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THE IMPERIAL CADET CORPS

Tony McClenaghan

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The subject of the photograph remains unidentified, except for the name Abdul Khalid on the negative and it is with a view to resolving that identification that this article is written. In researching the article I came to realise how little has been published about the Corps and for those wishing to pursue the subject further I recommend IOLR file R/20/30/288. This does not, however, name the Cadets and the only two lists that I have found are in the historical records of the 1903 and 1911 Delhi Durbar ceremonies. These have been combined here to form a composite list which appears as an appendix to this article.

The formation of the Imperial Cadet Corps was the brainchild of the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon, and was first suggested to the Secretary of State for India in a letter dated 19th July 1900. Earlier schemes for realising the military aspirations of Indians of noble birth, by granting them Commissions in the British or Indian Armies, had met with opposition. Opportunities did exist for Indian officers and there were, in 1900, some 3,000 holding Commissions in the Indian Army, but there was felt to be a dearth of opportunities for the sons of Indian princes, nobles and other gentlemen, especially when they were already receiving a superior education.

Lord Curzon therefore decided to recommend a scheme whereby a limited number of young men would be formed into a military corps. Selection would be made primarily from those already attending one of the four Chiefs' Colleges: Rajkumar College at Rajkot, Aitchison Chiefs' College at Lahore, Mayo College at Ajmer, and Daly College at Indore, though in exceptional circumstances selection could be made from some of the prominent British Indian families, or from those attending an educational establishment in England. The strength of the Corps would initially be limited to between 20 and 30 men and their ages would be from 17 to 20. It was envisaged that they would serve for two years and that they would undergo a course of training lasting two months each year and held during the cold weather period, probably at Calcutta, In addition they could be called upon during this two month period to provide a personal escort for the Viceroy. The training might be supplemented by additional training in Delhi or some other central spot, either in conjunction with or separate from other regular troops, after which they would return to their own States for the summer. The two year limit on service meant that there would be a constant rolling intake of new cadets.

At the end of the initial two year period it was envisaged that some of the Cadets would be called upon for military service within their own States. Others would probably not have developed a liking for the military life. For the remainder, however, and depending upon a satisfactory report from the Corps Adjutant, there would be the opportunity of embarking on

a third year of a more sustained military course in a garrison class, culminating in a Commission.

There remained the vexed question of what type of Commission should be conferred. Two options were considered. The first allowed for a Commission in the regular army, either British or Indian, carrying with it the prospect of continuous military service, but this was rejected on a number of grounds. First, it was felt that a large proportion would be unwilling or unfit for the rigours and occasional drudgery of regimental life, particularly in the Infantry. Most would probably wish to opt for service in the Cavalry. It was also felt that social difficulties would arise in the Regimental "Mess", as well as in those circumstances where Indian officers were placed in command of more junior British officers and of British soldiers. The second alternative allowed for a new type of Commission, a sort of honorary reserve, conferring the rank, pay and privileges of officers in the regular army but carrying the obligations of employment in extra-regimental and staff appointments only. Such employment, by the very nature of its peculiar origin, would allow for the regulation, arrest or advancement of the individual's career without attracting undue publicity. It was obviously felt that, if the scheme failed to work, it could thus be quietly shelved without attracting the adverse publicity that the cancellation of Commissions in the regular army would do.

With some misgivings as to whether there was a genuine need for the scheme, the British Government nevertheless gave its approval. King Edward VII gave his Royal Assent in 1901 and the Corps came into existence on 1 January 1902 with 23 cadets, including five Ruling Princes.

Maharaja Sir Pertab Singh (at that time Maharaja of Idar) was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Corps and the painting of him by Lovett in the uniform of the Imperial Cadet Corps is probably the best known painting of all Indian rulers. The first Commandant was Major W.A. Watson of the Central India Horse and the first Adjutant was Captain Donald Cameron, also of the Central India Horse. There was an Assistant Adjutant, Honorary Lieutenant Rao Bahadur Dip Singh of Bikaner and, from among the cadets, four Under Officers were selected. Though not stipulated in any records that I have found, I believe these were identified by the addition to their uniform of a cord loop worn around the neck and pinned to the left breast.

