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1ST GURKHA (RIFLE) REGIMENT ACTION AT WANA 1894

Colonel J R Cawthorne

Just before dawn on the 3rd November 1894, an estimated 500 fanatical Mahsud Waziris attacked the Waziristan Delimitation Escort at Wana on the North West Frontier. The brunt of the assault and fighting fell upon the 1st Battalion 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment. Astride the main axis of the attack on the camp, the Gurkhas sought to halt and throw back the fast and furious onslaught of the rebel tribesmen. As dawn broke, the attack petered out and the tribesmen retired, having inflicted 120 casualties on the Government forces. The 1st Gurkhas suffered over 50% of the total dead and wounded - their heaviest battle casualties in a single action since being raised in 1815. In recognition of their gallantry, they received a high number of awards for this action. The India General Service Medal 1854 was also awarded, for the last time, to the Escort and those forces committed to the subsequent punitive expedition mounted as a result of the attack. This is the account of the 1st Gurkha (Rifles) Regiment's action at Wana in 1894.

In October 1893, a Mission under Sir Mortimer Durand (Foreign Secretary to the Viceroy) went to Kabul at the invitation of the Amir. Agreement was reached by which Afghanistan relinquished all claims to Waziristan and to demarcate the boundary between Afghanistan and India; and so, by eliminating the no-man's land between the two countries, determine which frontier tribes fell within whose sphere of influence. The demarcation was to be undertaken by a joint Commission during 1894-6 and became known as the Durand Line. It was a compromise between divergent claims. The line was drawn somewhat arbitrary and did not take full account of the interests of the tribes, some of which were split in two. Preparations began in early 1894 for demarcating the new boundary.

As the attitude of the tribesmen was uncertain, it was decided to place a large force on the frontier during the delineation. It was also considered a favourable occasion on which to accept a recently received invitation from the Wana Waziris to take over and administer their country.

The British and Afghan Commissioners agreed to meet and start work in Southern Waziristan at Domandi on the Gomal River in October 1894.¹ A proclamation was issued to the Wazirs describing the line agreed upon and informing them that the Government had no intention of interfering with their internal affairs. Large "jirgas"² assembled to discuss the situation, and for the most part appeared to be prepared to receive the Commission in a friendly spirit.

The Escort to the Commission consisted of:

- Squadron 1st (Prince Albert Victor's Own) Punjab Cavalry
- No 3 (Peshawar) Mountain Battery (6 guns)

¹ See map

² Assembly of tribal representatives or elders

- No 2 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners
- 3rd Regiment of Sikh Infantry
- 20th (The Duke of Cambridge's Own Punjab) Regiment of Bengal Infantry
- 1st Battalion 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment

The Escort, under the command of Brigadier General A H Turner, concentrated at Dera Ismail Khan at the beginning of October. The 1st Battalion, 1st Gurkhas, under Major G H Robinson (Officiating Commandant), reinforced by F Company 2nd Battalion 1st Gurkhas, started from their homestation Dharmsala on the 22nd September, with a strength of 9 British Officers, 15 Gurkha Officers and 724 rank and file, and reached Dera Ismail Khan on the 29th September. The Escort left Dera Ismail Khan between 11th and 13th October for Wana and were joined en route by members of the Commission.

Wana, which was to be the Commission's headquarters, was reached on the 25th October. For political reasons the camp was pitched at the eastern end of the Wana plain, a stony open expanse measuring 13 miles long and 11 miles wide. From the time the troops reached Wana, it was apparent that individual Waziris were out to make trouble and the camp was fired into nightly. A naick of 1st Gurkhas was the first battle casualty, being severely wounded on the 25th October by sniper fire.

Reports were received on 28th October of a large gathering of Mahsud Waziris, under the leadership of the fanatical Mullah Powindah, with the intention of attacking the camp at Wana or harassing convoys. Reconnaissance was conducted on the 30th October and 2nd November. Other than sporadic sniping there was no opposition. With the news of the Mullah and his swelling band of followers getting closer, picquets were doubled and troops ordered to be under arms in their tents at 4 a.m. On the 2nd November, messengers came in from the Mullah but they were informed by the British Joint Commissioner that no dealings could take place with him except through the "jirga" and that he should break up his following and return home.

The Escort's camp was situated to the west of the Toi River between two large ravines running east to west. The civil camp of the Commission was located separately in order to allow free access by the "jirgas". The troops were quartered in a line of tented camps running nearly east to west and facing north. Because the political officers only anticipated raids or annoyance from small bands, the camp was pitched primarily to meet administrative and sanitary requirements as opposed to defence. The 1st Gurkhas were quartered to the extreme left or west of the military camp.

The whole camp was surrounded by a chain of observation picquets, which were not intended to withstand a determined attack. The 1st Gurkhas furnished No 8½, 9, 10, the "Bogey" and No 11 picquets. In the event of an attack, the picquets were instructed to raise the alarm and fall back on their respective supports, which in turn would retire onto the main body. The support for No 8½ and 9 picquets, however, were ordered to stand fast and hold its position. To the north east of the camp, a deserted fort was occupied by 100 rifles H Company (commanded by Captain Powell³) 1st Gurkhas. Their orders were to remain concealed and if an attempt was made by the enemy to attack the camp from that direction, they were to engage them in the rear. If an attack was made on the left of the camp they were to try and cut off any of the enemy retreating by the River Toi valley.

