## The memoir of Major-General E.J. Wild, Bengal Army during the Mutiny of 1857-1858

### Part 5: Under siege in the Lucknow Residency – September/October 1857

On our entering the Residency it was deplorable to see the original garrison looking like ghosts. They looked pale and worn out from constant exposure and worry, and even during the night they had no rest, as they were harassed day and night by false alarms and attacks, and had to be ready at any moment to turn out. I do not believe that they could have held out another week, and the women looked almost worse, for they had to live in underground rooms called Ty Khanahs, and were only allowed up at night for fresh air as bullets were constantly flying about in the day, and many a man was knocked over by a stray bullet. It having been decided on our holding the Residency, on the third day all the liquors were stopped, and our rations fixed on the following scale: meat, twelve ounces including bones; wheat, twelve ounces which we had to grind; salt, one quarter ounce.[1]

This latter I found too little, and we got no tea or sugar or anything else as all luxuries, including beer and wines, were kept for the hospital. These rations might have been sufficient if each got his share, but, as it went into the mess, some helped themselves very liberally - I won't say they were greedy and had big appetites, and they thought little of those who were on duty, or came late. Unfortunately Major Barrow,[2] and others, used to pick out the best bits and as much as they wanted, leaving the bones for those who came last.

There were now too many troops to remain in the Residency grounds, so most of the troops that came in with Havelock were told off to occupy the buildings

[1] Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny, India 1857*, Penguin Books, London 1980, p.329. In Hibbert's account, '…the "modicum of salt" was reduced to one-and-a-half ounces; allowances of ground wheat to one pound and of rice to four ounces; the ration of plain, coarse beef …had also to be reduced from twelve to six ounces a day.' This is similar to Wild's listing, except that Wild mentions no rice, the salt ration was rather less than one-and-a-half ounces, the grain was distributed un-ground and the meat ration contained a lot of bone. Later, as will be seen, the rations were further reduced.

[2] Major Lousada Barrow, 5th Madras Light Cavalry. Prior to the Mutiny outbreak, Barrow had been Deputy Commissioner at Salone, a town in Oudh Province. He commanded the mounted unit, known as Barrow's Volunteer Cavalry, with which Wild had served during Havelock's relief of Lucknow (see Durbar Vol.26, No.1, pp.4-9). Wild was still under Barrow's command within the Residency compound.

and courts through which we had passed in coming into the Bailey Guard. I have already stated that there was an open space separating these buildings from the Bailey Guard gate, and from this open space ran a road up to the city and round the Residency estate to the Mucheebawn (also written Machi Bawan) and the Iron Bridge. This road was considerably lower than the Residency grounds or the city wall, and was a source of great trouble to the old garrison as it was along this road that the mining operations took place, and the besieged were always on duty, listening for them mining, and then counter-mining. The Cawnpore battery was on this road, and before our entry a mine was exploded here, which knocked down a portion of our wall, but the cowardly mutineers were afraid to enter the breach they had made as they were afraid that a counter-mine might be exploded, so they only sent eight or ten men to examine the breach - and these were shot down. The besieged worked hard all that night and filled up the gap as well as they could, but this always remained a weak-point - even after we got in, as the enemy could always sneak down from the city. The open ground between the Bailey Guard and the buildings we took possession of was enfiladed from the city, and from this road, so we had to be careful and rush across this open spot.

The European troops who took possession of these King of Oudh's buildings destroyed everything they could. There was a part of these buildings, called the Sheish Mahal (Looking-glass Chambers) as the walls were lined with large looking-glasses, [that] had every bit of glass smashed by our men. In another portion, called the banqueting hall, was a quantity of Sèvres china for dining a large party - this was also smashed.[3] All these buildings, until our entrance, had been occupied by the mutineers, and swarmed with vermin of all sorts - the least objectionable being fleas. I went through a portion of these buildings two or three days after our taking possession, and the bodies of the defenders were

[3] Hibbert, p.327. The relieving troops of Havelock and Outram's force '…spent most of their first days there plundering…' and quotes an account by L.E.R. Rees (a civilian merchant and volunteer) that has a long list of items taken. Given that the column had fought hard to gain the Residency, that they had little transport, only expected at first to be in the compound for three days and would hardly have known where they might dispose of the loot, it would seem that Wild's observation of 'mere' wanton destruction is closer to the mark. Smaller, portable items may well have been pocketed, but Wild later says that certain items – such as cloth – were scarce, and sought-after at auctions of deceased persons' effects, which makes the presence of great piles of exotic materials less likely. Also, if those buildings damaged by shot and shell had been recently occupied by mutineers, they would have been stripped bare, since the rebels were unlikely to miss a chance of enriching themselves.

still on the floor where they had fallen when shot or bayoneted by our troops on our entry, and were in a frightful state of decomposition, and swollen up, so I did not linger long in these rooms. There were numbers of charpoys (native bedsteads) in all parts of the building, so I appropriated one, and also some pieces of native cloth, and carried it back to the Residency, and, after knocking out the vermin with a stick, I slept on it during my stay. The vermin in these buildings were so plentiful that the men cut their hair shorter than a convict's.

If Havelock had not entered the day he did, I think it would have been too late, as the enemy had again mined the Cawnpore battery. The powder was placed there, but for some unaccountable reason they did not ignite it, and, whilst the mutineers had left to resist our advance, the garrison destroyed it. God's providence watched over them, and saved them from the horrors of Cawnpore.

When we got into the Residency, the garrison was composed of the headquarters of the 32nd Foot, a few artillery, nearly the whole of the 13th Native Infantry and just a few of the 72nd and 74th Native Infantry who had remained faithful after the battle of Chinhut.[4] In addition to these, there were a number of civil and military officers who had come in from the outstations with their families for refuge, so that the Residency was rather crammed. Sir Henry Lawrence fortunately expected to be besieged, and had laid in a large stock of provisions to last for months for the original garrison, by getting as many bullocks as he could, with fodder for their feed, also wheat, oil, ghee, sugar, salt, tea, etc. so that if the Residency compound had been some distance away from the surrounding buildings and city, and had been properly fortified, the garrison would have been able to hold out for a year, or more. With our additional force, the supplies ran shorter and shorter as time rolled on - but our resisting power was stronger.

We, on coming into the Bailey Guard, as the Residency was sometimes called, had taken possession of all the King of Oudh's buildings along the banks of the Goomtee as far as, and including, the Feradbaksh (Farhatbaksh Palace). The 5th Fusiliers[5] occupied the latter building, and I used to go down daily to see

[4] Wild recorded these regiments incorrectly. In recognition of their services during the defence of the Residency, the loyal survivors of the 13th, 48th and 71st Bengal Native Infantry were formed into a new regiment, the Lucknow Regiment, raised at Cawnpore on 8th December 1857. There were no remnants from the 72nd and 74th in the Residency compound, although sixteen Christian or Eurasian musicians from the 41st Bengal Native Infantry were present.

[5] HM's 5th Regiment of Foot (Northumberland Fusiliers)

them, and hear what the enemy were doing in that part of our possessions, and how they were getting on - so that the men knew me well, and even my voice, which proved useful, for when we had been a week in the Residency we got orders one afternoon that the Volunteer Cavalry were to try a sortie that night, and try to get to the Alumbagh. It was found out at last that the cavalry were useless and out of place shut up in the Residency, and in addition fodder began to run short, so it was expedient for us to move. If we could get into the open on the other side of the Motee Mahal without detection it might be done, however it was a very risky undertaking.

My legs were covered with boils and sores brought on by the dye of the uniform, as it had not been washed when served out, but I was determined to make the attempt, though I could scarcely sit my horse.[6] At 9 p.m. we all saddled, and left the Bailey Guard at 10 p.m. Not one of us knew the road beyond the Motee Mahal, and it was a little cloudy and rather dark, but favourable for our enterprise. We were told not to speak above a whisper, and the words of command would be passed in whispers. We went on through the courts and out by the gate we had entered in by on 25th September. All went well till we got along the wall at the Feradbaksh - occupied by the 5th Fusiliers.

Major Napier, the future Lord Napier of Magdala, then a Captain of the Bengal Engineers and on the staff of Sir James Outram, said that he would go round to all the guards and tell them the Volunteer Cavalry were to go out at 10 p.m. to the Alumbagh, and we were to pass without being challenged. However, he had forgotten to caution the 5th Fusiliers in the Feradbaksh, so when we were passing under the window, the sentry from above challenged and, getting no answer, fired on us, thinking we were the enemy's cavalry. As I was just below the window I said, 'What makes you fire at us, and spoil our chance of getting out?' This shot had aroused the enemy, and shots were immediately fired from the front and from across the river, one of their bullets hitting one of the V.C. who, fortunately, had a couple of hard biscuits in his breast pocket. It broke them without doing him any further injury. Major Barrow then ordered us 'to the right about' and took us back through the gate into the court where we were out of the enemy's fire. It would have been madness for us to proceed, as the enemy were now on the alert, so Major Barrow sent back to the Residency to know what we were to do, and orders came for our return.

[6] Wild's painful sores may have been due to a form of scurvy, as his diet contained little or no fresh produce.

Next morning I went to chaff the Fusiliers about firing at us, and they told me that they had received no orders about our sortie, and said it was as well that I spoke to the sentry, as he recognised my voice, and stopped the guard firing a volley into us. A spy was subsequently sent out to find out if there was any possibility of our getting to the Alumbagh. On his return, he said that we should have to cut our way through three infantry regiments and a cavalry regiment, and there was also artillery on the road we should have to go, so it was decided that we were to remain.

I was sent down to Innes's bungalow with five others of the V.C. to strengthen the guard already stationed there. Our orders were: 'Be ready to turn out at a moment's notice - day or night,' and not to leave the post without a written order. There was no relieving the guard and, as we could not get up to our mess, we had the rations sent down daily to us, and one of our party was made caterer. He went up one day to the slaughterhouse and found out that certain portions of the slaughtered bullocks were the butcher's perquisite. Amongst this was the tongue, so he brought one back and said if we would subscribe he would make a contract with the butcher to supply us with one tongue daily, during the siege. I had to apply for an advance of pay to enable me to pay up, and I wanted a little in hand to buy things as they were sold - belonging to dead men's estates. In time I got a comb and brush at an auction, and between us we also bought an hermetically closing cooking-pot,[7] which we found most useful as we always got something hot on coming off duty, day or night. There was not much knowledge of cooking required - we just cut up the tongue and rations, and with a little sauce we put in occasionally, we had a palatable dish.

Innes's bungalow was an exposed place on the ridge of some high ground, and to get to it you had to go through the burial ground and pass the church, which was lower than the Residency or Innes's post. The church was riddled with round shot and one had to look out sharp in going to or from the Residency, being about a furlong from our post. A short distance in front of the bungalow was a well, which supplied us with water, and about forty yards behind the bungalow was a swimming-bath, but now used as a sentry-box. The ground from the bungalow to the bath was a kind of triangle, the bath being at the point, with perpendicular sides of about twenty-five feet. From here the sentry could see all round his post, and was under cover from observation and also from sun and rain, so the sentry was safe from a rush. He could see the Mucheebawn in front, the Iron Bridge to the right, and, on the left, the city. I

[7] This would seem to have been an early type of pressure-cooker.

mentioned before that the road ran from the Bailey Guard gate to the Mucheebawn, and separated the Residency from the city and passed by the bath, going through patches of garden. On this spur of ground, leading from Innes's post to the bath on the city side, ran a [low] wall of about five feet high. Halfway between the bungalow and bath the wall had been broken down by round-shot, and there was a gap of nearly ten feet, so that the sentry was exposed to their fire on going to post, or returning on being relieved, and there used to be sharpshooters on the watch so that the relief of sentries used to take place at uncertain hours, and we had to make a rush over this spot. On the Iron Bridge side of this triangle was also a wall of over ten feet high as far as the bungalow. On the outer side of this wall the ground sloped down to the Iron Bridge and the river. Curious to relate that, from Innes's bungalow to the Bailey Guard gate, this high wall did not exist, and in front of the Residency and hospital was only two feet high, and there was no perpendicular wall on the outer side, but the ground sloped gradually down to the river, so that it might very easily have been rushed. The only reason I could conjecture for [the rebels] not doing it was that they thought it was mined, and was a kind of invitation to them, and all natives are afraid of being blown up.

