

## **The Imperial Cadet Corps and the Indianisation of the Indian Army's Officer Corps, 1897-1923: a Brief Survey**

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### **Introduction**

One of the key attributes of modern nation-states is a professional military establishment. For a military establishment to be professional, it requires military training. During the British Raj in India until 1901, professional military training was the exclusive preserve of the British officer. Yet in 1901, military training was extended for the first time to the Raj's Indian subjects, in the form of the Imperial Cadet Corps (ICC). The ICC was a failure. It was resurrected as the Prince of Wales' Royal Indian Military College, founded in 1923 as a preparatory school for Indian cadets proceeding to Sandhurst; and after 1932, to the Indian Military Academy. The Prince of Wales' College exists today as the Indian Military College or 'Rimcoll.' Thus, it can be said that the ICC established the precedent for training Indian officers in India, which finally reached fruition in the founding of the Royal Indian Military Academy, which continues as the *Rashtriya* Indian Military Academy till today. The ICC therefore occupies a pivotal place in the history of the Indianisation of the Indian Army's officer corps. However, it remains little studied and little known. This article complements earlier research by colouring-in some of the lesser known features of the Corps, as well as precisely pinpointing the reasons for its failure.<sup>2</sup>

### **Background History of the Corps**

The Corps was the first tangible product of the 122-years Indianisation debate, which lasted from 1817 to 1940. It raised two questions: were Indians 'racially' fit for military command and leadership in the same class as Britons; and if they were, how were they to be integrated into the Army in a manner that did not endanger the Raj?

Before 1857, Sir Henry Lawrence came closest to advocating the granting of full officer commissions to Indians. He believed that, in a land like India which had witnessed the rise and fall of many kingdoms and empires, there

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<sup>2</sup> Sources used in compiling this article are detailed on page 10 below.

simply *had* to be men with a European-like capacity for military leadership, who deserved avenues to fully express that capacity. Lawrence's concern was pragmatic: he wanted to prevent the trend of Native Officers (today's JCOs) joining the militaries of the Indian polities because they were dissatisfied with Company's Army. He wrote that 'justice and liberality will forge stronger chains of loyalty than a suspicious and niggardly policy.'

The 1857 Mutiny killed the idea of Indianisation for thirty years. Since the British attributed their victory over rebellious sepoys and civilians to their superior military leadership, most of them flatly opposed encouraging or inculcating this quality amongst Indians. As one British general who had served during the 'Mutiny' later said: '...selecting... [Indians], educating them, and training them in the arts of war... would make them... dangerous characters, and rather too efficient.'

In 1885, General Sir George Chesney, the Government of India's Military Secretary, resurrected Indianisation, for two reasons. First, he believed that the British could not 'continue to use the native as a subordinate military tool, but must associate him as an intelligent agent.' Second, Indianisation was already being advanced by the Indian *Babu* intelligentsia as proof of British insincerity, because, by barring Indians from high military posts, they were not honouring the promise made in 1858 Royal Proclamation to open up positions in government and administration to Indians. As if to prove Chesney right, the Indian National Congress, in 1887, passed a resolution calling for Indianisation and the establishment of a military college in India for that purpose.

Between 1885 and 1891, Chesney proposed Indianisation schemes four times, advancing three measures: first, the experimental Indianisation of the officer cadre of one or two units; second, the opening of an Indian military college to train Indians for higher commissions; third, the professionalisation of the VCO [Viceroy's Commissioned Officer] class. Though seemingly liberal, closer examination shows them as essentially conservative. Rather than being designed for all Indians, they were aimed at only: the classes then recruited into the Army – the so-called martial races – and the 'native aristocracy' of Princely and British India. By advocating for these Indians, Chesney conformed to two dominant ideological strands of the late-Nineteenth Century Raj: firstly, that in India, unlike in the West, only certain rural 'martial races' possessed the ability to effectively bear arms and become soldiers; and secondly, that the princes were the upholders of 'traditional' India, the undue meddling of which had caused the 'Mutiny.' In fact the 1858 Proclamation which established Britain's Indian Empire promised to '...respect the rights, dignity, and honour of the native princes as our own.'

Despite his dogged persistence, Chesney's proposals were all rejected. His opponents employed three arguments. Firstly, that it was impossible that a British officer or other ranks would ever agree to be commanded by an Indian, which was something that the first two of Chesney's measures would eventually result in. Secondly, since "everyone knew" that Indians did not possess the British "habit of command", their posting to line units would lead to the Army's loss of efficiency, thus endangering the security of the Indian Empire. Finally, General Sir Frederick Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief India 1885-1893, held that the Indianisation demand was illegitimate, because it only issued from '...the misguided Englishmen and Hindus who direct[ed] the machinations of the [Indian] National Congress,' and not from martial and aristocratic Indian 'races' who, in any case, wisely realised that higher officer commissions were '...reserved for the governing race.'

### **Formation of the Corps**

In 1897, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, wrote to Lord George Hamilton, the India Secretary, asking whether his son, then at Eton, could obtain an officer commission in the British Army. Since the Maharaja was an Indian prince, and thus a 'legitimate' Indian, his request was taken seriously. However, it was rejected because Indian princes were legally not British subjects, and thus were barred, according to the Act of Settlement of 1690, from holding officers' commissions in any part of the Crown's Armed Forces.

Undeterred by this failure, Hamilton was determined to press the princes' cause regarding Indianisation. In 1900, he averred that, after their '...exhibition of loyalty and martial ardour (in the then ongoing Boer War) it is unjust and impolitic to deny them all prospect of military service, except in the lower grades.'

In Lord George Curzon, the incoming Viceroy, he found a willing and like-minded ally. In June 1900, Curzon produced a proposal to set-up an Imperial Cadet Corps to meet the military aspirations of Indian princes and gentlemen. This was to be a small body of between twenty and thirty carefully selected young scions of the Indian princely and noble houses, and was to be attached to the Viceroy's *Durbar* on special ceremonial occasions. For rest of their time, the cadets were to undergo a course of military training. The Corps was to be under the control of the Government of India's Foreign Department, which handled all dealings with the princes.

The normal course at the ICC was to last two years. However, those few cadets who showed real promise would undergo a third year of specialised military training. Upon successfully completing this third year, cadets would be

granted commissions in His Majesty's Native Indian Land Forces (HMNILF). Although these commissions entitled the holder to exercise command over '...all Native officers, soldiers, and other persons belonging to Our Native Indian Forces,' Curzon strongly preferred that holders be posted only in extra-regimental billets – as aides-de-camp, and on the staffs of general officers – where they would command nobody.

Despite scathing criticism by certain high officials, such as the C-in-C India, General Sir Arthur Power Palmer, and Sir Charles Crosthwaite, an eminent senior Indian civil servant – who contended that the scheme was '...like testing a man's capacity as a judge by giving him a seat on a bench which never has any cases to try' – Hamilton and Curzon managed to secure London's approval for the Corps. The Congress Party too endorsed the ICC, seeing it as '...the first instalment of a policy which will culminate in the establishment of military colleges... [where] ...India[ns] may be educated and trained for a military career as commissioned officers in the Indian Army.'

### Assessing the ICC

The staff of the Corps consisted of the Commandant and the Adjutant, who were both British officers; and the Native Adjutant. The main brunt of instruction fell on the two British officers. They were assisted by a senior British NCO who handled drill.

The academic year was divided into two terms: a cold weather term, from the beginning of November to the end of March, at Meerut Cantonment, and a hot weather term, from the end of May to the end of August, at Dehra Dun. At Meerut, cadets were housed in well-appointed tents. Accommodation was more formal at Dehra Dun: two lines, consisting of twelve rooms each, with attached bathrooms – uncommon even in Britain at the time. A separate line housed the ICC staff, the Muslim and Hindu messes, classrooms and the library. Book-learning was not emphasised. Per day, there were only three hours of classroom instruction, thirty minutes less than the draft rules stipulated. Most of the classroom time during the first year was devoted to English language instruction and arithmetic. Among the books read were Lord Roberts' *Forty-One Years in India*, and R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. While the first was a celebration of the Raj and its Indian Army in memoir form, the second was a 'boys-own' adventure, inspiring masculine values. Outdoor subjects in the first year included drill and equitation. In the second and third years, military subjects, such as cavalry training, topography, administration and organisation, and tactics were introduced. The textbooks used were: *Cavalry Training*, *Combined Training*, *The Manual of Military Engineering*, *The Manual of Field*

*Sketching, Longman's Geography, and Coleman's Arithmetic.* Throughout, there was a heavy emphasis on sports – especially team sports, like polo, which bred horsemanship as well as team spirit and leadership, and pig-sticking, which presumably added an unpredictable element, thought to be akin to the ‘fog of war.’

Cadets selected for the third year course, which consisted only of military subjects, took a commissioning examination at the end of it, which became more professionalised with time. For instance, while the first one, in 1905, contained no core military subjects, the 1909 examination had a paper on military law – a fundamental cornerstone of a professional officer's training.

Other aspects of the Corps, however, were not so professional. Separate messes, on communal lines, were instituted. While catering to ‘Indian sensibilities,’ this inevitably militated against the camaraderie that is the cornerstone of any professional officer corps. Cadets were also allowed to bring their personal servants, and sometimes, their private tutors. Furthermore, the Cadets' dress and ceremonial uniform were very extravagant. Designed by Curzon himself, it was snow white, with sky-blue and gold facings and was topped by a sky-blue *Sapha* (Rajput-style turban). Made of the finest materials, the uniform then cost a princely sum of Rs 500. The opulence and expense of the uniform was no doubt intended to appeal to extravagant tastes and the social exclusivity of the Indian aristocrats.

Imperial Cadets were to attend on the Viceroy at Imperial functions. One such occasion was the 1903 Coronation Durbar, organised by Curzon. Here, the ICC, ‘...mounted on black chargers and resplendent in their strikingly beautiful uniforms... formed an important contingent in the Viceroy's escort.’ According to modern commentators, the Corps' participation was essential to the Raj's order, which saw Indian aristocrats as the essential mediators between the Indian peasantry and the King-Emperor.

The Corps was not cheap. Between 1901 and 1908, its budget totalled Rs 4,57,835. Expenditure on the ICC averaged out at Rs 65,405 per annum.

## **Recruitment and Future Employment**

Membership in the ICC was by invitation only. Agents to the Governors General in the various States Agencies – but especially those of Rajputana and Central India, deemed to be the Corps' main recruiting grounds – periodically forwarded names of suitable candidates to the Government, who were then seen and interviewed by higher officials. Every effort was made to avoid the lazy, socialite ‘gaiety lounge type,’ while inducing either young ruling princes or heirs of princely states to join. In fact, by 1907, six princes had joined,

though none of them completed even the two-year course. The major source of cadets, however, were the four chiefs' colleges that had been set up in the late nineteenth century to provide an English public school education to the Indian aristocracy.

Intake into ICC was never high. Between 1901 and 1908, sixty-eight cadets were admitted, and new enrolments reached double-digit figures only twice, in 1902 and 1905. Fifty-four cadets came from princely India, with only fourteen from British India. While Rajputana led the way, providing eighteen cadets, it is interesting to note that supposedly non-martial states, such as those of the Kathiawar Agency (seven) and Hyderabad (four), supplied more individually than any martial state.

During the Corps' existence, only eleven cadets were granted HMNILF commissions: four in 1905; three in 1907, one in 1911; and three in 1913. The Corps reached a low ebb in 1909, when the two cadets who passed the commissioning examination – both from Hyderabad – declined to accept their HMNILF commissions. The ICC was unpopular for three main reasons. The first was the absence of tangible employment opportunities for graduating cadets. The second, fuelled no doubt, by the first, was the ruling chiefs' lack of sustained interest. Finally, there were complaints about the Corps' training regime, location, high attrition rate, and the fact that some of the Foreign Department's political officers<sup>3</sup> saw the Corps as a reform school for wayward boys.

Almost since the ICC's beginning, cadets, their families, and some officials expressed concern about the future employment of cadets. As early as 1903, one cadet became disillusioned because it was clear that he and his fellow cadets would not receive real officer commissions. But Curzon and his coterie were unconcerned. To a suggestion that graduating cadets could be profitably employed in the Imperial Service Troops (IST) contingents maintained by various princely states, the Viceroy retorted that if that were the ICC's purpose, he '...would throw the scheme into the waste-paper basket!'

The crux of the problem was the thorny powers of command question, and the solutions proposed involved 'special regiments,' to be officered exclusively by ICC graduates. In 1904, Major Watson, the ICC's first commandant, proposed that existing IST units be converted into Local Imperial Troop (LIT) units officered by ICC graduates. This would increase the effectiveness of the princely forces, and counter worries about the Corps. But Curzon was again highly dismissive, stating that he was not prepared to convert the whole IST

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<sup>3</sup> Political officers were the Foreign Department's 'field officers,' who were posted to the various states and agencies to keep watch on them.

system to benefit ‘...a narrowly limited number of young Indian gentlemen who have received a somewhat perfunctory military education over a period of three years.’ This, from a man who, a scant three years earlier, had praised the princes as the one Indian class that had exhibited unstinting loyalty towards the Raj, is perplexing.

