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SAGA OF SARAGARHI

Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh AVSM (Retd)

12 September 1897 (one hundred years ago) is a day that needs to be recalled with intense pride, not only by the Indian Army regiment concerned (The 36th Sikhs), but for the whole nation. But sadly one discovers that whilst this battle of epic dimensions is taught to children in France, and is one of the 8 stories of collective bravery published by UNESCO, it at best finds peripheral mention in our history volumes for our children and future generations to draw sustenance from.

A foreign journal has mentioned that Saragarhi is one of the 5 most significant events of its kind in the world, beginning with the saga of Thermopylae associated with the heroic stand by a small Greek force against the mighty Persian Army led by Xerxes in 480 BC. The name of Thermopylae has passed into the history of mankind and has inspired heroism of every kind and a name which will indeed ever be associated with self-sacrifice. Saragarhi epitomises self-sacrifice by a very small band of our own soldiers a century ago.

A former President of India, Dr Zakir Hussain (then governor of the state of Bihar) said on 12 September, 1961, whilst delivering the Saragarhi speech - and I quote some extracts from this:

"The mind travels back to the day sixty four years ago, the 12th of September 1897. On this fateful day, on a rugged, inhospitable ridge of a forbidding terrain, a brave little band of twenty one Sikhs stood its ground steadfastly to the utter last in the midst of a swarming sea of hostile assailants and bore unmistakable witness to the gallantry and honour of the Indian Army.

It is a sad episode that we remember today - but it is none the less an historic event in the annals of our Army, rich with lessons of unsurpassed gallantry, self-effacing loyalty and unconditioned allegiance to the call of duty.

On the Samana Range, in what was then our North West Frontier Province at a distance of less than two miles each from Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan, perched at a height of some 6000 feet, was a picquet post at Saragarhi, which maintained signalling communication between the two Forts and along the Samana Range.

It was at dawn this day that the Orakzai and Afridi tribesmen, over 20,000 in number, who had been repulsed a few days earlier from Fort Gulistan, surrounded the little picquet post at Saragarhi, thus severing Fort Gulistan from Fort Lockhart. No aid could be sent to the isolated picquet. The brave band of Sikhs in the picquet post put up a heroic fight.

Very small in number and with but limited ammunition, they kept the ever swelling hordes at bay most of the day, inflicting heavy losses on them. Their small number could ill afford any casualties, but their thin ranks too were getting thinner and their ammunition was running out.

But they never faltered and continued to punish the enemy relentlessly. Then some of the enemy's men, crouching in a dead angle in the broken rocks around, safe from their fire, succeeded in making a large breach in the surrounding wall. The swarm rushed like a torrent with untamed fury. The brave little band of Sikhs, under Havildar Ishar Singh, to the last man but one, fell or were mortally wounded. Only that brave son of India, Gurmukh Singh the signaller was still alive. Cool and collected in this moment of imminent danger, face to face with certain death, this gallant soldier, with utter dedication to his Duty, which was his worship, signalled to Fort Lockhart : 'The enemy are in. Shall I go on signalling or shall I take a rifle?' He did take his rifle, and after all had gone, never to return, he alone continued to defend the guard room and shot some twenty of the enemy.

The enemy set the place on fire, and the bodies of the twenty gallant Sikhs dead or dying were consumed in the flames. Yes, their bodies but not their souls. For are these heroes really dead? No, they live on, more alive than any of us, they live on in our hearts and urge us on to heroism and gallantry in the defence of our free country, to prize duty before life and thus to establish the worth and dignity of true human existence. For, after all, what is the specific worth and dignity of human life? It is the glorious privilege of mankind to triumph over the gravitational pulls of material life in the service of eternal absolute values. This is the pride and privilege of humanity and an indication of man's place on the borderline between the Animal and the Divine. Placed under conflicting urges, it is given to man to choose the difficult Higher in preference to the easier lower.; to opt for self-effacing sacrifice in the face of an almost irresistible appeal of the material; to opt for duty at the cost of ease and comfort; to stand by the right in preference to power and wealth and domination; to elect the self-forgetfulness of dedicated loyalty to the greedy, watchfulness of worldly calculation; to court death with honour in preference to life in shame.

It is this glorious privilege which is symbolised in an unmistakable fashion in the Episode of Saragarhi, which bears eloquent witness to the truth that dedication to the absolute values is the destiny of worthwhile human existence. It is this witness by the immortal heroes of Saragarhi which has made an unforgettable contribution of immense significance to the great traditions of the Indian Army which the Indian people but justly hold in such high esteem and warm affection. Let us hope and trust that these traditions will continue to grow and we shall ever carry in our hearts, with loving gratitude, the inspiring memory of the martyrs of Saragarhi. May their souls rest in eternal peace."

The news of the battle was flashed to London. The British Parliament rose to give a standing ovation when the story was related to a packed and emotion filled House. As a result of the fighting the following awards were earned by the battalion:

- The immediate award of posthumous IOM to each of the heroes was announced. The award of twenty two IOM in one day, the highest gallantry award given to the Indian ranks in those days and equivalent to the Victoria Cross (Param Vir Chakra) was something unheard of and remains unparalleled in the annals of military history.⁽¹⁾
- All dependants of the Saragarhi heroes were awarded two squares of land (50 acres) and Rs 500/- as financial assistance.

There was great public appreciation of this bravery and undaunted courage. To commemorate the gallantry of the twenty two immortals, two historic shrines and beautiful memorials were built, one each at Amritsar and Ferozepur by the Government. Memorials

were also constructed by public subscription at Ferozepur and at the Samana Ridge near Fort Lockhart. A cairn was built on the actual site where the Saragarhi Post once stood.

