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THE ADDIS ABABA MEDAL

Though an unofficial award, the special commemorative medal presented to Indian troops for their services at Addis Ababa in May 1936 represents a medal which was hard earned by the recipients. Before going on to outline the events for which the medal was awarded, there follows a description of the medal, an example of which is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

- Obverse - Plain except for inscription. Around the circumference is the legend: "Presented to the British Legation Guard", showing the year of award "1936". The central inscription continues: "...By the British Communities at Addis Ababa to commemorate services rendered 2nd to 6th May."
- Reverse - Several inscriptions in Indian characters, most probably Punjabi or Urdu, and including "No", short for number, followed by the recipient's regimental number, rank and name.
- Suspension - Small mount through which passes a loose silver ring, 10mm across.
- Diameter - 53mm
- Naming - Engraved bold block capitals on reverse.
- Composition - Silver

In August 1935, the British Minister in Ethiopia, Sir Sidney Barton, requested a detachment of Indian infantry to strengthen the guard at the British Legation in Addis Ababa. The request was prompted by the steadily worsening relations between Italy and Ethiopia, with an Italian invasion of Ethiopia anticipated before the close of 1935.

As the British Minister's cavalry escort of Sikh Daffadar and eight Sikh Sowars from the 8th Light Cavalry had gained the respect and admiration of the communities in Addis Ababa, it was recommended that the Indian troops despatched should also be Sikhs. The troops selected were 130 men of the Sikh company of 5/14th Punjab Regiment, then on garrison duty in Aden. The Sikh detachment under the command of Major W.F. Charter, MC, arrived at Addis Ababa on the 7th September, 1935; Italy's Colonial Brigades invaded Ethiopia on the 5th October.

The Indian troops sent to Addis Ababa in 1935 were not the first Jawans to serve in Ethiopia. In 1868, a large Indian contingent, drawn mostly from the regiments of the Bombay Army, formed part of Sir Robert Napier's expeditionary force in Abyssinia. For their services, the troops later received the Abyssinian campaign medal. Nor was it unusual to find Indian troops providing the Legation guard at British diplomatic missions, particularly in the Middle East, an area largely considered the responsibility of the Government in India.

Moreover, Legation guard duties were not always peaceful. At Kabul, on the 3rd September, 1879, the Ambassador's escort of Guides fought to the death in the heroic defence of the British Embassy. Of the 76 men from the Corps of Guides who left India under the command of Lt. W. Hamilton VC, in June 1879, only three returned alive. In 1909, the British Consulate in Shiraz was attacked by mutinous Persian troops. A detachment of 79th Carnatic

Infantry guarding the Consulate repulsed the Persians at bayonet point; an action which subsequently earned four men of the 79th C.I. the IDSM.

On their arrival at Addis Ababa, the Sikh Soldiers were detailed to construct fortified positions around the British Legation. At the same time, contingency plans were made to protect the lives and property of British subjects in the capital in the event of bombardment or air attack. Little was overlooked in the preparations for defence. Of particular note was the provision of over 2,000 gas masks which were being held in reserve. Though they used it with impunity elsewhere, the Italians were cautious enough not to drop poison gas on Addis Ababa.

Italy invaded in October 1935, but it was not until after the failure of the Franco-British "Hoare-Laval Peace Plan" in January, 1936 that the offensive got well under way. Despite their valiant efforts, there was little the Ethiopian troops could do to forestall the advance of the mechanised, modern Italian forces. By April, it was evident that Emperor Haile Selassie would have to flee from his country, and that Addis Ababa would soon fall to the Italians. Fearful of the state of anarchy that was expected to ravage the city, the foreign residents started to flock to the safety of their respective Legations on the 19th-20th of April.

Within the British Legation grounds, the Sikh soldiers helped in the construction of accommodation, latrines, cooking facilities, and water supplies to cater for one to three thousand refugees of all nationalities, should the need arise. Few of the city's 1000+ British-protected community were British nationals, most being Indian and Arab traders with their families.

