

MARTIAL RACE THEORY IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

Ashok Nath

This paper examines the Martial Race theory, its origins, conventions and applications in South Asia. The induction of Jat Sikhs as a martial race is examined, and latter day critics of the theory are summarised.

ORIGIN AND CONVENTIONS

Early literature available on the Martial Race theory in the context of the Imperial British Indian Army reflects typical Victorian views on scientific racism. They are mirrored bluntly in the writings of Sir George MacMunn¹, a popular military commentator and official British Army historian. A characteristic passage from his work reads: 'It is one of the essential differences between the East and the West, that in the East only certain clans and classes can bear arms; the others have not the physical courage necessary for the warrior'². Similar views were codified in Indian army handbooks or manuals³, official Government of India publications and essential reading for all British officers joining the Indian service. Handbooks were continuously updated and ran into several editions; their popularity can be gauged by looking at one such example. *Handbooks for the Sikhs*⁴ was published first in 1889 by Captain A.H. Bingley, and subsequently reprinted with updates in 1918, 1928, 1931 and 1942. Packed with much descriptive information, the 'Handbooks' expressed popular opinions but lacked anthropological insight. 'Martial races' are distinguished by loyalty, military fidelity and 'manly independence', in contrast to the other groups (races) who are 'effeminate, cowardly or inclined to crime', ran a typical passage from these Handbooks.

'Martial Race' was a designation coined by officials in British India, and increasingly in vogue after the Second Afghan War of 1878-80. It represented a collective expression of beliefs prevalent amongst the British Indian Army officer corps which had gained wide currency under Field Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar (Kipling's *Bob's Bahadur*), a popular Victorian military hero considered to be the main architect of victory over the Afghans.

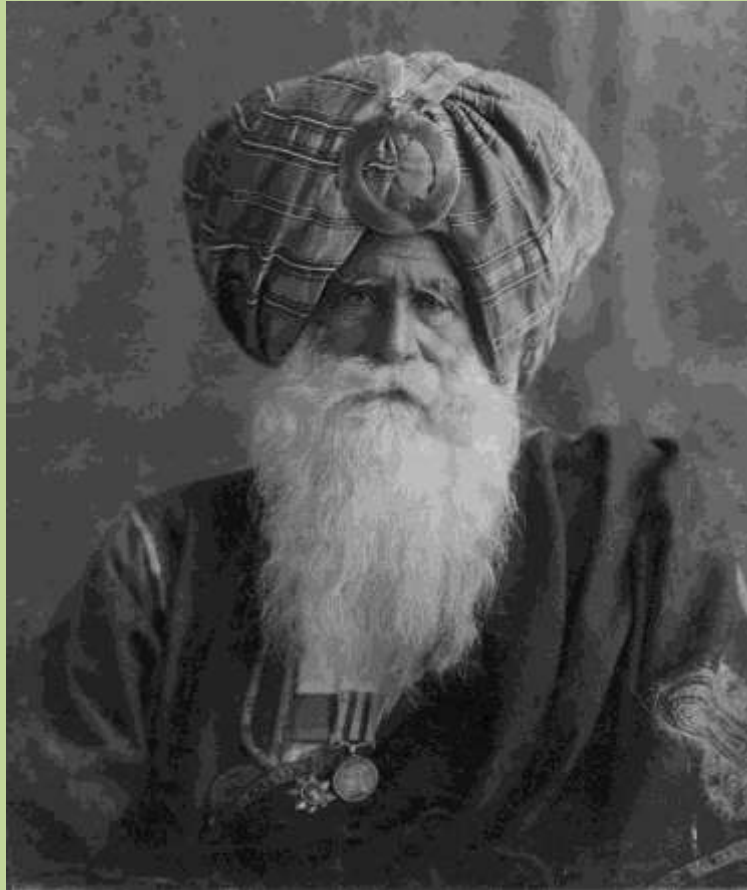
However, much of its genesis can be traced to the Great Mutiny of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence whereby large parts of the Indian Army had rebelled against British rule. The events of 1857 had a profound impact on the British and their subsequent policies appear to give priority to preventing it from repeating itself.

¹ General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn (1869-1952), commissioned into the Royal Artillery; Quarter Master General of the Indian Army and author of several books on India including *The Martial Races of India*, Sampson Low, Marston and Co, London 1933

² G.F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India*, Adam & Charles Black, London 1911; p 129

³ Indian Army Handbooks 1902-1945

⁴ Captain A.H. Bingley, *Handbooks for the Indian Army - Sikhs, compiled under the Orders of the Government of India*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta 1887



Subadar Nihal Singh IOM, a Jat Sikh late of 45th Rattray's Sikhs, in his eightieth year. He typifies the martial race warrior of the British Indian Army. The photographer was the renowned John Burke who opened his studio at Lahore in 1885 [Author's private collection]. A very similar image, taken at the same sitting but on a different plate, exists in the British Library's India Office Records, ref: 291/62.

One such safeguard was to gradually restrict service in the army to relatively backward minorities whose consequent privileged positions would depend on the continuation of British rule. This policy received its ideological justification through a racist ideology influenced by both the Indian caste system and Social Darwinism, referred to as 'scientific racism'. It propounded the theory that the measure of human potential might be judged by race. In addition and closely linked to it, there were military and environmental (climatic) perspectives. All three combined as criteria for purposes of evaluation and recruitment. The military view of the martial races theory attempted to judge the reliability and ability of different military classes according to their recent combat experience. For example Roberts argued that simple inactivity had lowered the efficiency of many classes of Indians, notably the South Indian military classes who had not seen battle for years; but there was as much decline in the quality of the British officers commanding these troops as in the troops themselves, and Roberts' theory was designed in part to get rid of these incompetent officers.⁵

The environmental aspect of the Martial Races theory is best reflected in the views of a former Commander-in-chief, Indian Army, General Sir O'Moore Creagh, who held that:

In the hot, flat regions...[of India].....there is no winter cold. In the hot regions are found races, timid both by religion and habits of service to their superiors, but tyrannical to their

⁵ Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-One Years in India*, two volumes, Bentley & Son, London 1897; also Stephen Cohen, *The Untouchable Soldier, Caste, Politics and the Indian Army*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 28 No 3, May 1969, pp 453-468

inferiors, and quite unwarlike. In other parts....where the winter is cold, the warlike minority is to be found, but its component peoples vary greatly in military virtue. Nowhere, however, are they equal in that respect to Europeans or Japanese.⁶

These policies when rigidly applied compartmentalized various ethno-religious groups within the military. The net result contributed to a British policy of *divide et impera*⁷ whereby it was assumed that in the event of future trouble each class would balance the other or, in other words, give one another away. British control of India depended on alliances fostered by the elevation of Muslim over Hindu, of high caste over low caste, of settled, commercialized peasants over nomadic and tribal peoples, of men over women, of rural interests over urban interests and the 'early winners in the imperial collaboration game' included groups targeted for military recruitment, supposed 'tribes' and 'castes' singled out for inclusion and privileges."⁸

Jeffrey Greenhut writing in his article *Sahib and Sepoy*⁹ described the Martial Race theory as having an 'elegant symmetry', whereby 'Indians who were intelligent and educated were defined as cowards, while those defined as brave were uneducated and backward'. Therefore, 'only British gentlemen combined both the intelligence and courage necessary for a man to become an officer'. On the other hand, the Army recognized that some avenue for advancement had to be open for Indian soldiers or it faced the possibility of disaffection or even another mutiny similar to that of 1857. The solution was to create a carefully limited position within the regiment, the Viceroy's Commissioned Officer or VCO. The VCO was a commissioned officer, wore a distinctive officer's uniform, and was entitled to receive a salute from any Indian soldier or non-commissioned officer. He functioned as either a platoon leader or company commander, and indeed, most of the platoons and companies of an Indian regiment were led by such soldiers. They had no authority over either white enlisted men of British regiments or British officers who might be junior to them. In fact they were outranked by any holder of the King's Commission, and thus by all British or white Colonial officers. VCO's were selected from the ranks, generally after long years of service. As a class, they were unfamiliar with anything beyond company level duties, and since they were uneducated, they could not be trained to manage the administrative duties required for higher rank, or for staff positions. Indeed, their obvious limitations confirmed the British in their attitude that only white men could become effective officers.

Yet although the Officer Corps were unashamedly racist, leavening the belief that Indians were inherently inferior was the concept that Christian morality demanded that one's inferiors should be treated as humanely as possible, as a father would treat a somewhat backward child. That the average British officer believed in both his inherent superiority over and his responsibility towards his men is beyond doubt.¹⁰

As can be seen here, the Martial Race theory suited the Imperialists and seemingly tended to justify their rule.

One major advantage was that since they habitually chose peasant castes as martial, and since these, in addition to being inured to hardship and amenable to discipline, were uneducated and politically backward, their loyalty was assured.¹¹

⁶ General Sir O'Moore Creagh, *Indian Studies*, Hutchison & Co, London, p 233

⁷ The British did not invent the concept of *divide et impera* but they certainly perfected it while giving it respectability. In India they borrowed it from the Moghuls who had used it fairly effectively in a caste ridden stratified society.

⁸ T. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, Cambridge University Press 1994, pp 122-126

⁹ Jeffrey Greenhut, *Sahib and Sepoy: An enquiry into the relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army*, Military Affairs, Vol. 48, No. 1, Jan 1984, p 16

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1971, pp 45-52

Another advantage was that by defining the educated classes of India as non-martial, the British justified their refusal to commission Indians and assured that only British gentlemen became officers.

The classification of the Indian people into martial races and non martial races was not an invention of the British; it was the recognition of something already implicit in the Indian social system. But it was extremely convenient to a conqueror. The martial race discourse had at least some basis in the customs and self image of the many communities who had a martial tradition quite independent of the colonial encounter, however this theory codified and effected indigenous society.

INDUCTION OF JAT SIKHS AS A MARTIAL RACE

One such community, the Sikhs, had by the end of the Mutiny come to be classified as one of the prominent martial races of India by the British for their loyal support. The British colonial embrace, starting from the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 and the post 1860 reorganisation of the Army, had an overriding significance in changing the social structure and caste relations in the Sikh community. A brief look into the background of the Sikhs would be in order.

The word Sikh comes from the Pali *Sikkha* or Sanskrit *Shishya*, meaning disciple. The Sikhs are disciples of their ten Gurus or teachers beginning with Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and ending with Guru Gobind Singh (d. 1708). Sikhism has its birth in the Punjab area of South Asia which falls into the present day states of India and Pakistan. Earlier the main religions in that area were Hinduism and Islam. Hindu society, according to the famous historian Arnold Toynbee, had by the time of the Turkish invasions started to break down under the morbid social growth of the caste system, resulting in revolts of the proletariat led by Kabir¹² and Nanak. Nanak's religion was an austere monotheism which disapproved of idol worship and the Hindu division of society into castes and sub castes and he started his mission with a simple statement: 'There is no Hindu, there is no Mussulman.' His crusade was against fanaticism and intolerance. A popular couplet describes him as: *Guru Nanak Shah Fakeer, Hindu ka Guru, Mussulman ka Peer* (Guru Nanak, *Guru* for the Hindus and *Peer* for the Muslims). In other words his teachings incorporated beliefs from both Hinduism and Islam.

