

Indian Volunteers in the Great War East African Campaign

Harry Fecitt, M.B.E., T.D.

Introduction

In August 1914 the Volunteer units of the Indian Defence Force were recruited from white and mixed-race members of the civilian community whose expectations were that they would only be used operationally within India for local or home defence. However on the declaration of war several members of Volunteer units wished to serve overseas and their willingness allowed the Indian authorities to assemble three such units for service in East Africa. An artillery battery, a Maxim Gun Company and a railway defence section were dispatched along with a few specialists such as signalers.

The North-Western Railway Volunteers

This unit initially supplied one 12-pndr (a 12-cwt gun) and a four-man detachment (plus five followers) for an armoured train. The men and their gun sailed from India with Indian Expeditionary Force 'B' arriving off Tanga, German East Africa (G.E.A.), in November 1914. During the two days of fighting onshore the detachment remained on board along with the two Railway Companies, Sappers and Miners, that it was supporting, and withdrew to Mombasa with the re-embarked survivors of the British defeat at Tanga.

After escort duties on the Uganda Railway and a short spell of action on the British East Africa (B.E.A.) coast the gun team was sent north to Kisumu on Lake Victoria. Here the gun was mounted on the vessel *Winifred* that was being used for transport duties on the lake. The gun came into action against ground targets during the successful British raid on Bukoba, G.E.A., in June 1915. At this time the North-Western Railway Volunteers appear to have been reinforced and converted into a six-Maxim Gun detachment in preparation for the invasion of G.E.A. In the latter half of 1915 a 2-gun section was deployed at Mzima Springs in the Tsavo Valley. The railway gun was left in the hands of the Royal Navy on Lake Victoria and was moved onto the vessel *Kavirondo*.

During the battle for the Latema-Reata ridge line on 11th March 1916 the North-Western Railway Volunteers under Lieutenant H.P.C. Browne were attached to the Indian Volunteer Maxim Gun Company (see details below), being used as No 4 Section of that Company. After this successful action,

which opened the door into G.E.A. for the British, the North-Western Railway men appear to have been used as an independent machine gun detachment and they probably served in-theatre longer than any other Indian Volunteer unit.



LATEMA-REATA FROM THE GUN LINE

Three Distinguished Conduct Medals (D.C.M.) appear to have been awarded to the North-Western Railway Volunteers and the citations in the 'London Gazette' [L.G.] give an idea of the conditions under which these men fought:

No. 94 Sergeant A.E. McNevin (attached Bharatpur Imperial Service Infantry)

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, In the face of heavy enemy fire he handled his gun with great coolness and remained himself in action with it after the majority of his team had become casualties. His courageous determination was most praiseworthy.

No. 56 Corporal C. Lowe

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. His behaviour and coolness under fire were very marked. In one action he set a fine example to his gun team, keeping his gun going after his team had nearly all become casualties, he himself being wounded later.

No. 98 Pte C. Boardman

He worked his gun until his team had been reduced to two men. He was also successful in getting his gun out of action on being rushed by the enemy. He collected the remaining gun porters and returned to the firing line, where he remained all night until the section was relieved next day.

Temporary Lieutenant W.T. Biscoe was mentioned in despatches.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (C.W.G.C.) commemorates two North-Western Railway Volunteers on the Dar Es Salaam British and Indian Memorial: No. 63 Private Godfrey Rupert Williams and No. 122 Private H.H.

Webb. Two others have known graves: No. 109 Private S. Joseph is buried in the Dar Es Salaam C.W.G.C. Cemetery; No. 7656 Private L. Hockley is buried in Mombasa Mbaraki C.W.G.C. Cemetery.

The Calcutta Volunteer Battery

The first reinforcements sent to East Africa from India started arriving in September 1914. They were the units of Indian Expeditionary Force 'C' commanded by Brigadier-General J.M. Stewart. General Stewart had requested a field artillery unit and so a battery was formed from members of the Calcutta Artillery Volunteers. This six-gun 12-pndr (the old 6-cwt horse-artillery gun) battery employed ox transport. Although the oxen moved slowly they were more reliable than motor transport when the African rains fell and the roads and tracks turned into thick mud. Major Graham Kinloch commanded the battery.



CALCUTTA VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY BATTERY AT NAIROBI

Although known as The Calcutta Volunteer Battery, the official designation was No 8 Battery. The battery was initially deployed with one section detached at Voi whilst the remainder of the battery moved to the Kajiado area south of Nairobi to defend the most likely invasion route for German forces. At Voi, 100 miles north of Mombasa, a military railway was being constructed westwards towards G.E.A. In 1915 the complete battery was deployed to support the construction of this railway.



SALAITA HILL FROM THE NORTH EAST

On 11th February 1916 the battery came into action and fired 330 rounds during the failed British attack on Salaita Hill. This was the first occasion in East Africa when British artillery used telephone lines running back to the guns from Forward Observation Officers, and No 8 Battery's lines were frequently cut by motor-cyclists and horsemen.

Exactly one month later the battery was in action again during the ultimately successful British attack on the Latema-Reata hills, firing 363 shrapnel rounds.

During the advance by General Smuts' British forces down the Pangani River, No. 8 Battery was in Force Reserve but it was brought into action on the Lukigura River on 24th June 1916 when over thirty enemy were killed and over fifty captured – a rare achievement in the African bush where the enemy usually slipped away at the last moment.

By now the Calcutta Volunteers must have been suffering, along with the other non-African units, from the debilitating and often fatal effects of the tropical diseases that were prevalent. As well as 'fever' or malaria, dysentery, black-water fever, snake and scorpion bites, and jiggers (insects that burrowed under toenails) constantly caused medical problems, whilst crocodiles and other wild animals were ready to attack the oxen during watering periods in rivers. Also General Smuts' almost total disinterest in logistics was leading to a constant shortage of rations that affected both morale and physical efficiency.

In November 1916 No. 8 Battery was moved by sea south to Kilwa, a harbour in between Dar Es Salaam and the Portuguese border. As fighting intensified around Kibata to the northwest of Kilwa, the battery's Ammunition Column was sent forward to support the other artillery units in action there. The Calcutta Volunteer Battery had for a time been the only British field artillery unit in East Africa, and after the arrival of South African field batteries it had been a useful reserve artillery unit, but now the artillery staff wished to convert all field artillery batteries to the South African 13-pdr gun. On 18th February 1917 No. 8 Battery left the Kilwa area and it is probable that the Calcutta Volunteers then handed in their equipment and returned to India.

One Calcutta Artillery Volunteer was awarded the D.C.M.

No. 86 Bombardier J.V. Seivwright

For conspicuous gallantry when bandaging a wounded man under fire and removing him to a place of safety. He also went back across the open for water for the forward observation post under heavy fire.

Five Calcutta Artillery Volunteers were Mentioned in Despatches in the London Gazette of 30th June 1916.

Temporary Major G. Kinloch
No. 46 Bombardier H. Binning
No. 121 Gunner J.P. Tocher

2nd Lieutenant W.M. Browning
No. 74 Acting Bombardier J. Emeny

No. 96 Gunner F.A. Pacey is commemorated on the Nairobi British & Indian Memorial. No. 24 Gunner T. Turner is buried in Nairobi South C.W.G.C. Cemetery. No. 45 Corporal W. Dawson is buried in Moshi C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Tanzania.

Individual Indian Volunteers

Two Volunteers can be traced through London Gazette announcements, the first being awarded a D.C.M., and the second a mention.

No. 9 Corporal (Motor Cyclist) H.G. Cooper, The Southern Provinces Mounted Rifles (Madras)

For conspicuous gallantry on 14th July 1915 at Mbuyuni (East Africa) when he carried messages on foot under a very heavy fire to and from the firing line and, though severely wounded, with great coolness and bravery continued his work and delivered all his messages safely. His devotion to duty was most marked.

No. 40868 Fitter C.A. Digman, Bombay Volunteer Artillery
Mentioned in Despatches - L.G. of 7th March 1918

One Volunteer, Jemadar Jaganath Venkataswami, 36th Bengal Nagpur Railway Battalion is commemorated on the Dar Es Salaam British & Indian Memorial (died 2nd December 1917). It is most unusual to find an Indian officer with this rank, evidently a Tamil, on the strength of an Indian Defence Force unit.

The Indian Volunteer Maxim Gun Company

Fortunately the National Archives in London hold the War Diary of this unit (except for December 1916), allowing one to follow its progress from formation to return to India. Authority was given to form the unit on 12th September 1914 and the headquarters of The Bombay Volunteers was chosen to be the assembly point. Captain F.N. James, 104th Rifles and Adjutant of The Bombay Volunteers, was selected to command the new company and Sergeant-Major A.A. Wale, a British Army instructor with the Bombay Volunteers was selected as the Company Sergeant-Major. On 15th September two Maxims, sixteen machine gun mules with saddlery and six drabies (men who tended the mules) were sent to Bombay from Jhansi, followed a day later by a similar party from Rawalpindi. The saddlery was new and panels had to be stuffed and holes punched into straps.

Volunteers arrived for attestation from The Bangalore Rifle Volunteers and the Bombay, Lucknow, Mussoorie and Nagpur Volunteer Rifles. The men were equipped with rifles and 1903-pattern bandolier equipment. They were issued with mekometers (range finders), field glasses, ammunition and tentage, and sent to embark on the MT *Bandra* on 18th September. The naval convoy sailed forty-eight hours later and a daily training routine of physical training, gun instruction and instrument skills commenced. In the evenings lectures were given to non-commissioned officers and first aid skills were practiced. Most of the men were unfamiliar with the Maxim; one range practice had been fired in Bombay and now the guns were fired over the side of the ship. Medical inoculations were brought up to date.

The Company was organized into four sections. The Section Commanders were 2nd Lieut. H. Agrup (Bombay), Lieut. E.A. Macnee (Nagpur), Sergeant W.J. Cockle (Punjab) and Lieut. C.H. Tresham (Mussoorie). Each section contained eighteen non-commissioned officers and men. On the 3rd October disembarkation commenced in Kilindini Harbour at Mombasa where the

Company was split into two groups: Nos 3 & 4 Sections entrained for Nairobi and then moved to the G.E.A. border area south of Nairobi, whilst Nos. 1 and 2 Sections and Company Headquarters were trans-shipped to the SS *Duplex* for operations at Gazi near the G.E.A. border.



CAPTAIN F.N. JAMES, COMMANDING INDIAN VOLUNTEER MAXIM GUN COMPANY

Coming in to action.

Two German field companies had moved up the coastline from Tanga in G.E.A. with the intention of attacking Mombasa. Arab and African troops of the British forces had blunted this assault but the enemy was still probing through the coconut plantations around Gazi. After being landed from lighters the Volunteers quickly came into action and learned how to fire bursts into trees and clumps of bush to clear out concealed enemy soldiers. Company Sergeant-Major Wale, a renowned rifle shot, exposed himself to an enemy sniper in order to locate him, and then brought him out of a tree with one shot. But the Germans were not the only enemy on this insect-ridden coastline. By the end of November half the Company was sick with fever, and No. 71 Private Humphreys (Bombay) had died in Mombasa Hospital. His grave is in Mombasa Mbaraki C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Kenya. Captain James appealed for his men to be withdrawn as the enemy had retreated towards G.E.A., and in

early December Nos. 1 and 2 Sections were moved from the coast to Nairobi which is situated 5,500 feet above sea level.

The Nairobi climate was beneficial, but sadly not for No. 58 Pte H.M. Walker (Bombay). He died in Nairobi of Blackwater Fever on 5th January. His grave lies in Nairobi (South) C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Kenya. Nairobi was only enjoyed for a fortnight. A new battle on the coast sent Nos. 1 and 2 Sections back down to Mombasa and finally to the Uмба Valley on the G.E.A. border – one of the most unhealthy locations in B.E.A. Two .450 Maxims were given to the Company for this action, complete with carriage mounts. The guns seldom fired in anger as the enemy had withdrawn again, and the two sections were back in Nairobi in mid-February. Fever was thinning out the ranks and men were medically evacuated to India in March 1915, a replacement draft arriving from the Cawnpore Rifle Volunteers. The Company was now reorganized into three sections.

Longido

Meanwhile to the north Nos. 3 & 4 Sections had been involved in a serious fight across the G.E.A. border. As a diversion aimed at attracting German troops away from Tanga whilst Indian Expeditionary Force 'C' landed there, the British mounted an attack on the German garrison at Longido Mountain on 3rd November 1914. This attack failed, as did the landing at Tanga, but two men from the Indian Maxim Volunteer Company were later awarded D.C.M.s with identical citations:

No. 74 Corporal A.J. Drake; No. 73 Pte E.C. O'Sullivan (both from Mussoorie)

For gallant conduct, coolness and ability during the engagement on 3rd November 1914, at Longido (East Africa). Whilst under heavy fire he handled his machine-gun very effectively against the enemy in their counter-attack.