³ Major General Sir Charles Powell KCB, Colonel 1st Gurkhas 1916-1943

The night of the 2nd-3rd November, which was very dark (the moon having gone down by 10 p.m.), passed quietly. Captain Powell, commander of the 1st Gurkhas detachment in the deserted fort, had seen the blaze of a big bonfire on the ridge across the river in the early evening and again between 4 and 5 a. m. It was realized later that the light from the bonfire was to give the tribesmen the line to attack along. At 4 a. m. all the troops were again stood-to in their tents wearing accoutrements.

At about 5.15 a.m. the whole camp was suddenly aroused by the sound of three shots followed by wild yells and the beating of drums. At the same time a desperate rush of some 500 determined fanatics, supported by heavy fire, was made straight into the left flank and left rear of the camp, defended by the 1st Gurkhas. So rapid was the rush that before the Gurkhas could get out of their tents, the leading enemy elements had penetrated the defence perimeter and had reached the rear of the field hospitals, commissariat and cavalry lines.

Under cover of darkness, and guided by the light of the bonfire, the enemy had approached the camp from the west along the two large ravines. A Gurkha, from one of the western picquets, had detected the stealthy movement of men. He was immediately sent back to warn the supports, but was killed in the sudden attack before being able to raise the alarm. Emerging from the ravines, the enemy rushed past No 9 and 10 picquets. Of the seven men holding No 10 picquet, three were killed and the remainder, after firing the three shots that aroused the camp, made their escape into the darkness. The left support, upon which No 9 picquet was to fall back, managed to check the enemy's assault and broke it into two parties, one of which joined the main attack on the left flank of the Gurkhas. The other continued down the ravine for a short distance and then turned left to the rear of the hospitals and the commissariat. Here they succeeded in inflicting much injury and damage on the unarmed followers and transport animals. Some also managed to get to the cavalry lines where they hacked at the heel ropes of the troop horses in an attempt to free them and create a stampede.

The speed of the main assault on the left flank of the camp resulted in many of the Gurkhas having to fight their way out of their tents in order to reach the alarm posts. It was in this melee in the darkness that many were killed and wounded. B and E Companies, detailed for the reserve, formed into a rallying square under Major Robinson in the centre of their camp. Fighting back-to-back and hand-to-hand they managed to stop the enemy's advance down the main route within the camp. Desperate fighting also took place in the breastwork along the north west corner of the camp, where F Company 2nd Battalion 1st Gurkhas checked the advance of the enemy along the ravine to their front. When it became apparent that the enemy's main attack was directed against the left flank of the camp, the reserve companies of 20th Bengal Infantry and 3rd Sikhs were ordered to reinforce the 1st Gurkhas, clearing the way as they advanced westwards with the bayonet. By the time the reinforcements had reached the left flank, the Gurkhas had succeeded in completely clearing the camp of rebel tribesmen.

The enemy now made two further but less determined attacks from the same direction. These were broken up by effective volley fire aided by artillery star shells.

At 6 a.m., as dawn broke, the enemy's fire slackened and they began to withdraw to the north. The squadron of Punjab Cavalry was ordered to pursue the retreating tribesmen to inflict as much damage as possible. The squadron was later joined by a mixed column of artillery, sappers and infantry, to include the 1st Gurkha detachment from the deserted fort, which

followed the enemy for some distance, inflicting further losses before returning to camp at 4 p.m.

Following the attack, the camp was in considerable disarray with casualties and equipment from both sides strewn everywhere. By the evening all the wounded had been collected into the hospitals. Several men, in collecting the wounded, were attacked by Waziris lying themselves severely wounded on the ground. Work also began on improving the defences with a stone perimeter wall, a ditch on either side and appropriately positioned alarm posts and supports. During the succeeding weeks there were many false alarms at night and the camp braced itself for further attacks, but nothing happened.

It was later determined that an estimated 3000 rebel tribesmen had amassed to attack the camp, of whom half took part in the actual assaults. The remainder awaited developments, ready to join their fellow tribesmen if successful. The Escort's losses amounted to 45 killed and 75 wounded, to include camp followers. Over half the casualties were the result of sword cuts, highlighting the close quarter fighting that took place. The enemy also killed, wounded, set free or captured over 100 horses and pack animals as well as carrying off Rs 2,600 in cash from the Commissariat Agent's treasure chest and a number of rifles. The enemy's losses amounted to approximately 350 killed, an unknown number wounded and ten prisoners.

The majority of the fighting had fallen to 1st Gurkhas. Of their conduct, the Commander Waziristan Delimitation Escort wrote in his Despatch:

"The brunt of the fighting fell on the 1st Gurkhas. This Regiment, although taken at a disadvantage, behaved with the utmost gallantry and steadiness, and succeeded after severe hand-to-hand fighting in clearing the camp of the enemy. The whole of the troops displayed excellent discipline, and a noticeable feature of the fight was the perfect order and absence of all confusion in the camp under very trying circumstances; there was little wild firing, and in the parts of the camp, not directly attacked, there was no firing at imaginary enemies"

Telegrams of praise and congratulations were also received from the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief noting "the steady stand and pluck displayed by the officers and men of the Escort".

The casualty return for 1st Gurkhas for the Wana action was two Gurkha Officers and seventeen rank and file killed in action and three British Officers (one of whom subsequently died from his wounds) and 41 rank and file wounded (of whom several died later).

The following British Officers 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment were brought to notice in the Commander Waziristan's Delimitation Escort Despatch:

Major G.H. Robinson, Commanding 1st Battalion, 1st Gurkha Rifles, for the steady bravery and resolution with which he held his own on the first assault, and rapidly restored order to his regiment, repelling all further attempts of the enemy.

Lieutenant and Adjutant R.D. Angelo, 1st Gurkhas, as being conspicuous in getting his men together, and encouraging them to do their duty.