The uniform, which was very similar in style to those of the Idar Sardar Corps and the Jodhpur Lancers, undoubtedly reflected the close interest taken in all three units by Sir Pertab Singh. It consisted of a white kurta with sky blue (Star of India) collar and cuffs, and a sky blue panel on the front all edged with gold tracing and embroidered in gold. The shoulder straps were sky blue with gold embroidery and ended in a pear shaped design reaching halfway down to the elbow. A sky blue cummerbund was worn embroidered in gold with crimson embroidered ends. The lungi was also of sky blue with a crimson feather tuft and gold "turrah" or aigrette on the left. The corps badge (Figure 2) was worn in the centre of the lungi and consisted of a large I with G C either side of it, surmounted by a crown. On three scrolls the motto "FOR THE KING". The badge was held on the lungi by three strands of fine gilt cord. The belt buckle (Figure 3) was the same, though in the example shown here the crown is different, as is the decoration on the letters. The sword belt over the right shoulder was gold with a white central stripe and went beneath the cummerbund. The sword was placed in a frog and had a Marmeluk hilt and a white scabbard with gilt mountings. White breeches and black Napoleon boots with straight gilt spurs were worn.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Originally it was intended that each cadet should provide his own horse but by the time the Corps was actually formed it had obviously been felt that this might lead to unnecessary emulation amongst the Cadets. The Government therefore provided black Walers. The saddlery was simple with a white poll-piece and the saddle cloth was made from the skin of the snow leopard which, according to an article in the Navy and Army Illustrated, was found not to be as rare as some had feared.

I have been unable to determine for how long the Imperial Cadet Corps existed. As mentioned earlier, I have traced lists of members for 1903 and 1911 but it is interesting to

note that the 1911 list contains a number of individuals who were recorded as being ex-cadets and who had, in fact, participated in the 1903 Durbar. Given that this was the 1911 Delhi Durbar, it seems strange that they had to resort to ex-cadets in order to fill the ranks for the ceremonial. Does this indicate that the Corps was not as popular as had been envisaged?

The IOLR contains a letter from the Hon. Mr Mills (R/2 (749/367) outlining objections to the Corps, though I am not sure of the date of the letter. Judging by its contents, however, the Corps had by this time been located at Dehra Dun and the training had come to represent three years' continual service rather than the cold weather training envisaged in the original proposal. Dehra Dun was apparently unpopular with the cadets, most of whom came from Rajputana and Central India. It was pointed out that by the time they joined the Corps most were at least 18 years old and were considered to have State obligations. A three year absence was unwelcome when the location of the HQ was not easily accessible to the State. It was also felt that, having just completed eight years of study at one of the Chiefs' Colleges, the prospect of another three was unwelcome, especially since the training was of a prospective officer and there was no guarantee of a Commission. There was, therefore, little incentive to join. The nature of the discipline at Dehra Dun was unpopular; strict drill (offensive to their high birth) and riding school (unnecessary given their background). The letter proposed that the HQ be moved from Dehra Dun and that the original idea of training periods be re-introduced, i.e. covering from mid-October to end-March, for three successive years.

A more radical proposal was that those taking the Diploma and Post Diploma classes at Mayo College form the nucleus of the Corps and that the HQ be transferred to Ajmer, possibly as part of Mayo College. I have not identified the Hon. Mr Mills but he was obviously biased in favour of Mayo College. Or had the other three Colleges dropped out of the scheme by this time?

The photograph of Abdul Khalid posed me three difficulties when I first started to study it. First, all the photos I had ever seen of the Imperial Cadet Corps had them all wearing the padded piece of the lungi on the left side. Abdul Khalid wears his on the right. However, I have now seen photos where others were wearing theirs tied in the fashion of Abdul Khalid. If would seem from talking to former Indian Army officers that there was no rule and that it was a matter of personal preference, often depending on whether one was right or-left handed.

Secondly, Abdul Khalid wears an aiguillette on the right shoulder and I had always associated this with an ADC to the King. Though I have not seen one, I have now been told that there are other pictures of cadets wearing the aiguillettes in this manner, so perhaps it had nothing to do with being an ADC after all.[1]

Finally, though it has been seen on other photographs, Abdul Khalid wears the hanging section of the cummerbund 4 inches below the kurta. This is unusual but it allows us to see the curled top of the Kashmir shawl. It is, of course, possible that at the time the photograph was taken he had ceased being a member of the Corps and had lost the habit of wearing the uniform correctly.

I should be grateful to know if any other member is aware of other lists of Cadets.

Can anyone identify Abdul Khalid?

Web site addition - Note 1. Perhaps the aiguillette was the mark of an Under Officer, rather than the cord around the neck mentioned previously.

APPENDIX - LIST OF KNOWN CADETS

(Note: 'ex' signifies that subject appeared in the 1911 list as a former member of the Corps.)