The names of the twenty two heroes who sacrificed their lives are inscribed in the Roll of Honour as below:

ROLL OF HONOUR

165 Hav Ishar Singh	332 Nk Lal Singh
546 L/Nk Chanda Singh	163 Sep Ram Singh
182 Sep Sahib Singh	287 Sep Ram Singh
359 Sep Hira Singh	492 Sep Uttam Singh
687 Sep Daya Singh	760 Sep Jiwan Singh
791 Sep Bhola Singh	814 Sep Gurmukh Singh
834 Sep Narayan Singh ⁽²⁾	1221 Sep Nand Singh
1257 Sep Bhagwan Singh	1265 Sep Bhagwan Singh
1321 Sep Sadhu Singh ⁽³⁾	1556 Sep Banta Singh ⁽⁵⁾
1651 Sep Jiwa Singh ⁽⁴⁾	1733 Sep Gurmukh Singh
871 Sep Jiwan Singh	- Sep/Swpr (Safai Karamchari) Dad ⁽⁶⁾

As Michael Barthorp has noted in his recently published book "*Frontiers Ablaze*":

"Of these 21 men of the 36 Sikhs a newspaper report later stated: 'They behaved with splendid courage and there is perhaps no more touching instance of inflexible devotion to duty than this in the whole narrative of frontier fighting'.⁽⁶⁾

Lieutenant General S C Menezes PVSM SC, who retired in 1980 as Vice Chief of the Army Staff, told me recently that in June 1947, he visited the picquet when as a Major at that Fort (Kurram - NWFP) with the 3rd Battalion of the Indian Grenadiers; possibly one of the last officers of the Indian Army to do so. According to him, the plaque, then installed at the site by the British on a cairn in 1897, was still there when he visited it from Fort Lockhart.

Air Chief Marshal Arjun Singh DFC, who retired as Chief of the Indian Air Force in the sixties, has mentioned to me that he has flown over the Saragarhi area, when he was posted at Kohat in the forties in undivided India. He told me that the heroic action at Saragarhi could be compared to the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade" (immortalised in Lord Tennyson's famous poem). In this heroic action at Balaclava 9 Victoria Crosses were awarded.

EDITOR'S NOTE

(1) Abbott and Tamplin's "*British Gallantry Awards*" notes (pp196-7) that it seems the insignia of the Order itself was not actually issued to the next-of-kin, though the widows were admitted to the appropriate pension.

The preparation of this article has led to correspondence between Admiral Satyindra Singh, Lieutenant General M S Bhullar PVSM VSM, Colonel of the Sikh Regiment, and Colonel H S Ahluwalia, Officiating Commandant of The Sikh Regimental Centre. Members may recall that we published an appeal for information about the heroes' descendants from Colonel I S Kalra, then Commandant of The Sikh Regimental Centre, in DURBAR, Vol. 12, No 2, Summer 1995. That article gave two names which are now excluded from the list: - 755 Hav

Sundar Singh and 63 Hav Kala Singh. There remain, however, a few anomalies in the naming of the heroes.

(2) 834 Sep Narayan Singh. This is how the name appears in the letters provided by General Bhullar and Colonel Ahluwalia. Admiral Satyindra Singh visited the Saragarhi Gurdwara in Amritsar last December and saw the plaques placed there. On the English language plaque the name is spelt Narain Singh. Hypher's "*Deeds of Valour*" also spells the name Narayan.

(3) 1321 Sep Sadhu Singh. On the Amritsar plaque the name is spelt Sudh Singh. General Bhullar's letter gives the name as Sunder Singh and Colonel Ahluwalia's letter gives Sadhu Singh with the number 1327. Hypher's "*Deeds of Valour*" gives Sundar Singh.

(4) 1651 Sep Jiwa Singh. General Bhullar's letter gives his name as Jiwan Singh, as does Hypher's "*Deeds of Valour*".

(5) 1556 Sep Banta Singh appears as Buta Singh in Hypher's "*Deeds of Valour*".

(6) Safai Karamchari is the current nomenclature for sweeper. General Bhullar's letter names him as Sep/Swpr Dao Singh. Colonel Ahluwalia's letter names him as Sep/Swpr Dad. His name does not appear at all on the Amritsar plaque. Colonel Ahluwalia's letter also states that, of the 22 men who participated in the battle, only 21 were awarded the IOM because Dad, as a "follower" was ineligible. Nevertheless, Admiral Satyindra Singh notes that the Sikh Regimental Centre Journal (1979) mentions that Dad was awarded the IOM. Certainly the Civil Division of the Order was not instituted until 1902 and Abbott and Tamplin in "*British Gallantry Awards*" note that "G.G.O. No 134 of 1898 lists 21 men of the 36th (Sikh) Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry who would have received the 3rd Class had they survived and whose widows received the pension."

(6) Michael Barthorp: "*The Frontier Ablaze - The North West Frontier Rising 1897-98*". London: Woodrow & Greene, 1996, p90.

Web site note – see also Vol. 14, No. 4, Winter 1997 for further discrepancies.



KHAKI

Peter Chapman

KHAKI, the reference books will tell you, is a Persian word for the colour of dust. Military books will tell you that its adoption by the Corps of Guides may be fairly laid at the door of the Lumsdens.

Many books mention khaki and its origins and adoption and of the weird and wonderful concoctions used to stain white uniforms to achieve it. But I came across this little oddment in a 1925 newspaper the other day which seems as plausible as many tales from the hills.

About 1880 Maj Gen Alexander A A Kinlogie (then a Lieutenant Colonel on the Staff) was in a train with a Swiss businessman. The Swiss told him he had come to India "to pick up

wrinkles" - in other words, to see what was in demand. Kinlogie told him that if a 'fast' dye could be invented for khaki uniforms, the inventor would make a fortune and he told the Swiss to call to see him at the Fort, Calcutta.

