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ARTILLERY RANKS

Further to my note in the Summer 1998 issue (Vol. 15, No 2, pages 45-47, the following responses were received:

● Alan Wolfe

“*HOBSON-JOBSON*” by Colonel Henry Yule and A C Burnell provides the following definition of LASCAR. “The word is originally from the Pers. *lashkar* ‘an army’, ‘a camp’. This is usually derived from Ar. *al’askar* but it would rather seem that Ar. ‘*askar*, ‘an army’ is taken from this Pers. word: whence *lashkari*, ‘one belonging to an army, a soldier’. The word *lascar* appears to have been corrupted, through the Portuguese.....and from these *laskar* has passed back again into native use in this corrupt shape. The early Portuguese writers have the form.....in the sense of ‘soldier’; but *lascar* is never so used now. It is in general the equivalent of *khalasi* in the various senses of that word, viz. (1) an inferior class of artilleryman (‘*gun-lascar*’); (2) a tent-pitcher, doing other work which the class are accustomed to; (3) a sailor. The last is the most common Anglo-Indian usage, and has passed into the English language.....”

From the above it is clear that the term Lascar is equivalent in usage to Khalassi but not a corruption of that word, as stated in “*Battles and Medals*”.

● Brian Stevens

Three types of Lascar existed, or had existed, in the pre-1857 Bengal Army, these being Gun Lascars and the associated Store or Magazine Lascars employed in the various Magazines and Arsenals and those Lascars who formed part of the Regimental Quartermaster’s Department and other similar establishments.

In the early days of the HEIC guns were moved by bullocks, not exactly the ideal animal for rapid movement, and the guns needed to be man-handled into action. The shortage of European Artillerymen and the deadly climate precluded their being used continually in this manner and this led to the use of the Indian auxiliaries known as Gun Lascars to provide the manpower for getting guns into action. Also the clumsy construction of contemporary gun carriages necessitated the use of large numbers of men. Older members may remember the large number of sailors required to pull or control the gun carriages used for the funerals of Kings George V and George VI, even on modern roads and with up-to-date carriages.

Whilst it is true to say that Gun Lascars could, in emergency, be employed as Artillerymen, that was not their intended role and they were considered as an inferior status by Golundauze who usually, when offered the alternative of taking their discharge or being enrolled as Gun Lascars, took the first option. That said, as will be seen, Gun Lascars were recruited as Golundauze when new companies of Native Artillery were being raised.

Gun Lascars also appear to have been used as ammunition numbers and in the early 1800s two of them rode on the limbers, as a report from the Commandant of Artillery deprecates this practice. This, in fact, referred to Lascars attached to the Galloper Guns with each regiment of cavalry. In this connection it should, perhaps, be mentioned that batteries in the modern sense did not exist. Guns in the proportion of two 6-pounders were attached to each battalion of infantry and were known as battalion guns. A group of two guns was usually referred to as a Brigade. Guns attached to cavalry regiments were designated Gallopers.

The number of companies fluctuated, but in 1770 the existing 4 companies of European Artillery each required 7 Lascar companies, or 28 companies in all.

In 1779 each company of European Artillery had a six-company strong battalion of Gun Lascars attached. Each company consisted of 1 Serang, 2 Tindals, 2 Cossibs and 50 Lascars - in total 6 Serangs, 12 Tindals and Cossibs and 300 Lascars.

In 1786 an Establishment of 30 Companies of Gun Lascars, two each for the fifteen European Artillery Companies, was authorized¹ each of 1 Serang, two 1st and two 2nd Tindals and 50 Lascars. (It will be noted that between 1780 and 1786 the terms 1st and 2nd Tindals were substituted for Tindal and Cossib, but I have not been able to locate the authority for this.)

A General Order issued in 1787 laid down a minimum height of 5 feet 6 inches. In 1798² the number of Privates was increased to 70 per company. In 1802 an augmentation of six companies of European Artillery should have led to an increase in the number of Gun Lascar Companies to 42 but this took many years to accomplish. Four Orders issued in August and September 1803 authorized the raising of the 31st to 34th Companies. A Return prepared in 1806 shows 36 Companies in existence. The 1806 Return noted that for each Brigade of two 6-pounder guns attached to infantry battalions 28 Lascar Privates were required.

When the 37th to 39th Companies were raised is uncertain, but in February 1809 orders³ were issued for the raising of the 40th to 42nd Companies. (In passing, it might be of interest to note that a Lascar Private was mentioned in General Orders by name in respect of an act of gallantry during the war with Nepal.)

Although it was laid down that each European Artillery Company should have 2 Gun Lascar Companies attached, this was a fairly flexible arrangement as reference to the various annual Bengal Military Statements show some companies without a single Lascar Company whilst others had three or more under command.