Recruitment of Sikhs in the Indian Army was confined mainly to Jat Sikhs, who were sturdy owners and cultivators of land. Their pride in manual labour was expressed as *dab ke vaah, te rajj ke khah* (till the land vigorously and eat to your content). Known for their indifference to Brahminical social stratification, the *gurus* willingly raised Jats to positions of high authority in the new *panth*. The inevitable result was the development along lines dictated by the influence of Jat cultural patterns. During the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh between 1799 and 1839, Jat Sikhs emerged as a high percentage of the nobility or ruling class and also constituted a major part of Ranjit Singh's army, and were recipients of many land grants.¹³

In order to construct a martial culture, the British could not enlist low status groups. Civilian socialization of the personnel was vital in generating group dynamics. Stanford W. Gregory argues that a soldier's fighting qualities depend on how civil society perceives him.¹⁴ The British therefore gave preference to Jat Sikhs over other Sikhs; in other words Sikhs who were converts from low castes like the Mazhbi or Ramdasia Sikhs were excluded from recruitment into Sikh regiments composed entirely of Jats.

¹² Kabir (1440-1518 AD) was an Indian mystic and poet who preached an ideal of seeing all of humanity as one and later became famed for scorning religious affiliation. His philosophies and ideas of loving devotion to God are expressed in metaphor and language from both the Hindu Vedanta and Bhakti streams and Muslim Sufi ideals, using vernacular Hindi.

¹³ Ashok Nath, *Ethnography of Indian cavalry regiments*, lecture at the United Service Institution of India, New Delhi, Autumn 2005

¹⁴ W. Gregory Jr., *Towards a Situated Description of Cohesion and Disintegration in the American Army*, *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol I No. ii, 1977, pp 476-81

The army strengthened Sikhism among the Sikh recruits not only to give them a separate religious identity but also because the imperial belief was that Sikhism, being a martial religion, imparted a martial ethos to those Jats who embraced Sikhism. W.L. McGregor, a British officer representing the pre-1857 army's views, thought that in general Indian soldiers were mercenaries, and that for them leaving the army was not a religious sin. But Sikhism, he claimed, demanded that its followers should never renounce their weapons before death.¹⁵

G. F. MacMunn voiced the post-Mutiny army's view when in 1911 he wrote:

Sikhism is an austere faith demanding some simplicity and rigour of life from its adherents. So much is this so, that for many years there has been a tendency for young men to avoid the *pahul* and grow up as ordinary Hindus for whom life has few irksome restrictions. But the value of the Sikh as the simple, faithful soldier has lain in his adherence to the simple tenets and hardy life of his forebears. No non-baptized Sikh is admitted into a regiment of the Indian Army. So careful are regiments in this manner and so much are regiments the home of the old martial and simple Sikh principles, that it has been said, not without some shadow of truth, that it is the British officer who has kept Sikhism up to its old standard.¹⁶

The British preference for Jat Sikhs encouraged many job hungry Hindu Jats to accept Sikhism. In 1891 there were 250,000 male Sikhs in Patiala District of the Punjab. Despite heavy enlistment in the army, their numbers rose to 323,000 in 1900.¹⁷

MODERN CRITIQUE AND POSSIBLE FRESH APPROACHES

Modern critics of the Martial Race theory have described it as a clever British effort to divide and rule the people of India for their own political ends. T.A. Heathcote for example, in his book *The Military in British India*, comments that after the Mutiny of 1857 till the end of the British Raj in 1947, control was based on 'using half of the Indian Army to watch the other half, and using one-third of the British Army to watch them all.'¹⁸

Amongst the foremost critics of the Martial Race theory, one finds Nirad Chaudhuri arguing that it was a fixed and unchanging colonial construction, and that it was created, at least in part, to demean the 'non-martial Indian' of the South and Bengal.¹⁹ Another author Ashish Nandy, in his book *The Intimate Enemy*, forcefully asserts that the emasculation and neutering of the majority of Indians, and the contrasting hyper-masculation of white imperialists and Indian soldiers, was one of the chief devices used by colonialist writers to justify British rule from the 1830s onwards.²⁰

Heather Streets, in her recent work on martial races,²¹ evokes a cultural approach to this theory, arguing that the doctrine was shaped by a racial-masculine ideology and that military authorities puffed up the images of the martial soldiers by writing regimental histories, and by extolling the kilted Scots, kukri-wielding Gorkhas and turbaned Sikhs in numerous paintings. Such an inflated reputation

¹⁵ W.L. McGregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, London 1846, reprinted Allahabad 1979; pp 51

¹⁶ MacMunn, *Armies*, p 135

¹⁷ Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp i, ii, vi, 41, 49, 53, app A

¹⁸ T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia 1600-1947*, Manchester University Press 1995, p 126

¹⁹ Nirad Chaudhuri, 'The Martial Races'

²⁰ Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1988, p 6 onwards

²¹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, race and masculinity in British Imperial Culture 1857-1914*, Manchester University Press 2004.

had an effect on the self-image of these warriors laced with gender bias because it emerged in response to the nineteenth-century feminist and nationalist critique in Ireland and India, which argued that the army was composed of ruffians and mercenaries. Since threats both to the core of the Empire and to the periphery resulted in the rise of this theory, Streets says that it is necessary to go beyond the frontiers of national history for both British and Indians as this ideology also played a crucial role in making the army appear as an attractive career option for commoners. This was done to stimulate recruitment to the armed forces.

Streets, who has been influenced by Edward Said's 'bipolar model of self and the other', goes on to show how the imperial army ascribed to its critiques feminine qualities like softness, fickleness and so on. In contrast, the elite soldiers of the British Empire, like the Scottish tenants, Gorkha mountaineers and Sikh peasants, were portrayed as intrepid men who were ready to protect the borders of the kingdom. This strand within the complex imagery of the martial warriors got a boost during the revolt of 1857 and the Afghan campaign. Interestingly, though British soldiers suffered from a high incidence of venereal diseases, the ordinary people were made to believe that the martial soldiers were immune to them.

The image building of the martial soldiers was largely due to efforts of the army's public relations campaign; public opinion in the nineteenth century came to accept the idea of the martial races. Pulp magazines and periodicals played an important role in blending military doctrine with popular discourse. Not only in Victorian society, but even in present day Scotland, Nepal and Punjab, martial race stereotypes dominate, claims Streets. This has led to the eradication of the other competing regional cultural systems. The cultural approach to military studies opens up new avenues regarding images and myths constructed by the institutions. Not only those with a military bent of mind believed in these larger-than-life images but they also had a spill-over effect on the civil society. This, according to Streets, is nothing new. The trend was also prevalent in the late 19th century when the British Empire was at its zenith.

David Omissi writing in *The Sepoy and the Raj*,²² argues that the Martial Race theory was in response to the Russian threat and subsequently became a colonial obsession that had a profound effect on recruitment and radically reshaped the army's composition.

John Lynn, in his classic work *Battle - a History of Combat and Culture*, suggests that traditional South Asian values allowed for the acceptance of such a theory and furthermore that Indian socio-cultural attributes played a crucial role in the construction of efficient regiments; '....so critical were indigenous values and ties to martial performance that Company officials wisely fostered them.....'²³

CONCLUSIONS

Lessons learnt from the Indian Army's participation in the First and Second World Wars demonstrated that the so called Martial Race theory was irrelevant to modern warfare. More recent experiences of the Indian Army, *vide* the LTTE²⁴ and other motivated groups who fall into the so called 'non-martial race' category, have further substantiated it. Why then does the 'martial over non martial' still dominate the psyche of the present highly professional Indian Army and even of the Pakistani Army?

²² David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj. The Indian Army 1860-1940*, Macmillan, London, 1994

²³ John A. Lynn, *Battle - a History of Combat and Culture*, Westview Press 2003, pp 148-49

²⁴ The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, is a militant organization that has been waging a violent secessionist campaign against the Sri Lankan government since the 1970s in order to create a separate Tamil state in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Complete regiments exclusively comprising Jat Sikhs, Gorkhas, Rajputs, Dogras, exist and thrive, in spite of a decree issued by the Government of India in 1949 throwing army recruitment open to all Indians irrespective of caste, race or religion. In all fairness to the Army, many changes have also taken place where recruitment is now open to all Indians martial or non martial, albeit mainly in those regiments created or reconstituted after 1949 such as the Brigade of The Guards, the Parachute Regiment, etc.

The so called 'martial race' identity in several of the old distinguished infantry regiments is considered inseparable from regimental or unit identity because these regiments are named after particular communities such as Sikhs, Gorkhas, Garhwalis etc.

Interestingly, regiments considered the elite within army circles, and therefore the most sought-after, still exclusively recruit in their rank and file the so-called martial races.

It is an acknowledged fact that the Indian Army is a professional body, considered to be the nation's most secular, apolitical institution that also demonstrates the working of diversity at its best. Simultaneously there is a paradox in the fact that it enforces caste, ethnic and communal identities by retaining its class regiments based on an obsolete 'martial race' agenda.

The Indian Army mirrors Indian society in many respects. Tradition, *esprit de corps* and the fact that it is an entirely volunteer force all play significant roles in its composition and ethos. These factors together with a combination of several others need to be scrutinized and understood. Further historical research might lead us to better understand this paradox.

Selected Bibliography

The Quarterly Indian Army List, Government of India, various editions

Bingley, A.H., *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Sikhs*, Government Central Printing Office, Simla 1899

Cohen, Stephen P, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, University Press, Berkeley 1971

Greenhut, Jeffrey, *Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into Relationship between British Officers and Native Soldier of the British Indian Army*, Military Affairs, Vol. 48 No.1, January 1984

Ellinwood, D.C., *Ethnicity in a Colonial Asian Army: British Policy, War, and the Indian Army 1914-1918*; Ellinwood, D.C. & Enloe, C.H. (eds.), *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia*, Transaction, New Brunswick 1981

Heathcote, Terence A, *The Military in British India: Development of British Land Forces in South Asia 1600-1947*, University Press, Manchester 1995

MacMunn, George, *The Martial Races of India*, Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., London 1933

Mason, P.A., *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, Jonathan Cape, London 1974

Mazumdar, Rajit K., *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, Permanent Black, Delhi 2003

Menezes, S.L., *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1999

Nath, Ashok, *IZZAT: Historical Records and Iconography of Indian Cavalry Regiments 1760-2007*, Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, Delhi 2007 (in process of publication)

Omissi, David, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army 1860-1940*, Macmillan, London 1994

Peers, Douglas M., *Those Noble Exemplars of the True Military Tradition: Constructions of the Indian Army in the Mid-Victorian Press*. Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 31 No. 1, Feb 1997

Peers, Douglas M., *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835*, Tauris, London 1995

Roberts, Frederick, *Forty-One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief*, Vols. I and II, Richard Bentley & Son, London 1897

Streets, Heather, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914*, University Press, Manchester 2004

Trench, Charles C., *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 1900-1947*, Thames & Hudson, London 1988

Wickremesekera, Channa., *Best Black Troops in the World: British Perceptions and the Making of the Sepoy 1746-1805*, Manohar, New Delhi 2002

Yeats-Brown, F, *Martial India*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London 1945

This article by IMHS member Captain Ashok Nath first appeared in *Militärhistorisk Tidskrift* 2007, journal of the Swedish National Defence College 2007, and forms a part of his research project on the historical construction of Indian Army regiments. The article appears here by kind permission of the College and the author.