Before leaving his city on the morning of the 2nd of May, Emperor Haile Selassie left orders that the contents of his palace and government stores were to be made available to the people. As a result of that edict, pandemonium broke out only hours after the Emperor's departure as thousands of looters took to the streets. The worse for drink and well-armed with guns and ammunition, the mobs seized the opportunity to settle old scores and amass more booty. Municipal police and soldiers were well to the fore of the miscreants. By the afternoon of May 2nd, the city centre had been gutted by fire and elsewhere fires blazed unchecked. For four days the mobs roamed the city.

Between the 2nd and 6th of May, Major Charter and his Sikhs were to perform sterling service for both the British and International communities. Armed motor patrols carried ammunition and supplies to various Indian and Arab traders who refused to abandon their properties, electing to defend their concerns; refugees were collected and transported to the British Legation; contact was maintained with the other Legations, and rifles and ammunition were supplied to the American, German and Japanese Legations. A detachment fought off an attack on the Belgian Legation, and a constant vigil was mounted at the British Legation. The period of tension in the city eased on the night of May 5th and ended on May 6th, when Italian troops entered Addis Ababa.

By the end of the troubles, the British Legation had more than 1,700 refugees in its care, including the nationals of more than 20 other nations. The Indian troops suffered no fatalities, having only one Sepoy wounded. Apart from occasional sniping and stray bullets, the British Legation was never attacked.

For their services, the Indian troops of the Legation guard were presented with silver commemorative medals by a grateful British community. The only other mention I have found concerning this medal is contained in L.L. Gordon's *British Battles and Medals*, however the details given are not particularly accurate. It is not known whether medals were presented to officers, Native or British. If they were, then regimental numbers would not appear on their medals. Gordon implies that the medals were issued unnumbered. This is an error, judging by the example in my own collection and from one other medal that I have inspected. Apart from the 130 Sikhs of the 5th/14th Punjab Regt., there is every reason to believe that the nine men of the 8th Light Cavalry also received medals. In addition to the aforementioned, a Captain Palmer of the IMS, Jemadar Harbans Singh, and Nursing Orderlies Bishan Singh and Karim Singh of the Indian Hospital Corps, who were present in Addis Ababa, should also have received medals.

At the House of Commons in London, both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary paid tribute to the good work performed by Major Charter's Sikhs. At the diplomatic level, the Belgian government was particularly generous in its thanks to the Indian troops. Several honours were later bestowed upon those who had performed well at Addis Ababa. Sir Sidney Barton was created a GBE in 1936, adding to the KCVO and CMG he had received in 1913. Major W.F. Charter, 5/14th Punjab Regt., was awarded a Brevet promotion to Lt.Col., Lieut. C.W. Person, 1/12th F.F. Regt., attached to the 5th/14th Punjab Regt., later received the Military Cross, (London Gazette, 10.11.1936). In the history of the 5th/14th Punjab Regt., the author states:

“The award was made on account of Lt. Pearson's command of the small force detached from the British Legation guard to relieve and occupy the Belgian Legation, which was besieged and heavily attacked on the night of May 4-5th, 1936.”

Gallantry awards may have been made to the Indian troops, however this is only speculative. It seems probable that Subadar Balwant Singh, 5/14th Punjab Regt., who was awarded the IOM, 2nd Class (ADN 797 28.11.1936) for services performed on 1.5.1936, did in fact receive his decoration for gallantry performed at Addis Ababa. As the unit history of the 5th/14th Punjab Regt. was printed in late 1936, it is likely that any awards issued late in that year would have been published too late for inclusion in the regimental history.

It is doubtful whether more than 150 Addis Ababa medals were ever presented, thus the medal can be classified as "rare". The services performed by the Indian troops, and the events which the medal commemorates, coupled with its rarity, makes the Addis Ababa medal quite a desirable item.

M. Sellar

Sources:

- *Who Was Who*, Vol. IV, 1941-1950
- *India's Army*, D. Jackson, 1940.
- *History of the 5th Battalion (Pathans), 14th Punjab Regiment*, L.R.S. Waters, London, 1936.
- *Madras Infantry 1748-1943*, E.G. Pythian-Adams, Madras, 1943.



SILVER QSAs to INDIAN TROOPS - "SURVIVAL" vs "RARITY"

This topic has been explored several times over the last two years, both in *Durbar* (2 # 2, 1985) and the *OMRS Journal* (Summer 1984; Spring 1985; Winter 1985). I do not propose, therefore, to rehash the question of how many were or might have been issued.¹ Rather, I have compiled a list of examples which are in some way noteworthy (e.g.: multi-bar) or are known to exist. I claim no credit for this research, though some of these existing examples have not been published in a roll before, being the results of my own correspondence with various collectors.

