

## DURBAR Volume 6, No.3, Autumn 1989

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GURKHA UNITS IN THE BURMA RETREAT - 1942

Lt Col A. A. Mains

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Burma, from PEGU to the ASSAM FRONTIER

PERIOD

Late February 1942 to mid-May 1942

UNITS INVOLVED

In 48th Indian Infantry Brigade

1/3 GR, 1/4 GR, 2/5 RGR, 1/7 GR, 3/7 GR

In 63rd Indian Infantry Brigade

1/10 GR

BACKGROUND

The Burma Retreat, as distinct from efforts to hold Burma, commenced after the disaster of the Sittang Bridge. The parade state of the three infantry Brigades of the 17th Indian Division on 24 February 1942 showed a strength of only 3484 men, or about 41% of its authorised establishment. The Division had only 1420 rifles and 56 Light Machine Guns.

Except for 1/4 GR, which had crossed the river before the bridge was blown, unit strengths were very low:

In 48th Indian Infantry Brigade

1/3 GR – 107

1/4 GR – 680

2/5 RGR – 227

In 16<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade

1/7 GR – 300

In 46<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade

3/7 GR – 170

Under normal circumstances, a Division with losses such as these would have been withdrawn for rest and refit but, with the absence of any replacements, 17th Division had to rearm and reorganise around Pegu during the lull while the Japanese forces regrouped before their next advance.

The reorganisation brought all five of the Sittang Gurkha Battalions together into the 48th Brigade: - 5/3 GR - amalgamation of 1/3 GR and 2/5 RGR; 1/4 GR; 7 GR - amalgamation of 1/7 and 3/7 GR

Later a fourth (British) battalion, 1st Cameronians, joined this Brigade.

The sixth Gurkha battalion, 1/10 GR, was not involved in the Sittang disaster as it was in the 63rd Brigade which only landed in Rangoon just before the evacuation of that place, and it remained in that Brigade during the Retreat.

#### COURSE OF THE RETREAT

There were few notable battles as the Retreat consisted of holding defensive lines and then, after the enemy had by-passed them, retreating to the next, often without a serious fight. After withdrawing from Prome, 17th Division was relieved by 1st Burma Division and thus did not take part in the disastrous battle of YENANGYAUNG, except for two battalions, of which 2/5 RGR was one, sent to help 1st Burma Division in their withdrawal.

Later the 48th Brigade, supported by 7th Hussars, fought a successful rear guard action at KYAUKSE, which enabled the British forces to withdraw across the Irrawaddy River, a course which had become inevitable after the collapse of the Chinese VI Army in the Shan States. The campaign now became a race to the Chindwin crossing at SHWEGYIN, the onset of the monsoon having joined the Japanese as the opponents. The 63rd Brigade was sent to assist 1st Burma Division at MONYWA and 1/10 GR gained a Battle Honour for this action.

48th Brigade had the honour of being the rear guard at SHWEGYIN. The race was won by the British by a very short head, the Japanese arriving there while HQ 17th Division, 48th Brigade and the garrison of SHWEGYIN were all still on the wrong side of the river. The enemy was held off for a while but it was not possible to embark any further personnel as the jetty was under fire. The remaining British forces then retreated up the eastern bank to KLAING, opposite KALEWA, without interference. They reached there, and safety, on 11th May and the monsoon broke the next day.

Battle Honours are given at Appendix A.

#### CONCLUSION

The Official History states, "During the campaign the Army in Burma, without once losing its cohesion, had retreated nearly one thousand miles in some three and a half months - the longest retreat ever carried out by a British Army - and for the last seven hundred miles had virtually carried its base with it". During this retreat the lack of opportunities to rest and refit,

together with the hot and oppressive climate of the dry belt of central Burma, had affected the morale and fighting spirit of a number of units. The Gurkha Battalions, however, stand out as never once having suffered any loss of discipline or morale.

(This article was written for the appropriate exhibit at the Gurkha Museum in its new venue at Winchester. The Museum hopes to reopen there in the Autumn of 1989).

APPENDIX "A"

BATTLE HONOURS AWARDED TO GURKHA UNITS  
DURING THE BURMA RETREAT  
MID FEB TO MID MAY, 1942

	1/3 GR	1/4 GR	2/5 RGR	1/7 GR	3/7 GR	1/10 GR
SITTANG	*		*	*	*	
PEGU		*		*	*	
YENANGYAUNG			*			
KYAUKSE	*		*	*	*	
MONWYA						*
SHWEGYIN				*	*	
BURMA 1942-45	*	*	*	*	*	*

Honours of 1/7, 3/7 and 1/10 GR awarded by War Office.  
Honours of 1/3, 1/4 GR & 2/5 RGR awarded by Army HQ, India.  
There are probably some omissions.

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ASSISTANT SURGEON FRANK HERBERT ASQUITH - INDIAN MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

M.C. Johnson

For many collectors there is a great sense of satisfaction in reuniting a group of medals, or even putting two of a group back together. The saga of Assistant Surgeon F.H. Asquith began several years ago when I attended a monthly meeting of the Canadian Society of Military Medals and Insignia. One member had for sale a 1914-15 Star to 4<sup>th</sup> Class Assistant Surgeon F.H. Asquith, I.M.D. I had my copy of the 1924 Supplement to the Indian Army List with me and was able to supply him with Asquith's war services (listed for some strange reason among the commissioned officers). A little while later I was chatting with one of my friends, who said that he was sure he had seen another medal to the man - an M.S.M., he thought - at a Toronto militaria store not far from where I then lived in Toronto. I went over and, sure enough, there was, not an M.S.M. but an L.S.G.C., with a BWM suspender named to him as

1st Class Assistant Surgeon. The fever was on me and I bought it. Not long after I caught up with the Star's owner and bought that too.

I then kicked myself mentally, as I already had a broken I.M.D. group to Assistant Surgeon A. R. Bell, consisting of a BWM, GSM "N.W. Persia", and L.S.G.C. - a perfectly plausible group for a man who had served only in India, but he had served in France and Iraq as well and was missing a 1914-15 Star and Victory Medal. So I put Asquith's medals away. Time passed, and one day I received Eugene Ursual's catalogue. Poring over it my eye lit upon a Naval General Service medal bar "Persian Gulf 1909-1914" to Assistant Surgeon F.N. Asquith, R.I.M. A phone call confirmed that the medal was still available and yes, the second initial might be "H". So I bought that medal as well. It was renamed, in lettering, and so I was able to get it at a good price. And there I thought the matter rested. Time went by, and more and more my interests broadened, especially towards medals to the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1915-18. I was at another friend's house and he said that one of the local dealers wanted to get in touch with me as he had an I.M.D. pair that he thought might interest me. I groaned inwardly, I really didn't need the pair. But a thought struck me - could it be? The odds were pretty long. But of course I called and, sure enough, it was our old friend, this time as a 2nd Class Assistant Surgeon. In the meantime, of course, I had Judith Farrington research Asquith and, from his record, it would seem that this is his entire entitlement.