In 1809⁴ the existing Experimental Troop of Horse Artillery was expanded into three permanent Troops, each of which included a Gun Lascar detail of 1 Serang, 2 Tindals and 24 Privates, but these do not appear to have been provided by the regular Gun Lascar companies.

In 1810⁵ orders were issued for furnishing each Gun Lascar Company with 75 swords. These instructions were amplified in a G.O.G.G. dated 21 February and a G.O.G.G. dated 6 March 1813. In 1813⁶ certain amendments to the Establishment of the Horse Artillery were authorized and these included an addition of 6 Gun Lascars to each of the 3 Troops of Horse Artillery whenever engaged on Field Service.

In 1815⁷ three additional Companies were raised, the 43rd to 45th. This must have been due to the demands of the Nepal War.

In 1818 a General Order ⁸ granted Commissions to Serangs of Lascars and ranked them with Jemadars. It also allowed one Serang per Battalion to be granted the rank of Serang Major with the additional pay attached to the rank of Subadar Major. This meant that each of the three Battalions of Foot Artillery and the Brigade of Horse Artillery now had one Serang Major. In passing it should be noted that the General Order which instituted the rank of Subadar Major in the Armies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay intended the rank to be more in the nature of a Brevet Rank rather than the prestigious one that subsequently came to be associated with it.

In September 1818 the Bengal Artillery was re-organised. The General Order ⁹ provided for 3 eight company battalions of European Artillery and a single (4th) fifteen company Battalion of Golundauze or Native Artillery, a company of Gun Lascars being attached to each of these 39 companies. The same Order assimilated the rank designations used in Gun Lascar Companies with those of the Native Artillery, i.e.

Subadar
Jemadar
Havildar
Naik
Private

It should be noted that there was only one Native Officer to a Company of Gun Lascars - either a Subadar (previously a Serang Major) or a Jemadar (formerly a Serang).

For a short period in 1818-19, the 6th Independent Company of Golundauze together with the attached 40th Company of Gun Lascars were retained in the Service. Both were stationed at Dum-Dum in early 1819 having recently returned from Ceylon. In 1819 a General Order ¹⁰ repeated the proportion of Artillerymen and Lascars required for a Brigade of two guns. These were:

- for a Brigade manned by Europeans: 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 12 Rank and File, i.e. Bombardier and Gunners together with 1 Havildar or Naik of Lascars and 16 Privates.
- for a Brigade manned by Natives: 1 Havildar, 1 Naik and 16 Privates with 1 Havildar or Naik of Lascars and 12 Privates.

The same G.O. increased the strength of Gun Lascar Companies attached to European Artillery Companies by 1 Havildar and 14 Privates and added 1 Havildar to each of the 15 Companies of Native Artillery.

The Bengal Military Statement for 1821-22 gives the composition of the Lascar details attached to the Brigade of Horse Artillery which at that time consisted of the 1st to 3rd European Troops, the 4th to 6th Native Troops and the 7th European Rocket Troop as 1 Subadar, 2 Jemadars, 3 Havildars, 3 Naiks and 72 Privates with the European Troops, and 1 Jemadar, 1 Havildar, 1 Naik and 24 Privates with the 4th and 6th Troops whilst the 5th Troop had a Jemadar, 3 Havildars and 30 Privates. I have not been able to find the authority for this.

An 1822 General Order ¹¹ referring to the abolition of the drag-rope movements stated that, as a consequence, there was no requirement for the existing large establishment of Gun Lascars and that in future no Lascars were to be attached to any company of Native Artillery

and the proportion to be allowed in future to European companies was to be the same as that allowed to Troops of Horse Artillery, i.e.

1 Havildar
2 Naiks
24 Privates

As, at the time, Field Batteries consisted of eight guns this allowed 3 Privates per gun.

The same General Order further directed that the supernumerary Gun Lascar personnel were to be formed into 16, subsequently 17, companies of Store Lascars to provide for any future requirement for Siege Artillery, but could also be employed on Magazine Men duties at the various Magazines to which they were attached. These companies were to consist of 1 Subadar, 1 Jemadar, 4 Havildars, 4 Naiks and 80 Privates and that any who remained after the formation of these were to be carried as Supernumeraries until such time as they could be absorbed. Any vacancies in the Gun Lascar details with Horse and Foot Artillery were to be filled by these supernumeraries.

The provisions of this Order were extended in the following year¹² to the four Corps of Local Infantry which had Brigades of Guns included in their establishment, these being:

Ramgarh Local Battalion with 2 Brigades
Champarun Light Infantry }
Dinagapore Local Battalion } with 1 Brigade
Rungpore Local Battalion } each

These corps had a European Artillery Sergeant and Corporal with each Brigade but no Golundauze. 1 Havildar, 2 Naiks and 16 Sepoys from each corps were trained as Artillerymen to work the guns.