Given the number of duplications I have received in replies to my queries, I think it safe to suppose that the sample listed below constitutes a sizeable percentage of the surviving medals to be found outside India. Whether that makes them "rare" or not I leave to others, though it is worthy of note that, after a period in which almost none were on the market, I have recorded six on dealers' lists in the past twelve months.

Named medals, with a very few exceptions, are those known to have survived, either in various collections or from having appeared in dealers' lists and auction catalogues during the last decade. I have been told of many unnamed samples, which may or may not be duplicates of the named specimens, listed here though for purposes of this list I have treated them as

¹ Numbers issued, according to various sources:

- -medal roll WO 100/296,97,98 - 2,626 silver; 9,083 bronze
- -185 w. bars other than NATAL/CC/OFS/TR/01 or 02 - 27 to Cavy; 5 to Infy (rest to transport, medical, etc.)
- -72 British Officers received QSA;
- -535 volunteers in Lumsden's Horse and Ceylon M.I. qualify for QSA

such. Numbers after a unit title refer to the number of that bar combination found on the rolls (these data from Patrick Street's article in the Winter '85 OMRS).

CAVALRY

1st Bengal Lcra	2	PR/CC
2nd Bengal Lcra	1	PR/CC
3rd Bengal Lcra	-	Sowar Gopal Singh - n.b.
	2	PR/CC/TR
	1	n.b. **
4th Bengal Lcra	1	PR/CC/TR
	1	PR/CC
5th Bengal Cavy	1	PR/CC/TR
6th Bengal Cavy	1	PR/DR/JH/DH/CC
7th Bengal Lcra	1	OFS/TR/TH/RL/LN
8th Bengal Lcra	1	BELFAST/OFS/LN1
	-	Sowar Ata Mah'd Khan - 02
9th Bengal Lcra		2187 Sowar Sant Singh - n.b.
		2169 Sowar Khusti Ram - n.b.
		Sowar Khadim Ali – 02
		Sowar Karun Khan, n.b.
	2	PR/DR/JH/DF/CC
	-	orderly to Lord Roberts - 6 bar
11th Bengal Lcra		2694 Sowar Narayan Singh - n.b.
		Sowar Sawan Singh – 02
		Sowar K. Khan - OFS/TR/02
12th Bengal Cavy	-	2036 Sowar Shujawal Khan - TR/OFS
14th Bengal Lcra	1	PR/DR/JH/DH/CC
15th Bengal Lcra	1	CC/OFS/TR/LN
16th Bengal Lcra	1	British officer - CC/PR/DR
16th Bengal Lcra	1	PR/DR/JH/DH/CC
17th Bengal Lcra	1	TR/DL

18th Bengal Lcrs.		1706 Sowar Dost Moh'd Khan, IOM - PR/DR/JH/DH/WT/CC ²	
		Lt. F.A. Maxwell, VC, DSO - as above? ³	
		1693 Swr Sultan Moh'd Khan - CC/OFS/TR/02	
		Swr Fateh Sher Khan - CC/OFS/TR/02	
		1736 Sowar Sunder Singh - CC/02	
		Sowar Jant Singh – 02	
		1 - CC/OFS/TR/02	
5th Punjab Cavy	-	Sowar Hazara Singh - n.b	
1st Madras Lcrs.	1	CC/OFS/TR	**
		British Officer - RK/PR/DR/JH/DH	**
		(Spec. Serv. Off., att- Transport Dept.)	
2nd Madras Cavy	-	1-3 bars (w.2 bar KSA)	
3rd Madras Cavy	-	Pte. Sarfroz Khan - CC	**
		2 - PR/DR/JH/DH/CC	
2nd Cavy H. Cont.	1	n.b.	
4th Cavy, H. Contd.	1	??	
1st Bombay Lcrs.	-	Lt. A.F.6. Williams - WEPENER/WITT/CC	
		Sowar Farr. Shaick Moh'd - CC	
2nd Bombay Cavy.	-	2264 Sowar Kirpa Singh - OFS/TR/02	
3rd Bombay Cavy.	1	/PR/DR/JH/DH/CC	
4th Bombay Cavy.	-	2100 Sowar Shere Baz -Khan - OFS/TR/02	
	1	OFS/TR/	
6th Bombay Cavy.	-	Sowar Hajee Khan	
7th Bombay Lcrs.	-	Naik Sher Dil Khan - CC/OFS/TR (w. 2 bar KSA)	
	1	TR/NATAL (w. 2 bar KSA) **	
1 C.I.H.	1	OFS/TR/02 **	
2 C.I.H.	1	CC/OFS/TR/02 (w. KSA)	
		Sowar Jeewan Singh - TR	