Asquith's record verifies the trio, but makes no mention of the N.G.S., and he is not mentioned in the N.G.S. medal roll. The Indian Army Lists do show him attached to the Royal Indian Marine in 1913, and he was serving in the Persian Gulf immediately before the war broke out. From there he went to France (Oct-Nov 1915), Iraq and Palestine. His post war postings included a civil posting in Assam, and various British Military Hospitals (Jubbulpore, Lahore, Multan, Solon, Ferozepore, and Subathu). In common with all British warrant officers in the Indian Army his services were no longer listed after 1931. He is not listed as a Senior Assistant Surgeon in 1939, so either never reached commissioned rank, or else died before then.

From naming point of view Asquith's medals pose some interesting questions. I have already mentioned that the N.G.S. is re-impressed. The style of the letters is exactly the same as that on his Star, which has not been renamed, but the letter style is not the most common one for the Indian Army, although I believe I have seen it on at least one other Star. It appears again on the War and Victory Medals, but for the rank only, the rest of the naming being original and matching that of the War Medal to A.R. Bell. The naming style on the two L.S.G.C.s is identical for the two Assistant Surgeons. This is not surprising as the two men entered the I.M.D. as of the same date; 1 March 1909. I would imagine that the naming of the N.G.S., the Star, and the "correction" to the rank on the War Medal and Victory Medal was done at the same time. I use the word "correction" because, according to the Indian Army List, Asquith did not make 2nd Class until 1 March 1921 (Bell's medal does not give the class). I am of the opinion that the naming is officially done. As was pointed out in an article on the Persian Gulf clasp by Barry Scott in *The Orders and Medals Research Society Journal* (Spring 1982) some of the originally issued medals were lost on their way out from England when S.S. Persia was torpedoed. I formerly owned another example of this medal to Engine Driver Tajoodin Mohammed Sallia of R.I.M.S. *Palinurus*, which was also officially renamed, in exactly the style of engraving used on a 39th Dogras I.D.S.M. for Mesopotamia. Asquith's medal MAY well have been a late claim; there was much controversy over awarding this medal to Army personnel, as is well set out in Major M. C. Spurrier's article in the Autumn 1976 O.M.R.S. Journal. While it is strange that he does not appear on the medal roll, as one

would expect if he was carried on the ship's books of one of the R.I.M. ships, it is possible that he was serving at one of the shore stations in the Gulf that were supporting operations.

In any event Asquith's group is an unusual collection of medals, and reuniting it has given me great satisfaction.

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*'THE HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE KUMAON RIFLES'*. In the last edition we carried a book review for Major Overton's work on the Kumaon Rifles. The author has now asked me to point out that very few copies were produced, and that these were typed, not printed. Copies are lodged with a number of libraries (MOD, National Army Museum, Imperial War Museum, India Office Library, Kumaon Regimental Centre) but it is unlikely other copies will be produced.

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#### A FRONTIER OFFICER IN THE KIPLING ERA

F.W.D. Jackson

The photograph accompanying this article was annotated by the writer's grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Davidson. He was the son of a "John Company" soldier, Sir David Davidson (1811-1900) who served in the Bombay Army from 1827-51 and in the 1840s invented a telescopic sight which was used by the Confederates in the American Civil War. His son Charles was always interested in new and original ideas. He told the present writer that he was once criticised by his C.O. in the 2nd Sikhs because during training exercise he captured a hilltop exercise by a roundabout route making full use of cover. This tactic, familiar to Scottish deerstalkers seems to have been a novelty in the army at that time. The C.O. thought he should have gone straight up the face of the hill.

Charles Davidson was born on 20th February 1859 and educated at Edinburgh Academy. From Sandhurst he was commissioned Second Lieutenant on 14th January 1880 in the 81st Foot, then at Ferozepore, being promoted to Lieutenant on 1st December of the same year. He went with the 81st to Allahabad and transferred on 17th September 1883 to the 2nd Punjab Infantry at Bannu. For the next twenty or so years, except when on furlough, he was to spend his time in one or other of the various cantonments west of the Indus or under canvas among the Frontier hills. The North West Frontier Province had not then been created, and the Punjab Government administered all the territory up to the tribal border. Up to 1886 the various cavalry and infantry regiments and mountain batteries of the Punjab Frontier Force came under the control of the provincial government, but in August of that year they were transferred to the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief. In November of the same year the linked battalion system was set up, and the 2nd Punjab Infantry was linked to the 6th Punjab Infantry and the 2nd Sikh Infantry. The object was to enable men to be transferred from any one of these single-battalion regiments to either of the other two if the "exigencies of war" should require it. The British officers all belonged to the Bengal Staff Corps and could be transferred between regiments without the loss of seniority which would have occurred in the British Army.

There were other differences in the treatment of British officers in the two armies. In particular, members of the various Indian Staff Corps were promoted after a fixed number of years and not when a regimental vacancy occurred. The date for promotion depended on the date of first commission. Davidson became a Second Lieutenant on 14th January 1880, so he was promoted Captain on 14th January 1891, Major on 14th January 1900 and Lieutenant Colonel on 14th January 1906.

In the 1880s and 1890s the number of British officers in a Frontier Force battalion, although greater than it had been in the early days, only allowed for a commandant, two wing commanders, four wing officers (including the adjutant and quartermaster) and a medical officer. Each of the eight companies was commanded by two "native officers", drawn from the "class" of which the company was composed. In the 2nd Punjab Infantry there were three companies of Sikhs, one of Dogras, three of Punjabi Mussalmans (often abbreviated to 'PMs'), and one of "Cis-Border" Pathans.