1903 DELHI DURBAR

AMAR SINGH (also 1911 as ex)

Kunwar ZORAWAR SINGHJI (also 1911 as ex)

Agha KASIM SHAH (also 1911 as ex)

MUHAMMAD AKBAR KHAN (also 1911 as ex)

H.H. Maharaja MADAN SINGH Bahadur of Kishengarh (also 1911 as ex)

H.H. Nawab MUHAMMAD IFTIKHAR ALI KHAN Bahadur, Jaora, (also 1911 as ex)

H.H. Raja SAJJAN SINGH of Rutlam, (also 1911 as ex)

Sahibzada TALEY MUHAMMAD KHAN (also 1911 as ex)

Maharaja AKHE SINGH of Jodhpur (also 1911 as ex)

Sahibzada AMANTULLA KHAN

Sardar BASANT SINGH

Kunwar BHARAT SINGH

Kunwar DEO SINGH

H. H. Maharaja KAMA RAM SINGH Bahadur of Dholpur

Thakur GOPAL SINGH

H.H. Maharaja SARDAR SINGH Bahadur of Jodhpur

Kunwar KHUMAN SINGH

Sardar MUHAMMAD KHAN

Kunwar KAMA PRATAP SINGH

Kunwar RAI SINGHJI

Kunwar RAM SINGHJI

Raja SAMANDAR SINGH

Nawab WALI-ud-DIN KHAN

1911 DELHI DURBAR

(Note: By this time the Commandant was Major R. O'B. Taylor)

Nawab ABDUL MAJID KHAN of Savanur.

Sardar AUTAR SINGH of Nhunga, Oudh.

Sheikh IMTIAZ RASUL KHAN of Jehangirabad, Oudh.

Thakur NARPAT SINGH of Rajptara, Nandod.

Kunwar KESHRI SINGH of Datha, Kathiawar.

Bala Sahib TRIMBAK RAO KHANVELKAR of Kolhapur.

Kunwar SAWAISDSJGH of Jamnagar, Kathiawar.

Kunwar DAJI RAJ of Jamnagar, Kathiawar.

Kunwar JORAWAR SINGH of Lathi, Kathiawar.

Kunwar SULTAN NIMBALKAR of Kolhapur.

Rana JODHA JUNG Bahadur of Allahabad

Rana Sahib GOPAL RAO of Kolhapur.

Aba Sahib CHANDRA RAO of Kolhapur

Kunwar HIRA SINGH of Panna.

Sahibzada HAJI KHAN of Bahawalpur.

Raja HAIDER ZAMAN KHAN of Khanpur.

Raja FATEH SINGH RAO of Akalkot.

H.H. the Maharaj Rana of Dholpur

Thakur DALPAT SINGH of Rohet Jodhpur.

Kunwar GAMBHIR SINGH of Vala, Kathiawar.

Raja PRATAP SINGH of Kama,(ex).

Lt. PIRTHI SINGH of Kota, (ex)

The Raja of Baria. (ex)

Kunwar NAHAR SINGH of Baria .(ex)

Maharaj Kunwar VIJAY of Rajpipla, (ex)

Lt BALA SAHIB DAFLE (ex)

Kunwar RAM SINGH of Narsingarh. (ex)

The Thakur of Rajkot (ex)

Lt AMAR SINGH of Kanota. (ex - see also 1903)

Lt ZORAWAR SINGH of Bhavnagar. (ex - see also 1903)

Kunwar PRAKRAM SINGH of Rajpipla. (ex)

MADHO RAO KADAM of Gwalior (ex)

Sardar HARNARAIN SINGH of Thol, Tangaur, Karnal. (ex)

Nawab RAIS YAR JUNG of Hyderabad. (ex)

Nawab RAIS JUNG of Hyderabad.

Aga MURTAZA KHAN of Bombay, (ex)

KHAN FATEH DIN KHAN of Manawadar. (ex)

Mir GULAM RAZA KHAN of Khairpur Mirs. (ex)

Lt Agha CASSIM SHAH (ex -see also 1903)

SAYED GULAM JILANI of Wai. (ex)

Sheikh ABDUL WAHAB HAZRATJI of Gwalior. (ex)

Nawab KHURSAD JUNG of Hyderabad, (ex)

Lt KHAN MUHAMMMAD AKBAR KHAN (ex - see also 1903)

The Nawab of Sachin. (ex)

His Highness the Maharaja of Kishengarh. (ex - see also 1903)

His Highness the Nawab of Jaora. (ex -see also 1903)

His Highness the Raja of Ratlam. (ex - see also 1903)

Sahibzada TALE MOHAMMAD of Palanpur. (ex -see also 1903)

BHARAT SINGH of Amleta (ex)

Maharaj AKHAI SINGH of Jodhpur. (ex -see also 1903

Acknowledgements: The photograph of Abdul Khalid is reproduced by kind permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The photographs of the ICC badges are reproduced by kind permission of Ashok Nath.

FRONTIER TOURS – PART III - WAZIRISTAN

Lieutenant Colonel A. A. Mains, late 9th Gurkha Rifles

(*continued from Vol. 9, No. 3*)

TERRAIN

Waziristan was the most southerly of the portions of Tribal territory inside the North West Frontier Province. It lies between the settled District of Dera Ismail Khan and the Afghan border. Mountainous with little cultivation, it was inhabited by Wazirs, Mahsuds and one or two lesser tribes. The Mahsuds were considered the most difficult and intransigent of all the

frontier tribes. Several attempts were made to enlist them into the Indian Army, but each had to be abandoned owing to their dislike of regular discipline.

