolnshire where they lived to celebrate their diamond wedding and to die in the late 1920s.

WILLIAM JOHN BRADSHAW, C.I.E. and the CALCUTTA NAVAL VOLUNTEERS

J.M.A. Tamplin

In Durbar of Summer 1991 at pages 34-35 (Vol. 8, No. 2) is a short article on the Calcutta Naval Volunteers. Lieutenant Commander W.M. Thornton submitted this piece and commented on the dress worn by those illustrated in the picture taken from the *Navy and Army Illustrated* of 18 September 1896. Only one in the group is identified, and he also appears in the group gathered around the gun. This is Commander Eaton Wallace Petley, R.N., who is seated second from left; third from left is William John Bradshaw who at this time was a Lieutenant (I possess the medals awarded to him).

At the time I got his medals I also obtained a Studio portrait of Bradshaw by Johnston & Hoffmann of Calcutta (and also of London). This clearly identifies him in the seated group.

Bradshaw was an unassuming person. He was appointed a C.I.E. on 3 June 1919 and, because of this, being a Companion he appears in Debrett's *Companionage*, Kelly's *Directory*, etc. In none of these are there any personal details at all! Debrett just records 'b. 18--' and his home address. Even when Gazetted with the C.I.E., he was the only person so honoured who had no description, appointment or position given. However, from various Indian Army Lists, and particularly his citation or recommendation for the award of the C.I.E. in reference L/P&S/15/43 in I.O. Records, the following was traced. The recommendation is as follows:

"William John Bradshaw, Esquire, Managing Director, Messrs Walter Locke & Co., Calcutta, Bengal. He is a respected member of the Calcutta Trades' Association, of which he is a Past Master. His whole life in India, since he arrived in 1885, has been marked by unostentatious but untiring public service in every direction. He was a Volunteer until 1917, when with the introduction of the Indian Defence Force, he retired with the rank of Major. He was an Honorary Presidency Magistrate from 1896 to 1904. He has served on the Committees of the Presidency General Hospital, the Mayo Hospital, the Calcutta Free School, St. John's Day School, Sailors' Home and Seamen's Mission. He was a Municipal Commissioner for 12 years and a Member of the Bengal Legislative Council for three years. He was for many years a visitor to the Presidency Jail, Reform School and Bhowanipur Lunatic Asylum, and he is the oldest member of the Cathedral Vestry. As Master of the Trades' Association he served on the Committee which sent Lumsden's Horse to South Africa in 1902, and he did excellent work in quieting public alarm in 1914 when the *Emden* was in the Bay of

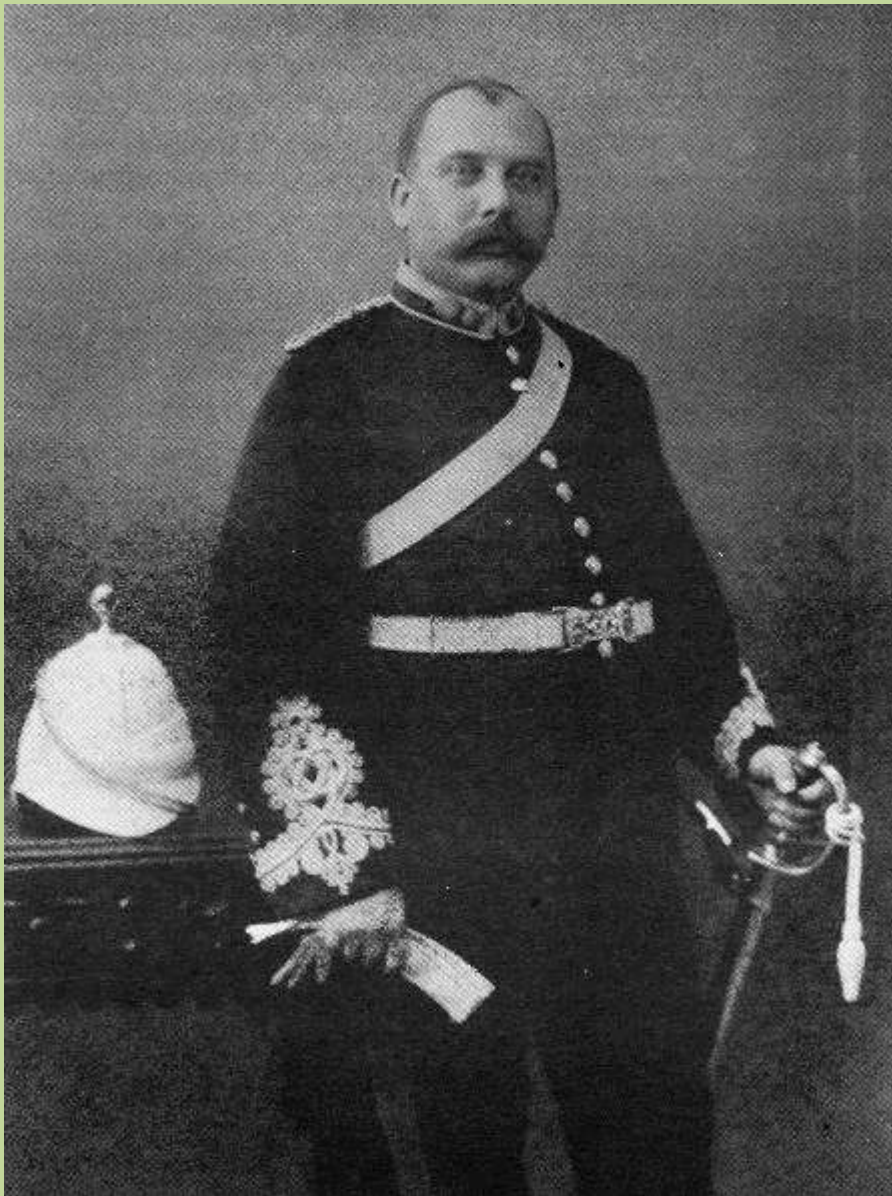
Bengal. He has been Secretary of three organisations for raising funds for war charities."