In 1906, Major Cameron, the new ICC commandant, tried again. Arguing that, as perpetual ADCs, HMNILF holders were being stultified professionally, he proposed the formation of a Regiment of Mounted Infantry (RMI). The RMI would consist of four 150-man double-companies: two of Rathore Rajputs, and one each of Rangars (Muslim Rajputs) and Punjabi Muslims. ICC graduates would be posted initially to subaltern posts, of which there were eight, and be duly promoted, based on their performance. Two years later, at the behest of Lord Minto, Brigadier Drummond, the Inspector-General of the ISTs, formulated a scheme essentially similar to Cameron’s. Drummond argued that his scheme would provide regimental employment to ICC graduates, while not negatively affecting the prestige of British officers.

As early as 1904, the ICC was garnering bad press. *The Civil & Military Gazette* published a damning assessment, saying that the ICC seemed to be ‘tottering to a fall.’ Citing the fact that only seven of twenty-two ‘carefully selected’ cadets had qualified for the third year course, it maintained that such a wholesale culling would only deter young Indian aristocrats from joining. Finally, it contended that the ‘...“failed cadets,” with their expensive European tastes and some proficiency in polo, will be a new and not wholly desirable addition to the ranks of the discontented.’ Although Calcutta was quick to counter that it never intended to select a majority of cadets for the third year course, and that cadets had withdrawn of their own accord for a variety of reasons, the Corps’ prestige had been dented. Indian politicians now joined in. Addressing the Imperial Legislative Council, Gopal Krishna Gokhale stated that, with regard to the ICC, the Government had irresponsibly raised hopes that it had no intention of fulfilling. And, not to be outdone, the All-India Muslim League advocated the posting of ICC graduates as officers of the Indian Army.

In 1907, the Corps took a direct and devastating hit, when the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, who had gotten the whole ball rolling with his 1897 request to Hamilton, withdrew his sons from the Corps, citing his disappointment that his sons would not be commissioned as regular officers in ‘...the *Indian Army*.’ This, and the Maharaja of Bikaner’s decision not to send any more boys from his state to the Corps, unless their being granted regular officer commissions was ensured, galvanised London. Lord Morley, the India Secretary, now sent a

despatch to Calcutta, enquiring about whether the Corps met princely aspirations.

Calcutta responded, in 1910, that ‘...nothing short of regimental employment... [would] ...satisfy the aspirations of educated young Indian noblemen who sought a military career.’ It therefore recommended the implementation of Drummond’s scheme, and the conversion of the Corps into a full-fledged military college under the Military Department to train Indians. Morley then convened a special committee to consider the issue. However, mainly because of Curzon’s intervention, no decision was reached and the Corps was allowed to soldier on, with dwindling numbers. Another conference, convened at Simla in 1912, reached an impasse as well, this time because the War Office representative insisted that, if indeed Indians were at some point in time admitted into the Indian Army’s officer corps, no Indian could receive a commission without attendance at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Clearly, the Corps had no place in these plans.

In 1914, the eleven HMNILF commission holders were holding posts in IST units, attached to the staffs of commanders of military divisions, or were attached extra-regimentally, to line units. For them, regular officer commissions – ‘the great objects of their longing’ – remained out of reach. Yet, in 1918, when London finally sanctioned Indians’ eligibility for regular officer commissions, the first nine were bestowed on ICC graduates. The ICC itself had closed its doors in 1914, though quite a few Foreign Department files from later years listed this as being only a temporary measure. Apparently, the authorities did not want to admit the Corps’ failure. Yet, that was not the end of the ICC. When, in the early 1920s, Indians at Sandhurst were failing at an alarming rate, New Delhi decided to open a preparatory Indian feeder school for Sandhurst. Christened the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College – and now the *Rashtriya* Indian Military College – it used the old ICC lines at Dehra Dun. The ICC had finally found its true calling, as a preparatory school, first for Sandhurst, and then for the Royal Indian Military Academy, which opened in 1932.

## Conclusion

The ICC failed, but why? First, the fundamental ‘smoking gun’ was the error made in wording of the first ICC rule. If, as the foregoing article has made abundantly clear, the authorities concerned had no intention of giving HMNILF commission holders the same powers of command as British officers, then the phrase in the first rule of the ICC’s draft rules stating that ICC graduates ‘...may be able to take their place in the Imperial Army *as British*

*officers...*’ should never have been printed, especially as the ‘Draft Rules’ was a public document that was even sent round to princely durbars upon request. Given the fact that Indian nationalists were already pointing out British hypocrisy and evasive statements regarding the 1858 proclamation, it is surprising that officials made a similar error regarding the ICC rules. The only plausible explanation, given the fact that no attempt was made to amend the first rule’s wording, is that the Foreign Department discounted the ability of the Indian aristocracy to detect the discrepancy. Yet intelligent aristocrats, like Amar Singh,<sup>4</sup> the Maharaja of Bikaner and the Maharaja of Cooch Behar did indeed express their dissatisfaction – the last in a very public way, which forced the authorities to act, though not, in the end, substantively.

The second reason for the Corps’ failure was the persistent lack of rewarding and meaningful career options for graduating cadets. Yet the authorities were consistently resistant to providing this. Witness Curzon’s disdainful ‘waste paper basket’ reaction to an entirely reasonable suggestion. As this article has articulated, the three entirely feasible special regiment schemes were all rejected, for reasons that were flimsy, at best. Despite countless meetings,<sup>5</sup> and secret memos, consultations and notes, the racial barrier – the notion that officer commissions were reserved for the governing race, however camouflaged by concerns over ‘military efficiency,’ exam-hungry and un-martial *babus*, fear of another mutiny outbreak, and the like – prevailed.

The ICC also showed, in stark relief, what could not be done in the matter of Indianisation. One could not set up a training institution and make vague promises of future employment and then fail to honour those promises by not providing meaningful and satisfying employment. Also, one could not set up a military training corps under the Foreign Department and expect full Military Department cooperation. It also showed that Indian noble and gentlemanly classes had expectations, and could not be taken for granted. The ICC raised the expectation among Indians for full and substantive King’s Commissions, with full powers of command. Had the Corps fulfilled this, there is no doubt that Indian nationalist politicians would not have had to maintain a sustained pressure on the Indianisation issue in the inter-war years. The words uttered by Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyer in the Central Legislative Assembly, while

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<sup>4</sup> See list of sources below: ‘*Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh’s Diary....*’

<sup>5</sup> High-level meetings to discuss the future of the Corps were held in 1904, 1907 and 1912.

introducing a set of resolutions on Indianisation on 16th March 1921, speak for themselves:

It is a characteristic of British rule in India... that they never have the knack for doing the right thing at the right time. They let the psychological moment pass by, and reasonable demands for justice and fair play are conceded only after years of persistent agitation.

Yet, although unlimited Indianisation was only sanctioned in mid-1940, and was forced, like its initial declaration in 1917, by the exigencies of war, it is undeniable that the ICC was a necessary first step in the whole Indianisation process.

### Sources

Most of the information in this article has been researched from unpublished primary documents in the Internal A, Internal B, and Secret Internal files of the colonial Govt. of India's Foreign Dept. in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The following published sources have also been used: Govt. of India, Central Legislative Assembly, *Debates*, 1921, vol. I; Arun Prakash, *The Young Warriors: A History of the Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehra Dun*: Rashtriya Indian Military College, 2004; Lloyd I. Rudolph, Suzanne H. Rudolph, with Mohan Singh Kanota, eds., *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, a Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India*, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 2002; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: the Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004; Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Grudging Concessions: the Officer Corps and its Indianization, 1817-1940,' in D.P. Marston and C.S. Sundaram, eds., *A Military History of India and South Asia from the East India Company to the Nuclear Era*, Westport and London: Praeger Security International, 2007; Chandar S. Sundaram, "'Martial' Indian Aristocrats and the Military System of the Raj: the Imperial Cadet Corps, 1900-1914,' in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25(3) Sept. 1997, pp.415-439; Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Preventing "Idleness": the Maharaja of Cooch Behar's Proposal for Officer Commissions in the British Army for the Sons of Indian Princes and Gentlemen, 1897-1898,' in *South Asia*, new series, 18(1) June 1995, pp.115-130; Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Reviving a "Dead Letter": Military Indianization and the Ideology of Anglo-India, 1885-1891,' in P.S. Gupta and A. Deshpande, eds., *The British Raj and its Indian Armed Forces, 1857-1939*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp.45-97; A. M. Zaidi and S. Zaidi, eds., *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, New Delhi: S. Chand, 1976-1987 (vol. 4)

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### **Group of Officers 2nd and 5th Madras Light Cavalry c. 1860**

Written on the reverse of the early photograph reproduced on the following page is the faint and relatively old inscription 'Officers - 2nd & 5th Cavalry EICS.' There are also two names: 'Curtis' (in the same hand as the inscription); 'Henderson' (in a different hand). Assuming each name is positioned to coincide with an officer on the obverse of the photo, then Henderson of the 2nd Madras Light Cavalry (MLC) is seated second from left and Curtis of the 5th MLC is in front on the left.

The presence of these two officers, combined with the evidence of the epaulettes and the jaunty peaked forage cap, indicates that the photograph was probably taken in 1860. This was when the H.E.I.C. Army was in its last throes and preparing for the major re-organizations of 1861 following the transfer from the Company to the Crown. 'On 26th October 1859 the 5th, 6th and 7th regiments (MLC) were ordered to be disbanded on the 31st December of the same year. The European Officers were distributed amongst the four remaining regiments to do duty with them.'<sup>1</sup> Along with six other officers from his regiment, Lieutenant Curtis was posted to do duty with the 2nd MLC.<sup>2</sup>

Also just visible in the picture on the pouch belt of one of the officers (half-standing third from the right) is what appears to be the device of an elephant with scroll below. This scroll would have been inscribed with the single word 'Assaye' which was an honour awarded to the 5th MLC and worn on its accoutrements. The 4th and 7th MLC were also entitled to wear this device.

Carman illustrates the belt with the crossover pattern, taken from a photo of an officer of the 5th MLC circa 1860, but also shows a similar belt worn by the 4th circa 1876.<sup>3</sup> He is silent on whether the 2nd wore a plain or patterned belt. Note that the pattern is repeated on the sword belt of the figure at the extreme right. Uniform colours, standard for all MLC regiments, were French grey for the jackets, pale buff facings, and blue trousers.

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<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Colonel C.L. Proudfoot, *History of the 16th Light Cavalry*, Calcutta 1976; p.88. The 8th Madras Light Cavalry mutinied in 1857 and was disbanded forthwith.

<sup>2</sup> *East India Register*, July 1861 edition. None of the other three surviving Madras cavalry regiments took officers from the 5th.

<sup>3</sup> W.Y. Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms under the British from the 18th Century to 1947, Cavalry* (London 1961); p.144



Although it seems logical to assume that different patterns of pouch belt served to distinguish the regiment to which the officers belonged, this does not seem to fit with the fact that Henderson of the 2nd and Curtis of the 5th both wear the same pattern. The confusion is caused by the fact that there was in effect a standard pattern of dress pouch belt as well as a standard pattern of undress pouch belt, both being common to all MLC regiments. As was often the case in officer groups of this type, some are wearing the dress pouch belt while others are wearing the undress pouch belt. The only regimental variances would have been the numbers on the badges and the differing honour scrolls.

Augustus Frederick Curtis was first commissioned in December 1858 and joined the 5th MLC in April 1859. Following the disbandment of his regiment, he must have been well received by the 2nd MLC as he remained with this same regiment for the rest of his career. It was not an eventful one, his only field service being towards the end of the Mutiny campaign in 1859 with the Bellary Field Force.<sup>4</sup> He was still serving as a Major and squadron officer with the 2nd MLC in 1880, but died before the January 1883 list was published.<sup>5</sup>

Philip Durham Henderson was a more enigmatic character. He was first commissioned in February 1857, joining the 2nd MLC two months later. There is no evidence that he served in the field and he did not remain with the 2nd MLC beyond 1872 when he was appointed Under Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.<sup>6</sup> He was a talented man with qualifications in signaling, surveying and mapping, and he was a linguist, speaking Arabic and Persian in addition to the basic Hindustani. He spent the rest of his career in the senior levels of one sort or another of internal security employment. From March 1878 until at least April 1892 he held the appointment of General Superintendent of Operations for the Suppression of Thuggee and Dacoity. No doubt he had much to do in this role, but it seems to have been a cover for activities of a more secret nature. His appointment to the Order of the Star of India in 1876<sup>7</sup> suggests that he had performed services of some importance to the Government of India. He transferred to the so-called Unemployed Supernumerary List as a Major-General in September 1895<sup>8</sup>, although it seems that he remained actively engaged for some time after this.