All Tindals and Lascars in excess of the new establishment were transferred to the Store Lascar Companies as supernumeraries or, if they declined transfer, were discharged. This Order also prohibited the recruiting or promotion in the several Store Lascar companies and the various details attached to the Horse and Foot Artillery until all these supernumeraries had been absorbed.

During 1824 several General Orders were issued concerning Gun Lascars. All of these were necessitated by the continuing European manpower shortage. The first of these¹³ was the augmentation of the 4th Native Artillery Battalion by five companies. Any Store Lascar who was five feet seven inches or more in height, not more than 25 years of age, and who was prepared to undertake general service, i.e. serve overseas, was offered the option of transferring to these new Golundauze companies.

Later in the year three Gun Lascar Companies¹⁴ were raised by taking drafts from the Store Lascar Companies. These companies were of the following strength: 1 Subadar or Jemadar alternately (in practice one company had a Subadar and the other two a Jemadar each), 3 Havildars, 2 Naiks and 84 Privates.

Still later in the year a further Order¹⁵ authorized an increase in the size of the Details with Companies to 1 Native Officer (a Subadar or Jemadar alternately), 2 Havildars, 2 Naiks and 40 Privates. It also ordered the reduction of the Store Lascar Companies and any men still remaining after the above augmentation and the formation of the three temporary Lascar Companies organized in 1824 were to be carried on the strength of the Magazines as supernumeraries until absorbed into the Gun Lascar Details.

An 1829 General Order ¹⁶ giving details of the composition of Field Batteries confirmed the size of the Horse Artillery details and repeated the 1813 G.O.G.G. It also confirmed the size of the 1824 detail with European Foot Artillery companies.

The size of the details attached to European Companies was reduced in 1842 ¹⁷ to 1 Native Officer (Subadar or Jemadar), 2 Havildars, 2 Naiks and 31 Privates. This was confirmed in 1844 ¹⁸. However, in 1846 a final General Order on the subject ¹⁹ directed that when a company had a Horse Light Field Battery attached the detail should be reduced to 1 Havildar, 2 Naiks and 24 Privates.

The various duties performed by the Lascars who formed part of the Q.M. Department of Regiments and Establishments of a similar nature were detailed in an 1820 General Order ²⁰. This runs to fourteen pages and also covers the use of Bildars who were general labourers.

In September 1821 ²¹ three companies of Hill Bildars were raised as a temporary measure to assist in the construction of a road from Calcutta to Nagpore and onwards to the Doab.

Hobson-Jobson states that a Classy or Clashy was a tent pitcher, or in other words a Tent Lascar, but those enumerated as employed in Scindia's Army would appear to be Gun Lascars. From the numbers quoted a brigade of five guns would seem likely.

I think that the article in the Gwalior Gazette of 1908 should be taken to mean that one of the Serangs was employed as a Bullock Sergeant and one of the Tindals as a Park Sergeant. Both these designations existed in the Bengal Army but were held by Europeans as non-effective appointments and, if memory serves me correctly, attracted a Staff Allowance of 20 rupees a month. Park Sergeants usually were appointed when Heavy Siege Ordnance was employed.

Authorities referred to in the text:

Abbreviations

M.C.	Minutes of the Governor General's Council
G.O.	General Orders
G.O.G.G.	General Orders by the Governor General in Council
G.O.V.P.	General Orders by the Vice President in Council
G.O.C.C.	General Orders by the Commander in Chief
G.G.O.	Government General Order

1. M.C. dated 2 June 1786
2. G.O. dated 31 December 1798
3. G.O.G.G. dated 6 February 1809
4. G.O.V.P. dated 4 August 1809
5. G.O.V.P. dated 24 April 1810
6. G.O.G.G. dated 6 and G.O.C.C. dated 10 November 1813
7. G.O.C.C. dated 15 August 1815
8. G.O.V.P. dated 24 February 1818
9. G.O.G.G. dated 1 September 1818
10. G.O.G.G. dated 24 July 1819
11. G.O.G.G. dated 28 August 1822
12. G.G.O. 297 of 1823
13. G.G.O. 46 of 1824
14. G.G.O. 174 of 1824
15. G.G.O. 209 of 1824
16. G.G.O. 253 of 1829
17. G.O.C.C. dated 17 March 1842

18. G.G.O. 220 of 1844
19. G.G.O. 300 of 1846
20. G.O.G.G. dated 26 February 1820
21. G.O.G.G. dated 29 September 1821

ANNUAL REPORTS OF A.F.(I) UNITS

J.M.A. Tamplin

There exists a useful - but rarely found - series of Annual Reports of the A.F. (I) units. These were noted by Roger Perkins in his excellent Bibliography “*REGIMENTS*” at pages 523-525. Their quality, extent and usefulness naturally vary. Some are 8 pages, others over 100.