Sushil Talwar

Some months ago, the writer was fortunate to view and photograph the medals of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad Tiwari.¹ The icing on the cake was not really the complete medal entitlement of a man who had served during the mutiny and was decorated thrice during the tenor of his service, but an original book and the parchment certificate of a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire (C.I.E.) that accompanied his medals. Anyone with an interest in medals to Indian recipients knows how rare it is when medals and original papers are found together, more so when they are of the 1880s vintage. The book, which is exceptionally rare, was published privately by Lieut. Colonel C.E. Luard in 1920 (the covers are absent and the title is not known). It not only chronicles the Risaldar-Major's services in the army but also gives a detailed insight into the kind of duties that the Central India Horse carried out in those days.

The Risaldar-Major was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire and admitted to the Order of British India (1st Class). He was additionally granted the honorary title of *Rai*² on 20 May 1890 [*Golden Book of India*, p. 196], at which point his residence was given as Central Provinces. His group of decorations and medals [illustrated on p. 27] includes:

C.I.E. 1st Type; O.B.I. 1st Class; Indian Mutiny medal named in engraved running script
Ressaldar Isreepershad 1st Regt Central India Horse

According to Watson's history of the Central India Horse, he was at one time with the Bhopawar Levy – and this may have been an extra-regimental attachment during the Mutiny period. The writer has never heard of this unit. It was in all probability a body of irregular armed police raised specifically for service within the independent state of Bhopawar in the Central India Agency, which at that very time had been temporarily annexed presumably due to some differences between the State's ruling family and the British administration. Not surprisingly, no Mutiny medal rolls for this obscure unit have been traced.

The pages that follow are a reproduction of the publication by Lieutenant Colonel Luard.

PREFACE

Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad Tiwari was from 1860 to 1890 the most familiar figure in Malwa. His personal influence was very great and this, as well as his untiring energy, he used whole-heartedly in the service of the British Government. Perhaps this sketch of the life of a most loyal and devoted soldier may afford a not inopportune lesson in these unsettled times.

C. E. LUARD,
6th July, 1920
M.A., C.I.E.
Lieut. Colonel,
Political Agent, Bhopal³

¹ Known more briefly during his earlier career as Isreepershad [*vide* medal naming]

² Derived from *Raja* meaning 'chief' when used by the British in an honorary context

³ Lieut. Colonel Charles Ekford Luard, C.I.E., M.A., Supernumerary List Indian Army, had been on secondment to the Civil Department as a Political Officer since 9 Dec 1897. The January 1920 edition of the Indian Army List records that he was by then serving as the Political Agent for Bhopal and Malwa in Sehore, on the staff of the Agent to the Governor General in Central India.

Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad Tiwari, *Sardar Bahadur*, C.I.E., of the 1st Regiment, Central India Horse, was born on the 10th July 1822, at the village of Millipur, *Tahsil*⁴ Purwan, district Unao, in Oudh. He was a Kanyakubja Brahman.⁵ His father Mansaram Tiwari was Jemadar in the United Malwa Contingent Infantry at Mehidpur, and served the Government for many years in the Regiment, dying while on detachment duty at Rutlam in 1836.

The Risaldar-Major entered the service on the 1st October 1837 in the Mehidpur Contingent Infantry and was promoted for his good conduct and abilities to the rank of Jemadar on the 1st May 1849, and to the rank of Subedar on the 20th July 1854. On the mutiny of the Gwalior Contingent in 1857, he with a portion of his company remained faithful to the British Government and assisted in saving the lives of several British officers. For this he was transferred to the Bhopawar Levy on the 15th December 1857 in the grade of Risaldar, and was also granted the 2nd Class of the Order of British India with the title of *Bahadur* by G.G.O. No. 773 of 27th May 1857 for fidelity and good conduct during the Mutiny. He was present at the action at Mehidpur in November 1857, and in others at Rajgarah, Beora (September 1858) and in Nimar. He was transferred to the 2nd Central India Horse as Risaldar on the 2nd November 1860, and to the 1st Central India Horse as Risaldar on 1st July 1861.

In 1861, he was sent into the Sondhwarah tract in Malwa in pursuit of the free-booter Umer Singh, who was killed and his band dispersed. The comparative quiet, which still exists in Sondhwarah, dates from that period. In the same year, he was employed to investigate a gang robbery of Rs. 22,000 worth of opium in the Nulkhera district in Gwalior State, eighty-seven of the gang were seized and sentenced, and the whole of the opium recovered. The then Agent to the Governor General at Indore in acknowledging this service told the Risaldar he might hope for reward.

Shortly afterwards, the Risaldar with a party of the Central India Horse was ordered to discover and apprehend the perpetrators of an attack on the village of Khejria in Sitamau in Central India. Most of the plundered property was recovered and fourteen of the offenders either killed or secured.

In the year 1866 whilst, on detached duty at Mandasor, the Risaldar received information of a dacoity in which Neemuch traders had been plundered of bales of cloth valued at Rs. 9,500. The Risaldar was many miles from the place at which the robbery had occurred but he and his men followed the murderers at a brisk pace, and brought back all the cloth to its owners. The murderers escaped into the jungles.

In the year 1866-67 there were three attacks by armed men made on bullock-train carts plying between Agra and Indore. Valuable goods were taken and so great a panic created that neither travellers nor merchants would make use of the carts. The careful enquiry instituted by Risaldar Isri Prasad resulted in the discovery of an organized gang of dacoits amongst the servants of the bullock-train companies and the Government Mail Department. Some twenty-five of these men were apprehended and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. On this service, Major W.P. Hughes, the Political Agent, Western Malwa, remarked in his annual report as follows:-

The credit of tracing out the culprits in the case above referred to and of bringing their practices to light is due to Risaldar *Bahadur* Isri Prasad of the Central India Horse, whose services in this and many other similar instances have been most valuable in the discovery and suppression of such crimes.

⁴ Subdivision of an Administrative District

⁵ One of five sub-divisions of the Pancha-Gauda division of Brahmins, and considered to be a warrior caste

In 1867, Thakur Moti Singh of Gagruni, Indore State, (whose estates had been confiscated by the Maharaja Holkar) was proclaimed an outlaw. He took into his service Daoran Khan, an Afghan free-booter, notorious in these parts, whose trade it was to hire out himself and his ruffian followers for any work which promised pay or plunder. In April 1867, Moti Singh and Daoran Khan instituted a system of plunder and terrorism, which, if unchecked, would have speedily depopulated the country. Eight villages had been plundered and burnt, and property carried off which was valued at upwards of Rs. 64,000. The Maharaja then applied for the assistance of British troops, and in January 1868 Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, with a party of the Central India Horse, was detached with others to capture the leaders of the gang and disperse their followers. Moti Singh finding his game was up surrendered to the British authorities, and shortly afterwards Daoran Khan was captured and his band dispersed. The success was altogether attributable to the secrecy and good judgment with which the Risaldar-Major arranged his plans and to the untiring perseverance with which the depredators were tracked and followed. For this the Risaldar-Major was promoted to the 1st Class of the Order of British India with the title of *Sardar Bahadur* by G.G.O. No. 762 dated the 7th August 1868, and His Highness the late Maharaja Tukojirao Holkar was pleased to grant him in 1873 twenty-one bighas of land *in inam*⁶. Though the order regarding the grant of land was passed in the year 1873, the land was given in possession to his grandson Mahesh Prasad Tiwari and others under Huzur Shri Shankar Order No. 261 dated the 18th June 1915. It is situated in Mauza Sherpur of the Indore *tahsil*.

In 1872, a band of fifty Meenas from the British Provinces and the states of Alwar and Jaipur in Rajputana robbed a convoy of silver valued at Rs. 46,000 near Nulkhera in Malwa, killing, wounding, and dispersing the escort, carrying off the treasure and disposing of it. Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad was not at hand at the time, but being afterwards put upon their tracks he captured three of the leaders and twenty-one of their followers, and his action led to the apprehension of nine others since. This good service was done in a country where he was a total stranger and amidst great difficulties. On this General Sir H.D. Daly, K.C.B., Agent to the Governor General, remarked in his annual report:

Colonel Watson notices the occurrence of a very well planned dacoity within 12 miles of Agar, when a band of armed men attacked a convoy of treasure, killed one man and wounded others and carried off the whole of the treasure amounting to Rs. 46,000 in value. It is satisfactory to be able to report that twenty-two Meenas have been convicted of this dacoity, owing to the excellent detective powers of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad who traced and found the robbers in the Gurgaon district in Punjab. Out of these twenty-two, three of the ringleaders were hanged and the rest have been sentenced to transportation for life.

In the year 1873-74 Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad received orders from Colonel John Watson, C.B., the Political Agent in Western Malwa, to break up the gangs of Meena tribes who came into Malwa from Gurgaon and from the States of Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur and had made Indore one of their rendezvous. He was successful in breaking them up. The Colonel in his report to the Agent, Governor General, wrote:

The credit of breaking them up belongs to Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad of the Central India Horse who, at personal risk, traced and apprehended the members of the bands.

In 1875, Major C. Martin, Political Agent in Western Malwa, referred the Agent to the Governor General in Central India to the frequent occurrence of dacoities by Moghias in Western Malwa, and alluded to the good services done for many years by Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, more specially to the capture he made of a notorious dacoit Lachhman Jharia and two of his gang after a brisk skirmish in

⁶ A gift of rent-free land

which one of the Central India Horse party under the *Sardar Bahadur* was severely wounded, one horse killed and another injured. The Major in his report to the Agent to the Governor General, regarding Lachhman Jharia's capture, said:

The principal actors are Moghias, their victims are land-owners of reputed wealth or merchants with valuable goods, such as opium in transit, and the time of their operation is at night. They do not hesitate to commit murder, and having succeeded in their object, disperse to the different states in Central India or Meywar, so that to trace and apprehend them is not an easy matter. Fortunately, this Agency has at its disposal Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, through whose intelligence and activity some of the perpetrators in bad cases have been apprehended and punished, and this excellent officer has lately apprehended a dacoit who had given considerable trouble principally on the Jharewar frontier, and since this report was commenced he has had a skirmish with a party of Moghias capturing a notorious leader and nineteen others, killing one, wounding another, while on his side a sowar of the Central India Horse was wounded by a bullet, one horse killed and one wounded. I cannot speak too highly of the services rendered to this Agency by Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, which have now extended over many years until his name has become a household word.

In letter No. 71 dated Agar, Western Malwa, the 29th June [1875], Major C. Martin, C.B., Commandant of the Central India Horse, reported to General Sir H.D. Daly, K.C.B., Agent to the Governor General:

Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, having returned from duty in the district, a parade of the Central India Horse was ordered and the approbation of His Excellency the Viceroy in Council was communicated to him for his recent good service in the capture of the notorious dacoit Lachhman Jharia and his band.

I feel I could not do justice to the recommendations I have to make as desired in the end paragraph of your letter No. 752 dated the 12th (forwarding copy of letter No. 1073G from the Under Secretary, Foreign Department) without referring to a report made by Colonel Hughes, Commandant Central India Horse, of the excellent service rendered by this gallant native officer on many occasions, for without this knowledge a just appreciation of his many services could not be obtained.

Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad is the third generation of his family who has served the British Government, and it is no exaggeration to say that he has never failed in any of the difficult duties he has been so frequently called upon to perform.

Colonel Hughes solicited that a grant in *Jagir*⁷ might be bestowed upon him, and nothing would be so gratifying to the Risaldar-Major. *Jagirs* have been granted to native officers whose services have extended over a number of years.

His family came from the *zila*⁸ of Unao in Oudh or from the *pargana*⁹ of Khaga, *zila* Fatehpur, North-Western Provinces and I respectfully recommend that a village in Istamrar be bestowed upon him in one of the above provinces. This would not entail much sacrifice on the part of the Government. It would be a graceful reward for his past services and an encouragement to others to follow his example.

⁷ Assignment of land and of its rent as annuity

⁸ Administrative District of British India

⁹ Subdivision of a *zila*

I trust Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad's services may be available to the Government for many years, for they are invaluable.

In the year 1877 a robbery was committed of four bars of silver valued at about Rs. 14,000 at the village of Barodia, in Maharaja Scindhia's territory, about 20 miles from Agra on the track between Shajapur on the Bombay and Agra Road and Jhalrapatan. The convoy, which had safely reached the village on the 20th December, was attacked early next morning and the silver carried off. It was certain that the robbery was committed by Meenas who had obtained information and followed the treasure from Indore. The Risaldar-Major was engaged in tracing the dacoits. He traced a band of Meenas from Jaipur who were brought to justice. Colonel Martin, regarding this service, reported to the Agent to the Governor General:

The dacoity committed at Barodia on the 21st December 1877 has been traced to a band of Meenas from Jaipur through the cleverness of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad and he is so successful in cases of this kind.

In the month of March 1881, Colonel W. Kincaid, Political Agent at Bhopawar in Central India, received intelligence from the officials at Dhar of a dacoity committed at the village of Karode in Dhar State, Central India, not far from Mhye River, by Walalties (Pathans) and Bhils, resulting in great loss of property and some lives. It was said other villages had been attacked. His camp was at Kolia near Mhow. He at once sent off a camel sowar to Colonel Martin, who in the absence of General Daly and his assistants was at Indore, and asked for a party of Central India Horse to co-operate with a detachment of his own regiment in pursuit, for he feared the Pathans had succeeded in gaining over the Mhye Dhowa Bhils, a turbulent tribe, and that mischief was brewing. He also asked for the services of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad. The detachment at Indore forming the Escort of the Agent to the Governor General was sent out under the command of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sirdar Bahadur*, in pursuit of the band of Walaiti dacoits who had plundered some villages besides killing and wounding some of the villagers. Two of the leaders with twenty of the gang and some of the property were captured; a few of the gang including the principal leader the Pirzada got away across the border into Rajputana. They were however followed up and the Pirzada with four other leaders arrested. About Rs. 5,000 were recovered out of the Rs. 20,000 said to have been plundered. The leader was tried in the Court of the Agent to the Governor General, where he was sentenced to death and his followers to transportation for life. Regarding this, Colonel Kincaid said in his report:

I am much indebted to Colonel Martin's prompt assistance and the ability and energy with which the Risaldar-Major carried out the orders given to him.

From January to June in 1888 the *Sirdar Bahadur* was employed with a troop of the Central India Horse under the orders of Major John Biddulph, Political Agent in Bhopawar, in repressing the outbreak of Bhils in the Ali Rajpur State in Central India, when he again brought himself prominently to notice by his indefatigable exertions in hunting down different parties of Makranies and indirectly causing the capture of the outlaw Bhil leaders Chitoo and Bhowan. Colonel Buller, the Political Agent in Malwa, regarding this service remarked:

A detachment of the 1st Regiment, Central India Horse, under Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, was employed from January till April in quelling the disturbances in the Ali Rajpur State. The services of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad were brought most favourably to the notice of Government.

No.1 M.3 Y, dated Camp Sutna, 19th November 1883

*From: Colonel P. W. Bannerman, Officiating Agent to the Governor
General in Central India*

To: The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department

I have the honour to forward, for the consideration of the Government of India, copies of papers received from the Officer Commanding, Central India Horse, in which he brings to notice the good work performed by Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, 1st Central India Horse, and proposing that some substantial mark of Imperial favour be bestowed on this distinguished native officer.

2. Colonel Buller suggests that the dignity of a Companion of the Indian Empire be awarded to the Risaldar-Major, and that he also receive a further grant of land if possible in Oudh.

3. Colonel Buller's favourable opinion regarding Isri Prasad I would heartily endorse. The work he has done for the Government has been of an unusually trying nature, and it is not too much to say that his skill and courage in tracking and arresting notorious criminals has tended materially to the safety of life and property in Malwa of late years. Recently I had occasion to bring his services in connection with the Bhil rising prominently to the notice of the Government of India, and I trust that it may be possible to give effect to the suggestions of the Commanding Officer.

No.1 M.3 Y, dated Agra, Western Malwa, 16th October 1883.

*From: Colonel H.M. Buller, Officiating Commandant Central India
Horse*

*To: The Second Assistant Agent, Governor General for Central
India*

I have the honour to forward herewith accompanying nominal roll and memorandum on the services of Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, of the 1st Regiment Central India Horse, and shall feel obliged by your submitting same to Colonel Bannerman for some adequate reward to the Risaldar-Major for the undoubted good work rendered by him to the British Government during an unusually long and creditable career of forty-six years.

As the gallant old officer will shortly be retiring from the Military Service, I trust the Agent to the Governor General will think fit to submit the case to Government, and lend his warm support in obtaining as a reward that the Risaldar-Major's name be enrolled amongst the Companions of the Indian Empire, and that he be awarded some more substantial remuneration by a further grant of land in Oudh district.

*Memorandum on the services of Risaldar Major Isri Prasad, Sardar Bahadur, of the
1st Regiment, Central India Horse*

This officer entered the service in 1837 in the Mehidpur Contingent, and was in 1854 promoted for his good conduct and abilities to the rank of Subedar. On the Mutiny of the Gwalior Contingent in 1857, he with a portion of his company remained faithful to the British Government and assisted in saving the lives of several British Officers. For this he was transferred to the Cavalry Branch in the grade of Risaldar and was granted the 2nd Class Order of British India.

2. From that date this gallant old officer has served continuously in Central India and has on numerous occasions performed most excellent work in successfully capturing several armed bands of dacoits and free-booters, in all of which expeditions, when leading his party of troopers, his sound judgment, cool nerve and daring were conspicuous and were the subject of well-merited praise by the Agent to the Governor General for Central India and the officers under whom he was immediately serving.
3. In consideration of his good services he obtained the thanks of the Government of India, and was granted 130 acres of land rent free for his life time and was also promoted to the 1st Class Order of British India.
4. Although Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad has not, unfortunately through force of circumstances, been employed in any great Military Campaign since 1857, and consequently has but few medals to show, he has nevertheless performed undoubted good work for the British Government during an usually long career of forty-six years' service under such distinguished leaders as Sir Henry Daly, Sir Sam Browne, Sir Deighton Probyn, Generals Travers, Hughes and Watson, Colonels Bradford and Martin, all of whom on different occasion testified to his good work, and to the valuable aid he has at all times rendered them.
5. As the Risaldar-Major is about to resign the service at the end of the current year his claims are duly submitted with a strong recommendation and hope that Government will deem him worthy of obtaining some more substantial mark of favour than he has hitherto been awarded.

In the report of the year 1883-84 on the administration of the Western Malwa Agency, Colonel H.M. Buller wrote that good work was performed by Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, who with a detachment of the Corps (Central India Horse) and six native officers, seventeen non-commissioned officers and 194 rank and file of the Malwa Bhil Corps, during the most trying season of the year, effectually broke up the notorious gang of dacoits under the leadership of the Bhil outlaw Nana Rawat, who by a successful course of plunder had caused his name to be held in terror throughout the Ali Rajpur state. A special report on the Risaldar-Major's long and distinguished services, which extended over a period of forty-seven years, was lately forwarded to Government and his name submitted for some substantial reward. In recognition Government has been pleased to confer on him the grant of a *Jagir* of half a village in the Oudh district.

On Colonel Buller's report, Sir Lapel Griffin, K.C.S.I, Agent to the Governor General in Central India, observed as follows:

One disquieting element still existed in the Bhil country: namely Nana Rawat, a daring free booter who had become the terror of the neighbourhood, and who was able with impunity to defy the authority of the small State of Jobat in which he resided. Measures were concerted for affecting his capture, and subsequent to the close of the year he was killed by the Malwa Bhil Corps in resisting attempts made to secure his person. The Bhil leaders Chhitoo and Bhowan have, for the sake of greater security, and in order that the Bhils might understand that there was no prospect of their release, been removed to the Agra Central Jail, and with their disappearance from the locality, and the death of Nana Rawat, there is no reason why the Bhil country should not be quiet for some years to come.

In 1885, Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, who had been transferred to the pension establishment in the previous year after a distinguished career of forty-six year's loyal and faithful services, was made a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire and A.D.C. to the Agent to the Governor General in Central India during the visit of His Excellency the Viceroy to Indore. The *Sirdar*

Bahadur also received a sword of honour from the Agent to the Governor General, for his gallant services, in the same year.

The Agent to the Governor General, in his remarks in this year's report to the Government, said:

His Excellency the Viceroy and Lady Dufferin, and his staff, arrived at Indore on the afternoon of the 12th November 1885 a sword of honour was given to Risaldar Major Isri Prasad, a retired officer of the same Corps [Central India Horse] whose services in the arrest of Bhil rebels and dacoits have been numerous and conspicuous, and who is now engaged in pursuit of Tantia, the notorious dacoit of the Nerbada districts.


A sword of honour, with the inscription 'for gallant service in the cause of order' was presented.

The Risaldar-Major acted as A.D.C. to the Agent to the Governor General in 1886 during the installation ceremony of His Highness the late Maharaja Sir Shivaji Rao Holkar, G.C.S.I.

In the year 1888, the gallant *Sardar Bahadur* Isri Prasad after a long and distinguished service received in *Jagir* the village Kundri in the Lucknow district and the village of Deotapur in the Sitapur district in Oudh.

In the year 1885, Risaldar Major Isri Prasad Tiwari, *Sardar Bahadur*, was ordered to capture the notorious dacoit Tantia Bhil, who had greatly disturbed the peace of Central Provinces, Indore State and of the British districts adjoining to Central India. Tantia after a prolonged campaign was captured on the 11th August 1889. On his capture, the *Sirdar Bahadur* obtained the thanks of the Government of India through the Agent to the Governor General, and the British Government granted in *Jagir* the village of Nandagaon to him in Khandwa district in the Central Provinces, and Rs 3,000 and Rs 2,000 were also granted to him by the Government and the Indore State respectively, and he also received letters of congratulation from Field Marshal Lord Roberts, the then Commander-in-Chief, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces and Colonel David Barr for this excellent service.

Victoria R. I.



Victoria by the Grace of
God of the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Ireland Queen
Defender of the Faith, Empress of
India and Sovereign of the Order of
the Indian Empire, To Resaldar
Major Sri Peshad, Sardar Bahadur,
1st Regiment, Central India Horse,
Greetings, Whereas We have thought
fit to nominate and appoint you
to be a Member of Our said Order
of the Indian Empire, We do by
these Presents grant unto you the
dignity of a Companion of Our
said Order and hereby authorize
you to have, hold and enjoy the
said dignity and rank of a
Companion of Our said Order

Grant of the dignity of a Companion
of the Order of the Indian Empire to
Resaldar Major Sri Peshad, Sardar
Bahadur.

together with all and singular
the privileges thereunto belonging
or appertaining.