The businessman turned up and was taken to a regimental tailor and shown the material then in use. The man apparently then went away and, after two years of experimenting, sent Colonel Kinlogie a sample of the dye. "These I submitted to the C-in-C, Sir Donald Stewart, who ordered them to be tried in several regiments. The results were satisfactory and Leeman and Gatty's khaki, manufactured by the great Manchester firm of E Spinner & Co, was adopted as the service and hot-weather dress of the Indian Army."

Footnote: I found Kinlogie in Hart's Army List. That's not his name. Alexander Angus Airlie Kinloch, commanding officer of the KRRC in 1884, served during the 2nd Afghan War and was twice mentioned in despatches. Whether his tale is as doubtful as the newspaper interpretation of his surname I have no idea.



THE SOUTER FAMILY IN INDIA

John Tamplin

The mention of Frank Souter by Captain Tim Ash in his article (Spring 1997 DURBAR, page 9) brings to notice this family who for three generations figure in India. The father of Frank Henry Souter was Thomas Alexander Souter who, as a Captain in H.M. 44th Regiment, is depicted in the painting by W.B. Wollen of 'The Last Stand of the 44th at Gandamak 1842' (original in the National Army Museum). In an attempt to save the Regimental Colour, Souter wrapped it round his waist and the enemy, thus thinking him a person of importance, spared his life. This picture has often been reproduced; it appears, for example, on the jacket of Patrick Macrory's "*Signal Catastrophe*". Souter's grand-daughter, Miss H.V.C. Souter, bequeathed £500 to the Essex Regimental Benevolent Association in 1962. The Colour now rests in the Regimental Chapel at Warley.

Frank, the second son, was born in 1831 and, as Tim Ash recounts, he was Commissioner of Police of Bombay from 1864 to his death on 4 June 1888. After his active career in the Mutiny (Medal without clasp - which I have), Sir Hugh Rose stated 'that his bravery fully entitled him to the distinction of the Victoria Cross'. He was appointed a CSI on 8 December 1868, Knight Bachelor on 24 November 1875, and CIE on 1 January 1886. There is a chapter devoted to his time as Commissioner of Police in "*The Bombay City Police*" by S.M. Edwardes (1923); and a fine photograph with an elaborate sword - possibly his 'sword of honour' awarded him for his Mutiny exploits - in "*Bombay and Western India*" by James Douglas (1893).. The illustration shown here is from the Illustrated London News of 11 August 1888. He is buried in St Thomas' Cemetery at Ootacamund. Frank had at least four sons and two daughters.

One of his sons was William Lochiel Berkeley Souter, CIE, KPM (1865-1945). This third generation Souter was also Inspector General of Police in Bombay 1915-1920. He was one of the first recipients of the King's Police Medal on its introduction (London Gazette of 1 January 1910) which I also possess. (Both these family awards were obtained years apart,

thus reuniting father with son after death). He was appointed CIE on 1 January 1910, and died at Montreaux on 28 June 1945 aged 80.



D-DAY: WHY DID INDIAN TROOPS NOT TAKE PART?

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Three years ago, as the world observed the 50th anniversary of the Allied landing on Normandy Beaches, there was renewed discussion amongst Indian Army circles as to why the Indian troops were excluded from that momentous day. On 6 June 1944 a massive amphibious operation, code-named OVERLORD, was launched marking the beginning of the end of Nazi Germany's occupation of Europe. The forces in England available for use were fourteen British, three Canadian and twenty American Divisions, and one French and one Polish Division. 5049 fighter aircraft, 3467 heavy bombers, 2343 other combat aircraft, 2316 transport and 2591 gliders made up the air force. Total landing craft, merchant vessels and warships exceeded 6000. But in this historic mission no Indian troops (I use the generic term to include all soldiers of the Indian sub-continent - now divided between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal) were involved. Why not?

This question has no text book answer since the history books have not thrown any light on the subject. Authoritative books such as Churchill's "*The Second World War*" and official chronicles have not touched this subject. I have visited both the Imperial War Museum and the National Army Museum in London and been rewarded with information about the contribution made by Indian troops in both world wars, but nothing about the non-contribution on D-Day.

The Normandy landings should be viewed against the backdrop of Allied strategy to defeat the axis of Germany, Italy and Japan. Italy - the soft under-belly of Europe - was to be knocked out first, followed by Germany and finally Japan. At the Tehran Conference President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshal Stalin decided that:

- OVERLORD was to be launched in North West Europe as the major effort to defeat Germany. To assist the operation, two other offensives were to be launched on two fronts.
- Italy. To capture Rome and advance up to the Pisa-Rimini Line to tie down as many enemy divisions as possible in Northern Italy, and;
- ANVIL (later DRAGOON) - an amphibious assault in the south of France to take the weight off OVERLORD.

There was one stipulation; Rome must fall before ANVIL could start ¹. While Germany was being tackled the offensive against the Japanese in Burma was to be pressed. Thus during 1944 the Allies were fighting on five major war fronts - Italy, the rest of Europe, the Russian front (essentially a Russian responsibility), the Pacific (primarily an American responsibility) and Burma.

