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THE EMPLOYMENT OF ELEPHANTS AND CAMELS WITH FIELD BATTERIES IN BENGAL

Brian Stevens

A G.O.C.C. dated 12 February 1842 authorized No 3 Light Field Battery to exchange its bullocks for elephants. These were exchanged for horses in the early part of 1845. During its entire existence it was located at Dum-Dum being attached at first to the 1st Company 1st (European) Battalion and subsequently to the 3rd (European) Battalion, at first with the 3rd and later the 1st Company.

It should be remembered that at this time Field Batteries, although maintained on a permanent footing at certain stations of the Army, were attached to companies of artillery and when required, the period of attachment varying from a few months to several years.

Originally No 3 LFB had an establishment of 15 elephants each with a Mahout and Coolie. The duties of the last would appear to be similar to those of a Groom or Syce. In 1844 an additional two elephants with their Mahouts and Coolies were added to the establishment. A Bhisti or Water Carrier was allowed, as also a Moochi or leather worker to keep the harness in good repair.

The battery had a gun establishment of 6 - 5 guns and 1 howitzer, together with 6 Ammunition Wagons and a Forge Cart. I have not been able to discover how the elephants were allocated but as the guns were 9-pounders and the howitzer a 24-pounder I would have thought that one elephant could pull either. At the time it was usual to allow an extra animal for every six as a spare, which would seem to indicate that one elephant was allowed for every gun, wagon or cart with two spare animals - but how the 1844 increment was utilized I have no idea.

At the turn of the century the 40-pounder guns with the Heavy or Bail Batteries, with an establishment of 18 elephants only, required two animals per equipment.

A Train or Forge Establishment consisting of the following ten artificers: 1 Mistri Smith, 2 Filemen, 2 Firemen, 2 Hammermen, 1 Mistri Carpenter and 2 Workmen Carpenters, was allowed to every elephant or camel field battery.

In all, three Light Field Batteries of the Bengal Artillery were provided with camel draught during this period. The first was No 6, attached to the 2nd Company 6th (Native) Battalion in September 1838 - G.O.C.C. dated 8 September 1838 refers - previously, like all the existing twelve Bengal field batteries, it was bullock-drawn. Initially the Establishment consisted of 3 Sirdars and 63 Sowars with 63 camels which was increased in October the same year by 1 Sirdar, 22 Sowars and 22 camels. Still later in the same month a further 9 Sowars were added to the establishment which was now 85 camels, 4 Sirdars and 85 Sowars. In addition 3 Bhistis or Water Carriers were allowed.

No 6 LFB took part in the 1st Afghan War but, after the capture of Ghuzni in 1839, Captain Abbott obtained permission to replace the camels with horses as the former had proved unsatisfactory. The date and authority for this I have been unable to discover.

During 1840, No 1 Light Field Battery was converted to camel-draught, initially stationed at Ferozepur. In late 1842 it was ordered to Sukkor in Sind where it arrived on 29 May 1843. It remained here until about October 1844 when it was ordered to Meerut on being relieved by the Artillery and Field Battery of the Bundelkhand Legion. The Company to which it was then attached - 4th/7th (Native) Battalion - arrived on 30 May 1845. The Army List, corrected to 10 October 1845, shows it as being converted in the meantime to horse-draught.

Whilst a camel battery it was attached to the following companies: the 3rd and 1st of the 2nd (European) Battalion, and the 3rd and 4th of the 6th (Native) Battalion. In 1845 the Battalion was renumbered 7th resulting in the 4th/6th becoming the 4th/7th.

No 14 Light Field Battery was raised with camel-draught sometime before 4 July 1842, at Nasirabad in Ajmer-Merwar, then a part of British India but now in Rajasthan. It remained there until the end of 1849 when it was ordered to Multan, arriving on 12 March 1850. It was converted to horse-draught sometime between 10 July and 8 October 1852. The July Army List gives camels whilst that of October shows it as having horses.

During the time it was a camel battery it was attached to the following companies: the 4th/5th and 2nd/1st (European) Battalions, and the 3rd and 4th/6th (Native) Battalion.

Both No 1 and No 14 Batteries had an Establishment of 4 Sirdars and 65 Sowars with 65 camels. In addition a Bhisti was allowed.

British Officers attached to Camel or Elephant Field Batteries were mounted, a Captain being allowed two horses and subalterns one.

A European Non-Commissioned Officer from the attached artillery company was appointed Cattle Sergeant with an allowance of twenty Rupees a month. This Non-effective appointment was a survival from earlier times when the cattle were supplied by civilian contractors and the poorly paid drivers tended to augment their wages by selling part of the animal rations, with the result that these were half starved and consequently unable to perform the tasks required of them. The Cattle Sergeant - variously designated Bullock, Camel or Elephant Sergeant - was required to be present when the rations for the animals were drawn and to see that each received the specified amount. For some reason this appointment was not considered necessary in a horse battery.

Between 1817 and 1820 the Madras Artillery included a Camel Battery but I have not been able to identify the company to which it was attached. Between 1842 and 1844 the 2nd Company, 2nd (European) Battalion, Bombay Artillery had a Camel Battery attached to it during the Sind campaign.

There were also elephant-draught batteries or two gun brigades attached to Local Corps in Assam and Arakan which are outside the scope of the present article.

