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THE CASE OF THE MISSING BATTLE HONOURS OF THE BENGAL ENGINEER GROUP

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The Bengal Engineer Group, formerly the Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners, were raised in 1803, and were awarded 63 battle honours in their long and eventful existence. Of these, ten battle honours do not appear against their name in the Bengal Army Lists published after 24 January 1859. The reason for their omission is not very clear, though the one most likely is a printing error, which was not pointed out at that time, and persisted for 130 years. Several efforts were made by successive Commandants of the Bengal Sappers to have the battle honours restored, but these met with only partial success when two honours, out of the ten originally omitted, were restored in January 1905. All efforts made subsequently for the restoration of the remaining eight did not get the approval of the government of the day. This position persisted up to 1987 when the discovery of an important document cleared the controversy and paved the way for the formal restoration of the missing honours to the Bengal Sappers. The complete historical background of the case is presented here, with the recently discovered documentary evidence which establishes the claim of the Bengal Sappers to the missing battle honours.

1803 to 1856

The Bengal Engineer Group was raised in 1803 as The Corps of Bengal Pioneers. The Pioneers were converted to the Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners in 1819. They formed a part of the Honourable East India Company, and took part in the campaigns fought by the Bengal Army during this period. As a result of their endeavours in the various campaigns they were awarded fifteen battle honours up to 1856. These were:

1. Bharatpur (Bhurtpoor), 1826, awarded to the Corps as a whole, vide GGO of 9 April 1832. Last published in the Bengal Army List of 24 January 1859. Later restored in 1905 and is presently held by the Group. **(R)**
2. Ghazni (Ghuznee), 1839, awarded to the 2nd and 3rd Companies vide GGO of 18 November 1839. **
3. Afghanistan, 1839, awarded to the 2nd and 3rd Companies vide GGO of 18 November 1839. **
4. Jalalabad (Jellalabad), 1842, awarded to the 7th and 8th Companies vide GGO of 30 April 1842. **
5. Kabul (Cabool), 1842, awarded to the 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th Companies, and detachments of the 2nd and 3rd Companies vide the GOGG of 18 November 1842. The honour is held by the Group.
6. Kandhar (Candahar), 1842, awarded to detachments of the 2nd and 3rd Companies. The authority for the award is not known. **
7. Ghazni (Ghuznee), 1842, awarded to detachments of the 2nd and 3rd Companies. The authority for the award is not known. **

8. Maharajpur (Maharajpoo), 1843, awarded to the 3rd, 4th and 7th Companies vide the GOGG of 14 January 1844. ** (R)
9. Punniar, 1843, awarded to the 1st Company vide GOGG of 14 January 1844. ** (R)
10. Ferozeshuhur, 1845, awarded to the 6th Company. The authority for the award is not known. The honour is held by the Group. (R)
11. Sobraon (Subraon), 1846, awarded to the Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners. The authority for the award is not known. Last published in the Bengal Army List of 24 January 1859. Later restored in 1905 and is presently held by the Group. (R)
12. Gujerat (Goojerat), 1849, awarded to the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Companies vide GGO No 803 of 7 October 1853. The honour is held by the Group. (R)
13. Multan (Mooltan), 1849, awarded to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 8th Companies vide GGO No 803 of 7 October 1853. The honour is held by the Group. (R)
14. Chillianwalla, 1849, awarded to the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Companies vide GGO No 803 of 7 October 1853. ** (R)
15. Punjab (Punjaub), 1848-49, awarded to the Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners as well as the 1st and 10th Companies vide GGO No 803 of 7 October 1853. The honour is held by the Group. (R)

(R) = now held to be Repugnant (see Note below)

** = last published in the Bengal Army List of 24 January 1859. The honour is also not shown against the Bengal Engineer Group, in the Indian Army Staff List of 1970-72.

1857 to 1859

The Corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners was at its Headquarters at Roorkee, except for the 5th and 6th Companies which were at Attock and Peshawar respectively, when the Sepoy mutiny broke out at Meerut in May 1857. The Corps was immediately ordered to march to Meerut to support the garrison there. On arrival they found the city panic stricken and the British troops on the defensive. The Commandant, Lieutenant A Fraser, ordered the ammunition to be moved out of the camp as a precautionary measure. On seeing this the men protested, but the Commandant peremptorily ordered that his instructions be complied with. At this juncture the men shot first the senior Non-Commissioned Officer and then the Commandant. Most men in the camp fled and those returning from work in the suburbs of the city were first disarmed, but later rearmed, when their loyalty was not in doubt. These men served at the siege of Delhi, the Relief and Capture of Lucknow, and the operations in Oudh and Rohilkhand.

The total strength of the Corps on 15 May 1857, the day it mutinied, was 1302. Of these, 519 remained loyal, of whom 194 only belonged to the 5th and 6th Companies, and 325 to the remaining Companies. These were the men who marched on to Delhi, took part in the siege of that city and were responsible for blowing up the Kashmir Gate, leading to the capture of the old Mughal capital. Their gallant conduct in this exploit was specially reported by Colonel Richard Baird-Smith, Chief Engineer, Delhi, to Major General Sir Archdale Wilson, Commanding Delhi Field Force. The Commanding General further commended their conduct to the Governor General in Council for adequate recognition and reward. As a result two British Officers and one British Non-Commissioned Officer were awarded the Victoria Cross, and six Indian Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Sappers were awarded the Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class.

Men of the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Companies served at Lucknow during 1857-58 after the fall of Delhi. They were a part of the force under Sir Colin Campbell which was responsible for the Relief and Capture of Lucknow. A detachment, 103 strong, was engaged in the operations under Brigadier Jones in April 1858 in Oudh and Rohilkhand. A detachment, 200 strong, under Captain F R Maunsell, the Commandant, served with Brigadier Colin Troup's forces in the Mainpuri district. The services of the 325 men of the Bengal Sappers and Miners (other than the 5th and 6th Companies), who remained loyal, were thus conspicuous in the operations for the suppression of the mutiny. Their reward was not long in coming. The tally at the end of the campaign read five Victoria Crosses, one Indian Order of Merit 1st Class, three 2nd Class, twenty two 3rd Class, and five Order of British India 2nd Class.