Given at Our Court at Osborne
under Our Sign Manual and the
Seal of Our said Order, this First
day of January 1885, in the Forty
eighth year of Our Reign.

By Her Majesty's Commands.

Kimberley

CERTIFICATE OF A COMPANION OF THE ORDER OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE

Rank, name and other personal detail

Ressaldar Major Isri Pershad, Sardar Bahadur, 1st Central India Horse

He captured Tantia while he was a pensioner. Mr F. Henvey, the Agent to the Governor General, in the Annual Report of 1889-90 regarding the capture of Tantia Bhil said as follows:

As an instance of the vigour of His Highness' action when his mind is made up, I may note the capture of the celebrated free-booter Tantia Bhil. This capture was effected, as everyone knows, by a joint expedition organized, equipped, and sent out at Maharaja Holkar's request. But it is not so generally known that the Indore Durbar had led up to this crowning exploit by a series of well-planned measures all tending to the isolation of Tantia and to the diminution of his prestige in Indore territory. His family was removed from the border, his patrons were arrested and punished, and a powerful personage, whose influence extended over the region frequented by the outlaw, was sent in to temporary exile. I must not forget, however, while giving the fullest credit and the greatest honour to the Durbar, to mention those by whom the capture was actually accomplished. The lance-shaft was Maharaja Holkar's, but the steel point was furnished by *Sardar Bahadur* Isri Prasad and his gallant comrades of the Central India Horse and Bhopal Battalion, whose services have been cordially acknowledged.

Tantia was tried by the Central Provinces Authorities and was hanged at Jubbulpore. The Risaldar-Major after this distinguished service fell ill and died on the 26th September 1890 at Indore. Mr A. Tucker, the 1st Assistant under the orders of the Agent to the Governor General, sent a letter of condolence on the 28th September 1890 to Major Madan Mohanlall, which runs thus:

The Agent to the Governor General desires me to convey to you, as the heir and representative of the late Risaldar-Major Isri Prasad, *Sardar Bahadur*, an expression of the concern and regret with which he had learned the news of the Risaldar-Major's decease.





DECORATIONS AND MEDALS AWARDED TO RISALDAR MAJOR ISRI PRASAD TIWARI

The crown is missing from the top of the C.I.E.
The Mutiny medal is named in engraved script:
Ressaldar Isreepershad 1st Regt Central India Horse

Editor's notes

The covers are missing from Luard's booklet and there is no title page, and so the title is unknown. On the opening page of his article, Sushil mentions the Bhopawar Levy and speculates that it may have been a body of irregular armed police raised for service within the independent state of Bhopawar in the Central India Agency. Can anyone provide more definite information?

A DORSET HERO OF THE INDIAN MUTINY - DELHI, 1857

Alan Harfield

Two officers whose families resided in Dorsetshire performed acts of heroism during the Indian Mutiny resulting in their death and the award of the Victoria Cross. They were Lieutenant Philip Salkeld, Bengal Engineers and Cornet William Banks of the 7th Hussars. This article deals with the life, service and memorials of Philip Salkeld.

Salkeld was born in the village of Fontmell Magna on 13 October 1830 and it is in this small north Dorset village that a memorial cross stands in the churchyard in memory of Lieutenant Philip Salkeld who was mortally wounded at Delhi on 14 September 1857.

Philip Salkeld was the third son among the eleven children of The Reverend Robert Salkeld, MA,¹⁰ the Rector of Fontmell Magna, and Elizabeth Henriette, his wife.¹¹ He was educated by Dr Bridgeman of Woolwich and was later sponsored by Mr William Astell, a Member of Parliament and a Director of the East India Company.¹²

He entered Addiscombe College in 1846¹³ and while there was selected by competition for an Engineer appointment and obtained the top prize in mathematics and modern languages. He was appointed to the rank of Second Lieutenant on 9 June 1848 and spent nearly two years studying the theoretical and practical side of fortifications and engineering at the Royal Engineers establishment at Chatham.

He was given authority to travel overland to India and arrived at Calcutta in June 1850 where he joined the Corps of Sappers and Miners, Bengal Engineers. By the time he had settled into his new environment he had acquired an excellent knowledge of Hindustani. In June 1853 he was appointed Extra Engineer at Meerut and in November of that year was given the appointment as the officer 'in charge of the Grand Trunk Road'. He held that post until December 1856 when he became the Executive Engineer, Delhi District¹⁴

During his service in India Philip Salkeld secured means for a brother to come to India and saved part of his salary. He sent home £100 a year towards the education of his younger brother¹⁵ and also helped a sister, who was 'obliged to earn her own bread as governess'.¹⁶ At the time of the outbreak of the mutiny at Meerut on 10 May 1857, he had saved £700 which was in the Delhi Bank. However when the Bengal troops mutinied at Delhi on 11 May, Salkeld lost all his possessions during his escape from the city as well as all his money.

Salkeld played a full part in the campaign around Delhi and proved to be a brave officer whose one aim was to achieve an objective with little heed to the danger. He was one of a group of twelve officers and ladies who escaped from Delhi and had made their way to Meerut. On 27 May he was one of fourteen officers who accompanied the column that marched out of Meerut and took part in the Battle of Hindun.¹⁷ On 8 June Salkeld took part in the successful action at Badli-ki-Serai; the column then proceeded and halted at a point where the main road to Delhi met the road to the Cantonment.

The next obstacle to be overcome was the crossing of the bridge over the Najafgarh Jhil Canal which, at the time, was under artillery fire from the mutineers. Salkeld volunteered to go forward to inspect the bridge but immediately came under fire; however his reconnaissance proved that although damaged it was just usable by the Artillery and, in consequence of his action the Column advanced. The artillery crossed the canal, wheeled to the right and opened fire on the enemy which had the effect of silencing that particular group of mutineers.

¹⁰ Robert Salkeld was born in Fifehead Neville and was Rector of Fontmell Magna for 46 years. He died at Fontmell Magna on 22 January 1866.

¹¹ Elizabeth Henrietta, youngest child of Lieutenant Colonel John Wilson of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, was born on 1 March 1802. She died at Blandford Forum on 25 September 1879 but was buried in the church ground of Fontmell Magna.

¹² The National Army Museum. The Hodson Index of biographical data on officers of the East India Company's Armies and the Indian Army.

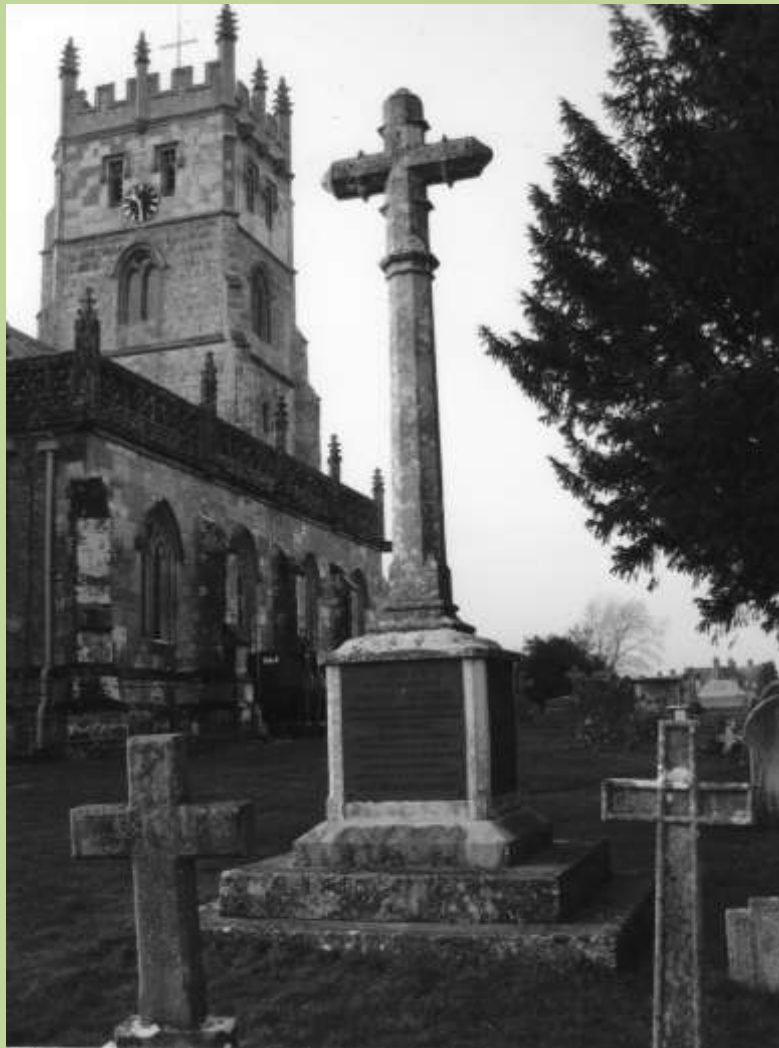
¹³ Vibart, Colonel H.M., *Addiscombe Its Heroes and Men of Note*, London 1894, p 537

¹⁴ *East-India Register & Directory* for 1857, p 87. The entry shows Salkeld as being a First Lieutenant (with effect from 1854) and employed by the Department of Public Works.

¹⁵ *The United Services Gazette* dated 28 November 1857. The two brothers who eventually served in the Bengal army were Richard Salkeld (British Library [IOR] reference L/MIL/9/250, ff 159-172) and Charles Edward Salkeld (BL [IOR] reference L/MIL/9/245, ff 1176-1180).

¹⁶ Extract from a letter by S.G. Osborne which was published in *The Times* dated 1 January 1858

¹⁷ Thackeray, Colonel Sir Edward, *Biographical Notices of Officers of the Royal (Bengal) Engineers*, London 1900, p 125



THE SALKELD MEMORIAL CROSS AT FONTMELL MAGNA

Salkeld served throughout the siege of Delhi and was stationed in the camp on the Ridge. Four days later, on the 12 June, when there had been particularly heavy fighting in the Sabzi Mandi¹⁸ area, Lieutenant W.S.R. Hodson, of Hodson's Horse¹⁹, proposed that six or eight Engineers should go out with him and 'take a look around'. The party moved out just before sunset and went to the Sabzi Mandi and Captain Trotter wrote:

As we went along the narrow streets many of the enemy, with muskets and cross belts, put their heads over the parapets on the houses right and left and bobbed down again. The enemy did not open fire on the small party of European officers, one of whom was Lieutenant Salkeld. Hodson accosted an old woman as they approached the Mori Bastion and, after questioning her about the directions of various roads thereabouts, the party withdrew along the same route without a shot being fired.²⁰

Trotter comments in his book that:

¹⁸ Sabzi Mandi, sometimes spelt 'Subzi Mandi' (vegetable market) was located to the west of the present day Subzimandi Railway Station.

¹⁹ Lieut. William Hodson was DAQMG i/c Intelligence Dept. of the Delhi Field Force

²⁰ Trotter, Lionel James, *A leader of light horse. Life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse*, Edinburgh 1901

[Salkeld] told me that he regarded this reconnoitring trip as the maddest one he had ever made.