MILITARY STATIONS

The area was not garrisoned until after 1922, when the 'forward policy' was introduced. Two large fortified camps were established - Razmak in the north and Wana in the south and a ring road linking the narrow gauge railheads of Bannu and Manzai with these camps was built; a branch road from near Wana went west to Fort Sandeman. Manzai, although a railhead, was a fortified camp just inside tribal territory; the station was inside the camp, and before the train was permitted to enter it all civilian passengers had to detrain and the train itself was searched to ensure that it was not used as a tribal 'Trojan Horse'. Close by was the Fort of Jandola, the Headquarters of the para military South Waziristan Scouts.

It had been hoped that the prosperity brought by the garrisons and the roads would have tamed the local tribesmen, and for a time this seemed to have worked; military passengers were using the roads unarmed and unescorted. This, however, did not last and in 1936 the so called Fakir of Ipi roused all the tribes in Waziristan against the British. The situation became so bad that massive reinforcements had to be sent into the area and there was a year of heavy fighting before the tribesmen gave in. While the result of this campaign was inconclusive, as fighting on a lesser scale occurred in 1938-9, the massive reinforcements showed the tribesmen the folly of their ways and led to a period of relative peace during the war years.

WANA

I only served in Wana for a relatively short period - from mid-December 1945, when I returned from leave to early February 1946 when I was posted as Chief Intelligence Officer at Headquarters Central Command. The camp had been built in the same style as Landi Kotal and the routine was much the same, except that personnel could not travel to and from the camp unescorted. The roads could only be traversed by heavily armed convoys on "Road Open Days" (RODs), when it was picketed by the South Waziristan Scouts.

In view of the hostile attitude of the locals everyone had to be alert. My own battalion was shot up while doing a small exercise less than a mile from the Camp. It was lucky that the mortar platoon had their mortars ready for action, as a small salvo of mortar bombs sent the tribesmen running.

I never agreed with the "RODs" policy. The convoy only went about every week or ten days, and although the day was supposed to be a secret until the night before, the bazaar always knew about it several days previously. The actual convoy in my opinion was too long for the escort provided. A typical convoy would be headed by an Armoured Car followed by a platoon of infantry in two 'Frontier Armoured Lorries' (FALs), then came the first part of the convoy, some ten 'soft' three ton lorries. In the centre was the Commander's wireless truck, a soft 15 cwt., the reserve consisting of a platoon in two FALs and two Armoured Cars. The second half had a further ten 3 tonners with a rear-guard of two FALs and an Armoured Car. I thought it would be easy for a small party of hostiles to ambush say the fifth and sixth lorry, loot and murder and be away before any of the escort could be on the scene. This was what actually occurred in attacks on refugee trains in the Punjab in the following year. I considered that smaller convoys running more frequently would have been a better policy.

Wana had one unusual amenity - a pack of foxhounds which hunted jackals on two days a week, protected by a posse of mounted Khassadars. The kennels were situated in the Mule Company lines, and the OC was usually the Master, as his unit had the greatest number of horses. Earlier in the war higher authority wished to close down the Hunt, as it was difficult to find anyone with the experience to hunt hounds and it was thought out of place in wartime. The Political Agent took great exception to this as he considered that if it was closed the locals would immediately assume that Britain had lost the war. I was a Whipper-In during my short time in Wana and much enjoyed the experience of being able to get out of camp.

ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY SILVER MEDALS and the STANHOPE GOLD MEDAL; 1871-1899 WITH INDIAN ARMY CONNECTIONS

Bill Fevyer

Having recently had access to the Royal Humane Society files for the period 1871 to 1899 I felt it might be of interest to the members of the Indian Military Collectors Society if I submitted to your editor one or two citations for the R.H.S. medals for this period.

Citations for the Silver and Gold Medals for the period 1830 to 1871 can be found in the book "*Acts of Gallantry*' by Lambton Young, who was Secretary of the Society from 1859 to 1879.

The Stanhope Gold Medal was instituted in 1873, and one was awarded at the end of each year to the Silver Medallist whose case was considered to show the highest order of courage.

For the year 1881 Major H. Senior, 34th Bengal Native Infantry was awarded the Stanhope Gold Medal for the following act on the 9th February, 1881.

> Several gentlemen were proceeding by country boat from Moonshegunge Shichar, when the boat struck on a rock in the centre of the river. The gentlemen succeeded in landing safely, but the boat had to be abandoned. Immediately afterwards a large native boat with coolies on board struck the hidden rocks at the same place, and all the crew were immersed.
>
> Major Senior immediately swam out and succeeded in rescuing six persons, but not until he had repeatedly swam to and from the bank. He encountered great personal risk in venturing into the midst of twenty five terror-stricken men and women, most of them totally unable to help themselves.
>
> The River Barrack is a large and fast running river, and like most Indian rivers, abounding in undercurrents.