As a couple of British officers in each battalion would probably be on furlough or on duty elsewhere, other officers might be attached on a temporary or provisional basis. Davidson's position as wing officer was on this basis until 1886, when it was confirmed, and in the following year he was made Quartermaster. In 1888 and 1889 he was on home furlough. The spring of 1888 found him at the School of Musketry, where he scored high points, and in the summer of 1889 he married. In 1890 he was back on duty. He relinquished his appointment as Quartermaster on promotion to Captain in January 1891, becoming at the same time an "officiating" wing commander.

In January and February 1891, and again in April and May, the "2nd P.I." (as Davidson always called it) was on service as part of the Miranzai Field Force under Sir William Lockhart. The Miranzai valley lies west of Kohat where the battalion was then stationed. The effect of the January-February operations was to lay down the law, so to speak, to the Orakzai tribes and to reconnoitre the Samana range with a view to setting up permanent military posts and to build roads. Tribal villages were destroyed, but no resistance was met and the chief hardship was the winter weather.

Then in April the Orakzais attacked the road - construction parties and the Field Force was again assembled. Heavy fighting took place in the high hills, and after it was over a brigade, including the 2nd P.I., remained in garrison on the Samana until February 1892. For his part in the campaign Captain Davidson received the North West Frontier medal (IGS 1854) with clasp.

The questionable value of "punitive expeditions" must have been evident to many of those who took part in them, but it was all part of the job of Frontier soldiering. The Government did not administer tribal territory. It paid subsidies to the chiefs and hoped they would keep their people in order. When the "bad men" raided across the administrative border or attacked an isolated frontier post, they had to be followed up, and if they escaped at least their houses and crops and those of the communities that sheltered them could be destroyed, and perhaps it would deter the next time.

The soldiers who took part in these expeditions remembered small, unusual incidents. In old age Charles Davidson would tell the story of one such incident that he witnessed in the Miranzai operations. It was on 23rd April 1891 at the village of Margharu, north west of Gulistan (the date and place can be established from the slightly different account in the

Regimental Records). The village had been "cleared" by the leading units, and the 2nd P.I., coming up in support, had halted beside it for a meal. Their arms were piled and guarded by a sentry, armed only with his bayonet. No doubt there were pickets out as well, properly armed. The camp followers took advantage of the halt to search the abandoned village for loot. Suddenly there was a commotion at one of the houses as the followers came running out pursued by a *ghazi* brandishing his sword. He could not catch them - "the fear of death gave them wings" - so he quickly turned his attention to the sentry. All this happened so quickly that the sepoy had only just time to grab a rifle and run away fixing his bayonet - then as the *ghazi* caught him up he twisted round and transfixed him, and threw himself on the ground under his rifle. The resolute swordsman cut down on him, but the sword struck the pouch on the back of the sepoy's waist belt. As the two men struggled on the ground other sepoys ran up, grabbed the sword, and cut off the *ghazi's* head. Bloody violence is a commonplace of war, but the young officer remembered the skilful way in which the sentry coped with a tricky situation. "It was a pretty bit of work!"

On 13th October 1894 Captain Davidson transferred to the 2nd Sikhs, one of the linked battalions, at Dera Ghazi Khan. Guarding the route from Multan into Baluchistan and on to Kandahar, this was the most southerly of the main Frontier Force stations, although later it was abandoned and disappeared into the Indus River. Sir George MacMunn describes it "a well laid out and popular cantonment on the frontier side of the city of that name"(1). It was here that the 2nd Sikhs celebrated their fiftieth birthday on 22nd December 1896, and here that our photograph was taken - probably in November, as on 1st December the left wing under Captain Eustace proceeded to Dera Ismail Khan, 120 miles to the north.

The four regiments (or battalions) of Sikh Infantry took their name because they were raised from the old Sikh Army, which in composition was really a Punjabi army; but the 2nd Regiment had always been recruited largely from the Dogras, thought of at first by the British as Sikhs who lived in the hills. Thus the full title of the regiment was the 2nd (or Hill) Regiment of Sikh Infantry. In 1896 it had three companies of Dogras, two of Sikhs, two of "PMs", and one of Khattack and Yusufzai Pathans. In the photograph one Sikh Jemadar is absent. Full details of the British and "Native" officers, present and absent, are given in the appendix to this article. In the official print only the British officers are identified, but Captain Davidson identified their Indian colleagues on his copy. He was methodical in such matters.

The photograph shows the review order (drab with scarlet facings) worn by the Indian officers and other ranks, and the more elaborate version worn by four of the British officers. The (officiating) Commandant, Major Fasken, and the two "attached" officers are in field service order, with Fasken wearing his review order pouchbelt and Barratt displaying the collar badges of his own regiment, the 23rd Madras Light Infantry. Fasken and most of the Native Officers have the Afghan War Medal and the Star for Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar. Subadar-Major Sher Baz has the collar insignia of the Order of British India (2nd Class), which carries the title of "Bahadur" or "Brave Warrior". The 2nd Sikhs had earned a name for steadiness in the Afghan War at Ahmed Khel in 1880, where they and the Gurkhas saved the day for Sir Donald Stewart by beating off a massed Afghan charge in company rallying squares. The standard of Raja Parmodh Chand, mislaid ultimately when the regiment was on active service, was a trophy from the early days.

The 2nd Sikhs took no part in the 1897 fighting in the northern section of the Frontier, although in October they were moved up by train and route march to Kohat. Lieutenant

Colonel Allen, who was away on sick furlough at the time of the jubilee photograph, finally retired on 25th July 1898, and Major Fasken and Captain Davidson were confirmed in their "officiating" positions as Commandant and second-in-command. As neither had reached the normal date for his next promotion, they became respectively "temporary Lieutenant Colonel" and "temporary Major". In December 1898 the battalion moved again, this time to Davidson's first Frontier station - Bannu.

Eight and a half miles from Bannu, through the Gumatti Pass, lay the village of that name. The inhabitants were Kabul Khel Wazirs, described by Sir George MacMunn as "a more than tiresome set of neighbours". In February 1899 a force was organized to march there by night and capture a band of outlaws sheltering in the village. It marched from Bannu at 10 p.m. on 5th February. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Batten of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry was in command, having a small party of his regiment with him. There were two guns of the 2nd Mountain Battery, 200 men of the 1st Punjab Infantry and four companies (300 rifles) of the 2nd Sikhs. Major Davidson commanded the four companies, supported by Captain Vesey and Lieutenants Phillips and Barratt. The Indian officers included Subadars Atta Mohammed, Raj Mir and Surain Singh, and Jemadar Harjalu.