ARTILLERY RANKS

The Editor

The preceding article reminded me of correspondence with another new member, Carl-Eric Granfelt, who had enquired about an entry in “*British Battles and Medals*” referring to ‘ranks of Tindal and Khalassi (corrupted to Lascar) in the artillery’. I have hitherto interpreted Lascar as a follower employed on labouring duties (and not confined to the Artillery). Three sources provide some clues but further contributions from members would be welcome.

“*History of the Regiment of Artillery, Indian Army*” by Brig Gen Y B Gulati and Maj Gen D K Palit VrC, published by Palit & Dutt, Dehra Dun, 1971. The opening chapter of this book deals with Indian gunnery prior to 1935. After the Mutiny, of course, there were no Indian gunners except in the Mountain Batteries and the Punjab Frontier Force until, in 1935, after a break of 75 years, the Indian Army started recruiting Indians into Artillery units again (although Lascars had continued to be employed with Royal Artillery units to clean the guns.) This chapter, in referring to the artillery of the Mahrattas, mentions the trained battalions of Scindia’s army as having a contingent of artillery consisting of:

- 1 Sergeant Major (European)
- 5 European gunners
- 1 Jemadar
- 1 Havildar
- 5 Naiks
- 35 Golandez
- 5 Tindals
- 35 Klassis (obviously the Khalassi mentioned in “*Battles and Medals*”)
- 20 Bildars
- 30 Gariwans
- 4 iron smiths
- 4 carpenters.

Philip Mason’s “*A Matter of Honour - an account of the Indian Army its Officers and men*” published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1974, describes the equivalent of Private as Golandez - the Mughal word for gunner, literally ‘a bringer of roundshot’. Mason then goes on to mention that the ‘lascars’ were inferior to the Golandez but seem to have done almost everything except aim and fire the guns - and that too they did in an emergency, as at Koregaum. Lascar companies had light pioneering tools for constructing roads and gun platforms and throwing up protective earthworks before a battery. This would suggest that the Lascar was a general labourer in a support role - but since the Tindal is listed above Lascar, and there were only 5 as compared with 35 Lascars, were these rather more specialised followers - perhaps something to do with looking after ammunition or preparing the shot?

The third source is the “Central India States Gazetteer (Gwalior Gazetteer) of 1908 which carries an article on Scindia’s army under De Boigne (1784). This refers to 5 Sarangs (Bullock Sergeant), 5 Tindal (Park Sergeant), Golandez (native gunners) and Khallasis (artillerymen, native) as well as drivers and blacksmiths.

Can anyone give a better idea of the meaning of these ranks or appointments and an indication of the period in which they were used?

INDIAN TROOPS IN PEKING

Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh (retd)

We all know that China attacked India in 1962. Recorded history has it, however, that Indian troops sacked Peking in 1860 and again invaded Chinese territory in 1900. Interestingly, the soldiers were from Army Chief General V.P. Malik's regiment - The Sikh Light Infantry (the erstwhile Sikh Pioneers). The official history of the Sikh Pioneers makes for fascinating reading. In three quarters of a century they were, as Lieutenant General George MacMunn records, in almost every Campaign of the Empire from the China Wall to Flanders Flats in the First World War. This includes Waziristan, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Central Africa, Sikkim, Bhutan, Gilgit, Chitral, Tibet, Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, Iraq, Aden, Sinai and Palestine. Their motto: AUT VIAM INVENIAM AUT FACIAM "I shall find a way or make one".

With me are my grandfather Subedar Sant Singh's (23 Sikh Pioneer Regiment) medals of China 1860 (clasps Peking and Taku Forts), Abyssinia 1868, Afghanistan (1878-79-80) and the 1880 Kabul to Kandahar Star. The Sikh Light Infantry Regimental Centre would have many such records and medals. In October 1997, during my visit to London to the Royal Indian Navy Association's final meeting, I came across the same medals won by British soldiers, well preserved and some sold to the famous firm of Spinks from where I obtained some very old campaign ribbons.

To quote from General MacMunn's official history "The wars with China have always arisen from the astounding arrogance and invincible ignorance with which the Manchu (Chinese rulers) regime treated all foreigners.....and all foreign interests and just rights." Maybe the pragmatic Sardar Patel, who identified China as the main antagonist, knew his history better than the idealist Nehru, with his tethered vision of his 'Permanent Friends'.

As the Regimental History reads "On 16 Sep 1860, we recommenced our march.....a little further on were seen great bodies of cavalry and infantry (estimated by another authority at twenty thousand strong with twelve guns) drawn up behind a large nullah to our right front, displaying innumerable war banners.....a mandarin of high rank came to us with a flag of truce. He was told that the ambassadors were not with the armies and after a short time he went away." To extrapolate, maybe Defence Minister George Fernandes would know that the country's ambassadors are not with the Army, his namesake Lt Gen George MacMunn has it on authority over a century ago!

Another account of my grandfather's regiment says "they were attacked by a large body of Tartar cavalry....they (the Pioneers) advanced in a steady line carrying everything before them and taking several guns..." Be as it may, the city of Peking was formally occupied on

13 October 1860. The destruction of the Peking Summer Palace was ordered to the Sikh Pioneer Regiment. “Before long a dense column of smoke rising to the sky....roof after roof crashed and what was once the proud Palace of the Celestial Kings was now a mass of ruins”.