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<sup>4</sup> *Madras Army List*, December 1878 edition

<sup>5</sup> *The India List Civil and Military*, January 1880 and July 1883 editions

<sup>6</sup> *Indian Army & Civil Service List*, January 1876 edition

<sup>7</sup> Companion of the Order of the Star of India (CSI), 7th March 1876.

<sup>8</sup> *Indian Army List*, January 1896 edition

The Henderson Papers, donated by his family to the India Office Records, are revealing. In 1879-80 he was charged with surveillance of Helena Pretrovna Blavatsky (a Russian citizen) and Henry Steel Olcott (a retired American colonel), co-founders of the Theosophical Society during their high-profile visit to India which the Government of India construed as a potential threat to their interests.<sup>9</sup> At about the same time Henderson submitted a memorandum concerning ‘intrigues between Constantinople and Mohammedans in India.’<sup>10</sup> Later on he was involved in the delicate case of Dhulip Singh, the youngest son of Ranjit Singh and the last Maharaja of the Sikh *Raj* who had been exiled to England in 1854 and attempted to return in 1886, getting no further than Aden before he was turned back.<sup>11</sup> It seems that by the end of the eighteen eighties Henderson was making arrangements for the collection of secret and political information from the whole of the Indian Empire and its field of influence.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Dhulip Singh affair had revealed gaps in the government’s ability to collect intelligence, it did not of itself lead to an imperative to change the system. Nevertheless, in 1887 Lord Dufferin’s government attempted to improve its intelligence collection capability and the Central Office of the Thagi and Dakaitry Department [sic] was reorganized for the last time when it became the Central Special Branch of the Thagi and Dakaitry Department.<sup>13</sup> ‘Thus the General Superintendent (Henderson), who already acted informally as the Viceroy’s senior intelligence officer, was placed in charge of the Government of India’s official intelligence office.’<sup>14</sup>

The Editor wishes to thank Sean Weir for permission to publish the photograph, and Sean, Tony McClenaghan and Ashok Nath for their help in compiling the narrative.

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<sup>9</sup> ‘The Blavatsky Archive Online’ ([www.blavatskyarchives.com](http://www.blavatskyarchives.com))

<sup>10</sup> *India Office Records*, L/P&S/7/6 volume 26, part 6

<sup>11</sup> *India Office Records*, MSS.EUR.E.243/23, The Cross Papers: Summary of correspondence in the case of Maharaja Dalip [sic] Singh, prepared by Colonel P.D. Henderson, 13th June 1887

<sup>12</sup> The ‘Blavatsky Archive Online’ quotes two sources: India Office Records: R/1/1/80 and R/1/19/80. This information must come from the index description, as the actual records could not be retrieved. There are supposedly about twenty bundles of records in this same series held in the Indian National Archives at New Delhi.

<sup>13</sup> The department ceased to exist in 1903.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence - British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire 1902-24*, Frank Cass, London 1995; p.26. Popplewell records that Henderson wrote a paper in 1887 entitled ‘British Intelligence Requirements within India in the late nineteenth century’ (Popplewell’s source: Cross Papers, *India Office Records*, L/PJ/7/670, and not MSS.EUR.E.243/23 cited in f/n 11).

**Risaldar *Sardar* Habib Khan Tarin**  
**1st Bengal Military Police Battalion**

Omer Tarin & Sarkees Najmuddin

Generally speaking, little is known about the militarized police units that were active during the period encompassing the Indian Mutiny. The substantial regiments of armed police, both cavalry and infantry that were formed in Bengal, Oudh and the Punjab, have been largely overlooked by historians.<sup>1</sup> The main interest in the military campaigning has clustered, somewhat myopically, around events at Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow and the major Central India catalysts of rebellion such as Jhansi and Gwalior. In the meantime, there were extraordinary events occurring in the vast and hugely important hinterlands of Bengal and Oudh where rebellion was rife.

The military campaigning launched in these two provinces, after the fall of Lucknow in March 1858, is frequently described as a process of ‘pacification.’ This is a euphemism. Some major set pieces took place between British and rebel forces and a great deal of hard marching and bitter fighting was required before the rebellion was finally extinguished. Much of the action took place in remote locations stretching across the wilderness of the Oudh/Nepal frontier.

Militarized police units, both cavalry and infantry, were used extensively in the pacification process, and these important services merit further research. This brief biographical account of a particular native officer, belonging to the cavalry element of one of the military police battalions in Bengal, is a small step in this direction.

Risaldar *Sardar* Habib Khan Tarin (1829/30-1888) belonged to the 1st Battalion of the Bengal Military Police, in which he served with considerable distinction for about seven or eight years, from circa 1856 to 1863/64. As early records of native officers, even in the regular regiments of the Indian Army, are generally quite rare, it is therefore rather useful to have this comparatively well-documented account from primary and secondary sources.

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<sup>1</sup> The most substantial of the military police bodies, incorporating up to ten full-sized battalions, were the Bengal, Oudh, and Punjab Police. Other similar police bodies, some of them 1,000 strong, and all of which claimed the Mutiny medal for service in the field, included: Allahabad, Benares, Bihar & Shahabad, Goruckpore, Jaloun, Jhansi, Jubbulpore, and Sikh [Police]. There were also organised bodies of militia and local levies, too many to name here, that were armed and claimed medals for field service.

The history of the 1st Bengal Military Police Battalion is the best known of all these police units, thanks to Colonel McRae's history.<sup>2</sup> The Battalion itself was raised at Lahore, in April 1856, by Captain Thomas Rattray, of the 64th Bengal Native Infantry. It was established as an armed mobile police force for service within Bengal. Within this broad remit, it had at the outset the specific purpose of maintaining law and order in the Raj Mahal hills of the Sonthal Pergunnahs in the Eastern Bihar district of Bengal.

The primary source of recruitment was from ex-soldiers of the Sikh *Khalsa* that had been disbanded after the Punjab Campaign of 1848-49, the so-called Second Sikh War. In spite of this major source of manpower, the Battalion's class composition was not exclusively Sikh. Indeed, from the outset it consisted of 100 mounted troopers (seventy-five Muslims and the balance Brahmins, Khattris, Rajputs and Sikhs) and 1,000 infantry (Sikhs 500, Muslims 300, Dogras 200). The uniform was drab with blue *pugri*, white cross-belt, blue facings and silver lace. The cavalry portion was armed with the sword and the light pattern percussion carbine, with the officers having pistols.<sup>3</sup>

*Sardar* Habib Khan, an Afghan/Pathan (terms are interchangeable) and chieftain of the Tarin tribe, was resident in the Haripur tract of the Hazara region (later North-West Frontier Province).<sup>4</sup> He was enrolled right at the start, at Lahore, as a Jemadar of mounted troops, and he brought in a number of mounted retainers with him.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note, here, something of the circumstances which brought this young aristocrat to Lahore, and from there to Bengal and Bihar, for military service with the H.E.I.C., as it reflects the turbulent times on the 'Punjab Frontier' in those years.

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<sup>2</sup> Colonel H. St G. M. McRae, DSO, OBE, *Regimental History of the 45th Rattray's Sikhs, Vol.1, 1856-1914* (Glasgow 1933). In due course, the 1st Bn. Bengal Military Police evolved into the illustrious 45th Rattray's Sikhs, which became the 3rd Battalion (Rattray's Sikhs), 11th Sikh Regiment after the 1921 reorganizations.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> For further information on the history of the Hazara during 1840s-1850s, see Omer Tarin & Sarkees Najmuddin, *Five Early Military Graves at the Old Christian Cemetery, Abbottabad, Pakistan, Part I, (Durbar, Vol. 26, No. 3, Autumn 2009, pp.140-149.*

<sup>5</sup> The Sophia Institute [TSI] Archives, Pakistan, ref. B./6/1823-90/01: Certificate given by C.G. Baker, 1st January 1863, at Morshidabad, Bengal. Lieutenant Charles George Baker was Commandant of Cavalry, 1st Bengal Military Police Battalion. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in an action on 27th September 1858. He led a charge of sixty-eight of his troopers against a large body of rebels at Suhejee near Peroo, some seven miles south-west of Jagdishpur in the Shahabad district (*London Gazette*, 25 Feb 1862).

The section of the Tarin tribe resident in the Hazara region, which came originally from the vicinity of Qandahar (Kandahar), in Afghanistan, settled there in 1749-50 when the region was still part of the Afghan Durrani/Abdali kingdom. Their chiefs were the *Hakims* (governors) of the Hazara plain up to the Salhad Pass, and of the *Chach* (Hazro) and Khattar country up to Taxila and the Margalla Pass, now part of Attock in North Punjab. Within this territory they collected taxes, administered the law and maintained general public order. Later, during Sikh rule, they suffered heavily for their resistance and, later still, between 1847 and 1849, incurred the enmity of James Abbott.<sup>6</sup> He found them arrogant and rebellious, insistent on returning to Afghan rather than Sikh or British rule. As a consequence, they lost sizeable portions of their land revenues by the First Summary Settlement of 1847, and their chiefs were eventually outlawed.<sup>7</sup> Amongst those thus treated was the young *Sardar* (chieftain) Habib Khan, of a rather tempestuous nature, who promptly escaped into the tribal hills bordering the Indus, from where he and his adherents used to sally forth to harass towns and villages on the Haripur plain.

The situation might have become very hazardous indeed for Habib Khan, as Abbott was bent upon crushing all dissent determinedly, had it not been for a strange chance. In 1850-51, not far from the Gandhgarhi hills in which Habib Khan and his band were hiding, the new British rulers had initiated a road project along the Trunk Road from Rawalpindi to Attock, under the direction of a renowned officer, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Cornelius Napier.<sup>8</sup> Because the road was bordered by wild, hostile tribes, Napier needed to have a team of 'poachers-turned-gamekeepers' to help him in carrying out his work safely. Somehow, he was able to win over Habib Khan through his personal tact and courtesy. Subsequently, a mutual regard developed between the two men and in 1852, when the Punjab Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, visited Hazara, it was through Napier's intercession that an open amnesty was granted, not only to Habib Khan but a number of other chiefs as well, who all came back to their homesteads.<sup>9</sup> In the same year, Habib Khan also played an important role in reconnaissance and intelligence gathering during the First

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<sup>6</sup> Captain James Abbott, Bengal Arty; Asst to Resident at Lahore from 24 Dec 1847.

<sup>7</sup> Dr S.B. Panni, *Tarikh I Hazara* (Urdu: History of the Hazara), Peshawar: NP, 1964, pp.121-125.

<sup>8</sup> Later Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala (1810-1890).

<sup>9</sup> By that time, James Abbott and his 'patriarchal' administration in Hazara were becoming something of a problem for the Government of the Punjab, leading to his eventual removal in April 1853 (see H. Lee, *Brothers in the Raj: The Lives of John and Henry Lawrence*, Karachi, Oxford UP, 2002, p.268).

Black Mountain campaign, an expedition under Napier's command. Between 1853 and 1855, he carried out various other commissions for the British in Rawalpindi and the Murree hills. In 1856, determined to get a regular military commission, he went to Lahore on the advice of Napier, again; and was thus enrolled in the cavalry troop of the new Bengal Military Police Battalion, apparently on the direct recommendation of Sir John Lawrence himself.<sup>10</sup> Later, Thomas Rattray remarked: 'He is a man of a very good family and entered service merely to make a name for himself.'<sup>11</sup>

After joining the Battalion, it is presumed that Habib Khan served with his troop in the Sonthal *pergunnahs* until the outbreak of Mutiny and rebellion in May 1857. Thereafter, the Battalion further developed its role as a highly mobile body, employed ad hoc across Bengal and eventually on the North-Eastern Frontier, being regularly split up into independent detachments, commanded by British or Indian officers. During this critical period, the mounted troop came into special prominence. The mobility of the cavalry was revealed to be a great advantage and this arm was therefore increased to five hundred sabres. Following the raising of further Bengal Police battalions, the title of Rattray's unit became '1st Battalion, Bengal Military Police' in 1858.

McRae provides a nominal list of the Indian officers of the cavalry troop and the infantry companies who served with the Battalion during the period up to August 1858.<sup>12</sup> He mentions three officers of the cavalry: Ressaldar Wozeer [sic] Khan, Jemadar Meer Mehranally [sic], Jemadar Huneen [sic] Khan. That the last-named is indeed our protagonist is borne out by a letter also quoted by McRae, written by Octavius W. Malet, Judge at Beerbohm, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 4th July 1858:

The *Ressalah* is entirely composed of Mussulmans recruited chiefly near Delhi and Futteyghurh, with a few from the Punjab. I have been told by a person, whom I can I think believe, that there are bad men among them, but that they are kept in strict order by their Native Officers, on whom Mr. Baker says he can entirely rely... The Ressaldar was formerly in the 8th [Bengal] Irregulars, which mutinied at Bareilly. The first Jemadar is a fine old soldier, formerly in the [Governor-General's] Body Guard, but noted as an extremely bigoted

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<sup>10</sup> Baker, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> TSI Archives, B/6/1823-90/03. Certificate given by Major T. Rattray, Deputy Inspector-Gen. of Police, Chota-Nagpur Division, Bengal; dated Ranchi, 4th May 1863.