Lieutenant C. Herbert, 1st Gurkhas, who behaved with gallantry under trying circumstances, his command being attacked in front and rear whilst extended in single rank.

Efforts were now made to impose terms upon the rebel Mahsuds and bring about a peaceful settlement. Preparations were concurrently set in motion to assemble a punitive expedition into Mahsud territory. The Waziristan Field Force, incorporating the Delimitation Escort, was formed under the command of Lieutenant General Sir William Lockhart. By mid-December, with the failure of the Mahsuds to comply with the Government's terms, the Waziristan Field Force advanced with three columns into Mahsud territory. Minimum opposition was encountered by the columns as they destroyed hostile villages and confiscated property and livestock. Snow and intense cold were the main enemy faced by the troops. By late January 1895, the Mahsuds had finally agreed to the terms imposed upon them. The Waziristan Field Force was broken up at the end of March 1895 and 1st Battalion 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment returned to Dharmasala. The task of demarcation of the frontier was then continued without further interruption.

For their gallantry, the following awards were bestowed upon the 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment:

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel:

- Major G.H. Robinson

Distinguished Service Order:

- Lieutenant C. Herbert

Indian Order of Merit (3rd Class)

- Havildar Balbahadur Gurung
- Naick Lahman Thapa
- Naick Hira Sing Thapa
- Bugler Dhan Sing Bhandari
- Sepoy Gubdu Gurung
- Sepoy Nar Sing Gharti
- Sepoy Basu Gurung
- 2nd Class Hospital Assistant Ganuram Newar

The India General Service Medal 1854 clasp WAZHUSTAN 1894-5 was granted to all troops and followers who had taken part in operations between 22nd October 1894 and 13th March 1895.

Acknowledgements:

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TABLE 1

LIST OF OFFICERS 1ST GURKHA (RIFLE) REGIMENT PRESENT AT THE ACTION AT WANA 3RD NOVEMBER 1894 AND SUBSEQUENT WAZIRISTAN EXPEDITION 1894-5

- Major G.H. Robinson - Officiating Commandant 1st Battalion. Awarded Brevet Lieutenant Colonel for action at Wana. Commandant 2nd Battalion (1900-1905). Died 1906
- Captain H.C. Powell - Commandant 1st Battalion (1903-1907). Colonel of Regiment (1916-1943)
- Captain C.L. Crommelin - Transferred to 9th Gurkha Rifles (1903)
- Captain A.G.B. Lang - Severely wounded at Wana. Commandant 1st Battalion (1907-1912)
- Captain G. S. Ommaney - 2nd Battalion. Transferred to 3rd Gurkha Rifles (1903)
- Lieutenant R.D. Angelo – Adjutant. Died of wounds received at Wana 30th November 1894
- Lieutenant E.D. Money - Commandant 2nd Battalion (1915-1918)
- Lieutenant H.F. Bateman-Champain - 2nd Battalion. Transferred to 9th Gurkha Rifles (1905)
- Lieutenant E.M. Lang
- Lieutenant C. Herbert - Awarded DSO for action at Wana. Dangerously wounded. Unfit for further active service. Transferred to Cantonment Magistrates' Department
- Lieutenant T.J. McLeod - Transferred to 7th Gurkhas (1907)

TABLE 2

1ST GURKHA (RIFLE) REGIMENT ACTION AT WANA 3RD NOVEMBER 1895 - CASUALTY RETURN

Abbreviations:

- Gunshot wound gsw
- Sword wound sw

Killed in action

- Subadar Padam Singh Rana gsw

- Jemadar Kharak Singh Nagarkoti gsw
- 2955 Sepoy Mustbir Roka gsw
- 1012 Sepoy Karnbir Burathokie gsw
- 1196 Sepoy Paimen Rana gsw
- 693 Sepoy Punbheader Alia gsw
- 2958 Sepoy Binder Singh Thapa sw
- 770 Sepoy Bahadur Gurung sw
- 1042 Sepoy Pahul Sing Thapa sw
- 1264 Sepoy Tikaram Thapa sw
- 186 Lance Naick Narbin Pun gsw
- 1192 Sepoy Man Sing Gurung sw
- 1270 Sepoy Kharkbir Ghartie sw
- 1142 Sepoy Dalkham Alia gsw
- 112 Lance Naick Judbir Thapa gsw
- 180 Lance Naick Harri Thapa sw
- 970 Sepoy Jiram Rai gsw
- 1239 Sepoy Dalbahadur Thapa sw
- 1141 Sepoy Gafbir Rana gsw
-

Wounded in action

- Captain A.G.B. Lang gsw
- Lieutenant R.D. Angelo gsw (subsequently died of wounds)
- Lieutenant C. Herbert gsw
- 2948 Havildar Hastin Gurung gsw
- 2916 Havildar Ramdat Sahaie gsw
- 203 Naick Nain Sing Thapa sw
- 170 Naick Rambir Khawas
- 2579 Sepoy Hansbir Thapa sw
- 2984 Sepoy Kirpen Thapa sw
- 697 Sepoy Ganea Gurung gsw
- 1146 Sepoy Rukmagat Rana
- 1271 Sepoy Kabir Gurung sw
- 1166 Sepoy Mania Thapa
- 124 Sepoy Bakht Sing Gurung sw
- 174 Lance Naick Chitarbir Thapa gsw
- 285 Sepoy Narhari Ghartie sw
- 1039 Sepoy Indarbir Thapa
- 1006 Sepoy Gokal Gharti
- 1060 Sepoy Mubir Burathokie
- 3006 Sepoy Wazir Sing Thapa gsw
- 984 Sepoy Kabir Gurung sw
- 2782 Sepoy Rania Thapa sw
- 350 Lance Naick Kulman Sing Thapa gsw
- 718 Sepoy Tania Gurung sw
- 736 Sepoy Bahadur Thapa sw
- 1058 Sepoy Mania Rana sw
- 1001 Sepoy Jasram Burathokie gsw
- 1105 Sepoy Ranbahadur Thapa sw