The curtain was rung down on the Indian Mutiny by the Government of India, in 1859, with the disbandment of some units which had mutinied. The Artillery, for example, passed from Indian hands into those of the British. No Company of the Bengal Sappers & Miners was, however, disbanded as per the History and Digest of Service of the Corps for this period.

1860 to 1889

The award of Battle Honours to the loyal Regiments and Corps of the Indian Army for restoring order in Her Majesty's Indian dominions were notified in the Gazette of India of 13 January 1864. Notification No 4 of 1864 of the Military Department stated that the words "Delhi", "Lucknow" and "Central India" respectively should be borne on the Standards, Colours or appointments of certain Corps. The Bengal Sappers and Miners were awarded the battle honours "Delhi", "Relief of Lucknow" and "Capture of Lucknow" for their services during the mutiny.

In the meanwhile, the pre-mutiny battle honours of the Corps and those of the 1st to 4th and 7th to 10th Companies of the Bengal Sappers and Miners had disappeared from the Bengal Army Lists published after 24 January 1859. The ten battle honours which disappeared were:-

- Bharatpur 1826
- Ghazni 1839
- Afghanistan 1839
- Jellalabad 1842
- Candahar 1842
- Ghazni 1842
- Maharajpur 1843
- Punniar 1843
- Sobraon 1846
- Chillianwalla 1849

The honours that remained were of the 5th and 6th Companies which, as already mentioned, were at Attock and Peshawar respectively during the mutiny. This omission was not noticed until 1889 when some effort was made to have the honours restored, but there is no further reference on record. From the year 1887 the honours for the Corps and Companies were no longer shown separately in the Army Lists, as the system showing them against the Companies was discontinued. All honours were henceforth shown as belonging to the Corps as a whole.

1890-1905

In 1904 a petition was addressed by the Commandant of the First Sappers and Miners (as the Bengal Sappers and Miners were then known) to His Majesty the King-Emperor for the restoration of nine battle honours which were granted to the Companies of the Corps prior to 1857.¹

He took the plea that the battle honours of the Corps and of certain Companies (except the 5th and 6th Companies) were forfeited on account of a portion of the Corps having joined the mutineers, in 1857, while the 5th Company at Attock and the 6th Company at Peshawar remained loyal. He, however, submitted that the men that had remained loyal (not including those of the 5th

1906-1918

The status of the case remained unchanged up to September 1906 when the Commandant of the 1st Prince of Wales' Own Sappers and Miners returned to the attack in a long printed letter, with some useful historical appendices. He enclosed the extract of a private letter from General Sir F R Maunsell, KCB, R.E., Colonel of the 1st PWO Sappers and Miners, who was the Commandant of the Corps during the mutiny, which stated that there had been no disbandment or deprivation of honours, but that things just lapsed of themselves. He further stated that everything was left in his hands and he put together such Companies as existing circumstances and recruiting at Delhi etc. allowed.

In this letter, the Commandant stated that the earlier belief (1904) about the battle honours having been forfeited on account of the mutiny in 1857 was incorrect, and that nothing of the sort had happened. He quoted his conversations in England with General Maunsell, during which the General had told him that the battle honours must have been omitted in the

¹ Though ten honours were missing, the restoration of only nine was asked for. This was an oversight as "Ghazni" had been awarded twice, once in 1839 and again in 1842. Each was a separate battle honour and had appeared as such in the Bengal Army List up to 1859.

and 6th Companies) had belonged to the remaining Companies and had served faithfully in suppressing the mutiny. He quoted an extract from official reports in support of his petition for restoration of these honours. He also said that the services of those who had remained loyal during the mutiny were considered of sufficient merit to deserve the distinction of the honours "Delhi" and "Lucknow", which were then borne by the Corps as a whole.

After some correspondence on the issue the Commander-in-Chief, India, recommended to the Government of India, in June 1905, that the 1st Sappers and Miners be permitted to bear the distinctions "Bharatpur" and "Sobraon", which were Corps honours prior to the mutiny. As regards the other honours, it was stated by the Adjutant General in India that they were correctly forfeited when the Companies by which they were earned mutinied in 1857, and that their restoration could only be admissible if it were decided to completely ignore the mutiny, which was then not considered expedient. The Adjutant General went on to state that mutiny, coupled with murder, was the greatest crime a soldier could commit, and that the gallant conduct of the Sappers that remained loyal could not palliate the crime committed by the Sappers and Miners as a Corps, when they shot their Commandant on parade.

Subsequently the two Corps honours "Bharatpur" and "Sobraon" were restored by His Majesty the King to the 1st Sappers and Miners in November 1905.

printing, which omission must have been overlooked at Regimental Headquarters, as it was not then customary for Regiments to send quarterly corrections to the Bengal Army List. The Commandant of the 1st PWO Sappers and Miners then contended that since the honours had been awarded by a Governor General, they could only be forfeited by command of that Governor General, or his successor, or by command of some authority higher than him. He then proceeded to ask for the restoration of six battle honours, leaving out two, the authority for whose award he was then unable to trace.

The second petition was, however, rejected in February 1907, when the Commander-in-Chief, India, was unable to see any reason for a reversal of the previous decision in regard to the restoration of honorary distinctions to the 1st PWO Sappers and Miners.

The next effort came in May 1907, when the Commandant forwarded certain lists by Companies, which were not previously known to exist, of the men enlisted before May 1857 who were still serving with the Bengal Sappers and Miners at Delhi during the siege. He cited these lists as clear proof that not only did a portion of each Company remain loyal during the uprising at Meerut, but that a number of these men received special promotion and awards for rendering valuable service to the State in the suppression of the mutiny, and in the operations before Delhi and Lucknow. He emphasised that none of the Companies was disbanded, but were brought up to strength as recruitment progressed at Roorkee. He again requested that the seven battle honours listed in his letter be restored under the same conditions by which the Corps honours "Bharatpur" and "Sobraon" were earlier restored.

This petition was also rejected in September 1908 when, after a very full consideration, the Commander-in-Chief, India, was unable to see any reason for a reversal of the decisions given earlier in June 1905 and February 1907.