The Chief Engineer and the Brigadier of the Artillery agreed to form two batteries with each having an 18-pounder and an 8-inch howitzer and Salkeld was placed in command of one battery which then became known as 'Salkeld's battery'.²¹

On the night of 13 September it was decided that an assault on the 'Cashmere²² Bastion' and the 'Water Bastion' would be made at daybreak the following day. The third Column, under the command of Colonel G. Campbell, commanding the 52nd Regiment of Foot, was to carry out the assault on the Cashmere Gate.

Colonel Richard Baird Smith records the event with complete simplicity.

14th [September] Assault took place early morning....3rd Column under Brig G. Campbell 52 Regt.
Lt Home Lt Tandy. Lt Salkeld Ens[ign] Nuthall.
The explosion party who performed the desperate duty of blowing in the Cashmere Gate [in] broad daylight consisted of
Lts Home & Salkeld wounded and died.
Sergeant John Smith. Sergeant Andrew Blair Carmichael – killed. Corporal Joshua Burgis Grierson alias J. Burgess – killed.²³

As day dawned the attack on Delhi began.

A detachment with ladders and powder kegs then advanced to demolish the Kashmir Gate. It was led by Lieutenants D.C. Home and P. Salkeld of the Bengal Engineers and consisted of three British non-commissioned officers and 14 Indian soldiers of the Bengal Sappers and Miners, ten men of the Punjab Sappers or Pioneers and a British bugler.²⁴

When there was no more cover the Explosion Party, consisting of all the Europeans and eight of the Indian Sappers, rushed in two small parties towards the gate despite the heavy fire from the mutineers inside the wall and the gate. The event is recorded by two contemporary accounts which have been graphically written by Lieutenant Duncan Home²⁵ and Serjeant John Smith.

Lieutenant Duncan Charles Home wrote:

Serjeants John Smith and Carmichael, Mahdo, Havildar, [and 4] Sappers and myself arrived at the Cashmere Gate untouched a short time in advance of the remainder of the party under Lieutenant Salkeld, having found the palisade gate on the outside of the ditch and the wicket of the Cashmere Gate open, and three planks of the bridge across the ditch removed.

²¹ Thackeray, *op cit*, p 126

²² There were two alternative spellings of the title of the gate written in various reports, these being 'Cashmere' and 'Kashmir'.

²³ *The Diary of Colonel Richard Baird Smith*. Original diary deposited in the Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham.

²⁴ Sandes, Lieutenant Colonel E.W.C., *The Military Engineer in India*, Vol I, Chatham 1933, p 342

²⁵ The official Report from Lieutenant D.C. Home, B.E., to the Chief Engineer, Delhi Field Force, was published under the title 'A Subaltern in the Indian Mutiny' by Colonel C.B. Thackeray, RA., in *The R.E. Journal*, Volume XLIV, December 1931, pp 604-605.



This obstacle did not delay the ‘Explosion party’ and Sergeant Carmichael advanced and was in the act of laying his 25lb powder bag when he was shot and killed by a mutineer at the wicket.²⁶ The report by Lieutenant Home continues:

Havildar Mahdo was, I believe, also wounded about the same time. Lieutenant Salkeld, carrying the slow match to light the charge now came up with a portion of the remainder of the party [and attempted] to shield himself from the fire from the wicket which was very severe.

The advance party deposited the powder bags and Home slipped into the ditch²⁷ whilst Salkeld advanced with the slow match but was wounded in the arm and leg, at which stage Corporal Joshua Burgess took the match. He was also hit by a musket ball and was being treated by Havildar Tillok

²⁶ Sandes, *The Military Engineer In India, op cit*, p 342

²⁷ Although the remains of the Kashmir Gate still stand, the ditch has, at some stage, been filled in and can no longer be traced.

who was, in turn, wounded whilst trying to rescue Burgess by helping him into the ditch. At the same time Sepoy Rambeth (also known as Ram Heth) was killed. Lieutenant Home's narrative continues:

As I was assisting Lieutenant Salkeld into the ditch I think he was wounded the second time [some reports record that he was hit in the arm]. The charge having exploded blew in the right leaf of the gate, on which I caused the regimental call of the 52nd Regiment to be sounded as the signal for the advance of the storming party. I caused the bugler (Hawthorne) to sound the call three times, after which the column advanced to storm the gate [which] was taken possession of by our troops.

Lieutenant Duncan Charles Home was later killed due to the blowing up of a mine on 1 October 1857.²⁸



THE KASHMIR GATE, DELHI

²⁸ Thackeray, *op cit*, p 124

An account of the action was also recorded by Sergeant John Smith of the Bengal Sappers and Miners and his report in respect of Lieutenant Salkeld shows that he did all he could for the mortally wounded officer. That section of his report reads:

As soon as the dust cleared away we saw Lieutenant Salkeld and [Sergeant] Burgess covered with dust; their lying in the middle of the ditch having saved them [from fallen debris] . . . I went to Lieutenant Salkeld and called the bugler to help move him under the bridge as the fire had covered upon us, and Lieutenant Salkeld's arms were broken. Lieutenant Salkeld would not let us remove him so I put a bag of powder under his head for a pillow, and with the bugler's puggery [sic] bound up his arms and thigh and I left the bugler to look after him and went to [Sergeant] Burgess . . . I got some brandy from Lieutenant Home and gave to both, also to a Havildar (Pelluck Singh), who had his thigh shot through . . . Lieutenant Home got out of the ditch, leaving me in charge of the wounded.²⁹

Smith's narrative continued:

I then went to the rear for stretchers . . . I put them into the ditch, and with the bugler's assistance got Lieutenant Salkeld into one and sent him to hospital, charging him [Bugler Robert Hawthorn] not to leave him until he had placed him in the hands of a surgeon.³⁰

Salkeld, with two broken arms and shot through the thigh, and one arm amputated, never recovered from these wounds and died on 11 October 1857³¹ and was buried in Delhi. In addition to the two contemporary reports the following account was published:

On nearing the gate itself, which had been blown open, by one of our officers . . . the latter was really the hazardous duty of the day and was most gallantly performed, although in broad daylight . . . on nearing the gate they found it open with a number of muskets protruding at the opening. They received a volley, which killed and wounded a number. Sergeant Carmichael tried to light the port-fire attached to the bags, but was shot dead in the attempt. After him Sergeant Burgess of the Sappers tried, but fell, pierced with three bullets. After Sergeant Burgess, Salkeld tried but fell into the ditch, shot in the leg which was broken, and in the arm which has been amputated.³²

Prior to his demise Major General Sir Archdale Wilson awarded Salkeld the Victoria Cross.³³ The ribbon of the Victoria Cross was pinned to his tunic by Lieutenant J.E. Turnbull, 78th (Ross-shire Buffs), Aide-de-Camp to Sir Archdale Wilson. Salkeld was reputed to have commented on the honour:

'It will be gratifying to send it home'.

²⁹ Wilkins, Philip A, *History of the Victoria Cross*, London 1904, pp 105-106

³⁰ Wilkins, *op cit*, p 106

³¹ Thackeray, *op cit*, p 127, confirms his date of death as being 11 October 1857; as does Molesworth, Colonel F.C, The diary and letters of 1st Lieutenant, Bengal Engineers, India – 1857 to 1859, *The Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol IX, No 38, October 1930, p 191.

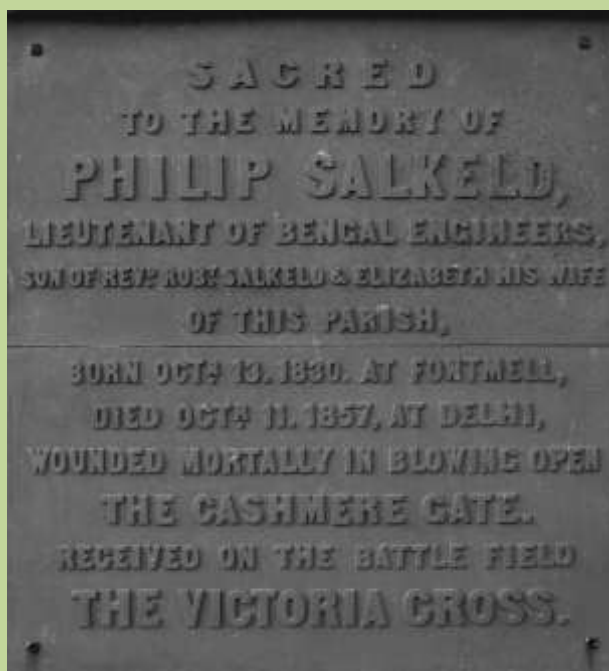
³² Anon, *Narrative of the India Revolt from the outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow by Sir Colin Campbell*, London 1858, p 165

³³ On 29 January 1856 Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort confirmed that the award of the Victoria Cross would be created and as a result the medal was instituted under a Royal Warrant published in *The London Gazette* dated 5 February 1856. There was some confusion in that the award did not include officers and men of the East India Company's armies. Eligibility was extended to the East India Company forces under a Royal Warrant of 29 October 1857. The grant of the award was made locally and later confirmed by Queen Victoria.

An obituary was published in the *Illustrated London News* of 19 December 1857 as a result of which an appeal for assistance in the commissioning of his two brothers was published in *The Times* which resulted in both being commissioned.³⁴

In *The Times* of 1 January 1858 Mr S.G. Osborne gave details of a fund that was raised to provide a memorial in his home village, stipulating that any surplus money should be spent in providing uniforms for the younger brother. *The Times* of 7 January 1858 published an appeal written by 'A Retired Engineer' recommending the grant of a commission to one of Salkeld's brothers.³⁵

The award of the VC was eventually promulgated in *The London Gazette* of 18 June 1858, p 145.



PLAQUE ON THE SALKELD MEMORIAL

Following Salkeld's demise, it was proposed that a memorial be raised outside the church in his home village of Fontmell Magna and as it was beyond the means of his father, the Editors of the local papers published the account of Salkeld's gallant action and details of his award, making an appeal for funds. Local gentry made generous donations for the provision of the memorial and a meeting was held for the Indian Relief Fund. As a result of the amount of money raised, the organisers of the fund decided in 1864 that the surplus money was to be used 'for the public good' to construct a bridge over the River Divilish (a tributary of the River Stour) on the road between Sturminster Newton and Hazelbury Bryan and Dorchester.

³⁴ Richard Henry Salkeld served as a Major in the 16th Bengal Infantry and Charles Edward Salkeld served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the 2nd Bengal Cavalry.

³⁵ Lummis, Canon W.H, MC, *The Lummis VC and GC files*. This archive is the property of The Military Historical Society. It is on loan to the National Army Museum in London for safe keeping. There is no NAM reference.



