

DURBAR Volume 5, No.2

WW2 GALLANTRY CITATIONS

Some members may already have made the same discovery, but it is new to me. From whence came the original information I cannot recall, but I wrote and telephoned a gentleman at the following address: Ministry of Defence, Room K26, Block F, Government Buildings, London Road, Stanmore, Middlesex, to ask if the department would furnish citations for gallantry awards made to members of the Indian Army in VW2. The answer was "yes", if a citation is available. The charge for this service is £7.00 per citation, and well worth the money.

Where once a typist laboriously typed out the meat of the citation, a superb time-saving exercise now ensures a photocopy of the original Army Form W.3121 - or in some cases a facsimile of the form, presumably because the citation was originated in the Field and the unit had run out of the official proformae. The advantage in having a photocopy of the original is that one sees the channels through which the recommendation passed (Unit; Brigade; Division; Corps; Army), though there are some variations in the procedures, probably depending on the theatre of war in which the action took place. One also comes across some well-known names in the form of signatures over the rubber stamp denoting the status of the signatory.

At the top of the Form are spaces for Brigade; Division; Corps and date of recommendation. Below are various headings: 'Unit; Regtl No. Rank and Name; Action for which recommended; Recommended by; Honour or Award; To be left blank'. Under 'Rank and Name' some forms carry the caste of the recipient together with his village, Tehsil and District - all interesting stuff.

It also brings to light variations in opinions of officers as to the award merited - for instance, the Commanding Officer might recommend an IDSM; the Brigadier might downgrade this to a Military Medal. In one such case the Divisional Commander, Major General Geoffrey Evans, GOC 7 Indian Division, over-ruled the Brigadier and recommended the IDSM. He in turn was over-ruled by the Commander of IV Corps, Lieutenant General Frank Messervy, who, on 19 March 1945, endorsed the form as a recommendation for the MM. The final 'say' came from C-in-C Allied Land Forces, Lieutenant General Oliver Leese, who, on 12 April 1945, approved the award of an immediate MM for a gallant action at PAGAN, on the Irrawaddy, on 11 March 1945 by Sepoy Kapur Singh, a Jat Sikh; Village - Sindhar, P.O. Shankot; Tehsil - Nakodar; District - Jullundur (Punjab).

The citation details a patrol on the enemy side of the River Irrawaddy ambushed by a Jap patrol. Kapur Singh, a Bren gunner, waded in killing many Japs and covered the withdrawal of the remaining nine survivors of his patrol. He was first wounded, seriously, in the left arm but continued to fire his Bren from the hip (it would have been around his neck on a sling). More Japs arrived and Kapur Singh and friends promptly attacked them; in this encounter he was wounded in his right arm and the magazine was shot off his Bren. Notwithstanding his wounds he returned with his gun. Had it not been for his fighting spirit and gallantry, his CO

(Lt. Col. B. B. Spink, commanding 1/11 Sikh Regt) was of the opinion that it was unlikely there would have been any survivors of his patrol, which had an original strength of sixteen.

Others are:

Recommended for an immediate IDSM (which was granted), to Havildar Pritara Singh, 25 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, for bringing up ammunition in trucks under severe shell fire south of Benghazi, in the Western desert, on 28 January 1942. It is endorsed by CRA (Commander, Royal Artillery), 4 Indian Division, GOC 4 Indian Division (Major General Francis Toker), and finally signed by C-in-C Middle East Forces, General C J Auchinleck.

Sapper Dalip Singh, No 33032, a Jat Sikh from the village of Sherpura in the LUDHIANA District (the very home of martial Sikhs), serving with 2 (KGVO) Bengal S&M, Corps of Indian Engineers, attached to 161 Indian Infantry Brigade, 5 Indian Division. Recommended for, and awarded, a 'periodical' MM for clearing road blocks, landslides, and de-lousing booby traps between 1 June 1944 and 31 August 1944. The areas of operation were: Kohima - Imphal Road and the Jessami Track, the Silchar Track south of Imphal, and on the advance to Tiddim, Chin Hills. This award was passed as recommended by Lt. Col. R C Orgill, CRE (Commander, Royal Engineers) and the GOC, both of 5 Indian Division. The GOC signs himself as Major General D F W Warren, The Lieutenant General commanding IV Corps, G Scoones (signature almost unreadable) recommended the award on 30 October 1944 and Lt Gen W J Slim, GOC 14th Army, finally approved the MM on 30 November 1944.