There are three major reasons for the non- inclusion of Indian troops in the Normandy landings; strategic, security and administrative:

Strategic. India had raised a volunteer army of over 2.5 million in the Second World War. As war progressed there were only three theatres where Indian troops could, other things being equal, be deployed - Burma, Italy and Europe. Burma was the outpost for the defence of India against the Japanese and responsibility for Burma was handed over to India with 14th Army (General Slim) having 4 and 15 Corps under command. 4 Corps had 17, 20 and 23 Indian Divisions; 15 Corps had 5, 7 and 26 Indian Divisions, while 25 Indian Division was held in reserve. In addition there were two British Divisions (2 and 36), two West African Divisions (81 and 82) and one East African Division (11), a total of 13 British Empire Divisions. In his Northern Combat Area Command General Stilwell had two Chinese Divisions (22 and 38) operating in Northern Burma. The total strength in Burma was:

Indian troops	340,000
British troops	100,000
East and West Africans	90,000
Americans	10,000
Chinese	65,000
Total	605,000

Thus Indians formed over 56% of the total Allied strength in Burma. It is interesting to note that while American and British Divisions in Italy were taken out for ANVIL, one Indian Division was to be withdrawn from Italy (after Kesselring had been driven across the Piave)

to be sent to Burma for the assault on Rangoon ², thus confirming that employment of Indian troops for Burma took priority, even when ANVIL was being launched in the then neighbouring south of France. The main strategic reason for the employment of Indian troops in Burma is that Indian Divisions were already committed there - Indian troops were near home and defending their homeland.

Let us examine Italy. The war there was a continuation of the Allied success in North Africa where Indian troops such as 4 Indian Division performed with credit. Winston Churchill wrote to the Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, "His Majesty's Government gratefully recognises the valiant contribution which Indian troops have made in North Africa". ³ A spirit of camaraderie which had prevailed between the British and Indian troops serving in Eighth Army continued in Italy. British Empire Divisions in Italy included the following numbers:

British Infantry	8
British Armoured	3 (1, 6 and 7)
British Airborne	1
Canadian Infantry	1
Canadian Armoured	1 (5 Armoured)
New Zealand Infantry	1 (2 NZ Division)
South African Armoured	1 (6 Armoured)
Indian Infantry	3 (4, 8 and 10)
Indian Lorried Brigade	1 (43 Lorried Bde)

In addition there were Americans, French, Polish, Brazilians and Greeks.

Next to the British Divisions, Indian Divisions ranked high in the pecking order and the performance of Indian troops was widely praised. Eric Linklater has written "8th Indian Division came into line and cleared the enemy from high ground west of the Biggerne". ⁴ The Indians finest hour came at Cassino. Again, Linklater can be quoted, "For Cassino, 2nd New Zealand Division and 4 Indian Division were withdrawn from 8th Army to form a new Army Group Reserve and came under command of 5th Army as the New Zealand Corps under General Freyburg....At Cassino, the 4th Indian Division had bled too deeply; in six weeks of fighting it had lost over 3000 officers and men". ⁵

It is interesting to note that Indian troops were put to training in amphibious operations in Madh Island and Marve Beach near Malad, Bombay. ⁶ Colonel P S Bhagat VC told me that there was an impression created that the training was for future use in Europe. DUKWS and a few landing craft were made available and the enthusiasm among the Indian troops showed that they were keen to come to grips with the Germans. Actually the training was for the amphibious assault on Rangoon. ⁷

Security. Security was *sine qua non* of success of OVERLORD. An elaborate deception plan was made to mislead the Germans regarding the timing of the invasion and the landing site. By mid-May 1944 only 549 officers of HQ SHAEF knew details of OVERLORD ⁸ and there was no compromise on security. On 18 April 1944 General Edwin Sibert overheard Major General Henry Miller of 9th Air Force name the target date of OVERLORD in Claridges Hotel while under the influence of alcohol. He was reduced to Lieutenant Colonel and returned to the United States. ⁹ The presence of Indian troops was considered a security risk since any movement in the launching area in England of Indian troops would have been easily detected. One World War II veteran, with his subtle British humour, told me "You know, Jerry would have smelt the Indian curry!"

Not a few try to drag racism into the controversy, possibly propelled by Churchill's mistrust of the Indians. Actually Churchill was apprehensive of Indian politicians, not the Indian Army. He was never miserly in praising Indian troops as, for instance, when he wrote to the Viceroy, "The whole Empire has been stirred by the achievement of the Indian forces in Eritrea." ¹⁰ There was no basis for keeping troops out on account of colour - a large number of blacks were fighting in the American forces.

But there is no gainsaying the fact that by this time the Indian National Army (INA) had been formed in the Far East and, along with their Japanese masters, were fighting the British and their former comrades as 54 INA Division. Lieutenant General S K Sinha has written, "INA had not remained true to their salt." ¹¹ The sanctity of the British salt had evaporated. The Chindit experience proved that British planners were averse to sharing secret missions with Indians. The Chindits were called 3 Indian Division for cover purposes but there were no Indians in the Chindits, not even DMA (Driver Mule Artillery). The Chindits were formed of 77 and 111 Indian Infantry Brigades (including some Gurkhas), 14 and 23 British Infantry Brigades and 3 East African Brigade. Thus in the overall bayonet strength of nearly 2 Divisions, Indian troops were not represented. This was purely for security reasons.

Administrative. Indian troops had fought valiantly in France in World War I. These were the days of trench warfare - static, muddy, defensive. But World War II demanded high mobility and involved land, sea and air. When I was shown a photograph at the Imperial War Museum of a tall, burly Sikh soldier of World War I vintage I was told that he was a victim of chemical gas since the Indian troops could not fit the gas masks properly. There is substance in this as I have undergone Chemical Warfare training and found that fitting a gas mask over turban and beard is a cumbersome and leaky job. Once phosgene or mustard gas gets into the beard it lingers on. It was commonly believed that Indian troops were prone to sea-sickness while crossing the English Channel and would suffer from the cold when on French soil. It would be relevant to quote Churchill with regard to the African Divisions, "...no-one contemplates them standing in the line against a European army.....They cannot be used as far north as Libya on account of the cold." ¹² Eating habits of the Indian troops were a minus point and it was thought too cumbersome and impractical to cater for the varied tastes of the Indian troops. There are vegetarians and non-vegetarians, most are non-beef eaters, others shun pork, while butchering of mutton on the hoof was to be done as per religious custom, either 'halal' or 'jhatka'. Few had a taste for canned foodstuff. Discipline was also a point, though I feel that non-European troops were measured by a different standard. One interesting medical point is that malaria- immune troops were wanted for Burma and the Nigerians and Indians were supposed to have a better resistance to the mosquito.