² Issued as described; may not still survive

³ Issued as described; may not still survive

Fardikote Lcrs. 64 Dafdr Kehr Singh - CC/OFS/TR (w, 2 bar KSA)
 Jhind Lcrs 5 Dffdr Mota Singh - CC/OFS/TR
 Jodhpur Lcrs. 4 PR/CC/TR
 2 PR/CC
 Karpurthala Lcrs. 202 Sowar Balwant Singh - CC/OFS/TR
 Patiala Lcrs. 885 Sowar Naurang Singh - CC/OFS/7 R/01 /02

INFANTRY & SERVICES

2nd Gurkha Rif. - Capt. H.T. Fulton, DSO - CC/OFS/RHODESIA (att. 4 N.Z. Roughriders) (2)
 2/3 Gurkha Rif. - Major W. C. French - 3 bars 23rd Pioneers - I - TR./DL
 23rd Pioneers 1 TR./DL
 18th Bengal - Major R.M. Edwards (att. S.A. Const.)²
 Infty.
 40th Bengal - 3 - TR/DL
 Infty. - 1 - DL
 14th Bombay - Lt. F. Owen-Lewis - BELMONT/CC²
 Infty.
 I.S.C. - Capt. W.A. Light - 6 bars
 - Capt. G. Warneford - TR & 2nd medal, same off. - CC/OFS/TR
 - Major W.C.C. Leslie - CC/02
 IS.M.D. - HOSP Asst Bansi Dhar - CC
 Army Hospt. Cps - 1st CI Ward Sv't Sunni - 7 bars, incl. BELMONT/MODDER
 Supply & Trans. - Bhistie Lal Khan - n.b.
 - Vet. Asst. Neaz Ali Khan - CC
 - 3960 Cook Lal Beharie - n.b.

** Known to exist still, though names not given

P. Monahan

"KINKI" IDENTIFIED

The photo of "Kinki, Baroda, 1914" has been convincingly identified by several people as an officer of the 104th Wellesley's Rifles (later 1st Rajputana Rifles). This seems logical, as the regiment was the only unit of the Indian Army stationed in Baroda in 1914, and there is personal corroboration from one of our Honorary Members.

Major General C.N. Das, who served in and eventually commanded a battalion of the RajRifs, writes that he too had a photograph taken in the full dress of the Rajputana Rifles. Though it was not officially in use then - 1935 - he wore it for a photo taken before he attended a levee, and suggests that the officer in question may have had this picture taken before embarking on active service, which the Rifles did in late 1914.

The particulars of the uniform are as follows:

- helmet White Wolseley, green pagri, black spikes, white metal badge, brown chain chin strap.
- cross belt black seal skin, Maltese cross and wreath, chain and whistle
- jacket braid frogging on chest and sleeves similar to mess dress
- equipment cap lines for mounted officers, Rifles pattern sword w. slings, wrist strap undone for mounted wear, black gloves, horse's halter rope black with black or red whisk under the neck.

R.G. Harris suggests that the officer may be a Major H.G.H. Grant Smith, whom General Das confirms was serving with the regiment at that time. The 1st Rajputana Rifles is now the 3rd Battalion of The Brigade of Guards, Indian Army.

P. Monahan (My thanks to Maj Gen. C.N. Das, R.G. Harris and Lt-Col. A.A. Mains for their help.)



BOOK REVIEWS

● *INDIAN CAVALRY OFFICER 1914-15*. Captain Roly Grimshaw, ed. by Col. J.Wakefield & Lt.Col. J.M. Wieppert.