A recently obtained one is the 21st Annual Report of the East India Railway Volunteer Rifle Corps for the Season 1889-90. This contains in Appendix L a listing of ‘War Services of Members of the Battalion’. It shows 57 men with a brief note of their services and medal entitlement. Some go back to the Sikh campaign of 1848-49, others include the Crimea, Egypt, Mutiny, Burma and Zulu wars. The following five out of the 57 are noted:

McArthur, Cpl C.: a scholar in the La Martiniere School - Mutiny Medal and clasp

McDonald, Volunteer D.: as above

McDonald, Volunteer D.H.: as above

Probett, Cpl C.: as above

Mullins, Volunteer M.: Bengal Artillery in Mutiny at Lucknow - medal and 2 clasps; and DCM and annuity of £10. (In fact it was the MSM he was awarded, not the DCM; Sgt Michael Mullins in R.A. G.O. 34 of 17 August 1869).

Of the pupils at the La Martiniere, these names are noted in an article by Tim Ash in the OMRS Journal of Spring 1995, at page 18; there are slight variations - Macdonald, Daniel and David, and Probell (not Probett). Going on with their services it is noted that Corporals C. McArthur and C. Probett were awarded the (Indian) Volunteer Long Service Medal in I.A.O. 499/1896; there is every likelihood these are the same Mutiny Veterans.

RECORDS COVERING THE INDIAN STATE FORCES

Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan

The very existence, let alone the quality, of records vary enormously from State to State. Standard records, such as the Indian State Forces Army List, provide a good starting point and cover all States. Other details appear in State Annual Reports and, while it was mandatory to make reference to military matters, the degree to which this was adopted varies widely. Furthermore, the preservation of such records leaves much to be desired. Some found their way to England and are now preserved in archives such as the British Library Oriental and India Office Collections, the Indian Institute Library at Oxford, The Cambridge University Library and the National Army Museum, but none of these institutions has a complete run of such records and there are many gaps. In India many of the surviving

records have been collected into regional centres and the efficiency of such a system has varied considerably. In some places, notably Bikaner, Patiala and Jaipur, there exist extensive and well preserved records, in other locations nothing at all.

The Imperial Service Troops/Indian State Forces were not part of the Indian Army, although the latter was responsible for supplying officers and training when required. Nevertheless, they came under a small organization known as The Military Adviser-in-Chief, Indian State Forces, who was responsible for all aspects of the forces involved. As they were outside the Indian Army they had no overall structure, each State being treated as an individual military force, and consequently they were not included in many aspects of Government of India military affairs.

There gradually developed reporting procedures that copied the Indian Army format, i.e., Army Lists and Annual Reports, but there was no tradition of writing regimental or army histories, as in the British and Indian Armies, although some works were produced covering a State's war services during the First World War. As a result of the paucity of reference works, it is very difficult to write a comprehensive record of the States' Armies. This situation was made worse by the granting of Independence to India and Pakistan only two years after the end of the Second World War which probably frustrated any plans Rulers may have had to prepare histories covering their units' war services, although some records have since been produced.

The following is a brief description of the more important reference works available:-

IMPERIAL SERVICE TROOPS/INDIAN STATE FORCES ARMY LISTS

These were similar to the Indian Army Lists and issues from 1915 to 1946 have been traced in UK archives. They give some details of the history of the unit, its organization, war services, class composition and awards made for war service. In addition, some individual States issued their own Army Lists. Examples are known from Bikaner for the years 1945, 1947, 1948 and 1949, though they have not been seen in archives outside of Bikaner. A recent find has been a copy of the Gwalior State Forces Army List for January 1947 and attempts are being made to trace earlier editions.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

The Government of India required each State to produce an annual report giving details of the State's progress in such matters as finance, health and transport, although not all did so. One of the chapters had to cover military forces and these are a valuable record as they covered not only the troops who were part of the Imperial Service Troops/Indian State Forces schemes but also other military forces of the State. The amount of detail included varied from State to State and reflected the Ruler's attitude to military matters. The more progressive States produced a continuous series of reports whilst others were very spasmodic.

INDIAN ARMY CASTE RETURNS

Within these documents, which were published annually on 1 April from 1900 to 1902 and thereafter on 1 January until 1942, the units of the Imperial Service Troops/Indian States Forces were included. Class composition was a very important feature of the Indian Army, mainly to control recruitment and avoid another mutiny, and this was reflected by the Government of India's attitude to the States armies. Pressure was brought on the States to recruit from their own subjects, which was not always possible, either because the indigenous population may not have had martial traditions, or the Ruler wished to recruit men of his own caste or faith. The authorized class composition of a unit was not always adhered to. The caste returns contain information as to the strength of a unit and, sometimes, its organization. Complete records for all years are not available.