In 1886 Captain H.N. McRae, 45th (Rattray's) Sikhs was awarded the Stanhope Gold Medal for rescuing a trumpeter of the Royal Artillery from a well at Rawalpindi:

> At 5 a.m. on the 5th October, 1886, a trumpeter of the Royal Artillery was crossing

the compound of Captain Holmes's bungalow at Rawalpindi, when he fell down a well. On hearing the alarm Captain Holmes, Captain McRae, and Lieutenant Taylor proceeded to the spot. On arriving they found that Mr Grose had preceded them, and had let down a well-rope which was of sufficient length to reach the soldier, and capable of sustaining him for a time.

Both Captain McRae and Captain Holmes volunteered to go down, but as the former was a light weight it was decided that he should make the trial, Captain Holmes demurring, as he wished to undertake the risk himself. The rope being very weak, it could not possibly have borne Captain Holmes great weight.

Captain McRae was accordingly let down by means of a four-strand tent rope, and on reaching the water found the soldier practically insensible. He therefore decided to go up with him.

Captain Holmes was at the head of the rope, and his strength enabled him to lift both completely. At every haul the amount gained was held in check by the other persons above. After hauling up about ten or fifteen feet the rope broke, precipitating Captain McRae and his charge to the bottom of the well. A second attempt was then made, and both were brought to the surface. The depth of the well was eighty-five feet of which twelve feet was water. It was quite dark at the time.

In 1877 Lieutenant G.S. Eyre, Bengal Staff Corps was awarded the Silver Medal.

On the 15th April, 1877, Lieuts. Deane and Mansell attempted to swim across a branch of the Ganges at Baghalpur, Bengal, in all their clothes, when Deane became faint. Mansell did what he could to sustain him in the water, but, though being clasped round the neck by Deane, would have been drowned with him had not Eyre with great promptitude come to their assistance. The moment he saw them in difficulties he had on all his clothes (Heavy shooting boots etc.) but he swam some eighty or ninety yards, and succeeded in separating them, and the brought the insensible body of Deane to the shore. A strong stream was running, and the bottom was very muddy; also the bank was very steep. The risk was very great.

Sepoy Torrey Baz, Punjab Infantry, Afghan Boundary Commission was awarded the Silver Medal in 1885.

On the evening of the 19th April, 1885, a native soldier went into the River Hari Rud, Afghanistan, to bathe; he was unable to swim, and was carried off his legs into deep water by the rapid current.

The salvor gallantly jumped in and succeeded at great personal risk in rescuing him.

The sepoy Torrey Baz, formed part of the escort of the Afghan Boundary Commission, and his conduct was recommended to the notice of the Society by General Sir Peter Lumsden, K.CB.

Lieutenant Hamilton Bower, Staff Corps, 17th Bengal Cavalry awarded a Silver Medal in 1886.

> Lieut. Bower, whilst passing through Lahaul, on his way to Ladakh, had occasion to cross a jhula bridge spanning a mountain torrent called the Chandra or Bhaga river. After passing over and ascending about 200 yards he heard a scream, and on looking round, saw one of his coolies being rapidly carried away by the fast running river, the bridge having broken under him while crossing. Lieut. Bower at once ran down the hill, plunged into the water, and succeeded, with considerable difficulty, in rescuing the native.
>
> The river was about sixty yards wide, and flowing between high rocks; the water was intensely cold, having just escaped from the snow above. The salvor had to remain in wet clothes for a day and a night, his clothes being frozen. The case is sent by the Colonel commanding the regiment. The incident occurred about noon upon the 1st of May, 1886.

Lieutenant Cecil P.G. Griffin; 1st Bengal Cavalry was awarded the Silver Medal for endeavouring to rescue a sepoy from a well in 1893.

> At 4 pm. on the 18th May, 1893, a sepoy jumped down a well at Saugor, probably with a view to committing suicide. The man's cries awoke Mr Griffin, who ran out of his bungalow and proceeded to the well. Hearing the man's groans he descended by means of a rope a distance of fifty feet, and dropped a distance of six feet into the water. Not finding the man, he dived, and after a couple of unsuccessful attempts succeeded in bringing the man up from the bottom of the water, which was ten feet deep. Meanwhile Mrs Griffin had been exerting herself in getting together as many servants as she could, obtaining lanterns and procuring ropes of sufficient length to lower a lantern to her husband. Eventually, the original rope having been lowered and a second one let down, both men were drawn to the surface, but owing, unfortunately to a jerk being given to the rope securing the insensible sepoy, the man's body slipped from its fastening and again fell into the well. Mr Griffin descended a second time, secured the man's body more effectually, when it was drawn up to the surface, but too late for resuscitation.
>
> The risk in this case was twofold; there was a danger in trusting to a well-rope, which may have been of insufficient strength to sustain a man's weight; and a possible risk from the bite of a cobra, a snake that is known to frequent the spaces between the rough stones forming the sides of the well.