During 1915 detachments of the Company supported operations in the Lake Victoria and Kilimanjaro areas, and manned their Maxims as train guards on the Uganda Railway which was being targeted by enemy demolition parties. Two Volunteers were commissioned into the Indian Army Reserve of Officers and joined Indian Army units in East Africa: 2nd Lieut. (former Sgt) S.H. Kearsy (Nagpur) joined the 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry; 2nd Lieut. (former Pte) G.H. Cooke (Bombay) was posted to the 130th Baluchis but attached to the 2nd Kashmir Rifles, an Imperial Service unit. C.S.M. Wale was commissioned into the 2nd Bn The Loyal North Lancashires (regrettably he was later killed in France). Reinforcing drafts of Volunteers continued to

arrive from India. In August the company was deployed to Maktau on the military railway line being constructed from Voi to the G.E.A. border. Operational tempo increased as the Germans patrolled continuously in the area.



INDIAN VOLUNTEER MAXIM GUN AT MAKTAU

The push into German East Africa

In early 1916 massive South African reinforcements arrived in theatre and preparations were made for the invasion of G.E.A. The Indian Volunteers now had friendly aircraft flying overhead and armoured cars trundling through the bush besides them. The Company was issued with twenty First Line pack mules tended by a Conductor and six 'Cape Boys' from the South African Service Corps. However two more battles had to be fought on B.E.A. soil and the Company shed blood in both of them.

During the abortive attack on Salaita Hill on 12th February 1916 all six guns of the Company came into action on the South African right flank, but when the assaulting white South African infantry broke and fled under the impact of a ferocious German Askari counter-attack, the Indian Volunteers were left in an exposed position. The Company withdrew in good order but Sergeant J. Sinclair (Lucknow) was mortally wounded, dying soon afterwards. His grave is located in Taveta C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Kenya. A gun porter was killed and a cook and two other porters wounded.

In order to clear a railway route into G.E.A. the Latema and Reata hills had to be captured and the new British commander, General Smuts, mounted a set-piece Brigade attack. The Company deployed all six guns in support of 130th Baluchis who attacked Latema on 11th March. The Germans fiercely contested the hills and the battle ebbed and flowed throughout the afternoon and night until at dawn the enemy commander's nerve failed and he withdrew westwards into G.E.A. Some of the intensity of the action can be assessed from this citation for a D.C.M. later awarded to a member of the Company.

No. 65 Lance-Corporal M. Fox (Bombay)

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Although wounded in the foot early in the afternoon he continued to fight his gun, and after his section and gun commanders had been incapacitated, he took command, helped to carry his gun from place to place, and refused to leave till 8 p.m., when he was ordered to the dressing station.

No. 62 Sergeant T.O. Parry (Bombay), No. 74 Cpl A.J. Drake (Mussoorie) and No. 10 Private C.W. Tremenheere (Bangalore) were commended by Captain James for very professional conduct whilst under fire, along with Lieut. H.P.C. Brown of the North West Railway Volunteers (see above). Captain James was awarded a Military Cross.

The Company lost two men killed on the slopes of Latema: 2nd Lieut. R.E. Wilson (Bombay) and No. 50 Corporal T.S. Christopher (Mussoorie). Their graves lie in Taveta C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Kenya. Five men were wounded: No 57 Sergeant W.R. Clarke and Lance Corporal M. Fox (both from Bombay), No. 8 Corporal C. Bateman (Punjab), No. 48 Private J. O'Loughlin (Mussoorie), and No. 99 Private Deakes (Cawnpore). Three of the faithful African gun porters were also wounded.

General Smuts now split his forces. After a halt during the heavy monsoon rains he advanced in May southeastwards with his infantry along the Moshi-to-Tanga railway line that ran down the valley of the River Pangani. General van Deventer was ordered to march with his South African 2nd Mounted Division on a route southwestwards to Kondoa Irangi. The Indian Volunteer Maxim Gun Company accompanied van Deventer's troops, but on foot. Van Deventer's men were ordered to march through the April rains which were the heaviest for many years, four inches of water sometimes falling in a day. The tracks quickly became quagmires that bogged down the motor transport, and only ox-drawn wagons could make decent progress. Rotting animal carcasses lined the route as tsetse-fly and climatic exposure took a toll. Many men fell

sick from fever. The supply organization failed and the Volunteers were often reduced to half-rations or less after a day of struggling with the mules through the mud. This was a very hard march but the Indian Volunteers maintained their discipline. A fellow-volunteer machine gun unit recruited from white East Africans and marching on the same route displayed severe disciplinary problems when twenty-four men including non-commissioned officers refused orders to saddle-up one morning and were placed under arrest.

Actions in German East Africa

Six weary weeks after starting out, Company H.Q. arrived at Kondoa Irangi, where during June the Maxims supported the South African defence during attacks mounted by the Schutztruppe. In July two more Maxims were issued to the Company allowing the formation of a fourth section again, commanded by the recently commissioned Lieut. A.J. Drake, D.C.M. The Company split into two detachments that marched with South African troops who were deployed to provide cover on van Deventer's western flank. Nos. 1 and 3 Sections moved west to Singida whilst Nos. 2 and 4 Sections looped north past lakes Balangida and Basotu to approach Singida from the north. Just short of Singida at Mgari, where the track climbed steeply up the side of the great Rift Valley, a small stone fort manned by German Askari blocked the route. No. 1 Section came into action there and fired 211 rounds. This caused enemy casualties and led to a quick surrender.

The Company was united at Singida and, leaving No. 2 Section there as part of a garrison, the remainder of the Company marched south to arrive on 12th August at Saranda on the German Central Railway. Camp was made at Kilimatinde eight miles to the south and picquet positions manned. Here No. 2 Section joined the Company from Singida and orders were received for all remaining original Volunteers to be returned to India (except officers) as their service was time-expired on 16th September. No. 15 Private R. Nagaukar (Bangalore), one of the originals, died on the journey out of G.E.A. and is buried in Taveta C.W.G.C. Cemetery, Kenya.

The month of October 1916 was spent in marching east along the Central Railway line to Dodoma where camp was made and the training of a recently arrived draft started. In November thirty-seven Volunteers, sent from India but misemployed elsewhere in G.E.A., were located and brought to Dodoma. Personal equipments in the Company were now of differing patterns and clothing, which had not been re-supplied, was ragged and deficient. Machine

gun equipment could not be obtained.

The last operation

In November the Volunteers were attached to the 8th South African Infantry (S.A.I.) and in December they marched south to Iringa. General Smuts had ordered van Deventer to attack southeast from Iringa to destroy a German unit on the Muganga Plateau. Four of the Company's Maxims went out on this operation. Violent storms broke and 28th Mountain Battery (M.B.), Indian Army, whom the Volunteers caught up with in early January, lost many mules that broke legs and necks slipping off the steep tracks. Several carriers collapsed and died whilst others despaired and jumped off cliffs, others deserted and several of these were shot by the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.) Askari in the column. Several men were also lost to lightning strikes.

As usual on South African-led operations, although long-range contact was made, the envelopment plan appeared to be allowed to fail. A decisive battle was not forced and the Germans withdrew successfully. The failure of the ration re-supply became so bad that the South African troops were recalled to the Central Railway line by their divisional staff, but 28th M.B., the Indian Volunteers, the 17th Infantry (The Loyal Regiment), an Indian Army regiment, and the 4th (Uganda) K.A.R. stayed on the plateau existing on short rations and steadily growing weaker. Papers in the National Archives, written by the Officer Commanding 28th M.B., display his anger at the way South African troops plundered Indian Army rations being sent forward, looted his soldiers' personal kits left in brigade stores and treated hospitalized Indian soldiers with very limited concern. Attempts to bring these matters to light were treated with hostility by General Smuts and his staff.

Recall to India

On 7th February 1917 Captain James, now seriously ill, was carried away from the Company base at Boma Mzingi on a hammock stretcher. On the same day thirty-two of the Company mules were killed by lightning. Lieutenant Macnee took over command, and a week later was ordered to march the Company back to Iringa where he was instructed to hand in his reserve ammunition and speedily move his company to Dar Es Salaam for repatriation to India. But this was easier said than done. The swollen Ruaha river, in places flooded up to eight miles wide, lay across the Company's path. Tracks were covered in water and the Volunteers and their carriers and gun porters splashed down the

southern bank of the river. From a camp on the aptly named Mosquito Island a group of seven supply punts was observed being pushed upstream through the shallows by carriers. The N.C.O. in charge of the punts agreed to move the Company across the deep river bed on his return journey, and then only three more miles of wading through swamps on the north bank was required before reasonably firm land was reached.

The Company arrived in Dar Es Salaam on the 18th March 1917 and over the next few days handed in its guns and equipment. Lieut. Agrup returned to Taveta to locate the battlefield graves of Lieut. Wilson and Corporal Christopher. Lieut. Tresham returned to Dodoma with the Company's 139 long-suffering and loyal gun porters to hand them over to the Officer Commanding Carriers for allocation to 4th K.A.R., where they were to have the chance of becoming Askari. The surviving Volunteers embarked for India.

Conclusion

Very little recorded history of the Indian Volunteers can be found in archives. Hopefully one day the reference material that remains can be centrally collated by a determined researcher who will produce a history. But perhaps what this article can show is that the Indian Volunteers who went to East Africa to fight in hastily-formed units did not let their King-Emperor down. They displayed both high military standards and the resilience and discipline needed to deal with the extremely difficult conditions prevailing in the theatre. They were amongst the best of the British units serving in East Africa.

Footnote on war graves

The Volunteer commemorations mentioned above are those that the author has personally come across and photographed, and so there are bound to be more Indian Volunteer graves that he has yet to locate. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission does a really excellent job in maintaining war graves and memorials in East Africa. However in one respect the C.W.G.C. has been badly briefed about the Indian Volunteers. All the headstones of the buried Indian Maxim Gun Company Volunteers are carved with the crest of the British East Africa Protectorate and there is no reference to India on the stones. Correspondence with the C.W.G.C. has revealed that the Commission is working to a post-Great War policy document that designates the Indian Volunteer Maxim Gun Company and the Indian Telegraph Service as being East African Protectorate units. The author submitted to the Commission

pages from the relevant War Diary proving that the dead men were members of an Indian military unit, but this submission was rejected. The Commission considers its policy documents to be infallible, as perhaps it must do to maintain consistency in its operations. If any reader knows of an approach that would result in the dead Volunteers being recognized by the Commission as having served in an Indian military unit, please advise the author via the editor.

Sources

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MEDALS OF CAPT. F.N. JAMES, O.B.E., M.C., 104TH RIFLES, INDIAN ARMY

Order of the British Empire (Military Division), Military Cross, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal, India General Service Medal (clasps: Mahsud 1919-20, Waziristan 1919-21, Waziristan 1921-24), Defence Medal 1939-45, Delhi Durbar 1911.

Reactionary or Reformer?
Major General Douglas Haig: Inspector General of Cavalry
India 1903-1906

Dr. Andrew Winrow

This Edwardian cavalry officer, tarnished through no fault of his own by the inadequate performance of cavalry in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902),¹ and soon to be further damaged as a senior commander struggling to adapt to the mechanised carnage of the Great War, still awaits revisionist rehabilitation in the public's perception.² Despite many attempts to amend such historical orthodoxy, Field Marshal Douglas Haig remains the archetypal cavalry officer frequently condemned as an intransigent blinkered reactionary. However evidence of Haig fulfilling this stereotype is at variance with examples of his modernism. This brief article examines Haig's performance during his tenure as Inspector General of Cavalry in India between the years 1903 and 1906 to determine whether he warranted the label of reactionary or reformer.

Douglas Haig was stationed in India several times throughout his career initially as a regimental officer with the 7th Hussars, then as Inspector General of Cavalry, and latterly as Chief of Staff towards the end of the Edwardian era.

Having successfully acquitted himself both as General French's Chief of Staff and subsequently as a mobile column commander in his own right during the Anglo-Boer War, Haig, together with pitifully few of his cavalry colleagues, notably Harry Scobell of the Royal Scots Greys and Edmund Allenby of the Inniskillings, found his professional 'star in the ascendancy.'³

Although not a surprising choice for regimental command, his promotion at the end of the War to command the 17th Lancers over the heads of at least two more senior candidates from within the regiment caused controversy within the military hierarchy.⁴ Relatively shortly after, whilst hoping for brigade command under his close associate Sir John French at Aldershot, Haig was sought by Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief in India, for the post of

¹ Clayton A., *The British Officer*, London 2006; p.120

² Corrigan G., *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*, London 2003; pp.189-213

³ *National Archives*, WO 108/41, CIPHER 1628, Roberts to Secretary of State for War

⁴ *National Archives*, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/28

Inspector General of Cavalry. His home-based counterpart, proposed by Lord Roberts, was to be Robert Baden Powell. Despite counsel from close regimental friends advising him to avoid this appointment on the grounds that this posting would render his influence distant and his opinion impotent,⁵ Haig duly embarked for senior service in India in late 1903 at the relatively young age of forty-one years.