Command and control was a deciding factor. Lieutenant General O'Connor was not accepted for a Corps command in Europe as "O'Connor had never commanded or, indeed, served in a modern formation under European conditions".¹³ When it came to the question of reinforcements it is on record, "The only way in which our forces in France can be rapidly expanded is by bringing the professional troops from India - 60,000 Territorials to be sent to India for IS duties and 40,000 or 45,000 regular troops should *pari passu* be brought back to Europe." ¹⁴

OVERLORD was primarily an American show and Churchill did not want His Majesty's subjects to serve under an American commander. To recapitulate, there were no purely British Divisions available in the East to be sent under American command. Indian Divisions

were traditionally formed of two Indian brigades and one British brigade. Americans were ardent supporters of Indian independence - Churchill was concentrating on winning the war; Indian independence could wait. The overriding factor, however, was that there was a 'friendly' understanding between the two super powers that only whites could fight the whites. What about the American blacks? Well, every white cloud should have a black lining!

Notes:

1. Winston Churchill. *The Second World War*, Volume VI, p51.
2. *ibid.* p. 131.
3. *ibid.* Vol. III, p 667
4. Eric Linklater. *The Campaign in Italy*. p100
5. *ibid.* pp.170 and 184
6. Marve Beach is near Bombay and has a naval shore establishment.
7. The assault on Rangoon was code-named Operation DRACULA and intended, after the capture of Rangoon, to move inland and cut off Japanese troops from their bases and lines of communication in Siam (Thailand). Colonel P S Bhagat VC was an engineer officer who won his Victoria Cross in Eritrea. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant General and commanded the Northern Command of the Indian Army.
8. David Irving. *The War Between the Generals*.
9. *ibid.*
10. Churchill. *Op. cit.* Vol. III, p 79
11. Lt Gen S K Sinha PVSM. *A Soldier Recalls*, p 60. General Sinha was Vice Chief of the Army Staff. For the Indians 'Salt' is a guarantee for loyalty. In attestation parades of new recruits there is a 'salt eating' ceremony. On 31 July 1806 the Duke of Wellington wrote, "I am a 'nimmukwalla', as we say in the East; that is I have ate of the King's salt."
12. Churchill. *Op. cit.* Vol. III, p 654
13. Army Quarterly and Defence Journal, July 1994, quoting Lieutenant General Sir James Wilson's 'Montgomery - Leadership in Normandy', p 267
14. Churchill. *Op. cit.* Vol. I, p 437

(Editor's Note: The content and conclusions of this article must be seen as reflecting the opinions of the author and not the Indian Military Historical Society. Nevertheless, I include it in order to inform debate.)



INDIAN ARMY VICTORIA CROSSES 1914-1939

Chris Kempton

The roll of Victoria Cross awards from 1914 has an added significance in that effective from 21 October 1911 native ranks of the Indian Army became eligible for the award, a rather belated adjustment to what, despite the availability of the IOM, would seem a rather prejudiced arrangement.

Of the 22 awards in this period, 12 or 52% were to Indian ranks and it is interesting to note the high level of initiative and skill shown by junior ranks, particularly in France in the winter of 1914/15 when everything - climate, terrain and battle conditions would have been totally alien to the Indian units.

The awards are listed by date of action and [P] indicates posthumous.

SEPOY KHUDADAD KHAN, 129th DCO BALUCHIS

GAZETTE 7.12.1914

On 31 October 1914 at Hollebeke, Belgium, Sepoy Khudadad Khan was in the MG Section of the Regiment and was working one of the two guns. The British Officer in charge was wounded and the other gun put out of action by a shell. Sepoy Khudadad Khan, though himself wounded, continued working his gun after all the other five men of the section had been killed. He was left by the enemy for dead but later managed to crawl away and re-join his unit.

The first VC to an Indian. Khudadad Khan became a Subadar and died in Pakistan in 1971.

Lt F A de PASS, 34th PAVO POONA HORSE [P]

GAZETTE 18.2.1915

On 24 November 1914 near Festubert, France, Lt de Pass entered a German sap and destroyed a traverse in the face of the enemy's bombs. Subsequently he rescued, under heavy fire, a wounded man who was lying in the open exposed to enemy bullets. Lt de Pass lost his life on 25 November in a second attempt to capture the sap which had been reoccupied by the enemy.

NAIK DARWAN SING NEGI, 1st/39th GARHWAL RIFLES

GAZETTE 7.12.1914

On the night of 23/24 November 1914 at Festubert, France, the 1st/39th Garhwal Rifles were engaged in retaking and clearing the enemy out of our trenches. In this very dangerous operation Naik Darwan Sing Negi was the first to push round every traverse. Although wounded in the head and arm he kept going forward in the face of heavy fire from bombs and rifles at close range.

Became a Subadar and died in United Provinces in 1950.

Lt W A McC BRUCE, 59th SCINDE RIFLES [P]

GAZETTE 4.9.1919

On 19 December 1914 near Givenchy, France, Lt Bruce was in command of a small party which captured one of the enemy trenches during a night attack. In spite of being wounded in the neck he walked up and down the trench encouraging his men to hold out against several counter-attacks until he was killed. The fire from rifles and bombs was very heavy all day and it was due to his example and encouragement that the men were able to hold out until dusk when the trench was finally captured by the enemy.