Annual Report on Indian State Forces 1922-1940 and Annual Review of the Working of the Indian State Forces 1932-1946

These documents set out the views of the Military Adviser-in-Chief and his staff on all aspects of the units within the scheme. They were strictly secret documents with a limited circulation and are frank in the assessments made. They are the most important sources of material for studying the Indian States Forces units and the attitudes of the Rulers towards military matters.

They give details of each of the State Forces units including accommodation, pay and pensions, clothing, equipment, training, Confidential Reports on Officers' abilities, animals, strength and organization. The assessments made of the units and their personnel, whilst on occasion very critical, also identify the continuous efforts made by the Military Adviser-in-Chief and his officers to improve the efficiency of the units and to make them fit for their allotted role. The attitude of the Ruling Princes to their State Forces is also recorded and it is interesting to note the wide divergence between them. When the Second World War broke out all the Princes made strenuous efforts to further the Allied cause and their commitment to their State Forces grew dramatically.

ORDERS OF BATTLE OF THE INDIAN ARMY AND THE LISTS OF UNITS, INDIAN ARMY

These documents, normally produced monthly, are useful in trying to establish where units were based during wartime and to which higher formation they belonged. Often they are the only method of establishing such information but complete issues of these documents are not always available for reference.

THE INDIAN STATE FORCES ANNUALS

Issued annually between 1937 and 1947, they contain articles on a number of issues, not always military, and are a useful source of information about the units.

A FORGOTTEN HERO - SUBADAR BARKAT SINGH GC, 4/2 PUNJAB

Subadar BARKAT SINGH of 4/2 Punjab Regiment won the George Cross, the highest peacetime British award for gallantry, in 1938 but remained largely unknown to the regiment until 12 April 1971 when the Deputy Adjutant General, Army Headquarters, telephoned the Commandant, The Punjab Regimental Centre, in connection with the grant of a monetary allowance attached to the George Cross. Subadar Barkat Singh, who had by then retired, was contacted at his village, Mansoorpur near Mukerian, where he was leading a retired life unaware of the monetary award.

Barkat Singh won the George Cross while serving in the training battalion at Meerut (10/2 Punjab) for cool courage and an act of the most conspicuous gallantry displayed while apprehending, in utter disregard of the grave danger to his life, an armed soldier who had run amuck.

On the morning of 2 May 1937 Sepoy Kanshi Ram, who was on Quarter guard duty, suddenly went berserk and shot dead his guard commander and another member of the guard, and attempted to kill the bugler on duty but missed as he dodged and escaped. The OR then ran towards the adjacent lines and encountered Subadar Gopi Ram, the officiating Subadar Major, whom he started chasing when a JCO questioned him as to what he was doing. The JCO started going round a small barrack store nearby, closely followed by the berserk OR. Barkat Singh, then a Naik, noticed the plight of the Officiating Subadar Major and shouted to him to escape and told him that he would arrest the OR. At this, the OR turned towards the NCO who was standing on the veranda of his barrack and took aim for a shot, but the NCO quickly took cover behind the veranda wall. Thereupon Sepoy Kanshi Ram turned towards Subadar Gopi Ram once again, but the JCO had by then escaped. When Kanshi Ram's attention was temporarily diverted towards the JCO, Barkat Singh saw his chance and dashed towards a nearby neem tree. This provoked the OR once again to turn his attention to the NCO and he started chasing him when, once again, the berserk OR's attention was for a moment diverted towards someone at a distance who was shouting at him. Barkat Singh jumped on the OR from behind and got him, along with his rifle, pinned down to the ground. He held on until some officers, JCOs and others arrived and secured the individual.

The soldier had his rifle with bayonet fixed and six rounds in the magazine. In addition, ten more rounds were recovered from his pocket. It was evident that many more lives would have been lost that day if the OR had not been apprehended quickly.

Naik Barkat Singh had shown cool and calculated courage in following an armed and dangerous individual and displayed the most conspicuous gallantry in grappling with him single handedly at the risk of his life. He was recommended to His Majesty's Government for the award of the highest decoration for peace time gallantry. On 1 January 1938 the London Gazette published the award of the NCO.

Even though the award was made as early as 1938, it took well over thirty two years and protracted correspondence by the JCO for the monetary award attached to the decoration to be paid, the award of £100 sterling per year finally being sanctioned by the British Government with effect from 1 April 1965.

THE SAPPERS & MINERS AT MEERUT 1857 - SOME RAMBLING NOTES

Tim Ash

I read with interest Colonel A K Srivastava's article in the Winter 1997 DURBAR, "The Case of the Missing Battle Honours of the Bengal Engineer Group". Whilst not being able to add anything to his detailed and painstaking research on the subject, which led to the long overdue restoration of the pre Mutiny Battle Honours due to the Corps of Engineers, members may be interested in the following personal accounts of some of the events surrounding the mutiny of the Sappers & Miners at Meerut in 1857.