As for his medals, these are the Volunteer Long Service Medal awarded in I.A.O. 103 of 4 March 1907; the Indian V.D. in *Gazette of India* 13 June 1911; the Delhi Durbar 1911 as listed in L/MIL/5/127; and the C.I.E. as already noted.

Returning to England in 1922 when he retired, he lived at Beaconsfield and died on 11 January 1926. He left estate of some £4,533 gross, a widow (Salome) and a son, William Howse Fewster Bradshaw.

Reverting to the group photograph, whilst all the illustrations in the *N. and A.I.* were quite excellently reproduced, so rarely are names given of those pictured. It is satisfying that in this group of 8 officers there are now 2 named! What that they all were!

Note: E.W. Petley (1850-1913) was also appointed a C.I.E. in 1897 (see *Who Was Who*).



THE BURMA REGIMENT

Following the fall of Burma to the Japanese in 1942 the surviving military forces of Burma re-grouped in India and a new regiment was formed, The Burma Regiment, from nationals, domiciles and Gurkhas who had served in the Burma Military Forces. The Burmese and indigenous tribes were concentrated in the surviving 2nd Battalion, Burma Rifles. All the Burmese Army units were based in Hoshiarpur, Central India.

The new Regiment consisted, on raising, of the following:

- 1st Battalion
- 2nd Battalion (not to be confused with the 2nd Battalion, Burma Rifles, the sole surviving Battalion of that Regiment)
- 3rd Battalion
- 4th Battalion
- 5th Battalion
- 6th Battalion
- 7th Battalion (Reconnaissance)
- 10th Battalion (Training)
- 25th Battalion (Garrison)
- 26th Battalion (Garrison)
- Chin Hills Battalion (not to be confused with the Chin Levies/Rifles. This was the surviving battalion of The Frontier Force).
- 1st Reinforcement Battalion
- 2nd Reinforcement Battalion

The two garrison battalions were probably raised from the 2nd to 7th Burma Garrison Companies, raised in 1942, and were originally designated as 1st and 2nd Garrison Battalions. They were later re-designated as 25th and 26th (Indian Army garrison battalions were numbered from 25 onwards). The battalions were grouped under the 2nd and 5th Burma Brigades.

Punjabi Muslims, Kumaonis, Sikhs and other Indians from the erstwhile Burma Rifles, Military Police and Frontier Force were enlisted. The 1st Battalion, for example, had Gurkhas, Kumaonis, Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs. The 2nd (all Gurkha from 1947) and 4th Battalions were mainly Gurkha units. The Chin Hills Battalion had Gurkhas, Kumaonis and Chins.

The 3rd, 5th and 7th Battalions were gradually wasted away, the men being used as reinforcements. The 10th was re-designated as The Training Centre.