At this point of time, i.e., in 1909, claims from various Corps and Regiments for the grant of ancient battle honours, for campaigns and battles fought during the early part of the nineteenth century, became so numerous that, in 1909, the Adjutant General's Division ordered a complete review of all cases. All Corps and Regiments were asked to send a statement showing complete details of the battles/campaigns for which the honours were being claimed. The Bengal Sappers asked for the restoration of six of the missing battle honours, in addition to claims for the award of certain others which do not form the subject of this study. It appears that no reply was received to this claim till the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The matter was then lost sight of.

1919-1928

The case was only reopened in November 1928 when the Commandant of King George's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners wrote to the Engineer-in-Chief at Army Headquarters regarding the restoration of the missing battle honours to the Regiment. He had divided the battle honours into three categories, of which the second category are the subject of this study, and had requested advice on the steps to be taken to reopen the case.

The matter was disposed of, in February 1929, by a letter from the Adjutant General's Branch. This advised that in view of the time which had elapsed, and the policy adopted in such cases, it had been generally decided that claims of units of the Indian Army to ancient battle honours should not be further pursued. Although no ban was placed on reopening the

case, the letter clearly stated that in view of the ruling referred to, it would not receive favourable consideration.

1929-1990

No further correspondence on the matter is available on files up to June 1981, when the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Command, wrote to the Colonel Commandant of the Bengal Sappers to initiate a case for the restoration of the lost battle honours. The ball was again set rolling, with a statement of case for restoration sent to the Adjutant General's Branch in January 1983, after carrying out some research and consultation with the National Archives of India and the Historical Section, Ministry of Defence. The first argument put forward in this case was that no official reason was ever ascribed for the sudden disappearance of the honours from the Bengal Army Lists after January 1859, but was attributed to the part played by a portion of the Bengal Sappers in the events of 1857. The second argument stated that, even if the cause for their omission had been this, though never corroborated by documentary proof, it had now become inoperative after the country's independence. The Adjutant General's Branch advised that further research would need to be carried out at the National Archives of India to establish the reason for the omission of the battle honours from the Bengal Army Lists. This research was carried out, and a study on battle and theatre honours was forwarded to the Adjutant General's Branch in November 1985. This study covered various categories of battle honours, including certain other claims. In the category relevant to the present case were listed 14 battle honours awarded prior to 1857. Out of these, seven were listed as missing, but the restoration of only four was requested, as the remaining three were considered repugnant to Indian national sentiments, as per Indian Army Order No 405/66.

After prolonged discussions with the Adjutant General's Branch it was ruled, in 1986, that further documentary evidence would be required to prove conclusively that no disbandment of units or deprivation of battle honours had taken place after the mutiny, as far as the Bengal Sappers were concerned. Accordingly, a thorough search of the relevant documents of that period was carried out by the author at the National Archives of India. Since the battle honours had disappeared after January 1859, it was inferred that this could only have been on account of an order or notification issued in the last quarter of 1858 or thereafter.

The search did not reveal an order to the effect that any forfeiture or deprivation of battle honours of the Bengal Sappers had ever taken place after the events of 1857-58. The search did, however, reveal a hitherto unknown document which provided conclusive proof that there was no disbandment of any Company of the Bengal Sappers, nor was any dishonour heaped upon the Regiment for their part in the mutiny. This document was the Gazette Notification No 1277 of 1859, July to September quarter, in which the Governor General in Council had passed his orders on the reorganisation of the Bengal Army in the aftermath of the mutiny. This notification listed the Regiments and Corps which had remained totally or partially loyal, and had retained their arms. The Viceroy and Governor General in Council, in enumerating these faithful Regiments, had desired to award them all the praise which their excellent conduct had earned, and noticed briefly the services of those which had most distinguished themselves. The services of the Bengal Sappers and Miners were noted in paragraph five of the notification.

Paragraph 60 of the notification listed the Corps which were to be disbanded and would cease to exist. This list did not name any Company of the Bengal Sappers and Miners.

With the discovery of this gazette notification in 1986 the controversy was cleared, and the Bengal Sappers could rightly claim the eight missing battle honours as their own. The rationale behind this was simple. In each Company that had mutinied, a certain number remained loyal and were later rewarded by the grant of the principal mutiny battle honours. The missing battle honours belonged to both categories, those that had mutinied and those that had remained loyal. It was inconceivable that the loyal men were first deprived of their old honours, and then awarded new ones for actions during the same campaign. They could either have earned the opprobrium or the salutation of the Government, but not both at the same time. The battle honours probably disappeared due to a printing error, which was not then noticed as India was in turmoil, and such matters were farthest from the minds of persons responsible for pointing out the error. The error persisted and, since the matter was connected to the sensitive subject of the mutiny, no one in power was prepared to render justice to the Bengal Sappers. A lot went by words and expressions, and once the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, got wind of expressions like deprivation and disbandment, the game was lost. No one bothered to check the published records of the period to verify whether any such thing had actually happened. Wrong assumptions were made, and persisted for 130 years. The discovery of the Gazette Notification of 1859 cleared the obstacles in claiming the lost battle honours.

In 1987, the Bengal Sappers decided to emblazon some of the missing honours on the Regimental Colours which were to be presented by the President of India. The presentation took place at Roorkee, on 13 January 1989, in a grand ceremony which was also attended by the UK members of the King George V's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners Officers' Association. By reclaiming the honours, the sons effaced the stigma and cast off the ignominy heaped upon the fathers more than a hundred years ago, when their richly deserved honours were not allowed to be borne by them by the uncomprehending military hierarchy of the day.

Notes:

Battle Honours now considered Repugnant may not be emblazoned on Regimental Colours, but there is no objection to their inclusion in the Army Staff Lists (ASL), against the Regiments who may have earned them. The Army Staff List of 1970-72 (since discontinued) includes Honours from this category below the names of certain Regiments which were raised in the early 19th century and which had earned the honours in the process of the annexation of Indian Kingdoms and Princely States into the British Indian Empire. The Bengal Engineer Group hold their share of these Honours and six of the nine marked **(R)** at pages 140-141 are considered "presently held by the Group" by virtue of their appearance in the above referred ASL. They were not emblazoned on the Regimental Colours.