When I had nothing better to do, I used to amuse myself [by] taking a rise out of the sharpshooters on the city side: I used to take a stick, twist some canvas around one end of it about the size of my head, then get behind the wall leading to the bath, put my helmet on it, and raise it gradually above the wall as if I was trying to look over the wall. As soon as it was seen, a dozen shots or more would be fired at it, and then I would quickly bring it down. I would then alter my position by a few feet and do the same thing over again, and then at times as a wind-up I would raise the helmet and show them the helmet on the stick, moving it about for their edification. They were such bad shots that they never hit the helmet.[8]

The first few days we were not much troubled by the enemy at Innes's bungalow, but they came closer and closer and were more on the alert, so it became dangerous to show oneself at daytime. At first we could draw water from the well at any time we liked during the day, but had to give it up and only draw it at night, and had to store it up in ghurrahs[9] for use during the day, and we had to bathe at the well during the night. The enemy had a strong guard near the Iron Bridge, and from there they would send up parties to attack our

[8] It seems that the phrase 'wind-up' is older than many might think.
[9] The *ghurrah* wide-necked earthenware pot.

post, and they used to make a great noise behind the wall, but a few hand grenades thrown over the wall sent them back. The fresh arrivals of mutineers on reaching Lucknow city were always sent on these expeditions. They had loopholed the wall on the Iron Bridge side of the triangle, and one day I was standing sentry. It was getting towards sunset and I saw long shadows cast on the ground as they came up the slope. I gave the warning at the bungalow to be on the lookout, and as they [the enemy] came up to the wall they peeped through the loophole, one after the other, and I fired at the hole, and knocked the man over. A second one looked out of the hole - and received a bullet. I had knocked over six before they found out from whence the shot was fired, and at last they shot into the bathhouse, which had not such a substantial wall, but was pigeonholed like all the bathhouses in India.

Fortunately for me there was a thick board on the inside of the building, and between this and the wall the space was filled up with loose earth. One of their bullets came through this and the board, and hit me a sharp knock in the abdomen, and I thought it was up with me. I looked to see if there was a hole in my dress, or any blood - and found I was safe.

A grenade or two thrown over the wall at Innes's bungalow sent them back from whence they had come, and I could see them carrying off their dead and wounded, but they never attempted to come over the low wall in front of the hospital.

The hospital was a long building, and till it was turned into a hospital was known as the banqueting hall, where the Resident used to give official dinners. The ladies of the garrison did their best in nursing the sick and wounded, but there were two of them whose names were household words amongst the sick: One was Mrs Polehampton, the widow of the Rev'd Mr. Polehampton, who was killed in the early part of the siege before our entry,[10] and the other [was] a Mrs Perry. These two worked especially hard and deprived themselves of all comforts to give [them] to the sick.

Up to the 15th October I did not leave Innes's post. Then there was a call for volunteers to act as Assistant Field Engineers. I applied, and was appointed, and had to work under the orders of the Bengal Engineer officers. As we did not know how long we might be shut up, it was thought advisable to make the

[10] Rev. Polehampton died on July 20th. He had been wounded a few days before, and then caught cholera.

approach to Innes's bungalow and the low wall running between that and the Bailey Guard gate more impregnable. My work began on the outside of the wall facing the Iron Bridge, which was one of the weakest points, and I had another of the V.C. officers to work with me. We worked all night long. The chief engineer came at about 9 p.m. and marked out the trenches we were to dig, sapping down close to the Iron Bridge, and then he left, returning at early dawn to see what we had done, and to see that it was well done. This he did every day. I had a certain number of sepoys from the 13th, 72nd and 74th Regiments Native Infantry[11] allotted for the work and I liked working with the 13th, for they took an interest and worked hard. The sepoys of the other regiments would scarcely work, and I constantly told them that they ought to join their rebel brothers as they would not work, and were not worth their food. We had two working parties: one worked at digging from the time we came till 12 p.m., whilst the other furnished sentries and they relieved each other at twelve till dawn. My companion and I were with the digging party, only going now and then to visit the sentries. This, of course, made us turn day into night, and night into day, so that we slept the best part of the day. The rebels could hear us at work, and fired random shots at us, and once or twice they tried to creep up to attack us, but found us on the alert and retired. The whole of our party carried muskets as well as picks and shovels, so we were always prepared to receive them as all the men had their muskets loaded. We made two embrasures in the wall, and placed two guns there, so as to command the Iron Bridge and to prevent their encamping there.

After we had been at work a week, the rebels made a raid on us during the day to see what we were doing and the bungalow guard had to turn out. The enemy came as far as the trenches, but would come no further as they thought there might be a mine. Our guns proved useful, and sent them flying. After this they never came near our post during the day. Having finished the trenches towards the Iron Bridge as far as was necessary, we worked some trenches to a mosque about 150 yards to the right of these trenches, between the Bailey Guard gate and the Iron Bridge. When we had sapped our way to it, we fortified the mosque and placed a strong guard to hold it against all comers. Now we commanded the whole position and made this face of the Residency safe against all attacks. On the city side we were also busy, taking court after court, with their surrounding buildings, as far as the Dilkusha.

[11] See f/n 4 above. The 13th contributed 189 of the total 386 Bengal NI personnel who were present at the commencement of the Defence. There were only 243 survivors.

As it was uncertain how long we might be besieged, and having no communications with the outside world, it was thought advisable to reduce our rations so as to make them last as long as possible, and [we] were, henceforth, put on short commons of 4 ounces of meat and bones, 4 ounces of coarse attah - with a dash of husks and straw all ground together,[12] and salt about the size of a small plum-stone per diem. It would have been better for us to get the wheat and grind it for ourselves, whereas we were obliged to be content with the rubbish they served out. On returning from my night's work, I used to drink a lot of water to fill up the vacuum in my stomach. I felt the want of salt more than anything else, and began to get an attack of dysentery. Now and then the butchers used to bring round meat for sale, but it always happened when a horse or camel had been shot by the enemy in the Residency, so we knew what it was, but were glad to get it.

The nights began to get cool and chilly in October, and our appetites increased, so that it was not very pleasant to be on short commons and only to have an apology of a breakfast after the night's work. Provisions began to get scarce towards the end of the siege, but when one of the old residents died, one might manage to pick up things at fabulous prices. A bottle of brandy would fetch £5, i.e. 50 rupees and upwards, a cigar 5 rupees (10 shillings), a leaf of native tobacco 1 rupee, and everything in like proportion with even their clothes sold at ridiculous prices, as those who had come in with Havelock had nothing but what was on their backs. By chance, at auction, I picked up a piece of red broadcloth for making soldiers' coats. It was 6ft x 5ft, and this I used as a blanket. I also bought a reel of cotton and a needle, and during the day, having nothing to do, I made up a shirt and a pair of pyjamas out of the stuff I had brought up from the Feradbaksh some weeks before, as I was anxious to have a change of under-linen. Before I made them up, I used, on returning from work, to wash what I wore and lay in bed till they were dry. Smoking was still carried on, though tobacco was scarce. I had given it up, but the privates smoked anything that would burn; dried leaves of trees, grass, coffee-grounds, tea leaves and even cotton rags.

The enemy would annoy us in any way they could think of. One ingenious way was this: they would cut down trees of twelve to eighteen inches diameter and cut them into lengths of two feet. Then they would dig round holes into the ground - sloping slightly towards the Residency - and fit these pieces of wood tightly in, having placed some gunpowder under each. Then they would fire

[12] Attah is a whole wheat-flour, the main ingredient of most varieties of Indian bread.

them off, in the hopes that these blocks might fall on some of the buildings or someone's head, or on the horses which were tethered in the open spots. I was standing at the Residency door when one of these blocks fell on a syce's head who was cooking his evening meal, and killed him at once.

Many curious tales might be told of the recklessness of some of our men, who, on dark nights, would sneak out of our grounds into the bazaar, make a sudden dash on the nearest shop, grab what they could in the shape of provisions or cash, and rush back before any of the rebels could turn out and fire on them. There was one man in particular who used constantly to go out looting, and was known by them. When he was seen, they were so much afraid of him that they would bolt. He used to go to the jewellers' shops, take as many ornaments and as much cash as he could lay hands on, and walk quietly back. If he met any natives, he would knock them down, rob them, and return. One day this man asked one of the V.C. if he would like to see a nauteh (ceremony or gathering) that was going on near the Muchiebawn, so off they went. 'Don't speak a word, and do just what I tell you. Are you a good shot?' 'Yes.' 'Then take your rifle, and follow me.' Though going out was strictly forbidden, yet they left.

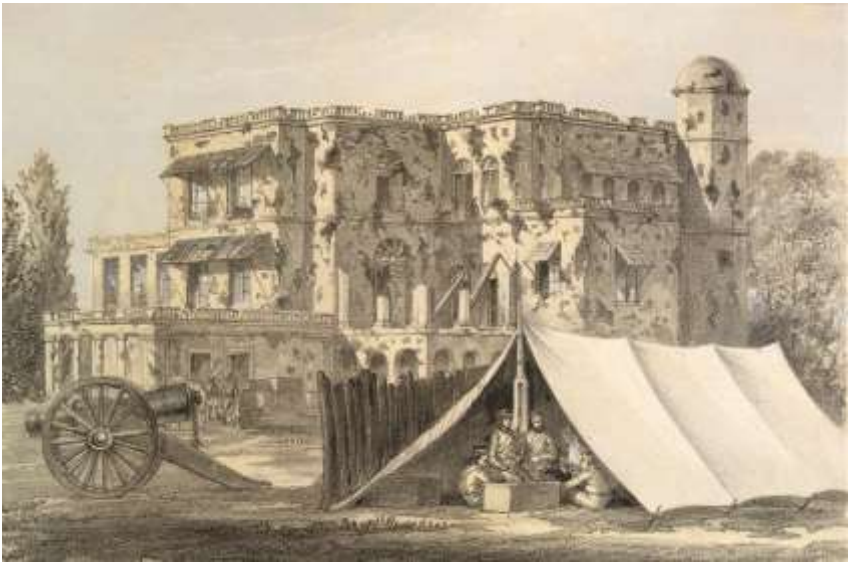
As they went, and had advanced to the Muchiebawn, the man told his companion: 'There are two sentries at the gate, I will fire at the right one, and you make certain of the left hand one. I will give the order to fire, as we must fire at the same moment.' This was done, and both sentries fell at the same moment. Those inside were too much taken up with the nauteh and, with the beating of tom-toms, did not take notice of the shots fired. The leader then told his companion of the V.C. to get up some steps and look over the wall on the assembly, and when they had had enough of it he said: 'We will fire two parting shots into the thick of them, and then bolt as fast as we can, for they will be after us.' Having returned safe, they told me what I have written.

This man had picked up a lot of gold mohurs[13] and jewellery in his outings, but did not live to enjoy his robberies as he came to an untimely end. He used to carry his loot in a net bag that he wound round his waist, and on the day before we were relieved a round-shot entered his stomach and carried a lot of his loot with it. Whenever there was a chance of looting he was to the fore, but was fatally punished for his misdeeds.

[13] The official name of the chief gold coin of British India.

When our work at Innes's bungalow was finished, we were removed to the Feradbaksh to work at some embrasures that were to be made there, and of course it was again all night work. It was a dirty spot to live in as it was creeping with vermin, and we all cut our hair short. I now saw more of the 5th Fusiliers than when I was at Innes's bungalow. When I first went down to work there, I could not make out how the men of the other regiments knew who I was, and they even knew my name, and paid deference to me, though I was only dressed as a trooper of the V.C. The sentries stood at attention when I passed, so one day when I passed with my working party to fetch our tools from the guardroom - for we always left them at the nearest guardroom during the day - I asked one of them how he knew who I was, and he said: 'The men of the 5th Fusiliers know you, and have often pointed you out and spoken about you when you were in the Arrah expedition with them, and wished you were an officer in their regiment as they would do anything for you, and follow you anywhere in action.' Till then I had no idea that the men held me in such esteem, so I might well feel proud of having served with them.

*Major-General Wild's memoirs have been transcribed by his direct descendent, Tony Kerrison, and will be continued in a future edition of Durbar.*



THE LUCKNOW RESIDENCY AFTER THE SIEGE

## Subedar-Major Mehar Din, *Sardar Bahadur*, OBI, IDSM, MVO
## 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners

Rana Chhina

Mehar Din was born in Dhoria village, in Gujrat district, Punjab, in 1866 and enlisted in the Bengal Sappers on 26th Aug. 1886. Having secured a 1st Class Military Certificate, he was commissioned on 15th March 1905, advanced to Subedar on 1st June 1910, and appointed Subedar-Major on 13th October 1915. He was awarded the honorary rank of Captain upon retirement on 1st July 1920. He had an enviable and highly acclaimed record, with thirty years of campaign service to his credit.

> NE Frontier of India: Sikkim Field Force 1888-89, IGS 1854 medal and clasp; NW Frontier of India: 1st and 2nd Miranzai Field Force 1891, clasp; NW Frontier of India: Waziristan Field Force 1894-95, clasp; NW Frontier of India 1987-98: engagement near Shabkadr 9 Aug 1897, Mohmand operations, IGS 1895 medal and clasp; Tirah 1897-98, operations in the Bara Valley 7-14 Dec 1897, operations in the Bazar Valley 25-30 Dec 1897, clasp; Mishmi Expeditionary Force 1899-1900; China Expeditionary Force 1900, medal; Abor 1911-12, IGS 1908 medal and clasp; Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force 1915-16; Persian Field Force 1916-18, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

For highly satisfactory performance of reconnaissance duty in Burma (Northern Shan States and Wa Hills) in 1896-97 he was awarded the MacGregor Memorial Medal in 1899.[1] In the China Field Force file (1900-02) he is referred to as 'a most useful man' who could be 'entrusted with any work either in the field or in the office.' He served with distinction with the Kabul Mission 1904-05 (Havildar-Major 20 Nov 1904 to 23 Apr 1905), and on R. E. Survey Duty, Hindustan-Tibet Road 1906. Major Powell, Lieut. Bond, Jemadar Mehr Din and four men were employed under the Public Works Dept., Jul-Oct 1906, on survey and estimate of extension of the Hindustan-Tibet road from Jangi to Shipki, a distance of forty-two miles.[2] For good service with the Miri Mission Force, 1911-12, he was appointed to the Order of British India.[3]

---

[1] Maj. Robert Hamond, *History of the MacGregor Memorial Medals 1889-1989 (*Lancer, New Delhi 1994), p.56; awarded the small silver medal as a naik for recces on the NE Frontier with China; member of the Northern Party, Burma-China Boundary Commission 1898-99.