Lt Col Goodchild, commanding 7 Bn, 14 Punjab Regiment, recommended Naik Dheru Ram, a Dogra Rajput from the village of Dewa, Tehsil Bhiraber, District Mir Pur in Jammu State, for the IDSM. The battalion was part of the somewhat off-beat LUSHAI Brigade, a formation with four battalions of infantry and precious little else in the way of supporting arms. It was commanded by the legendary Brigadier P C Marindin who, from his position in the Chin Hills, pushed his four battalions, plus some Chin Levies, over 200 miles of villainous country to harry the Japs retreating back down the Tiddim Road to the Chindwin. No guns, no Sappers, makeshift wireless communications - the unique LUSHAI Brigade certainly harried the Japs. Dheru Ram commanded his section with courage and determination, instilling confidence in his men by coolness and personal disregard for danger. Marindin endorsed the recommendation for an IDSM but Oliver Leese downgraded it to an MM and Slim put the final touches, written in his own hand, endorsing the MM.

Finally, another award to a Sikh, but this time for action in Italy. His unit was the unusual NABHA AKAL INFANTRY (I presume a State Force battalion - can anyone expand on the origins of this battalion?). Having served in Eritrea/ Ethiopia with 10 Indian Division the Bn went to Cyprus when 10 Indian was withdrawn from Africa, the remainder going to PAIFORCE (Persia and Iraq Force), in Italy the Bn was sent to 18 Lorried Infantry Brigade of British Armoured Division, 10 Corps, in October 1944. The Bn attacked a place named SEDICI but were shelled and mortared off the feature. Another attack went in, in which 278 L/Havildar Nikka Singh picked up a Bren from the fallen gunner and fired 'with such ferocity and determination' that the on-coming enemy, who were counter-attacking, were completely scattered and forced to withdraw. Nikka Singh was severely wounded but stayed with his section, under heavy fire, throwing grenades and firing his Bren. Lt. Col. P H Denyer recommended an IDSM, which was amended to an 'immediate' MM by Lt Gen R L McReery, GOC 8th Army. The citation is further endorsed by Maj Gen D W Reid, GOC 10 Indian

'Division, Lt Gen Keightely, Commanding V Corps, and finally approved by Field Marshal H R Alexander.

These photocopies of original citations breathe more life into the award with the array of senior officers who signed them - £7 well spent, in my view. As a postscript, Pritam Singh was also awarded the MSM (as a Havildar, Indian Artillery); Sapper Dalip Singh was also Mentioned in Despatches.

Notes: 'Tehsil' is, as far as I recollect, the equivalent of an English parish. If I am mistaken please correct me - old men forget - and I am no exception. For information on the Lushai Brigade and Brig. Marindin see Slim, "*Defeat into Victory*". Both are mentioned in the index.

A Sudlow

The Nabha Akal Infantry was, indeed, an Indian State Force unit. Nabha was one of the Cis-Sutlej states in the Punjab. The Nabha Imperial Service Infantry was formed on 12 April 1889 out of the old State army and served in the Punjab Frontier and at Tirah in 1897-98. During the First World War it served in Mesopotamia and later in Afghanistan, The unit transferred to the restructured ISF Scheme in 1924 when the Nabha Akal designation was adopted. While serving with 10 Indian Division it lost 67 killed, 226 wounded, and 9 missing. It collected a lot of gallantry awards, including 13 MMs. Nikka Singh's MM was published in the Supplement to the London Gazette, 37072, dated 10 May 1945. Ed.

INFORMATION REQUESTED

● R.G. Harris would like to obtain information on the modern Indian and Pakistan Armies' ceremonial or No 1 Dress uniforms. Some detail is already held on the Border Security Force, Sikh Light Infantry and Skinner's Horse as well as Corps of Military Police, Indian Army. As an example of the sort of detail required the following description of the Corps of Military Police parade dress, as worn in 1986, is provided:

Brilliant red pagri with magnificent shaped fan and ending in long hanging tail; silver or white metal regimental badge. Khaki uniform, open at neck with scarf of red, black and gold alternate striping. Lanyard on left shoulder. Leather waist-belt with gilt rectangular belt plate carrying regimental badge in white metal upon it, the belt over a cummerbund of striped material, similar colours to neck scarf. A short hanging end to cummerbund over the belt on the left side, the hanging end with broad horizontal striping of black, gold or yellow, red, and silver or white terminating with a pale yellow fringe. Most soldiers have either one or two medals. The cap-badge of the Corps of Military Police is a five pointed star surrounded by a wreath with triple scroll below, the words MILITARY POLICE on central section of the scroll and the crest of India surmounting the whole.