- 1163 Sepoy Lachman Thapa sw
- 1235 Sepoy Shadeo Thapa sw
- 1282 Sepoy Bhagtea Thapa gsw
- 669 Sepoy Purdal Gurung sw
- 3031 Sepoy Birkhdoj Gurung sw
- 541 Sepoy Kabir Gurung sw
- 680 Sepoy Kabir Gurung sw
- 1248 Sepoy Ganj Sing Gurung
- 1251 Sepoy Bhadarbir Thapa sw
- 175 Sepoy Bahadur Thapa
- 576 Sepoy Bhimbal Alia gsw
- 610 Sepoy Gorla Gurung gsw
- 657 Sepoy Kalu Nagarkotie gsw
- 1081 Sepoy Dulbir Pun
- 1118 Sepoy Rajpal Rai sw
- 1346 Sepoy Purnea Thapa gsw

TABLE 3

CITATIONS OF INDIAN ORDER OF MERIT (3RD CLASS) AWARDED TO 1ST GURKHA RIFLE REGIMENT FOR THE ACTION AT WANA 3RD NOVEMBER 1894

368 Havildar Balbahadur Gurung (1st Battalion)

- "During the attack on the camp, held his post in charge of mess stores, shooting three Ghazis, and thereby enabling the unarmed servants to effect their escape"

29 Naick Lachman Thapa (1st Battalion)

- "Defended the field hospital of the camp at Wana with six men against great odds, and saved lives by his firm stand"

67 Naick Hira Singh Thapa (1st Battalion)

- "Did his best in the mule lines to protect the mule lines and drivers from some Ghazis who attacked them, and four of whom he killed".

2907 Bugler Dhan Sing Bhandari (1st Battalion)

- "Saved the life of Sepoy Birkboj Gurung, when the latter was wounded, by taking his rifle and shooting at a Waziri, and recovering from him a Government Martini-Henri rifle which he had stolen".

1047 Sepoy Gubdu Gurung (1st Battalion)

- "As Lieutenant Angelo's orderly, stayed with that officer and protected him when wounded, regardless of the danger he ran from the Ghazis who were fighting all around".

48 Sepoy Nar Singh Gharti (1st Battalion)

- "Carried a box of reserve ammunition to his company through a number of Ghazis, and endeavouring on the way to save the life of Sepoy Mastabri Roka of his company, who was hacking at him"

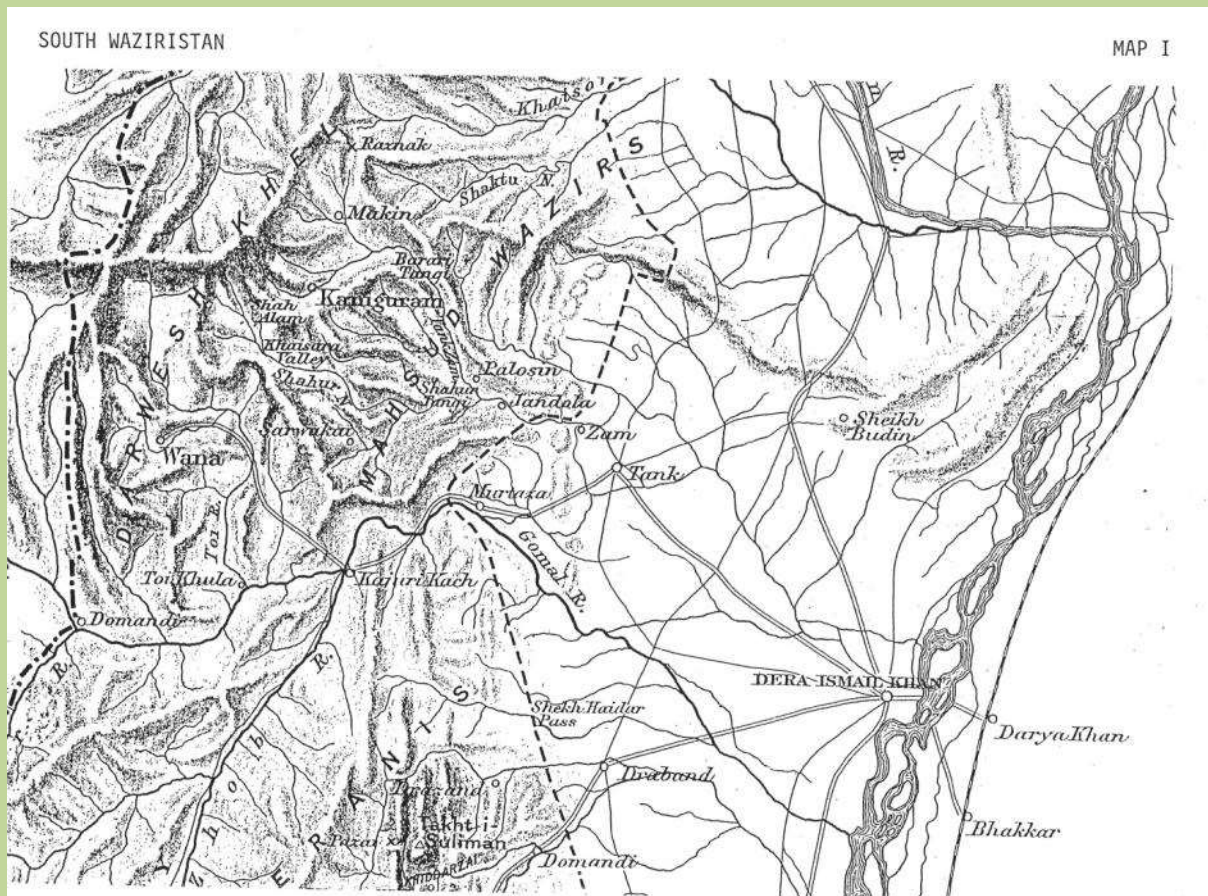
1041 Sepoy Basu Gurung (2nd Battalion)