[2] Anon., *History and Digest of Service of the Ist K.G.O. Sappers and Miners (*Roorkee, n.d. [c.1909]), p.79

[3] OBI 2nd Class, GGO No. 1076, 15 Nov 1912.

He was employed on Special Secret Service in Persia in 1913 and gave a highly creditable account of himself. He raised the 1st Field Coy Engineers, South Persia Rifles, in Shiraz and was highly spoken of by Brigadier-General Sir P.M. Sykes, K.C.I.E., C.M.G., for his great intelligence and noteable engineering work in South Persia from November 1916 to October 1918.

During the Great War, in addition to his distinguished services in the field, he helped in recruiting 800 men for the Labour Corps for service in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia in 1915. He was mentioned in despatches[4] for 'gallant and distinguished services in the Field' with the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force and also for his services with the Persian Field Force, for which he received the Indian Distinguished Service Medal[5] and was advanced to the 1st Class Order of British India[6] with the honorary title *Sardar Bahadur.*

He was appointed Orderly Officer to His Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor in 1914 and presented with the Silver Medal of the Royal Victorian Order. He was also a recipient of the Delhi Durbar Medal 1911 and His Majesty's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1935. He contributed liberally to the Red Cross, Prince of Wales' Fund, Poor Fund and Their Majesties' Silver Jubilee Fund.[7]

---

[4] GGO No. 1749, 12 Oct 1917
[5] GGO No. 9 of 1918
[6] GGO of 11 Oct 1917
[7] This account is largely based upon the narrative in: Anon, *Who's Who of the Indian Empire*, 1937, p.492

## A Barasat Prize Sword

Barry Renfrew

My enjoyment of Brian Stevens' excellent article on Barasat Cadet College in the Summer 2009 edition of 'Durbar' (page 93) was enhanced by the light it cast on a sword I acquired in the 1980s. It appears to be one of the swords described in the article as being awarded to cadets who completed their studies in eight months. The presentation inscription, illustrated on the left, is etched in copper plate script in a roundel at the throat of the scabbard. This presumably is the William Rigby Bradshaw on the list of cadets in Mr Stevens' article. The spelling of the school's name is a variant, and quite a marked one, on the two versions noted in the article.


*Honorary Reward*
*Cadet Company*
*Barahsul 1st Febr/1807*
*W.R. Bradshaw Cadet*

The weapon was probably supplied by a Calcutta retailer, and the engraving added locally. Spurious engravings are sometimes added to authentic swords to enhance their value. That seems unlikely here since the college is obscure, and anyone intent on making an unethical profit would probably have inscribed a much better known regiment or corps.

The sword is of English make and in the style of a scimitar. The hilt appears to be of stained ivory or possibly shell. Its true glory is a lavish frost-etched curved blade of the highest standard: one side bears, amid trophies of arms, foliage and other details, an image of a classical warrior, the cypher of George III and a mounted cavalryman: the other side bears, again amid luxuriant decoration, an angel in the Baroque style, the Royal coat of arms and Britannia

with a supine lion at her feet. It was supplied by Underhill and Cooper of Birmingham and carries their warrant in a scroll at the base of the blade. There is no specifically Indian or East India Company decoration. The sword, which is of a very high-standard and would have been costly in its day, is a surprisingly extravagant reward for a cadet.

William Bradshaw had only a short career in the Bengal Army. He gained his Cadetship in 1805 and was commissioned Ensign on the 26th September 1806. He arrived in India on 11th November 1806 and, following graduation from Barasat, he was posted to the 1st Bn 22nd Bengal Native Infantry. He did not progress beyond Ensign, resigning his commission in India on 8th August 1808 before he had any opportunity of serving actively. It is not known how long he remained in India after leaving the service, but he eventually passed away at his residence in Hanover Square, London, on 25th November 1842.

---

Editor's note: Although Barasat prize swords must be exceptionally rare, IMHS member Brian Turner reports that the National Army Museum possesses a more conventional example with typical Mameluke hilt, thought to have been awarded to Cadet Thomas Richard MacQueen who was at Barasat in 1808.

# 'Turks across the Canal!'

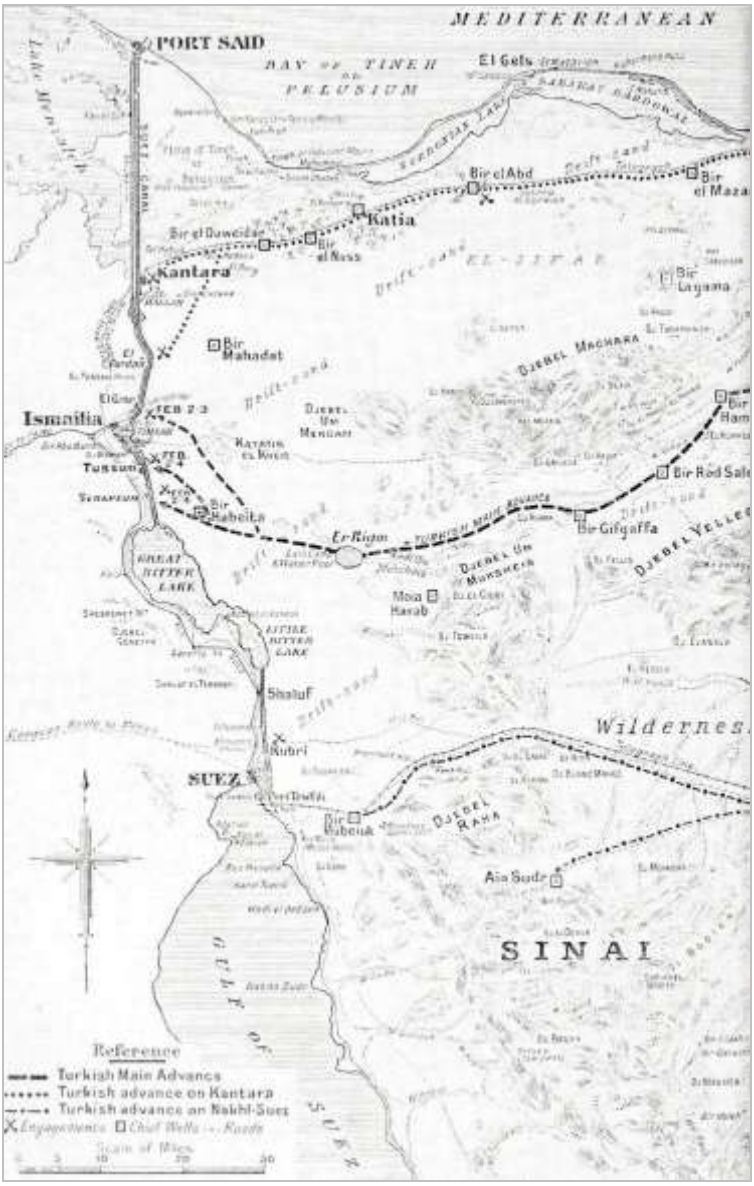
## The Suez Canal 1914-15

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

### Introduction

Great Britain and France declared war against Turkey on 5th November 1914. At that time Egypt was theoretically still a province of the Turkish Empire but for practical purposes the country had been occupied and controlled by Britain since 1882. Egypt's strategic importance lay in its possession of the Suez Canal, a waterway regarded with good reason by the Germans as the jugular vein of the British Empire. Britain needed to keep the Canal open to facilitate the transport of troops and mounts from India and Australasia. Also, commercial shipping needed the Canal open in order to speedily move the military equipment, food and commodities originating in the British colonies and Dominions of the Far East which were required in Europe. For the same reason, Germany needed to close the Canal. Indian Army infantry battalions were to play a vital role in the forthcoming struggle.

The Allied declaration of war resulted in the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire obtaining from the Islamic clergy in Constantinople a proclamation of a Holy War against the Allies. The Sultan himself, as Khalif of his Empire, proclaimed a Jihad (religious war) on all those who were militarily confronting Turkey or her allies. The Khedive (Viceroy of Egypt appointed by Turkey), Abbas Hilmi, had been in Turkey since August 1914; he was actively and openly pro-Turk and he stayed in Turkey where he was used politically by the Central Powers. The British response was to proclaim Egypt to be a British Protectorate on 18th December 1914. Khedive Abbas Hilmi was deposed and his uncle, Prince Hussein Kamal Pasha, elevated to the Egyptian throne with the new title of Sultan. The British Consul-General, Lord Kitchener, (the real power behind the Egyptian throne) was in England in August 1914 and he remained there to become Secretary of State for War. He was replaced in Egypt in January 1915 by Sir Henry McMahon who held the new title of High Commissioner. In an attempt to reduce tensions in Egypt where the vast majority of the population was Muslim and where nationalist agitation and hostility to Britain were on the increase, the Egyptians were told that they would not be pressed into fighting the Turks.




TURKISH ROUTES AND ATTACKS ON THE SUEZ CANAL

**The British defence of Egypt**

The British peace-time Regular Army garrison in Egypt consisted of one cavalry regiment, four infantry battalions, one horse and one mountain artillery battery and an engineer field company plus supporting services. In August 1914 these troops were needed in France. The primary purpose of the Egyptian Army, which contained many British officers, was to defend and maintain security within the Sudan, and just one field artillery battery, one garrison company and three infantry battalions were actually located in Egypt when war broke out. They should not have been involved in operations against Turkish troops, but British demands of expediency were soon to alter that arrangement.

The Indian Army now took over the first-line defence of the Suez Canal, supported by Allied warships. The Lahore (3rd Indian) and Meerut (7th Indian) Divisions passed through the waterway towards France, leaving the 9th (Sirhind) Brigade temporarily detached to man the Canal defences. This allowed the British Regular Army garrison in Egypt to also move to France. The Lucknow Brigade was then dispatched from India to relieve the Sirhind Brigade, allowing the latter to move on and re-join the Lahore Division in France. The Egyptian theatre was also allocated an Imperial Service cavalry brigade and a composite infantry brigade and the Bikaner Camel Corps, all provided by Indian princely states, and eight Indian Army battalions. Then, three all-Indian Army brigades followed. These troops, organized into the 10th and 11th Divisions, were eventually titled 'Indian Expeditionary Force E.'

One other British formation had been mobilized in England and sent to Egypt. This was the Territorial Army East Lancashire Division. It needed intensive training to reach operational fitness. Newly raised and rapidly mobilized units from the Australian and New Zealand Corps (ANZAC) were also heading to Egypt for war training before deployment to France. The British rather complacently considered the Sinai Desert, east of the canal, to be a defensive asset because it was mostly water-less. To make things even more difficult for any Turkish movement westwards from Palestine, a detachment of Egyptian Coastguards destroyed the wells at Nekhl, seventy miles east of Suez.

**Turkish and German preparations**

However there was one man in Palestine who considered that the Sinai Desert was more of a logistical challenge than an obstacle. He was Oberst (Colonel) Friedrich Freiherr (Baron) Kress von Kressenstein, a German officer attached

to the Turkish Army. Kress had previously reconnoitred into the Desert of Sinai, and after hostilities were declared he headed a German team of six staff officers attached to the Turkish VIII Corps at Damascus. When a decision was made to attack the Suez Canal, Kress became the chief planner of this Turkish operation. In Damascus, Djemal Pasha, the energetic Commander of the Turkish Fourth Army, and his German Army Chief of Staff, Oberst von Frankenberg und Proschlitz, organized an expeditionary force of around 23,000 men, nine field batteries of artillery plus a 15-centimeter howitzer battery. The majority of the men to be used in the initial attacks on the Canal came from the Syrian territories of the Ottoman Empire, the force reserve being the 10th Division composed of Turks. Regular cavalry and camel-mounted troops supplemented the Bedouin irregulars that were raised for the operation. Djemal Pasha was hoping to provoke a revolt within Egypt against the British occupiers. Kress was probably more realistic in wanting (he later claimed) to hold the west bank of the waterway for two or three days while ships were sunk to cause a serious blockage. Kress' team purchased camels and loaded 5,000 of them with water carriers, prepared roads and brushwood tracks through the Sinai for the artillery, and equipped the two engineer battalions with pontoons.