Early on the morning of 15 May Captain Charles Walters d'Oyly arrived at Meerut having fled with his wife and infant daughter, and some others, from the Government Stud Farm at Harpur. He recounts that

"Having deposited the ladies and children in a fortified entrenchment, called the 'Dum-dumma', I sallied forth to report my arrival to the General Officer commanding the troops. In crossing the large open parade ground adjacent to the Barracks, I met a fellow officer in uniform whose face I seemed to know. As he neared me he put up his eye-glass, for he was short sighted, and I immediately recognised a dear old friend, who had been a fellow Cadet with me at the Military College at Addiscombe, Edward Fraser, of the Engineers, a brother of the late Dr Fraser, Bishop of Manchester. After fraternising, I said - 'My dear Ned, what are you doing here?' He replied - 'I have just arrived with a native Company of Sappers from Roorkee on our way to Delhi.' He continued - 'I have just been reporting the arrival of myself and Company to General Hewitt, Commanding the Station.' After a few words we parted, and I never saw him again alive. On my return from reporting myself to the General I was re-crossing the parade ground, when I observed a party of soldiers carrying something heavy. I approached and to my horror ascertained they were carrying a dead body. On lifting the cloth that covered the face I recognised the handsome features of my friend Edward Fraser, with whom I had been conversing only a little before, in perfect health and rejoicing in the prospects of service in the field. He had just been shot by his own men, under the mistaken impression that he had been to the General to organize an attack on them by European troops."

This was not to be d'Oyly's only loss that day for that night his wife, overcome by the stress and fatigue of their flight from Harpur, was taken in premature labour and she and her son expired. It was a very sad time for d'Oyly; to lose a friend was one thing but to lose his wife and son must have cut him to the quick. He never had another son and on his death in 1900 his half-brother inherited the Baronetcy which he in turn had inherited on their father's death in 1869. The burial register for Meerut records the burials of Edward Fraser and Emilie Jane d'Oyly, inscribed one beneath the other, by the Reverend John Edward Wharton Rotton, later Chaplain to the Delhi Field Force. Edward Fraser had married into the Anglo-Indian family of Major Henry Forster, who raised the Shekawattee Brigade, so he therefore left a widow and several children to mourn him. He had served in both campaigns in the Punjab and also in the Burma War.

d'Oyly mentions that Captain Edward Fraser was the brother of the late Bishop James Fraser of Manchester [1870-1885]. However, d'Oyly wrote his memoirs in 1890, sometime after the events he describes. In 1857 Reverend James Fraser was the Rector of Cholderton in

Wiltshire, and in 1859 he had a memorial window erected in the church, in the north side of the Nave, to his late brother, representing the Healing of the Paralytic and Peter walking on the sea –

“Captain Edward Fraser, of the Bengal Engineers, who in the revolt of the Bengal Native Army fell by the hand of his own mutinous troops whom he was endeavouring to recall to their duty at Meerut. May 16, 1857. Aged 34 years.”

To return to the Sappers & Miners, or more specifically to those that made a successful escape from the pursuing retribution mounted from Meerut. Some set off for Delhi whilst another group set off to the east and away from the capital of insurrection. A day or so later they were approaching the town of Moradabad, in Rohilcund, where was stationed the 29th Bengal Native Infantry, which had so far remained loyal. The Magistrate and Collector was Charles Burslam Saunders, the Judge J.C. Wilson and the Joint Magistrate John Scarlett Campbell.

In his Mutiny narrative of events at Moradabad, Mr Saunders said of Campbell,

“On the occasion of our proceeding against the Sappers and Miners, who had dispersed on hearing of our approach, he was fortunate enough to be the first to ascertain the line of country which they had taken, and, pursuing them but with four Sowars, brought them to bay until the arrival of the remainder of the force.”

The civilians of Moradabad were eventually forced to flee to Meerut when the 29th B.N.I. turned against them. On his arrival at Meerut Campbell wrote a letter to his brother, George Campbell, later Sir George and Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. In this he gives a full account of the events at Moradabad; with regard to the affair with the Sappers and Miners he wrote –

“It was reported that 2 Companies of Sappers and Miners were within 5 miles of us. On sending out Sowars etc. we found that they were marching straight down on Cantonments and were within 3 miles, so we ordered out a wing of the regiment, our 2 guns and all the horsemen we could muster and sallied out to meet them. They [had] news of our coming and turned back and made off, so after a brief consultation it was agreed that the force should cross the Ramgunga and try to cut them off, while I volunteered with 4 Sowars to follow them up by the route they had taken. I had an 8 or 9 miles gallop and at length got them in sight and ran them into a village. My fellows volunteered to go among them so I sent 2 of them offering to allow them to walk off if they would lay down their arms and come out of the village one by one. They were rather slow about it, but I got 6 to do so in about half an hour when Saunders came up with a lot more horse and fearing to be cut to pieces no more would come out. By and by the guns and infantry came up and we recalled the Sowars intending to give them a taste of grape. The moment however the way was clear they rushed towards the infantry intending to throw themselves among them to claim protection. The native Officers however behaved well and they were not allowed to advance without laying down their arms. Of these we took possession and then sent the fellows about their business because we dare not do more. Had we fired on them I believe that Artillery and Infantry would immediately afterwards have turned on us. We captured 65 stand of muskets and returned in triumph.”