<sup>12</sup> McRae, op. cit., p.7

Mussulman. *The second Jemadar is a young man of good family and large property.*<sup>13</sup>

In describing the overall services of the 1st Bengal Military Police Battalion during the Indian Mutiny campaign, McRae refers to the roll of claims for the medal compiled on 18th August 1858. Unfortunately this roll is one of several that are not available in the British Library's 'India Office Records.' However, McRae makes several interesting observations on the information included on the roll. Discounting minor affairs, detachments of the Battalion fought in thirty engagements,

The troop of Cavalry seemed to have had very strenuous service – its record averages practically ten engagements per man – and Jemadar Hubeeb [sic] Khan heads the list with fourteen engagements.<sup>14</sup>

The man who saw the most service was Naik Synah Singh, of No. 1 Company (infantry), who was present at twenty engagements. Having given a list of the awards granted to officers and other ranks of the infantry companies, a further shortfall of information is then implied by McRae's ensuing statement: 'There is no record of rewards bestowed on the Cavalry portion of the Battalion.' Nevertheless, some further information about Habib Khan's services is available, contained in certificates given afterwards:

He was present in a number of engagements with rebels and always bore himself creditably on each occasion. His personal courage was undoubted and [he] was frequently in command of detached parties... He remained under my command when I succeeded Major Rattray... and was also very well spoken of by the staff of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal when my troop was acting as a bodyguard to His Honour.<sup>15</sup>

During the Mutiny, in Shahabad, in 1858, when I in common with every other European official and non-official scarcely knew upon whom to rely, this man was to be entirely relied upon – and, on one occasion I particularly remember, he, with myself and Mr. Assistant Superintendent Dowand, headed a charge on the rebels who had captured a large quantity of Government Stores on the Trunk

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<sup>13</sup> McRae, op. cit., p.85 (our italics).

<sup>14</sup> McRae, op. cit., p. 136

<sup>15</sup> Baker, op. cit.

Road... this man's gallantry was very conspicuous, and he, I believe, saved Mr. Dowand's life on this occasion.<sup>16</sup>

During 1862 and 1863, Habib Khan helped sort out the accounts of the Battalion, left in bad shape by the previous Risaldar, and journeyed to Bhutan to procure horses as remounts for the troop.<sup>17</sup> In 1863 he was advanced to Risaldar commanding the cavalry troop as a result of his meritorious services.

As a reward for its loyalty and good performance in the Mutiny campaign, in Sikkim during 1859-62, and in the Jynthia and Cassiah Hills expedition, the 1st Bengal Military Police Battalion was taken into the line in 1864 as a regular infantry battalion of the Bengal Army with the title '45th (Rattray's Sikhs) Regiment of Native Infantry.' The cavalry and artillery elements had probably already been mustered out in 1863, as they no longer featured on the establishment of the Battalion in March 1864.<sup>18</sup>

During 1863, when his command was disbanded, Habib left the service and returned to Hazara where he lived until his demise. His last years were taken up by endless property disputes and litigation against relatives as well as the Punjab government;<sup>19</sup> and in settling the affairs of his considerable estates.

It is said of Habib Khan that, unlike most of the rather bigoted and narrow-minded Hazara chiefs, he always remained a most tolerant and liberal-minded man, well in advance of his times and often at loggerheads with many of his Afghan/Pathan compatriots because of his syncretic Sufic religious beliefs, his

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<sup>16</sup> TSI Archives, B/6/1823-90/05: Certificate given by Mr. P.J. Bingham, Magistrate, late Civil Officer with troops in Shahabad, in 1858 and 1859. Given at Sasseram, 22nd May 1863.

<sup>17</sup> Baker, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> McRae, *op. cit.*, pp.169-170

<sup>19</sup> According to the earliest Hazara District Gazetteer of 1883-84 (The Punjab Government, Lahore, 1884), pp.81-82: 'Prior to the final Permanent Revenue Settlement of the Hazara in 1872... it [Hazara] was the subject of a special Act of Legislation [by the Government]... provisions being made for the Hazara Settlement Rules of 1870, with a special provision relating to the cases in which the [previous] Sikh Government had confiscated the rights of the old *waris* [landowners] [upheld by Abbott's Summary Settlements]; and this [legislation] empowered the Settlement Authorities to make a full investigation of all claims that might be advanced by the old *waris*. The rule was framed to meet the cases of the Tarin, Turk and Dilazak families who owned ninety-six villages in the Haripur plains, and those of the Gakkhar Rajas, who were ousted from the Khanpur *ilaqa*, or tract, by the Sikhs in 1830 A.D.'

close lifelong friendships with his old Sikh and Hindu colleagues-in-arms, and his firm espousal of the benefits of a Western style liberal, rational education for Muslim youth. Something of this was reflected in subsequent years, in the lives of two of his sons: one who served and died in the British Indian Army, in Mesopotamia, during World War I; and another, who studied for the Bar in England<sup>20</sup> and rose to be a prominent magistrate, a revered philanthropist and an M.P. for the Hazara.

Unfortunately, we have no image of Risaldar *Sardar* Habib Khan Tarin from his military service days; but a photographic portrait of him, from his later



days, is reproduced here.<sup>21</sup> It is to be noted that he is wearing the dress of the ‘sophisticated’ aristocracy of Oudh and Bengal, rather than traditional Afghan or Pathan garb; so, obviously, he retained till the end a nostalgic memory of his years spent in those distant parts, and where he picked up some relatively urbane tastes and habits.

An early fragment of correspondence from Habib Khan in Urdu, dating back to circa 1863-64, tells us that he met a ‘relative’ of Thomas Rattray, who was also a soldier and had recently fought in the Mutiny (*Ghadr*). This must have been Major James Clerk Rattray of H.M.’s 90th

Regiment of Foot (Perthshire Volunteers) (Light Infantry). He was a veteran of

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<sup>20</sup> Khan Sahib Abdel Majid Khan Tarin (1877-1939), was at Lincoln’s Inn circa 1899-1902 (the relevant entries are available on the old rolls of the Inn).

<sup>21</sup> Photo by courtesy of Mr. A. Naghuib Khan Tarin, Hazara, Pakistan.

the Crimea where he had been severely wounded, at Sebastopol, in September 1855. Back on his feet and in India during the Mutiny campaigning, he joined Henry Havelock's moveable column that marched to the relief of the Residency at Lucknow in September 1857. He was mentioned in dispatches by Sir James Outram for his services during the subsequent defence of the important Alambagh outpost, and took part in the operations leading to the final capture of Lucknow in March 1858. He eventually became a Lieutenant-General, although he appears to have seen no further field service. He was 26th Laird of the Clan Rattray, and was appointed K.C.B. (Knight of the Order of the Bath) in 1897.<sup>22</sup>

Habib Khan's uncle, *Sardar* Muhammad Ghulam Khan, Tarin, had been arrested by James Abbott on 13th May 1849 (after Habib Khan's father had died and Habib Khan himself had become an outlaw) and was sent to Allahabad Prison. He was still there when the 1857 Mutiny/Rebellion broke out and, at the very time when Habib Khan was serving with Rattray's Sikhs, Muhammad Ghulam Khan tried to instigate a prison uprising against the British. This was quickly put down and Muhammad Ghulam Khan was duly sentenced and hanged there. It is indeed ironical that today, in postcolonial Pakistan, he is considered a big hero and 'freedom fighter' while Habib Khan, and others much like him, are viewed rather as 'collaborators.'<sup>23</sup>

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The authors of this article would be most grateful to hear, via the Editor please, of any further information on the life and military services of Habib Khan. They also wish to acknowledge the help received from the Editor who allowed them to have access to his notes on the military police during the Mutiny period.

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<sup>22</sup> Harts Annual Army Lists (various editions). Information on Clan Rattray can be found on at least two websites: <[www.clanrattray.org](http://www.clanrattray.org)> and <[www.clanchiefs.org](http://www.clanchiefs.org)>. The former website incorporates a section devoted to the history of Rattray's Sikhs. Six chapters of Thomas Rattray's original manuscript history covering the early years of the 1st Bn Bengal Military Police are being serialized in the printed journal of The Clan Rattray Society. This manuscript, along other papers belonging to the Rattray family, is assumed to have been used by Colonel McRae when compiling his history of Rattray's Sikhs. In his bibliography, McRae describes it as: '*Accounts and Anecdotes of the Bengal Police Battalion, late No.1 Battalion Bengal Military Police (Rattray's Sikhs), with an account of a few incidents during the Mutiny of 1857-58*, private manuscript by Col. Thomas Rattray.

<sup>23</sup> Details of Muhammad Ghulam Khan's actions are given in Dr Panni's *Tarikh I Hazara* (op. cit.) and in the late Professor Shafi Sabir's monograph *Freedom-fighters of the North-West Frontier* (published 1997-98).

## **The 15th Ludhiana Sikhs and the Senussi The Egyptian Western Desert, November 1915 to February 1916**

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

### **Introduction**

In 1914, the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs went to fight in France with the 3rd Lahore Division, but in late 1915 the regiment was posted to Egypt where it operated against a much more traditional and tribal enemy.

Working from eastern Libya, Sayed Ahmed, known as the Senussi, was the leader of a sect of devout Muslims. His men had been fighting the Italian occupiers of Libya with considerable success. They were trained and assisted by a group of Turkish military officers led by Nuri Bey, brother of the Turkish War Minister, Enver Pasha. During 1915, German submarines began supporting the Turkish effort with the Senussi's army by transporting Turks and weapons to Eastern Libya and attacking shipping along the Egyptian coast. The Senussi was at first reluctant to fight Britain, but in the end Nuri Bey persuaded him to join the Turkish Holy War and to invade Egypt. The Allied reverses at Gallipoli doubtless influenced the Senussi's thoughts and actions.

In early November 1915, a German submarine sank the British ships *Tara* and *Moorina* off the western Egyptian coast, and the British survivors of these attacks were handed over by the submarine to the Senussi who arranged their captivity. The Senussi's troops then harassed and fired upon the British outposts at Sollum and Sidi el Barrani. British Headquarters in Cairo decided that a withdrawal was necessary, and all British troops west of Matruh were ordered to move to that location. At Sollum, the most westerly British post, the withdrawal was effected too hastily, as the Egyptian Army garrison of the fort was left behind. During the withdrawal, many of the Egyptian Coastguards deserted to the Senussi with their weapons and camels. The Senussi's followers now occupied and pillaged all the abandoned British locations.

### **The first action at Wadi Senab**

On the 20th November 1915, the British formed the Western Frontier Force (WFF). The commander was Major-General A. Wallace and he assembled his force at Matruh. A light railway moved the men and mounts from Alexandria to Dabaa, and from there the men marched or were shipped the seventy-five miles to Matruh.

The WFF contained an infantry brigade composed of three partially-trained British battalions, the 6th Royal Scots and the 2/7th and 2/8th Middlesex, plus the 15th Sikhs. The other main component of the WFF was the cavalry brigade consisting of three composite British Yeomanry regiments and a composite regiment of Australian Light Horse. Brigadier-General the Earl of Lucan commanded the infantry, and Brigadier-General J.D.T. Tyndale-Biscoe commanded the cavalry. The 15th Sikhs was the only major regular unit. The one artillery battery, the Notts Battery Royal Horse Artillery, was destined to perform very well in the forthcoming actions.

By the 3rd December the British garrison at Matruh numbered 1,400 men. New arrivals included 'A' Battery Honourable, Artillery Company, two 4-inch guns manned by Royal Marines, two aircraft of the 17th Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, and a six-car detachment from the Royal Naval Armoured Car Division. Meanwhile, over 2,000 of the Senussi's men were believed to be moving south and west of Matruh.

On the 11th December, Major-General Wallace sent out a column to disperse a group of enemy reported to be at Duwwar Hussein, sixteen miles west of Matruh. Lieutenant-Colonel J.L.R. Gordon, 15th Sikhs, was appointed Column Commander. The column consisted of the 15th Sikhs, less two companies, the 2nd Composite Yeomanry Regiment, a section of guns of the Notts Battery and a detachment of armoured cars. Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon took his infantry along a track that followed the telegraph line westwards to Sollum, while the cavalry, guns and armoured cars used a road to the southwest, known as the Khedivial Motor Road, which also led to Sollum.