The Colour (below) presented by His Excellency Mr R. Venkataraman, then President of India, is embroidered on dark blue silk, the colour of the facings of the Corps of Engineers uniform. In the centre on a scarlet background the Corps of Engineers badge, with motto '*Sarvatra*' (Ubique) inscribed on a quoit below a fort. This fort is the 'Purana Qila' at Delhi, seat of the Mughal Kings before Shah Jahan. The badge is surrounded by a single wreath composed of Ashoka leaves and lotus flowers. Below the wreath on a scroll appears the name of the regiment, 'Bengal Engineer Group'. On the right of the badge are ten scrolls carrying a total of thirteen battle honours (Hindi on one side, English on the reverse), though

there are mistakes in the Honour scrolls suggesting only ten are recorded. As listed they are "Ghazni 1839-42", "Tirah 1897-98", "China 1900", "Neuve Chapelle 1914", "Festubert 1914-15", "Kut al Amara 1915-17", "Megiddo 1915", "Tigris 1916", "Cassino II 1944", and "Meiktila 1945". "Ghazni 1839-42" should read "Ghazni 1839, '42"; "Festubert 1914-15" should read "Festubert 1914, '15"; and Kut al Amara 1915-17" should read "Kut al Amara 1915, '17". Since these honours were awarded twice we were able to emblazon thirteen pre-Independence Honours in place of the stipulated ten. The Colour is mounted on a pike surmounted by the State emblem.



Bibliography

1. The "Restoration of Honours" files at the Bengal Sappers Museum & Archives, Roorkee.
2. The Bengal Army Lists for 1859 and 1887
3. The History and Digest of Service of the Bengal Sappers and Miners, 1857-59
4. The Gazette of India, January 13, 1864
5. Army Order No 405/66
6. The Calcutta Gazette for the quarter July to September, 1859.
7. The Calcutta Gazette from 2 October to 29 December 1858.
8. The Calcutta Gazette from 1 January to 31 December 1859.
9. GGOs for the quarter October to December 1858.
10. GGOs of 1859
11. The Annual Army Staff List, 1970-72.
12. Letter No 2415/S&M dated 26 April 1904 from the Commandant, First Sappers and Miners, addressed to the Chief Staff Officer, in which he petitioned for the restoration of nine battle honours.
13. Extracts from GGO No 1383 of 5 November 1857.
14. Letter No 1391A dated 9 June 1905 from the Adjutant General in India to the Lieutenant General Commanding Eastern District, which informed him that the Commander-in-Chief had recommended to the Government of India that the 1st Sappers and Miners be permitted

to bear the Corps distinctions "Bhurtapore" and "Sobraon", and explained the reasons for not recommending the restoration of the Company honours.

15. The Garhwal Brigade office letter No 12269-R dated 16 December 1905, which informed the 1st Sappers and Miners of the restoration of the battle honours "Bhurtapore" and "Sobraon" by H.I.M. the King, as per a telegram from the Secretary of State for India, dated 23 November 1905.

16. Letter dated 1 September 1906 from Lt Col A E Sandbach, Commandant 1st PWO Sappers and Miners, to the Deputy Assistant Adjutant Garhwal Brigade, in which he requested that the Commander-in-Chief, India, reconsider his decision for the restoration of Company honours in view of certain additional information enclosed in favour of this reconsideration.

17. A private letter dated 4 August 1905 from General Sir F M Maunsell to Colonel A E Sandbach, in which the former stated that no disbandment or deprivation of honours ever took place in 1857.

18. Letter No 462-E dated 1 February 1907 from the Adjutant General in India to the General Officer Commanding, 7th (Meerut) Division, in which he informed him that the Commander-in-Chief was unable to see any reason for a reversal of the previous decision in regard of the restoration of certain honorary distinctions to the 1st Sappers and Miners.

19. Letter No 1194 dated 20 May 1907 from Colonel A E Sandbach, Commandant 1st PWO Sappers and Miners, to the Assistant Adjutant General, 7th (Meerut) Division, in which he enclosed certain lists by Companies which showed that some men from each Company had remained loyal and had continued to serve at Delhi and Lucknow, and requested the restoration of seven Company battle honours under the same conditions by which the Corps honours were earlier restored.

20. Letter No 1908/Honours and Rewards/30 dated 7 September 1908 from Army Headquarters, India, Adjutant General's Division, addressed to the General Officer Commanding, 7th (Meerut) Division, in which he stated that, after a very full consideration, the Commander-in-Chief was unable to see any reason for the reversal of a previous decision given in regard to the restoration of certain honorary distinctions to the 1st Sappers and Miners.

21. Letter No 1335/S&M dated 8 July 1909 from Colonel G M Heath, Commandant First PWO Sappers and Miners, in which he re-submitted the old claims for six battle honours, in response to a general directive from the Adjutant General's Division, with a plea that the honours be restored as a portion of each Company had remained loyal, and as there was a precedent in the case of 32nd Native Infantry, which retained its honours though a part of it had mutinied.

22. Letter No 013098 dated 3 November 1928, from the Commandant KGO Bengal Sappers and Miners addressed to the Engineer-in-Chief, Army Headquarters, Delhi, in which he made an attempt to reopen the case, giving details of the previous correspondence, and asked for advice on steps to be taken for restoration of the missing battle honours.

23. Letter No B 2749/1 (AG 9) dated 5 February 1929 from the Adjutant General in India to the Commandant KGO Bengal Sappers and Miners, in which he stated that in view of the time which had elapsed, and the policy adopted in similar cases by the Army Council, it had been decided that no useful purpose would be served by pursuing the claims of Indian Army units to ancient battle honours.

24. Letter No 1536/SKS/AC/1 dated 4 June 1981 from Lieutenant General S K Sinha, General Officer Commanding, Western Command, to Lieutenant General T B Nanda, Colonel Commandant Bengal Engineer Group, in which he expressed that out of the battle honours withdrawn by the British after 1857, Ghazni and Jalalabad should be restored as they

had been won during the Afghan War, and advised him to prepare a statement of case for the restoration of these battle honours.