Skip a century and recall that although there were strategic blunders and a failure of organisational and some higher military leadership, there are many, many holdfasts to the last round last man in 1962. 4 Garhwal Rifles had No 4039009 Rifleman Jashwant Singh Rawat whose posthumous Mahar Vir Chakra citation reads “On 17 Nov 62 a battalion of Garhwal Rifles was occupying a defensive position near the Nuranang bridge in NEFA. Rawat’s company was subjected to a series of attacks by the Chinese forces...The enemy managed to bring forward a medium machine gun very close to one of our platoons and weakened its defences. Rawat volunteered to destroy the enemy MMG...crawled forward, hurled grenades killing two Chinese...seized the gun and was returning to his position when he was killed by enemy automatic fire, while still holding the enemy MMG in his hand.” The spot where he was killed is now known as Jashwant Garh. My son, who was in the Army and served in the early eighties at the Sela Nuranang Area, tells of the pride which soldiers now serving around Jashwant Garh have. The military honours its own, even if the nation cheats the soldier and the pensioner of his just dues.

General D K Palit’s book ‘*War in the High Himalaya*’ tells of Rezang La (in Chushul). IC 6400 Major Shaitan Singh PVC (posthumous) commanded a company of the Kumaon Regiment at 17,000 ft. where, under his command, his men were inspired to fight almost to the last man. As Palit drily states “months later...the party that went up to Rezang La found the Kumaoni troops frozen in their battle position still holding their weapons in their trenches. The extent of the Chinese casualties was much in evidence in the frozen wasteland around them.” A clear indicator that the Chinese are not supermen.

India does not occupy 90,000 square kilometres of Chinese territory as their officials now state. Indian troops did, however, occupy 11 square miles of Peking more than a hundred years ago. This the regiments vacated (probably much to the chagrin of Sepoy Goorditt Singh of whom it is recorded in the regimental history that he and his British officer bagged a large quantity of gold and pearls!). On the other hand, China occupies large chunks of our territory. We undoubtedly have an unfriendly, aggressive and arrogant neighbour to contend with. War is no answer and neither will a surfeit of jingoistic threats much in evidence by our political establishment solve bilateral problems. But history does have its lessons and vignettes. History, it has been said, is like a cruel stepmother, for when it strikes it stops at nothing!



THE BURMA GALLANTRY MEDAL - A QUERY

The Editor

The Burma Gallantry Medal was instituted on 10 May 1940, following the separation of Burma from India in 1937, to fill the gap thus created on account of personnel of the Armed Forces of Burma ceasing to be eligible for Indian decorations and medals. Abbott and

Tamplin, in their “*British Gallantry Awards*”¹, quote from the Royal Warrant which appeared in the *London Gazette* on 18 September 1945:

“*Secondly* - It is ordained that the Medal may be conferred by Our Governor of Burma upon Governor’s Commissioned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and other ranks of the Burma Army, the Burma Frontier Force, the Burma Military Police, the Burma Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Force and the Burma Auxiliary Air Force, for any acts of conspicuous gallantry performed in connection with their duties.”

They go on, however, to refer to the Warrant having earlier been published in the *Burma Gazette* on 13 July 1940 in which it had been stated that:

“The Burma Gallantry Medal may be awarded to Governor’s Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, Other Ranks, enrolled non-combatants and temporary personnel of the Burma Army, including the Burma Army Reserve, the Burma Frontier Force, the Burma Military Police, the Burma Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Force and the Burma Auxiliary Air Force who have distinguished themselves in peace or on active service by acts of personal bravery.”

Subsequently Governor’s Commissioned Officers were deleted from the list of those eligible, although Abbott and Tamplin note three Subadars and six Jemadars amongst the 201 awards so far traced, one of these being to Jemadar Lian Nawn, 2nd Gurkha Rifles, the only non-Burma Forces recipient listed in their summary of awards.

The medal was 36mm diameter, of silver, with the effigy of King George VI on the obverse and, on the reverse, the word BURMA at the top and, in the centre within an open laurel wreath, FOR GALLANTRY. It was suspended from a dark green ribbon 32mm wide with a 6mm central crimson stripe by an ornate scroll bar suspender.

While doing some work on the Tripura State Forces recently I had sight of the “Tripura State Administration Report 1940-43”² from which the following is taken:

“During the month of January 1943 the 1st Tripura Rifles and the Tripura Mahabir Legion (known as Tripforce), took part in the Arakan operations very successfully and captured the Japanese position at Kyauktaw in spite of comparatively heavy casualties. They received the following Immediate Awards for their gallantry:-

(it goes on to list one M.C., two I.O.M., seven I.D.S.M., twenty one Mentions in Despatches, five C-in-C’s Commendation Cards, six Certificates of Gallantry, **and eight Burma Gallantry Medals**):-

4644 Jemadar Mangal Ch. Dev
423 Nk Abdul Gafur (since discharged)
197 Nk Manibhadra
720 Nk Radhakrishna Dev
388 Nk Ramani Das
823 L/Nk Hiralal Das
554 L/Nk Nibaran Laskar
105 Nk Abdul Shamed

All eight appeared amongst the twenty one Mentioned in Despatches. Their “Mentions” also appear in the Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 36287 dated 16 December 1943 and the *Gazette of India*, 114-H dated 27 May 1944 “for Burma and the Eastern Frontier”. But until seeing the entry in the State Administration Report I had not come across any references to the Burma Gallantry Medal. I have since scoured the Gazette of India but failed to find any reference to the Burma Gallantry Medal having been awarded to any of these personnel. Indeed, given the regulations quoted above, it is difficult to see why it should have been, since Tripura was not a part of Burma, though in that regard it would be interesting to know why Jemadar Lian Nawn, 2nd Gurkha Rifles, was eligible.