The 1st Battalion saw service in Burma with the 7th Indian Division, and later with the 5th Division in Sumatra. The 4th Battalion saw action in Fort Hertz in North Burma. One company each of the 5th and 25th Battalions were in the siege of Kohima in 1944 and the 1st Battalion was part of the relief force. The Chin Hills Battalion also served in Burma.

After the war the new State of Burma had no requirement for Indian nationals in its Army and the Burma Regiment battalions were demobilised. The 1st Battalion was disbanded in 1947. The 2nd was converted into a wholly Gurkha unit. The 25th and 26th Battalions were

disbanded in 1946. The Chin Hills Battalion was converted into the 1st Anti-Tank Regiment in 1946. The Burmese Army decided to retain the two Gurkha (2nd and 4th) battalions.

INDIAN DIVISIONS of WORLD WAR TWO

Major General Chand N Das OBE

(continued from Vol. 13, No 1, page 29)

20TH INDIAN DIVISION



A tulwar, in white, raised aloft by a clenched hand, set on a black circle

The 20th Indian Division was raised in Bangalore in 1942 under Major General Douglas Gracey. It carried out extensive training in jungle war in Ceylon solely for the war in Burma. The Division's order of battle then showed the classic constitution of an Indian Division - one British, one Indian and one Gurkha battalion to a brigade. General Gracey had personal concern for the welfare of his troops. The "Jawans" he knew well, the Gurkha "Sathi" even better, for he himself was from 1st Gurkha Rifles. During a pitched battle in the Irrawaddy valley one Gurkha battalion went into action with the cry "the General's Gorkha charge".

In early 1944, when patrolling and brief action on outpost lines was the general pattern of the war in Burma, the 20th Indian Division was moving down through the jungle country to the Chindwin and beyond into the Kabaw Valley, seeking out the enemy to destroy him.

These early days also brought the award of a Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Alan George Harwood in a three day action at Kyaukchaw which cost him his life while leading the final assault.

The 20th Division had attained early mastery over the enemy in the Kabaw Valley. They were, however, withdrawn to defend the southern half of the Imphal plain, though their withdrawal was to be a fighting one during which time the first tank versus tank battle in Burma took place. Successive actions were fought which delayed and took toll of the enemy at Moreh, Shark, Nippon Peak and Sita Ridge. Bitter battles were fought on the Shenam Saddle, "Brigade Hill", "Crete" and "Scraggy". In the defence of Palel airfield the Division prevented the Japanese from bringing his guns forward to get within range of it. Before it was pulled out, the Division had killed 2,500 Japanese in the fighting from Tamu to the Shenam Saddle.

On the Ukhrul road the Division held the Saddle overlooking the Thoubal River and by an encircling movement cut the enemy line of withdrawal for Kanglatonghi area. The enemy made desperate attempts to escape but was practically annihilated.

In November 1944 the Division went into its second spell of fighting. It established the 14th Army's first bridgehead across the Chindwin at Maukadaw. After a sharp action at Budalin there were only brief encounters before the final assault at Monywa which was captured without any opposition. In the advance towards Mandalay it captured Myin-mu. The Irrawaddy bridgehead battle lasted nearly a month but in spite of stiff opposition and counter attacks by the Japanese the Division held its position. Jemadar Parkash Singh of the 13th Frontier Force Rifles won the Division's second Victoria Cross, making the supreme sacrifice.

In early March Talingon was captured after a week long battle following which the break out to the east began, swiftly capturing Myotha on the Sagaing- Myingyan railway, cutting the Mandalay-Rangoon road to Bilin. After the battle of Kyaukse the Division captured Magwe, cutting the only road to Prome. That forced the enemy to evacuate the airfield, hurriedly abandoning his MT and guns. Allammyo and Bwetgyi Chaung were captured and Prome was entered with slight opposition on 2 May and Shwe-daung the next day. During June the Division took up its final position along the main Rangoon road from Gyobingauk to Hmawbi.

In September the Division moved by air and sea to French Indo China with the task of concentrating and disarming 70,000 Japanese troops. In December one brigade left for Borneo and, in January 1945, another for Mecassar to relieve the Australian Divisional HQ. The third brigade returned to Ranchi in February to disband and so a famous fighting formation was broken up.

23RD INDIAN DIVISION



A red cock on a light yellow circle

The 23rd Indian Division was formed at Ranchi in January 1942 and first went into action on the borders of Burma and Assam. In June 1942 the first patrolling started from Imphal and formed defensive positions to cover the withdrawal of General Alexander's army. In November 1942 the Division was concentrated in the Kabaw Valley and operated up to Chindwin.