SALKELD BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER DIVILISH

Into either side of the bridge stones were set containing the words

SALKELD
1857
DELHI



INSCRIPTION ON LEFT SIDE OF BRIDGE (PARTLY OVERGROWN)

At Sturminster Newton on the right-hand side of the entrance of the local Museum is a large stone to which the Museum name plaque is attached and the rear of the stone contains the following inscription:

SALKELD
1857
DELHI

Gwyn Rogers commented that

This stone was noted by Ray Rogers at Manor Farm Bagber (c 1960) on the occasion of the retiring sale of Mr Maurice Bower – a great nephew of Philip Salkeld VC. He was told that it had been removed from Salkeld Bridge during World War 2, so that it could not be used by enemy parachutists to determine their position, should they land in the area. As the stone was to be broken up and the yard concreted, Ray Rogers was given permission to remove it.³⁶

There were four recipients of the Victoria Cross awarded for the action at the ‘Kashmir Gate’ these being

The London Gazette, dated 24 April 1858
Sergeant J. Smith, Bengal Sappers and Miners.
Bugler R. Hawthorn, 52nd Regt (Ox & Bucks Light Infantry).

The London Gazette, dated 18 June 1858
Duncan Charles Home, Lieutenant, Philip Salkeld, Lieutenant, Bengal Engineers. Date of act of bravery: 14 September 1857. Upon whom the Victoria Cross was provisionally conferred by Major General Sir Archdale Wilson, Bart, KCB. For their conspicuous bravery in the performance of the desperate duty of blowing in the Cashmere Gate of the Fortress of Delhi, in broad daylight, under a heavy fire of musketry, on the morning of 14 September 1857, preparatory to the assault. Would have been recommended to Her Majesty for the confirmation in that distinction had they survived.

The Indian Sappers and Miners were also awarded for their bravery, some being given the ‘Indian Order of Merit’ while others were granted the appropriate class of the ‘Order of British India.’³⁷



THE RECTORY AT FONTMELL MAGNA

³⁶ Rogers, Gwyn, *Three Stones at Sturminster Newton Museum*, leaflet dated 1989

³⁷ Hypher, P.P., *Deeds of Valour of the Indian Soldier which won The Indian Order of Merit*, Simla 1925, pp 114-115

As Salkeld was deceased, the Victoria Cross was consequently sent by post to his father on 7 July 1858 together with the following letter:

I have received Her Majesty's Command to transmit to you herewith the decoration of the Victoria Cross which Maj Gen Sir Archdale Wilson conferring in Her Majesty's name on your late lamented son to commemorate the daring act of gallantry which he performed on the memorable occasion of the assault on the stronghold of the Fortress of Delhi.³⁸

There appears to have been a second letter sent to Salkeld's father.

Her Majesty desires me to express to you the satisfaction which it would have afforded to Her to have confirmed the grant of this high distinction to this gallant soldier had it pleased Providence to have spared his life, and how gladly She would have presented to him this token of the sense which She entertains of his undaunted courage and conspicuous bravery. The Queen sincerely sympathises with you in his loss.

(Signed) J. Peel³⁹

Salkeld's 'VC' is not, as far as is known, in a Museum collection and Canon Lummis has annotated his file to the effect that the medal is still held by a member of the family. The entry is dated 14 June 1948; however the present whereabouts of the medal is not known.⁴⁰

Additional Reading

Irving, Miles, ICS, *A List of Inscriptions on Christian Tombs or Monuments in the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir and Afghanistan possessing Historical or Archaeological Interest*, Lahore 1910, entries 162/164

Edwardes, Michael, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny*, London 1963

Llewellyn, Alexander, *The siege of Delhi*, London 1977

Malleson, Colonel C.B, *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1858*, Volume II, London 1879

Smyth, Brigadier The Rt. Hon. Sir John, *The Story of the Victoria Cross 1856-1963*, London 1963

The photographs supporting this article were all taken by June Harfield. The drawing 'The Blowing in of the Kashmir Gate' was made by Eyre Crewe A.R.A. and published in Vol I of *The Military Engineer in India* by Lieut. Colonel E.W.C. Sandes, Chatham 1933, p 342. The original was at one time kept in the Royal Engineers Mess at Roorkee.

Editor's note

As a reward for outstanding gallantry with the explosion party, four Indian officers and other ranks of the Bengal Sappers and Miners were admitted to the Indian Order of Merit. A further seven awards were granted to men who were in support of (but not actually with) the explosion party. The Bengal Sappers received an additional twenty-three awards for other gallant deeds performed during the Delhi siege. The havildar referred to as 'Pelluck Singh' on page 36 is probably Havildar Tillok Sing who died of his wounds and was thus not eligible for admission to the Order of Merit which at that time was only granted posthumously under exceptional circumstances.

³⁸ Perkins, Roger, *The Kashmir Gate. Lieutenant Home & the Delhi VCs*, Chippenham 1983, pp 95-96

³⁹ Perkins, *op cit*, p 96

⁴⁰ Lummis, *op cit*, page unnumbered

SUBEDAR SOWAR KHAN, *BAHADUR*, I.O.M., AND THE 6-13TH FRONTIER FORCE RIFLES AT THE FORCING OF THE TRIGNO RIVER

An episode during the campaign in the Italian Adriatic sector

Cliff Parrett

The Trigno river, northeast of Cassino and flowing from west to east into the Adriatic Sea, was one of several major obstacles facing the right wing of the Allied army advancing northwards in October 1943 in what was known as the 'Adriatic Sector' of the Italian front. The task of forcing the Trigno opposite Tufillo village, some 15 miles inland, and establishing a bridgehead there fell to 19th Indian Brigade of 8th Indian Division (1-5th Essex, 3-8th Punjab, and 6-13th FFR). Opposing the crossing were elements of First German Parachute Division, reputed to be one of the enemy's most experienced, skilful and belligerent formations.

On the night of 24th October, after some sharp skirmishes with German advance posts, 19th Brigade occupied Monte Mitro and Monte Falcone on the south bank of the Trigno.

In this neighbourhood the Trigno ran between steep escarpments whose crests stood fifteen hundred feet above the bottom of the valley. In many places the banks were sheer. The river was one hundred yards wide and in full view of the enemy on the ridges to the north. Ordinarily no more than two feet deep, the stream had risen sharply as a result of the autumnal rains. All bridges were blown and all approaches mined.¹

The objectives of 19th Brigade were to cross the river and capture and hold two key features on the north side, Tufillo village and Monte Farano on the high ground. Thus was 8th Indian Division committed to its first major action on European soil. The prospects were grim. Intelligence sources reported that the German paratroopers were well aware of the Indians' intentions and had prepared a warm reception. Weather conditions deteriorated. Heavy rain turned tracks into quagmires, and approach roads were severely damaged.

Under lowering skies, pelted by cold rains, the infantry patiently waited for three days before preparations were finalized. The assault was to be spear-headed by the Frontier Force *jawans*. At 0345 hours on 2nd November, after a fierce barrage which was later found to have completely missed the enemy's positions, the 6-13th FFR silently waded into the icy water and began to cross.

When it reached the opposite bank, 'B' Company (Pathan) occupied a knoll overlooking the Battalion's left flank without much difficulty. 'C' Company (Dogra) immediately moved through to assault Tufillo village, a typical medieval hamlet with narrow, precipitous streets. Artillery and mortar fire had little effect on the thick stone walls of the buildings. It was a classic German 'hedgehog' defensive position. All approaches were mined and booby-trapped. A curtain of mortar bombs covered the minefield. Every house held a sniper. Attempts to close were met with showers of grenades. Several determined attacks were put in by 'B' and 'C' Companies. Quick savage counterattacks were launched against any ground won. The Battalion called for air support but this was refused on account of the close proximity of the fighting. Eventually the attack petered out.

¹ Anon, *The Tiger Triumphs, The Story of Three Great Divisions in Italy*, H.M's Stationary Office, for the Government of India, 1946, p 10

Later in the morning some 'Kittihawks' dive-bombed Tufillo, scoring several direct hits on the village. Unfortunately this air attack did not shake the hold of the enemy paratroops. By 18.15 that evening 'B' and 'C' Coys had been withdrawn.²

Both companies pulled back to the small knoll on the riverbank where Battalion HQ and 'A' Company (Sikh) had established a temporary bridgehead. Overlooked as they were by the German positions above them, they were subjected to a harassing fire.

While the events at Tufillo village were unfolding, 'D' Company (Punjabi Musalman), the right leading company, had advanced along a spur towards what looked like an intermediate bound halfway up the slope of Monte Farano code-named 'Cross Tracks'. The way forward here was blocked by German defensive positions, and it was overlooked by German gunners in and around Tufillo village. During the afternoon of 2nd November, savage fighting also raged on this front. Commanded by Subedar Sowar Khan, 'D' Company had dug itself in around the lip of a precipitous quarry.

The enemy paratroops had counter-attacked again and again, but in spite of the limited field of fire, which in some cases did not exceed twenty yards, 'D' Company beat them off. However, towards evening, the enemy in great numbers approached through the bushes and a violent fire fight at close quarters ensued. Urgent messages over the wireless for ammunition and assistance were received by Battalion H.Q., but before help could reach 'D' Company the enemy were already forcing an entry into its position. As his forward posts were being overrun and the enemy were beginning to infiltrate into his main positions, Subedar Sowar Khan took desperate action. As Company Commander, he asked the F.O.O. with him to bring down the Field Regiment's defensive fire directly on to his own position instead of two hundred yards in front of it. The effect of this was terrific. While 'D' Company's men got some protection from their trenches, the enemy were caught in the open and driven back with heavy casualties. 'D' Company's casualties through this brave action were not light, several men having been blown over the precipice into the quarry. Subedar Sowar Khan himself was severely wounded.³

Shortly afterwards, when Major S.J.H. Green of 'A' Company arrived on the scene, he found 'D' Company still in possession of their trenches. The Germans had indeed withdrawn.⁴

The fighting at the Trigno bridgehead continued for the next two nights and days, with 1-5th Essex and 3-8th Punjab joining battle. In spite of his wounds, Subedar Sowar Khan continued to lead his Company until 4th November when he was wounded for a third time, crossing exposed ground under close enemy fire to restore the situation at a point on the perimeter of his position, knowing full well that he was risking his life in doing so. By now every Platoon commander had become a casualty, and command of the heavily weakened Company devolved on the shoulders of a junior NCO.

Eventually the diminished strength of 6-13th FFR made its position untenable. The forward companies were replaced by 3-8th Punjab during the night of 5th/6th November, and the Battalion withdrew across the Trigno to recuperate and reorganize. That same night forward patrols of 3-8th Punjab discovered that the Germans had quietly pulled out of Tufillo, and that the front was finally open.

² Brigadier N.L. St P. Bunbury DSO, *Regimental History of the 6th Royal Battalion (Scinde) 13th Frontier Force Rifles*, Aldershot 1951, p 56

³ *Ibid*, p. 57

⁴ Brigadier W.E.H. Condon OBE, *The Frontier Force Rifles*, Aldershot 1953, p 302

In this first engagement everyone [of 8th Indian Division] learned that next to courage and skill in battle, what mattered most was the adaptability and resources of the supply service. During the three days of the Trigno fighting, not even a jeep could reach the forward area. The 19th Brigade was maintained entirely by Indian mule transport companies, who faced and overcame every hazard of the battlefield. After Tuffillo was cleared, the only routes for wheeled transport were a village street as steep as a staircase, on which vehicles had to be winched up, and lined down; and a mud skidway, on which vehicles slid, ski-fashion, down the hillside. A senior officer of another division refused to believe that the Eighth Division could be maintained on such communications.⁵

More hard fighting for 6-13th FFR lay just around the corner. In mid-November 1943, prior to 5th Corps' attack on the important Sangro River defensive line, the Battalion was deployed with 19th Brigade to screen the left of the Corps advance. In connection with this operation 6-13th FFR was ordered to capture positions overlooking 2nd New Zealand Division's main assault. For three days and nights it battled for the high ground around Archi, just two miles from the river itself. It was one of many more actions involving 6-13th FFR throughout the remainder of the Italian campaign, including Cassino, the breaching of the Gothic Line, and the Senio and Salerno River Crossings. It finally returned to India in June 1945 after completing nearly five years of overseas service, having first embarked from Bombay in August 1940.