Douglas Haig, only recently promoted to be a substantive Colonel, had acquired a post usually the remit of Major General rank. Indeed Haig replaced a Lieutenant General, namely Sir Edward Locke Elliott, K.C.B., D.S.O., who moved to command the Lucknow Division. For a comparatively junior officer assuming this role, accelerated promotion was required and both Haig and Lord Kitchener agitated for Haig's further promotion to Major General rank. This duly but tardily arrived in early May 1904.⁶

Douglas Haig brought a new lease of life to the role. Despite contemporary criticism that Haig 'dragooned' Indian cavalry regiments into accepting British cavalry regimental practices,⁷ it appears that Haig dealt with both British and Indian regiments fairly and equally. Newly acclimatised to service in India, the 1st Royal Dragoons were mildly reprimanded by Haig for the difficulty that the regiment was having in keeping its horses fit.⁸ The regiment's second-in-command, the future General Beauvoir de Lisle who had previously served in India with the Durham Light Infantry before transferring to the cavalry at Lord Roberts' personal suggestion, makes no mention of this event in his otherwise anecdote-filled memoirs.⁹

Commanding officers of Indian cavalry regiments were not immune. Criticised by Haig as being 'fairly antiquated,' these cavalry commanders found that the new Inspector General had precise ideas on how their regiments should perform. Many commanding officers had seen previous active service in South Africa and some had commanded mounted infantry units. Haig was far from a convert to the concept of mounted infantry, excoriating them publicly for their poor discipline, lack of utility, deficiency of élan and their inadequate horsemanship.¹⁰ Convinced that only trained cavalry could deliver the required combination of speed and power, Haig vehemently disputed the contention that mobile riflemen could achieve the same effect on the

⁵ Scott D., *The Preparatory Prologue*, Barnsley 2006; p.219

⁶ *Ibid.*; p.228

⁷ Heathcote T.A., *The British Field Marshals 1736-1997*, Barnsley 1999; p.157

⁸ Scott D., *The Preparatory Prologue*, Barnsley 2006; p.234

⁹ De Lisle B., *Reminiscences of Sport and War*, London 1939; pp.121-125

¹⁰ Spiers E., *The British Cavalry 1902-1914*; *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. LVII No.30 1979; pp.71-77

battlefield. Certainly there was no chance that the cavalry regiments stationed in India would degrade into mounted infantry during Haig's tenure.

Douglas Haig embarked on a round of visits to cavalry regiments. Each visit usually involved three days with the regiment. He normally issued prior guidance as to his expectations. Country exercises were undertaken with Haig bivouacking in the Officers' mess in the field. Despite a recorded tendency to be a 'trifle rigid in his ideas ...and a trifle prejudiced as regards persons,'¹¹ Haig clearly knew his business and demonstrated that his interest centred on training for war and the inculcation of a sense of leadership at all command levels. The Inspector General of Cavalry ensured that his regimental visits, and the instructions that he issued, were 'more practical and realistic than anything the cavalry in India had known previously.'¹²

In addition, larger scale manoeuvres were undertaken such as those occurring between Rawalpindi and Attock in 1905 witnessed by Kitchener's Military Secretary, the future Field Marshal Birdwood.¹³ This exercise included sixteen cavalry regiments amongst other military arms. The extent of such events, both in terms of numbers and geography, was unheard of in Britain where the relatively heavily populated area around Aldershot prohibited such easy campaigning until the purchase of parts of Wiltshire's Salisbury Plain enabled divisional exercises a few years later.

Douglas Haig's introduction of realism into training for the cavalry in India culminated in five staff rides for his officers. His third staff ride in December 1904 around Aurangabad was attended by over thirty-five officers plus numerous notable observers such as General Archibald Hunter.¹⁴ Detailed reconnaissance of the surrounding topography was usually undertaken by Haig accompanied by his longstanding servant Secrett, or by his principal staff officer, George Barrow of the 4th Cavalry. Partly on the basis of his staff role, Barrow was supported by his commander in his eventual appointment as a cavalry instructor at the Staff College at Camberley.

The staff rides encouraged the adoption of an offensive spirit, manifest by the maxim that 'no river shall be impassable to cavalry'¹⁵ and that geographically wide-ranging reconnaissance, as part of the strategic exploitation role of the cavalry, should replace the previous defensive mentality. Each ride was designed to specifically test out a particular tactical problem that might be encountered in a future war. The notes arising from the

¹¹ Gough H., *Soldiering On*, London 1954, p.97

¹² Barrow G., *The Fire of Life*, London 1942, p.104

¹³ Birdwood W., *Khaki and Gown*, London 1941, p.165

¹⁴ Scott D., *The Preparatory Prologue*, Barnsley 2006, p.235

¹⁵ Haig D., *Cavalry Studies*, London 1907, p.75

five staff rides, together with commentaries by chosen staff officers such as Barrow, were subsequently combined into a well-received book titled 'Cavalry Studies',¹⁶ published in London in 1907 shortly after Haig had relinquished his post in India.

Despite Douglas Haig's enthusiasm for reforming training into a more realistic activity, his zeal must be juxtaposed against his reputation, both then and now, as a reactionary resisting wider reformation of the cavalry.

The perceived deficiencies of the army, and in particular the cavalry, during the Anglo-Boer War had spawned both a series of major investigative committees and far-reaching reforms. For some the future of sword, stirrup and lance was decidedly uncertain in comparison to the more fashionable concept of rifle-carrying mounted infantry that emanated from the experiences on the veldt.¹⁷ The attempted abolition of the lance as a frontline weapon for British cavalry in 1903 caused a major rift among senior army officers. Resistance to Lord Roberts' proposal was championed by General John French, Douglas Haig and Harry Scobell in particular who identified the Army Order to be both a threat to a controversial part of the cavalry armament as well as to the cavalry 'ethos.' Perhaps this amounted to a fundamental attack on the cavalry way of life? As the Adjutant General mused, would Lancer regiments be renamed Hussars if their lances were discarded?¹⁸

On Haig's promotion to Inspector General, Lord Roberts indicated to Lord Kitchener that Haig was a significant opposition to the proposed modernisation.¹⁹ Kitchener in turn, despite providing Roberts with written encouragement, appeared quietly lukewarm to the whole issue. He did convert two of the numerous Indian Lancer regiments, including George Barrow's 4th Cavalry, to non-lance-carrying units as a response to Roberts' demands; however there was no wholesale disbandment of Indian Lancer regiments whose lances were still valued for controlling civil unrest.²⁰

Kitchener and Haig held a mutual if perhaps unspoken understanding as to the role of cavalry. Far from advocating strident opposition to the concept of dismounted firepower as many believe, Haig did not dispute Lord Roberts' exhortation to improve musketry and in 'Cavalry Studies' he confirms that

¹⁶ Haig D., *Cavalry Studies*, London 1907

¹⁷ Badsey S., *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918*, Aldershot 2008, p.63

¹⁸ National Archives, WO 32/6782

¹⁹ National Archives, *Kitchener Papers*, PRO 30/57/28

²⁰ Winrow A.P., 'Undoubtedly the queen of weapons: the fall and rise of the British Cavalry Lancer 1903-1912' (Soldiers of the Queen, No.130 2007, pp.3-7)

‘efficiency in the use of the rifle is absolutely essential.’²¹ Haig was not prepared to abandon ‘the hardening of the heart and the charge home’ of the true cavalryman in favour of the tactics of the mounted infantryman, a peddled paradigm that he disputed so much. His hypothesis was that the role of the cavalry on the modern battlefield would remain important,²² a view that would not be entirely disproven in certain theatres of conflict in both the First and Second World Wars.

The accusation of Haig as a commander immune to innovation similarly does not hold up to scrutiny during his post as Inspector General of Cavalry. His old regimental colleague, John Vaughan, commanding the 10th Hussars in India, replaced the slow and unpredictable mule transport for his machine guns with packhorses, initially against Haig’s considered judgement.²³ Claiming that this arrangement meant that the machine gun transports were faster than the Royal Horse Artillery by about five miles per hour, Vaughan demonstrated his innovation to Haig who was both impressed and apologetic for his doubts. Subsequently the effectiveness of this method of machine gun transport was demonstrated on exercise when the combined gun detachments of a scratch brigade that comprised the 10th Hussars, the Guides Cavalry and the 25th Cavalry routed the 17th Lancers, Haig’s old regiment.

On a personal level, although Haig was famously inarticulate in speech, he was precise in written instructions and whilst he did not frequently seek others’ opinions, when appropriate Haig would be appreciative of others’ advice. When Horace Smith-Dorrien, commanding 4th Division at Quetta, proposed his schedule of cavalry training and planned manoeuvres to Haig, the latter returned the proposals and welcomed them saying that he couldn’t improve on them.²⁴

There were two other major influences on Haig during his tenure as Inspector General of Cavalry. The first was the protracted friction between Kitchener and the Viceroy, Lord Curzon. Naturally Haig supported Kitchener, being critical of Curzon’s conceit and aloofness. Curzon finally resigned in 1906. The other major influence was Haig’s whirlwind romance and marriage to the Honourable Dorothy Vivian, a Maid of Honour to Queen Alexandra, during his leave in England in June 1905. His marriage certainly helped consolidate his place within the inner circle at Court and probably encouraged future royal patronage.

²¹ Haig D., *Cavalry Studies*, London 1907, p.18

²² *Ibid.*, p.18

²³ Vaughan J., *Cavalry and Sporting Memories*, Bala 1954, p.130

²⁴ Smith-Dorrien H., *Memories of Forty-Eight Years Service*, London 1925, p.326

Towards the end of his posting in India, Haig was recommended back at home by several influential figures such as Lord Esher for the future role of Director of Staff Duties. Esher predicted that if Haig was appointed to this role 'the whole tone of army officers and their education will have undergone a change that will recast the army.'²⁵ Lord Haldane subsequently claimed to have sought Haig's return to England from India to utilise Haig's intelligence on reorganising the army.²⁶

The Haigs embarked for England in mid-May 1906 with Douglas subsequently commencing his post as Director of Military Training for the next two years before becoming the short-lived Director of Staff Duties for which he had been previously endorsed. Destined for further promotion, Douglas Haig returned to India as Chief of Staff in 1909.

If the major role of Inspector General of Cavalry in India was training and modernisation of the cavalry, Haig must surely have achieved this objective with his regimental tours and staff rides. Traditionally portrayed as a recalcitrant reactionary, closer inspection of Haig's work show an intellect championing both the pro-active belligerence of attack and, where indicated, defensive dismounted firepower. Unlike those reputed to be 'modernisers,' Haig refused to countenance discarding sabre, tulwar and lance and continued to value the momentum of the well-considered cavalry charge.

If the indictment directed at Major General Douglas Haig during his sojourn in India is 'reactionary' or 'reformer', the verdict must surely and resoundingly be 'reformer'.

The recently published book *Izzat, Historical Records and Iconography of Indian Cavalry Regiments 1750-2007* by Ashok Nath (reviewed in *Durbar* Vol. 26 No. 1 Spring 2009) is now available in the U.K. from I.M.H.S. member Tom Donovan, Flat 4, 22 Florence Road, Brighton, BN1 6DJ. The price including postage and packing is £100. Cheques should be sent to Tom at the address given above but made payable to Captain A. Nath.

²⁵ Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry Vol.4 1899-1913*, London 1986, p.381

²⁶ Dunlop J.K., *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914*, London 1938, p.242

An Unusual Carte de Visite
An officer of the 14th Bengal Cavalry

Sean Weir

The striking husband and wife portrait by Shepherd & Robertson on the following page illustrates the ‘irregular’ alkaluk dress uniform worn by Bengal and Punjab cavalry regiments in the years following the Mutiny.

The photographic studio was short-lived, enabling the carte to be dated with some certainty independently of image content. Opening in Agra c.1862, Shepherd & Robertson moved to Simla in 1864 when the partnership is thought to have been supplanted by the new business of Howard, Bourne & Shepherd.¹

Prior to the introduction of the 1863 Bengal Dress Regulations there was little if any consistency in uniform design, with local variations and commanding officers’ preferences often dictating the outcome. As a result, regimental identification by uniform alone can prove difficult. Post 1863, the alkaluk pattern was formalised but only for the first eight regiments. Remaining cavalry regiments, together with those of the Punjab, wore the new French officer pattern tunic.²

Fortunately, the carte was identified by a former collector as ‘Colonel R. Chalmers and wife, Bengal Staff Corps,’ presumably transcribed from the album page from which it was taken. Contemporary army lists confirm that there was only one individual at the time with matching name: Robert Chalmers, second in command of the 14th Bengal Cavalry. However, from experience, this sort of later inscription is no guarantee of accuracy.