The night march through the pass without guides proved very difficult, the men and animals having to watch out for high, precipitous banks and deep pools of water. Towards morning the Deputy Commissioner, who had accompanied the column, pushed on ahead with the 1st Punjab Infantry. This advance guard surrounded the village by about 7.30 a.m. with a cordon of pickets. Surprise was complete.

The ordinary villagers came out to make their peace with the representatives of the "Sirkar", and seven outlaws who tried to get away in the crowd were made prisoner. The others shut themselves up in two very strong towers and opened a desultory fire on the pickets. There followed an interminable delay while the Deputy Commissioner parleyed with the villagers. At 10 a.m. the guns opened fire on the towers, but could make no impression on the solid masonry, so Major Davidson was ordered to charge through the village, clear it, and attack the towers.

The 2nd Sikhs advanced with two companies extended and one-and-a-half in support, the remainder staying with the guns. But the infantry could do little more than face the towers and exchange shots with their defenders. The doors would have been well above ground level, and neither tools nor explosive charges were available. Davidson told the present writer how he stood beside a sepoy and directed him to put a shot into one of the loopholes. Next moment the sepoy fell dead as an answering shot struck his head. Two men had been killed and five wounded, so Batten ordered the Sikhs to stand fast and brought up the guns to a closer range. Once again their fire seemed ineffective, and fearing that he might not get his force back through the pass before dark, Batten called off the operation and began his withdrawal. Ironically, Davidson discovered that the Pathan sepoys had heard the outlaws saying that if the artillery fired again they would have to come out!

Batten's difficulties were not yet over. He had not picketed the heights above the pass, and as the troops came up to it they found that the good folk of the neighbourhood were up there in strength. By the time the column got through, the 2nd Sikhs had lost two men killed and seven wounded, in addition to the two killed and three wounded in the attack. The 1st P.I., bringing up the rear, lost Lieutenant Houston wounded, the veteran Subadar Hasan mortally wounded, and four other casualties. Finally as the Sikhs formed up again at the far end, Major

Davidson was severely wounded by a Lee-Metford bullet, British Army type. (2) The Regimental History says that he must have been fired at a range of 1100 yards. Davidson told the present writer that this was nonsense.

On 9th February another column of 1st P.I. and 2nd Sikhs found Gumatti deserted, and blew up the towers. It is worth noting, however, that in 1902 the whole thing had to be done again, as Sir George MacMunn tells us. The circumstances were almost the same, except that the heights were picketed, the wall of a tower was blown in by a Sapper officer with gun-cotton and the outlaws died fighting. But Colonel Tonnochy of the 3rd Sikhs, who commanded the column, had been shot dead and so had his Adjutant, "Blanco" White, with other good men, and MacMunn wondered whether it had all been worth it.

For his wound Major Davidson had a year's furlough, which enabled him to attend his parents' golden wedding in the autumn and personally to wish Lord Roberts well as the old General embarked for South Africa and the Boer War. Further Indian service gave him the new Frontier medal (IGS 1895) and at the end of 1902, while officiating Commandant in Fasken's absence, Davidson got orders to take the regiment to Somaliland.

For the 2nd Sikhs the Somaliland campaign against the "Mad Mullah" and his followers is chiefly memorable because of the disaster that swept away Captain Vesey, Acting Subadar-Major Naurang Singh, Jemadar Mohammed Khan (a recent promotion), and a company-strength detachment of Sikhs and PMs. They had been with a column of the King's African Rifles, part of which was lured into an ambush and annihilated. This last stand of the Frontier Force men is the subject of a drawing (from imagination) by the well-known war artist Melton Prior.

For Major Davidson Somaliland was a disaster of a different kind. He was taken seriously ill, and in July was invalided home. A few days later Lieutenant Colonel Fasken, who early in the campaign had hurried back from furlough, was given temporary command of a brigade, and Captain Eustace got the regiment for the rest of the war, including the deciding battle of Jidballi. He emerged with the DSO and much credit.

Davidson's illness was a long one, and it effectively ended his career prospects. He continued to be listed as second-in-command, but when Fasken gave up command on 25th July 1905 he was succeeded by an officer of the 51st Sikhs. In January 1906 Davidson was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and received a year's furlough. Major Eustace superseded him as second-in-command. Although his official date of retirement is 14th January 1908, 1907 found him settled in his native Scotland from which he never returned to India. Eustace became Commandant in 1907 and following in Fasken's footsteps went on to be a Major General and eventually Colonel of the Regiment.

When the 1914-18 War broke out, Davidson offered his services and was made second-in-command of a new battalion of the South Wales Borderers. The effort put into training his civilian soldiers was too much for a man in his mid-fifties, and he collapsed with an attack of angina which nearly killed him. Told that if he took things very quietly he might live for a few more years, he carried on in retirement until December 1956, dying of old age a few weeks before, his ninety-eighth birthday. The manner in which he lived can best be illustrated by the fact that in his mid-eighties he fell off his bicycle on an icy road in front of a lorry, which just managed to stop. Lying on the ground with a broken hip he looked up with interest