Meanwhile, in northern Sinai, the first confrontation between the Turkish and British armies had occurred at Bir El Nuss. On 20th November 1914, a patrol consisting of twenty-two men from the Bikaner Camel Corps fought with a group of 200 Bedouins and Turks, losing one Indian officer and twelve men killed and three men wounded.[1] The British patrol commander, Captain A.J.H. Chope, 2nd Gurkha Rifles, returned with an enemy bullet lodged in his saddle and claimed to have inflicted sixty casualties on the enemy. Two Bikanir sepoys received gallantry awards. No. 1534 Sepoy Ali Khan was admitted to the 2nd Class Indian Order of Merit 'for conspicuous conduct and gallantry throughout the engagement at Bir-el-Nuss, Egypt, on the 20th November 1914, during which he displayed self-reliance and power of command of a very high order, and by his example encouraged his comrades, all of whom were very young soldiers' (G.G.O. No. 1168 of 26th Dec. 1914). No. 115 Sepoy Faiz Ali Khan received the Indian Distinguished Service Medal (G.G.O. No. 1169 of 26th Dec. 1914). Unfortunately during this patrol several Sudanese members of the Egyptian Coastguard, who were acting as guides for Chope, allowed themselves to be captured. These men then served as guides for the Turks.

[1] Although recorded numbers on both sides of this action vary, the odds remain about the same. One source records a patrol of forty confronting 300 Bedouins and Turks.

By mid-January 1915, the General Officer Commanding Canal Defences, Major-General A. Wilson, had allocated his troops into three sectors. The units in each sector were:

*Sector I. (Southern) Port Tewfik to Geneffe*
**30th Brigade**
24th and 76th Punjabis, 126th Baluchis, 2/7th Gurkha Rifles;
one sqdn Imperial Service Cavalry, one Company Bikaner Camel Corps;
half-coy Sappers and Miners, one Territorial Battery Royal Field Artillery;
one Indian Field Ambulance.

*Sector II. (Central) Deversoir to El Ferdan (inclusive)*
**22nd Brigade (**less 3rd Brahmans att'd 29th Brigade)
62nd and 92nd Punjabis, 2/10th Gurkha Rifles.
**28th Frontier Force Brigade**
51st and 53rd Sikhs, 65th Punjabis, 1/5th Gurkha Rifles;
one sqdn Imperial Service Cavalry, Bikaner Camel Corps (less three-and-a-half companies); Machine Gun section of the Egyptian Camel Corps;
one Territorial Battery Royal Field Arty, one battery Indian Mountain Arty;
two Field Ambulances.

*Sector III.(Northern) El Ferdan (exclusive) to Port Said.*
**29th Brigade**
14th Sikhs, 69th and 89th Punjabis, 1/6th Gurkha Rifles, 3rd Brahmans;
one sqdn Imperial Service Cavalry, two companies Bikaner Camel Corps;
half company of Sappers and Miners;
two Territorial Batteries Royal Field Arty, 26th Battery Indian Mountain Arty;
Armoured Train with half-company Indian infantry;
Indian Field Ambulance, Territorial Royal Army Medical Corps detachment.

Other Indian Army and Imperial Service troops secured the Advanced Ordnance Depot at Zagazig, the railway and the Sweet Water Canal, and also formed a General Reserve at Moascar. The Imperial Service cavalry provided a brigade consisting of the Mysore I.S. Lancers, the 1st Hyderabad I.S. Lancers, and the Patiala I.S. Lancers (left the Brigade in May 1916). The Kathiawar I.S. Signal Troop, the Imperial Service Brigade Field Ambulance and the Imperial Service Cavalry Mobile Veterinary Section arrived in Egypt with the Brigade in November 1914. The rulers of Alwar, Gwalior and Patiala provided the infantry. Territorial, Indian, Australian and Egyptian sappers, pioneers and military works personnel were given engineering tasks to strengthen the Canal

defences, which included a few strongly-defended posts on the east bank. British and French planes flew reconnaissance missions whilst British and French warships entered or stood by to enter the Canal to provide fire support wherever required. As the British prepared their defences the Turks advanced in three columns across the Sinai Desert, encouraged by their German mentors.

**Initial contacts and British reactions**

From the 18th January 1915 onwards, Allied aircraft began reporting the progress of the Turkish advance and two brigades of British Territorial field artillery were deployed forward into prepared positions west of the Canal. On 22nd January, the enemy skirmished with British covering forces east of Kantara. This resulted in the 33rd Punjabis and the 4th Gwalior Infantry, both from 32nd Brigade, being deployed forward into that sector. The New Zealand Infantry Brigade also moved forward and detrained at Kubri and Ismailiah.

Five days later the Turkish southern column attacked the British Baluchistan and El Kubri posts on the east side of the Canal in Sector I. Both attacks were easily beaten off without loss and appeared to be diversionary. The following day, attacks were mounted on the Kantara outposts but without conviction. In the belief that Sector II would see the decisive confrontation, 2nd Rajputs from 31st Brigade was sent to reinforce Serapeum. The large Turkish central column was observed in the vicinity of Jebel Habeita and 5th Battery, Egyptian Artillery, was deployed to Toussom. On 1st February, troops from the enemy central column advanced north-east towards the Ismailia Ferry post. The British outer screen engaged these troops. The Turks did not press forward and dug themselves in at about three kilometres from the British main positions.

**Crossing the Canal**

A decisive Turkish move was made at 03.30 hours on 3rd February, when several pontoons and rafts were launched 1,500 metres south of Toussom. Heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the 62nd Punjabis, supported by excellent gunnery from the 5th Battery, Egyptian Artillery, decimated the attackers. But at least two pontoons reached the west bank. The Turks who had crossed the Canal could make no headway against determined British counter-attacks and the survivors hid along the edge of the Canal. This action was not without British loss as the Turkish covering fire was effective, Mulazzim Awaal Effendi Helmi of the 5th Battery, Egyptian Artillery, being

killed whilst gallantly fighting his gun under heavy fire at short range. Lieutenant R.A. Fitzgibbon, 128th Pioneers, who commanded the protection party for the Egyptian battery, died of wounds after counter-attacking Turks on the west bank. Two other smaller Turkish landings on the west bank were made nearby, but neither progressed far as Indian troops either killed or captured the enemy who survived the crossing. Whilst this action took place the enemy northern column unsuccessfully attacked the Kantara outposts, losing many men.

As dawn broke the British saw that nearly all of the Turks on the west bank had been neutralized, but that was not the case on the east bank where an enemy attack was being launched against the Toussoum post. Turks were occupying trenches around the post and the 92nd Punjabis, supported by naval gunfire and enfilade machinegun fire, successfully cleared this ground during a nine-hour fight. Seven Turkish officers and 280 other ranks were killed or captured. The 2nd Rajputs mopped up the Turkish survivors sheltering along the west bank.

Serapeum post, south of Toussoum, was also under attack. Two companies of 2/10th Gurkhas and six platoons of 2nd Rajputs crossed the Canal by ferry and were joined by two companies of 92nd Punjabis from a post on the east bank. This force advanced north up the Canal edge, clearing a surprising number of Turks out of broken ground, until the enemy 74th Regiment of the 25th Division advanced towards Serapeum. Heavy firing now started and Captain R.T. Arundel, 2nd Rajputs, was killed whilst moving his men along the canal bank. But with the aid of fire support from two French warships, the small British force halted the Turkish regiment about one kilometre from the Canal.

As the unused pontoons lying on the east bank needed destroying, a Royal Navy torpedo boat moved along the canal using its 3-pounder gun to fire two rounds into each pontoon. When the boat commander decided to land in order to use gun cotton against any pontoons out of sight over the Canal bank, he almost walked into a manned Turkish trench. During the scramble back aboard the boat, the commander and another officer were wounded.

Further north the Turkish 68th Regiment of the 23rd Division advanced against Ismailiah ferry post, but the attack halted 750 metres from the British wire. Whilst the enemy infantry attacks had not prevailed, the Turkish artillery fire was effective and the armed Indian ship *Hardinge* had to quickly move after receiving hits from a 15-centimetre howitzer battery. The French *Requin* finally silenced the enemy howitzers. The Turkish southern column made no

further aggressive moves. During the night of 3rd March, Australian infantry was moved up to support Sector II. This Sector received sniping during the hours of darkness.

As daylight crept across the desert on 4th February, the British in Sector II observed that the main body of Turks had withdrawn, although scattered groups of enemy remained near the east bank. Captain L.F.A. Cochran, 92nd Punjabis, was in a post on the east bank and was ordered to use two companies to clear the enemy stragglers. Whilst attempting to do this, Captain Cochran was killed. A company from each of the 27th and 62nd Punjabis and the 128th Pioneers was now sent across the Canal. After an action lasting an hour, 298 of the enemy surrendered, fifty-two of them being seriously wounded. Amongst the fifty-nine enemy dead was the body of Hauptmann von den Hagen, the German staff officer who had supervised the operation to cross the Canal.

**Conclusion**

All three Turkish columns now withdrew eastwards across Sinai. The British failed to mount a pursuit, citing lack of training especially amongst the cavalry, and so the Turkish guns and gunners and the mass of infantry lived to fight another day. Allied aviators did drop some bombs on the withdrawing enemy. The battle was hailed as a British defensive success, which it was, and a Turkish defeat, which it only partially was as the bulk of the enemy forces withdrew in good order along their well-constructed desert tracks. British casualties numbered 163 (ten of them being naval) and Turkish casualties were estimated at over 2,000.

Had Djemel Pasha's dream of an Egyptian uprising actually happened, the British would have been pressed to both maintain internal security throughout Egypt and the Sudan and to defend the complete length of the Canal. The Indian Army had fought professionally to hold the Canal and Indian and Egyptian Muslim troops had shown no collective desire to be associated with the Turkish Holy War.

**Sources**

*Official History, Military Operations Egypt and Palestine*, Macmunn and Falls; *National Army Museum Book of the Turkish Front 1914-18*, Field Marshall Lord Carver; *Sir John Maxwell's Despatch,* dated 16 Feb 1916; *British Campaigns in the Nearer East 1914 – 1918 Vol. I*, Edmund Dane; *100 Years of the Suez Canal*, R.E.B. Duff; *Orientations*, Ronald Storrs; *The Times History of the War; Deeds of Valour Performed by Indian Officers & Soldiers 1860-1925*, P.P.Hypher; *The Indian Distinguished Service Medal*, Rana Chhina.

## The Khyber Rifles

Tim Ash

During May 2001 I had the good fortune to accompany a small group that travelled to the North West Frontier of Pakistan, this being my first visit to this country. I found it very different from India where I had previously made a number of trips, the first in 1973. But unfortunately Pakistan is unlikely to be on the tourist map for as long as the activities of the Taliban continue!

Our agenda included a trip to the Khyber Pass during which we visited the post at Michni. This is the final point in the Pass where foreigners are allowed before the border with Afghanistan at Torkam. On our return we stopped at the officers' mess of the Khyber Rifles at Landi Kotal, where we were entertained with some very welcome cold Pepsi-Cola. It was here that I received my first lesson on the history of the Khyber Rifles.[1]

Displayed in a glass-fronted case in the Mess were numerous photographs of the officers of the regiment and texts to describe them and their various actions. It was of course the earlier history of the regiment that caught my imagination. From 1848 to 1878 the Khyber Pass had been closed. The treaty of Gandemak, signed on 25th May 1878 between the British and Afghan Governments, gave Britain the control of the Khyber Pass. This enabled the Pass to resume its historic role as the main corridor between India and Central Asia.

Relying on the concept of 'poacher turned gamekeeper,' an irregular corps had been raised from Pathans of the local Afridi tribes to protect traffic through the Khyber Pass, piqueting the hills on either side and escorting the long strings of camels between the Afghan Frontier and Fort Jamrud at the Peshawar end of the Pass. They were unshaven and generally unkempt, with no uniform. A red tag was sewn onto the back of the *pagree* (turban) to distinguish them from those whose principal leisure and livelihood it was their duty to prohibit. They were armed with the traditional jezail and were first known as the Khyber Jezailchis[2] although they were known by the Afridis themselves as the 'sur-lakhis' from the red tag on their *pagrees.*

[1] See the article 'A Visit to the Khyber Pass' by Tim Ash in *Medal News*, May 2001.
[2] In its very early days, the regiment was also called the 'Khaibar Levies' (Quarterly Bengal Army List, July 1884).

The Khyber Rifles was formed in 1878 by Captain Robert Warburton of the Bengal Staff Corps. Warburton's mother was an Afghan princess, a niece of Dost Mohammed, sovereign head of state of Afghanistan from 1843 to 1863. She had married Warburton's father during the British occupation of Afghanistan in 1839. He was therefore well acquainted with the culture of the Afridi tribesmen of the Khyber, and knew how to deal with these volatile people. He was able to avoid the racial prejudices so often suffered by Anglo-Indians, and he was deemed socially acceptable to his superior officers. After all, his mother was a princess. He was also a very capable man, and he had an important advantage. Pushtu, the language of the Afridis, and Persian, a status symbol amongst all Pathans, were virtually his mother tongues. Both were indispensable for conducting business in the Khyber. So he was spared the difficulties generally suffered by British officers working in a virtually foreign tongue. Robert Warburton served as the Political Officer of the Khyber for eighteen years and exercised overall control of the Khyber Jezailchis (as they were first known) during this time.