Gunner Indar Singh, 3 Peshawar Mountain Battery, Tochi Field Force, was awarded the Silver Medal in 1897.

> In connection with the operations being carried out by the Tochi Field Force several men of the No 3 Peshawar Mountain Battery, were about 4 p.m. on the 13th September 1897, returning down the Surtoi Nullah, on their way to camp at Pirakai, when owing to a violent storm among the hills the defile they were traversing was

suddenly transformed into a mountain torrent, the water rushing along with terrific force. Four men and eight mules were at once swept away. Two of the men managed to reach a rock in the middle of the stream, only one of whom was able to retain his hold, the other being carried away by the force of the water. The man on the rock was in a most dangerous position, and rapidly becoming numb with the intense cold.

The water having gone down slightly, Gunner Indar Singh stripped, and entering the torrent from the opposite side, succeeded in reaching the rock, where he remained supporting the now almost insensible man, for some considerable time, when, the water having gone down a little lower, he was enabled to reach a place of safety.

Considerable risk was incurred, as large stones were being carried down by the stream, which was composed of freshly thawed hail, the depth being about breast high, and the width sixty feet.

When one considers that the numbers awarded for the period 1869 to 1981 are - Silver 783, Bronze 9336 - it becomes quite obvious that there must be many more, both Bronze and Silver awards of the Royal Humane Society to Indian Army recipients.

The following article is taken from the archives of the Assam Rifles and was written by Sir Robert Reid after the end of the Second World War when he was Governor of Assam. I am grateful to Colonel M.D. Commissariat for producing it, and for his permission to reproduce it in *Durbar*. Ed.

ASSAM IN PEACE AND WAR

Sir Robert Reid, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

One Indian Order of Merit, four Military Crosses, ten Military Medals, sixteen Indian Distinguished Service Medals, two M.B.E.s, six British Empire Medals, twenty-four Mentions in Despatches - such is the record (and it is not necessarily complete) of the Assam Rifles in the war against Japan. Not a bad one either for a corps of Military Police whose previous training was directed with a view not to warfare with the troops of a first class Power, but to the far less exacting duties of frontier watch and ward, small-scale punitive expeditions, and internal security.

The Assam Rifles can trace their history back for more than a hundred years; for it was in 1835 that a body of semi- military police, known as the 'Cachar Levy', was raised by Mr Grange, then in civil charge of the Nowgong district. At that time troops in Assam were being reduced and some substitute was required to carry out watch and ward on a frontier which then ran from the Brahmaputra south of Cachar, on a line which would more or less bisect the present province of Assam. About 1852 the Levy became known as Frontier Police, and in 1882 the whole force was reorganised in three bodies of Military Police under the territorial titles of the Surma Valley Battalion, the Lakhimpur Battalion and the Naga Hills Battalion. These are now known as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalions respectively of the Assam Rifles.

In 1913 a force known as the Darrang Battalion was raised for service on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, but very soon, in 1915, it went to Imphal to relieve the Indian Infantry battalion hitherto stationed there. In 1917 it became the 4th Battalion Assam Rifles, and has remained at Imphal ever since. A 5th battalion was raised in 1920 for service on the north bank, was abolished as a measure of economy in 1930, and revived again in 1940.

In the early days the organisation of the force was sketchy, training meagre, and methods of recruiting haphazard, but successive Commandants in the course of years brought it up to a pitch of efficiency that at the time of the outbreak of war in 1939 caused it to compare favourably with many units of the Indian Army. In 1924 there was sanctioned the affiliation of units of the Rifles with certain Gurkha Battalions, with most beneficial results, while the practice of sending men of the Rifles on various courses at Army training centres helped to keep them in touch with modern methods.

In time of peace the five battalions are distributed all round the semicircle of the North East Frontier, from left to right as follows: the 5th battalion at Lokra on the north facing Tibet, the 2nd at Sadiya on the borders of S.E. Tibet, the 3rd at Kohima facing Burma, the 4th at Imphal in Manipur State, and the 1st in the South at Aizawl in the Lushai Hills.

The bulk of the men are Gurkhas, but with a substantial element of Lushais, Cacharis, Kukis and other tribes. The Gurkhas are mostly of types which before the late war any regular Gurkha Brigade Officer would have rejected with scorn as either 'line boys' or of classes not worthy of enlistment, but these same recruits have proved their worth in the sternest test of all modern war. Before the war the Gurkha element greatly preponderated, partly because the officers serving with the Rifles were more often than not seconded from Gurkha Regiments, partly because of the reluctance of the local tribes to enlist, or to remain in service, if they did enlist, for more than a few months. But of recent years there has been a tendency to take more of the local races. In the 1st battalion, for instance, there is a substantial number of locally recruited Lushais, whose generally higher intelligence and education make them valuable material particularly for the signals branch.