CAPTAIN E JOTHAM, 51st SIKHS [FF], att N. WAZIRISTAN MILITIA [P]

GAZETTE 24.7.1915

On 7 January 1915 at Spina Khaisora, Tochi Valley, Capt Jotham, who was commanding a party of about a dozen N. Waziristan Militia, was attacked in a nullah and almost surrounded by an overwhelming force of some 1,500 tribesmen. He gave the order to retire and could have escaped himself but sacrificed his life in trying to rescue one of his men who had lost his horse.

NOTE: spelling seen as Jothanu but Jotham is as per Gazette Citation.

RIFLEMAN GOBAR SING NEGI, 2nd/39th GARHWAL RIFLES [P]

GAZETTE 28.4.1915

On 10 March 1915 at Neuve Chapelle, France, during an attack on the German position Rifleman Gobar Sing Negi was one of a bayonet party with bombs who entered their main trench. He was the first man to go round each traverse driving back the enemy until they were forced to surrender. He was killed during this engagement.

MAJOR G G M WHEELER, 7th HARIANA LANCERS [P]

GAZETTE 1.9.1915

On 12 April 1915 at Shaiba, Mesopotamia, Major Wheeler took out his Squadron in an attempt to capture a flag which was the centre-point of a group of the enemy who were firing at one of our picquets. He advanced, attacked the enemy's infantry with the lance and then retired while the enemy swarmed out of hidden ground and formed an excellent target for the Artillery. On 13 April Major Wheeler led his Squadron to the attack of the North Mound; he was seen far ahead of his men, riding straight for the enemy's standard but was killed in the attack.

JEMADAR MIR DAST, IOM, 55th COKE'S RIFLES [FF] att 57th WILDE'S RIFLES [FF] GAZETTE 29.6.1915

On 26 April 1915 at Weiltje, Belgium, Jemadar Mir Dast led his platoon with great bravery during the attack and afterwards collected various parties of the Regiment [when no British officers were left] and kept them under his command until the retirement was ordered. He also displayed great courage that day when he helped to carry eight British and Indian officers to safety whilst exposed to heavy fire.

Became Subadar. Died in Pakistan in June 1950.

On 18 May 1915 near Richebourg L'Aouve, France, Lt Smyth, with a volunteer bombing party of 10 men, conveyed a supply of 96 bombs to within twenty yards of the enemy's position over exceptionally dangerous ground after the attempts of two other parties had failed. Lt Smyth succeeded in taking the bombs to the desired position with the help of two of his men, the other eight having been killed or wounded. To achieve this purpose he had to swim a stream being the whole time exposed to howitzer, shrapnel, machine gun and rifle fire.

Became Brigadier and A/Major General commanding 17 Indian Division in 1942. Later Rt Hon Sir John Smyth Bt, Founder and Chairman of the VC & GC Association. Died April 1983.

On 25 September 1915 south of Fauquissart, France, Rifleman Kulbir Thapa having been wounded himself, found a wounded soldier of the Leicestershire Regiment behind the first line German trench. Although urged to save himself the Gurkha stayed with the wounded man all day and night. Early next day, in misty weather, he took him through the German wire and leaving him in a place of comparative safety returned and brought in two wounded Gurkhas, one after the other. He then went back and, in broad daylight, fetched the British soldier carrying him most of the way under enemy fire.

Became Havildar. Died in Nepal October 1956.

On 13 January 1916 during the Battle of the Wadi, Mesopotamia, Sepoy Chatta Singh left cover to assist his CO who was lying wounded and helpless in the open. The sepoy bound up the officer's wounds and then dug cover for him with his entrenching tool, being exposed all the time to very heavy rifle fire. For five hours until nightfall he stayed with the wounded officer shielding him with his body on the exposed side. He then under cover of darkness went back for assistance and brought the officer to safety.

Became Havildar. Died in India in March 1961.

On 21 January 1916 at El Orah, Mesopotamia, finding a wounded British officer lying close to the enemy, Lance Naik Lala dragged him into temporary shelter. After bandaging his wounds the Lance Naik heard calls from his own Adjutant who was lying wounded in the open. The enemy were only 100 yards away, nevertheless Lance Naik Lala insisted on going back to help. He stripped off his own clothing to keep the wounded officer warm and stayed with him until just before dark when he returned to the shelter. After dark he carried the first wounded officer to safety and then returning with a stretcher carried back his Adjutant.

Became Jemadar. Date of death not known.

CAPTAIN J A SINTON, IMS

GAZETTE 21.6.1916

On 21 January 1916 at El Orah, Mesopotamia, Capt Sinton attended to the wounded under very heavy fire and although he was shot through both arms and through the side he refused to go to hospital, remaining on duty as long as daylight lasted. In three previous actions he had also displayed the utmost bravery.

Became Brigadier, OBE. Served WWII. Died March 1956.

NAIK SHAHAMAD KHAN, 89th PUNJABIS

GAZETTE 26.9.1916

On the night of 12/13 April 1916 near Beit Ayessa, Mesopotamia, Naik Shahamad Khan was in charge of a machine gun covering a gap in our new line within 150 yards of the entrenched enemy. He beat off three counter-attacks and worked his gun single-handed after all his men, except two belt fitters, had become casualties. For three hours he held the gap under very heavy fire and when his gun was knocked out he and his two belt fitters held their ground with rifles until ordered to withdraw. With help he then brought back his gun, ammunition and one severely wounded man and finally all remaining arms and equipment.

Became Jemadar. Died Rawalpindi July 1947.

MAJOR G C WHEELER, 2nd/9th GURKHA RIFLES

GAZETTE 8.6.1917

On 23 February 1917 at Shumran, River Tigris, Mesopotamia, Major Wheeler with one Gurkha officer and eight men crossed the river and rushed the enemy trench in the face of very heavy fire. Having obtained a footing on the far bank he was almost immediately counter-attacked by the enemy with a party of bombers. Major Wheeler at once led a charge, receiving in the process a severe bayonet wound in the head. In spite of this, however, he managed to disperse the enemy and consolidate his position.