When Wingate's group set out, men from the Division escorted them 20 miles beyond Chindwin, with a diversionary attack on Okkan near Kalemyo. Constant patrolling by the

battalions and sudden small attacks in the jungle distracted the enemy's attention from Wingate's exhausted men. Later, when Wingate returned, the Division covered their retreat.

In November 1943 the Division had been holding the sector of the Assam frontier over 100 miles long for more than 18 months. While withdrawing for a rest a battalion was sent to assist a battalion of the 17th Division which was being heavily pressed. During the rest the Division got valuable training and then moved to Sittaung to make another diversion for the second expedition by Wingate into northern Burma.

To meet the Japanese attack on India, 17th and 20th Divisions were withdrawn from the Kabaw Valley near their base in Imphal as it had been decided by General Slim, the Commander, that we should fight the Japanese when their precarious line of communication was behind them and not behind us.

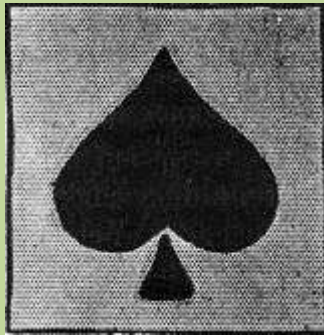
The first enemy move in early March 1944 was a wide encircling movement through Chin Hills, threatening to cut 17 Division's supply line. To meet the threat, a brigade was sent into Chin Hills and when the forward troops of the brigade were themselves cut off by the enemy, the rest of the Division started fighting from Imphal to contact 17 Division. There followed one of the bloodiest fights in the campaign and the Division suffered 250 casualties. The contact with 17 Division was, however, established and a brigade covered the withdrawal of 17 Division to Imphal. Subsequently it was engaged in bitter and prolonged fighting in the defence of Imphal against the main thrust of Japanese armour and artillery. 50 Indian Parachute Brigade, which had joined the Division, was cut off at Sangshek but delayed the advance of the Japanese for several days and fought its way out. General Slim wrote later, "the enemy by constantly attacking and reinforcing failure, fell into our hands and it was at this period especially round Imphal that the process of wearing him out began".

When Imphal was cut off by the Japanese, the Division attacked 15 Japanese Division on the Ukhrul road and cleared the hills dominating the area. It finally opened the road on 22 April. In the battle of Lam-nu it again surprised the enemy and captured the position.

The Division relieved 20th Division at Shenam and for almost three months every single battalion of the Division was involved in heavy but successful fighting on the hills around. One of the most daring attacks of the campaign took place when "Gibraltar Hill" was taken by the enemy but finally, in a counter attack, was recaptured with artillery support. Subsequently it was engaged in bitter and prolonged fighting and took part in the initial stages of the offensive and advance back into Burma. It had suffered 2,900 casualties.

In 1945 the Division, having trained in combined operations, embarked for Malaya, arriving at the time of the Japanese surrender. Thereafter it moved to Java with the formidable task of restoring law and order and rescuing internees. This involved fierce street fighting which continued for a year after the war with Japan was over. This evoked a special tribute from the Dutch Force Commander in praise of the unsurpassed gallantry and self-sacrifice of the troops which had saved so many men, women and children from death and starvation. The Division's casualties in Java were more than 1,300. It returned to India in 1947 to disband the same year.

25TH INDIAN DIVISION



A black ace of spades set on a green background

25th Indian Division was raised in South India in August 1942 and given the operational role of meeting any attempted Japanese invasion while at the same time training intensively in jungle warfare.

The Division, under 15 Corps, first saw action in Arakan in March 1944 where it held and enlarged the Maungdaw Base. It had advanced down the Mayu valley in the latter part of 1944, reaching Buthidaung in early January 1945 and entered Akyab Island which had eluded 14th Indian Division two years earlier but was now found to have been evacuated by the Japanese. It was decided to carry out sea-borne landings to get round successive enemy positions, as the Japanese had done in Malaya in 1941, and to prevent the retreating Japanese from escaping. Landing by 25 Division at Ramree Island took place in the later part of January 1945. Village Kangaw near the coast was strongly defended but the commandos established a beach-head on which a brigade was landed. The position was held against counter-attacks from January to mid-February.