The first Commandant of the Khyber Jezailchis was Captain Gilbert Gainsford, seconded from the 5th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force. His place in command of the Jezailchis was taken over in 1881 by Major Muhammad Aslam Khan. He was a man of outstanding character and ability, an Afghan of the Sadozai section of the royal Durani tribe, and as the Afridis supported the Sadozai claim to the throne his prestige was enormous. He set about training and disciplining the Jezailchis in military skills. Their 'raison d'être' was to provide the patrols necessary to safeguard the Pass, operating from various forts long the line of the Pass, notably Landi Kotal at the western end, with Ali Masjid in the middle and Fort Jamrud at the Peshawar or eastern end. They also had intervening posts along the line of the Pass.

Although the Khyber Jezailchis were considered to be a local corps and not required to serve out of their own area, they volunteered for the Black Mountain expedition of 1888, for which they were issued with the Snider, the British Army's first breech loading rifle,[3] in place of the antiquated muzzle-loading jezail. They acquitted themselves well, and were thereafter known as the Khyber Rifles. They were provided with practical, loose-fitting khaki uniforms and a Mounted Infantry troop was added to the original infantry companies.

[3] Ian Skennerton, *Treatise on the Snider, The British Soldier's Firearm 1866 – c.1880* (Queensland, 1977). Although by 1888 the Snider was largely obsolete in the British Army, it was still a substantial improvement over the jezail.

So successful were the Khyber Rifles that H.R.H. Prince Albert Victor was able to visit the Khyber during January 1890 without fear of attack by the Afridi tribesmen. On 5th Dec. 1890, Lord Roberts, C-in-C India together with General Sir James Browne, QMG, left Peshawar with Col. Warburton for Ali Masjid. By evening they were in Landi Kotal. On the following day, escorted by two troopers of the Khyber Rifles, they rode on to Tor-Sappar. On the way Sir James, turning to Lord Roberts, said: 'Here we are, the C-in-C and the Quartermaster General in India with the Political Officer Khyber, riding in these hills with an escort of only two troopers. If this fact were reported in England, or to any old officers of the Punjab School, they would not credit the story.'[4]

Warburton had long pleaded with Government for a relief, both for himself and M'd Aslam Khan, to understudy their duties and responsibilities. None was appointed until it was too late. The Great Pathan Uprising of 1897 came at an unfortunate time when Warburton was on furlough prior to retirement. He had handed over the duties of Political Officer Khyber to Muhammed Aslam Khan,himself close to retirement. These were two men who had served Great Britain well. Although most Khyber Rifles personnel joined their co-religionists, a few remained loyal to the British. But the Khyber Pass was again closed.

The discredited Khyber Rifles barely survived the ordeal. Nevertheless, the regiment was re-established in 1898 and continued to serve until the 3rd Afghanistan War in 1919 when the many Afridis serving in the Indian Army and in the various frontier corps, who were generally sympathetic to the Afghan cause, mutinied. The Afridis of the Khyber Rifles was caught up in this, and the regiment was disbanded. There was no further recruitment of Afridis until the demands of World War 2 led to the formation of the 1st Afridi Battalion in 1942. This 'war-raised' unit was reconstituted after the end of hostilities in 1946 as the Khyber Rifles. Recruits were henceforth drawn from various Pathan tribes, although the Afridis remain dominant.

In 2001 I was browsing in a local book shop which had a display of medals for sale. I spotted an Indian General Service Medal with clasp 'Punjab Frontier 1897-98' named in running script *2177 Sepoy Yarzarda Khyber Rifles.* I have often wondered if it was awarded to one of the remnant of Khyber Rifles that remained loyal. If any members have medals to the Khyber Rifles I would be interested to hear from them, with details of clasps, numbers and naming.

---

[4] *Eighteen Years in the Khyber 1879-1898*, Colonel Sir Robert Warburton, K.C.I.E., C.S.I. (John Murray, London 1900); p.227

## Two groups at Ali Masjid in 1893 and 1894

Cliff Parrett

Reading Tim's article reminded me that I have two early group photographs, one of which features three of the personalities he mentions, that were taken at the Khyber Pass in 1893 and 1894. They originate from the obverse and reverse of a page extracted from a contemporary album of photographs – probably assembled by an officer (not identified) who served on the Frontier.

The original caption of the first (page 27), written on the mount in contemporary script, states simply: 'Ali Masjid 1893.' However, in view of the notoriety of some members of the group, it was relatively easy to work out that it records Lord Roberts' last visit to the Khyber Pass shortly before he finally left his beloved India in April 1893. The visit is described by Robert Warburton who was there himself and can be seen seated second from left.

> Lord and Lady Roberts and family came up to Peshawar, and Lord Roberts, accompanied by his son the Hon. Frederick Roberts and by his eldest daughter, paid his farewell visit to Ali Masjid. He had for eight years taken the greatest interest in the Khyber Pass, and had always given his strongest support to any measure that benefited our hold on the Khyber Range, and had aided any measure likely to produce a good understanding with its residents.[1]

Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel *Nawab* Muhammad Aslam Khan, *Sirdar Bahadur*, C.I.E., O.B.I. (as he then was), is seated on the far right. In his earlier career, Muhammad Aslam Khan (a.k.a. Mahomed Uslam Khan) had been a prominent cavalry officer. Born in 1838, he first entered service with a direct commission in December 1857, eventually becoming Risaldar-Major of the 5th Bengal Cavalry in May 1877. He was advanced to the 1st Class of the Order of British India in 1881 on account of his services in the Second Afghanistan War, and in the same year was posted to the Khyber Rifles as commandant, being accorded the additional honorary title of Nawab in 1887. Upon completion of an assignment as Political Officer to the Tirah Expedition in 1897-98, he relinquished command of the Khyber Rifles and retired, having been in military service for forty-one years and earned a number of campaign medals and clasps. He was called upon for further duty when he was appointed Honorary Aide de Camp of the King Emperor and advanced to Hon. Colonel

[1] *Eighteen Years in the Khyber 1879-1898*, Colonel Sir Robert Warburton, K.C.I.E., C.S.I. (John Murray, London 1900)

on coronation day, 9th Aug. 1902.[2] This outstanding officer continued in royal service after the death of Edward as Hon. A.D.C. to his son and successor, George V, and eventually passed away in 1914 as Colonel *Nawab* Sir Muhammad Aslam Khan, *Sardar Bahadur*, K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., O.B.I.

In view of his earlier cavalry career, it is not altogether surprising to see that Muhammad Aslam Khan carries a pronounced cavalry-pattern sword rather than an infantry-pattern sword. In a better known image, reproduced in Jules Stewart's very readable history of the Khyber Rifles, he is shown carrying a cavalry sword that has been fitted, most unconventionally, with a claymore type of basket hilt.[3] This suggests an association with a Scottish regiment, and it would be interesting to hear from any readers who can explain this.

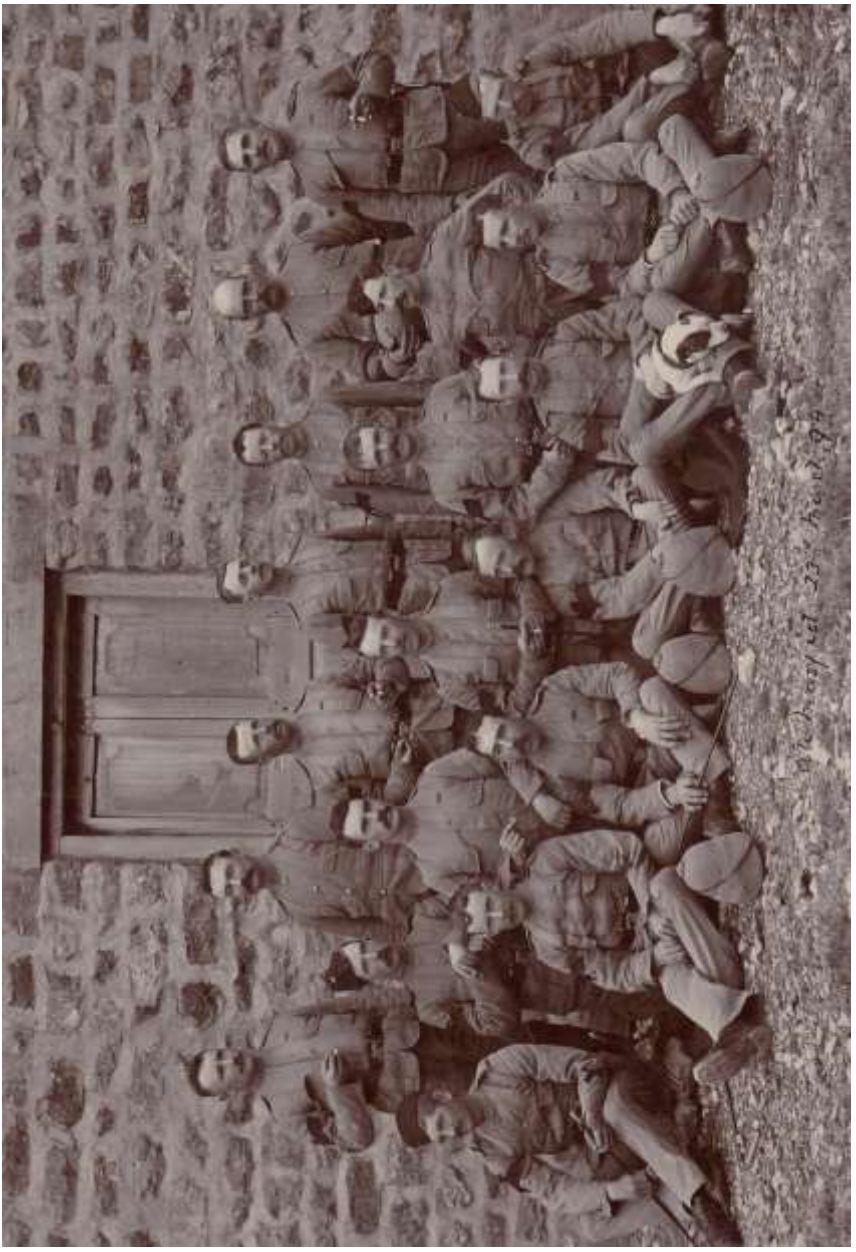
Also featured in the Ali Masjid photograph are two holders of the Indian Order of Merit, both officers of the Khyber Rifles wearing the same shoulder belt as their commandant. In addition to the 3rd Class I.O.M., they both wear the India General Service Medal with single clasp 'Hazara 1888' for service in the Black Mountain Expedition that Tim Ash has referred to. A total of two officers and four other ranks of the Khyber Rifles were admitted to the 3rd Class Order of Merit for gallantry in this expedition (G.O. 123 of 8th February 1889). This coveted decoration was occasionally granted for several acts of gallantry that had occurred within a relatively short period of time.[4] In the case of Subedar-Major Mir Akbar Ali (standing second from left) and Jemadar Muhammad Ghalli, both were decorated as a result of six separate acts of gallantry. Even by the high standards of the Order of Merit, this is a remarkable record.

> Subedar-Major Mir Akbar Khan
> *Admitted to 3rd Class Order of Merit for the acts of gallantry detailed below*:
> 1. On 8th Oct. 1888, at the attack on Abu village, Black Mountain, he charged five or six of the enemy single handed and saved the life of a wounded sepoy.

[2] It is not known whether he actually attended the coronation celebrations in London. However, he was present at the Coronation Durbar in Delhi that followed in January 1903, one of thirty-three representatives from the North-West frontier Province.

[3] *The Khyber Rifles, From the British Raj to Al Qaeda*, Jules Stewart (Sutton Publishing, Stroud 2005); p.80.

[4] The rules of the Order of Merit (as it was then known) provided for the first award of the Order to be admission to the 3rd Class, with subsequent acts of gallantry rewarded by advancement to a higher class (i.e. 2nd and then 1st). Elevation to a higher class could only be granted where admission to the 3rd Class of the Order had already been promulgated. The only exceptions to this strict rule occurred during the period 1857-60. The same rule was retained when, from 1912 on, the Order was reduced to two classes.



2. On 4th [sic] October 1888, at the attack on the village of Ghori, he was the first man to enter the village under a heavy fire.
3. On 1st November 1888, at the capture of the Ghoraphor Pass, he led the right attack and displayed great personal bravery.
4. On 3rd November 1888, at the attack on Pokal, he led his men over difficult ground under a heavy fire and cleared the enemy from the left flank, inflicting on them a heavy loss.
5. On the same occasion, he carried a wounded sepoy to a place of safety under a heavy fire during an attack on the rear-guard when returning to Pokal.
6. On 4th November 1888, with thirty of his men, he dislodged a large body of the enemy who were occupying the summit of the Chel Mountain.