Became Lieutenant Colonel. Died August 1938.

LANCE DAFFADAR GOBIND SINGH, 28th LIGHT CAVALRY att 2nd LANCERS

GAZETTE 11.1.1918

On 1 December 1917 east of Peizieres, France, Lance Daffadar Gobind Singh three times volunteered to carry messages between the Regiment and Brigade HQ, a distance of 1½ miles over open ground which was under heavy fire from the enemy. He succeeded each time in delivering the message, although on each occasion his horse was shot and he was compelled to finish the journey on foot.

Became Jemadar. Died India December 1942.

RIFLEMAN KARAN BAHADUR RANA, 2nd/3rd QAO GURKHA RIFLES

GAZETTE 21.6.1918

On 10 April 1918 at El Kefr, Egypt, during an attack, Rifleman Karan Bahadur Rana and a few other men crept forward with a Lewis Gun, under intense fire, to engage an enemy

machine gun. The No. 1 of the Lewis Gun opened fire but was shot almost immediately whereupon the rifleman pushed the dead man off the gun, opened fire, knocked out the enemy gun crew and silenced the fire of the enemy bombers and riflemen in front of him. During the remainder of the day he did magnificent work and finally assisted with covering fire in the withdrawal, until the enemy were close on him.

Died Nepal 1972.

RISALDAR BADLU SINGH, 14th MURRAY'S JAT LANCERS att 29th LANCERS [DECCAN HORSE] [P]
GAZETTE 27.11.1918

On 23 September 1918 on the West Bank of the River Jordan, Palestine, when his Squadron was charging a strong enemy position, Risaldar Badlu Singh realised that heavy casualties were being inflicted from a small hill occupied by a machine gun and 200 infantry. Without any hesitation he collected six other ranks and with entire disregard of danger he charged and captured the position. He was mortally wounded on the very top of the hill when capturing one of the machine guns single-handed but all the guns and infantry had surrendered to him before he died.

T/CAPTAIN H J ANDREWS, MBE, IMS [P] GAZETTE 9.9.1920

On 22 October 1919 at Khajuri Post, Waziristan, Capt Andrews, the Senior Medical Officer, heard that a convoy had been attacked in the vicinity and that men had been wounded. He at once went out under heavy fire and established an Aid Post under conditions which afforded some protection to the wounded, but not to himself. He was subsequently compelled to move the Aid Post but continued to attend to the wounded. Finally when a van was available he collected the wounded, under fire, and put them into it. He was killed while stepping into the van on completion of his task.

LIEUTENANT W D KENNY, 4th/39 GARHWAL RIFLES [P] GAZETTE 9.9.1920

On 2 January 1920 near Kotkai, Waziristan, Lt Kenny was in command of a Company holding an advanced covering position which was repeatedly attacked by the Mahsuds in greatly superior numbers. For over four hours this officer maintained his position repulsing three determined attacks, being foremost in the hand-to-hand fighting which took place. In the subsequent withdrawal, recognising that a diversion was necessary in order that some of the wounded could be got away, he turned back with a handful of men and counter-attacked the pursuing enemy and with the rest of his men was killed fighting to the last.

SEPOY ISHAR SINGH, 28th PUNJABIS GAZETTE 25.11.1921

On 10 April 1921 near Haidari Kach, Waziristan, Sepoy Ishar Singh was No. 1 of a Lewis Gun section. Early in the fighting he was severely wounded, all the officers and havildars of his company became casualties and his Lewis Gun was seized. He recovered the gun and went into action again though his wound was bleeding profusely, but when ordered to have it

dressed he went instead to help the Medical Officer, carrying water to the wounded, taking up a rifle and helping to keep down enemy fire and acting as a shield while the Medical Officer was dressing a wound. It was nearly three hours before he submitted to being evacuated.

Became Captain. Died in India, September 1963.

CAPTAIN G MEYNELL, 5th/12th FRONTIER FORCE REGIMENT [QUEEN VICTORIA'S OWN CORPS OF GUIDES] [P] GAZETTE 24.12.1935

On 29 September 1935 at Point 4080, Nahakki Pass, N W Frontier, in the final phase of an attack, Capt Meynell, seeking information on the most forward troops found them in a struggle against an enemy vastly superior in numbers. He at once took command and with two Lewis Guns and about 30 men maintained a heavy and accurate fire on the advancing enemy, but their overwhelming numbers nevertheless succeeded in reaching the position and putting the Lewis Gun out of action. In the hand-to-hand struggle which ensued Capt Meynell was mortally wounded but the heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy prevented them from exploiting their success.

BOOK NOTES

● *"UNPARALLELED DANGER - UNSURPASSED COURAGE, Recipients of the Indian Order of Merit in the Second World War"* compiled by Chris Peterson. Limited edition of 300 copies, soft illustrated cover, 201 pages, index, recipients tabulated by regiments and theatres of war. Obtainable from the author at 11456 Orchard Lane, Reston, VA 20190, USA - US\$19.95 + US\$3.95 postage and packing. ISBN 0-9656206-0-6.

IMHS member Chris Peterson has compiled a reference book containing the names, details and, in most cases the citations, of the recipients of the IOM in WWII. It includes awards for the North West Frontier and Java together with two awards to personnel of the Royal Indian Navy. Each recipient has an individual entry with, besides his citation (where available), his details (where known), i.e. rank, class, village, tehsil and district.