Finally, to revert to the actual outbreak at Meerut. Lt Col E.W.C. Sandes, DSO, MC, RE, in his history "*THE INDIAN SAPPERS AND MINERS*", gives the following account.

*"The European Garrison [at Meerut] had good reason to distrust all native troops, and this sentiment had its effect on Fraser. Although he had promised the Sappers that they should keep and guard their ammunition, he seems to have decided later that it would be safer to store it in a bomb-proof magazine, and accordingly he issued an order that this should be done. To remove the ammunition was equivalent to disarming the men. The Sappers objected strongly to the measure and resolved to resist it. Maunsell, the Adjutant, was aghast when he read the order, for he was fully aware of the temper of the men. He sent a note to Fraser to warn him of the danger, [this note was found subsequently in Fraser's pocket], but the Commandant was adamant and nothing could shake his determination. The parade was held. Without offering any explanation, Fraser ordered the men to load the ammunition into some carts which had been provided. Protests from the men were met by an angry reply from Fraser and the loading began; but it was not until the carts had started to move away that the storm broke. An Afghan sentry with loaded carbine rushed forward and shot Fraser in the back. A gallant havildar tried to protect him and was killed also. Fire was opened on Maunsell, but he managed to escape unharmed. A general stampede in the open country followed. The mutinous Sappers were pursued by some Carabineers and a troop of Horse Artillery, and fifty were annihilated in a small wood among some sand hills where they made a stand. The remainder fled towards Delhi or made their way slowly back to Roorkee, where some of them rejoined the Corps. **It cannot be too strongly asserted that this disastrous outbreak was the result of panic rather than treachery.** Maunsell and every other officer in the Corps formed that opinion."*

One cannot help feeling that had Fraser been more even tempered and communicative towards his Indian Sappers the incident may never have happened - but of course we shall never know.

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MEN OF HARLECH - CHILIANWALA AND THE TRAGIC 24TH FOOT

Tim Wilsey

One of the memorable moments in the epic film 'Zulu' occurs when the besieged British force is awaiting the final Zulu charge which will surely overwhelm them. As they listen to the Zulu war chants two Welsh soldiers start to sing 'Men of Harlech' and the words are gradually taken up by all the men with their officer exhorting them to 'Sing, damn you, sing'. The regiment was the 24th Foot (later the South Wales Borderers). On a duty visit to South Africa in 1992 I spent a weekend visiting Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, two of the sites of the Zulu War of 1879 immortalised in the films 'Zulu' (Michael Caine and Stanley Baker) and 'Zulu Dawn' (Peter O'Toole and Simon Ward). The first celebrated the 24th's heroic defence of a Swedish mission station at the banks of the Buffalo River. The second dwelt on the hideous massacre of a whole column (including the remainder of the 24th) on the same day. Their graves still litter the bundu, each body buried under a pile of white stones because the ground was too hard for digging.

Barely a year later I visited with a friend the battlefield of Chilianwala just south of Jhelum. It is a two and a half hour drive from Islamabad with the usual thrills of the GTR to ensure that no-one gets bored. At Chilianwala are the mass graves of the British dead and two impressive memorials. One reads 'Around this tomb was fought the sanguinary battle of Chillianwallah 13th January 1849 between the British forces under Lord Gough and the Sikhs under Rajah Sher Singh....' The story behind these words was a bitter one and Gough, an irascible Irishman, was to receive damning criticism for yet again committing his troops to a frontal assault against a strong Sikh position without using any artistry at all. The British list it as a victory but at best it was a disastrous draw. Fortunately Gough did rather better a few weeks later at Gujerat thereby securing the Punjab and NWFP for British rule (Sindh had been taken in 1843).

My companion, however, left the best bit till last. On a previous visit and while roaming the battlefield he had, to his amazement, discovered three enclosures in the middle of a field which he believed must be linked to the battle. They were clearly mass-graves and were exactly at the site where the 24th Regiment were involved in the heaviest fighting of the day. We found the place where a plaque had once been affixed and realised there was a faint trace of the original inscription on the cement. After perhaps an hour of calculation (and a touch of guesswork) we came up with the following text - 'In Memory of the men of HM 24th Foot who fell around this spot in the Battle of Chillianwala on 13th January 1849'. There followed three lines of text which we could not decipher.