Landings were also made at Ru-ywa to open up the An Pass and then break out to outflank the Japanese, provide a route to the Irrawaddy River and threaten Prome. Heavy counter attacks by the Japanese at Ru-ywa were repulsed. With 3 Commando Brigade under command, the Division made a series of successful sea-borne attacks down the coast supported by sloops of the Royal Indian Navy. The Division won four Victoria Crosses:

Sepoy Bhandari Ram - 16/10 Baluch Regiment
Havildar Umrao Singh - Artillery
Rifleman Bhanbhagta Gurung - 3/2 Gurkhas
L/Naik Sher Shah - 7/16 Punjab Regiment

The Division was withdrawn to South India in April 1945 to prepare for the invasion of Malaya, being chosen for the assault landing role. Although hostilities then ceased, the operation proceeded as planned and it was the first formation to land in Malaya, occupying the capital Kuala Lumpur and then accepting the surrender of the Japanese Army.

26TH INDIAN DIVISION



A tiger stepping out of a blue triangle set on a black triangular background.

26th Indian Division was raised in 1942 from the original Calcutta Division and for the next two years was almost continuously in action in the Arakan, the south west Burma front. During 1942/43 the Division took part in the strenuous efforts made to reach Akyab. During March, when 14 Division was sadly depleted by casualties and sickness, 26 Division took over the Front. Early in 1944 it moved to the relief of 7th Indian Division, invested by the Japanese in their "Admin Box" at the Ngakyedauk Pass. The Japanese had established themselves on the eastern side of the Pass and had surrounded the "Admin Box". It was cleared of Japanese by joint effort after a month long battle. One of the Division's two Victoria Crosses was won during the bitter fighting at this critical stage of the Arakan campaign. In January 1945 the Division took part with 25th Division in a series of swift leap-frog landings down the coast to capture Akyab and Ramree Island. Preparations followed for the long-awaited sea-borne invasion and capture of Rangoon which in the event was accomplished without enemy opposition on 2 May 1945.

1946 saw the Division engaged in operations in Java and Sumatra prior to its eventual disbandment.

34TH INDIAN DIVISION

Raised in 1942 for the defence of Ceylon. There was an increasing Japanese thrust and the Division prepared a number of defences on the beaches and inland. The Japanese naval crafts managed to reach the proximity of the island to shell it on one occasion but no damage was done and the troops suffered no casualties.

When Lord Mountbatten established his headquarters in Ceylon the defence of the island was further strengthened.

1 BURMA DIVISION (LATER DESIGNATED 39TH INDIAN DIVISION)



A tulwar, in white, held aloft in a clenched brown hand on a dark green circle.

The Division was first formed in Burma on 1 July 1941. At the time of the Japanese invasion in February 1942 the Division was short of artillery, engineers, signals, medical and transport.

After 3 months of continuous fighting delaying actions, the Division received orders for withdrawal in April 1942 and the tired and exhausted troops began their retreat over 1,400 kilometres of mountains and malarial jungle with the enemy in hot pursuit. For crossing the Chindwin at Kalewa by streamers the order of priority was men, guns and four wheeled vehicles. All other items were either burnt or made unserviceable before crossing. Of the 100,000 Indian settlers who came with the retreating army, barely half made it to India, the rest having perished on the way. On 12 May 1942, 30 kilometres out of Kalewa, Indian Army lorries met them.

The Division finally withdrew to Shillong where it was re-designated 39th Indian Division and assumed a training role.

[To pre-empt any comments may I point out that General Chand Das's notes did not include references to 31st, 42nd and 44th Indian Armoured Divisions, or 44th Indian Airborne Division. See Letters and Queries for a number of comments relating to this series of notes.

Ed]

BOOK REVIEW

● *BENCOOLEN : A HISTORY OF THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S GARRISON ON THE WEST COAST OF SUMATRA 1685-1825.* Alan Harfield. Published as a limited numbered edition of 200 by A & J Partnership, 1995. 624 pages, 21 maps and plans, over 100 illustrations, including eight colour plates, some of which were especially commissioned for the book. £70. ISBN 0 9516065 2 2.

In the majority of general studies of the Indian Army, Sumatra hardly merits a mention, far less the garrison there of Bencoolen. It is a testimony to Alan Harfield's researches,

therefore, that he has produced such a definitive account of John Company's army which served in this and other settlements on the west coast of Sumatra for a period of 140 years. This develops a theme first covered by the author in his "British and Indian Armies in the East Indies, 1685-1935". The book is more of a reference work than a "light read" and, given that it is also aimed at an Indonesian audience interested in a particular period of their country's history, includes some fairly basic information which will already be well known to the student of the Indian Army. Nevertheless, there is much that is new.