The mounted column departed at 07.00 hrs on 11th December, but the cavalry moved so quickly that the scouts could not keep sufficiently ahead of the main body. Around 300 enemy were waiting to the north of the road in the Wadi (valley) Senab, and they successfully ambushed the cavalry. Attempts made to turn the enemy's right flank were driven back by heavy fire, and a stalemate existed until a squadron of Australian Light Horse arrived from Matruh in the afternoon. Then, using artillery support, the cavalry forced the enemy group out of its position. Eighty dead and seven prisoners were left behind by the Senussi troops. British losses were sixteen killed and seventeen wounded. During this action Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon continued along his track and established a firm base at the Umm Er Rakham wells. The cavalry joined him there during the night.

As the cavalry mounts were now exhausted, the 12th December was spent in resting and in rounding up nearby enemy stock. The 6th Royal Scots, less two companies, joined Gordon during the night of the 12th, as did a convoy of stores. On the following morning at 08.30 hrs, Gordon marched west to Wadi

Hasheifat, planning to turn south up the wadi towards Duwwar Hussein. As the track was expected to be unfit for heavy wheels, the sixty 1st Line Transport pack mules of the 15th Sikhs were loaded with reserve ammunition and extra water for the column. One company of the 15th Sikhs was left to guard the camp.

As the British column approached the Wadi Hasheifat from the east, the cavalry was forward and dispersed, No. 2 Company of the 15th Sikhs was the advanced guard, and two platoons of the Royal Scots formed the left flank guard. Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon heard heavy firing on his left and observed his left flank guard running very swiftly towards the shore, pursued by an equal number of uniformed and well-drilled soldiers who used formations and cover as they followed up the fleeing Royal Scots. The British soldiers were making no attempt to engage the enemy, identified as troops of the Muhafizia, the Senussi's regular army trained by the Turks. The Sikhs' two machine guns came into action to halt the enemy advance.

Many more of the enemy now appeared, and Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon decided to fight on the edge of the plateau that rose from the coastal plain. The Royal Scots were ordered to move forward and to the left, and the cavalry were brought back to man the right of the line; however the cavalry took some time to reorganize, and the Royal Scots appeared unwilling to advance. This left the advanced guard, which had occupied some mounds, in an exposed position. Gordon ordered it to withdraw towards his headquarters. The 15th Sikhs' company commander, Captain C.F.W. Hughes, replied that he could not comply with this order unless he abandoned his wounded, and that he was therefore obliged to hold his ground. The enemy increased the pressure around 10.00 hrs by bringing 4-inch guns into action and by effectively deploying machine guns.

Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon radioed back to the camp at Umm Rakham, ordering forward all reinforcements that could be spared, and the machine gun section of the Royal Scots and seventy-five men of the Australian Service Corps, armed with rifles, were sent forward. As these reinforcements approached the main body, an enemy machine gun engaged them. This induced the Royal Scots machine gun section to break and run for cover with their guns into the sand dunes on the beach, but the Australians stayed and fought well. Finally two squadrons of Australian Light Horse came forward from Matruh and escorted two Royal Horse Artillery field guns onto the beach where they engaged the Senussi's warriors. Also HMS *Clematis*, a newly-built submarine trawler mounting two 4-inch guns, appeared offshore and fired at the enemy positions. A lucky British shell exploded amongst one of the largest groups of enemy, scattering it. That was the turning-point of the action. As the

enemy began to withdraw and his machine guns ceased firing, the Royal Scots advanced to their nominated objective. The 15th Sikhs advanced guard regrouped and evacuated its four dead and nineteen wounded.

Knowing he could not achieve a decisive result and aware of the fatigue felt by men and mounts, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon withdrew his men to their camp and on the next day the column returned to Matruh. British casualties amounted to nine killed and fifty-six wounded whilst enemy casualties were around 100 killed and wounded. The Official History comments:

The enemy had been driven off, but had been able to retire unmolested, and must be given credit for the surprise and the vigour of his attack. Had the standard of training and the experience of the whole column been equal to those of the 15th Sikhs, the Senussi might have been heavily defeated.

### **The action around the Wadi Majid**

Bad weather now prevented operations for ten days. During this period the 1st Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade arrived to join the WFF. Meanwhile British aerial reconnaissance reported that the enemy was concentrating 900 Muhafizia in three battalions, plus four mountain guns and two machine guns, six miles southwest of Matruh where Jebel (mountain) Medwa dominated the road to Sollum. Major-General Wallace hoped to surprise the enemy force, and at 05.00 hrs on 25th December two columns moved out from Matruh.

The southern composite cavalry column under Brigadier Tyndale-Biscoe detoured on a southern loop through Wadi Toweiba, attempting to position itself to prevent an enemy withdrawal. The infantry column, comprising the 15th Sikhs, 1st N.Z. Rifle Brigade and 2/8th Middlesex, plus supporting arms, advanced down the Sollum road. Major-General Wallace's headquarters followed the infantry column. The only effective signaling sub-unit in the force was the 15th Sikhs signals platoon. Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, who had asked to command his battalion rather than do a job that Maj.-Gen. Wallace could easily manage, was ordered to command the infantry column. Major G. Pennfather-Evans commanded the 15th Sikhs. As dawn broke, an enemy outpost spotted the British advance and gave the alarm by lighting a huge bonfire.

Observing that Jebel Medwa was not occupied, Gordon sent one of the two 15th Sikh companies forming the advanced guard to seize the Jebel, and this was achieved without opposition. At around 08.00 hrs an enemy mountain gun began to shell the road from a ridge west of Jebel Medwa where the enemy battalions were forming up. This caused the 15th Sikhs to open out into artillery (i.e. dispersed) formation, astride the road but well clear of it. With Lieut.-Colonel Gordon using his telescope and acting as an observer, the Notts

Battery engaged and silenced the enemy gun from a range of 2,000 yards, whilst shells from HMS *Clematis* also fell on the enemy-occupied ridge from a range of 10,000 yards.

Gordon requested Major-General Wallace to relieve the Sikh company on Jebel Medwa, and a company of the Middlesex did this. The 15th Sikhs now advanced on the enemy ridge on a frontage of 200 yards, with the 1st New Zealand Rifles following. Companies of New Zealanders were placed as guards on each flank as the Sikhs moved briskly across an open plateau. The advance was halted 800 yards from the enemy to allow the cavalry to appear and take up position. As the cavalry did not appear, the advance continued but now with both New Zealand companies on the right flank. As the British troops moved onto the ridge the enemy broke and fled, some of them hiding in caves and gullies where they were shot or bayoneted. The whole of the ridge was secured by 10.00 hrs. Gordon now brought the guns forward onto the plateau where they fired into the retreating enemy. Regrettably the cavalry was not in position to complete the destruction of the Muhafizia battalions.

The southern column had first been delayed by moving its guns over difficult terrain, and then had been engaged at around 08.00 hours by enemy camelry and horsed cavalry who had anticipated the British cavalry move. Although machine gun fire eventually dispersed the enemy, this contact disrupted the column's advance. At 15.00 hrs the cavalry column appeared but by then the battle was nearly over. The enemy had retreated into Wadi Majid, followed by the Sikhs and New Zealanders. The enemy camp in the Wadi was set alight and the Muhafizia rearguard, demoralized but still fighting effectively, was driven onto the beach. Some of the enemy feigned death or wounds, but then opened fire at close range. This so enraged the Sikhs that any of these men taken alive were thrown into the burning tents.

The light was fading and at 17.00 hrs Colonel Gordon broke off the infantry pursuit, ordering the battalions to bivouac on Jebel Medwa. The mounted troops returned to Matruh that night, followed by the infantry early the next morning, 26th December. British losses had been thirteen killed and fifty-one wounded. The Senussi's force lost between 300 and 400 dead, and eighty prisoners were taken.

### **The action at Halazin.**

The 15th Sikhs were now involved in two minor operations as a result of aerial observation of enemy encampments. On the 28th December, a column marched out to Bir Gerawla, twelve miles southeast of Matruh, and on 12th January 1916 another column marched to Jebel Howeimil, thirty-five miles in a

similar direction and fifteen miles south of the coast at Baqqush. In both cases the camps were found to be deserted and were burned down. Livestock in the immediate vicinities was seized.

On 19th January an aeroplane located the main enemy camp at Halazin, twenty-two miles southwest of Matruh. Over 300 tents were observed, one of them belonging to the Senussi himself. General Wallace left Matruh at 04.00 hrs on 22nd January with an infantry and a mounted column. A South African battalion now joined the WFF. The right-hand infantry column was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Gordon and the left-hand mounted column by Brigadier Tyndale-Biscoe. The force bivouacked in bad weather at Bir Shola, just over halfway to Halazin. On the 23rd, Gordon's column advanced on a compass bearing directly towards the enemy whilst the mounted column echeloned to the left front of the infantry. Motor transport experienced extreme difficulty on the sodden ground, and the armoured cars returned to Matruh.

By 09.25 hrs the cavalry were in action against parties of the Senussi's men and Brigadier Biscoe requested the infantry to attack whilst the cavalry manoeuvred against the enemy's right flank. At 10.00 hrs the 15th Sikhs advanced with No. 1 Company leading, No. 2 Company 200 yards behind, and No. 3 and No. 4 Company 300 yards further to the rear. Each company echeloned its platoons to the left. Support was provided by the 2nd South African Infantry, the 1st New Zealand Rifles and the covering fire of four guns of the Notts Battery. The enemy displayed considerable skill in withdrawing to prepared defences and made good use of mountain guns and machine guns, causing attrition amongst the British troops. Seeing that his right flank was being aggressively turned by parties of the enemy, Gordon reinforced that flank, first with two companies of South Africans, then with a company of New Zealanders with machine guns, and finally by a company of Royal Scots.

Meanwhile, on the British force's left flank the cavalry was also outflanked and receiving effective enemy machine gun and artillery fire. Despite receiving reserves, the mounted troops were gradually driven in. Two companies of New Zealanders were sent to stabilize the left flank, which they did, and the remaining New Zealand company advanced on the left of the Sikhs. The shape of the British advance now resembled a horse shoe with the Sikhs in the centre of the curve. The British infantry did not flinch, despite the open ground it crossed and the punishment it took. By 14.45 hrs the Sikhs, New Zealanders and South Africans were through the enemy camp and into the entrenchments.

The enemy defenders broke and retreated into the desert, abandoning their position. The British cavalry mounts needed water and were not in a condition to pursue, so again the Senussi's men escaped. The British had lost one British officer and twenty men killed, ten British and three Indian officers and 278

other ranks wounded. The 15th Sikhs suffered eighteen men killed and two British and three Indian officers and 115 men wounded. The Senussi escaped, but he had lost around 200 men killed, including Turkish troops, and up to 500 wounded. Major-General Wallace camped two miles to the east. The non-walking or riding wounded had to be carried through the wet ground on stretchers. The British force took two days to complete its withdrawal to Matruh.

Jemadar Basant Singh, 15th Sikhs, received the Indian Order of Merit for gallantry at Halazin, the only I.O.M. granted for this action. In addition, eight other ranks of the 15th Sikhs were awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal. These awards were promulgated in G.O. 1531 of 14th September 1917.

### Conclusion.

The Senussi and his followers continued to present a security threat in the Western Desert for a further twelve months. But the participation of the 15th Sikhs in the campaign was over, as the regiment now received orders to proceed to India. The 15th Sikhs had borne the brunt of the fighting, and had



provided the backbone of a very untrained, inexperienced and understaffed Western Frontier Force. The regiment had acquitted itself with distinction, and for its services in this theatre it received the honour 'Egypt 1915-17.' As a result of the post-war reforms of the Indian Army, it became the 2nd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment.

### Sources

Russell McGuirk, *The Sanusi's Little War; The 15th Sikhs War Diary* (copy kindly provided by Russell McGuirk); Lieut.-General Sir George Macmunn & Captain Cyril Falls, *Official History of the War, Military Operations Egypt and Palestine, from the outbreak of war with*

*Germany to June 1917*; Field Marshall Lord Carver, *The National Army Museum Book of the Turkish Front 1914-18*; Peter Duckers, *Reward of Valor, The Indian Order of Merit 1914-1918*; Rana Chhina, *The Indian Distinguished Service Medal*.

**Piffers on Campaign**  
**The 4th Punjab Infantry, Punjab Frontier Force**

Sean Weir

In common with many photographs divorced from their original albums, the ‘campaign group’ on the opposite page has neither attribution nor description, simply a suggestion from a previous owner that it was located on the North West Frontier, a reasonable assumption in view of the Afghan *poshteens*. The challenge was to identify the unit.

The starting point was the unusual double-breasted full dress tunic worn by the officer standing second left. The pale tone is indicative of the drab worn by Punjab Frontier Force [PFF] regiments. An undress, darker version is worn by the senior officer seated in the middle of the group.

Initial attempts to identify the specific PFF regiment were inconclusive. Bill Carman’s book<sup>1</sup> was of no help, as it merely reflects the Dress Regulations of the time which called for all Punjab Infantry regiments without exception to wear hussar-style uniforms.<sup>2</sup> The National Army Museum has a photograph of PFF officers from several regiments, and one of the group can be seen wearing the double-breasted tunic – but without identification.