● L.E. Bishop Jr. would like to appeal again for answers to an earlier query about bronze IGS medals. Were rolls prepared and might they still exist at the India Office Library or Calcutta Mint? Were medals named at the Mint and distributed on parade, or was some other system used?

● The photograph below is of a badge believed to be that of a Nepalese Army unit. Can any member identify the regiment? Answers, please, to the Editor.



ARMY IN INDIA - THE LEGAL POSITION

THE BRITISH ARMY ACT

Those subject to the British Army Act were:

All Officers holding a King's Commission in HM's Land Forces, i.e.

- Officers of the British Service.
- British Officers of the Indian Army (KCOs)
- Indian Officers of the Indian Army, holding such a commission; those trained at RMA or RMC (KCIOs); last batch commissioned early 1934.
- All personnel of the Auxiliary Force (India), irrespective of ethnic origin as they were classified as British Troops when called out or/embodied.
- All British soldiers, whether serving in British units or seconded to Indian Army units.
- All Assistant Surgeons of the Indian Medical Department (Warrant Officers Class I).
- British Warrant Officers (Conductors and Sub Conductors) and Staff Sergeants of the India Unattached List i.e. belonging to the Indian Army and serving in the RIASC, IAOC, Indian Army Corps of Clerks, Detention Barrack staff etc.

THE INDIAN ARMY ACT

Those subject to the Indian Army Act were;

- Indian Commissioned Officers (ICOs); those commissioned from the Indian Military Academy, first batch commissioned in 1933, holding Commissions in HM's Indian Land Forces.
- All Sub Assistant Surgeons of the Indian Medical Department (Viceroy's Commissioned Officers).
- All Viceroy's Officers.
- All Indian soldiers, serving in Indian Army units or units the British Army.

- Indian soldiers of the Indian Territorial Force, when called out or embodied.

POWERS OF COMMAND

- Officers holding a Commission in HM's Land Forces, including KCIOs, whether British Service or Indian Army, had power of command over all personnel, British or Indian.
- Indian Commissioned Officers' Commissions in HM's Indian Land Forces gave them power of command over personnel subject to the Indian Army Act. They were given Power of Command over personnel subject to the British Army Act by a special dispensation, issued as an Order of the Governor General in Council.
- British WOs and NCOs had no power of command over Indian soldiers, nor VCOs and Indian NCOs over British. However in units of Artillery, Sappers & Indian Signal Corps, a mutual and typically British compromise was worked out.

COURTS MARTIAL

- Officers holding Commissions in HM's Land Forces, including KCIOs could sit on Courts Martial held under either the British or Indian Army Acts. In practice it would be most unlikely for a KCIO to be appointed to a Court Martial on a British soldier, and conversely for a British Service Officer to be on a Court trying an Indian soldier. This did not apply to British Service Officers serving in Mountain Artillery, Sappers & Miners or Indian Signal Corps.
- Indian Commissioned Officers could only sit on Courts held under the India Army Act.
- Summary Courts Martial. To speed up military justice, the Summary Court Martial was introduced after the Great Mutiny for personnel subject to the Indian Army Act. A Commanding Officer sitting as such could only award 28 days in custody. Should he consider that the offence merited a greater sentence, he could remand the offender for a Summary Court Martial. The culprit was then marched out for a Summary of Evidence to be taken. On conclusion he was marched back in front of his C.O. sitting, with two VCOs as Assessors, as a Summary Court Martial. He could then award up to 2 years Rigorous Imprisonment. The Sentence was promulgated immediately without the necessity of confirmation by higher authority. The proceedings were reviewed by the Judge Advocate's Department, but they could only quash the whole proceedings, when there was a gross miscarriage of justice, and not on a technicality, nor could the sentence be reduced. There were also Summary General Courts Martial and on active service, Summary Field General Courts Martial.

OTHER REGULATIONS

Kings Regulations (K.R.), Regulations for the Army in India (R.A.I.) and Instructions by H.E. The Commander in Chief.