25. Statement of case sent by the Bengal Engineer Group to the Adjutant General's Branch in January 1983 in which the restoration of six battle honours was requested on the grounds that the cause for their earlier withdrawal was no longer applicable since the government of the country had passed into Indian hands.

26. Letter No A/21429/AG/CW 2 dated 11 April 1983 from the Adjutant General's Branch addressed to the Commandant Bengal Engineer Group in which it was stated that the reason for the omission of the missing battle honours from the Bengal Army List be ascertained in consultation with the National Archives of India, and a fresh case submitted.

27. An extract from the case study sent by the Bengal Engineer Group to the Adjutant General's Branch in 1985 in which the restoration of four battle honours was requested, three others being left out as they were considered repugnant to our national sentiments in accordance with Army Order 405/66.

28. Calcutta Gazette Notification No 1277 dated 10 September 1859 in which the Government of India noted the services of those Corps which had remained loyal in the uprising of 1857, and notified the units which were to be disbanded after the reorganisation of the Indian Army, in the aftermath of the mutiny.



2nd PUNJAB CAVALRY - GROUP PHOTO 1859

Cliff Parrett

In the promotional campaign supporting its SOLDIERS OF THE RAJ exhibition (circulated with the last edition of DURBAR), the NAM has featured a painting described as "*Native Officers, 2nd Regiment of Cavalry, Punjab Frontier Force c.1880. Oil on canvas by Gordon Hayward*". Somewhat surprisingly, this description is inaccurate in two fundamental respects. Firstly, the dating is inaccurate by more than twenty years; secondly, non-commissioned officers are featured as well as officers.

The inspiration for Hayward's attractive painting can be found in the "*History of the Second Panjab Cavalry from 1849 to 1886*", published by Kegan Paul Trench in 1888. This unit history contains a magnificent series of individual portraits and group photos of British officers, Indian officers and Indian other ranks. Amongst them is a group photo, taken in 1859, of Indian officers and Daffadars who were awarded the Indian Order of Merit for gallantry in action during the Indian Mutiny.

The artist's work is essentially a coloured reproduction of this earlier photograph in most of its detail - with careful attention to the portraits of each individual portrayed. Whilst the NAM's dating is a long way off the mark, there were no significant uniform changes in the intervening period, and colouring of the uniform detail seems to be correct. In a series described as Indian Costumes, published by Ackermann in 1856, there is a fine print featuring 2nd Punjab Cavalry uniforms. The distinctive red alkalak, with gold lace for officers, dark blue turban, and black Napoleon boots as worn by all Indian ranks are well illustrated.

The sole difference of significance between the painting and the photograph is that the artist has superimposed Indian Mutiny medals alongside of IOM stars. In fact the campaign

medals were not distributed until 1863, some four years after the original photo was taken. *"The medals for the Mutiny campaign, having been received, were distributed to the men of the Regiment, who earned them, at a parade held for the purpose on 14th March"* (Permanent Order Book 1863; 2nd Punjab Cavalry; NAM Archives 7610-42). Various clasps were issued to the 2nd Punjab Cavalry, including the combination DELHI-RELIEF OF LUCKNOW- LUCKNOW awarded to the single squadron which went to Delhi with Nicholson's column from the Punjab and later rode with Greathead to the Relief of Lucknow.

Some years ago in Delhi I came across a Mutiny medal lacking its suspension. But it was in otherwise very fine, undamaged condition and named to *Duffr Jumeeyut Sing, 2nd Punjaub Cavalry* in typical contemporary engraved script. It was clear, from the evidence of heavy pitting caused by the points of a star, that this Mutiny medal had been worn alongside an IOM. A visit to the USII library, at that time located within the Army GHQ compound in New Delhi, which keeps just about every Indian Army and Presidential Army list ever published on its shelves, revealed a most exciting fact. I had found the Mutiny medal, originally issued with three clasps, to Daffadar (later Ressaldar) Jumeeyut Singh who was awarded the 1st Class Indian Order of Merit for several acts of outstanding bravery during the Mutiny campaign.

Jumeeyut was a man of exceptional courage. He was known personally to several of the Indian Army's greatest heroes. Dighton Probyn (whose life he had saved earlier in the Mutiny), describing his Mutiny service:

"As brave as a lion, a good horseman and spearman, he has killed about a company of the enemy in this campaign" (typescript draft of 2nd Punjaub Cavalry history - NAM Archives 6910-11-2a)

He was promoted directly to the 2nd Class of the IOM for conspicuous gallantry in a single combat. He was subsequently recommended for promotion to the 1st Class for recovering Captain Sandford's body during the Capture of Lucknow in March 1858. In a later and apparently unrewarded endeavour, he was one of three men who saved Sam Browne's life at Seerpoorah on 31 August 1858 during the action in which this famous irregular cavalry leader lost his arm and won the Victoria Cross.

Jumeeyut Singh was commissioned Jemadar in April 1859, and continued to serve in the 2nd Cavalry until 1878. With little opportunity for further promotion due to an excess of officers of his own class, he was transferred to the 5th Punjab Cavalry as Ressaïdar. He went on to fight with his new regiment in the 2nd Afghanistan War and was wounded at Kabul in December 1879.

This fine old soldier died in service on 4 November 1883, only one of two men still serving in the Bengal Army at that time who had won the 1st Class IOM. Unfortunately he was not admitted to the Order of British India due to the system of allocation applied to all admittances. Following transfer to the 5th Punjab Cavalry, his path was blocked by two more senior Indian officers, both members of the OBI, who outlived him.



DUFADAR BISHAN SINGH. JEMADAR JAMYAT SINGH.
 3rd Class Order of Merit. 1st Class Order of Merit.

RESAIDAR HAKDAD KHAN. JEMADAR JIWAN SINGH.
 3rd Class Order of Merit. 3rd Class Order of Merit.

RESAIDAR BISHAN SINGH.
 "Sirdar Bahadur."
 1st Class Order of British India.
 2nd " " of Merit.

JEMADAR SHER SINGH.
 2nd Class Order of British India.
 2nd " " of Merit.

DUFADAR SARMUKH SINGH.
 3rd Class Order of Merit.

DUFADAR PANJAB SINGH.
 3rd Class Order of Merit.

1859.