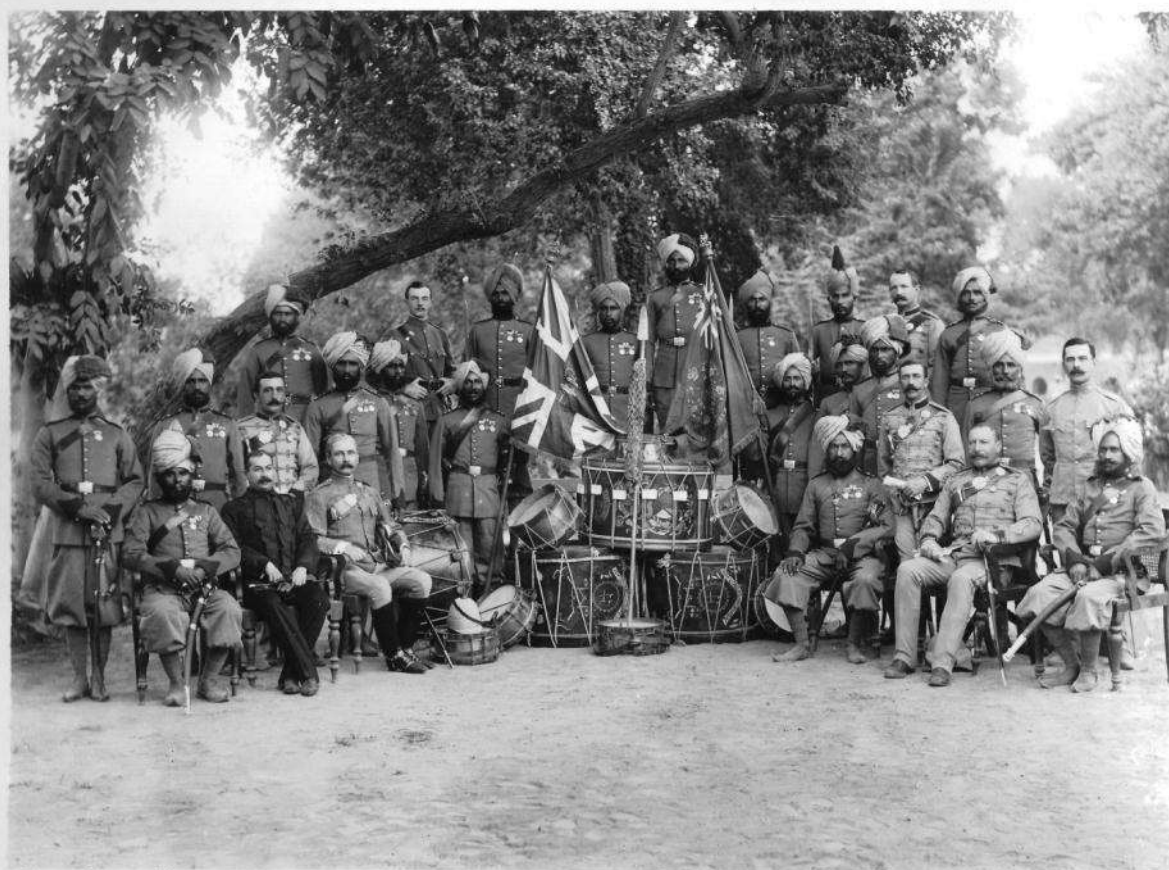
at the horrified driver peering down from his cab, "You should have seen that johnny's face! It was as white as a sheet!"

A man of powerful build, Davidson had been known in the 2nd Sikhs as "Jumbo". Major General Moens, who joined the regiment in 1901, told the writer's mother how much the young officers had come to rely on "Jumbo" Davidson's advice and support, particularly when they fell foul of higher authority. And an American journalist who met him in 1912 wrote of him that he was the kind of officer that only Britain (he said "England") was able to produce. Davidson felt flattered. I am sure he was also amused.

#### Notes

1. *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers*. London, 1931
2. British regiments in this period always had later-pattern rifles than the sepoy. The introduction of smokeless cordite gave the Pathans, who stole from the British soldiers, a decided advantage over the sepoy, whose Martini- Henry rifles used black powder.

Raised 22nd December 1846.



DERA GHAZI KHAN 1896

Sher, Jem' Miyan, Lieut. Wynter, Sub' Naurang Singh, Captain Eustace, Sub' Lakhe Singh  
 Sub' Ata Mahamad, Jem' Rahim Ali, Jem' Mahtab Singh, Jem' Sibdi Singh, Sub' Surain Singh, Lieut. Barratt  
 Jem' Hari Singh, Lieut. Vesey, Jem' Harjalu, Lieut. Forster, Sub' Ari Jang  
 Sub' Dina Nath, Sub' Rajmir, Major Fasken, Sub' Moj Sher Bax, BAHADUR, Captain Davidson, Sub' Ari Jang  
 Gung-Major Rodgers, Major Fasken, Big drums and small drums captured at KANDAHAR in Sep. 1880.

2<sup>ND</sup> SIKH INFANTRY – P.F.F.

APPENDIX: OFFICERS IN 1896 [(\*) = not in photograph]

(a) British Officers

Name	Year joined	Date rank	of	Year left	Function Dec.1896
Commandant Major (temp. Lt. Col.) B.M. Allen (*)	1890	24.4.92		1898	Sick leave
2nd in Command and Wing Commander Major C.G.M. Fasken	1878	13.6.94		1905	Officiating Commandant
Wing Commander Capt. C. Davidson	1894	14.1.91		1908	Officiating 2 i/c

Wing Officers				
Capt. T. Jermyn (*)	1883	22.10.92	1902	One year's leave from August 1896
Capt. A.H. Eustace	1887	6.5.96	1913	Officiating Wing Commander
Lieut H.C. Vesey	1888	25.11.85	1903	Officiating Quartermaster
Lieut P.B.B. Forster	1888	10.11.86	1916	Adjutant
Lieut G.L. Carter (*)	1893	5.10.90	1902	Adjutant Kurram Militia
Lieut R.S. Phillips (*)	1893	10.6.92	1907	One year's leave from Dec. 1895
Medical Officer Surgeon Major J.V. Rodgers	1886	2.4.93	by 1912	
Attached Lieut E.B. Barratt (Wing Officer, 23rd Madras L.I.) Lieut C.P. Wynter	1896 1893	7.12.91 3.10.94	1900 1921	Officiating Wing Officer Officiating Wing Officer

Note: Allen, Davidson, Forster and probably Rodgers left the regiment on retirement. Jermyn, Carter, Phillips and Barratt transferred to other regiments. Fasken, Eustace, Forster and Wynter all commanded the regiment. Vesey was killed in action, and Phillips was killed in a polo accident after he had transferred.