- K.R. were the regulations governing the conduct of the British Army worldwide, except in India, with the exception of a few minor matters not covered by RAI.
- R.A.I. was the equivalent of KR for the Army of India and applied to both British Service units and the Indian Army.
- C-in-C's Instructions applied to both British Service units and the Indian Army and was supplementary to and explanatory of RAI.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES

OFFICERS

All Officers mentioned in paras. 1 (a), (b), & (c) drew the same basic pay, fixed in Rupees by the Secretary of State for India. This was nearly double the pay of an Officer, rank for rank, in the U.K. The reasons for the higher amount were partly extra expenses incurred by Officers serving abroad, and partly as in India an Officer did not draw rations, nor did he receive furnished quarters.

Officers of the Indian Army, and British Service Officers of the Mountain Artillery, Sappers & Miners, and Indian Signal Corps drew an Indian Army allowance, according to rank.

KCIOs were paid the rates given in paras 6 & 7 above, but ICOs were paid a lesser rate, without any IA allowance. This was presumed to reflect their lesser expenses serving in their own country, and their lower status as Platoon Commanders, rather than Company Officers.

BRITISH RANKS

Assistant Surgeons and WOs etc. of the India Unattached List were paid special rates, fixed in Rupees.

British WOs, NCOs & soldiers of British units drew their sterling rates as fixed for the UK, but converted into Rupees at a special favourable rate of exchange. British soldiers could buy British Sterling Postal and Money Orders also at a favourable rate.

INDIAN RANKS

VCOs and Indian NCOs and soldiers were paid at Rupee rates as fixed by the Government of India.

ALLOWANCES - GENERALLY FOR OFFICERS ONLY

These were legion - Corps and Technical Pay - Marriage Allowance -Lodging Allowance, when free quarters were not provided - Staff Pay etc. They would fill a book and I am not going to attempt to catalogue them now. I will gladly attempt to answer any specific queries.

A.A MAINS



THE SWORD OF LOFTUS TOTTENHAM

The article by Michael Johnson on this subject which appeared in Vol. 4, No. 3 elicited two responses.

L E Bishop Jr. writes:

"... I have in my collection the IGS '95 medal with bar for the Relief of Chitral to Robert

Loftus Tottenham. From research I have had done I can solve the mystery of the identity of his father who was, in fact, the Robert Loftus Tottenham who served in the Royal Artillery. Also, the only campaign service performed by "my" man was that for which he was issued the medal I now have, and which is suspended by its original ribbon (somewhat soiled) and single brooch, just as he wore it, now more than 90 years ago; it was his only medal".

Colonel Patric Emerson writes:

"Fred. Joseph Loftus Tottenham died on 11 April 1987 - 89 years old. His son Michael, who was born in 1927, joined the IA in 1945 and served for nearly two years and so was the last of the Loftus Tottenham line to serve in the I.A."

AN EARLY AWARD OF THE IDSM IN WORLD WAR TWO

I read with interest the article on this subject by Terry McCormick which appeared in Vol. 4, No 3.

In my collection I have the IDSM awarded to Naik Umansab Khan, 1-2 Punjab Regt, mentioned in Terry's article, so it would appear that there is now only one IDSM for Somaliland 1940 to be accounted for!

The Regimental History states that "The evacuation of other Units of the Somaliland Force had begun about 7.30 p.m. on 15th August 1940, and the last troops embarked on 18th August. From the sea a great pall of black smoke was by that time visible over Berbera, caused by the burning stores and vehicles which could not be embarked in the time available. At the last moment it was found that a small party of the Somaliland Camel Corps had been left ashore. Naik Munsab (sic) Khari of the 1/2nd volunteered to go ashore and render what help he could to this small party, and for this brave act of self-sacrifice was awarded the IDSM". The recommendation was signed by General Wavell as C-in-C Middle East, in November 1940, but the award was not published in the London Gazette until 1st April 1940 (page 1869).

I also have in my collection the IDSM awarded to Subadar Ata Mohamed of the 3-1 Punjab Regt, which was gazetted on 9th December 1940 - another early award. Ata Mohamed's photograph, as a Subadar-Major, appears in the publication *The Tiger Strikes*, and his full group of medals, which I also have, is very impressive as it includes the British War and Victory Medals from the 1914-18 War, the IGS 1908 with 2 clasps, the IGS 1936 with 1 clasp, as well as his Second World War medals and the IDSM.