Jemadar Muhhamad Ghalli (Madgalli)
*Admitted to 3rd Class Order of Merit for the acts of gallantry detailed below*:
1. On 10th October 1888, at the attack on Khund, Black Mountain, Hazara, he led the attack and was the first man to enter the village.
2. On 12th October 1888, with four sepoys, he drove thirty or forty of the enemy out of a village neat Bethan.
3. On 15th October 1888. near the village of Mer Khanai, when in command of a flanking party during the return march from Kunhar, he rushed forward with a few men and repulsed a party of the enemy who opened fire from the heights.
4. On 28th October 1888. in the vicinity of Thakot with a picquet, he dislodged the enemy from a *sangar*, killing several of their numbers.
5. On 1st November 1888, at the capture of the Ghoraphor Pass, he was conspicuously to the front in storming the heights under a heavy fire.
6. On 3rd November 1888, when returning from Pokal, during a series of most determined attacks on the rearguard, he was the last to leave his position, on each occasion allowing the enemy to come to close quarters and thus securing the retirement of his men.[5]

The second photograph (page 30), also taken at Ali Masjid but on 23rd March of the following year, records a quite different gathering. It depicts a group of nineteen off-duty sergeants of the 1st Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps, which arrived in India in 1890 and was presumably on frontier duty when this photograph was taken, having served in the Hazara and Miranzai expeditions.

A useful article by Ashok Nath entitled 'The Frontier Scouts' appeared in the Spring 1996 edition of Durbar (Volume 13, No. 1, pp. 2-15).

[5] *Deeds of Valour Performed by Indian Officers and Soldiers During the Period from 1860 to 1925*, P.P. Hypher (Army Department, Simla 1927); p.63-65

## Risaldar Sayad Mir Raunak Ali

Sushil Talwar

Tony McClenaghan's article discussing the Rewa State Army (*Durbar*, Autumn 2009, Vol. 26, No.3, p.107) refers to officers employed in various States forces who had previously served in the ranks of the Indian Army. Risaldar Sayad Mir Raunak Ali (a.k.a. Sayad Mir Raunak Ali Khan, Raunak Ali and Raunaq Ali) of the 1st Bengal Lancers was one such man, who after he retired from the Indian Army was employed by the Orchha [Orcha] State in Central India. Raunak Ali was the son of Havildar Mir Kasim Ally who served with the 9th Bengal Native Infantry and saw field service during the expeditions to Bhutan for which he received the India General Service Medal with 'Bhootan' clasp.

Raunak Ali enrolled on 16th August 1899 and saw extensive service during his years with the 1st Bengal Lancers (Skinner's Horse). In 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion, he went to China with the regiment which was a component of the force sent for the Relief of Pekin, seeing action at Peitsang and Yangtsun. He attended the coronation of King Edward VII, and the Delhi Durbar in 1911, receiving commemorative medals for both events, the latter being through the civil quota of Orchha State.[1] The outbreak of World War I did not see the 1st D.Y.O. Lancers

[1] Medal roll, WO 100/400, p.139: 'Ressaidar Syed Raunak Ali Khan, 1st D.Y.O. Lancers (Skinner's Horse); Allotment - Civil; Source - Orchha State (Central India).'

(Skinner's Horse) being mobilised for field service on the Western Front. It served the entire duration of the war in India – mostly on the North West Frontier, commencing in April 1915 with the expedition against dissident Mohmand tribesmen.

A striking feature of Raunak Ali's career is that he received a Viceroy's Commission on 18th June 1904 after less than five years service, that too at a time when the Indian Army was not at war. It speaks volumes for his efficiency and capabilities. Some of his deeds find mention in his regiment's history:

> In June 1910, two incidents occurred which are worthy of note as showing the enterprise of an Indian officer. Jemadar Raunaq Ali was in command of the outpost Jatta [Mahsud country]. He heard that some camels had been looted from a village in the vicinity by some tribesmen. He turned out his detachment promptly, pursued the looters, and recovered the camels. On another occasion he heard by wire that the Tormanda Militia Post, some ten miles away, was being attacked, and was asking for help. He at once moved out his detachment, half cavalry and half infantry, and made a night march, arriving at Tormanda in the early morning, and relieving the post. The above are good examples of the correct employment of frontier post garrisons and show the initiative and offensive spirit of this detachment.[2]

The demands of war necessitated the raising of new units, including seven Indian Cavalry regiments (40th to 46th). The 40th Cavalry was raised at Baleli on 1st April 1918, this being the gazetted date although the 'effective' date may have been a month or two later. The nucleus was provided by transferring men from three existing Indian Army regiments. One squadron was sent by the 1st D.Y.O. Lancers (Skinner's Horse) and with it went Raunak Ali. He is listed with the 40th Cavalry as Risaldar Sayed [sic] Raunak Ali Khan in the January 1919 Indian Army List (corrected to 31st December 1918). The regiment remained at Baleli as part of the 12th Mounted Brigade until November 1919 when it moved to Sibi. On the 12th July 1921, resulting from the post-war reductions of the Indian army, the 40th Cavalry was disbanded.

Promotions had come quickly for Raunak Ali, with advancement to Ressaidar in August 1911 and Risaldar in November 1915. However, his career with the Indian Army came to an end sometime during 1919, as he is not listed in either the January 1920 or subsequent editions of the Indian Army List. He does not feature either in the listing of King's Commissioned Officers or in the batch of twenty Viceroy's Commissioned Officers who were given temporary

[2] Major A.M. Daniels, *The History of Skinner's Horse*, p.64

commissions of 2nd Lieutenant on the 1st December 1920. Nor does his name figure amongst the later batches of V.C.O.'s who in 1921-22 were commissioned onto the Indian Army Unattached List. Furthermore, there is no evidence that he received any sort of honorary commission in the Indian Army.

There are two known photographs of Raunak Ali. The first (page 32), from a larger group photograph, was taken after his retirement. He is wearing the full 1914-15 trio, which includes the War Medal and Victory Medal – both of which would have been distributed in 1920 at the earliest. The plate on his cross belt has not been identified but it does not appear to be either a Skinner's Horse or a 40th Cavalry belt plate. He looks a bit 'scruffy' and hardly smart enough for a regular cavalry officer. Employment in an Indian States Forces unit is an obvious possibility, but the I.S.F. Army List of 1922 does not record him or any similarly named officer serving with the Forces.


ORCHA STATE

———

WAIST BELT
CLASP

The second photograph (page 35) is more interesting and informative. It shows Raunak Ali standing alongside His Highness *Sarmand-i-Rajah-i-Bundelkhand Maharaja Mohindra Sewai Sir* Vir Singh Deo Bahadur, Maharaja of Orcha [Orchha], and an unidentified man, possibly the Maharaja's A.D.C. Raunak Ali, wearing full medals, is carrying a regulation pattern V.C.O.'s sword whereas H.H. the Maharaja and the unidentified man are carrying the traditional Indian *tulwar*. H.H. the Maharaja is seen wearing the star of the K.C.I.E. on a serge uniform.[3] The other two are wearing khaki cotton uniforms. By now, Raunak Ali seems to have been elevated to a high rank in the State as he is wearing collar tabs. The occasion and date are not known.

[3] It is known that Sir Vir Singh was appointed K.C.S.I., and so this photo was presumably taken prior to this event.

FROM LEFT: RISALDAR SAYAD MIR RAUNAK ALI.; H.H. THE MAHARAJA OF ORCHA; UNIDENTIFIED OFFICER (POSSIBLY A.D.C. TO H.H. THE MAHARAJA)

In 1923, Orchha was a Seventeen Gun Salute state (including two personal salutes), covering a territory of 2,079 square miles with a population of 285,000. Although it was a senior state in Bundelkhand, for some inexplicable reason Orchha played no part in the Imperial Service Troops or Indian States Forces schemes, and never deployed troops to help the British. Between 1912 and 1931, the Orchha army included only local troops (*Memorandum on the Indian States).* The State was something of an anomaly as it had no military forces to speak of, and yet it produced a most handsome badge which was definitely not a cheap cast job lot. By 1940, it maintained no military forces and only a small police force (*Memoranda on the Indian States* – 1940 edition). Raunak Ali commanded the Orchha State Army and possibly also the State Police, which ties in with the fact that, even though he is not listed in the I.S.F. List, he is seen wearing a uniform in both the photographs.


BADGE OF THE INFANTRY, ORCHHA [SIC] STATE

It is of great significance that Raunak Ali, a Sunni Mussalman, commanded the armed forces of a predominantly Hindu state; a fact that says a lot for the values of the ruling family and for the personality and standing of the man himself. His war services and medal entitlements were: *China 1900:* Relief of Pekin, actions at Peitsang and Yangtsun (medal and clasp); *Great War*: NWF of India (1914-15 trio); *Coronation 1902*: medal (bronze); *Delhi Durbar 1911*: medal. His qualifications for the 1902 Coronation medal are not known.

---

The badge illustrations were kindly supplied by Tony McClenaghan. Note the different spellings of the State name: Orcha and Orchha. The latter version was more often used.

**William Hall V.C. – a Lucknow hero remembered**

William Neilson Edward Hall, the first Canadian to win the Victoria Cross, was the son of former American slaves. He was also the first man of colour to receive this coveted decoration. On 1st February 2010, Canada Post released a stamp featuring a painting of Hall with HMS *Shannon* in the background. Believed to have been born near Hantsport (Nova Scotia) in 1829, William was the son of Jacob and Lucinda, refugees from the 'War of 1812' between the United States and Great Britain. He joined a merchant marine ship at fifteen and the Royal Navy at twenty-two. He served in the Crimea at Inkermann and the siege of Sebastopol. He subsequently went to India with the frigate HMS *Shannon*, and was awarded the V.C. for gallantry in action during the 2nd Relief of Lucknow.

Courtesy of Canada Post Corporation

*London Gazette* of 1st February 1859
The Queen has been graciously pleased to signify her intention to confer the decoration of the V.C. on the under-mentioned seaman of H.M.'s Navy, who has been recommended to Her Majesty for that Decoration for gallantry while serving in the Naval Brigade in India under the orders of Capt. William Peel, K.C.B.
*William Hall, Captain of the Foretop of H.M.S. Shannon*
Recommended by the late Captain Peel for his gallant conduct at a 24-pounder gun, brought up to the angle of the Shah Nujjiff at Lucknow on the 10th Nov. 1857.

Hall received his decoration on 28th October 1859 aboard HMS *Donegal* in Queenstown, Ireland. He was discharged in the rating of Petty Officer 1st Class in 1876, and passed away, unmarried, in Avonport in 1904. His medals, including the Victoria Cross, the Crimea medal, the Indian Mutiny medal, and the Turkish Crimea medal are on display at the Nova Scotia Museum.

[Much of the personal detail of William Hall has been taken from an article by Michael Posner in the Canadian "Globe and Mail" published on 30th Jan 2010.]

## An unusual example of insubordination in a highly respected Bombay Native Infantry Regiment on field service - 1839

Rana Chhina

The 1st (Grenadier) Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry[1] served on the lines of communication throughout the 1st Afghanistan War. It marched into Shikapore on 14th September 1840 where it left a detachment of 200 men while the main body of the regiment marched on to Sukkur. This appears to have remained the situation until December 1842 when the regiment re-crossed the Indus, and joined Sir Charles Napier in his operations against the Amirs of Sind.

There is no mention in regimental records[2] of an unfortunate incident involving the 'Vakil of Bhawalpore' occurring near Shikapore or Sukkur, or of the subsequent insubordination of the Subedar of the Light Company. It was however recorded by a military officer on political service in Northern Sind at the time.[3]

> 'A few days after, I received a visit from the Vakil of Bhawalpore, a straightforward worthy personage, who had lately suffered some evil treatment at the hands of our Sipahis. The matter was, indeed, throughout a very serious one. It seems the Vakil was encountered not far from the cantonment of Shikarpore by some of the 1st Grenadiers in their undress. They stopped and robbed him. He carried his complaint to the officer commanding at Shikarpore, who ordered the regiment to parade that the Vakil might identify the offenders. This caused evident dissatisfaction; but when the Vakil came to the Light Company, the Subedar of which had the title of Bahadur, and wore the Order of Merit, that officer gave the word 'Right about face' to his company, and added, 'Now look at them.' He was immediately put under arrest and confined, as well

[1] The 1st Bombay Native Infantry was originally formed in Bombay in 1779, and it continues to serve in the senior infantry formation of today's Republic of India armed forces as the 2nd Battalion, Brigade of Guards (1st Grenadiers).

[2] Capt. A. Frankland (compiler), *The 101st Grenadiers – Historical Record of the Regiment 1778-1923*, Gale & Polden, Aldershot 1928, p.27

[3] *Dry Leaves from Young Egypt – being a Glance at Sindh Before the Arrival of Sir Charles Napier*, by an Ex-Political, James Madden, London 1849, pp.79-80. This work is usually attributed to Lieut. Edward Backhouse Eastwick, 6th Bombay Native Infantry – but it might possibly be Capt. William Joseph Eastwick, 12th Bombay Native Infantry, who was on political service in Upper Sindh from 1839 to1841.