Fortunately, Peter Duckers’ book ‘On Service in India – the Mein Family Photographs 1870-1901’ came to the rescue. A Changla Gali Musketry Course participant is shown wearing the same type of tunic. He is named as ‘Lieutenant Prendergast (4th Punjabis)’ and dated 1889.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in this excellent book, an earlier photo from the Takht-i-Suleiman Expedition of 1883 includes a Captain Radford of the regiment, wearing the helmet with the distinctive *pagri*.<sup>4</sup> On closer inspection, it appeared that Captain Radford and the wearer of the tunic in the ‘campaign group’ could well be one and the same, a supposition given further weight when Peter Duckers was able to undertake a comparison with the original Mein album photograph.

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<sup>1</sup> W.Y. Carman, *Indian Army Uniforms under the British from the 18th Century to 1947, Artillery, Engineers and Infantry*, Morgan-Grampian, London 1969

<sup>2</sup> Bengal Army Dress Regulations, 1885; Army Regulations India, vol. vii, Dress, 1886; ditto 1891.

<sup>3</sup> P. Duckers, *On Service in India – the Mein Family Photographs 1870-1901*, Tempus Publishing, Stroud 2000. p.79

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57



Campaigns undertaken by the 4th Punjab Infantry at this time are described in two unit histories.<sup>5 & 6</sup> In addition to the Takht-i-Suleiman Expedition, these were: the Zhob Valley Expedition 1884; the Black Mountain Expedition 1888; the First Miranzai Expedition 1891

As Lieutenant Prendergast took part in the 1891 expedition but does not feature in the campaign photograph, a Black Mountain scenario seemed more likely. In 1888, the 4th Punjab Infantry was based at Dera Ghazee Khan. The earlier history records that, on 6th September, orders were received for the regiment to join the Hazara Field Force under Brigadier-General J.W. McQueen, C.B., A.D.C. On the 17th September, 750 rifles under Lieutenant-Colonel A.J.D. Hawes marched for Derband and joined the River Column under Brigadier-General W. Galbraith. The action that followed at Kotkai was summarized in General Galbraith's despatches:

On the 4th October large numbers of the enemy, with many standards, were discovered in position with their front line on the open ground between the hamlet of Towara and the river, their main body holding a rocky ridge, about a mile long, extending to the Kotkai village; whilst numerous skirmishers lined the ravines and ridges of the mountain on the right of our advance. At many commanding points, strong 'Sungahs' had been constructed, and similar defences on the opposite bank of the Indus were held by sharpshooters.

I ordered Colonel Cruikshank<sup>7</sup> to clear the flanks; this was well executed, the 34th Pioneers searching the belt of jungle between our left and the river, while the 4th Punjab Infantry, under Colonel Hawes, scaled the difficult height on the right and drove the enemy from every point of vantage, in a style which commanded universal admiration. In this operation Captain Radford was severely wounded, but continued to lead his men until ordered to desist. At this time, a body of fanatics made a desperate attempt to break our line, but were all shot down by the Royal Irish.

On the 10th a party of 800 men and two guns, under Colonel Hawes, crossed the river to reconnoitre, returning at dusk. The Rear-Guard, under Captain Gray, repelled a determined attack.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anon, *History of the 4th Regiment, Punjab Infantry*, Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1894

<sup>6</sup> Anon, *Regimental History of the 4th Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Wilde's)*, Butler & Tanner, London c.1931

<sup>7</sup> Colonel A.C.W. Cruikshank C.B., 34th Punjab (Sikh) Pioneers. See pp. 94-95 below for an article on the Crookshank [sic] family; also *Durbar*, Vol. 26, No.4, Winter 2009, p. 208 for details of Cruikshank's memorial in Abbottabad Old Christian Cemetery.

<sup>8</sup> *History of the 4th Regiment, Punjab Infantry*, p.53-54; reproducing 'Brig.-Gen. Galbraith's Official Despatches.'

While this description paints a vivid picture of serious conflict redolent of current news reports, the unit historian adds a distinctly ‘Boys’ Own’ flavour to the harsh reality of events:

This Expedition was a rough but pleasant one. The great heat of the valley during the day and the cold and occasional wet at night resulted in a good deal of fever; but there was no loss of life, and the many reconnaissances and road-making kept the men employed. Great good fellowship prevailed in the river column, and when the Regiment left Derband the whole camp turned out and cheered it lustily.<sup>9</sup>

The British officers who served in the field with the 4th Punjab Infantry during the expedition were:

Col. A.J.D. Hawes commanding	Lieut.-Colonel A. McC. Bruce
Capt. O.C. Radford	Capt. G.W.C. Bruce
Capt. W. du G. Gray	Lieut. A.R. Browning
Lieut. P.J. Miles	Lieut. G.M. Baldwin
Lieut. H.A. Cooper, 1st Sikhs	Lieut. F.D. Grant, 1st Pjb Infy
Surgeon-Major L.J. Pisani, Bengal Medical Service <sup>10</sup>	

Several officers and men were mentioned in despatches: <sup>11</sup>

Colonel Hawes - also received the Distinguished Service Order;  
 Captain Radford – also received a Brevet;  
 Captain Gray;  
 Subedar Umr and Havildar Khadi Khan;  
 Naick Mehtab Singh – also received the [Indian] Order of Merit. <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.54

<sup>10</sup> According to his entry in the April 1892 Indian Army List, he had been serving as a surgeon-captain since 1 Apr 1886. Surgeon-Major was presumably a temporary rank.

<sup>11</sup> *History of the 4th Regiment, Punjab Infantry*, p.54

<sup>12</sup> G.G.O. No.1039 of 21 Dec 1888, Naick Mahtab [sic] Singh, 4th Punjab Infantry, admitted to the Order of Merit 3rd Class ‘for conspicuous gallantry in having, on the 10th October 1888 near the Trans-Indus village of Garhi, successfully held, with the aid of a few comrades, a considerable body of the enemy in check (himself shooting their leaders) whilst the main body of his regiment retired on the Kotkai ferry to cross the Indus.’

In the words of the official gazette: ‘...the 4th Punjab Infantry, led by Colonel Hawes, scaled the difficult heights on the right and drove the enemy from every point of vantage in a style which commanded universal admiration.’ In this operation, Captain O.C. Radford was severely wounded in the chest, but continued to lead his men until ordered to desist. For his gallantry on this occasion Captain Radford was mentioned in despatches, and received a Brevet Majority.<sup>13</sup>

All the individuals in the photograph look to be from the regiment, apart from the figure seated left, probably the medical officer. An eclectic mix of campaign uniforms and accoutrements is worn, typical of the era: the practice of wearing a sash of *pagri* fabric behind the belt, the strapping over the puttees, the local pattern of sandals worn by three of the group and, finally, the personal choice of swords and the pistols casually tucked into belts.

The officer standing second from left, the supposed Captain Radford, is wearing two campaign ribbons which tallies with his field services in Jowaki 1877-78 (IGS 1854 with one clasp) and Afghanistan 1879 (Afghan 1878-80 without clasp).<sup>14</sup> If it is indeed him, then the photograph was presumably taken early in the campaign, prior to his injury.

The senior officer seated at the centre also has two medal ribbons. Both Colonel Hawes and Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce were entitled to two campaign medals for past service at Jowaki and in Afghanistan, the latter also qualifying for the Bhootan clasp.<sup>15</sup> On the basis of this evidence, the senior officer could be either of the two.

Bruce went on to become the British Agent in Gilgit, and Radford eventually commanded the regiment.

Given that there is a certain amount of conjecture in reaching the above conclusions, the author would welcome any correspondence that might shed further light on the photograph. Finally, thanks are due to Peter Duckers for his assistance.

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<sup>13</sup> *Regimental History of the 4th Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Wilde's)*, p.51

<sup>14</sup> Indian Army List, April 1892 edition.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

### Early Memorials in St Peter's Church, Gwalior

Several interesting photographs of early memorial plaques have been sent in by Captain Roddy Sale, following a visit to St Peter's Church in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. Three of them have a particular military significance.

#### Major Muirson Trower Blake

The whole of the Gwalior Contingent, also known as 'Scindia's Contingent,' mutinied in 1857, the first outbreak occurring during the night of



14th-15th June in the Morar cantonment at Gwalior. The bulk of the Contingent was quartered here, including elements of the 1st Cavalry, the 2nd and 4th Companies of Artillery, and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Regiments of Infantry.

In spite of increasing evidence in May 1857 that insurrection was spreading through Scindia's territories, the British officers of the Contingent decided to remain with their men, believing that a show of confidence and resolve would hold them together. This was a brave but ultimately tragic misjudgment, and the cynical observer might perceive here a significant lack of rapport between the British officers and their Indian officers and men, in spite of an association that in some cases had existed for many years. Major M.T. Blake, 54th Bengal Native Infantry, had been appointed to command the 2nd Infantry in January 1844, shortly after the Contingent had undergone a substantial reorganization. But his association with Gwalior stretched back even further than this. From September 1839 he had served as second-in-command of 'Sindhia's Reformed Contingent.' Little is known of Blake's final moments, although Colonel Malleeson recorded:

The officers, as in duty bound, galloped down to the lines in the vain endeavour to recall their men to order. They were met by a murderous volleys directed at them.<sup>1</sup>

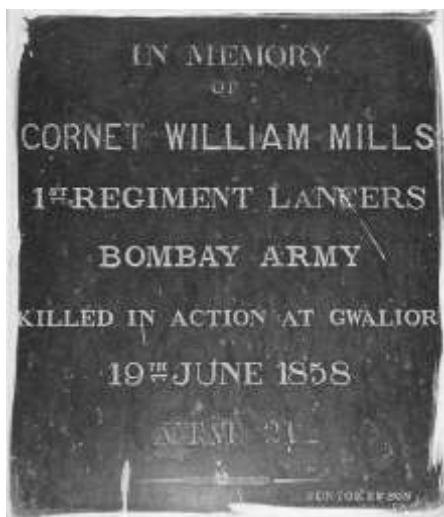
<sup>1</sup> Kaye's & Malleeson's *History of the Indian Mutiny*, Vol. III, pp.115-116

Six of the Contingent's British officers were killed. Happily, most of their women and children, protected by the worthy Maharaja Scindia, escaped with their lives, including Mrs Blake. The epitaph on the memorial marking Blake's grave in the Christian Cemetery at Gwalior confirms Malleson's record:

Sacred to the memory of Major Muirson Thrower Blake, Comdg 2nd Regt Gwalior Contingt, who was shot by the mutineers at Gwalior on entering the [lines of the] Regt on the night [of 14th] June 1857, in his [-] Year. His remains were interred here by some Sepoys of his Regt. This monument is raised by his afflicted Widow.<sup>2</sup>

### Cornet William Mills, 1st Bombay Lancers

The 1st Regiment of Bombay Light Cavalry (Lancers) was stationed at Nasirabad when the Indian Mutiny broke out. The majority of Bombay Army



units resisted the pull of rebellion as it spread westwards from Bengal, and the 1st Bombay Lancers was one of several Bombay regiments that received the honour 'Central India' in recognition of their loyal services during the campaign. The regiment was part of Brigadier Smith's Brigade of the Rajputana Field Force that in turn formed part of Sir Hugh Rose's field force at Gwalior. On 19th June 1858, after two days of operations to soften up the defences, Sir Hugh launched a general attack on the city. His first objective was to capture a large parade ground which lay

before a sprawling residential suburb known as the Lushker [New City] with its spacious houses half-hidden by trees. The second objective, occupation of the Lushker, was essential to the effective investment of Gwalior's formidable fortress.

<sup>2</sup> A photo of the memorial is reproduced on the website <[www.india-cemeteries.org](http://www.india-cemeteries.org)> which includes listings of memorials from a large number of cemeteries in Indian.

The 1st Lancers, under Lieutenant-Colonel Owen, the 1st squadron led by Lieutenant Heath, that in support by Captain Loch, issuing from the road, charged most gallantry, in sight of the British troops descending the slopes of the heights of Gwalior into the grand parade, and clearing all the right of it, pursued, carried away by their ardour, the enemy's infantry into the 'Lushker,' Captain Loch leading and Lieutenant Heath supporting this second charge; in which, I much regret to say, fell in the streets, shot through the heart, Lieutenant Mills of the 1st Lancers, bravely leading his men – a very promising and popular young officer. Captain Loch in the pursuit cut down the rebel who shot him.<sup>3</sup>

According to the 'Return of killed and wounded of the Central India Field Force during the operations before Gwalior,' the 1st Bombay Lancers incurred very few casualties. Cornet W. Mills was killed (musket ball through the spine); Captain W.W. Anderson, one naik and four troopers were wounded.<sup>4</sup>

### **Lieutenant Peter Gill, V.C., Royal Artillery**

Peter Gill was born in St Paul's Parish, Dublin, in September 1831.<sup>5</sup> He enlisted in the H.E.I.C. Army and, when the Mutiny broke out in May 1857, he was attached to the Seikh Regiment of Loodianah, in Benares. As Sergeant-Major, he was the senior of two British non-commissioned officers serving with the regiment.<sup>6</sup> He was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry at Benares on 4th June 1857, together with Sergeant-Major Matthew Rosamund of the 37th Bengal Native Infantry.