None of the usual uniform references (Carman, Tradition Magazine, etc.) contains either an illustration or a description of the uniform worn by the 14th Bengal Cavalry prior to the 1863 Regulations, nor does there appear to be a regimental history.

The 14th was formerly the Jat Horse Yeomanry, an irregular cavalry regiment on the Bengal Establishment raised by Capt. John Murray at Aligarh in 1857.

¹ RCS Photographers Index (Cambridge U. Library website); ‘Luminous Lint’ website

² The tunic worn by Colonel C.J. Godby of the 4th Punjab Cavalry c.1872 is illustrated in *Durbar*, Winter 2008 vol. 25, p.172.



The National Army Museum has a folio of copy photographs of the Indian Army 1858-68 compiled by a Patrick Carnegie of the Bengal Civil Service, two of which confirm that the carte illustrated here is indeed of Chalmers. The earlier image is captioned 'Murray, Major John I., Commdt Jat Horse Lucknow 1860'. Chalmers' alkaluk is identical to that of Murray, repeating the intricate trefoil-looped braid around the 'purdah front' and the fine line of central buttons, together with the Kashmir shawl cummerbund. The later image, taken in Gwalior in 1863, is of a group of officers and other ranks in which both Murray and Chalmers are named. They continue to wear the original uniform, accompanied by pale (possibly grey) helmets with contrasting pugris.

Robert Chalmers was born at Cawnpore on 30th April 1832, the son of Alexander Chalmers M.D., Presidency Surgeon and Maria Frances Jane Chalmers. He was educated at Canon Mills House and Edinburgh Academies between 1843 and 1849.³ He joined the 21st Bengal Native Infantry as an ensign on 7th September 1849 and was posted to the 45th Bengal Native Infantry in 1850. Promoted Lieutenant on 10th September 1852, he was subsequently appointed Adjutant to the 2nd Punjab Infantry on 21st November 1853, transferring as Adjutant to the 1st Regiment of Infantry, Oudh Irregular Force, in March 1856.⁴ The annexation of Oudh the previous month turned out to be a significant factor in the growing unrest over the following twelve months or so, culminating in the 'Great Mutiny.'⁵

Regarding the impact on Chalmers' regiment, Kaye and Malleeson's history of the Mutiny records:

The other district station in the division of Faizabad was Saloni. The Deputy Commissioner here was Captain L. Barrow. The troops consisted of six companies of the 1st Oudh Irregulars, commanded by Captain Thomson. By the exertions of the officers tolerable order was maintained here for the first nine days in June. On that day intelligence arrived of the mutinies at Sultanpur and elsewhere, and of the approach of mutineers from other stations. The next day the troops threw off the mask and revolted. The officers succeeded in leaving the station in safety, and in reaching the fort of Darapur...⁶

³ National Army Museum, Hodson's Card Index

⁴ British Library, India Office Records, shelf mark IOR/L/MIL/10/89

⁵ David S., *The Indian Mutiny*, (London 2002), p.8

⁶ Malleeson G.B., Colonel, C.S.I. (ed.), *Kaye & Malleeson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8* (six volumes, London 1888), vol. III, p.273. Malleeson's work was a substantially expanded version of J.W. Kaye's earlier *The Sepoy War in India*, published in London between 1864 and 1867 in three volumes.

By the middle of July Chalmers had joined General Henry Havelock's Allahabad Moveable Column in operations leading to the so-called 'first relief' of the Lucknow residency, serving as a trooper in Barrow's Volunteer Cavalry,⁷ and thereafter as adjutant.⁸ Kaye and Malleeson again:

On the afternoon of the 24th [July], General Havelock crossed (the Ganges) likewise, and marched the force about five miles on the Lakhnao [sic] road, halting for the night at the little village of Mangalwar.

The force which was now starting on an expedition, which, however desperate it was, seemed at the time to present, under so daring a leader as Havelock, some chance of success, consisted of artillery – ten guns, imperfectly equipped and imperfectly manned; of infantry – the remnants of the 64th, the 84th, the 78th, the Madras Fusiliers, and of Brasyer's Sikhs; and of cavalry, some sixty volunteer horse. Small as were their numbers, they were animated by the best spirit, and had unbounded confidence in their General.⁹

Hart's Army List provides the usual synopsis of war service:

Major R Chalmers served throughout the Indian Mutiny campaigns of 1857-59, advanced with Major Reynaud's column towards Cawnpore and carried his dispatch announcing the Cawnpore Massacre from Lohunda to Allahabad, a distance of forty miles through a disturbed country, afterwards joined the Volunteer Cavalry and served with Havelock's force from its first taking the field in July 1857, and was present at the actions of Futtepore, Aoung, Pandoo Nuddee, Cawnpore, Oonao, Buseerutgunge (both actions), Mungarwar and Alumbagh, relief of Lucknow, and subsequent defence of the Residency for two months (twice wounded), during which he acted as field engineer and was present at the assault and capture of the King's stables and engine house. After the relief of the garrison by Lord Clyde, served with the force under Outram, occupying the Alumbagh, including the affair of Ghilee and repulse of the several attacks thereon, also present at the capture of Lucknow, and action at Ruttunpore (medal with two clasps, a year's service and brevet of Major).¹⁰

⁷ British Library, India Office Records, shelf mark L/Mil/5/77 ff.43-50; medal roll of officers who served with Barrow's Volunteer Cavalry. According to the roll, Lieut. Chalmers initially as trooper, then corporal, and finally sergeant. The two clasps on his medal were 'Defence of Lucknow' and 'Lucknow' It seems anomalous that the former clasp was issued to the relief force. However, the force was locked up in the Residency and besieged during what is frequently termed the Second Defence.

⁸ British Library, India Office Records, shelf mark L/MIL/10/89

⁹ *Kaye & Malleeson*, op. cit., Volume III, p.330. In fact this first attempt to advance to Lucknow failed and Havelock was forced to retire to Cawnpore. Having been reinforced by troops brought up by Outram, he advanced again on 19th September – successfully.

¹⁰ Hart's Army List, 1870 edition

On 6th October 1858 Chalmers was appointed second in command of the Jat Horse Yeomanry. The title of the regiment evolved into Murray's Jat Horse in 1859 prior to becoming the 14th Regiment of Bengal Cavalry in 1861 following the post-Mutiny reorganization of the old H.E.I.C. Army.

Chalmers' subsequent career appears to have been altogether less eventful. He remained second-in-command (and squadron commander) for seventeen-and-a-half years, other than a spell officiating as commandant between 1872 and 1873, presumably when Murray was on furlough. He was promoted lieutenant-colonel on 7 September 1875 and his longevity was finally rewarded with his appointment as commandant on 1st May 1877.

His tenure of the senior post was short-lived. He was granted two years furlough to Europe on 10th May 1878. Hodson's Index and the India Office Records then record his burial 'in Europe' on 11th August 1878. No further information has been forthcoming regarding the circumstances of his demise at the relatively early age of forty six.

Havildar Dhirta Singh, I.D.S.M. – a True Military Hero of the Punjab

Sarkees Najmuddin and Omer Tarin

Havildar Dhirta Singh of the 4th Bn 11th Sikh Regiment can be considered a true military hero and a rather 'forgotten' champion of the Punjab, who obtained the unique distinction of being awarded both the Indian Distinguished Service Medal [I.D.S.M.] for his daring and selfless devotion to duty, and, for the very same episode, the MacGregor Memorial Medal [M.M.M.] for outstanding reconnaissance and survey work. This 'double award' of I.D.S.M. and M.M.M. is an achievement that stands alone in the annals of Indian military history.¹

The British Indian Army was enriched greatly by the annexation of the Punjab, following the Second Sikh War (1848-49) – not only in terms of territorial gain to the Company *Bahadur*, but also in terms of the gain of a valuable repository of

¹ There had actually been two other cases of the IDSM and MMM being awarded to the same man: [1] Dafadar (later Jemadar) Shahzad Mir, 11th (Prince of Wales's Own) Regiment of Bengal Lancers; [2] Dafadar Moghal Baz, Queens Own Corps of Guides Cavalry (Frontier Force). But they were not overlapping awards for the same services.

human resources, especially soldiers. The Punjab was to become the 'sword arm' of British India, and out of the remains of the *Khalsa* army of the old Sikh Kingdom that 'died' in March 1849² were reborn the many superb regiments of Sikhs that time and again distinguished themselves throughout the British Empire, in many campaigns. The chief credit for this effective rebirth, evinced in the earliest recruitment of old *Khalsa* troops into the service of the Company, must go to the first/original Punjab Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence (1806-1857), frequently referred to as '*plus Sikh que les Sikhs*.'³

In subsequent times, the fine Sikh forces from the Punjab proved their fighting qualities, from the Indian Mutiny campaigns of 1857-58 to the Second World War of 1939-46. In this last military service to the Raj, the predominantly Jat Sikh yeomen were part of a sizeable presence from the Punjab, and from other regions of India, in diverse theatres of operation. Their exploits in the Middle East in particular were singled out by General (later Lord) Wavell as 'a stirring and impressive story.'⁴ Almost all of the awards for gallantry were given purely for outstanding conduct in combat, although a small number were granted for bravery in escaping from P.O.W. camps. However, not only is Dhirta Singh's I.D.S.M. in itself exceptional,⁵ it becomes unique when combined with the award of the so-called 'Reduced Size' M.M.M.⁶ for the same action. The only other recorded case of a similar 'double award' was that of the Military Cross and 'Standard Size' M.M.M. in 1942 to Subedar Tekbahadur Limbu, Northern Shan States Battalion, Burma Frontier Force, both awards granted for his perilous 600-mile escape from Burma through enemy lines.⁷

² Singh, K. (Khushwant), *A History of the Sikhs, Vol 2:1639-1964*, Princeton UP, Princeton NJ 1966, p.69

³ Lee H., *Brothers in the Raj, the Lives of John and Henry Lawrence*, Oxford UP, Karachi 2002, p.232 (Lord Dalhousie to Sir John Hobhouse, 6th March 1849)

⁴ Anon, *The Tiger Strikes, The Story of the Indian Divisions in the Middle East 1940-42*, Directorate of Public Relations of the Government of India, Calcutta 1942, page 'v' (forward by General Sir Archibald Wavell, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C.)

⁵ Although a number of 'escaper' awards of the Military Medal are known, the IDSM appears to have been rarely awarded for escaping. Only one other such award is known to the compilers of this article, also to the same battalion: No. 16614 Lance Naik Sohan Singh, captured by the Germans on 1st July 1942. He eventually escaped and reached British lines on 14th November 1942 (I.D.S.M., *London Gazette*, 22nd July 1943).

⁶ The M.M.M. was awarded annually, one to an officer and one to a non-commissioned officer or other rank. The former received the 'Standard Size' medal; the latter the 'Reduced Size' medal. The design was identical (apart from dimensions). The rim was engraved with the name of the recipient and the deed for which the medal was awarded.

⁷ Military Cross, *London Gazette*, 23rd September 1943

So who was Dhirta Singh and what did he actually do? Alas, despite many efforts, almost nothing is known or could be discovered of his background and origins or of his service record before and after 1942. It is known that he was a Jat Sikh, and a resident of Village Mahudeo Khurd village, Sohal area of Gurdaspur district in the Punjab,⁸ and that, on retirement, Dhirta [Dharta] Singh was granted a pension or 'special allowance' of Rs. 100/- for life.⁹ However, we do know quite a lot about his exploits, which ended with his receiving the awards mentioned earlier. His detailed I.D.S.M. citation states that:

This Hav[ildar] was taken prisoner by the Germans with a number of other men of the Bn on 1st July [1942] at Deir-el-Shein, whence he eventually arrived at Tobruk... [and] on the night of 18th August [he] made his escape [with some others].¹⁰

Havildar Dhirta Singh then proceeded to lead these men away into the desert, eventually being rescued by a British armoured division team, and he brought back information of considerable value.

Whilst in Tobruk he made full use of his opportunities of obtaining valuable information ...By his fortitude and leadership he saved not only himself but also three of his brother soldiers whom he led across 400 miles of the desert occupied by enemy troops.¹¹

This conduct was considered to have been 'of the highest order and well worthy of recognition.'¹² But these terse, laconic military statements tell only the outline of the story. This nearly-unknown N.C.O. proved his mettle under the most rigorous circumstances in 1942.

Major Robert 'Bob' Hamond informs us that Dhirta Singh received his I.D.S.M. and his M.M.M. for 'War Escape.'¹³ On 1st July 1942, after the disastrous action at Deir-el-Shein, West of Alamein, where the 18th Indian Brigade came in for some

⁸ Chhina, R, *The Indian Distinguished Service Medal*, Invicta, New Delhi 2001, p.219

⁹ We are indebted to Cliff Parrett for this information.