Philip Burman

BOOK REVIEW

● *SARAGARHI BATTALION: ASHES TO GLORY - HISTORY OF THE 4TH BATTALION THE SIKH REGIMENT*. Kanwaljit Singh and H.S. Ahluwalia. New Delhi: International, 1987. 300 pages.

To coincide with the centenary anniversary celebrating the raising of the 4th Battalion The Sikh Regiment, the authors of Saragarhi Battalion (both of whom are serving regimental officers) have performed a timely service for their unit and military historians. Although 4 Sikh can trace their origin to the Bareilly Levy, raised in 1858, it was only after the re-raising of the battalion as 36th (Sikh) Regiment of Bengal Infantry, in March 1887, that this fine unit began to earn its honourable reputation.

Chronologically arranged, the book is divided into five sections; Beginnings, First World War, Inter War Years, Second World War, Post-Independence Years. Including the numerous appendices and supplementary lists the contents are evenly divided between the pre and post-independence periods.

Saragarhi Battalion lacks the depth and variety of detail that is the hallmark of an authoritative history; specifically, the dearth of information pertaining to medals, uniforms, badges, equipment, recruiting, family connections, regimental, characters, etc.

Few regiments of any Commonwealth Army hold the distinction of a unique battle honour. For their outstanding services on Samana Ridge during the Indian frontier wars of 1897, the 36th Sikhs were awarded the unique battle honour 'Samana'. In particular the honour was in recognition of the stalwart defence of Fort Gulistan and the epic stand made at Saragarhi where the outpost's 21 man garrison was annihilated, but not before they had exacted a heavy toll on the invading force of Pathans. Quick references to Hypher's *'Deeds of Valour'* and Farrington's *'IGS 1895 Casualty Roll'* will leave no reader in doubt as to the bravery of the 36th Sikhs. Ironically, not content with the unique honour of 'Samana', the 4th Sikhs, and Sikh Regiment as a whole, have now conferred upon themselves the totally unofficial honour 'Saragarhi'.

Regrettably, missing from the section on the First World War is the part played by a detachment of 36th Sikhs in helping to quell the Singapore Mutiny of 5th Light Infantry. 2187 Havildar Wand Singh, 36th Sikhs, won a (unique?) IDSM for his services at Singapore.

The battle honour 'Tsing Tao' is another honour unique in the Indian Army, as an award belonging to the Sikh Regiment, but the services in China during 1914, to which the honour was awarded, are all too briefly dealt with. A substantial account of the battle, written by Major Knox of 36th Sikhs, is included as an appendix. Unfortunately this is an overall description of operations and makes but scant reference to the role played by the 36th Sikhs.

The section on the Second World War and the chapter on the battle of Walong during 1962 are especially readable accounts that will affirm in the reader the qualities of bravery for which the Sikhs are renowned. The section on the Second World War would seem to have been culled almost verbatim from Birdwood's *"The Sikh Regiment in the Second World War"*. Generally the chapters on post 1947 operations are more detailed and better presented than those for the earlier period. The variations in style of presentation and depth of detail between the pre and post-independence sections can possibly be attributed to the paucity of source

material available to the authors, and over-dependence on 'dry' digests of service for the early period; a glance at the authors' bibliography can support this theory.

For the specialist Indian Army enthusiast this book is not a treasure chest of information. However, as a record of regimental service *Saragarhi Battalion* is well recommended. The continuity of service beyond 1947 will provide fresh and interesting information for those readers unfamiliar with India's military record since independence. Illustrated throughout with simple yet accurate maps and several plates of photographs, *Saragarhi Battalion* represents good value for money, priced as it is at approximately £10 sterling.

M.D.S



NEW POSTCARDS

Two new postcards have recently been produced by the National Army Museum from watercolours in their collection. One, by a Company artist, issued under the title Bengal Army, c1785, depicts the Bengal Artillery, Native Infantry and Governor-General's Bodyguard (see page 22). The other (page 23), from a watercolour by Richard Simkin (1851-1926), depicts 1st Battalion 8th Gurkha Rifles, 1914, and shows a drummer, piper and Subedar in full dress; Subedar in field service order; Havildar in full dress; Naik in field service order; and Gurkha in mufti. The cards are available at 10p each plus postage from the Museum shop, National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HT.