The organisation is a military one, but every man is enrolled as a Police Officer; their duties are primarily police rather than military, and they are under the control of the Inspector General of Police, Assam.

The cadre of British officers is a very small one, a Commandant, and at the very most four Assistant Commandants to each battalion. The Ghurkha officers consequently are trained to exercise a great deal of initiative and they have plenty of experience in independent command, since so many of the frontier outposts which they man are only of platoon size and all in remote and isolated places in the hills. They are a highly mobile force accustomed to move about the densely wooded hills without transport and with minimum baggage, and every outpost has a party permanently told off ready to move out at a moment's notice, complete with everything they can want for six days, needing no transport whatever and self-contained in every particular.

In normal times their chief duty is to man the numerous outposts dotted along the North East Frontier from Lakher-Land in the far south of the Lushai Hills, northwards through the Naga hills, and along the outskirts of Sadiya Frontier Tract to the confines of Bhutan. These outposts swallow up a very large proportion of the strength of each battalion, and the

smallness of the average time consequently spent by a man at his battalion headquarters is a source of constant anxiety to the Commandants.

Then there are the small frontier expeditions which are periodically, and in these modern times only rarely, necessitated by misbehaviour of transfrontier elements. In earlier days, at the time when our frontier was in process of formation and contact with the frontier tribes was gradually being extended, expeditions were numerous and the three older battalions of the Force took part in every one.

On the south-eastern portion of the border, where the Lushais, or "Shendoos" as they were then called, gave perpetual trouble with raids and forays on tea-garden and peaceful villages the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion, as the 1st Battalion Assam Rifles was then called, played its part in numerous expeditions, the last of which on a large scale was Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90. Various expeditions had entered the Hills over a long period of years to exact reprisals for damage done, but results were never thorough or conclusive. Consequently the situation had steadily become worse as the raiding tribes became emboldened with success. Three outrages brought things to a head. The first was the murder in February 1888 of Lieutenant J.F. Stewart of the Leinster Regiment, two British soldiers and a sepoy at a place only eighteen miles from Rangamati, the Headquarters of the British District of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The second a few weeks later was a raid on a village within the British boundary when eight persons were killed and wounded and twenty-three prisoners taken. The third was in December of the same year, when a village only four miles from Demagiri, also within Chittagong Hill Tracts district, was raided and twenty-one men killed and fifteen captives carried off. The Government of India accepted the advice of the Government of Bengal, and a force of 3400 officers and men assembled at Demagiri under command of Colonel F.V.W. Tregear. This was mainly a military force, comprised of Gurkhas and Indian Infantry, but the plan also included the co-operation from the northern edge of the offending tribesmen's' country of a force of 400 Surma Military Police. In the event the expedition encountered no opposition worthy of the name, but it fully accomplished all it set out to do. It had to endure great hardships however, and much sickness, and the Adjutant-General of the day referred in his report to: "the severe sickness which attacked the force and which crippled the Burma columns to almost a dangerous extent". They were operating in country in every way similar in character to Arrakan where our troops suffered so severely from malaria in 1942-43, but without the facilities for fighting that scourge that modern science has invented.

The 2nd Battalion Assam Rifles under its old designation of the Lakhimpur Battalion of Frontier Police was concerned mostly with affairs in the Abor and Mishmi countries, though it was often called upon to furnish reinforcements on other parts of the border. The most important major expedition in which it took part was the Abor-Expedition of 1911-12, undertaken after the murder of Mr Williams and Dr. Gregorson in 1911. These, the former being the Assistant Political Agent and the latter a tea-garden doctor who was much interested in the hill tribes, had penetrated into the hills beyond the line past which it was forbidden to go, and were murdered by the tribesmen, more out of ignorance than real malice. Be that as it may a large scale expedition under command of Major General Sir Hamilton Bower was undertaken. Opposition was negligible, but a large tract of country was opened up by means of roads, far-reaching administrative changes and improvements were brought about, and a very large area of hitherto unknown country was mapped and surveyed. Since then there has been no trouble in the Abor country.

The turbulent Naga tribes along the eastern border gave more trouble in the early days than any others, and the history of the Naga Hills Frontier Police (now the 3rd Assam Rifles) is one long record of frontier fighting. Perhaps the most noticeable engagement in which they were concerned was the siege of Kohima in 1879, when a small party of this battalion with other units was besieged by the Angami tribesmen of Khonoma and Kohima. Kohima had been occupied permanently in November 1878 as a result of an expedition against certain turbulent Angami villages which had become a perpetual menace to the peace of the countryside. But Khonoma, the biggest and strongest of these villages, about five miles from Kohima as the crow flies was far from subdued; and when Mr Damant, the Political Officer, went there on the 14th October in the following year, he was fired on and killed as he was about to ascend the steep path leading up to the main entrance to the village. Men of Jotsoma and Kohima, as well as of Khonoma, were concerned in this attack. His escort, mainly composed of sixty-five constables of the Frontier Police and twenty-one men of the 43rd Bengal Infantry, suffered fifty-eight casualties out of a strength of about one hundred, and the survivors were forced to retire.