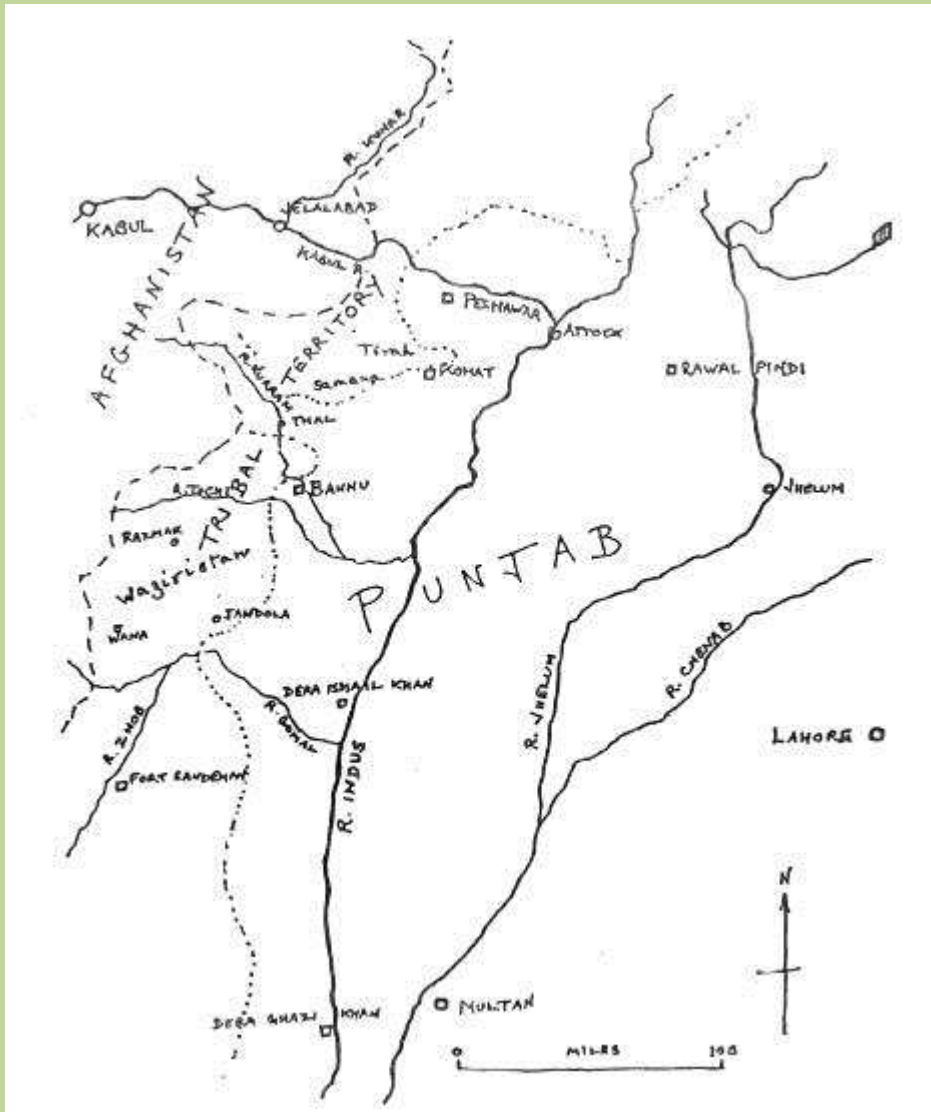
(b) Indian Officers

			Entered service	Jemadar	Subadar	Left
Subadar Sher Baz (Bahadur)	Major P.M. Gakhar		1861	1877	1879	1903
Subadars						
Dina	Nath	Dadwal Dogra	1880	1880	1887	1903
Raj	Mir	Khattak Pathan	1862	1883	1890	c.1900
Ari	Jang	Rajput Dogra	1871	1887	1892	1897
Surain	Singh	Jat Sikh	1872	1890	1894	1899
Atta	Mohammed	P.M. Rajput	1877	1890	1894	c.1902
Naurang	Singh	Jat Sikh	1877	1894	1894	1903
Lakha Singh		Rajput Dogra	1877	1891	1896	1899
Jemadars						
Shibdit	Singh	Katoch Dogra	1887	1892		1910
Ishar	Singh (*)	Jat Sikh	1873	1894		1909
Sher	Ali	P.M. Bhatti	1877	1894		1898
Hari	Singh	Jat Sikh	1877	1894		1901

Miyan		Sher	Khattak Pathan	1874		1895		1900
Rahim		Ali	P.M. Gakhar	1877		1895		1905
Burhan	Ali	(*)	P.M. Janjua	1882		1895		1904
Mehtab		Singh	Rajput Dogra	1874		1896		1899
Harjalu			Brahman Dogra	1879		1896		1913

#### NOTES:

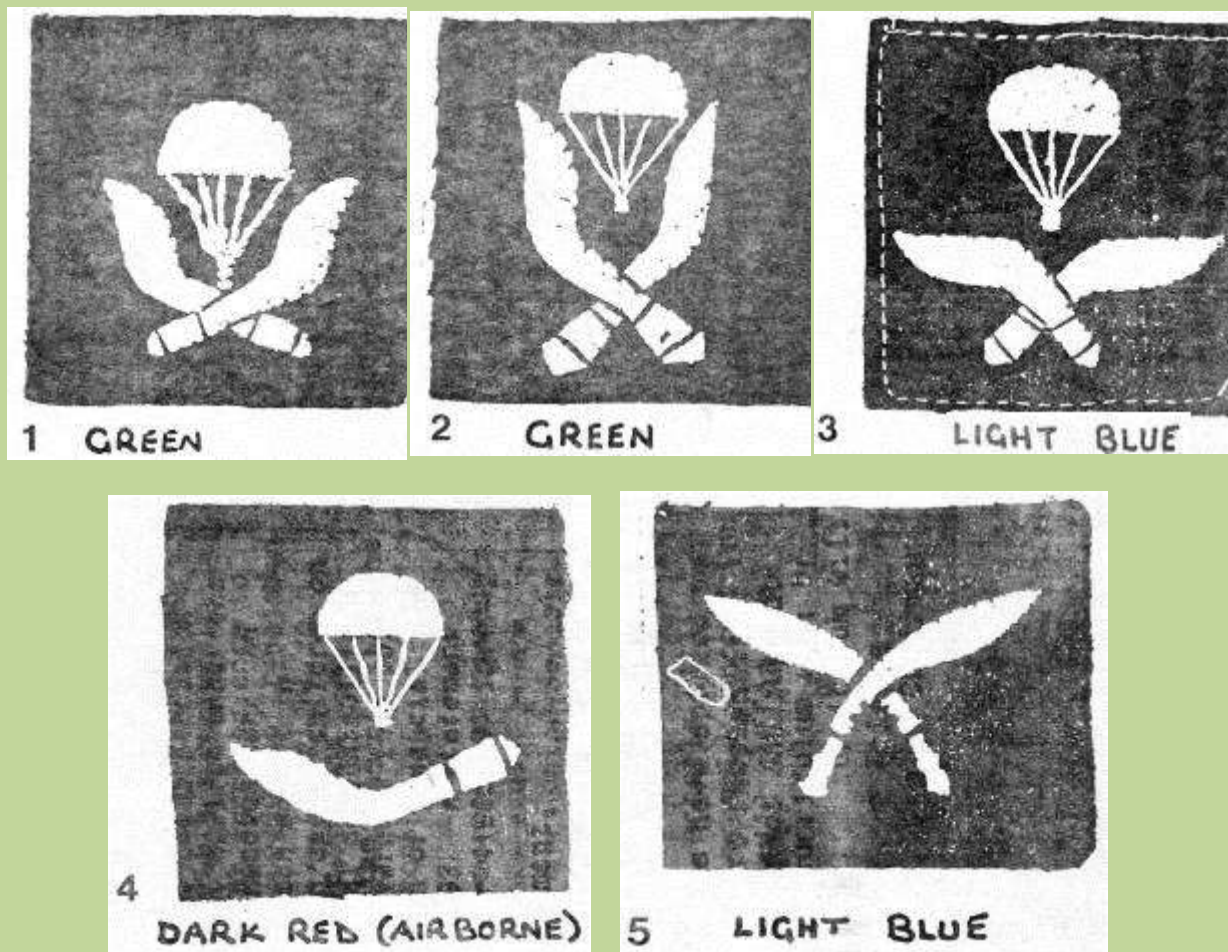
1. Sher Baz, who became the regiment's fourth Subadar Major in 1891 retired as Honorary Captain. He was succeeded by Ishar Singh, who in turn was succeeded by Harjalu.
2. Dina Nath died in Somaliland and Naurang Singh was killed there.
3. The dates when Raj Mir and Atta Mohammed left the regiment are not recorded in the regimental history. They became Subadar Majors of the Zhob Levy and the 74th Punjabis respectively.
4. Sher Ali was the "Native Adjutant".
5. Hari Singh was promoted Subadar in the 47th Sikhs and became Subadar Major of that regiment.
6. Burhan Ali was supernumerary, having volunteered for the Mombasa Contingent in East Africa.