Tripura (also known as Hill Tipperah) was situated in Bengal on the border with Assam and comprised a strip of fertile plain east of Bengal and a large tract of hill territory beyond. The fortunes of the ruling family fluctuated according to the relative strengths of Bengal. When the latter was weak the rule extended to the plains areas, the sixteenth century seeing its greatest period of power, but when Bengal was strong the Tripura dynasty was confined to the hill tracts. In the eighteenth century the State was taken over by Muslims but they proceeded to occupy the plains only, leaving the hill tracts alone. The Raja occupied the plains as a zamindar of the Mughals, although he still maintained his Kingdom in the hills. This situation remained unchanged when, in 1765, the British took control of the area. Thus the Maharaja was both a British Indian zamindar and a ruling prince.

Under the 1920 Indian States Forces Scheme sanction was given on, 23 April 1923, to form an infantry unit consisting of an headquarters and two rifle companies, although it was stipulated that they were only to be recruited from outside the hills of Tripura Territory managed by the Government of Bengal. For financial reasons the implementation of the scheme was delayed and it was not until 1928 that the first company was raised. By 1930 the 1st Tripura Bir Infantry had been formed comprising an headquarters and one company with a total strength of 164. In 1935-36 the 2nd Tripura Bikram Company was raised, comprising an headquarters and four platoons. In 1938 the units combined to form the 1st Tripura (Bir Bikram) Manikya Rifles. Originally categorised for State Security duties, it was employed on railway security duties at Agartala, but in December 1941 was posted to ALFSEA as Line of Communication troops. It returned to the State in May 1942 for reorganisation and then served with 15 Corps in Burma from 1943 until its final return to the State on 5 February 1946 at which time Field Marshal Auchinleck wrote to the Maharaja to express his appreciation of the work of the unit:

“Almost from the date they left the State they have been employed in actively fighting against the Japanese. They have covered many miles in Burma during these long years of war and have always earned the highest praise from the Commanders under whom they have served. They have made the name of Tripura famous.”³

The Tripura Mahabir Legion was not a part of the Indian States Forces but was a guerrilla unit raised in the State from two non-ISF units, His Highness’s Body Guard and 2nd Jangi Infantry, and placed at the disposal of the Government of India during 1942 for service with V Force, a fifth column unit formed of civilian irregulars and armed police.

If anyone has come across other references to the Burma Gallantry Medal having been awarded to Tripura personnel I would be pleased to hear.

References:

1. Abbott, P E and Tamplin, J M A. "*British Gallantry Awards*". Enfield, Middlesex: Guinness Superlatives Ltd, 1971.
2. Tripura State Administration Reports 1940-43. (OIOC V/10/2109), pp22-23
3. Tripura State Administration Reports 1943-46, p35.

A STROKE OF LUCK - THE TALE OF A RESEARCHER'S DREAM COME TRUE

Christopher Peterson

While perusing a medals list I came upon a group which caused me to stop for a moment. A Great War pair (MID) with GSM clasp Iraq to a Lt H S Howarth, IARO. Included in the description were some scant particulars including the London Gazette date for the MID (for Mesopotamia) and various promotion dates for service in the 3rd Sappers & Miners and Royal Indian Engineers spanning both wars.

Having bought them my first stop was the Indian Army List 1939, with War Services. It showed Lt Howarth as having served in Mesopotamia and Iraq but did not list his MID. His listing under Army in India Reserve of Officers was as a Captain with, under the Remarks column, 'Engrs.-B' (the B designating Bengal). His London Gazette entry for the MID was correct, listing him under 'Works - Attached RE'.

As I was calling an old medal collecting acquaintance, who lives nearby and is somewhat of an expert on Royal Engineers, about a different group to Bengal Sappers & Miners, I mentioned the List entry which designated Bengal and Lt Howarth. While he had nothing specific on either recipient he provided me with the address of the secretary of the Bengal Sappers & Miners Officers Association and encouraged me to write.

I duly posted a letter enquiring about both soldiers. What followed was quite astounding. In a short time I received a very cordial reply from Maj D D Alexander, the Hon. Secretary, informing me that on receipt of my letter he had noted there was a member of the association with the same surname. To use his own words, "I took a long shot and telephoned him." He turned out to be the nephew of Herbert Howarth. I was put in touch and we have corresponded with the best of results for both of us.

To read of Maj Herbert Howarth referred to as 'Uncle Bert' and to gaze upon photographs from both wars, one with Maj Howarth wearing his medal ribbons including MID, has breathed more life into this group than I could have imagined. For his nephew's part, he is happy to find the whereabouts of his uncle's medals and appreciates that they are preserved and well taken care of.