This non-commissioned officer conducted himself with gallantry at Benares, on the night of 4th June, 1857. He volunteered, with Serg.-Major Rosamond, of the 37th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, to bring in Captain Brown, Paymaster, and his family, from a detached bungalow to the barracks, and saved the life of the Quartermaster-Sergeant of the 25th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, in the early part of the evening, by cutting off the head of the Sepoy who had just bayoneted him. Sergeant-Major Gill states that on the same night he faced a guard of twenty-seven men, with only a Sergeant's sword, and it is also represented that he twice

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<sup>3</sup> G.W. Forrest, C.I.E., (Editor), *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers Preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India 1857-1858* (four volumes, Calcutta 1893-1912), vol. IV, Ch. 3, Gwalior Despatches, p.148; Sir Hugh Rose to Maj.-Gen. Sir William Mansfield, Poonah, 13 Oct 1858.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171

<sup>5</sup> These details are from Peter Gill's page on the <[www.en.wikipedia.com](http://www.en.wikipedia.com)> website.

<sup>6</sup> Regulations in force prior to 1861 called for two British NCOs, a sergeant-major and a staff-sergeant, to be attached to each native infantry regiment.

saved the life of Major Barrett, 27th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, when attacked by sepoys of his own regiment.<sup>7</sup>

A large proportion of the sepoys of the Sikh Regiment of Ludhiana, which in spite of its title was not an all-Sikh class regiment, joined the rebel cause. There was certainly a degree of sedition within the non-Sikh elements of the regiment, but a large part of the blame for allowing the mutiny to erupt at Benares has been attributed to the mishandling of the situation by Brigadier George Ponsonby, the station commander. He was in a poor state of health, and he proved to be physically and mentally incapable of coping with the crisis.

The Sikh Regiment of Ludhiana was able to put its unfortunate record at Benares behind it, and it was reconstructed in 1861 around the loyal remnant of



Sikhs and became a regular line regiment of infantry in the Bengal Army with the title 15th Bengal Native Infantry (and eventually the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs). However, well before this, Peter Gill had parted company with the regiment.

Presumably on account of his long and gallant service, on 16th April 1858 he was granted a commission in the H.E.I.C. Army as 'Ensign Unattached'

and posted as adjutant to the Moradabad Levy on the following 27th August. His services, recorded in *Ubique*, include both Sikh Wars for which he was entitled to the campaign medals. In the aftermath of the main Mutiny campaigning, he was present with the Moradabad Levy in the Transgogra region of Oudh from 3rd April 1859.<sup>8</sup> There was a great deal of hard marching

<sup>7</sup> *London Gazette*, 24th August 1858

<sup>8</sup> Capt. T.C. Anderson, *Ubique: War Services of all the Officers of HM's Bengal Army*, Calcutta 1863, pp.251-252

and some serious fighting along the Oudh-Nepal frontier before the process of pacification in this wild and remote region was completed.

Ensign Gill remained with the Moradabad Levy until at least June 1862, but in the July 1866 edition of the Indian Army List he is recorded as 'Lieutenant Unattached' (effective 22nd May 1863) and Quartermaster at the Chinsurah Depot.<sup>9</sup> This was an important posting as Chinsurah, about twelve miles from Calcutta, was the main depot of the Bengal Army. How he came to be at Gwalior two years later is not known, nor is the cause of his death, although cholera was a frequent visitor there. The gallant Lieutenant was laid to rest in the Artillery Lines Cemetery at Gwalior in an unmarked grave in October 1868. His association with the Royal Artillery, clearly inscribed on his memorial tablet, is another unanswered question.

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### **Employment of Elephants in Burma**

Brian Stevens

An article on the use of elephants in Burma during the Second World War appeared in the April 2002 edition of *Durbar* (Vol. 19, No. 1) entitled *An Ad Hoc Indian Elephant Battery in WW2* contributed by John Randle. I believe the subject was aired in one or two further issues until the Editor called a halt to the correspondence. However, since then I have come across an earlier employment of elephants in Burma for the carriage of guns, forming part of the establishment of an infantry battalion.

Prior to 1861 there existed in the Bengal Army a 'local infantry' corps designated the Arracan Battalion, headquartered at Akyab in Burma, which eventually attained a strength of ten companies, including from 1856 one dedicated to the service of six mountain train howitzers which were provided with elephant draft.

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<sup>9</sup> Various lists checked for details of Peter Gill include: *East India Register*, Jan 1859 to May 1860; *Indian Army & Civil Service List*, Jan 1861 to Jul 1866.

However, during the period from 1837 to 1845, guns had also formed an organic part of the Battalion. The earlier guns were four 3-pounders. They were served by one Jemadar, three Havildars, three Naiks and forty Sepoys found by the unit. The only artillery personnel attached to the guns were: one Subaltern, one Gun Sergeant and one Gun Corporal together with a Tindal<sup>1</sup> and eight Gun Lascars. A 'train' or 'forge establishment' of five Artificers and two Bildars<sup>2</sup> was provided.

An allowance for the repair of four sets of elephant harness would indicate that four of these animals were provided by the Commissariat. Each elephant usually required the services of a Mahout and a Coolie but there is no mention of these in either the General Orders or the Bengal Military Statements. As the Commissariat Department supplied the animals, it is likely that it also provided the necessary attendants.

G.G.O. No. 171 of 28th August 1837 states that the animals were for draft or carriage but does not elaborate. The carriage of a 3-pounder gun would present no difficulty for an adult elephant. However, no mention is made of any provision for the carriage of ammunition or the forge.

Regarding the officers who commanded the guns attached to the Arracan Battalion, only one artillery subaltern has been identified. G.O.C.C. of 27th September 1837 directed Lieutenant Richard Horsmonden Baldwin, 4th Company, 1st Battalion, Bengal [Foot] Artillery to proceed to the Arracan and assume command. He did not stay in post for long. He was granted furlough on sick certificate from the 8th November 1838 until 11th November 1841.<sup>3</sup> As this lasted for three years, the Arracan climate must have badly affected his health. In 1842 he was posted to the 1st Troop, 1st Brigade, Bengal Horse Artillery, then in 1845 he transferred to the 2nd Troop, 1st Brigade. He took part in the 1st Sikh War (medal with Moodkee reverse and clasps for Ferozeshuhur and Sobraon). He commanded the 1st Troop, 1st Brigade from 1846 until 1854. He served on the North-West Frontier against the Raanizais in 1854 (India General Service Medal with clasp 'Northwest Frontier'). He was promoted Brevet-Major in June 1849 and retired on 1st February 1857 with the Honorary Rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He died at The Albany<sup>4</sup> in London on 17th January 1871 aged fifty-eight. *The Times* of 20th January 1871 contained an obituary. It seems he retired just at the right time to avoid the Mutiny.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreman of lascars

<sup>2</sup> General labourers; literally 'spade wielders'

<sup>3</sup> Major V.C.P. Hodson, *List of Officers of the Bengal Army 1758-1834*, London 1927, vol. 1, p.83

<sup>4</sup> The Albany in Piccadilly was built in 1770-74 as a private mansion. In 1802 it was converted into bachelor apartments or 'sets' which were the most prestigious in London.

No definite information has been traced as to who was in effective command of the Arracan Artillery after Baldwin, although it is quite likely that, following his departure on sick furlough, no artillery officer was posted to the Arracan Battalion and that the artillery detail came under one of the infantry officers doing duty with the Battalion.

According to the Bengal Army List corrected to the 10th January 1843, Lieutenant John Arthur Howard Gorges, 57th Native Infantry, commanded the artillery detachment from the 6th October 1841. However he ceases to appear in the Arracan Battalion entry in the Army List for July 1844 onwards. As Hodson gives no details of any officer commissioned after 1834, his services are unknown. Having been advanced to Captain in September 1848, still with the 57th Native Infantry, he retired three years later.<sup>5</sup>

The Army List for October 1844 shows the artillery detachment as being commanded by Lieutenant William Frost Nuthall, 18th Native Infantry. As he had been with the Battalion since 1840, it seems likely that he took over from Lieutenant Gorges. Nuthall was appointed Adjutant of the Battalion on the 13th August 1845. The Army List for 25th July 1845 is the last one to show any officer as being in charge of the artillery, but it would be reasonable to speculate that, for the few remaining months that guns were attached to the battalion, Nuthall continued to be in command. He remained in Burma for many years and gained a qualification in the indigenous language. He served in the 2nd Burma War in 1852 during which he was wounded and mentioned in dispatches, awarded a Brevet-Majority, and received the India General Service Medal (with 'Pegu' clasp).<sup>6</sup> There is no evidence that he saw any further field service, although he continued on in Burma during 1853 and 1854 with the Pegu Light Infantry, and possibly remained there during the period of the Indian Mutiny as the Bengal Army List of January 1859 records that he was then with the 'Pegu Levy.' In the years after the Mutiny he commanded the 3rd Bengal Native Infantry, and eventually retired in February 1880 as a Lieutenant-General. He resided in London where he passed away on 10th December 1902 aged 84 year.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> East India Register: editions of Jan. 1851 and Jan 1852

<sup>6</sup> Captain T.C. Anderson (compiler), *Ubique, War Services of All Officers of HM's Bengal Army* [abbreviated title], Calcutta 1863; pp.446-447

<sup>7</sup> *London Gazette*, 13th January 1903, p.267

## A Scottish Military Family – the Crookshanks

Jeffrey R. Jacob

In the *Durbar* journals No. 3 and 4 of 2009 appeared an excellent article entitled ‘Five Early Military Graves (c.1853-1888) at the Old Christian (Anglican) Cemetery, Abbottabad, Pakistan’ by Omer Tarin and Sarkees Najmuddin, listing five British Army officers and their headstones, with biographical information. Furthermore, in the correspondence columns of the Winter 2009 issue there was mention of another stone, found by the authors, belonging to Colonel A.C.W. Crookshank, who died in 1888.<sup>1</sup> The following paragraphs provide some details of his family, his more immediate military ancestors and his descendants.

The Family of Cruickshank came originally from Aberdeen, where it had been settled since the 14th Century. It later had many branches, some spelling the name ‘Cruikshank’ and some ‘Crookshank’ – and the latter settled in both Scotland and Ireland.

One branch of the family produced a number of army officers. Colonel Chichester William Crookshank, K.H., (1783-1838) was commissioned in 1799 and served in the West Indies at the taking of the Danish Islands 1801, the Cape of Good Hope 1806, South America 1807 (he was wounded four times at Montevideo) and in the Peninsular War, including Roleia, Vimiera, Busaco, Fuentes d’Onor and Salamanca. He was once again wounded at Salamanca and received the Field Officer’s Gold Medal for this battle. He also served in the Walchern Expedition of 1809.

Colonel W.C. Crookshank’s son, Captain Blackman Chichester Graham Crookshank (1819-1860), served in H.M.’s 21st and 51st Regiments of Foot. He was forced to retire early due to injuries received in Van Dieman’s Land when, while in charge of a convict guard, the prisoners attempted to escape. It was his son, Colonel Arthur Chichester William Crookshank, C.B., whose headstone was discovered by Messrs Tarin and Najmuddin in the cemetery at Abbottabad.

Arthur Crookshank was born on the 26th January 1841 and was originally commissioned into H.M.’s 35th Foot in 1859, before transferring to the Bengal Staff Corps. For several years he was Assistant Military Secretary to the Government of India. He served in the Jowaki Expedition of 1877-78 and in Afghanistan in 1878-80. In 1887 he raised the 34th Punjab (Sikh) Pioneers and was its first Commanding Officer. He commanded the River Column in the Hazara Expedition in 1888, during which he was severely wounded on 5th

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<sup>1</sup> The actual spelling of the surname on the headstone at Abbottabad is ‘Cruikshank.’

October 1888, dying nineteen days later on the 24th October. Colonel A. C. W. Crookshank had five sons, all of whom served in the Military Forces of the Crown. Details are given below:

*Colonel Chichester de Windt Crookshank, R.E.*

Born 18th October 1868, died 23rd October 1958. 7th Laird of Drumhalry and Johnstounburn, D.L., J.P., M.P. Served in Miranzai Expedition 1891, Boer War 1900-02 (wounded, mentioned in despatches), Natal Rebellion 1906. Served in 5th Battalion, Royal Irish Regt. (Pioneers) 1914-15, commanded Birmingham Anti-Aircraft Defences 1916, B.E.F. 1917. Commanded R.E. in 54th (East Anglian) Division, T.F. 1920-24. Member, King's Bodyguard of the Hon. Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms 1920 and King's Bodyguard for Scotland (Royal Company of Archers) 1929. Unionist M.P. for Berwick and Haddington from 1924 to 1929, Conservative M.P. for Bootle from 1931 to 1935.