The book is the diary of a squadron commander of the Poona Horse during that regiment's time in France. It includes sketches of the doings of a fictional Sikh Daffadar, in the field and in hospital in England. It also includes a section titled "A Day at an Indian Cavalry War Depot". It concentrates on the strategic importance of the reinforcements to the BEF provided by the three Indian divisions in France in 1914 and the unusually grim conditions faced by the Indians. The book may be of interest to students of the early campaigns of WW1 and the reactions of Indian troops to a totally new form of warfare.

● *DISASTROUS TWILIGHT. A PERSONAL RECORD OF THE PARTITION OF INDIA.*
Major General Shahid Hamid.

The author was Private Secretary to General Sir Claude Auchinleck, C-in-C. India in 1946-47. It is his diary for that period, prefaced by a series of "Essays" which provide background to the record of events.

The diary throws light on the role of various British officers in the events leading to Partition, but is weakened by the author's apparent bias toward the Muslim interest in India. It is also less than completely accurate in some of its facts and therefore, while interesting, is not necessarily good history.

(The details given here are gleaned from information provided by Lt-Col Mains in reviews written by him for the British Council. Our thanks for the contribution.

Members might also be interested to know that Colonel Mains' article "**Organization of Indian Infantry 1903-39**" will appear in the current issue of the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Society.

PEM



IDENTIFICATIONS

Some Answers

After the last issue the editors admit to having had some misgivings about the possibly demoralizing effects of asking great numbers of possibly unanswerable questions. We stand rebuked: many knowledgeable members have written in to identify and comment on the badges described and illustrated therein.

The comments below are often amalgams of several members' comments and initials used indicate only those directly quoted. We sincerely thank all those who responded. Errors of interpretation are ours.

Numbers mentioned refer to the illustrations in Volume 3, No.3.

2ND BN. DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT



The regimental museum says that "the whole design is the 'badge' of the second battalion" (for stationery and so on) and suggests that it may have been a pagri badge for mess servants in India. It is less likely, they say, that it is the unofficial badge adopted for mess dress by

officers of the old 76th Foot. Other members suggest a "valise" or music case badge for the 2nd Bn. band. (Thornton)

CHOTI KHAS LANCERS - NAWANAGAR STATE CAVALRY



Photo ANM

- hence the inter-twined initials. Raised in 1881 with a strength of 152. Served as garrison troops in Karachi in WW I, though a detachment of signallers formed part of the "Kathiawar I.S. Signal Troop" - with men from Junagadh and Bhavnagar - and served in the 15th Bengal Cavalry Brigade. (This small group, not the unit as a whole, served in Egypt and Palestine) In 1919 seconded to the Alwar I.S. Lancers and saw service in Afghanistan. 1920 renamed **Shri Huzur Body Guard**; doubled in size. 1940 **Nawanagar State Bodyguard** 1945 - 1 sq. again. (Tony McClenaghan).

Web site note: This identification has since been withdrawn. The information about the Kathiawar Signal Troop is correct but the Choti Khas Paga belonged to Baroda State, not Nawanagar, and played no part in the First World War – see *Durbar*, Vol. 13, No.4 and *The Maharajas' Paltans*. Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan. Delhi, USII and Manohar, 2013, pp. 105-106

FIRST BRAHMANS



Photo RCW

The unit, originally 30th Bengal N.I., was raised from high caste Brahmins from the state of Oudh, hence the fish (badge of that state). Did not mutiny in 1857 and so became "1st" in the Bengal line (AAM)

FIG. 4



Fist clutching a bunch of lightning bolts - "Definitely the old pagri badge of the Indian Army Ordnance Corps" (H.L. King, to A.A.M.)

Photo RCW

FIG.8



The fishes of Oudh with the Indian state emblem (lions on Ashoka). Script in inscription isn't either Hindi or Sanskrit. Spurious?

FIG.13



Embroidered blue "S.R.P." on khaki - almost definitely **Special Reserve Police** (AAM).