> as some Sipahis (who had made a disturbance on the parade ground), in the Quarter Guard.
>
> 'The majority of the regiment, however, gathered round them, and declared they would not return to their duty until the prisoners were released; and the European officers, who went to the mutineers, were beaten and insulted. Matters began to assume a formidable appearance, for the regiment was the only one at the station; and in the unsettled state of the country, with enemies surrounding the camp, the most serious consequences might have resulted. The firmness, however, of the commanding officer had its effect; the men yielded and returned to their duty, and the Subedar was transferred to Sakkar [sic], where he was tried by Court Martial, and dismissed the service. This mutiny was proof enough – if any proof were wanting – of the powerful influence native officers have over the sipahis. It cannot be doubted that the regiment shewed stronger excitement on this occasion of the arrest of their Subedar Major [sic] than they would have done had any of the European officers been disgraced. It is fortunate for us then that such an influence is almost invariably exerted in support of discipline and in favour of our Government.
>
> 'It would be no pleasing task to picture the results which would follow, were any measure of ours to cause general dissatisfaction among the native officers and lead them to combine against us.'

It seems that the offending Subedar was indeed a member of the Order of British India in the 2nd Class (with the honorary title *Bahadur*), but not of the Order of Merit. The 'Ex-Political' was in all probability confused between the O.B.I. and the O.M. – both orders having been only very recently instituted in the H.E.I.C.'s army and thus not yet universally understood.

Prior to the close of 1842 only one commissioned officer of the Bombay Army had been admitted to the Order of Merit: Jemadar Bhowaney Sing of the Corps of Bombay Sappers & Miners for gallantry at Ghuznee in July 1839 (G.O.G.G. 15, 7th January 1840). On the other hand several officers of the Bombay Army had been appointed to the Order of British India during this period.

Generally speaking, the Bombay Army remained loyal during the period of mutiny and rebellion in 1857-59, although it is nevertheless interesting that the 'Ex-Political' should draw attention to the tenuous control that British officers had over the Indian rank and file, and to the crucial role played by Indian officers in this regard.

---

**Remembrance Sunday 2009 at the Afghan Church, Bombay**

The Editor has received a letter from Roddy Sale, Captain Welsh Guards retd., who is the Hon. Treasurer of the Bombay Branch of the British Ex-Servicemen's Association. Roddy's letter, accompanied by several interesting photographs, relates that the Bombay Branch held its Annual Remembrance Sunday service at the 'Afghan Church' in Bombay[1] on Sunday 8th November 2009, which was very well attended. Support is still given to some sixty pre-1947 soldiers and their widows. Veterans attended the service wearing medals including the Burma Star, 1939-1945 Star, etc.

The 2nd Battalion The Grenadiers provided its Pipes and Drums by kind permission of the Commanding Officer. In the photo of the assembled band on page 42, the Pipers can be seen wearing the white feather plume. The photo on page 41 illustrates what appears to be a pre-1945 pattern shoulder belt (or sash) worn by the current Drum Major (or Band Master).

The 2nd Battalion was raised in 1796 as the 13th Battalion of Native Infantry on the Bombay establishment. The designation had evolved to the 102nd Prince of Wales's Own Grenadiers by 1903, and in 1936 the title became '2nd Battalion (King Edward VII's Own), 4th Bombay Grenadiers,' as it appears on the embellishments adorning the Drum Major's shoulder belt. It remained thus until 1945 when it changed to '2nd Battalion, The Indian Grenadiers.' In 1950, three years after Independence and on India becoming a republic, it evolved to '2nd Battalion The Grenadiers' – the present day title. The old nickname 'The Grinders' is still enjoyed by the regiment.

It is difficult to determine the number of honour scrolls on the shoulder belt, but there are at least eight from the total tally of thirty honours to which the six battalions were entitled collectively by the time they were amalgamated to form the 4th Bombay Grenadiers in 1922.

| *honour* | *regiment* | *honour* | *regiment* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mangalore | 101 | Mysore | 101, 108, 109 |
| Seringapatam | 109 | Egypt | 102, 113 |
| Kirkee | 102, 112, 113 | Corygaum | 102 |
| Beni Boo Alli | 113 | Meeanee | 112 |

The regiment was unusual insofar as its four junior battalions (108th, 109th, 112th, and 113th) were either disbanded or removed. Thereafter it consisted of only two, 1st (101st Grenadiers) and 2nd (102nd Grenadiers) in the run-up to World War 2. Nevertheless, the honours of all six battalions were retained.

[1] See the article on the Afghan Church in 'Durbar' Winter 2009 (Vol. 26, No.4), p.187.


DRUM MAJOR'S SHOULDER BELT OR SASH
2ND BATTALION THE GRENADIERS

As with all Indian Army regiments post 1922, honours were shared collectively and not left with the battalions that actually won them. However, the individual battalions continued to wear distinctive badges that often reflected their principal honours. The Sphinx of the 2nd Grenadiers representing 'Egypt' is clear to see on the Drum Major's shoulder belt.

PIPES AND DRUMS, 2ND BATTALION THE GRENADIERS
REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2009

---

Postal auction to supplement Society funds

**King's Royal Rifle Corps at Ali Masjid, 1894**

The contemporary K.R.R.C. photograph on page 30 measures 10 x 6 inches. It is sharply focused and is in good condition apart from some corner trimming which does not affect the main subject. It will be sold to the I.M.H.S. member who submits the highest bid (minimum £6 to cover registered postage) to the Editor prior to 30th April. The successful bidder, whose identity will not be revealed without prior permission, will be requested to make payment in the form of a donation to the Society, to be forwarded to the General Secretary.

## Indian Officer Ranks in the Cavalry Prior to 1922

Brian Stevens

When looking through some early numbers of *Durbar*, an article in the Autumn 1992 edition (Volume 9, No. 2), contributed by Major-General Chand N. Das, O.B.E., caught my eye. Entitled *The Oldest Ever Serving Soldier in India*, it concerns Risaldar-Major Mir Sher Ali who was killed charging with the 8th Bengal Light Cavalry at Ramnagar on the 22nd November 1848 during the early stages of the so-called Punjab Campaign. At the time of his death Mir Sher Ali was seventy-eight years old and had served for sixty years.

It should be noted that the rank or appointment given in the article (*i.e.* Risaldar-Major) is not correct. He was serving in a 'regular' as opposed to an 'irregular' cavalry regiment, and he would therefore have been Subadar-Major of the regiment. Indeed, in Lieutenant P.G. Cardew's *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (Calcutta 1903, p.228), he is described as 'Subadar-Major Mir Sher Ali, *Sardar Bahadur*, of the 8th Light Cavalry,' being a member of the Order of British India, 1st Class. He was the only Indian officer killed on this occasion, although one other was wounded.

As he was stated to have served for sixty years, Mir Sher Ali must have enlisted sometime in 1788 at which time only two regiments of Native Cavalry existed, although in reality they were half regiments, and on an 'irregular' footing. They were not given 'regular' status until 1796. When the 7th and 8th Regiments of Native, later Light, Cavalry were formed in 1805 from drafts from the six cavalry regiments by then in existence, it is likely that Mir Sher Ali was one of those drafted. By this time he would have had some eighteen years service, so the probability exists that he was either a Naik or perhaps a Havildar, and it is more than probable that on being drafted he received a step in rank, this being the usual method of providing a cadre for new units, for example six Jemadars promoted to Subadar, twelve Havildars to Jemadar, and so on down to Troopers of whom some would be promoted to Naik whilst others would provide the core element in each of the new Troops. As the 3rd and 4th Regiments were raised in 1796 and 1797 respectively, and the 5th and 6th in 1800, it is quite likely that Mir Sher Ali was drafted or volunteered more than once.

So far as the Madras Army was concerned it never included any 'irregular' cavalry regiments, and the four regiments that survived the 1861 re-organizations of the several Presidency armies retained their 'regular' status throughout their entire existence. However, they adopted the 'irregular' cavalry rank designations in 1902, this change also affecting the Governor's Body Guard.

The three 'regular' Bombay cavalry regiments were converted to 'irregular' regiments in 1861. The Poona Horse and Scinde Horse were always 'irregular' regiments, as were the short lived Southern Mahratta Horse and Gujerat Horse. The only other cavalry regiment which used apparent infantry rank designations was the Governor General's Body Guard which retained them until 1896.

It may be of interest to note that while the 'regular' regiments had the ranks of Subadar and Jemadar together with the rank or appointment of Subadar-Major (*i.e.* the senior Subadar), the 'irregulars' originally had four ranks: Risaldar, Ressaidar, Naib-Risaldar and Jemadar. Troops or 'risalas', as they were designated in 'irregular' regiments, were commanded by officers holding either of the first two ranks, with one Naib-Risaldar and one Jemadar per risala. In 1865 the rank of Naib-Risaldar was abolished, one promotion to Jemadar being given for every two vacancies in the rank of Naib-Risaldar.

The rank or appointment of Risaldar-Major (*i.e.* the senior Risaldar) was first authorised in 1866 (G.G.O. No. 425 refers). The rank of Ressaidar existed until about 1922 when it was abolished and not replaced.

---

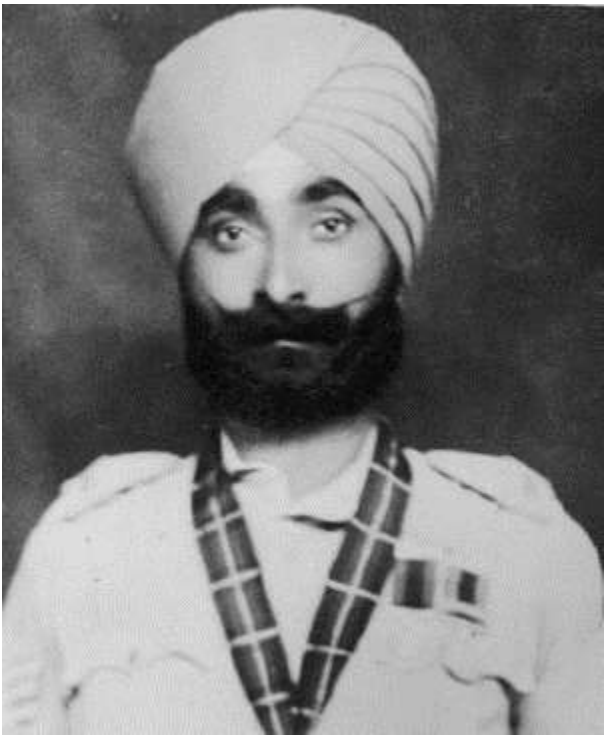
## CORRESPONDENCE

*From Sushil Talwar…*

Further to the article by Sarkees Najmuddin and Omer Tarin entitled 'Havildar Dhirta, IDSM - a True Military Hero of the Punjab' (*Durbar*, Winter 2009, Vol. 26, No. 4), the following extract from the unit history of the 4th Sikhs may be of additional general interest.

> *Valour and Sacrifice, Famous Regiments of the Indian Army*
> Lieutenant-Colonel Gautam Sharma (New Delhi 1990), pp.191-192
>
> 'The 4th Battalion was the first to be mobilised, and set sail for Egypt in September 1940. After a short while at Siddi Barrani and in Sudan, it was in the brigade attack on Aqua Col, a strongly held enemy feature, in early 1941. The fighting was so fierce that, of the two companies that went into assault, one had eighty-seven casualties. After this initial christening, the battalion continued to be involved in some more fighting in Siddi Barrani, Libija and a feature known as Point 204. The Sikhs had their share of reverses also at El Alamein, when the Germans launched their offensive. The battalion was forced to disperse to the rear in small parties, and as the major portion (over 500 officers and men) became prisoners of war, it had to be re-formed. This battalion was also in a similar unfortunate situation during the1965 War and had to be re-formed.
>
> 'During this withdrawal some of the men, who had also managed to escape after capture, displayed great devotion to duty. Of these, Havildar Dhirta Singh

was awarded the IDSM, as also the Macgregor Memorial Medal for valuable information collected by him during his escape from the German prisoner-of-war cage. He had managed to come out, along with three other men of his battalion, and conducted this small party in a very skilful manner through enemy-infested territory, covering a distance of 700 kilometres in just twenty-two days. Lance-Naik Sohan Singh, who too had been captured at Deir ez Shein in July 1942, also managed to escape three months later and rejoined his battalion, after having undergone great hardships. He too displayed great ingenuity and was awarded the IDSM.'



HAVILDAR DHIRTA SINGH, I.D.S.M.

This portrait of Dhirta Singh illustrates the distinctive ribbon from which the Macgregor Memorial Medal was suspended. Prior to 1947, only the small silver version, limited to NCOs and other ranks, was worn in uniform. Dhirta Singh also wears the IDSM and a pre-WW2 India General Service Medal with one clasp (photo courtesy of Rana Chhina).