*Major-General Sir Sydney d'Aguilar Crookshank, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., M.V.O., K.G.St.J., R.E.*

Born 3rd June 1870, died 17th August 1941. Served in the Relief of Chitral 1895 and organised famine relief in India 1896-97. Superintendent of Works, Delhi Durbar 1911. Served throughout WW1 1914-19 and, inter al., was in command of R.E. in 47th London Division, Deputy Director of Light Railways, Director-General of Transportation, British Armies in France. Secretary of Government of India and Member of the Legislative Assembly 1920-23.

*Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Alexander Crookshank, R.E.*

Born 21st March 1875, still living in 1937. Served on the North-West Frontier 1897-98 and WW1 1914-19. Retired c.1920.<sup>2</sup>

*Captain Wilfred Plassy Crookshank, 1st K.G.O. Gurkha Rifles*

Born 21st May 1878. Commissioned 1899 in the East Surrey Regiment and later transferred to the Indian Army. Killed at Kut, Mesopotamia, 8th March 1916.

*Major Claude Kennedy Crookshank, 34th Sikh Pioneers*

Born 24th April 1880, still living in 1939. Served WW1 1914-19, retired 1919. In the 1930's was Bursar, St. Andrew's College, Grahamstown, Cape Province, South Africa.

Of the five sons listed above, only the first and last left any male descendants – several of whom also served in the Army, both British and Indian.

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<sup>2</sup> He was evidently involved with a major surveying project in Persia during 1899-1901, accompanied by *Khan Bahadur Sher Jang* (see following page 97).

***Khan Bahadur Sher Jang, Survey of India***  
**Recipient of the Macgregor Memorial Medal**

Brigadier J.A.F. Dalal, Indian Army

Born on 15th March 1870,<sup>1</sup> Sher Jang enlisted in Coke's Rifles in 1887. After taking part in the 1st and 2nd Miranzai Expeditions of 1890-91 and accompanying the Kurram column in 1892-93, he joined the Survey of India as a Soldier Surveyor in 1895. From 1895 to 1899 he served on the North West Frontier, taking part in the Waziristan Expedition of 1894-95, in the Tochi, Tirah and Mohmand Expeditions of 1897-98, and in Dir and Chitral in 1899 when he was granted the honorary title of *Khan Sahib* when he was less than 30 years of age. From 1899 to 1901 he served with Captain A.A. Crookshank in Persia, visiting Bandar Abbas, Kerman, Shiraz and Bushire and surveying an area of about 53,000 square miles. In 1901-02 he was attached to the Abyssinian Boundary Commission and was awarded the elevated title of *Khan Bahadur* on 1st January 1904, again at a very early age. In 1903-04 he accompanied the Tibet Mission, being mentioned in despatches, and in 1905-06 served under the Foreign Department in the Persian Gulf, visiting Bushire, Muhammareh, Basrah and the Masqat Frontier. He returned to South Persia in 1907-08 where he surveyed an area of some 25,000 square miles and travelled as far north as the Frontier via Herat. He was then employed on the Baluchistan-Afghanistan Frontier in 1909 and with the Afghan Mission in 1910, when he was awarded the Macgregor Memorial Medal. He served with the Abor Expedition in 1911-12, when he was again mentioned in despatches. In 1913-14 he was with the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission when he was awarded decorations by the Persian and Turkish Governments.

When the Great War started in 1914, the Khan Bahadur was engaged in survey work with the Commission in the neighbourhood of Urumieh. He brought the survey personnel back through Persia by way of Mianeh, Tehran, Qum, Isfahan and Shiraz, to Bushire. After a short period of service in India, Sher Jang returned to Persia and in 1916-17 was with the party surveying the road alignment between Bandar Abbas and Kerman.

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<sup>1</sup> Sher Jang was born at the tiny hamlet of Dhok Aziz, in Attock District of the Punjab. He was the eldest son of Aziz Khan, Jodhra Rajput, a small yeoman farmer of the above locality. The Jodhras were one of four tribes of the district which supplied and still supply a large number of soldiers to the army – the others being Awans, Khattars (Punjabi Muslims) and Sagri Khattaks (Pathan settlers) along the Indus.

In 1917-18, he served in Waziristan and on the Mahsud Frontier, and towards the end of 1918 proceeded again to Mesopotamia. Owing to his intimate knowledge of conditions in Persian Kurdistan, he was now employed under the political authorities on an important diplomatic mission.

At this time the tribes of Central Kurdistan were in appalling conditions of destitution as the result of the war, and their chieftains were seeking the protection of the British. In the north, Sayyid Taha, who was in position to control the tribes under British administration, had been invited to meet the political officer; but being influenced by Turkish propaganda, had so far remained aloof. Sher Jang received orders to go to Urumieh and to negotiate with Sayyid Taha. He left Rowanduz with four Indian khalasis [tent pitchers or followers] on the 9th March 1919, forced a way over the snow-bound Guru-i-Shaikh Pass on the Persian frontier, traversed the desolate Lahijan country and reached Urumieh after much hardship on the 20th March 1919. Sayyid Taha was six stages away at Chahari, and owing to the attitude of the Persian Governor, Sher Jang was unable to leave Urumieh. He wrote a letter to the Sayyid, persuading the latter to visit him in Urumieh, and they met five days later. All through the night of the 25th March the two men discussed the situation and at last, as dawn was breaking, Sher Jang won his case, prevailing upon Sayyid Taha to accompany him back to Baghdad. The success of this mission was largely responsible for maintaining tranquillity in the Rowanduz District during the subsequent rising of Shaikh Mahmud in Southern Kurdistan.

During this rebellion Sher Jang served as political officer in the Sulaimani area. In 1920-21 he was appointed representative of Iraq in the resettlement of the Iraq-Persian frontier, which had been disturbed by war conditions. This work of his was highly appreciated by the Right Honourable Mr. Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in his despatch dated 21st September 1921. He returned to Persia in 1923 with a detachment of the Survey of India which was then employed on surveying for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

The Khan Bahadur was promoted to the Upper Subordinate Service on the 1st August 1909. He retired on 15th June 1925 after more than thirty years of most distinguished service. He earned twelve medals and decorations with eight clasps; he was awarded honoraria for his services on several occasions; he also received an assignment of land revenue from the Government of India. In 1902 the Royal Geographical Society awarded

him a sword of honour (the Back Memorial) in recognition of his valuable contributions to geography. On 1st January 1916 he was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal (2nd class). During the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to India in 1922, Sher Jang was personally presented to the Prince, who showed a very keen interest in this survey officer's achievements.



Sher Jang's unfailing tact and courtesy endeared him to all with whom he came into contact; it was largely due to these qualities, together with his energy and resource in hazardous situations, that he was so successful

and his services so valuable, politically and professionally, in the turbulent countries where he spent so much of his life.

Another side of his character, which was only realised by those who knew him well, was his compassion for the weak. At the end of 1918 he was on sick leave when ‘the virulent epidemic of influenza’ was ravaging various homes in this country. Sher Jang devoted his three months leave to nursing the sick and burying the dead; and he wrote in a letter that he ‘regarded this duty greater than his active service.’<sup>2</sup>

Once in Urumieh in 1919, when he was in an unpleasant and difficult situation, he exercised all his personal influence and tact in urging the protection of the hapless Christian women and children, whose lives were threatened by fanatical Kurds at that time.

Sher Jang was outstanding by any standards, having joined the Survey of India in the late nineteenth century and leaving it in the 1920s, when outdoor work requiring both mental and physical fitness was predominant. That he succeeded in whatever task he was given, and received fitting rewards, was but right.

After he retired, the Department seems to have lost touch with him. As a result of a query to the Surveyor General of Pakistan in 1985, I received a reply: ‘We have no information about Khan Bahadur Sher Jang.’<sup>3</sup>

*Acknowledgements by the author:*

The Survey of India – general reports; personal papers [not elucidated]

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**Editor’s note**

This article was originally published in the Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CXVII, No. 487, January-March 1987, pp.78-80. It is reproduced here by kind permission of the USII. The additional information in footnotes has been provided by Omer Tarin.

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<sup>2</sup> He also remained a member of the Attock Veterans’ Board, c.1920s, which was an organization providing various relief and/or social services to ex-soldiers and their families in this major recruitment area.

<sup>3</sup> On retirement, *Khan Bahadur* Sher Jang went back to his native Attock area where he had received sizeable *jagirs* or land grants from the Governments of India and the Punjab, and he founded the settlement of Kamalpur Sher Jang there, where he lived out his life. The village continues to flourish and some of his descendants still live there.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*Colin Bell has written...* asking for information about this Indian Army badge. Ashok Nath has summarized it as a 'General Service badge, having no direct



association with any particular corps or regiment.' The cypher of George VI indicates it was current in the final decade of British rule between 1937 and 1947. In addition to military personnel, Ashok believes it might also have been worn by civilian employees of the Indian Army such as peons or clerks. It has a horizontal diameter of slightly less than 4 cm and is made of 'bronzed' brass, with two 'east-west' loops on the reverse for a split-pin. It is cast, not die-struck, and well finished.

It may have been manufactured in India to meet urgent war

service requirements. Can any readers confirm these observations? Answers directly to the Editor please.

*Dr. Kenneth Robbins...* is looking to purchase items relating to the Indian States including (but not limited to) flags, medals, badges, paintings, documents, maps, photographs, etc. This includes non-military subjects. He is also looking for information and items relating to any subject about 'Jews in India' and/or 'Jews of India' such as the military history of the Bene Israel. Any help would be appreciated. Please contact Dr. Robbins directly at: 11305 Rouen Drive, Potomac, MD 20854, U.S.A. (rajanawab@comcast.net).

*Mike Shaw...* has sent details of three campaign medals in his collection, in response to Tim Ash's article on the Kyber Rifles (*Durbar*, Vol. 27, No.1, Spring 2010): They are: *1181 Sepoy Mirza Khan, Khyber Rifles* – India General Service 1895 with two clasps 'Punjab Frontier 1897-98' and 'Waziristan 1901-02'; *1077 Sepoy Sohbat Shah, Khyber Rifles* – India General Service 1908 with one clasp 'Northwest Frontier 1908'; *1087 Havr Mohd. Shah Khan, Khyber Rif* – British War Medal.

*Omer Tarin and Sarkees Najmuddin write from Pakistan...* ‘We are grateful to Sushil Talwar and Rana Chhina for supplying the additional information and portrait of Havildar Dhirta Singh in the Spring 2010 issue of *Durbar*. We also appreciate the interest Lt.-Colonel Poulson has shown in the Abbottabad article, as well as his photograph of the plaque in St. Luke’s Church which is certainly well known to us. We would like to reiterate that the OCC Abbottabad and St Luke’s are fascinating places for military historians, with a wealth of historical campaign associations. We hope that in time, as things improve here, we might be able to welcome more members of the IHMS, to share and discover the many aspects of colonial military history of these parts.

‘Tim Ash’s article, also in the last edition of *Durbar*, presented an interesting and thoughtful perspective on the Khyber Rifles, with frequent recourse to Colonel Warburton’s posthumously published memoirs. His mention of Sepoy Yarzada Khan (properly) makes one think that his IGS medal might have been awarded for defending one of the loyal *chowkis* (posts) of the KR during the 1897-98 Frontier rising. The defence of Landi Kotal *chowki*, under the redoubtable Subedar Mursil Khan, is well known, but there were other scattered outposts which also held out in the teeth of the Afridi *Lashkars*. It might even have been for service during the Tirah expedition. Warburton makes some rather poignant comments about the service of some of the KR who went along with the expedition, into the very heartland of Afridi country, at big personal cost, in many ways. For anyone interested in reading more about the Frontier Scouts and the Khyber Rifles, some useful sources are Charles Chenevix Trench’s *The Frontier Scouts* (Oxford 1986), Col. H.R.C. Pettigrew’s *Frontier Scouts* (published privately, n.d.), and Jules Stewart’s *The Khyber Rifles, From British Raj to Al Qaeda* (Sutton Publishing, 2005).’

*Keith Steward, a recently joined member...* has undertaken what he describes as an ambitious attempt to index *Solah Punjab, The History of the 16th Punjab Regiment* (Lawford and Catto, Aldershot 1967). As many decorated and brave soldiers had been omitted from the text, he has decided to go further by compiling a census of all who were decorated, gave their lives or were wounded in action, and any member of the 16th and its five constituent battalion who have been noted. Any member with photographic images of the regiment or medals is asked if they would make these images available in order to enrich what otherwise may be a rather bland 220 pages of tabulation. Data will include number, rank, name, post-nominals and battalion. Appendices will include a number of pages from Indian Army Lists and copies of original WW2 recommendations for awards. Please reply directly to Keith at: 100 Doulton Place, Macmillan Way, London SW17 6AT (kjhsteward@aol.com).