AREA OF OPERATIONS – 2<sup>ND</sup> SIKH INFANTRY P.F.F.

### REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

● Lieutenant Commander W M Thornton requests help in identifying the following cloth badges. With the cooperation of Lieutenant Colonel M H Broadway, who is currently helping at the Gurkha Museum, Lieutenant Colonel A A Mains has already given some tentative identifications and these are shown below, but any additional information would be welcome. Numbers 1 to 4 are all of felt sewn onto felt with, in all cases, the canopy and kukris in stone colour and the shrouds in white. Background colours are as shown. Number 5 is of white embroidered kukris on light blue felt background.



Notes - Tentative Identifications

1. Possible pre-1943 edition of No.2
2. 154 Gurkha Parachute Battalion. Probably worn on bush hat or pagri
3. 153 Gurkha Parachute Battalion. Comments as for 2
4. Possibly Gurkha staff at Parachute Training Centre, Delhi (later Chaklala)
5. Similar to designs worn by Brigades of 17 Gurkha Division (various colours); Indian Gurkha Recruiting Depot, Gorakhpore; HQ Brigade of Gurkhas; Calcutta & Chittagong pre-1947 Armed Police.

● Can anyone help in identifying the badge below (Figure 1)? It seems to be a plaid brooch and is inscribed LUCKNOW HIGHLANDERS. **Web site note** – since discovered to have been incomplete as shown on Figure 2 – thought to have been part of the Lucknow Rifles A.F. (I) but see Vol. 6, No. 4 for further comment.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2 (Photo RCW)

● Cyril Walters is anxious to obtain information on musical programmes at Military Balls and Viceregal Occasions during the period of the Raj, with short details of the events concerned.

#### REPLIES TO EARLIER QUERIES

● Post-Independence Indian Formation Signs (Volume 6, No 2, pp. 21-22 refers).

Figure A - is the National Cadet Corps, formed on 16 April 1948. There are two Divisions, each of which has a 'girls wing', and all members are students: Senior Division – university students; Junior Division - High and Higher Secondary recognised schools. The NCC celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1973 with the issue of a postage stamp in that year. W.M. Thornton and Cyril Walters

Figure C - HQ Eastern Command

Figure B - appeared in the late Major J Waring's book (c.1970) as unidentified -probably a Division.

W. M. Thornton

● AGRA VOLUNTEER RIFLES

Paul G Williams requested (Volume 3, No 4, p 24) information on a badge depicting a building thought to be the Taj Mahal and J L Chapple replied (Volume 4, No 1, p 26) that it belonged to the Agra Volunteer Rifles. I recently had the privilege of seeing the magnificent badge collection of Hugh L King and was able to photograph both the badge depicted by Paul Williams and an officer's pouch belt plate, the latter of which I produce here. It differs markedly from the cap badge description given by John Chapple in that there is no Maltese Cross. Hugh King told me that for years he had held in his "unknown for certain" box a white metal representation of the Taj Mahal. It had always been in his mind that it must be connected with Agra but it was only about a year ago that he found the pouch belt plate and solved the mystery.

Tony McClenaghan



Photo R C Worts

## BOOK REVIEW

● *"REGIMENTS OF THE EMPIRE. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THEIR PUBLISHED HISTORIES"* Compiled by Roger Perkins and published by him privately, 1989. 382 pages.

Our member, Roger Perkins (125), has produced what he can justly claim to be a pioneering work in that, not only has he listed for the first time in one publication titles covering the Dominions, Colonies and Mandated Territories of the former British Empire, but also has gone beyond a mere listing to provide a description of each book so that one might have an idea of what to expect to find in the book. Some countries are included which were never a part of the British Empire but the justification given is that local forces were raised within them by the British for internal security and similar duties.

Obviously no single person could easily gather together all the information contained in this book and so the compiler enlisted the help of 'reporters' around the world who, to a set format, provided details of regimental histories and related works known to them, along with their comments on the books. At least 19 libraries and 72 individuals from 14 countries cooperated in the project. As the introduction points out, "It is inevitable, given the large number of people engaged in this work, that some of their reports will be more or less detailed than others". It is also inevitable that not all countries or territories have been covered in the same detail, but perhaps this reflects a paucity of original material rather than lack of research effort by 'reporters'. Generally I think readers will find the layout, style and content easy to follow and informative. One criticism of style is that book titles could have been better presented in bold type, thus making them more distinctive from the rest of the text.