FIG.14



Initials "C.R.P.", as above - definitely **Crown Representatives Police** - armed police under the government of India, to assist small native states in Rajasthan and Central India with serious civil strife. Became **Central Reserve Police** at independence. (AAM)

MORE OF THE SAME

Regarding W.M. Thornton's badges in the first issue of this year (Volume 3, No.1):

The centre one is the crest of the Indian Navy ship "Kukri", which was sunk in the second Indo-Pakistani War. (AAM)

The right-hand one is that of the **Kumaon Rifles**. A rifle unit, grouped with the Hyderabad Regiment for training recruits as 10/19 Hyderabad Regiment, subsequently re-named **Kumaon Regiment**. Kukris of the Kumaonis with the badge of the Kumaon Regiment. (AAM)

Orissa State Chowkidars are the Gurkha watchmen of the state-owned transport company. (AAM)

M.C. Johnson's badge, in the same issue has been tentatively identified as that of the Nepalese Police.

Entries marked "AAM" represent the combined efforts of Lt-Col. A.A. Mains and General M. Palit, I.A., ret'd.

PEM

MILESTONES

An Honorary Member of the IMCS, Lieutenant General Sir John Chapple, KCB, has been named Colonel of the Regiment of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles). We would like to offer our congratulations on this honour.

Lt. Col. A.A. Mains has become an official reviewer for the British Council's "British Book News". Look there for his comments on new military publications.

General K.M. Cariappa, the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army after Independence, has been granted the rank of Field Marshal. He was commissioned in July 1920 into the 1/7th Rajputs and became commander of the newly independent I.A. in 1949. He is the second Indian general to be made Field Marshal, the other being Gen. S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, promoted for his part in the 1971 war with Pakistan.

(Thanks to M. Sellar and R.G. Harris. Ed.)

BANDOBAST

In this issue I will return to my normal area of operations: medals. More specifically, I would like to deal with that little known and neglected group, the Indian Army Reserve of Officers (I.A.R.O.).

I'm sure many collectors' hearts fall when they read "appointed to the I.A.R.O." on their research sheets. It often means blind alleys, meagre information, "second rate" service on lines of communication, Labour Corps or Service Corps and a military career which stops abruptly in 1921 or earlier. But it isn't always so, and some of the alleys are not as blind as they may seem.

According to Heathcote's *The Indian Army*, the I.A.R.O. had forty officers in 1914. At the same time about ten per cent of the officers of the Indian Army were on leave in Britain and were seconded to the British Army on the outbreak of war. This led to a great expansion in the I.A.R.O. The new members came from three different sources.

The first and most useful was the Indian Volunteer Force (re-named the Indian Defence Force in 1917). Its members were usually fluent in at least one Indian language, and had some military training, so that they could fit in quickly, without much further training. I imagine that the bulk of this group was posted to combatant units (health permitting) or to the Staff.

The second group were those Europeans resident in India who did not have military training but had language qualifications and, in many cases, were used to "man management" in their civilian jobs. With the great expansion of the Supply and Transport Corps, and the raising of the Labour Corps, there was a real need for officers who could run a supply unit or labour gang. Most junior officers in the I.A. Service Corps were I.A.R.O. members. In postings such as these, a lack of military training was no great handicap. This second group was obviously much larger than the first; a disparity not helped by the heavy casualties among officers of

combat units. While it might have been possible to train some of the second group up to the requisite level, it was not practical, as they were doing useful work in their own units and many of them were not physically suited for combat. It is here that the third group, commissions from the British Army, came into their own.

In selecting applicants from the British Army for I.A. service, great stress was laid on finding men with some Indian connection - many had been born in India while their fathers were serving or working there. Since most children were sent home for schooling, and their fathers retired to England, there was in Britain a body of men who might have some knowledge of Urdu or Hindi, however rusty from disuse. Most were currently serving in the British Army and also had combat experience. Any deficiencies in their linguistic skills could be overcome by cramming.

This third group produced some of the more interesting medal groups and records of service (I wrote up the story of one of this "third group", Lt-Col. H.J. Hawthorn, in the 1984 Journal). Their previous British service will usually only show from their application papers (if available) or from the particulars in the register of the I.A.R.O. officers. Some of them had been decorated and the 1919 Indian Army List shows I.A.R.O. officers with the D.C.M. and M.M.