¹⁰ Army Form W.3121 (National Archives, Kew; WO 373/114). The recommendation for Dhirta Singh's IDSM was made by Lt Col. Bamfield commanding 4-11 Sikhs and approved by Gen. H.R. Alexander, C-in-C Middle East Forces, on 8th October 1942. It was published in the *London Gazette* on 31st December 1942 (supplement, page 5667).

¹¹ Army Form W.3121

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hamond R., Major, *History of the MacGregor Memorial Medals 1889-1989*, Spantech & Lancer, New Delhi 1994; p.66

punishment,¹⁴ Dhirta Singh was one of a number taken prisoner from his battalion. These men were then taken to Tobruk and put to work on the docks there,¹⁵ but all along the way, evincing unusual intelligence and initiative, Dhirta kept his eyes and ears open and ‘during the journey, he made mental notes of enemy activities such as petrol and ration dumping, use of landing grounds and movement of coastal shipping.’¹⁶ Later, while employed at the docks in Tobruk, and on a labour detail extending the railway to El-Adem, ‘he was able to note the number of lorries carrying German and Italian dead.’¹⁷ Throughout this watchful time, he also harboured the intent to escape as soon as he could manage it, collecting some scanty emergency rations of biscuits and water, and ‘on the night of 17th/18th August [he and his] small party successfully broke out.’¹⁸ Now began the really gruelling part of this odyssey.

The Battalion’s historian goes on to relate that, ‘Though the party had neither map, nor compass, it made its way via El Gubi to Sofafi.’¹⁹ Along the way, they strayed somewhat and reached Sidi Omar – which Dhirta Singh was able to recognize – and they then turned Eastwards again, eventually being picked up by a British armoured patrol somewhere in the Southern Sector on 7th December.²⁰ The journey itself was amazingly difficult, with the shortage of food and water and danger on all sides, covering nearly 400 miles over some of the earth’s most unfriendly terrain; but the wealth of vital intelligence gained by Dhirta Singh was even more amazing.

Considerable enemy activity had been encountered, and several wide detours had to be made. At one time, the party lay up a whole day watching the enemy

¹⁴ Anon, *The Tiger Kills: The Story of the Indian Divisions in the North African Campaign.*, H.M.’s Stationery Office for the Government of India, London 1944, pp.146-148 (section entitled ‘Disaster in the Deir-el-Shein’). The 18th Indian Brigade had just arrived from Iraq as an urgent reinforcement and had no time to catch its breath before it was thrown into action.

¹⁵ Hamond, p.66. Apart from access to Dhirta Singh’s I.D.S.M. citation, Hamond cites the following source: Brigadier D.M. Cornah, C.B.E., D.S.O., *A Desert Exploit*, published in a 1980 edition of the regimental journal ‘The Sikh’. Brigadier Cornah commanded the 4-11 Sikhs in 1944-45.

¹⁶ Singh K.J. (Kanwal Jit), Colonel, and Ahluwalia H.S., Major, *Saragarhi Battalion, Ashes to Glory, History of the 4th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment (XXXVI)*, Lancer International, New Delhi 1987, pp.112-113

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

forming a ration dump, their lorries at times passing within a few yards only. All these things Havildar Dhirta Singh carefully noted; and when he eventually reached [the British] lines, his information was considered of such value that he was sent back by air to Alexandria for interrogation by senior officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Such an example of coolness and devotion to duty was clearly deserving [of] some special form of recognition; and in addition to the Indian Distinguished Service Medal granted for the military aspect of his exploit, he was further awarded the MacGregor Memorial Medal for the value of his information and the skilful conduct of his long and difficult journey.²¹

There we have it, a summary of this full exploit, rarely equalled anywhere in its combination of daring and level-headedness, as exciting and enthralling as the most adventurous fiction, at the same time yielding positive results of considerable military value.



WESTERN DESERT: SIKH GUNNER LOOKING OUT FOR ENEMY AIRCRAFT

²¹ Ibid.

In his memoirs, Major Shaukat Hyat-Khan,²² who was present in the Middle East and North Africa during 1940-42, remembers that during the ‘debacle on the Desert Front’, General Auchinleck’s ‘Punjabis stood by him bravely.’²³ With sheer tenacity, these troops distinguished themselves under extremely trying circumstances, in various ways, at all levels. The stolid Jats and volatile Ranghars, with their rural, agrarian roots and martial traditions, wrote new chapters in the Punjab’s history, their deeds fit to rank with the old traditional folk ballads and legends of Punjabi heroes.

As a body, the Sikhs especially were ‘highly intelligent’ and ‘progressive’, according to Philip Mason. They were ‘better educated than most peasant communities ...like the Scottish peasantry they were a people of their book;’ and ‘their relationship with the British had been a special one because of their contribution to the army.’²⁴ Although by the 1930s and 1940s, winds of political change were blowing in India, and amongst the Sikh community too, they proved themselves as true and brave in the Second World War, in British service, as their *Khalsa* ancestors had been in fighting the *Company-sahibs*, almost a hundred years earlier.

Amongst this number we also have the rather mysterious/anonymous figure of Havildar Dhirta Singh, I.D.S.M., M.M.M. – with very little known or remembered about him but no less a hero, with a unique and fascinating set of actions to his eternal credit. Although Dhirta Singh is a forgotten, unknown name today, like many other such heroes from different parts of the Punjab and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in general, he and others like him deserve to be noticed, to be properly recognized and remembered for what they were and how much they contributed to the cause of the British Empire and the defence of humanity.

²² Major (R) Shaukat Hyat-Khan (c.1915-1998), ex-soldier and politician, was the eldest son of the then-Premier of the Punjab, *Sirdar* Sir Sikandar Hyat-Khan (1892-1942). His memoirs are entitled: *The Nation That Lost Its Soul* (Jang Publishers, Lahore 1995).

²³ *Ibid.*, p.74

²⁴ Mason P., *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men*, Jonathan Cape, London 1974, p.514

The Afghan Church Bombay – the Church of St John the Evangelist

Tim Ash

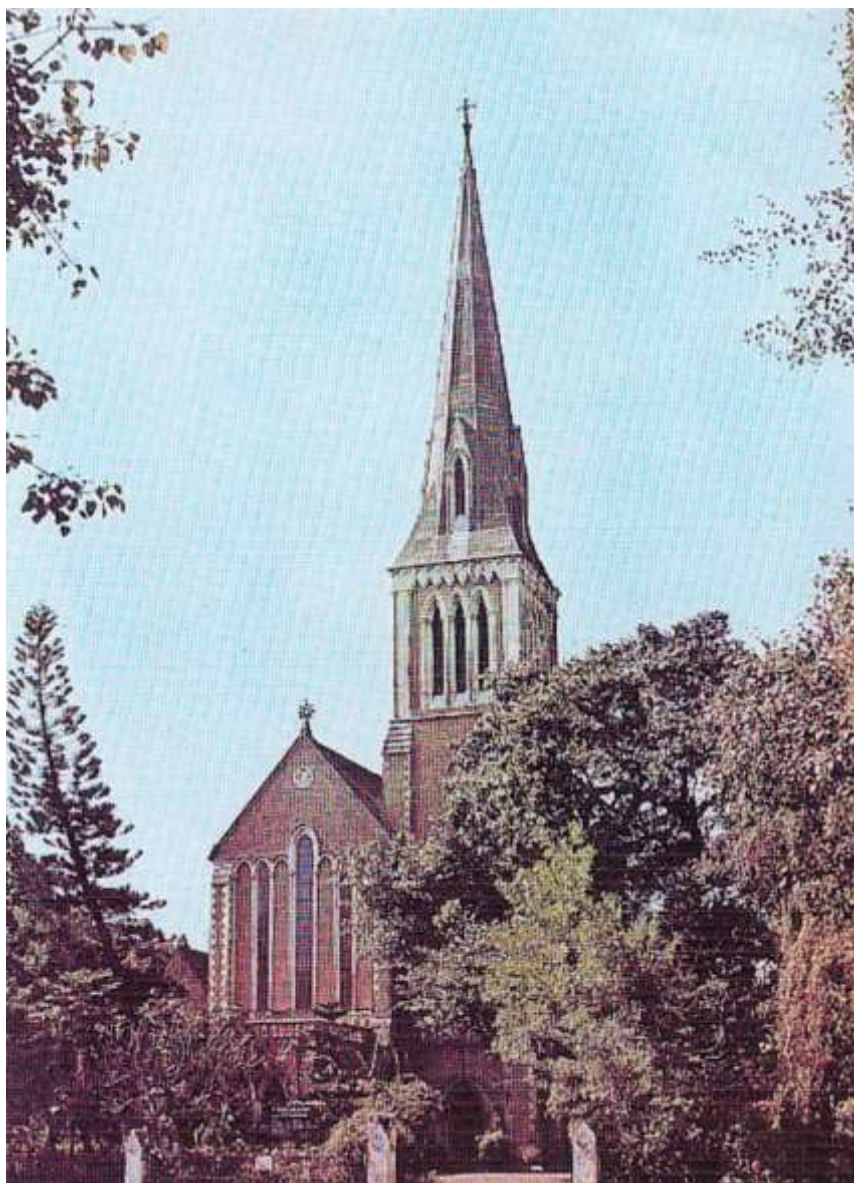
The traveller to India in the 21st Century will nearly always arrive by air at one of the international airports now scattered across the country. However, up to the second half of the 20th century, the traveller, if he was coming from the west, gained his first sight of India from the sea as the vessel on which he travelled approached the premier port of India, Bombay, the centre of trade and commerce of British India. His first view would have been the spire of a church, rising proudly above the other buildings on the skyline as they came into view. This spire belonged to the Afghan Church at Colaba, the main Cantonment area for the Bombay Army whose history in peace was as glorious as its deeds on the battle field. For its soldiers were among the makers of Bombay - the builders of docks, mills, schools, law courts, bridges and Government buildings.

Bombay is in fact a group of seven islands running north to south, with, at its southerly tip, the island of Colaba. Reclamation has now joined the islands together. Only at its northern end is the city of Bombay joined to the mainland.

It was the Reverend George Pigott who conceived the idea of a church at Colaba, to commemorate those officers and men of the Bombay Army regiments who had fallen during the Afghanistan and Sind wars of 1838 to 1843. With missionary zeal he canvassed and collected funds for this project and within four years the foundation stone was laid by the Hon'ble Sir George Russell Clerk, Governor of Bombay, on 4th December 1847.

Work on the church continued apace and the walls, built with red stone, rose steadily. Sadly, the Reverend Pigott, on a voyage to visit England, was taken sick and died suddenly on 24th February 1850. He was buried at sea. However his work was continued by the Reverend Philip Anderson, who exerted himself in raising new funds and maintaining the tempo of construction.

The main portion of the church reached an advanced stage where services could be held in it. Preparations were made to consecrate the building, but unfortunately the Reverend Philip Anderson died in December 1857 before the Right Reverend John Hardinge, Second Bishop of Bombay, could consecrate the Church of St John the Evangelist on 7th January 1858.



THE AFGHAN CHURCH BOMBAY—THE 210 FOOT SPIRE

The steeple of the church was 210 feet high and became a welcome landmark for shipping approaching Bombay, probably the first sight of land for many vessels since leaving the Cape. Over the years numerous donations were made to the church. In 1865 forty-two stained glass windows were received. The great west window gradually took shape – five lights with tracing above. The three plain arches behind the altar were eventually clad in marble covered in ornamental work. A major donor towards these additions was Sir Cowasji Jehangir, a Parsee. At the dawn of the 20th century came the eight bells donated by Sir Charles Cayser.

With time, marble tablets were erected on the walls commemorating the officers and men who died in the Afghan wars; memorials to great deeds and heroic deaths.