The results of the research are given below in a condensed version. It is interesting to note that Maj Howarth never served with the Bengal Sappers & Miners.

Major Herbert S Howarth, Royal Indian Engineers

born 21 May 1894 - Millom, Cumberland

Education:

Barrow Grammar School

Cambourne School of Mines, Cornwall

Gold Medallist, Metaliferous Mining Assay

On graduating from the School of Mines, Herbert Howarth sailed for India, finding employment in the Kolar goldfields of Mysore State. Joined the IARO and was commissioned on 5 January 1917. Upon completing his military training at Kirkee he was posted to No 24 Field Company, Bombay Sappers & Miners. After various postings including Dhanori and Poona, he was moved to Basra in Mesopotamia where he was attached to RE Works.

He was MID for 'distinguished and gallant services' by Lt Gen Sir W R Marshall, C-in-C Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, in his despatch of 7 February 1919. Supplement to the London Gazette, 12 January 1920.

Promoted Captain 26 October 1921. Released 1922.

Between the wars Herbert Howarth remained in India working as a resident engineer for a number of Princely States in the north, including the Maharaja of Jaipur. Deciding to resume his military career, he re-joined the IARO as a Captain in the Royal Indian Engineers on 13 January 1927. He was called to service on 12 October 1939, serving in India as Captain - A. CRE (Works), HQ Poona Area, Poona. By 1942 Captain Howarth had been promoted to Major and was working for MGRE Branch, HQ Tenth Army back in Basra, Iraq. He was ultimately promoted to Temp. Lt Col and worked for the rest of the war in the E in C Branch, GHQ Paiforce.

After WWII Herbert Howarth saw no future in India. His India had gone so he looked east, first to Australia, which he did not like, and then on to New Zealand where he settled for a time. He returned to England in the late sixties and died in Seaford, Sussex, at the age of 82.



3RD ANGLO-MYSORE WAR 1791 - BRITISH ASSAULT ON BANGALORE, 23 MARCH 1791

Lt Col (retd) Daljit Singh

After the 2nd Mysore War (March 1784) Tippoo Sultan ¹ was emboldened to try to oust the British from South India. But he knew he had to fight against a powerful grand alliance of the British, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Mahrattas and, later, joined by the Raja of Coorg. He therefore wanted the help of the French in his designs of capturing South India. He went to Pondicherry to get a French contingent of 6000 troops to join him.² Also, in 1788, he re-advanced aggressively towards the Raja of Travancore who was an ally of the British.

On 12 September 1786, Lord Cornwallis took over as Governor General of India. Cornwallis had been restrained by Act of Parliament of 1784 which prevented him from entering into an

offensive against any Indian Prince.³ But Tippoo's rupture with Travancore provided the English an excuse for organising a powerful confederacy against Mysore.⁴ Cornwallis, on hearing of the quarrel between Tippoo and the Raja of Travancore, adjured the Madras Government to stand by their ally.⁵ General Meadows, C-in-C Madras Army, planned to carry the war into the heart of Mysore territory, entering from the south by the Gejehutti Pass. But in 1790 the campaign closed in a manner unsatisfactory for the British⁶ because, "Meadows...was out-generalled by Tippoo."⁷ General Meadows' lack of success is no reflection on his personal bravery. Nolan has recorded, "At the storming of Nundedroog,⁸ General Meadows himself led the assault.....with a sword in his hand like a volunteer subaltern. It was one of the most gallant feats ever performed by Englishmen, and by an English General".⁹

In January 1791 Lord Cornwallis decided to take over personal command and direct the campaign himself. On 5 November 1790, he recorded a minute, "Although I am not vain enough to suppose that the military operations would be conducted more ably.....than by General Meadows, yet from the station which I hold in this country and the friendly intercourse which I maintain both with Nizam and Peshwa, I conceive it would be possible that my presence.....would be considered by our allies as a pledge of our sincerity..... against the common enemy." ¹⁰

On 29 January 1791, Lord Cornwallis arrived in Madras with six battalions of Bengal Infantry under Colonel Campbell. He immediately assumed command of the Madras Army. Cornwallis' campaign is characterized by dash, deception and diplomacy. Cornwallis wanted to elude Tippoo, leaving him in the Carnatic to do his worst, and ascend the ghats before the Sultan could either intercept him or perceive his plan.¹¹ Cornwallis' main objective was Srirangapatnam ¹² capital of Tippoo Sultan and the place where the main army of the Sultan was located. To reach Srirangapatnam Cornwallis chose the most direct route from Madras to Vellore-Bangalore-Srirangapatnam. By adopting this route he shortened the line of communication while he placed himself within easy reach of his allies - the Nizam and the Mahrattas.¹³ Madras to Bangalore is 221 miles and Bangalore to Srirangapatnam is another 77 miles.

ASSAULT ON BANGALORE

Between Vellore and Srirangapatnam, Bangalore was the major fort. Colonel Reade, the Army's Intelligence Chief, had won over a number of Palegars, particularly of Kangundi, Palya, Chikbachapur, Pungmoor, Mandanpalli and Anekal. These Palegars had suffered at Tippoo's hands. Reade also sent spies and munshis (writers) dressed as merchants to obtain information on the topography, location and strength of Tippoo's domain.