The author quotes extensively from a selection of documents taken from the Sumatra Factory Records as well as from the Bengal and Madras Presidencies. The narrative begins with the decision taken in 1684 to establish a trading post for the acquisition of pepper. It goes on to describe the establishment of a military force to protect the Company's property, detailing the construction of the first York Fort settlement and the subsequent re-positioning of the garrison at Fort Marlborough as well as the outstation of Fort Anne at Moco Moco. The constant battle between the authorities in London and India, eager to maximise their profit margins, and those in Sumatra charged with the defence of these remote facilities, highlights the constant struggle over resources. The harshness of living conditions is vividly portrayed. Hundreds of soldiers died of cholera, malaria and dysentery, as the extract from the burials register dating from 1712 bears witness. Others died as a result of the severe military punishments inflicted in order to maintain discipline in this harsh location (either sentenced to be executed or sentenced to '1000 lashes in the usual manner' which inevitably had the same effect) whilst some were killed in numerous minor skirmishes with hostile local inhabitants at the outstations. The evacuation of Bencoolen and Fort Marlborough in 1719, brought about by the inept handling of the local rulers and their subjects by the Company's senior civil officers, is covered, as is the capitulation of the garrison to a French expeditionary force in 1760. Although the French left again fairly quickly and British possession of the Settlement was soon achieved, it was not until the Treaty of Paris in 1763 that the return of the west coast settlements was formally recognised. The French had destroyed parts of Fort Marlborough and Fort Anne and their repair had to await the arrival of a relief force from Madras in 1761. There is an enormous amount of detail on building and re-building programmes, and many statistics on disease and death within the text, but other statistics are also usefully brought together in some valuable appendices covering, amongst other subjects, a chronological list of construction from 1714 to 1825, Governors of the Settlement, a list of HEIC Officers known to have been stationed in the area between 1685 and 1789 and a list of commissions granted by the Fort Marlborough Presidency.

The murder of Resident Thomas Parr is recorded in some detail. The story continues with the Governorship of Sir Stamford Raffles and concludes with the Settlements being handed over to the Dutch in 1825.

The book is well illustrated, many of the photographs of the existing site of Fort Marlborough having been taken by the author's wife. There are also eight colour plates, some of which were especially commissioned for the book from the military artist Peter Archer.

Given that the author has devoted over four years of research to the book, and has published it privately, it is a pity that he was let down at the last moment with the decision of the new Governor of the region not to support the work started as a direct result of the encouragement of his predecessor. Despite this set-back the author has produced what must surely remain the definitive study of a little known aspect of the HEIC's military history. A valuable contribution and one to be commended.

ANM

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● James Reader writes:

I am researching into the life of my great great grandfather, James William Miller. He was born in Glasgow in 1820, joined the Honourable East India Company on 22 June 1841 and died in Simla on 12 June 1892. He won a VC, I believe numbered 868, during the Mutiny at Fatehpur, whilst serving as a Conductor with the East India Company Artillery. I have various letters certifying to his conduct and merit, but sadly his medals and papers were stolen in India around the turn of the century.

I am hoping to track down where his VC is now, to obtain photographs of it, and to get hold of copies of his original citation. The courageous act for which he was awarded his VC took place on 28 October 1857, but owing to various delays in gathering the evidence of eye-witnesses (namely Lt Glubb, the officer whom he saved under fire, who was on sick leave in England) he was not rewarded until much later. The official announcement appeared in the *Gazette of India* on 25 February 1862.

I am also interested in the ranks and organisation of the East India Company Gun Carriage Agency, and of his subsequent employment in the Timber Agency from which he retired in 1882.

● Tom Sikes is interested in learning if anyone has ever made a check list of Indian units that qualified for the IGS 1908, having seen many that are not listed in *Battles and Medals*.

● Douglas Zinn writes:

I am working on a comprehensive history of tropical headdress. I am interested especially in the sun helmet (i.e. sola topee, pith hat, pith helmet, shikar helmet, Wolseley and colonial patterns, etc.) and its development. I would be grateful for any information (i.e. catalogues, photographs, dress regulations, advertisements, descriptions, helmet embellishments etc.) related to sun helmets and their use.

● Simon Lee writes:

I have for some time been researching the Colours carried by the Native Infantry regiments of the East India Company between 1765 and 1815. My main area of interest is in the period when Wellington was in India but I feel it necessary to trace the Colours back to the time when the Native companies were first formed.