GWALIOR STAR 1858

Douglas Hill

Historian, 14th/20th King's Hussars Regimental Museum

I have been endeavouring to obtain some information on the Gwalior Star which was awarded by Scindia for the capture of the Fort on 20 June 1858.

On 29 May, Sir Hugh Rose despatched a "pursuing column" against a very large body of rebels which had retreated across the River Jumna and taken the road to Gwalior. Two squadrons of the 14th Light Dragoons followed from Calpee as reinforcements. Brigadier Stewart set off on 1 June with the 1st Brigade, which included a wing of the 86th Regiment (2nd Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles) and a further two troops of the 14th Light Dragoons. General Rose followed with a part of the 2nd Brigade on 1 June, in which two more troops of the Fourteenth were included. Thus the whole of the 14th Light Dragoons were now committed to this campaign with the force known as the Central India Field Force.

With forced marches in great heat, mostly carried out during the late evening and throughout the hours of darkness, the troops under General Rose met up with the rebels at Morar cantonment which they captured after engaging the enemy in very severe fighting.

The 71st Highland Light Infantry ousted a considerable number of the enemy from a dried nullah at the rear of Morar, losing an officer and several men. The Fourteenth, led by Captain P S Thompson, made a very successful charge against these fugitives in the plain ground and cut up a large number of the rebels as they fled from the nullah, chased by the Scots.

On 17 June Brigadier Smith's column joined the C.I.F. Force around Gwalior after being attacked all day by strong bodies of rebel infantry. Sir Hugh had sent off reinforcements of the 25th Bombay Native Infantry, 4 artillery guns, and 3 troops of the 14th Light Dragoons to assist Smith. During this action a squadron of the 8th Hussars, led by Colonel Hicks and Captain Heenage, charged the rebels and the Ranee of Jhansi met her death at the hands of a Trooper of the Eighth.

The force, under General Rose, camped that night on the Morar River where they were joined by Scindia, who arrived from Agra to witness the result of that day's fighting, which was destined to restore to him his lost city and fort of Gwalior.

The enemy guns had been pounding Rose's troops from a ridge at the other side of a canal which lay between them and the city of Gwalior. The 86th and 95th (2nd Battalion, Derbyshire) British regiments, with the 10th and 25th Bombay regiments, crossed the canal and attacked the enemy guns, which were quickly captured, and the ridge was taken.

Two Troops of the Fourteenth escorted a Light Field Battery to the ridge and, with the captured guns being fired by the 86th and 95th, the day was won and Gwalior lay at the feet of the British. To their right lay the Phool Bagh and the old city surmounted by the fort, and to the left lay the Lushkar with the Maharaja's palace.

Sir Hugh at once ordered a general advance. The 1st Bombay Lancers went round the rear of the heights and made an attack on Lushkar. The 3rd Bombay Troops of the Horse Artillery, with a squadron of the 14th Light Dragoons, protected the flank of the attack and turned the enemy's left. The 86th advanced on the left and the 95th on the right. The cavalry charged the rebels and with the infantry coming up at the double, completed the capture of the Lushkar.

Brigadier Smith had taken the Phool Bagh, killing large numbers of the rebels, and the enemy retreated towards the British Residency, on the road to Agra. These rebels included a number of cavalry, so the Brigadier launched his cavalry and guns in pursuit and the enemy were overtaken. The fighting carried on long after dark, the cavalry inflicting great loss and capturing the guns. Brigadier Smith spoke very highly of the conduct and steadiness of the 14th Light Dragoons and Bombay Horse Artillery, adding greatly to the crown of laurels which they had well deserved.

The fort still remained unconquered and it was the great gallantry of Lieutenant Rose, assisted by Lieutenant Waller with a party of men, who forced the gate, passed through several other gates and charged a gun at the archway of the fortress. Rose closed with the rebel garrison in hand-to-hand fighting, during the course of which he fell mortally wounded. The fort was now gained due to the gallant conduct of Rose and his men. He had already been twice specially mentioned by Sir Hugh Rose. The total losses of the British arms were just short of 100 men killed and wounded.

"A squadron of the 8th Hussars and a squadron of the 14th Light Dragoons, 'honourable representatives of my force', says Sir Hugh Rose, 'escorted His Highness the Prince of Gwalior to his palace in the Lushkar.' This ceremony was attended by the Major General and his Staff, who received Scindia with every possible mark of respect.....Scindia was everywhere greeted with enthusiasm by the populace, and after eighteen days' occupation by the rebels the city, fort, cantonments and states of Gwalior were restored to their ruling prince. Subsequently, as a mark of his appreciation of the great services rendered to him, Scindia presented to the officers and men of the Central India Field Force the Gwalior Star, an elegant design in frosted silver, bearing on it a snake of gold, the crest of the Prince of Gwalior and the figures "1858", worn with an orange (saffron) ribbon; and the royal authority was afterwards granted for its issue to, and acceptance by, the troops engaged." ¹

An extract from the despatch of Sir Hugh Rose, dated 22 June 1858, Gwalior, giving full particulars of the recapture of Gwalior and Morar, to Major General Sir William Mansfield, KCB, Chief of Staff to the Army in India, states:

"I venture to recommend all the troops engaged in the Gwalior operations, the Central India Field Force and Brigadier Smith's brigade of the Rajputana Field Force, to his Lordship's most favourable consideration. I marched on the 6th June from Calpee for Gwalior and on the 19th of the same month, the Gwalior States were restored to the Prince.
Hugh Rose, Major General"

Note:

1. Colonel H B Hamilton, "*Historical Record of the 14th (King's) Hussars, 1715-1900*", pp. 317-8

Editor's Note:

This is a most intriguing reference to an early State issued medal. It is obvious from the reference that we are not referring to the British issued stars for the Gwalior campaign of 1843, the Punniar Star and the Maharajpoo Star. I have come across no record of this Star in the researches for my recently published book, "*Indian Princely Medals*". In that book, however, I referred to an unidentified medal, possibly Scindia Gold Medal, and included a tentative description of an eight pointed star, although the top-most point was replaced by a cobra head, the body of the snake forming the central part of the medal (see illustration). This version definitely has the bust of Madho Rao Scindia (1886-1925) on the obverse but it would be feasible for him to have copied it from an earlier award created by his father, Jayaji Rao, in 1858. The ribbon for this star is variously shown on paintings I have seen as golden yellow with central red stripe and outer edges of green or blue (the most likely version), dark blue with central red stripe, pale blue with central red stripe and outer edges of dark blue, or pale green with central golden yellow stripe. The much later issued (c1907-1912) Gwalior Medal (an octagonal medal) was suspended from a plain saffron ribbon but, again, it is quite feasible that Madho Rao Scindia copied this from an earlier medal awarded by his father. Douglas Hill has since told me that he has seen a reference in a footnote (no further reference) to the fact that the 1858 Star was never actually issued, and that Colonel Hamilton's mention of it in the regimental history is a mistake. But it seems from the reference that its award was intended for a wider distribution than the 8th Hussars and 14th Light Dragoons (for instance, the 86th and 95th) Has anyone with an interest in those regiments ever come across a reference to, or better still an example of, this Star?

Web site note - an example of the Madho Rao Scindia star has subsequently been traced and a photograph appears below.



Both Photos ANM

SAGA OF SARAGARHI

Since publishing Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh's article on the subject in *DURBAR*, Vol. 14, No 2, I have received further correspondence from Colonel Madhav V Vesvikar, Commanding Officer, 4th Battalion The Sikh Regiment, who kindly forwarded a photograph of the cairn at Saragarhi and detail of the inscription:

ON
THIS SPOT
STOOD
SARAGARHI POST

MOST GALLANTLY HELD
BY A DETACHMENT
OF THE
36TH SIKHS
ON THE
12TH SEPTEMBER 1897
UNTIL EVERY MAN
HAD PERISHED
IN ITS DEFENCE

ERECTED BY
THE GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA

There still remain some identification anomalies. As I mentioned in the Editor's note at Vol. 14, No 2, Lieutenant General M S Bhullar PVSM, VSM, Colonel of the Sikh Regiment, had forwarded a copy of that part of Hypher's "*Deeds of Valour*" which covers the episode and I highlighted variations in the names and/or regimental numbers between Hypher and Admiral Satyindra's article. Colonel Vesvikar has now forwarded an extract from the unit's "*Digest of Service*". According to this, 332 Naik Lal Singh is shown as 322, and 182 Sep Sahib Singh is shown as 782. I suspect these are typographical errors in the "*Digest of Service*". I am grateful to the officers of The Sikh Regiment for the interest they have shown.



"FROM RECRUIT TO STAFF SERGEANT" by N.W. Bancroft

John Tamplin

Members may know of this readable work by this long serving soldier of the Bengal Artillery. It was first published in Calcutta in 1885, the 2nd Edition in Simla in 1900, and the 3rd Edition in 1979 by Ian Henry Publications of Hornchurch, Essex. There is a lengthy review in the *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* of Spring 1980 by Major P E Abbott.

The purpose of this note is to report that following his retirement to Simla, Nathaniel Bancroft died there on 25 April 1908, aged 84, and was buried at Sabathu.

On a recent visit to India in 1997, including Simla and Sabathu, the Church Register of Burials at the latter place was viewed, and quite by chance the name of 'Nathaniel Bancroft, Retired Sergeant Major, Bengal and Royal Horse Artillery' was seen. David Mahoney (of this Society) took a photograph of the page and I have a print of it beside me now. I did not look for his grave, but it is good to be able to record the date of his death as it is not noted in his book.

In addition to his four campaign medals of the Sutlej, Punjab, IGS and Mutiny, he was awarded the Royal Victorian Medal in Silver in January 1900 as 'an old Artillery Pensioner at Simla'.

The priest in charge was the Revd. Sydney Septimus Scott, and whilst his name appears in signature on the page, he was not at that time the chaplain who conducted the burial.

THE EXPERT COMMITTEE ON THE DEFENCE OF INDIA - 1938-39

Mike Cunningham

In the 1930s the principal role of the Army in India (British and Indian) was support to the Civil Power. With the exception of two infantry battalions (in Malaya and Hong Kong) it was, in Indian terms, home-based. Organisation, weapons and tactics were rooted firmly in the past. It was perfectly capable of dealing with internal security, including the demanding North West Frontier. However, there was a need to review the commitments of the Army, and determine the changes that might be needed to fulfil them.

The first step was to appoint a committee (a very British preliminary - The Modernisation Committee - under the chairmanship of the DCGS, Maj Gen C J E Auchinleck. The committee's report was hard-hitting. It concluded that the Army had fallen behind in terms of organisation, tactics and equipment, and was unfit to take the field against a modern enemy. It had declined to a state below that of Egypt, Iraq or Afghanistan, the latter being important as a potential opponent.

The roles of the Army were identified as:

- Frontier defence
- Coastal defence
- Internal Security
- Provision of a general reserve
- Operations beyond India's boundaries

The committee recommended that coastal defence might become an RAF responsibility. Frontier defence would remain primarily an Army matter, supported by the RAF and the fledgling Indian Air Force (IAF).

The proposals for modernisation were the provision of:

- 6 tank regiments (2 British, 4 Indian)
- 7 motor regiments (cavalry capable of fighting on foot and transported by mechanical transport (MT))
- Motorised artillery; 8 field regiments (2 Indian), an anti-tank regiment, 3 AA batteries (all British) and 5 mountain regiments (all Indian)
- 34 British and 75 Indian infantry battalions, capable of mechanised warfare

All these forces were for the defence of India. To fulfil the general reserve and expeditionary roles, a division-sized force should be established:

- British: 2 horsed cavalry regiments, 2 field regiments and 5 infantry battalions
- India: 5 infantry battalions

This left:

- British: 1 horsed cavalry regiment, 3 horse artillery batteries, 5 field batteries, 4 infantry battalions and 5 companies RTC, which were to be returned to the UK
- India: 3 horsed cavalry regiments and 16 infantry battalions to be disbanded

The report was accepted by the C-in-C. However, a further committee - The Expert Committee on the Defence of India - had been established. Known as the Chatfield Committee, after its chairman, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, it was charged with a tri-service review. Auchinleck was a member. The committee accepted most of the Modernisation Committee's report. It noted that the defence of India depended on the RN, and that Service might not be capable of providing it. This was deemed particularly important because it was a key factor in retaining defence as a reserved power of the Sirkar.