Information reached Cornwallis that Tippoo's harem was kept at the palace at Bangalore.¹⁴ If the harem was in Bangalore, Tippoo could not be far behind. Tippoo was encamped near Jigani, to the south-west of the fort. After the battle of Pullalur, 23 British prisoners had been lodged in the dungeons of Bangalore Fort. Lord Cornwallis began his march on 5 February 1791 and the British Army was concentrated at Vellore by 11 February. Here he demonstrated as if to ascend the table land of Mysore through the Amboor Pass. Tippoo, who was in Pondicherry negotiating with the French, left after learning about Lord Cornwallis' advance. He proceeded by the passes of Changama and Palli Code to oppose the British Army. Lord Cornwallis, however, while pretending to ascend by the Amboor Pass, out-maneuvred Tippoo by taking the easy pass of Mugli. In four days he occupied the pass and in the next four days the battering train, 67 elephants and provisions for 45 days were on

the table land of Mysore, 90 miles from Bangalore.¹⁵ Tippoo rushed to Bangalore and the harem was hurriedly moved to safety.

On 5 March 1791, Lord Cornwallis was encamped 6 miles from Bangalore and laid siege to the place. Dr E H Nolan has recorded that Cornwallis intentionally 'leaked' information of his pressing for Amboor Pass to dupe Tippoo. The British Army consisted of 22,300 combatants with 130,000 camp followers - both male and female. There were 6 followers to one fighting man. There were 80,000 transports besides camels and ponies and 100 elephants, mainly used for dragging cannons, with two keepers per elephant. Every sepoy took his wife and family with him. A 'bazaar' accompanied the Army officers who moved in grand style, e.g. Major Mango and other field officers had 40 servants each.¹⁶ The British Army advanced in parallel columns; on the left flank (next to the enemy) infantry and field artillery moved; at an interval of 100 yards and on the right moved siege artillery, ammunition wagons and heavy transport vehicles. Siege artillery guns and field guns were drawn by bullocks on a scale of one bullock for every pound weight of metal in the ball.¹⁷ To the right of the siege artillery moved a third column of smaller store carts and private baggage carts. Further to the right was the bazaar, transport animals and camp followers. Security was ensured by an outer flank of cavalry.¹⁸ As the advance continued Colonel Floyd was sent on a reconnaissance with the whole cavalry and a Brigade of infantry. Floyd caught up with Tippoo's rear and captured some guns, but he failed to notice Tippoo's infantry hiding behind some rocks,¹⁹ who galled him severely and obliged him to retreat. In the encounter, Colonel Floyd himself was wounded and his losses were considerable.

The 'Pettah' (town) was 2000 yards long, 750 yards broad within the fortifications which consisted of a rampart, a thick hedge and a deep dry ditch. These did not completely surround the place, it being left open at the part opposite the fort.²⁰ The fort was of an oval shape, extending somewhat more than 900 yards at its longest. It was fortified with a broad double rampart, about 30 semi-circular bastions or turrets and 5 cavaliers. There were two entrances to the fort - one at each end. North gate was called Delhi gate, of 5 strong large gates, while South gate was called Mysore gate, of 4 low and inferior gates.²¹ The fort was originally built by Kempe Gowda, the Hindu Raja, in 1534 in brick. Later Hyder Ali and Tippoo reinforced it with a stone lining.

ATTACK ON THE PETTAH

On 7 March 1791, the Pettah was stormed by the King's 36th Regiment and 26 Battalion, Native Infantry (Lt Col Cockerell) with a body of artillery under Lt Col Moorhouse. In the afternoon Tippoo made an attempt to dislodge the British and three units of his infantry entered the Pettah at the opening of the south. The British, reinforced by the 76th Regiment, forced Tippoo to retreat with the loss of their standard and 500 men. British losses were 100 men, including Captain Delany of the 36th Regiment. In the Pettah the British found large quantities of supplies. Their next objective was the fort and between 7 and 21 March a cannonade continued while the British made out their plan for the assault on the fort.

ASSAULT ON THE FORT

Lord Cornwallis approached from the north-east corner. The fort had a ditch all around and the gate was covered by a very close thicket of Indian thorns. A breach was made on 21 March but it was not in a position to be stormed, though Cornwallis ordered an assault that