- "Displayed faithfulness and devotion to a wounded officer when he himself was wounded".

2nd Class Hospital Assistant Ganuram Mewar

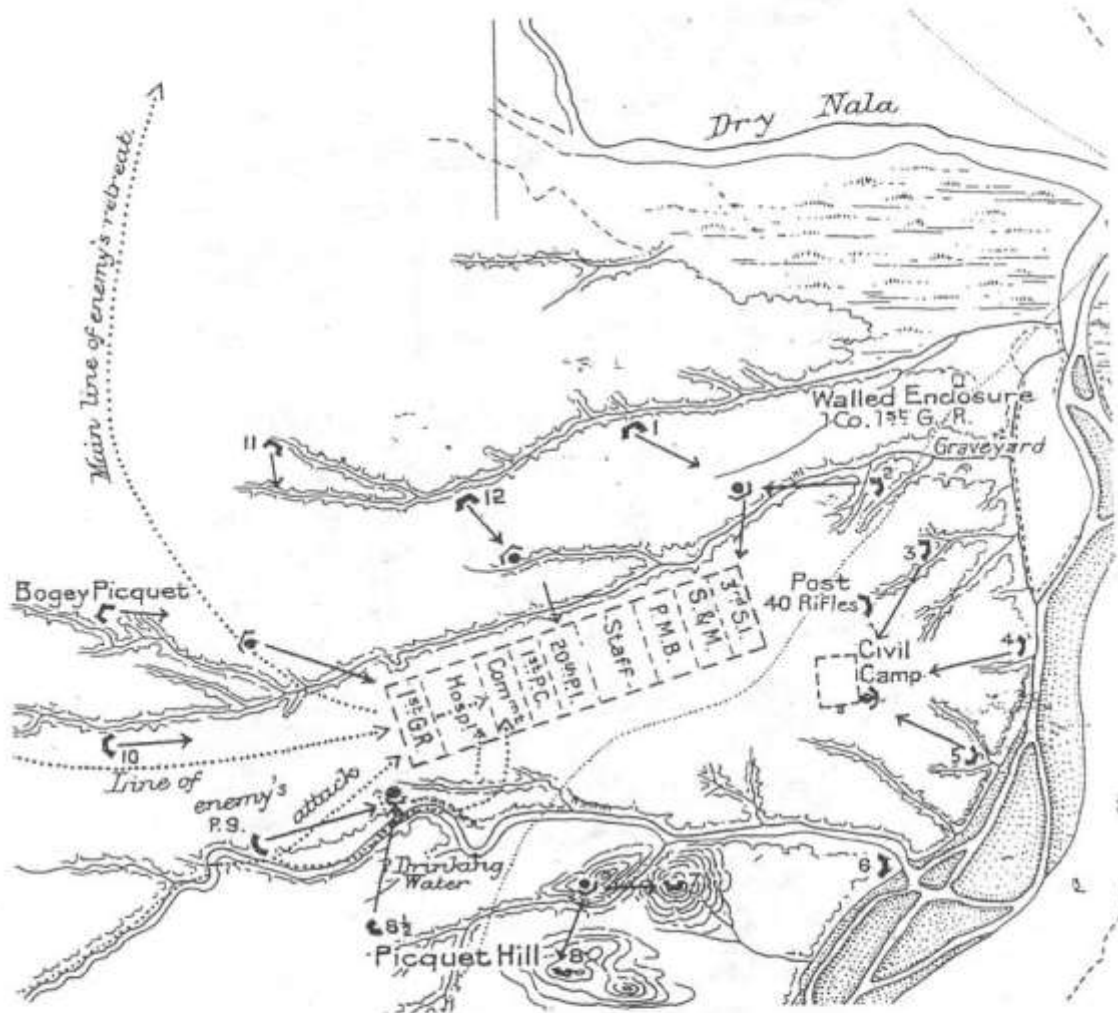
- "Shown gallantry and coolness in searching for and attending the wounded at a time when the enemy were in large numbers in the camp, being quite alone".

Note. In addition to the eight Indian Orders of Merit awarded to 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment, four were awarded to 1st (Prince Albert Victor's Own) Regiment of Punjab Cavalry and one to a sepoy attached to the Field Hospital.



TO ILLUSTRATE ATTACK BY MAHSUD WAZIRIS
ON NOVEMBER 3RD 1894.

MAP II



REFERENCE

| | | | |
|--|--------|--------|----|
| Picquet No. 10 | | | 10 |
| Supports | | | 11 |
| Line of Retirement of Picquets and Supports | | → | |
| Line of Enemy's attack | |→ | |

"THE BRITISH FOREIGN LEGION", 109th FOOT

Peter Chapman

We all know that during the 19th Century the sub-continent was peopled by soldiers from armies other than Britain's. Nonetheless it is still fascinating that, as late as 1866, the 109th Foot (15 years later the 2nd Leinsters) was half German.