One of your reviewers has checked a very small section of the book (that dealing with Indian States Forces) against his own records and found agreement with almost every detail. Lance Naik MIMAL DEB, listed in the book as Indian States Forces (without the State being identified from the London Gazette) is identified in a Gazette of India entry several years later as 1st Tripura Rifles. It is interesting that the table of recipients by regiment shows Patiala as having 2 awards, though only one is detailed in the book. The reviewer's records show one definite award and one claimed but not proven. This table should probably read Hyderabad ISF (1), Patiala ISF (1), Tripura Rifles ISF (3). The compiler has performed a most valuable service by drawing together the details of this prestigious award for the last years of its existence, a period not covered in depth in other publications.

This is probably not a book for general reading but it is a MUST for museums and medal collectors. (AAM & ANM)

● *"MANDALAY AND BEYOND. Tales from a Medical Airman's Diary"*. Morton Charlton. paperback, 101 pages, illustrated with photographs, no index. Merlin Books, Braunton, Devon, £6.95

This is the story of a young man, too young to join up in 1939, who joined the local branch of the British Red Cross and, as soon as he attained the age of eighteen, enlisted in the Medical Branch of the RAF in 1941. Later in the year he was sent to Egypt but, as a result of Japan's entry into the war, was sent on to Burma where he was stationed first at Toungoo and later at Magwe. After the disaster at Magwe and the subsequent withdrawal of the RAF to China, he was stationed at Cheng-Tu where he contracted both malaria and dysentery, finally ending up with sprue. He was evacuated by air to Calcutta where, as his medical records had been mislaid (incorrect filing), he was treated almost as a malingerer before finally being evacuated to the UK by ship in May 1943. On arrival home in September he was medically downgraded to "fit for home service only", but later this was altered to "fit for service in Western Europe", with a posting to an RAF Mobile Field Hospital just after "D" Day. He remained with this unit until finally arriving at Celle in Germany about the time of VE Day. He was finally demobbed in July 1946.

I read the Burma portion of this story with a very critical eye as I too was on the Burma Retreat, but nowhere could I fault it. Indeed, it is a very readable and well written account of events from the point of view of a very young man sent far from his usual environment. The photographs, particularly of the "Burma Road", are of great interest. RECOMMENDED

(AAM)

● *"A REGISTER OF TITLES OF THE UNITS OF THE H.E.I.C. & INDIAN ARMIES 1666-1947"*. Chris Kempton. British Empire & Commonwealth Research Paper Number 1. Paperback, 426 pages, maps, index, bibliography, select chronology of events 1599-1947. Available from The Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Clock Tower Yard, Temple Meads, Bristol BSI 6QH, £20 + £3 postage & packing. ISBN 0 9530174 0 0.

This is a monumental work by our member Chris Kempton which has taken four years of full time effort to put together. From many of the letters I receive as Editor enquiring into changes of regimental title, I have absolutely no doubt that this will be a welcome and indispensable addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of the H.E.I.C. and Indian Armies.

The Register is organised in 19 parts (the more obvious Cavalry, Artillery, Sappers & Miners/Engineers, Signals, Pioneers and Infantry), through the various support arms (Service Corps, Medical, Veterinary, Electrical & Mechanical Engineers, Ordnance, Intelligence & Military Police, Catering/Education/ WAC[I], Labour & Pioneer) to the Indian States Forces, Miscellaneous units, Military Schools & Colleges. Also included are sections on Volunteer & Territorial units and Burma Forces. The inclusion of Volunteers (strictly speaking a part of the British Army) has been justified on the grounds of the close association of the former with the Indian Army, while the inclusion of Burma Forces is made on the grounds that they appeared in the Indian Army ORBAT after the Burma Retreat in 1942. Native Militias and Police Corps are only included if they appeared in Army Lists, Lists of Units, subsequently became Regular units, or formed part of an Order of Battle since the majority only performed in a purely Civil capacity.

There are a number of surprises to be found which go against accepted wisdom and/or previous documentation and will doubtless fuel debate.

There are six very useful maps with an index of place names taken from the 'Station Location Statements' so that you can more easily find the vast majority of locations referred to in the text (battle sites, therefore, are NOT included, and a few places mentioned have proved impossible to pin-point)

In general the book is well laid out and easy to use, though at first I found the over-use of boxes around the text distracting and an apparent inconsistency in use of capitals, bold text and/or underlining confusing. But let that not detract from what is an exceptional piece of research work available at a very reasonable price. Given the amount of effort that has gone into it you will be hard pressed to find a better bargain.

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Peter Chapman writes:

Further to correspondence concerned with the last survivors of the Mutiny may I mention Mrs M L Franks who, in about 1957, lived in Lymington? Her husband, Robert Roche Franks, served during the Mutiny as a very young officer of the Bengal Artillery. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1884.

I only mention her as she was the last widow - the last - to receive a pension from the East India Company. Naturally, she could not possibly have been married to R R Franks at the time of the Mutiny. Her father was also Indian Army, a General Nisbett, a Captain during the Mutiny. One of her aunts was killed in the Cawnpore massacre.

I believe the R R Franks medals were presented to the museum at Sandhurst in about 1957.

● Sam Morale has sent the following illustration of a belt buckle of the 106 Hazara Pioneers. Silver badge on brass buckle.



● James Patrick has written to expand upon his request for information about the initials G.O.F.F. (DURBAR, Vol. 14, No 1, page 38).

"G,O,F,F," appears on a Mutiny medal to a British Lieutenant who served with Havelock's relief force and subsequent Defence of Lucknow, which bar it carries. Further, the unit appears after the title "D,A,Q,M,GEN^L" and a space. Commas are used throughout as I have seen similarly on other Mutinies. Mr Cliff Parrett has so far confirmed my original guess that O.F.F. stands for Oude Field Force, as Havelock signed off his later despatches this way. The "G" may be an error?