When the war ended, the I.A.R.O. officers were released, but the troubles on the Frontier and in Iraq and Persia held up the process and there are many groups to these officers which include either an IGS 1908 or a GSM 1918. The former medal will give the officer's unit, of course. Most of the first and second groups mentioned would have returned to civilian life; the former were not professional soldiers and the latter were in it for the duration. Both had their work to go back to. But despite the rundown of the Indian Army, a good number of I.A.R.O. officers seem to have gained permanent commissions in the Indian Army, judging by the 1930 Indian Army List. Some resigned after a few years, but others served on and their groups can be quite spectacular, especially if they saw Second War service. (It is only these regularly commissioned officers whose war services appear in the I.A. Lists.)

Researching an I.A.R.O. group is not always easy, but it can produce nice results. Perhaps it's time to take the "but" out of "But he's I.A.R.O."

M.C. Johnson



INDIAN SOLDIERS SERVING IN BRITISH UNITS

It is not generally realised that, in the nineteen thirties, there were a considerable number of combatant Indian soldiers serving, not in the Indian Army, but in British units, and wearing the badges of those units. They were found in Royal Artillery batteries and in British Infantry battalions and numbered about 3,500 men.

After the Great Mutiny, it was decided that Indian soldiers would no longer be trusted with Artillery pieces and Royal Artillery would, in future, provide artillery for the Indian Army. It was also decided that the Mountain (pack) Batteries of the Punjab Frontier Force, who had remained loyal, should be retained. To get over the prohibition of Indian gunners, these batteries were made part of the Royal Artillery, until 1939 when they were transferred to the

Royal Indian Artillery. All other Royal Artillery units serving in India had British ranks only as gun numbers and drivers of the guns themselves. All ammunition limbers and other first line transports were driven by Indian soldiers, wearing the badges of the Royal Artillery.

The Mountain Batteries were grouped into Mountain Brigades, comprising one (British) light Battery and three (Indian) Mountain Batteries. The Light Battery had British gun numbers and gun mule leaders, the remaining mules being led by Indian soldiers. Indian soldiers for Horse, Field, Medium, and Heavy batteries were trained at the Royal Artillery Training Centre at Muttra, and those for Light and Mountain at the Mountain Artillery Training Centre at Amballa.

British Infantry in India and serving on the Indian Establishment had, like the Indian Army, one Lewis gun per platoon, carried on a mule led by a British soldier. The Machine Gun Company had some 36 mules to carry the guns and ammunition, led by Indian soldiers of the "Indian platoon", wearing the badges of their respective regiments. British units on the British Establishment, however, had two LMGs per platoon. The Support Company (Vickers MGs) were separate and normally kept under central Battalion command by the COs. The original replacement for the Lewis Gun, the Vickers-Berthier, was also carried on a mule, though they and the Bren which replaced them were man-carried.

The Indian drivers and muleteers were Indian soldiers, subject to the Indian Army Act, serving with the British Army in India - like the personnel of the Mountain Artillery. They received normal Indian rates of pay and had the usual NCO set up (L/Naiks, Naiks and Havildars) as well as VCOs. The VCOs, as Officers, were listed regimentally, after the British Officers, in the Indian Army Lists.

All British Artillery and infantry units in India had either Indian drivers or muleteers. British cavalry had no Indian ranks. The Indian ranks were purely for animal transport and the mechanisation programme started in 1938 meant that they no longer had a role. However, had we had to defend the North West Frontier against the Russians in the winter of 1939/40, they would have gone with any still unmechanized British units. By 1941-42 mechanization was complete in the British Army and these men were absorbed into the expanding Indian Army.

A.A. Mains



LIEUTENANT THOMAS PRESTON. I.A.R.O.

"There was no one like 'im, 'Orse or Foot? Nor any o' the Guns I knew;"
Follow Me 'Ome', Rudyard Kipling in *The Seven Seas*

It would be an exceptional medal collector who had an unerring instinct for picking out which groups would turn out to be interesting and unusual. Most of us have a mixed record of hits and misses. The hits may stay in our collections; the misses tend to go back into circulation. Of two identical groups, one may yield nothing interesting despite intensive research, while the other produces unexpected bonuses. The group to Lieut. Thomas Preston falls into the latter category.

It is a fairly standard Indian Army officer's group, consisting of a Great War pair (Lieut.), a GSM bar "Iraq" (Lieut.), and an Efficiency Medal, GVIR first type, bar "India" (Cpl.). As is to be expected, the first three did not have a unit; instead he was shown as "I.A.R.O." The first three showed fairly heavy polishing. The group was without ribbons when I bought it, and had no research; the dealer thought that it might be a father and son group, given the difference in monarchs and an additional initial on the Efficiency.