This unique state of affairs was recalled in 1935 by an old soldier, Mark Emeny, an Ipswich man who, having enlisted at Chatham in 1866 and joined his regiment in India via The Cape, discovered to his amazement that 500 out of the 109th's complement of 900 were Germans. More than half the officers were German, and although the Colonel and senior Major were British, several company commanders were German, the adjutant and the RSM were both named Schmitt and the QM and musketry instructor were Germans.

Most of the orders, Emery recalled, were given in English because the Germans had complete command of the language. But to compound problems, the remainder of the men received their orders in Irish. Not for nothing therefore was the 109th Foot known colloquially as The British Foreign Legion.

The reason for this extraordinary state of affairs was that in 1860, the 109th (then the 3rd Bombay European Infantry BEIC) was joined by 500 men of the Jaeger Corps from the Cape who had volunteered for service in India on the outbreak of the Mutiny. Their arrival after the event presumably hints that officialdom's wheels ground exceedingly slow.

In 1862 the 3rd BEI became the 109th and, in 1881, the 2nd Leinsters.

Emeny, reminiscing in 1935, said the Germans were very good soldiers, many with long service, who had fought well both in the Crimea and the Mutiny. They were disciplined, peaceful and good tradesmen. For this reason there was little chance of a mere Englishman getting promoted and Emeny was to transfer to the 33rd Foot and subsequently soldiered in Abyssinia.

As late as 1877, Hart's Army List reveals that the 109th had not shaken off their Foreign Legion tag. Bt Lt Col (Major) August Schmid, who had entered the army directly as a Captain in 1862, was then AAG and also in the Mess was Capt Oscar Schmidt. The former had been in the Schleswig Holstein Army and had fought in numerous engagements of the 1st Danish War of 1848-50 ..."and" says Hart's "has the Schleswig Holstein decoration". One thinks in vain of a group containing medals from the Danish Wars and the Mutiny or Crimea. And to a German.

As for Emeny he served a further seven years in India, marching with his regiment 999 miles from Delhi to Calcutta along the Grand Trunk Road to welcome the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), and was demobbed in 1877. He joined the Suffolk Constabulary (so many old soldiers became Bobbies) and later in life became a gardener in Yorkshire. Finally (also like too many old soldiers) he finished up in the workhouse (Scarborough in his case).

Footnote: In view of the long and strong German connection it is perhaps not surprising that, in 1871, the 103rd were presented with new Colours by the Crown Princess of Germany at Parkhurst, on the Isle of Wight, where the regiment was quartered. Also present on this

occasion was the future Kaiser Wilhelm II then aged 12. It was, he wrote, "a touching ceremony of earnest significance".

RASHTRIYA RIFLES

Richard Head

In October 1990 the Indian Army began raising a new para military regiment, The Rashtriya Rifles. Initially six battalions were raised and in May 1994 authority was given to increase the force to thirty six battalions. This is the first para military force to be raised by the Ministry of Defence, other such organisations coming under national or state control.

There are several unusual features about the organisation of the Rashtriya Rifles. All personnel are on deputation from regiments and corps of the Indian Army. There is no regimental centre as yet and, since the personnel are on deputation, their records are maintained by their parent regiment. Originally it was planned to recruit ex-servicemen but this has not been implemented to date. Battalions are raised by Army regimental and corps centres, usually in two months. The battalions are grouped in Sector Headquarters of three battalions. Recruitment is on an all class basis. Training, organisation and equipment are on similar lines to the Army.

The role of this new force is to relieve the Army from frequent deployment in counter insurgency, maintenance of law and order, protection of vital areas and positions. For some time the Army has been unhappy with its involvement in this type of activity, to the detriment of its training and its standing in the community.

The battalions have been actively engaged in Jammu and Kashmir and in the border districts of the Punjab. Rashtriya translates as Federal or National.



NOTE: The badge is in anodized aluminium. The striking is not of good quality.

INDIAN CAVALRY 1857-1861

14th BENGAL IRREGULAR CAVALRY

C.J. Parrett

Continuing the series, herewith the fact sheet for 14th Bengal Irregular Cavalry. Its Mutiny record is not very full and unfortunately I can find absolutely nothing on Indian officers and rankers - which is what really interests me.

(Editor's Note: For the benefit of more recently joined members, Cliff Parrett started this series in 1989 (Vol. 6, No 1) with the aim of following the evolution of Indian cavalry regiments during the turmoil of the Indian Mutiny and its aftermath by producing for each appropriate unit a summary of Mutiny medal claims, and a brief history from the outbreak of the Mutiny in May 1857 to the reorganisation of May 1861)

14th Bengal Irregular Cavalry IOL L/MIL/5 reference (None traced)