Little is known of Subedar Sowar Khan's services prior to his gallant deeds in Italy. His group of medals indicates that he fought in all of his Battalion's campaigns on the North West Frontier of India between 1920 and 1939.⁶ For gallant and distinguished services in Egypt and Cyrenaica between July and October 1941 he was mentioned in dispatches.⁷ For courageous leadership at the forcing of the Trigno river, he was admitted to the 2nd Class of the Indian Order of Merit, an immediate award approved in the field by *inter al* General B.L. Montgomery, at that time G.O.C. 8th Army.⁸ This was subsequently amended to a so-called 'Single Class' award.⁹

It is unlikely that Subedar Sowar Khan was involved in any of the actions in Italy that followed the Trigno fighting. His severe wounds resulted in a relatively long period of recuperation in India where he was attached to the 13th FFR Regimental Centre.¹⁰ He eventually retired in 1946, having been granted admission to the Order of British India for his long and faithful service.¹¹

⁵ Anon, *One More River, The Story of the Eighth Indian Division*, War Dept, Government of India, p 9

⁶ His medal group includes OBI/2, IOM/2, IGS 1908 (clasp NWF 1930-31), IGS 1936 (clasps NWF 1936-37, NWF 1937-39), 1939-45, Africa and Italy Stars, Defence Medal, and War Medal with MiD emblem.

⁷ *London Gazette*, 20 Jun 1942

⁸ Subedar Sowar Khan was admitted to the 2nd Class Indian Order of Merit for gallantry on this occasion. The award was sanctioned in GGO No. 81-h of 23 Mar 1944 and the award certificate was signed by the Private Secretary to the Viceroy on this same date. The citation was published in the Gazette of India two days later on 25 Mar 1944. As should be expected, the description of the Subedar's act of gallantry on the certificate matches precisely the citation published in the Gazette of India. However, some precision in the original recommendation on Army Form W. 3121, including the identity of the officer's company, was omitted.

⁹ Army Instruction 380 of 30 Oct 1944. This retrospective instruction required the recipient's class to be amended whereas the 2nd Class badge was to be retained.

¹⁰ The April and October 1945 editions of the *Indian Army List* record Subedar Sowar Khan's presence with the Centre.

¹¹ Subedar Sowar Khan was appointed to the 2nd Class Order of British India (supplementary to establishment) per GGO 150-h of 13 Jun 1946, round about the time of his retirement. He is not listed in the October 1946 edition of the *Indian Army List*.

CORRESPONDENCE

Further to Victoria Singh's article on Kotah in the Autumn 2007 edition of *Durbar*, the following comments and complimentary information have been received from member Brian Stevens.

Assuming the Kotah Contingent marched for Delhi on May 19th 1857, the length of time that the Contingent occupied their new cantonment at Deoli was extremely short as GGO No.1575 dated 13th April 1857, published in a GOCC dated the 25th of the same month, states that the Contingent's Head Quarters will be at the new cantonment of Deoli. From 1838 or 1839 the Headquarters had been at Murad-i-Munzil, near Nasirabad.

According to the Bengal Army List corrected to the 30th September 1858 the Establishment of the Contingent was: Artillery two European Sergeants and sixty Indians [with the four Guns and Howitzers mentioned in the article]; Cavalry four Risalas with 283 Indians of all ranks; Infantry element consisted of eight weak companies with a total Indian strength of 752. In addition there were two European Sergeants and two Indian Doctors.

By the time this Army List was published the Contingent no longer existed but the strength quoted is the same as that given in the last pre-Mutiny Army List. For some reason, with very few exceptions all units of the Bengal Army as it existed on the 1st January 1857 are listed. The entries include authorised strengths with a note stating whether the corps had mutinied or been disarmed.

The Section of the Army List concerning the Contingent noted that it was a Civil Corps, meaning that it was not maintained out of the Military Budget.

After the Mutiny, a GOGG dated 12th June 1860 authorised the formation of a local force designated the Deoli Irregular Force which came under the authority of the Government of India. It was formed from the Meena Battalion raised in 1857 from loyal elements of the Contingent.

As originally organized the Deoli Irregular Force consisted of a small cavalry regiment 320 strong which would approximate to four Risalas, and an eight-company infantry battalion with a strength of 800. By 1875 the force consisted of two Risalas of Lancers with a strength of 166 all ranks and an Infantry Battalion 712 strong. In 1902 the cavalry strength was down to 100 all ranks.

In 1903 the force was redesignated the 42nd Deoli Regiment retaining the cavalry element until about 1909. To date I have not been able to locate the authority for their disbandment, or for that matter those authorizing the various reductions in the strength of the Force.

A 1919 Army List shows Honorary Lieutenant Colonel H.H. Sir Umad Singh Bahadur, G.C.S.I. G.C.I.E. G.B.E., the Maharao of Kotah, as an Honorary Officer in the 42nd.

The Colonel of the Regiment from the 23rd April 1912 was Major General Sir James A. Bell, KCVO. I do not know if there had been a previous Colonel between 1904, the year Colonels were first appointed to regiments of the Indian Army, and 1912.

G.G.O. No. 4 of 1864 authorised the Honour 'Central India' won by the Meena Battalion of 1857. G.G.O. No. 418 of 1881 authorised 'Afghanistan 1879-80' for the Infantry Battalion's services during the 2nd Afghanistan War.

As a prelude to the 1922 re-organisation of the Indian Army the 42nd Deoli Regiment was disbanded on the 10th December 1921.

BOOK NOTES

● *AN ORDINARY OFFICER'S UNUSUAL CAREER. GEORGE FRANCIS ROWCROFT D.S.O., COLONEL 15TH LUDHIANA SIKH REGIMENT AND LATTERLY SURGEON MAJOR, INDIAN ARMY*; edited and published by Dee Stanley, 'Tregenna', Highcliff Crescent, Seaton, East Devon EX12 2PS, U.K.; iv, 91 pages, soft covers, 23 monochrome illustrations; £12.50 (p & p included); ISBN 978-0-9557691-0-8

The chance discovery of a forgotten journal in a bookshop led IMHS member Dee Featherstone (née Stanley) on a quest to trace the life of George Rowcroft [1861-1953] whose military career with the Indian Army took a most unusual turn in his later years. The result of what Dee describes as a labour of love is this edited version of Rowcroft's account of his life, as well as the restoration of the family memorials in Tiger Hill cemetery in Coonor, Southern India. It took Dee five years and annual trips to India to accomplish her mission.

After Sandhurst and commissioning, and the conventional two years with a British regiment, Rowcroft opted for the better financial conditions of the Indian Army and was posted to the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs, eventually rising to the command of this fine fighting regiment. He served with it in the Sudan, and on the Northwest Frontier between 1895 and 1898 including the relief of the beleaguered Chitral fort. He retired in 1906 but his military career was by no means over. Remarkably he decided to train as a surgeon and graduated five years later – just as the 1st World War was breaking out. He applied to the War Office for an infantry job but was appointed a surgeon major in the Indian Medical Service, serving on hospital ships in the English Channel and the Mediterranean.

Following his second retirement and the end of the war, George Rowcroft spent more than a decade searching for a country and a place to settle down in. He eventually returned to India in 1931, choosing the pleasant station of Coonor in the Nilgiri Hills. He passed away there in 1953 aged 91 years. Fortunately for posterity, in 1948 when his recollection of detail was evidently still good, he decided to record his experiences. This he achieved in an easy style peppered with good humour. He memoirs range from the campaigns he fought in to his valiant efforts to grow vegetable in the garden fronting his cantonment quarters.

Laced with anecdotes, including some extraordinary episodes on board hospital ships, it is an unusual and remarkable story. The illustrations include portraits of Rowcroft family members and regimental groups, and a series of photos illustrating the editor's trips to Southern India and the cemetery in Coonor where several Rowcrofts rest in peace. There is much in these reminiscences to interest students of the social and military history of the Indian Army. Recommended as an informative and thoroughly enjoyable read.

● *PUNJAB CAVALRY. EVOLUTION, ROLE, ORGANISATION AND TACTICAL DOCTRINE, 11TH CAVALRY (FRONTIER FORCE) 1849-1971*; Colonel M.Y. Effendi; published by Oxford University Press, No. 38, Sector 15, Korangi Industrial Estate, PO Box 8214, Karachi 74900, Pakistan; case-

bound, xix, 324 pages; 87 coloured and black/white illustrations, 62 polychrome maps, appendices, index; ISBN 978-0-19-547203-5. Price directly from OUP online at www.oup.com/pk is Rupees 595 plus postage. The Editor purchased his copy from a helpful eBay seller, namely Mr E. Hussain, House No 11, Street No 41, Sector G-7/4, Islamabad, Pakistan [ehjaz@fsmail.net], for GBP 9.99 plus GBP 5.50 postage [outside Europe postage GBP 7.00]; cheques or money orders payable to Mr E Hussain, care of 28 Chadwick Road, Eccles, Manchester, M30 9BS, U.K.

Colonel M.Y. Effendi was commissioned into the Pakistan Army in 1962 and joined 11th Cavalry, with whom he served for many years. His last appointment before retirement in 1986 was Deputy Director of Military Training, since when he has been writing and editing books. This unit history has the great advantage of being written by someone from within the regimental circle. It meets the long overdue need for a comprehensive history of the 11th Punjab Cavalry, which traces its origins back to the 1st and 3rd Cavalry, Punjab Irregular Force, raised in 1849. Not since 1887, when two volumes (one for each regiment and both very rare) were published in Lahore, has a comprehensive history of the regiment been attempted.

The author uses a broad brush to describe the regiment's services during the Indian Mutiny, the 2nd Afghan War and several frontier expeditions prior to 1914. The use of war diaries and regimental records brings much more detail to its services in Mesopotamia during the First World War [when it was 21st and 23rd Cavalry] and in North Africa and Burma during the Second World War including operations in Java in 1945-46. Colonel Effendi moves into top gear when he comes to describe the field services of his regiment as part of Pakistan Armoured Corps during the three conflicts with India following partition in 1947 up to 1971. The personal notes and journals of serving officers are used extensively and to good effect. The accounts of 11th Cavalry in action are gripping and crammed with detail. His comments on the strengths and weaknesses of both sides are well balanced, and he is occasionally quite candid in mentioning the shortcomings of particular general officers. The narrative is supported throughout with a series of useful maps and sketches.

There is plenty here to interest the student of cavalry. The 11th Punjab Cavalry saw a great deal of active service. As the author says, 'those who have worn the Kandahar Star on their berets can be proud of a rich and illustrious heritage'. Although his publisher has chosen a somewhat inferior quality paper which does not do justice to the illustrations, this should not deter the serious reader. Colonel Effendi's work more than justifies the relatively modest investment and is strongly recommended.