same night, something of which the enemy had no expectation.²² Under the command of Colonel Maxwell, King's regiments stormed the fort at 11 p.m. The fort was illuminated by a number of blue lights suspended from the ramparts for the purpose of discovering assailants, a common practice in the Indian camps, and the British soldiers were exposed to a destructive fire from turrets lined with musketry. Colonel Moorhouse received four wounds which proved fatal. "The night was bright with all the beautiful clearness of a tropical moonlight and the breach could be distinctly seen."²³ The British column advanced and, with a rush, they planted the ladders. The drums of the Sultan beat to arms. Tippoo's two senior commanders, Kamruddin Khan and Syed Saheb, wanted to charge the British but Tippoo was indecisive.²⁴ Bahadur Khan the 'killidar' (Governor) rushed to the point of danger leading his troops but by then the British troops had penetrated the fort. Fierce hand to hand fighting ensued and the defenders fought bravely, though vainly, as the bayonets of the English like a torrent of steel swept all before them and the place was mastered.²⁵ Bahadur Khan fell bravely and Cornwallis offered his body to Tippoo for internment - a soldierly offer responded to with a soldierly reply, Tippoo saying that the proper place of burial for a soldier was the spot where he fell.²⁶ After the fall of Bangalore Tippoo escaped to Srirangapatnam where his main army was located. Tippoo suffered 600 killed and 300 captured but 2000 managed to escape. British losses were 50 - both killed and wounded. A total of nine British officers died during the entire operation: Lt Col Moorhouse, Lt Conan of the Madras Artillery while storming the Pettah, Captains John Slipper, Nathaniel Slipper and Nathaniel Dawes of 4th Native Infantry, Jeremiah Delany of HM 36th Regiment, James Smith of the Bengal Artillery, James Williamson of 1st Bn. Bengal Volunteers and Lt Col Gratton, QMG Indian Army (died 31 December 1791). It has been recorded that the capture of Bangalore may be deemed one of the greatest achievements of the British Army in India.²⁷

ADVANCE TO SRIRANGAPATNAM

For the final capture of Srirangapatnam Lord Cornwallis used his diplomatic acumen to form the grand alliance with the Nizam, the Mahrattas and the Raja of Coorg. By 1 February 1792, a British army of 22,000 was joined by the Nizam's contingent of 18,000 troops under Sikandar Jah and two Mahratta contingents of 112,000 under Haripal and 20,000 men under Parsuraman Bhow. Lord Cornwallis looked the other way as the Mahrattas plundered the countryside. The grand alliance was reinforced by Abercromby's army of 9,000 troops from Bombay. From Bangalore to Srirangapatnam Lord Cornwallis had to face an acute shortage of supplies as Tippoo had laid waste to the country. Cornwallis had no carriage and troops, officers, followers, women and even children carried the ammunition.²⁸ The allied army commenced its move from Huliyeer Doorg and besieged Srirangapatnam where "an immense extended camp without the walls, hold the flower of the Sultan's troops."²⁹ Lord Cornwallis has been criticised for his advance from Bangalore to Srirangapatnam but there was "reasonable alarm of the immediate action of the French on the side of Tippoo."³⁰ Cornwallis' diplomatic foresight was correct, since he not only had to cater for French intervention but there was also a latent danger of Tippoo coming to terms with the unpredictable Mahrattas, thus breaking up the grand alliance. When Tippoo surveyed the grand army (Europeans 11,193, native 72,620 and 254 cannons) besieging him he was totally demoralized, particularly by the large number of cannon. David could not take on Goliath without the sling. On 23 February 1792, Tippoo signed a harsh and humiliating treaty with 5 articles which included the surrender of his two sons, Abdul Kaleek (10 years) and Moozaad-deen (8 years) as hostages. "On the 26th February 1792, the hostages left the fort and seldom has the pages of history recorded a scene more touching."³¹ Tiger Tippoo's claws had been pared and British supremacy in Mysore was fully established.

Notes:

1. Tippoo has been spelt both as Tippoo and Tipu. It has been standardized as Tippoo in this narrative.
2. “*Modern Mysore*” - Shama Rao, p144
3. “*Tipu Sultan*” - Sheik Ali, p194
4. *ibid.*, p 194
5. “*Modern Mysore*” *op.cit.* p143
6. *ibid.*, p143
7. “*The History of the British Empire and the East*”. Dr E H Nolan (8 volumes), Vol. VII, p429
8. “Droog” (Sanskrit for fortress). The country of Tippoo Sultan was studded with “droogs” - fortified hills or rocks.
9. Nolan, *op. cit.*, p439
- 10 “*Modern Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p144
- 11 Nolan *op. cit.*, p431
- 12 Srirangapatnam has been spelt in this manner though other authors have used different spellings. (More usually seen as Seringapatam - Ed.)
- 13 “*Modern Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p144
14. Tippoo’s palace. Construction commenced by Hyder Ali in 1781 and completed by Tippoo in 1791. He called it “The Envy of Heaven”. It is not within the fort but nearly 600 metres away.
- 15 “*Modern Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p145
- 16 Nolan *op. cit.*, p431
- 17 “*Modern Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p148
- 18 *ibid.* p148
- 19 *ibid.* p149
- 20 “*Select Views on Mysore - the country of Tippoo Sultan*”. R Bowyer, 1794. p4-5
- 21 *ibid.* p4
- 22 *ibid.* p5. There is a marble plaque in the wall where the British made the breach and stormed the fort. A question is often asked as to why the British chose to breach the stone wall and not the wooden gate (Delhi gate) next to the breach site. Three explanations are given: in front of the breach site there was enough deployment area to site the cannons used for blasting the walls. Just behind the Delhi gate is the old Ganesh Temple and the British did not want to desecrate the Hindu Temple. The breach site was defiladed from fire from ramparts above the Delhi gate. Colonel Moorhouse was hit just in front of the Delhi gate.
23. Nolan *op. cit.*, pp431-432
- 24 *ibid.* p432
- 25 “*Modern Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p151
- 26 Nolan *op. cit.*, p432
- 27 “*Select Views on Mysore*” *op. cit.*, p8
- 28 *ibid.* p8
- 29 Nolan *op. cit.*, p432
- 30 “*History of the British conquest of India*”. Horace St John, Vol. I, p185
- 31 Nolan *op. cit.*, p433

BOOK NOTES

● *“A LADY’S DIARY OF THE SIEGE OF LUCKNOW - written for the perusal of friends at home”*. Selous Books Ltd., 40 Station Road, Aldershot GU11 1HT. Reprint July 1997. 128 pages. Hardback, gold embossed mock leather binding. ISBN: 1 901371 15 8. £13.95 plus £2.50 p&p

Selous Books is to be commended for this facsimile reprint of a volume first published in 1858.