Total known claims Nil

COMMENTS ON HISTORY OF REGIMENT 1857-1861

The mutiny of the HQ and Right Wing of the 14Bgl IC at Jhansi on 6 June 1857 was one of the more violent recorded. Having generally plundered and ransacked the town and released prisoners from the jail, they were foremost in the subsequent massacre of the European fugitives sheltering in the fort. The Left Wing joined the general mutiny at Nowgong on 10 June. Thereafter some of the 14Bgl IC joined Nana's force investing Cawnpore; others made their way to Delhi to join the main rebel army. There is no evidence to show that the 14Bgl IC ever served with the mutineers as an organised regiment. Remnants are known to have been with the force thrashed by Hodson at Rohtak on 18 Aug 1857; some others reported to be at Farrackabad in the following September melted away as a British column advanced into Aligarh. There is no further record of the 14Bgl IC which, due to its savage mutiny, was never considered for reconstitution. Its British officers were fortunate to survive the Mutiny. Capt Hercules Skinner, third son of Colonel James Skinner and Commandant of the 14Bgl IC, was on furlough when it mutinied. Employment had been found for Hercules in 1841 as a "Local Lieutenant" with the Hyderabad Contingent and then, in 1851, as a favour to his father, he was elevated to the Unattached List as a Captain. In January 1852 he inherited the command of 14Bgl IC from James, his elder brother. The 14Bgl IC's 2nd-in-command, Captain Charles Robarts, was on furlough at the very same time. It is recorded that, having predicted the Mutiny, he "took leave in Europe in disgust that his prophecy was not attended to" (Regimental History - 17 Bgl Lancers). Thus Robarts did not serve in the Mutiny, although he formed Robarts' Regiment of Horse in November 1858 which, apart from its Afghani nucleus enlisted by Robarts himself, took in The Meerut Military Police and Lieut Charles Adolphus de Kantzow's Rohilkand Auxiliary Police Levy, both having been in action against the mutineers on more than one occasion. It seems that only the adjutant, Lieutenant Edmund Tyrwhitt, and Assistant Surgeon Sgt George Tucker, were at Jhansi when the 14Bgl IC mutinied. They both managed to escape. Tucker had been appointed Civil Surgeon for Jhansi by January 1858, although he could not have taken up his duties fully until this important fortified city in Central India had been recovered from rebel control by Sir Hugh Rose's Central India Field Force in April 1858. Tyrwhitt served first as Adjutant of the Meerut Volunteer Horse (the so-called "Khakee Ressalah") from June 1857, and then commanded the Meerut District Police. When the latter was absorbed into Robarts' Horse, Tyrwhitt continued in the Meerut District as Deputy Inspector of Police, a post which he held for several years. There is no trace of a 14Bgl IC roll and so, for want of any evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to conclude that no medals were claimed on a roll specific to this regiment. The two British officers entitled to medals, Tyrwhitt and Tucker, would have

entered their claims on the rolls of other units with which they subsequently served against rebel forces during the prescribed period. The same applies to native officers and troopers although there is no record of any loyal remnants.

TWO UNIDENTIFIED SHOULDER FLASHES

Tony McClenaghan

Richard Head and I have just returned from a three week research trip to India, concentrating on our shared interest in the Indian State Forces. It was very successful and I hope we will be able to offer a number of articles of general interest to IMHS members. As a starter I offer these shoulder flashes photographed amongst the personal possessions of the late Maharaja of Jaipur, His Highness Lieutenant General Sir Sawai Man Singh II, GCSI, GCIE, LLD. I also include a photograph of the Maharaja wearing military uniform with flash No 1 clearly visible on his right arm. I am unable to say whether flash No 2 was worn on the left arm.

Flash No 1

The top part of the flash is dark blue, the bottom shield red. The devices on it are in gold coloured embroidery. Clearly the sun in splendour on the top part is taken from Jaipur, but the device on the bottom shield is British in its design.

Flash No 2

Again, the top part of the flash is dark blue, the bottom shield red. The sun in splendour and the GR cypher are in gold coloured embroidery.

Were these flashes unique to the Maharaja? Did flash No 1 signify his honorary rank as Lieutenant General? If so, did other Maharaja's who carried similar honorary rank wear such flashes with their own State devices on the top part of the flash? I am not aware that the Maharaja of Jaipur was appointed ADC to King George VI but that might be an explanation for flash No 2. Has any member of the Society seen similar photographs of ruling princes in uniform with devices such as these? I would be interested to hear.





BOOK REVIEW

● *HISTORY OF THE MACGREGOR MEMORIAL MEDALS 1889-1989*. Major Robert Hamond, Lancer Paperbacks.

Major Robert Hamond has presented the Society with a copy of his recently published book on the medal instituted in 1888 by the United Service Institution of India in memory of its Founder, Major General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor KCB CSI CIE.

It was intended that the medal should be awarded annually for the best military reconnaissance, journey of exploration or survey in remote areas of India, or in countries bordering or under the jurisdiction of India, which produced new information of value for the defence of India.

In the 100 years from 1889-1989 seven gold medals were awarded, all to officers and 59 standard size silver medals to 58 officers (one officer gaining the award twice). From 1889-1944 forty eight reduced size silver medals were awarded to NCOs and soldiers, though none has been awarded since 1944. The author won the silver medal in 1939 for recess/route

surveys in Western Tibet and was, up to 1947, the youngest officer to have been awarded a medal.

Information about awards of the MacGregor Memorial Medal has hitherto been limited to a list of medallists, a description of the medal and the rules of award (we published a short article on the medal in Vol. 2, No 3, Summer 1985, pp. 2-4).

Major Hamond has researched medallists' journeys as well as including a description of the medal, an updated and clarified version of the rules of award, and a character study of MacGregor. There are still gaps in the information about medallists' work, especially in relation to awards to NCOs and soldiers. In the case of some officer recipients the secret nature of their work has never been made public; in the case of NCOs and soldiers, they probably did not write lengthy reports anyway. Despite the gaps, however, this is a pioneering work, an enjoyable read and a useful reference work on which to build further research.

A.N.M.

LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Patric Emerson has written to me about my article on the Bikaner State Forces (Vol. 11, No 4, page 142) in which I mentioned Captain Walker, 4th Gurkhas, receiving the Victoria Cross. I did not mention Captain Rolland, 1st Grenadiers, who also won the VC and Patric enclosed an extract from "*The Grenadiers*" which I reproduce here.