The main findings of Chatfield were kept secret. It recommended that:

- "Indianisation" units would be exempt from disbandment
- 10% of the Indian Army should be available for external defence between Singapore and Suez
- the UK subsidy for the Indian Army should be increased from £1.5 million (about £55 million in 1997 terms) to £2 million (£74 million in 1997)
- the UK should contribute £34 million (about £1,225 million - 1997) for mechanisation (75% as a gift and 25% as an interest-free loan)

Both committees recognised the need to improve the Indian Army, and re-inforced the concept that it was maintained primarily for Indian purposes and not to supplement the British Army. However, it was all overtaken by events in September 1939, by which time 4 Indian Division was already assembling in the Middle East to fight the *Dushman*.

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Ashok Nath writes:

I read with much interest Colonel Tony Mains' article on the partition of the Indian Army (Vol. 14, No 3, pp. 108-111). I think he has confused Ranghars with Kaim Khanis. Both groups are Rajputs ethnically and embraced Islam at different periods of time. Geographically the Ranghars really did not live in the Rajasthan area but in the area around Delhi, or Haryana as it is now called. Hindustani Muslims traditionally refers to those Muslims living in the "Doab", i.e., the land between the Ganga and Jamuna rivers, where the majority of them settled in the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh.

The Kaim Khanis, on the other hand, come strictly from Rajputana, now Rajasthan, around Jaipur and even Jodhpur (chiefly Sikar and Jhunjunu districts). Kaim Khanis are a clan and all claim descent from the Rajpur king Raja Kaim Singh and his followers who embraced Islam, hence the word Kaim Khanis. They were and are expert horsemen and are recruited into 61st Cavalry.

It may interest readers to know that the "hand of God", the famous standard which was surmounted by a silver hand of great antiquity, was captured at the battle of Kooshab (Persia, 1857) by a Kaim Khani, Bargeer Ghulam Hussain Khan, of The Poona Horse. The Poona Horse adopted this famous device eventually as their regimental badge. The Poona Horse always had a Kaim Khani squadron and when partition came in 1947 they were stationed at Jhansi. At first the Kaim Khanis opted to remain with India, but as Colonel Mains correctly points out, there was a lot of pressure from all sides. The Kaim Khanis had also witnessed the killings on a train journey from Risalpur to Jhansi and this made them fear for their safety so they eventually changed their opt. They were transferred to 13th DCO Lancers and the Sikh squadron from 13th Lancers replaced them in The Poona Horse. It is an irony that the 13th Lancers and Poona Horse faced each other in the bloody tank battle at Basanthur in December 1971. It was in this very action that a posthumous PVC was awarded to 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal of The Poona Horse.

Kaim Khanis, although recruited into the Grenadiers, Rajputana Rifles and 61st Cavalry, did not get their own squadron in an Armoured Cavalry Regiment of India again until 3 December 1971.

I had the honour to serve with these magnificent cavalry soldiers, now apt tank men. Most of them were second or third generation soldiers and we got on well. In fact with A Squadron Sikhs, B Rajputs and C Kaim Khanis, we were one of the two cavalry regiments which had the same composition as that of the pre-partition Indian Cavalry Regiments.

Partition of India created more problems than it solved. How can one jubilate over 50 years of India's independence? I'd rather call it a day of remembrance where, with the greatest of callousness and irresponsibility, a land was divided against geographical, cultural and historical logic, as was the gallant Old Indian Army. This was done to appease a few political parties and personalities, whilst millions of innocent men, women and children, many of them coming from the traditional recruitment areas of the Indian Army, were slaughtered. In what is often called (but less often written) the greatest massacre of modern times - Bosnia pales into insignificance!

It was said that the partition of India was so terrible that those victims who survived would rather forget than remember it. I wish other people who have eye witness accounts could let us know before it is too late. This sad chapter of Indian history needs to be recorded as a warning to the people of India and Pakistan what politics and evil politicians, and a spineless government, can do and did. The partition of India is their memorial! To have allowed a thing like this to have happened rests primarily with those British officials/politicians in the corridors of power at that time. They had responsibility to the people of India and they failed them miserably. The other co-accused are the Muslim League headed by Jinnah, and the Congress Party, who were indirectly responsible as well.

What we face today is two halves of a former historical entity, who have fought three major wars and several undeclared battles. How many more such conflicts will be fought before one realises the foolishness of it all?

● W J Carr writes:

In my studies of regimental colours and guidons pre 1947, finding information relating to the presentation of the first and/or subsequent sets or stands of Colours, by whom, where and when, is slow and tedious. If the dates of one issue to the next are closer than expected, and are obviously not due to a change of monarch (Queen's crown for King's crown and vice versa) why should that be? What happened? Even with Kipling's servants to help, progress is very slow.

Reading the Editor's note on replacement Colours being issued in 1961 I would imagine that some (if not most) are on their second stand and getting towards a third in the beginning of the new millennium, while I am still researching the Victorian era!

Such a series of articles as proposed would be very encouraging; together with photographs in colour - invaluable.

(see the article on Bengal Engineer Group at pp. 139-158. Photographs in colour would probably be too expensive for us to handle, but I shall attempt to give guidance notes on colours used Ed.)

● E. Dennison writes:

I would be very interested in articles on Regimental Colours of the pre 1947 Indian Army.

If any member wants information concerning the Western (Chin) Levies in Burma in WWII I might be able to help them. So far as I am aware all the first wave of officers to it are dead and there were only two of us in the second input (one now in Australia and myself), while the third group only arrived after the guerrilla operations moved out of the Chin Hills. Our memories are somewhat poor now but my colleague and I might be able to help. I also have some of the books written a century ago on expeditions into the Chin Hills.

I was in the office in Falan early in 1945 when Lt Col Oats designed the badge of the 1st Chin Rifles - crossed head hunting swords (or KIN-KOT-NAM). The long hair of the Chin soldiers worn as a bun was in the front of the head for HAKA tribes, in the middle for FALAN tribes, and at the back of the head for TIDDIM tribes.