Although the information on the Bombay and Bengal armies is scarce, I have managed to piece together the information to give me an idea of the Colours carried.

However, the Madras Army is more difficult to research as I have found only sketchy information. I would like to ask other members if they can assist me. What do the inscriptions "CIRCAR" and "CARNATIC" mean, and in what positions of the Colours were these words carried. Furthermore, if anyone has any pictures of the Colours of the three

Presidency armies, I would be grateful for details. Sources reviewed so far include Captain H Bullock's "Indian Infantry Colours".

[CIRCARS and CARNATIC - coastal regions on the eastern seaboard, at one time under the suzerainty of the Nizam of Hyderabad. In the case of the Northern Circars the Nizam had made the territory over to the French who held it from him as a fief. The Carnatic was governed in the Nizam's name by the Nawab of the Carnatic with his headquarters in Arcot. Bullock states that he had been unable to trace the design of any of the earlier Colours (p.69) Ed.]

● Two further responses following on from Peter Chapman's article on Lumsden's Horse (Vol. 12, No 4, p161). Further to my Editor's note at the end of Shamus Wade's letter (Vol. 13, No 1, p40,) Shamus Wade has written again to say:

Indians from India received a total of 1,609 silver and 8,574 bronze Boer War Queen's South Africa Medals. 303 received silver King's South Africa Medals. Probably about 1,600 Indians living in South Africa served in Ambulance Corps: the majority never received medals.

● Chris Kempton writes:

First, Peter Chapman's article:

- (a) a minor correction, Darrang [not Durrung] Mounted Rifles.
- (b) it is probably worth mentioning the total list of decorations - 1 CB, 1 CMG, 2 DSOs, 5 DCMs - which was quite an achievement by any standards.
- (c) unfortunately 'Lumsden's Horse' [full title THE INDIAN MOUNTED INFANTRY CORPS (LUMSDEN'S HORSE)] was not a unit of the Indian Army. Its existence was of such short duration (Jan 1900-Jan 1901) that I am not sure if it was placed on any official listing. However, if it was given official status it would have been as part of the Indian Volunteer Force which was part of the British not Indian Army.

With regard to Shamus Wade's letter I feel it would be correct to say that all the 'units' which he lists were either civilian volunteers or followers and not part of the Indian Army establishment. This does not, of course, in any way detract from their contribution. In fact I would suggest that it probably enhances it. As Mr Wade says, they all received the QSA Medal which was awarded in bronze with no bar to Indian troops and followers.

In respect of Indian Army units, remount detachments were provided by 3rd Skinner's Horse and Jodhpur I.S. Lancers, while the Indian Medical Service provided C&D Sections of No 69 Indian Field Hospital and No 3 Field Medical Stores Depot. All personnel of these units/detachments also received the QSA Medal in bronze. Other cavalry regiments may well have provided detachments but the above are the only two of which I am aware.

● Two responses to the series by General Chand Das on Indian Divisions in World War II (concluded in this issue on pages 63-73)

M A Kerr writes:

14th Indian Division (Vol. 13, No 1, p22). I think they were on the Burma front prior to September 1942. We (2/1st Punjab Regiment) were part of that Division and were in Feni

in April 1942. Secondly, Subedar Ram Sarup Singh won his VC in the fighting at Sialum Vum on the Tiddim Road on 25 October 1944 when the battalion was part of 5th Indian Division.

(All sources that I have consulted refer to the formation of the Division in May 1942 but I cannot confirm when it moved to the Burma front. I should have spotted the Subedar Ram Sarup Singh point. He was correctly mentioned as part of 5th Indian Division in Vol. 12, No 3, p.100 as well as on p.87 of the same issue. Ed.)

Tony Mains writes:

General Chand Das in his excellent articles gives a place and date of raising or forming of the various Divisions. This pre-supposes that a number of units were mobilised, formed into Brigades, grouped into a Division under a Divisional HQ, and trained together before embarking together for a theatre of war. This was seldom so in the case of Indian Divisions formed in 1941-42.

The desperate need in 1941 and 1942 to find troops for Iraq, Malaya and Burma, as well as reinforcing the Middle East, led to a hand to mouth policy - Divisions being broken up, with their Brigades sent to whichever theatre desperately required troops; Headquarters without troops sent to take command of what was already in place; ad hoc Headquarters formed on the spot; and Divisional Commanders sent to command without a Headquarters at all - a makeshift one being put together on their arrival. I had personal experience of the confusion in 10 Indian Division and to a lesser extent of 17 Indian and 1 Burma Divisions.