Of particular interest to members of this Society will be the section on India which is by far the largest, covering 164 pages and in excess of 460 titles. A few representative 'general interest' titles are included in a preliminary section and the remaining titles are then divided into; "British Regiments originating in India", "The Presidential Armies", "The Bodyguards", "Cavalry", "Infantry", "Mercenary Infantry", "Airborne Forces", "Punjab Frontier Force", "Pioneers", "Engineers and Sappers & Miners", "Artillery" - sub-divided into Bengal, Madras, Bombay and Mountain Artillery, "Volunteer Forces", "Police, Armed Police and Tribal Militias", "Imperial Service Troops and Indian States Forces", "Medical Services and Other Corps", and finally "Gurkhas".

Many of the works are, of course, extremely rare, but if you have been after such a title without success this book might help to point you towards a more readily available but previously unknown acceptable alternative.

The book is available from Roger Perkins, price £24.50 plus p&p - UK, £1.70; Europe, £3.50; elsewhere, surface £2.50, airmail £7.50. An order form is enclosed with this edition of DURBAR.

ANMcC

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## FIFTY YEARS AGO

Lt Col C.R.D. Gray (late Skinner's Horse)

When the war started the Regiment (Skinner's Horse), then still horsed, was stationed at BANNU, on the Frontier.

I was commanding "B" Squadron on outpost duty some 30 miles away in a large mud fort called Gambela.

Our job was to patrol the Frontier boundary to intercept infiltrating tribesmen and we daily rode on long sweeps up to the Waziristan foothills - I suppose a cavalry task which had not changed in a hundred years, but it was now 1939. Of course we had no radio, contact being maintained by semaphore flags and helio lamps and it was by this means that I was suddenly recalled to R.H.Q. I remember excitedly cantering back all night to reach Bannu by dawn on 2nd September and, to my surprise, finding myself the senior Officer present as all but a few were on leave. I still have a copy of the Regimental Order of 3rd September 1939 recording that Skinner's Horse on that fateful day was commanded by Lieutenant C.R.D. Gray.

My first act as C. O. was to open the Secret Mobilization Orders which instructed the immediate recall of all personnel. So it was with some glee that, as a subaltern, I sent a telegram to the Colonel, then in Kashmir, ordering him to "Return forthwith".

The other unusual paragraph in Mobilization Regulations was that "All swords will be sharpened" - so the Armourer solemnly got busy with a grindstone to put a war-like edge on our sabres. Incredible but quite true!

By October we were relieved and marched our horses the 150 miles to Rawalpindi for conversion to what we hoped would be an Armoured Car Regiment. The War's restrictions had not, by then, reached India so we saw nothing wrong in travelling in our accustomed style - with advance parties going ahead to pitch tents, light fires for baths and prepare four-course dinners in the carpeted Mess marquee, with a bearer behind each Officer.

On arrival, fit but apprehensive of the future, we prepared for our final mounted parade a few days later, and it was a sad but splendid moment when some 500 men and horses were drawn up together for the last time. The C.O., Will Broadfoot, was a great judge of a horse, with some dealer's cunning as well, a combination which resulted in our being magnificently mounted on this occasion - probably better than at any period in the Regiment's history, which was ironical in the circumstances but the right note to end on.

As Quartermaster I sat on my charger, "Carefree", next to the Adjutant, Jack Tweed, on the right of the Officers and beside the eight grouped trumpeters on their grey horses. When the Regimental call peeled out in my ear the tears rolled down my cheeks - and Jack's too. We gave "Three cheers for the King Emperor" and then Colonel Broadfoot rode forward, turned and shouted his last mounted order - "Parade will march off by Squadrons, Dis-Miss" and our horsed days were over, after 125 years.

The next day the saddlery was returned to Ordnance, the blue and gold pagris, the red throat plumes and the steel shoulder chains were packed away. The horses were distributed to State cavalry units or were sold for 100 rupees each and these were called "Hundred-chippers".

The best of them were quickly snapped up at that price by our own Officers for we realised that, while being mechanised, we would remain some time in Rawalpindi, so we continued playing polo three days a week and raced on Saturdays. It was our "last fling", so to speak.

The hoped for armoured cars never materialised; instead we were issued with open Chevrolet trucks with wooden bodies and no windscreens or hoods. Scarcely a man (and not every Officer) knew how to drive but, after many crashes and, unfortunately, two or three deaths in them, we somehow whipped ourselves into shape as a Divisional Reconnaissance Regiment.

By the end of the summer we were considered ready for service and, in September, we heard to our great joy that we would be going overseas, destination unknown, but with the Italians invading the Sudan from Eritrea, they were the obvious target - and so it proved.

By this time Will Broadfoot had been promoted and was succeeded in command by Tom Scott who joined us from the 6th Lancers.

The day eventually came for our move to Karachi. We had been issued, to our horror, with a new type of khaki shorts which some clothing expert had designed with extended anti-mosquito flaps which could be buttoned down below the knees. For some reason Tom Scott decided to wear his in the "long" position and his Adjutant, Ronnie Coaker, loyally followed his example, but when these two very tall and thin men appeared in this garb there was a big laugh all round which helped to break the tension before we marched off.

As Q.M. I had advance-loaded the vehicles, stores, and ammunition the day beforehand, but a sudden attack of dysentery caused my absence when the last items were being put on the train and, as will be seen later, this nearly prevented our departure.

The local infantry battalion had sent a brass band to play us to the station but Tom, thinking it would help us, told the Bandmaster to keep the pace slow. Unfortunately this was overdone and our column straggled along at a funeral pace like Chelsea Pensioners but all out of step and loaded down in our unfamiliar web equipment - worn for the first time. It was certainly an embarrassing start.

All our friends and relatives in Rawalpindi were at the station to wave goodbye and, as the band struck up "Auld Lang Syne", the Guard blew his whistle, the engine hooted and chuffed - but the train didn't move!

What had happened was that, unknown to me, the ammunition had all been put at one end of the last van and the extra weight had locked the wheels solid.

The Station Master said the ammunition would all have to be reloaded but, when I explained this to the C.O., Tom's enormous bushy eyebrows bristled and he said, "It's your bloody fault and I don't care if the train catches fire but you have got to get it out of this station somehow at once". The railway staff was so "gabao-ed" by Tom's anger that someone persuaded the driver to give his engine more "stick" and we slowly crept out of Rawalpindi with the wheels of the baggage van skidding along in sparks and smoke. Two miles further on we stopped at a

siding - discreetly out of sight of our well-wishers - to reload the ammunition. There were no further incidents and I.H. finally embarked and went off to war on September 20th, 1940.

(The preceding article first appeared in an edition of the Skinner's Horse Retired Officers' Newsletter)