Source:

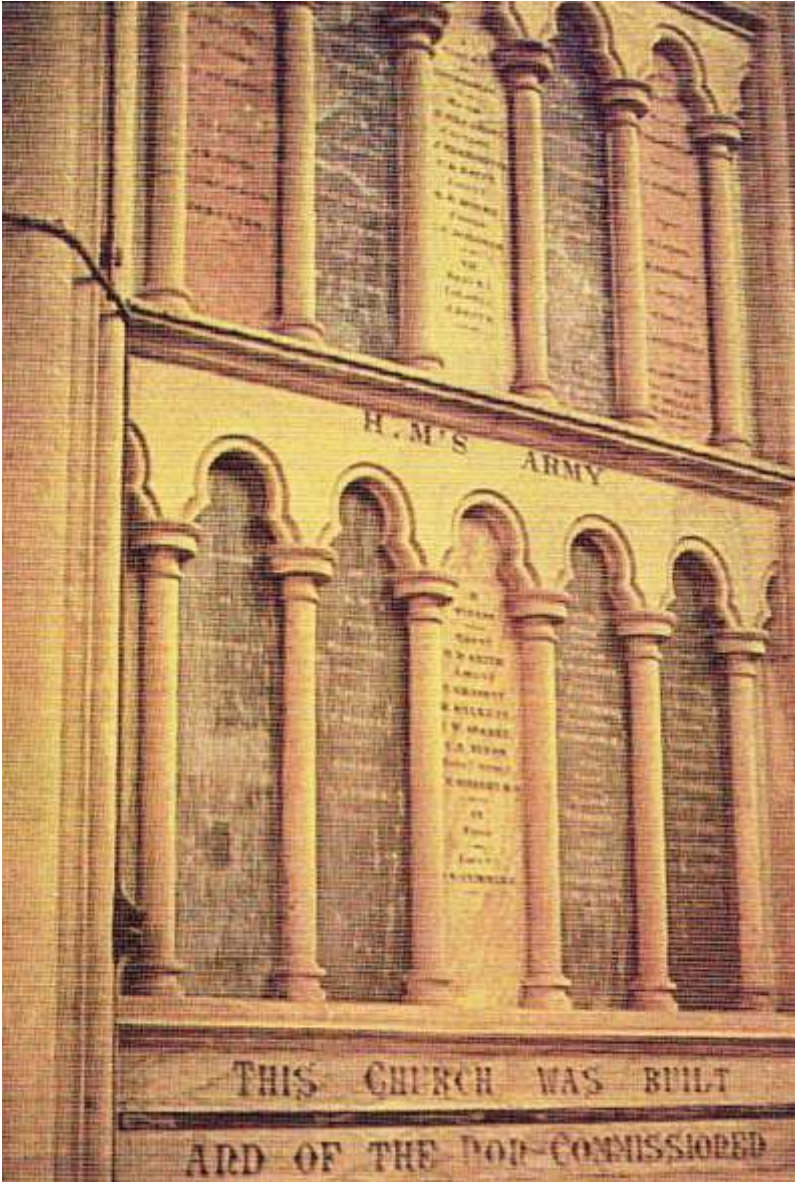
Larry Grant, *A Spiritual Story in Stone* (an appeal for funds, c.1979-80; with photographs credited to Larry Grant, Neville D'Souza and Ramesh Khosla)

.....

THIS CHURCH
 WAS BUILT IN MEMORY OF
 THE OFFICERS WHOSE NAMES ARE
 WRITTEN ON THE WALLS OF THE CHANCEL,
 AND OF THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS
 AND PRIVATE SOLDIERS, TOO MANY TO BE
 SO RECORDED, WHO FELL MINDFUL OF
 THEIR DUTY, BY SICKNESS OR BY
 THE SWORD, IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF
 SIND AND AFGHANISTAN.
 A.D. 1838-1843

.....

INSCRIPTION AT THE BASE OF THE MEMORIAL TABLETS



AFGHAN CHURCH BOMBAY – THE MEMORIAL TABLETS

5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force – Bannu 1900

Cliff Parrett

The caption to the photograph of Indian officers on the following page does not record the identity of the regiment, the location, or the date it was taken. It is clearly a rifle regiment, as the officers are carrying the straight-bladed 1827 Pattern Rifle Regiment sword. Furthermore, the plaque on the wall next to the Adjutant's office and the captioned names of the officers allows the regiment to be identified as the 5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force. Regarding location and date, there are clues in two photos glued to the reverse of the same album page, these being described as 'Officers Quarters at Bannu 1900' and 'Bannu April 23 to June 25 1900.' Taken together with the known stationing of the 5th Punjab Infantry and the recorded services of its officers, it is possible to confirm that the photograph was taken at Bannu in the first half of 1900.¹

The easiest clue is the name plaque on the wall, presumably next to the door of the adjutant's office, which is inscribed 'Lt. C.E.D. Davidson Houston, 5th Punjab Infantry.' Lieutenant C.E.D. Davidson-Houston first joined the 5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force, on 4th June 1897. He was acting as Officiating Adjutant of the regiment when this photo was taken.² He later commanded the regiment in France following the death of Lieut. Colonel W.E. Venour on 31st October 1914. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and was killed in action at Aubers Ridge on 25th September 1915. The 5th Punjab Infantry was very severely mauled in this action, suffering casualties in killed, missing and wounded amounting to 260 all ranks.

Officers wearing decorations

Subedar Man Singh (seated second from left)

Indian Order of Merit, G.G.O. 252 of 23rd April 1880

3483 Sepoy Man Singh, 5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force.
'Admitted to the 3rd Class Order of Merit for conspicuous gallantry in action at Kabul and in the vicinity between the 10th and the 23rd December 1879.'

¹ The location of the stations in which regiments were posted is recorded in quarterly editions of the Indian Army List. The 5th Punjab Infantry arrived at Bannu (a.k.a. Edwardesabad) on 10th December 1899 where it remained until 20th October 1900 before marching to Miran Shah (*Indian Army List*, April 1900 and November 1901 editions).

² Adjutant from 1st June 1901 (*Indian Army List*, April 1900 edition).



According to the unit history, the Indian Order of Merit [I.O.M.] was awarded for gallantry during a sortie on 13th December against a fortified serai.³ Man Singh was a Malwai Sikh.⁴ He entered service on 18th July 1871, was commissioned on 14th July 1889 and advanced to subedar on 1st March 1891. He was appointed to the 2nd Class Order of British India on 2nd Sept. 1902 and retired shortly afterwards (not in July 1904 I.A. List). His medals include the I.O.M. (3rd Class), India General Service [I.G.S.] with one clasp (Jowaki 1877-8), Afghanistan 1878-80 with three clasps (Peiwar Kotal, Charasia, Kabul), and I.G.S. with two clasps (Punjab Frontier 1897-98, Samana 1897).

Subedar Hasan Khan (seated fourth from left)⁵

Indian Order of Merit, G.G.O. 271 of 28th March 1879

1489 Sepoy Hussan [sic] Khan, 24th (Punjab) Regt of Bengal Native Infantry.
‘Admitted to the 3rd Class Order of Merit for conspicuous gallantry on the 27th Jan. 1879 in the Bazar Valley, in coming to the assistance of Lieutenant B.E. Spragge, 51st Regiment, when suddenly attacked by a party of Afridis.’

Hasan Khan was a Pathan (Kamar Khel Afridi).⁶ He entered service on 4th December 1869, was commissioned on 1st March 1883, and advanced to subedar on 26th August 1893. He served with the 24th Punjabis until at least 31st March 1892 (April 1892 IAL), and then sometime before the end of 1893 he transferred to the 5th Punjab Infantry.⁷ There were no recorded class changes to either regiment during the period 1892-93, and Jemadar Hasan Khan’s move to the 5th PI probably coincided with his advance to subedar. There may have been no foreseeable opportunity for promotion within the 24th Punjabis at the time, or the 5th Punjab Infantry may have been short of an Afridi subedar. Hasan Khan remained with the 5th Punjab Infantry until he retired on 28th February 1901. His medals include the Order of Merit (3rd Class), I.G.S. with one clasp (Hazara 1888), Afghanistan 1878-80 with two clasps (Kabul, Kandahar)⁸, the Kabul to Kandahar Star, and I.G.S. 1895 with two clasps (Punjab Frontier 1897-98, Samana 1897).

³ Wylly H.C., Colonel, C.B., *History of the 5th Battalion 13th Frontier Force Rifles 1849-1926*, Aldershot 1929; p.42

⁴ From the Malwa region of the Punjab.

⁵ Captioned as ‘Hassan Khan’ whereas the I.A. List records his name as ‘Hasan Khan.’

⁶ As distinct from Kamar Khel Afridi.

⁷ Wylly, p.48; he appears in a group of 5th Punjab Infy officers photographed in 1893.

⁸ There is some uncertainty regarding the Kabul clasp. The 24th Punjab Infantry was not present in Kabul during the qualifying period for the clasp and Hassan Khan may have been there on detached duty.

Subedar Zaman Ali (seated third from left)

Order of the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar 3rd Class, Regimental Orders 1898

Subedar Zaman Ali, 5th Punjab Infantry

‘Her Majesty is pleased to confer on Subedar Zaman Ali, 5th Punjab Infantry, permission to wear the Order of the Brilliant Star of Zanzibar conferred in recognition of active and distinguished services before the enemy.’⁹

Zaman Khel is the Punjabi Muslim officer seated third from left, and it is surprising that the original owner of the album was not able to identify an officer with such a distinctive and rarely seen decoration. He first entered service on 29th May 1872, was commissioned jemadar on 1st October 1879, and advanced to subedar on 6th December 1895. During his service in Africa he held the challenging post of Subedar Major of the Mombassa Contingent.¹⁰ He was appointed to the 2nd Class of the Order of British India on 21st June 1900 and in the same month was transferred to the 40th Pathans. He was advanced to the 1st Class Order of British India on 8th January 1902 and became Subedar Major of the 40th Pathans from 17th May 1902. In the unit history of the 40th Pathans, the campaigns of this long serving officer are listed as: Jowaki 1877-78; 2nd Afghanistan War 1878-80; Waziri Expedition 1881; Takht-i-Suleiman Expedition 1883; Miranzai Expedition 1891; British East Africa 1895-96; Uganda Expedition 1897-98, Tibet 1904-5. He must have been unusually fit, for a man of his age, to have been able to contend with the extreme rigors of the campaign in Tibet, during which his regiment was actively involved and for which he personally was mentioned in dispatches. Soon after returning from Tibet, in November 1905 he was appointed Honorary Aide De Camp on the staff of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales (later George V) during his official visit to India.¹¹ He retired as an Honorary Captain on 15th April 1906 and the portrait reproduced on the facing must have been taken round about that time.¹²

⁹ Wylly, p.58. ‘Subedar Zaman Ali and eleven sepoy of the Regiment rejoined this year [1898] at the expiration of three years’ service in East Africa for which they had volunteered.’ Permission to wear the Zanzibar decoration was published in regimental orders of the 5th Punjab Infantry in 1898.

¹⁰ *Indian Army List*, January 1898 edition. The Indian Contingent of Punjabi Muslims was headquartered at Mombasa. ‘

¹¹ Waters R.S., Major, O.B.E., *History of the 5th Battalion (Pathans) 14th Punjab Regiment, formerly 40th Pathans, ‘The Forty Thieves’*, James Bain Ltd., London 1936; pp. 43, 72, 81

¹² *Ibid.*, p.50



In accordance with his known field services, Zaman Ali's impressive set of decorations and medals includes: 1st Class Order of British India; I.G.S. with one clasp (Jowaki 1877-8); Afghanistan 1878-80 with three clasps (Peiwar Kotal, Charasia, Kabul); East & West Africa without clasp ('M'wele 1895-6' engraved on the rim); East & Central Africa with two clasps (Uganda 1897-98, Lubwa's); 3rd Class Order of Brilliant Star of Zanzibar.

The Editor wishes to thank Sean Weir for his kind permission to publish the 5th Punjab Infantry photograph, and Brian Turner for identifying the straight-bladed 1827 Pattern Rifle Regiment sword.

Five Early Military Graves (c. 1853-1888) at the Old Christian (Anglican) Cemetery, Abbottabad, Pakistan

Part II¹

Omer Tarin and Sarkees Najmuddin

3. **Lieut. Robert Gerald Fitzgerald:** born 1846, died 1872²

Lieutenant Fitzgerald, was a Royal Artillery officer attached to the Peshawar Mountain Battery, Punjab Frontier Force. One or other of the four batteries of artillery of the Punjab Frontier Force was generally always at hand in the Abbottabad central garrison,³ and they were brought into use a number of times during the several Black Mountain campaigns in Hazara (1850s to 1920s) as well as in other punitive expeditions and minor border skirmishes. This young officer, whose life was tragically cut short by a gun accident, had returned to Abbottabad in June 1872 following service with his battery in the Lushai campaign on the Eastern Frontier of India.

Fortunately the inscription on the headstone of Robert Fitzgerald's memorial in the OCC Abbottabad remains in relatively good condition. It states:

*Sacred to the Memory of Lieut[enant] Robert Gerald Fitzgerald R.A
Peshawur [sic] Mountain Battery
Who died from the effects of an accidental gunshot wound
at Hurripore[sic] near Abbottabad
On the 27th of November 1872
Deeply loved, honoured and lamented [by] his sorrowing Brother
and Sisters and his brother officers and many friends
R.I.P
Revelations 21, Ch ...V*

¹ Part I of this article was published in the preceding (Autumn 2009) edition of *Durbar*.