Although the group was somewhat "blind" when it came to his immediately apparent service, I decided to get it on the strength of the Efficiency; I had recently read *Boarding Party* by James Leasor, and knew that several members of the Calcutta Scottish had accompanied the members of the Calcutta Light Horse on the raid on Goa. Unfortunately, none of the latter are named in the book, but that simply meant that my dream would not be immediately shattered.

My first attempts at research did not get me very far and it was not until some years later that I learned of the existence of L/MIL/9 (I.A.R.O. applications) and the list of particulars of I.A.R.O. officers in the India Office Records. In the event, no papers were on file but the list showed that he was appointed to the I.A.R.O. on 19 May 1917, serving with the 17th Cavalry. He had eight years previous military service, shown as being with the 66th Bty. R.F.A., and at the time of application was an office assistant with Messrs. Mackinnon, Mackenzie and Co., Calcutta.

This was encouraging but presented a new problem: apart from one squadron which served in East Africa, the 17th served throughout the Great War in India, and were not one of the cavalry units which served in Iraq in 1920. I put my problem to Cliff Parrett, as I knew he had a good Indian Cavalry library. His answer gave a new twist to Preston's story: no reference to him in any regimental histories, but the 1921 Indian Army List showed him under Labour Directorate, Mesopotamia as a Wing Commander, 2nd P.L.C., which Cliff opined stood for Persian Labour Corps. I later confirmed this when I ran across a passage in Lt.-Gen. Sir Aylmer L. Haldane's *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia*. Apparently the Indian Government raised objections to recruiting coolies in India for service in Iraq and as a result Persian, Kurd and Arab coolies were locally recruited (to supplement Indian coolies already there). By July 1920 there were 34,000 coolies at work in Mesopotamia and Persia (Haldane, p.108). As an interesting side note, some of the Indian coolies were armed and used as guards for depots, prison camps and line of communication blockhouses. It is quite possible that Preston may have been similarly employed during the Great War.

Next I decided to follow up Preston's early military career, on the assumption that the lack of a Star in his group indicated that he had finished his twelve years combined service (Colours and Reserve) before 1914, so that his discharge papers would be in the P.R.O. His papers were on file and, with them, the Preston story began to take on the turns of a coil spring.

Thomas Preston, a native of Leicester, enlisted in the Northumberland Fusiliers on August 20th 1902, having previously served with the 3rd (Militia) Battalion, The Leicester Regiment, apparently aged 18 years, 3 months. There seems to have been some doubt about this, however, as his age is crossed out and shown as 17 years, 1 month and he did eight days Boy Service before being posted as a Private. Less than two months later, however, he transferred to the Royal Field Artillery as a Driver. He served with a number of units, extending his service from the original 3 years with the colours to 8 years and by 1910 was a Bombardier with the 66th Bty., serving in India. In November he passed to the Army Reserve, with permission to reside in India. He only served in the Reserve for seven months, as his papers

show that he was discharged June 20th, 1911 "on promotion to the rank of Sergeant of Police". It is not known when Preston left the Police and joined Mackinnon, Mackenzie and Co.

After his service in Iraq, Preston presumably went back to his former employment and sometime in the 1920s joined the Calcutta Scottish, although he would have been in his forties by then. The condition of his first three medals is consistent with more than a decade of polishing for parades. His discharge papers show no record of a marriage, and while it is possible that he had a son after 1911, who could have joined the A.F.I. and qualified for the Efficiency Medal during the 1940s, I feel that it is likely his own. One small point that tends to confirm my belief is the position of the right ear on the Iraq bar: it is bent inwards (as is its opposite number) to allow the bead on the suspension of the Efficiency to snug in neatly against it.

There cannot be many soldiers who can truthfully claim to have been "Horse, Foot and Guns", but Thomas Preston was one. Three regiments of Foot, one of Horse, and the Guns. Perhaps his Police service might count as Flat-Foot?

Web site note: The photograph of the group accompanying this article was of such poor quality that it does not bear reproduction here and so has been deleted.

M. C. Johnson