So what happened to the 24th on that cold January evening? It is a ghastly story. Their Divisional Commander Colin Campbell told the Regiment 'Let it be said the 24th stormed the guns without firing a shot'. It seems that Campbell had remembered the 24th doing this in the Peninsular War against the French. He did not mean it as an order not to fire! But the 24th were a proud unit and went into the attack wearing their full-dress uniform and led by its antelope mascot. It soon was ahead of the other regiments in Pennycuick's Brigade as it scrambled through the thick undergrowth in a hail of Sikh fire. Some ponds (one is still there today) further impeded its progress. But incredibly they did reach the Sikh lines and spiked the Sikh guns before a Sikh counter-attack drove them off. The Regiment had lost 11 officers and 193 men killed and 10 officers and 266 wounded and 38 men missing; that is 518

casualties out of about 800. Pennycuick's son Alexander (an ensign in the 24th) died defending his father's dead body. The memorial to them both erected by Alexander's mother, Sarah, is in Holy Trinity Cathedral, Sialkot and is guaranteed to bring a tear from the most hardened cynic.

Most of the wounded were rescued from the battlefield that evening but some were murdered in the night. Most bodies were stripped and slashed across the mouth revealing hideous smiles. The burial parties started work the following day in torrential rain. The 24th elected to bury their men separately from the other regiments and dug three mass graves near where most of the bodies were found. Later the graves were surrounded by low brick walls and then largely forgotten. The walls are in a poor state and one is tempted to have them restored but this might only arouse interest, curiosity and possibly even hostility amongst the local inhabitants. Neglect is ironically often the best protection for colonial memorials.

I was in a sombre mood on the drive back to Islamabad but it is difficult not to be uplifted by the sight of St John's Church, Jhelum across the fields as one crosses the Jhelum River. It is like a mini Salisbury Cathedral across the watermeadows. Like most churches in Pakistan it is in a sorry state but I was not prepared for the inscription on the lectern 'in memory of the 35 soldiers of H.M. XXIV Regt of Foot who were killed in action at Jhelum on 7th July 1857' in the Indian Mutiny. But that is another story!



LETTERS AND QUERIES

● Brian Stevens writes:

Having had a cursory look at back numbers (of DURBAR) I was most interested in the Autumn 1993 article on the grave in Satara of General W W Goodfellow CB, Colonel Commandant Royal (late Bombay) Engineers. Between 1968 and 1971 I was on contract to the Zambian Government. Whilst living in Lusaka I became acquainted with a Mrs. Molly Goodfellow whose former husband was a member of that branch of the family to which the General and the others mentioned belonged.

Another item from the same issue which caught my eye was the article on the Honour 'BENI BOO ALI'. In addition to the units mentioned, the following European Company of the Bombay Artillery was authorized to carry it on its appointments:

5th Company 2nd Battalion

● Carl-Eric Granfelt writes:

My interest is in "followers" of Indian or British units. Recently I obtained a bronze IGS '95 clasp "Punjab Frontier 1897-98" named to a cook, Bhagtu, 55th Bl Infy. My copy of "*Battles and Medals*" does not show any such unit and in John Gaylor's "*Sons of John Company*", Appendix C (Table of Units 1903-32) it shows previous titles of 1903 units but I can find none with a number higher than the 48th Bengal Pioneers. In 1903 there was a 55th Coke's Rifles (Frontier Force) which had been 1 Punjab Infantry but that was almost five years after the clasp was authorized. So what could the 55th Bl Infy on the IGS '95 refer to?

[my first response is to say that the medal has probably been incorrectly re-named or is otherwise defective. There was a 55th Bengal Infantry. Originally raised in 1804 as 1st/28th Bengal Native Infantry, it became 55th Bengal Native Infantry in 1824, but it mutinied at Hoti-Mardan in 1857 and was disbanded. I am not aware it was ever raised again. As you rightly say, the number 55th was reallocated to 1st Punjab Infantry in 1903 when it became 55th Coke's Rifles (Frontier Force), later 1st Battalion 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Coke's), but it is my belief that the number 55 was not in use in 1897-98 so I am afraid I cannot account for your medal. Are you sure it is 55? Can any member throw any light on this?

Ed.)

● Surjit Singh Jeet seeks further information about the military action against the Kooka (Kuka) rebellion of 1872 (see Vol. 12, No 4, Winter 1995 for an article by Elizabeth Talbot-Rice on this subject). He is particularly interested in obtaining further information about the army units involved, details of who supplied the cannon, and further details of Mr Cowan, Deputy Commissioner and the subject of the above quoted article.

● I published an article in the last edition by Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh "Indian Troops in Peking" (Vol. 15, No 2, page 47). It is worth adding as a footnote that, in recognition of his bravery in the China 1900 campaign, the Admiral's grandfather was given 4 squares (100 acres) of fertile land in Lahore District (now in Pakistan) and the village in which it was situated was named after him - "SANTPURA"



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