² Irving M., I.C.S. and de Rhé-Philippe G.W., *Inscriptions on Christian Tombs or Monuments in the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir and Afghanistan*, Punjab Government Press, Lahore 1910 and 1912.; Part I p. 167, Part II, p.110. Fitzgerald's name and date of demise appear on a memorial tablet in St. Augustine's Church, Kohat, commemorating officers of the Punjab Frontier Force who died on the Frontier. His grave at Abbottabad is not recorded.

³ Hazara Gazetteer, 1883-84, pp.172-73. It is also to be noted that, apart from the garrison at Abbottabad, two smaller military outposts existed: at Haripur in the plains, and at Oghi Fort in the Agror Valley, bordering the Black Mountain area.



INSCRIPTION ON THE MEMORIAL OF LIEUTENANT FITZGERALD

From what we could ascertain, like many young officers then serving in the Hazara, Lieutenant Fitzgerald was on ‘shooting leave’ in Haripur when his accidental death apparently occurred.⁴ Nothing more is known about him. However, within the India Office Records is recorded the death of his brother, Richard Gerald Fitzgerald, a surgeon in the Army Medical Department, at Lahore Fort on 30th September 1874 (the exact location of his burial in Lahore is unknown).⁵ One might speculate that the tragically fated young Fitzgerald brothers were related to Colonel Robert Fitzgerald, 12th Bombay N.I, first commandant of the Scinde Camel Corps from 1843 to 1849.⁶ We have been unable to trace a connection, and maybe a reader will be able to clarify this.

⁴ Ibid., pp.16-18. Haripur was, and still is, home to several fine government *rukhs* (preserves) which were popular among British officers as venues for partridge hunting during the official ‘season’ (Nov. to February). Gun accidents occurred occasionally. Nowadays most *rukhs* are reserved for V.I.P. *Shikar* (hunting) for visiting dignitaries. In St. Luke’s Register for 1872-75 is a brief entry on the circumstances of Fitzgerald’s accidental death. An inquest must have taken place, but we have seen no record of it.

⁵ This information derives from an unspecified source.

⁶ Anon, *Regimental History of the 6th Royal Battalion (Scinde) 13th Frontier Force Rifles, 1843-1934*, Gale & Polden, Aldershot; pp.1-6. The 6th Royal Battalion was first raised in Karachi in 1843 as the Scinde Camel Corps.

4. Major Leigh Richmond Battye: born 29th June 1845, died June 1888⁷

Major Leigh Battye was the son of George Wynard and Marian Martha Battye.⁸ His biography in Irving & de Rhé-Philippe is accompanied by that of his eldest son Richmond Moffat Battye, killed in action in the Tirah on 1st December 1897, and three of his brothers (Frederick Drummond, Quintin Henry, and Wigram) – all of whom were also killed in action. Leigh Richmond Battye was with the 5th Gurkha Regiment, Punjab Frontier Force, when he also was killed in June 1888, during the Black Mountain Campaign (Hazara), in an action in the Agror Valley; and was buried in the same month in the OCC Abbottabad.

The circumstances of Major Leigh Battye's death in 1888 are recorded in several sources – the most detailed account being in the 5th Gurkhas' history.⁹ The Hazara outpost of Oghi, in the Agror Valley, close by the Black Mountain area, was generally manned by a detachment provided by two Punjab Frontier Force units, on this occasion the 5th Gurkhas and the 6th Punjab Regiment, depending on which units were available for such duty in Abbottabad at a given time. Thus, on 18th June 1888, a 'mixed party' some eighty strong left the Oghi Fort (Agror Valley) early in the morning for reconnaissance purposes. The party was commanded by Major Leigh Battye, 5th Gurkhas, accompanied by Captain H.B. Urmston of the 6th Punjab Regiment. While they were still in British (settled) territory, the party was ambushed and fired upon and the fire became heavier and the numbers of Black Mountain tribesmen and/or their local allies larger, as they advanced further towards the tribal border. At this point, the party was ordered to fall back as some men were hit and wounded and there was apprehension that the small party might be overrun. A havildar in the rearguard was wounded badly and fell, and the two British officers, accompanied by Subedar Kishanbir Nagarkoti of the 5th Gurkha Regiment and five other ranks, went back to get him out. As they were putting the wounded man on a stretcher, they were charged by the enemy and in the subsequent hand-to-hand conflict, Battye was felled by a sword cut and then shot through the neck. Urmston was first struck by a hatchet and then killed soon afterwards. In the meanwhile the main body went on in retreat, unaware of what had occurred. However Subedar Kishanbir Nagarkoti, who had managed to reach

⁷ Irving & de Rhé-Philippe, *op. cit.*, Part II, pp.22-21

⁸ British Library, India Office Records, shelf mark N/1/68 f. 188

⁹ Anon, *History of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force) 1858-1928*, Aldershot (undated); pp.84-87

the main body, then led them back and recovered the bodies of the two officers and others who fell. For his outstanding gallantry on this occasion, Subedar Kishanbir Nagarkoti was awarded the unique gold fourth award clasp to his 1st Class Indian Order of Merit. This tragic border *fracas* led to the outbreak of the punitive Black Mountain campaign that lasted from September to December 1888, after which the local tribesmen came in and made terms.¹⁰

The Battyes were a very well-known family indeed, in India generally and on the Frontier in particular. You can find mention of them almost everywhere, in old archives and government records of all sorts.¹¹ They were mostly missionaries but also produced a remarkably large number of soldiers who were conspicuous for their gallantry at various times, as well as some civilian officers in several branches/departments. In the Hazara district/area they are especially famous, as the small but well-known hill station of Thandiani (about one hour's drive from Abbottabad town) was originally leased out as a special 'grant' to a member of this family, who subsequently donated it to the Church as a missionaries' resort.¹²

¹⁰ The local tribesmen of the *Kala Dhaka*, or Black Mountain, bordering the Hazara District of British India, had in this instance been primed to attack the British forces at Oghi by the machinations of the locally influential Khan of Agror, Ali Gohar Khan (b.1857) who had an ongoing rivalry with his near neighbour the Chief or Nawab of Amb (Feudal Tanawal) and who, despite the confirmation and increase of his *jagir* grants by the British, imagined he had been slighted by them in favour of the Amb chief. Since he did not want to be involved directly in any confrontation with the British he found it expedient to work up some of the Black Mountain clans to do his dirty work for him. In 1888-89, he was arrested from Oghi and sent off as a prisoner to Lahore, and the campaign thereafter closed, with the tribal chiefs suing for peace. During the period of Ali Gohar Khan's detention, his estate was placed under the wardenship of the court and his minor son, Badi-ul-Zaman Khan (born 1886) expected to succeed to the Agror chieftainship in due course, on attaining his majority.

¹¹ Evelyn Désirée Battye, *The Fighting Ten*, British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, London 1984. This book, which has not been available to the writers of this article, tells the tale of ten gallant Battye soldiers, including the five referred to here.

¹² Records of the former Hazara Hill Tract Improvement Trust, now incorporated into the *Galiyat* Development Authority (GDA), Abbottabad. File 1969/01/HHIT/101-133, Re: 'Early Leases in the Hazara Hill Tracts granted during British Rule.' The Church of Pakistan's Peshawar Diocese still owns considerable land there, as well as a small church building and outhouses etc, mostly in use during the summer months when a considerable number of missionaries and church officials move up there. Some property is also owned privately by a few Christian families.

There are two graves together in the small ‘family plot’ in the OCC Abbottabad, enclosed by a wrought-iron grill. One is Major Battye’s, and the other is that of his little son George Percival Battye who died earlier in 1872 aged only 10 months. We have found no record of the child’s tragic demise and there is merely a simple entry in the register at St. Luke’s Church. Major Leigh Richmond Battye’s headstone reads:



IN MEMORIAM
Major Leigh Richmond Battye
5th Goorkha Regt
Who was killed in action on the Black
Mountain, Agror Valley
June 18th 1888
Aged 42 years 11 months 21 days
 (followed by a long Biblical text)

Major Battye was the ninth son. He came immediately after his famous brother, Major Wigram Battye ‘of the Guides’, who died leading a dashing cavalry charge at the Battle of Futehabad in Afghanistan on the 2nd April 1879.

5. Lieut. Trevor Farquhar: born 1865, died October 1888

This last is a very interesting case. He is not mentioned in Irving and de Rhé-Philippe’s compendium, and at first we could find no information about him elsewhere.¹³ Due to the exceptionally bad condition of the grave we could not take a proper photo. The inscription on the headstone in the OCC Abbottabad is barely legible, and his name is incorrectly spelled ‘Farouqahar’ thereon.

...Lieut. Trevor Farouqahar [sic] ----- Seaforth Highlanders...
son of H.Farouqahar [sic] of Gilminscoft, Ayrshire
Died in action in the Black Mountain Campaign, 1888 October
 (date of burial is given as 22nd October 1888)

¹³ It is understood that details of Farquhar’s death can be found in the India Office Records (unspecified source).

The young Lieut. Farquhar, of the 2nd Bn, The Seaforth Highlanders,¹⁴ died in the campaign generally referred to as the ‘Black Mountain Expedition of 1888’ that began with the murder of Major Battye, whose details are given above. Farquhar was actually buried in this plot on the 22nd October although he probably died some days earlier. His plain, simple grave, in a forgotten corner of the OCC, suggests a rather forlorn presence. Since the Seaforth Highlanders was not an Indian Army regiment, and as Lieut. Farquhar had no connections in these parts, his grave suffered considerable neglect over the years.

While searching for details about him, we began on a rather tenuous line of research. His father’s name is given as ‘H. Farouqahar [sic] of Gilminscroft, Ayrshire’, so we presumed he must have been a relatively unknown minor squire or ‘laird’ as the family name is common enough in the Scottish Lowlands.¹⁵ In this mistaken assumption, we began to scour available records here and in the British Library, as well as available records in Scotland, through the agency of various local historians and specialists, but came up with no additional information whatsoever. It was not until June 2009 that we made a startling discovery.¹⁶ We were advised to look up a website <www.peerage.com>, a genealogical record of British peers and nobility compiled by a gentleman in Wellington N.Z., and on searching this site we ‘came up trumps’!

Lieut. Trevor Fauquhar was the eldest son of Sir Henry Thomas Farquhar, 4th Baronet Farquhar (1838-1916), who married the Hon’ble Alice Brand, daughter of the 1st Viscount Hampden of Glynde, in 1862. They had four

¹⁴ Chichester H.M., and Burges-Short G., *The Records & Badges of Every Regiment & Corps in the British Army*, Gale & Polden, Aldershot 1900; pp.742-756. The Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-shire Buffs, The Duke of Albany’s) was created via the amalgamation of the 72nd (The Duke of Albany’s Own Highlanders) Regt of Foot and the 78th (Highlanders) (Ross-shire Buffs) Regt of Foot, as part of Childers’ Reform of the British Army, 1881. The 2nd Battalion (the old 78th) arrived in India in 1879 where it remained for eighteen years. It served *inter al.* on the North-West Frontier, including the Black Mountain Expedition, and in Afghanistan.

¹⁵ As a small historical ‘aside’, it is worth noting that in 1788 the great Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) was famously married to his beloved Jean Armour by a ‘Farquhar of Gilminscroft’ in Ayrshire—probably a local J.P. or Magistrate. Was he any relation to our poor young lieutenant? The connection certainly invites speculation. We are indebted for this snippet of information to Ms Mubeshra Jamil of the Department of Mass Communication, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan, who has considerable ‘out of the way’ literary knowledge stored up.

¹⁶ Thanks to Mr. Asad Khwaja of Basingstoke, England, for setting us on the right track.

children: a daughter, Gertrude Farquhar (1863-1914); another daughter Katherine Farquhar (1865-1933); their elder son, our Lieut. Trevor Farquhar (born 27th December 1865);¹⁷ and another son, Colonel Francis Douglas Farquhar (1874-1915), who died in action during World War I.¹⁸ This is a substantial jump in what we previously had on Lieutenant Farquhar and his antecedents and background. One wonders if any members of his family still survive and if they have ever visited his grave in Abbottabad? Or if they are even aware that he lies buried there?

Conclusion

Our chief objectives in carrying out and putting down this research in this form, were: [a] given the paucity of funds with the Church of Pakistan, especially St. Luke's, Abbottabad, for the effective maintenance of the older graves in the OCC, to document as much as we could some of the still existent records for posterity; [b] to highlight the presence of these graves, in Abbottabad, Pakistan, of people who lived and died here and are very much part of our past historical 'narrative', one way or the other, despite years of terrible neglect by Pakistani historians and governmental authorities, who choose, even today, to adopt a rather ostrich-like attitude in accepting that we had, in fact, a 'colonial' history, which is worthy of study at various levels; [c] to make a small contribution towards rectifying this sorry neglect, for the sake of future generations, which, removed by several decades from the trauma(s) of Independence/Partition, might ask what all these old remains and monuments are and what role they played in our past. We seriously apprehend that a great many of these sites will probably have ceased to exist in some years' time, which will be a real shame indeed.