10th Indian Division. The idea of a force in Iraq dated back to mid-summer 1941 when plans were made to implement the portion of our Treaty with that country allowing us a Line of Communication from India via Basra and Palestine to the Middle East, including the stationing of such units as were necessary for movement and protection. I found myself on the troopship "*Nevasa*" bound for Iraq. The ship contained the better part of three HQs - Iraq Force (General Quinan), Iraq L of C (General Beresford) and 10 Indian Division (General Fraser), but no-one had much idea as to which he was supposed to join. Our convoy, the second, which arrived the day before hostilities with Iraq commenced, had, with the first, put ashore about a brigade of troops together with a number of supporting arms and services, the fighting portion of which came under the command of General Fraser as the first GOC of 10 Indian Division (soon to be replaced by Bill Slim). A makeshift HQ was put together under a GSO I.

The muddle and confusion at Bombay and Basra was indescribable. Most of the units in Basra had originally belonged to 9 Division, earmarked for Malaya, and it took some time for it to sink in that they were now part of 10 Div since many of their supporting arms and services were still using their old titles, e.g. 9 Div Signals. My first job in Force HQ was to compile an Order of Battle of our own side as the Force Commander had little idea of what was actually in Basra. Units were put on ship at Bombay in no particular order and in many cases only partly mobilised - much of their warlike stores were sent direct from the depots to Bombay and loaded any old how onto any ship. The whole came out onto the dockside at Basra like a scrambled egg, causing gross congestion while it was sorted out.

17th Indian Division. General Chand Das and others have stated that the Division was raised in Ahmednagar in 1941, but these were not necessarily the troops who fought in

Burma. For example, its 45th Brigade was detached and sent to Malaya. The Official History makes it quite clear that the GOC and his Divisional HQ arrived in January 1942 to command various brigades already in the country, including the indigenous 2 Burma Brigade detached from 1 Bur. Div. Much of the supporting arms normally found in a Division were absent - notably field artillery; they had to make do with mule pack mountain batteries.

1 Burma Division (later re-named 39th Indian Division). A makeshift Divisional HQ with a Commander was formed to command troops already in situ. The Official History's comment is "In July (1941) 1st Burma Division (Major General J Bruce-Scott) was formed. Its staff was found from local resources and its HQ was at Toungoo. It consisted of 1st and 2nd Burma Brigades and the 13th Indian Brigade, but was short of artillery, engineer, signal, medical and transport units. None of its Brigades had any collective training and from an operational view was at that time a Division in name only."

I was transferred in January 1942 from HQ Iraq Force to HQ Burma Army as a GSO II.

● John Gaylor writes:

Regarding the badge shown on p 121 of Vol. 12, No 3 (Autumn 1995), Ashok Nath and I are convinced that not only is it not the 91st Punjabis but that it looks very much like a fabricated badge. The basic stringed bugle-horn looks to be from an early Raj Rif badge from which the letters 'RR' have been removed and the 'XCI' inserted. In our experience, bi-metal badges do not normally appear in this format.

● I published a request in Vol. 12, No 4 (Winter 1995), p166 for information on 38th Indian Infantry Brigade. Patric Emerson was able to provide the following:

Formed Egypt October 1941

Disbanded July 1942

Comprised of:

1 Welch Regiment	Oct - Dec 41
1/1 Punjab	Dec 41 - Jan 42
3/10 Baluch	Dec 41 and March-Apr 42
3/1 Punjab	Jan 42 and Feb - March 42
1 BUFFS	Jan-March 42
Brigade HQ only	Apr-July 42 and then disbanded

● I published pictures of two unidentified shoulder flashes in Vol. 12, No 1 (Spring 1995), p29, photographed among the personal possessions of the late Maharaja of Jaipur, His Highness Lieutenant General Sir Sawai Man Singh II, GCSI, GCIE, LLD, and asked if they might have been unique to the Maharaja. I was in India again at the beginning of this year and met Major General U.C. Dubey who was GOC Rajasthan 1950-51 with, as one of his tasks, the integration of the Indian State Force units in Rajasthan into the Indian Army. His photograph albums contained a number of pictures of various officers wearing flash No 2 (GR beneath the sun in splendour) and General Dubey told me it was the formation flash for his District, worn by all officers. Flash No 1 was worn by the Maharaja of Jaipur as Lieutenant General and Rajpramukh of Rajasthan, as well as an Indian States Forces woven shoulder title. Ed.