THREE MORE VICTORIA CROSSES WON

Two officers of the 1st Grenadiers, viz., Lieutenant G.M. Rolland and Lieutenant H.A. Carter were awarded the Victoria Cross. Thus, including Lieutenant Colonel C.J. Melliss VC, there were three VC holders serving with the 1st Grenadiers in Somaliland. The fourth officer to earn the Victoria Cross was Captain W G Walker (ex 4th Gurkha Rifles), then serving with the Bikaner Camel Corps. Rolland and Walker were awarded their Victoria Crosses in the same action. The report submitted by their officer commanding is extracted below:-

"From the Officer Commanding Flying Column, to the Officer Commanding Lines of Communication, Bohotle.

Sir,

Danot, 23rd April 1903

I should like to bring the following incident, which occurred during our return to Danot on the afternoon of 22nd April, to the notice of the General Officer Commanding, Somaliland Field Force:-

Owing to the thick bush and the rearguard having to hold their ground while wounded men were being placed on camels, the rearguard had got considerably in rear of the column. Captain Bruce, who was with the rearguard, was shot through the body from about 20 yards and fell on the path, unable to move. With him at the time were Captain Walker, 4th Gurkha Rifles (Bikaner Camel Corps); Captain Rolland, Intelligence Officer, Flying Column; two men 2nd Battalion King's African Rifles;

one Sikh and one Somali of the camel corps. In the meantime the column, being unaware of what had happened, were getting further away. Captain Rolland ran back some 500 yards and returned with help to bring off Captain Bruce, while Captain Walker and the men remained with Captain Bruce, keeping off the enemy, who were all around in the thick bush. This they successfully accomplished, but not before Captain Bruce was hit a second time and the Sikh wounded. But for their gallant conduct Captain Bruce must have fallen into the hands of the enemy.

I beg to submit the names of the officers for the Victoria Cross, and the men of the 2nd Battalion King's African Rifles and 6th Battalion King's African Rifles for the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Sikh for the Order of Merit.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
J.E. Gough, Major,
Officer Commanding Flying Column".

Captains Walker and Rolland were awarded the Victoria Cross *vide* London Gazette of 7th August 1903. At a later period Gough's own share in this incident was brought to notice by Brigadier General Manning and he was also awarded the Victoria Cross."

● On the subject of the same article Tim Ash took issue with my statement that Maharaja Sardar Singh personally led the Bikaner troops who besieged and relieved Hissar. Tim forwarded information drawn from the papers of George Godfrey Pearse, Madras Artillery (IOR:EUR.MSS.E.417/7) showing that it was he who was in command of the troops at Hissar. This is confirmed in "*The Relations of the House of Bikaner with the Central Powers*" by Karni Singh –

"Brig. Gen P Lawrence had deputed Lt Mildmay to lead the Bikaner troops which were to cooperate with Gen. Van Cortland in the action in the revolting districts of Sirsa, Hissar and Hansi. Lt Mildmay found the Maharaja, who was leading his own troops, very enthusiastic. A few days after the arrival of the Bikaner troops, a detachment of five hundred of them was sent by Van Cortland under the command of Lt Pearse, to occupy Hissar" (p 151).

There is no doubt that Maharaja Sardar Singh did take to the field, the only Rajputana prince to do so, but I accept that Pearse was in charge of the action at Hissar.

● As mentioned on page 27, I have just returned from a trip to India, including another visit to Bikaner, where I was able to photograph a number of regimental Colours, including that of the DUNGAR LANCERS, successors to the Rathor horse who took part in this action. The background is grey, the shield yellow with blue/red/blue bars and gold falcons, the helmet and supporters white and the scrolls red with gold lettering. Only the three on the left are filled: FIRST SIKH WAR 1845-46, SECOND SIKH WAR 1848-49, MUTINY 1857-58. The lettering on the title scroll is red. (Ed.)



● Richard Mead seeks help in resolving a problem encountered while researching the Burma campaign of 1941/2. He writes:

My father-in-law, 2nd Lt (later Capt) J L Thom, served during the retreat to India with the 8th Battalion, Burma Rifles and it is the cap badge of that unit which provides the puzzle. My father-in-law says that 8 BURIF never wore the "peacock" cap badge of the other battalions of the regiment, but instead had a badge in the form of the "Chinthe", the mythical beast later adopted by the more famous Chindits. Contemporary photographic evidence bears this out, but the quality of the photographs is not good enough to determine the details of the badge. I have never seen this fact referred to in any work on cap badges in which the only badge associated with the regiment is the "peacock".

Uniquely in the regiment, 8 BURIF did not enlist any of the indigenous peoples of Burma - Karens, Kachins, Chins or Shans, let alone Burmese. Instead it was composed of Sikhs and Punjabi Mussulmen who had transferred from the Burma Frontier Force, the battalion retaining the "FF" in its full title. To that extent it resembled more closely a typical Indian battalion of, say, one of the Punjab regiments. From the photographs in my possession, the badge bears a resemblance to that of the 8th Punjab Regiment, but I have seen nothing to connect the two. The closest that I can get is that Brigadier Bourke, commander of 2nd Burma Brigade, in which 8 BURIF served during the retreat, had previously been CO of 4/8 Punjab and may well have been commissioned into that regiment. Was there some other connection between the two regiments (for instance, 5/8 Punjab had been formed in 1922

from the 93rd Burma Infantry and continued to bear the "Burma" title)? Was the cap badge derived from that of the Burma Frontier Force? Or is there some other explanation?

I would be very grateful if a member of IMHS could solve this puzzle. A description of the badge, or better still a picture, would be most helpful together with any comments such as when the badge ceased to be worn.