The research that we have carried out and set down here is far from being adequate, we know; but we hope this will also help people to understand the sheer difficulties confronting serious researchers here in Pakistan, without access to proper, detailed records and resources for research and with little help or assistance from various quarters. However, it is a small beginning we hope,

¹⁷ His date of demise is wrongly given as 23rd October 1888. The note states that he 'died in action in the Black Mountain Expedition'. As already stated, he was buried in the OCC, Abbottabad, on 22nd October and probably died some days earlier (www.peeraage.com).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The biographical note also informs us that Colonel Farquhar had served with the Coldstream Guards and received a D.S.O.; but at the time of his demise he was commanding the Canadian Light Infantry. He was married and had issue, however.

which might encourage others to follow. It is indeed strange that even in our top public and private sector universities in Pakistan, with large history departments/faculties, hundreds of students and several millions of rupees in annual funding, there is almost no work being undertaken on our colonial history, especially the fascinating military history of that time. Indeed, almost 70% of all historical research being carried out here seems to focus entirely on: [i] the ‘Freedom Movement’ leading to the creation of Pakistan (c.1920s to 1947); [ii] famous personalities associated with this struggle/movement; [iii] some aspects of regional/provincial history/histories, again with a focus on Pakistan and its creation; [iv] some aspects of Mughal or early Muslim rule in these parts.

A small amount of work has been done, in the past, on the ancient civilizations of Gandhara and the Indus Valley but nothing new or original has been said or written now for the last twenty years or so. There seems to be a major hiatus in our history, between the late 18th century and 1857. This situation prevails at a time when, since the 1990s onwards, the military history of South Asia is experiencing a ‘renaissance’ of sorts in other parts of the world – with historians looking at ‘multiple interconnections’ between military-colonial history and a range of other fields/areas: socio-cultural, political, economic and so-on.¹⁹

It is sincerely hoped that this article will be useful in making a very small contribution towards filling this hiatus, or vacuum.

Any readers who are unaware of The British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (www.bacsa.org.uk) may wish to know that BACSA was set up to care for and record European cemeteries wherever the H.E.I.C. set foot. A good number of detailed cemetery records have been published by BACSA, those in Pakistan including Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Quetta but not Abbootabad, although the BACSA archives housed in the British Library may contain some information on this station. The membership secretary is Mrs J. Bailey, 18 Elthorne Ave, London W72JN (bacsamember@aol.com).

¹⁹ Dewey C., *The New Military History of South Asia*, International Institute of Asian Studies, 1996, 9:21

A Forgotten Hero

Denis Wood

Every regiment of great age must have had countless heroes whose deeds of initiative or endurance or gallantry not only influenced a battle but were a blessing to their comrades and perhaps life-saving as well. Many of those are remembered for distinguished conduct in the face of death. Many others, perhaps even most heroes, went unmarked and unrewarded because their acts were not seen by anyone in authority or there were no survivors to report them. Sometimes they performed deeds of great benefit to their comrades which, despite being recorded, could not be publicly rewarded. Naick Poorun Ghurtee's initiative and devotion to his comrades' welfare in the approach to battle was just one such example. His determination and his stoic display of strength undoubtedly eased the hardship of every officer and soldier in his battalion and raised morale all round. But, so far as one can tell, it gained him no reward other than a statement of admiration and appreciation in the Regimental Digest of Services of the 2nd Goorkhas.

The Digest of Services, written up annually by the Commandant, while recording the account of the Black Mountain campaign of 1868 on the North West Frontier states that during the Regiment's engagement with the enemy on 4th October:

An incident of the day may be here mentioned to shew the extraordinary muscular power possessed by some of the Goorkhas. As the Regiment swarmed up the Munna-ka-Dunna hill, an old Naick by name Poorun Ghurtee, not a powerful looking man, came upon a nine Gallon Cask of Rum which had fallen from a Commissariat mule. He immediately hoisted it upon his shoulder and carried it to the summit, about 500 feet at an angle of something like 45°, not a bad feat considering the weight of the cask was upwards of a hundred and twenty pounds and that he also carried his arms, accoutrements and 40 rounds of service ammunition. The Cask was carefully put into a dandy and afterwards served out to all hands.

A day or two and a few pages later the full value of Naick Poorun's initiative and endurance is revealed:

Heavy rain commenced before the dispositions for the night had been completed and continued to fall until morning; few blankets or great-coats could be got at, and it is not surprising under the circumstances, that at an elevation of 9,000 feet all were rather numb, when at dawn all hands were piped to grog and again partook of the cask of Rum mentioned as having been rescued from destruction by the old Naick. The remaining contents proved sufficient for one wine glassful to each individual.

The record does not reveal whether or not Naick Poorun Ghurtee got any reward for his feat. It would be nice to think that British justice prevailed in the form of at least a double wine glassful at the time and promotion to Havildar in the Quartermaster's Department in due course, but perhaps, as he is described as 'old' at the time, the promotion at least never came his way.

CORRESPONDENCE

Barasat College

(From James Maggs)

Brian Steven's article on Barasat Cadet College (*Durbar* Vol. 26, No. 2) included a list of cadets who graduated in 1807, and noted the place of death of all but two of them. One of the exceptions was Robert Blackall (1787-1863). The date and place of his death is recorded in a legal notice published by *The Times* on 10th October 1863: 'Robert Blackall Esq, a Lieutenant-General in Her Majesty's Indian Army, Bengal Presidency (died at Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope, on the 20th day of April, 1863).'

One of the less fortunate Barasat cadets who succumbed to the tropical climate of Bengal was Edward Blagdon, from Puddington, near Witheridge in Mid Devon. The tortuous arrangements by which he was appointed to a Company cadetship, his kitting out in London (his purchases included '3 lb of tobacco' and a 'dictionary of Bengal') and his eventful journey to India – during which he was challenged to a duel – were described in *A Cadetship in the Honourable East India Company's Service, 1805; being a Short Memoir of Edward Blagdon, born 1788, died 1806*; edited by Florence Mostyn Gamlen (Oxford University Press, 1931; p.43). This memoir was reviewed at some length in *The Times* of 8th December 1931.

The sometimes frequent departures of cadets for Bengal were recorded in *The Times*. Thus, as reported on 9th July 1805, Bengal cadets were passengers on the *William Pitt* (5), *Glory* (6), *Diana* (9), *Ann* (12), *Northampton* (7) and *Streatham* (4). Except for the *Northampton*, all of these vessels also carried cadets bound for Madras. Cadet Henry Clapton Barnard (Appendix II, 'Barasat Cadet College') and thirteen other Bengal cadets sailed on the *Lord Castlereagh* early in 1806 (*The Times*, 25th February 1806).

Voyages through the Bay of Bengal in those times of war could be hazardous. The *Streatham*, homeward-bound in convoy, was one of two East Indiamen captured by a French frigate in May 1809.

Edward Blagdon died of fever at Barasat, not long after reaching India, on

6th August, 1806, in his eighteenth year. *The Times* review ended with: ‘His name remains on a pane of glass at his old home, Sminacott. He wrote it with a diamond before he left Devon to join John Company.’

India Unattached List

Mr. R.A. Dodkins (441) seeks clarification of the designation P.A.I.U.L. (Permanently attached to the Indian Unattached List). Mr. Dodkin enlisted into the Royal Artillery in 1939. In 1943 he was posted to 587 (M) H.A.A. Battery, Calidcot as a Sergeant Instructor and then in 1944 he was accepted for transfer to the Indian Army and was sent to P.A.I.U.L. Cawnpore. He spent his time in and around the Indian Army Ordnance Corps Central Ordnance Depot in Cawnpore, having completed his probationary period, but was demobilised in 1946 without ever having been told to whom he belonged. Our late Vice President, Lieut. Colonel Tony Mains, wrote about the I.U.L. in 1989:

India Unattached List, Indian Army - A number of British Warrant Officers Class I (Conductors and Sub Conductors) and Staff Sergeants served in the IUL. They had transferred initially from British units and served in the R.I.A.S.C., I.A.O.C., Indian Army Corps of Clerks, Detention Barrack Staff, etc.

It was, of course, different for British officers joining the Indian Army who were initially commissioned into the Unattached List, Indian Army (a different organisation from the I.U.L.) and spent their first year of commissioned service in this unit, though attached to a British regiment, before transferring to their parent regiment. Officers of the support services were not appointed directly but were found by transfers from combatant units.

From this it may be deduced that non-commissioned officers in Mr Dodkins’ position were ‘listed’ for administrative reasons as Permanently Attached to the India Unattached List, rather than shown ‘on strength’ of the respective Corps to which they were attached, but if any member can add to this, perhaps with documentary evidence, the Editor would be pleased to hear.

An unidentified shoulder title

Sushil Talwar has written to the Editor seeking help in identifying an unusual Indian



Army shoulder title in brass, consisting of a mailed fist brandishing three (or is it six?) lightning flashes or thunderbolts. He came across this shoulder title quite recently in one of the military equippers in Delhi.

Tony McClenaghan recalled something similar being published in an early edition of



Durbar (Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, p.23) and this was confirmed by the late Hugh King as being an old World War 1 vintage pagri badge of the Indian Army Ordnance Corps (Vol.3, No. 3, p.16).



That identification is also confirmed by reference to the accompanying post-card photograph taken in France during the First World War.

There are, however, some obvious and noticeable differences between that badge and Sushil's shoulder title. The I.A.O.C. badge has a fist rising from a coronet, the central lightning bolt is of a different shape, and the whole is surmounted by a pair of wings.

Is Sushil's shoulder title a later, possibly World War 2 period piece, or is it a different unit altogether, such as the Indian Signals? Replies to the Editor please.

The Burtons of Kota

While waiting for books to be delivered at the National Army Museum's reading room, new IMHS member Mike Thomas browsed through a copy of the Summer 2008 edition of *Durbar* which included an article about the unfortunate Charles Aeneas Burton who perished with two of his sons during the Indian Mutiny. Noting that all references to Burton's field services prior to the Mutiny point to his presence at the battle of Maharajpore, qualifying for the Gwalior Star with the 'Maharajpore' reverse, Mike has a genuine Gwalior Star that is correctly named to this officer but with the 'Punniar' reverse.

Old Christian Cemetery, Abbottabad

(From Dr. Saiqa Khan)

I was recently given an article to read on 'Five Early Military Graves at the Old Christian Cemetery, Abbottabad (Part I)' published in the Autumn 2009 edition of *Durbar*. The authors mention that there were no native Christian

graves in this European cemetery prior to 1947. I suppose that early church records were not always accurate, but those of us who remember a little of that time, knew there used to be five such graves. These were:

1. *Edward Sohun Lall*: died in the 1920s. He served for many, many years as the Postmaster of the Abbottabad GPO, and was something of an institution in himself, according to stories.
2. *Mangat Rai*: died in the late 1930s. Rai Bahadur Mangat Rai, B.A., was a distinguished member of the Abbottabad community. He originally belonged to a famous Christian family of the Punjab and first came to the Hazara as a junior revenue officer, and remained Settlement Naib-Tehsildar in Abbottabad for long years. He later retired as the first native Assistant Commissioner for Excise and Taxation in the region (c. 1931-32) and settled permanently in Abbottabad.
3. *Mrs Mangat Rai (Mrs)*: died in the late 1930s. Wife of the above.
4. '*Suzanna*.' There was a grave of a young girl, probably of an Anglo-Indian Christian family. Nothing else was known about her.
5. Another grave, c. 1930s. This belonged to a prominent local Muslim convert whose name I forget. He was active in Church social/philanthropic activities.

I trust this information will help to set the record straight. Congratulations on publishing this otherwise fine article.

(From *Omer Tarin and Sarkees Najmuddin*)

With reference to our article on the OCC Abbottabad (*Durbar*, Autumn and Winter 2009), we have some more information regarding an early grave listed by Irving and de Rhe-Philippe. and subsequently 'lost'. In a recent visit, we located a headstone hidden under a clump of grass and rather weathered. Parts of the headstone are still legible and we could decipher: 'A...W Cruikshank C.B. Aged 47 years ...Pioneers ...Oct 1888.' Colonel A.C.W. Crookshank [sic] commanded the 34th Pioneers and died at Haripur of wounds received in the 1888 Black Mountain campaign.

On another occasion we took up a team of *mazdoors* (day laborers) to clear the undergrowth and discovered a 'mystery monument' close to Crookshank's memorial. Hidden in a clump of rough grass was a short stone obelisk with this partly indecipherable inscription:

*M... memory of
Pvt Barnel (Parnel?), Pvt Bird, Pvt J Bodycot, Pvt Jamesson,
Pvt W Barrett, Pvt – Bodycot, Pvt Davie
of the ...Batt ...5V...died in 18-- ...were buried near this spot.*

Can anyone identify these British soldiers and their regiment? Replies to the Editor please.