**St Luke's Church, Abbottabad**

*Lieutenant-Colonel Neville Poulsom writes….*

I found the article by Omer Tarin and Sarkees Najmuddin in the Autumn and Winter issues of *Durbar* of particular interest. In 2005 I was privileged, along with a number of others, to visit my old regiment, The Baluch Regiment, in Abbottabad. During our stay we visited the Anglican Church of St. Luke and were made welcome by the Vicar. I managed to photograph the memorial plaque of Major Ernest Edlmann D.S.O., R.A.,which may add some interest to the article. The inscription reads:


> *To the glory of God and in ever loving memory of Major Ernest Elliot Edlmann D.S.O. Royal Artillery - son of the late Major J.E. Edlmann 1st (King's) Dragoon Guards - who died of wounds at Shaiba Persian Gulf, 17th April 1915 aged 46, commanding the 23rd Peshawar Mountain battery F.F.*

---

**Jullunder Brigade**

*Major-General Peter Davies, CB, writes…*

I am expanding the website of the Jullundur Brigade Association <www.jullundurassociation.org> described in the Spring 2009 edition of *Durbar*, and am interested in hearing from members of any relevant historical facts which might be incorporated. In particular I would like to learn the history of the Brigade's commander, Major-General P.M. Carnegy, C.B. He took the Brigade to France from India and commanded it until January 1915 when he was invalided, handing over command to (then) Lieutenant-Colonel E.P. Strickland (whose biography I have). Any information will be gratefully received and may be selected for publication. Written material should be sent to me at: The Jullundur Brigade Association, c/o City HQ Manchester, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, TA Centre, Ardwick Green, Manchester M12 6HD ; or by email to pdavies@fastmail.fm

**'Lightning Fist' badge**
(*vide*: 'Durbar' Winter 2009, Vol. 26, No. 4, p.206)

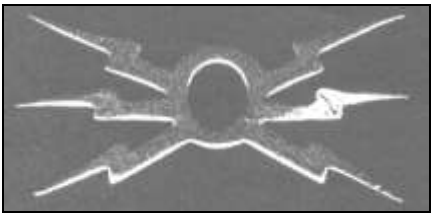
*Steve Matthews* wrote in to say the badge found by Sushil is a wartime RAF 'radio operator mechanic' trade badge, and that it was normally embroidered. He speculates that, as Sushil's brass example originates in India, it may have been made for wear on tropical dress.

*Colin Bell* subscribes to the R.A.F. trade badge theory, and points out that metal versions of trade and appointment badges were frequently made for wear on tropical and desert kit. He has what appears to be an inferior bazaar-made copy of the very same badge in brass, possibly made as a replacement for a lost or damaged badge. He has his uncle's Royal Sussex Regiment brass cap badge, bazaar-made in Cairo in 1941 after the original was lost.

*Andrew Walker* sent this scan (below) of an RAF badge. He explains that the badge was introduced on 19th Sept 1918 by Air Ministry Order 1066/18, and that the right-handed clenched fist holding six lightning bolts was embroidered in light blue silk on a dark blue melton backing. The badge was initially confined to airmen qualifying as wireless operators (a.k.a. 'Sparks') and was worn on both sleeves of the tunic below the RAF eagle shoulder badge. At the end of WWI it became obsolete but was re-introduced in 1920 as an incentive for airmen to qualify in an advanced skill. In 1951, A.M.O. A380 authorized the badge to be worn by airmen and women of all ground signalling, radio engineering and later telecommunication trades. Andrew opines that the brass version found by Sushil may be a Royal Australian Air Force development of the same badge, used for the same purpose. Oher Empire and Commonwealth countries tended to replicate RAF badges (maybe the RIAF included) when establishing their own Air Forces. However, he reserves judgment as he doesn't have access to AAF Regulations.

*Rana Chhina* reports that he interviewed a gentleman who had served in the RIAF and believes that the badge was indeed used by the RIAF or IAF at some point of time, although he thought it was unusual that it was in brass rather than in embroidered cloth.

*Peter Chapman* has provided this interesting photocopy of a badge he recorded from a past Spink of London catalogue (item No.314 in a sale of 5th November 2003). This brass badge was catalogued as: 'Royal Flying Corps wireless operator's arm badge.' The resemblance to the badge found by Sushil is unmistakeable.



Also in the last edition of 'Durbar' when commenting on Sushil's badge, Tony McClenaghan drew attention to a somewhat similar WW1 period 'Indian Ordnance Department' badge. The title of the Corps remained thus from 1884, when the ordnance departments of the three Presidencies were united, until 1922 when the title evolved to 'Indian Army Ordnance Corps.'

*Sir John Chapple* has sent in this very clear illustration of what he describes as a 'Hand of Mercury' badge, very much like one worn by the soldier in Tony's First World War postcard. It shares the same design but includes a scroll below with the words 'INDIAN / ARMY ORDNANCE / CORPS' on its three parts. Sir John goes on to mention that there is also a hand-written note by Major H.G. Parkyn O.B.E., whose collection resides in the National Army Museum, which indicates that a badge of this same design, but without the scroll, might also have been worn by the 12th Pioneers (the Kelat-i-Ghilzai Regt). He believes that, although Major Parkyn was very knowledgeable, this observation may not be incorrect.

**The Rendition of Islamic names**

*Omer Tarin writes…* In the Autumn 2009 edition of 'Durbar' (Vol. 26, No. 3, p.156), Peter Chapman referred to a medal to a subedar in the Gilgit Scouts named 'Gauhar Aman.' This may be how the medal is named, but the name does not make any sense. I expect that somewhere down the line, during the medal issuing procedure, there has been one of those typical and frequently made errors in transcription. In reality, the officer would probably have been called 'Gohar/Gauhar Rahman' (Jewel/Gem of the Benificient), 'Rahman' or 'Ar-Rahman' being one of the names/attributes of God, also appearing in the formula 'Bismi'allah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim'). One comes across names such as Amanullah or Aman-ul-Mulk, but Gauhar Aman just cannot be. There is a whole naming system at work, and anyone interested in pursuing this further might benefit from the late Professor Dr Anne-Marie Schimmel's *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh, 1995). This may not make much difference in any way, and past errors are difficult to correct, but it seems unfortunate that chaps who received decorations and medals are not remembered by their proper names.

In an attempt to control the multitude of variances in spelling of Indian names, the Indian Army published lists of approved Anglicized versions. However, the frontier scouts and militias were hardly renowned for abiding by regulations, and it is unlikely that medal issuing authorities in turn bothered to correct the many unconventional spellings on the rolls from which medals were named. [Ed.]

BOOK REVIEW

Barry Renfrew, *Forgotten Regiments – Regular and Volunteer Units of the British Far East*; Terrier Press, Amersham, 2009; 246 pages, case-bound, ISBN 978-0-9563175-0-6. Generously discounted to IMHS members from Terrier Press, 15 Hollow Way Lane, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6JP, U.K. members £20 inclusive of postage; overseas members £20 plus £5 pp.

Given the number of units in the Far East that did not maintain any records at all, or whose records were lost in action at the beginning of the Second World War, it is remarkable that the author has been able to provide so much information on so many of the units. With the exception of the Hong Kong Volunteers and the Malay Regiment, this is an area that has been virtually ignored by military historians. The author sets out to rectify that omission by recording the contribution made 'by the hundreds of thousands of men from many races who served in Britain's Far Eastern military forces'.

Of special interest to members of this Society will be the many references to the recruitment of Indians to fill positions in these units, either directly from India or from those domiciled in the countries throughout the Far East. This was not always popular with the colonies – London proposed Indian soldiers to serve in Hong Kong as a cheaper option to British units; the local bureaucrats were mortified at the suggestion, even more so when 'a native battalion of Madrassees' was proposed. If they had to have Indian troops, could they at least be warlike Sikhs, went the argument. Eventually it was settled that 'Mohammedans of Upper India' would form the basis of The Hong Kong Regiment, '...the first Corps raised in India for "General Service" under the War Office.' It might also come as a surprise to some to note the number of Indian Army officers who were responsible for raising many of the Volunteer units, not just those manned by Indian soldiers, though in the early days the region was, of course, part of the sphere of interest of the HEIC. But there are many other aspects of the book that will also undoubtedly be of interest.

Two striking features throughout the book suggest that the British Empire was lucky to have any form of local volunteer military force at all. The first was the insouciant attitude of the young British 'gentlemen' clerks and civil servants from whom the Volunteers were intended to be drawn. In several cases an initial enthusiasm soon gave way to indifference caused by work, the distractions of colonial life and 'the tedium of drilling in tropical temperatures.' Coupled with this was the penny-pinching attitude of governments, whether British or local, that denied the units much needed equipment which impacted on their training. Nevertheless, over time the expatriate Volunteer did respond and, as the book clearly identifies, when the chips were down responded magnificently. There are some truly amazing stories of bravery.

The second striking feature is the widespread and overt racism that prevailed in colonial life at those times, and its impact on recruitment for these units. This should come as no surprise given the references to the types of Indians to be recruited for the Hong Kong Regiment. Although the first Volunteer unit to be formed in the Far East was the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, this comprised various European and American expatriates and so was dismissed by purists as being not quite right. The honour of *'In Oriente Primus'* therefore went to the Singapore Volunteer Corps, formed in 1854. As the author points out, however, it was run like an affable gentlemen's club; officers and NCOs were elected by the unit members and new recruits, exclusively of 'British descent,' had to be approved by a committee and three quarters of the corps. That particular unit came to an end in 1887 but others followed, though it was not until 1901 that the first Chinese were recruited, and then into a separate company, even though the Chinese community had

subscribed to a fund for the purchase of Maxim guns. The same attitude prevailed towards the Malay volunteers. In Hong Kong, opposition to Chinese Volunteers within the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Force persisted up to the outbreak of the Second World War and was even more pronounced towards Eurasians, especially those descended from the union of British fathers and Chinese mothers.

Yet the author shows most clearly the gallantry and determination of these various groups to fight against overwhelming odds when the Japanese attacks came in the Far East. Many were ordered by their British officers to abandon their uniforms and slip away if they could; and a number eventually re-joined British units, having trekked through Burma or China.

In addition to Volunteer forces of Singapore, Malaya, Hong Kong, Burma and the China Coast, the book also covers The Hong Kong Regiment, Hong Kong-Singapore Royal Artillery, 1st Chinese Regiment, Chinese Labour Corps, Burma Rifles and Burma Regiment (the latter only briefly), Malay States Guides and Malay Regiment. There is also a chapter on Fiji and a few notes on the Solomon Islands, Gilbert and Ellice Islands and Tonga.

There might be some surprise at the lack of any mention in the bibliography of two recent works by the late Alan Harfield – *British and Indian Armies on the China Coast 1785-1985* and *British and Indian Armies in the East Indies 1685-1935*, but this new work is a welcome and valuable addition to our knowledge of the military history of the British period in the Far East. Highly recommended. (Tony McClenaghan)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**The Chattri at Brighton – the unveiling of a new Indian Army memorial**

*From Tom Donovan...* As mentioned in the article 'The Chattri' ('Durbar', Summer 2009, pp.53-65), the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has agreed to erect a new 'cremation memorial' at the Chattri site on the South Downs just outside Brighton. I am now able to confirm a timescale for completion of the new memorial. Building will commence shortly and an inauguration ceremony will form part of the annual Memorial Service on 13th June this year. The new memorial will be officially opened by a senior official from the Indian High Commission and the Director-General of the C.W.G.C.

Seventy-four Indian soldiers died while convalescing in hospitals in Brighton during 1914-15. Twenty-one were Moslems who were buried at the Shah Jehan mosque at Woking. Fifty-three Hindu (including Gurkha) and Sikh soldiers were cremated at the spot on the Downs where the Chattri Memorial now stands. It was the original intention of the mayor and corporation of

Brighton to commemorate these men by name, but this was not possible because records were unavailable in 1920 when the memorial was first built. The men are commemorated on memorials at Neuve Chapelle and Hollybrook, as if they were missing in action. The C.W.G.C. now accepts that this is misleading, and that a memorial at the place of cremation is more appropriate.

The annual memorial service on 13th June is a unique, warm and inclusive ceremony, when representatives of the Undivided Indian Ex-Services Association, the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, the Mayor of Brighton, representatives of the armed services and others will lay wreaths, in addition to this year's special event, the opening of the new memorial. All are most welcome to attend and to take refreshments afterwards at a venue nearby.

THE CHATTRI AT BRIGHTON

You are requested to please arrive by 2.30 p.m. for a 3 o'clock service. Roads around Brighton can be very busy on summer weekends so you should allow ample time for your journey. The interlude before the service provides time to mix with an interesting crowd of visitors from near and far and to admire the memorial and the splendid view, so early arrival is a bonus! Getting to the Chattri normally involves a walk of a mile or more across farmland, but on the day of the service cars may be driven all the way up to the memorial. Please contact me at tom@turnerdonovan.com if you require directions or any other details.

**New exhibition at the National Army Museum opening on 19th May**

*'Indian Armies, Indian Art: Soldiers, collectors and artists 1780-1880'* explores the cultural exchange between the British and India in the 18th and 19th centuries and features artworks created by local artists and collected by British soldiers. It includes a series of paintings commissioned by Colonel James Skinner and now displayed together for the first time.