Although published anonymously, it was later known that the writer was Mrs Katherine Harris, the wife of the Reverend James Harris who, after the death of the Reverend H S Polehampton from cholera on 19 July 1857, was the sole representative of the Church of England in the Lucknow Garrison.

Only two other ladies had their memoirs of the siege of Lucknow published during 1858; Mrs Adelaide Case, the widow of Major Case of the 32nd Foot, and Mrs Katherine Bartrum, the widow of Surgeon Bartrum, though later years saw further publications by ladies. Katherine Harris’s words were therefore among the first, if not the first, to recount to the British public, unknown to the ravages of war on their own doorsteps, the day by day experiences of a wife exposed to the fears, anxieties, privations and sufferings of herself, her husband and others during the months of the siege of Lucknow. Many names are mentioned and the book is an excellent first hand source on affairs of the garrison of Lucknow. The Reverend Harris’s duties took him to all the various posts and through him Mrs Harris is able to paint a broader picture than just her own experiences.

The “Lady’s Diary” was never written with the idea of publication. In a letter home dated Allahabad, December 14, 1857, Katherine Harris wrote, “I have kept a rough sort of journal during the whole siege, often written under the greatest difficulties - part of the time with a child in my arms, or asleep on my lap; but I persevered because I knew if we survived you would like to live our siege life in imagination, and the little details would interest you; besides the comfort of talking to you.” Compiled day by day, the therapeutic effect of so doing, during a period of such stress, cannot be ignored.

A highly recommended and affordable acquisition for all those with an interest of the mutiny at Lucknow. (T.A.)

● *“A CELEBRATION OF EMPIRE - A Centenary Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria 1837-1897”*. Colonel Peter Walton. Spellmount Publishers in association with the Victorian Military Society. large format illustrated paperback. 68 pages, numerous illustrations. ISBN 1 86227 021 X. £9.95

This is a beautiful book, published in July 1997 to coincide with the centenary celebrations, hosted by the Victorian Military Society, of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The first chapter is a brief overview of Queen Victoria’s life whilst the next two deal with the celebrations of the Jubilee and a contemporary report by The Daily Mail correspondent, G W Stevens. But it is the five appendices which members will probably find the most interesting dealing with The Processions, Colonial Contingents, Australian Contingents, Canadian Contingent and the Indian Contingents. All contain many photographs which, when studied closely, give good uniform details. Many of them will be known to members of

this Society - for instance, a number of the Indian photographs are from the Navy & Army Illustrated, Special Christmas Number, 10 December 1897, and have since been reproduced many times, but there are others which this reviewer has not seen before. Well worth having.
(ANM)

● *“HOURS OF GLORY - Famous Battles of the Indian Army 1801-1971”* by Major General Chand N Das OBE. New Delhi: Vision Books Pvt. Ltd. 600 pages, maps, illustrations. ISBN 81-7094-069-9. Rupees 1250.

Another monumental work by our Honorary Member, first published in 1997, I have not yet had time to digest it fully, but first impressions suggest it adheres to the same high standards of General Chand's earlier works. Written essentially for the young officers and men of today's Indian Army, the book is divided into five parts - Cavalry and Armour, Artillery, Corps of Engineers, Infantry and Miscellaneous. Within the first four parts the author has taken one or more of the Battle Honours awarded to each regiment and described in varying amounts of detail that regiment's activities in the particular campaign (in all there are 202 Battle Honours described in this way). Just over a third are pre- Independence Honours, quite a few of which are Second World War, but the remainder cover actions since Independence, many of them in Jammu and Kashmir. Part V - Miscellaneous - covers actions involving Ordnance in Manipur in 1944, the garrison at Kohima in 1944, Medics in Korea in 1951, seven actions involving the Corps of Military Police, and five post war UN Peace Keeping missions. Many of the descriptions of actions are accompanied by maps and there are several pages of illustrations. The book concludes with a useful index of Battle Honours and of recipients of gallantry awards named in the book. A valuable addition to the library.
(ANM)

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Hamish King is continuing his efforts to trace the records of his great great grandfather, William King, who served with 2-2 Bengal Horse Artillery (see Volume 12, No 2, Summer 1995, page 76 for earlier information) and seeks the following information:

- the whereabouts of his medals:- PUNJAB MEDAL with clasps Chillianwalla and Goojerat, and MUTINY MEDAL with clasps Delhi and Lucknow
- does anyone know of a list of European troops who transferred from HEIC to British Army service in 1859?

(Peter Stanley's *“White Mutiny”*, for which I enclosed a leaflet in the last edition of DURBAR, refers to over 10,000 soldiers of the HEIC who took their discharge rather than transfer to the British Army.
Ed.)