Kohima was then besieged. Kohima straggles along a ridge, rising steep at each end, with a saddle in the middle over which the main road runs on the way from Dimapur to Manipur. Approaching the town from the north, the road winds in its long ascent from the plains in and out along the contour of hills, with the steep hillside above it on the right and a deep cultivated valley on the left, the slopes of which are terraced for rice cultivation in the way in which Angamis are adept On the face of the hill, on the left as you approach, is the big native Angami village, near which the house of the American Baptist Mission makes a conspicuous landmark. On the right a steep hill slopes up in the opposite direction, at the lower end of which is the Deputy Commissioner's house and garden, wherein Damant lies buried. The house is a single-storeyed one (or rather was, it is a ruin now) made mostly of wood, with a corrugated iron roof. Above it, and right on top of it so to speak, is the little club and its tennis court, made famous in the great battle of April 1944. Above, again, are wooded hills, the nearer slopes being the catchment area for Kohima's water supply. Just round the corner is the bungalow (now a ruin) allotted to the Commandant of the Assam Rifles. These buildings are on the right of the road as you go south towards Manipur. On the left lies the jail, a tiny place built of bamboo palisade, made to hold only a dozen or so prisoners. It also has figured in the news as "Jail Hill".

Between these two heights there is a stretch of flat - or almost flat ground whereon lie the parade ground, the main bazaar, the hospital (now burned to the ground), and the Deputy Commissioner's "Cutcherry", a term which covers Court and Offices. The latter is situated in the old earthwork fort, and this was the centre of defence in the siege of 1879. On the slope below it are the quarters of the Assam Rifles, lines of open barrack huts, the walls made of split bamboo matting, the roofs of corrugated iron painted red.

The garrison in 1879 was only 150 strong, 100 Frontier Police and fifty sepoys, and they had with them some 400 non-combatants, including the newly widowed Mrs Damant, Mrs Cawley, wife of the Assistant Political Agent, and a large number of wives and children belonging to the men of the garrison. With only ten days' supplies and surrounded by an enemy whose strength was estimated at 6000, they experienced severe hardships owing to the shortage of food and water, especially the latter. The main source of water supply was diverted by the insurgents, and the sole remaining spring was polluted by having the head of a dead sepoy thrown into it. The garrison was reinforced on the 19th October by the arrival of Mr Hinde, the Political Assistant at Wokha. On hearing the news he had marched instantly to

their assistance with a force of sixty-two men, and covered sixty-three miles of hostile country without the loss of a single man. The arrival from Manipur on the 27th of Colonel James Johnstone, the Political Agent, and a strong force brought the siege to an end. He had great difficulties in urging his forces along over bad and mountainous paths, but covered a hundred miles in five days. Johnstone's force arrived not a bit too soon, for the garrison was in pretty desperate straits and, in fact, was thinking seriously of surrendering.

Reinforcements then came up from Assam, and steps were taken to punish the insurgents. Khonoma, a strongly fortified village on the top of a steep ridge, to which approach was only possible up precipitous slopes, was stormed on 22nd November after hand-to-hand fighting, with the loss on our side of fifty-one officers and men killed and wounded, four out of the nine British Officers being casualties. A severer punishment still, though a necessary one, was that men of Khonoma were exiled from their village and forbidden to cultivate the Khonoma fields for a term of years. Jotsoma was attacked and destroyed on the 27th November. These were the most important points of resistance, but opposition continued into January 1880. In that month a party of fifty-five Khonoma men performed a remarkable feat by breaking through British lines and making off down Cachar to attack, by way of diversion, the Baladhan tea garden. They killed the manager, Mr Blyth, and eighteen garden coolies, laid the whole place waste, and then marched straight back from whence they came, covering incredible as it may seem, a distance of eighty miles each way.

In all these operations, as well as in the more humdrum works of garrisoning the country afterwards, the 3rd battalion played a valuable and creditable part.

These three expeditions which have been instanced, however, are somewhat in the nature of the 'set piece' resulting out of some major outrage, organised after consultation with higher authority, and conducted under military control. Far more typical of the general run of frontier work are the small expeditions of company or platoon strength undertaken to inflict swift punishment on some village or group of villages for isolated offences against the peace of the tribe. A trans-frontier Naga village, for instance, will take heads from a village within our border, and when that happens and reparation is refused a small party of Rifles is sent out to inflict punishment which generally takes the form of burning the offending village after the inhabitants have been evacuated.

Thus in 1889 a combined force of Lakhimpur and Naga Hills Military Police was sent out against the Chang village of Tuensang in the Naga Hills district. Tuensang, which lay on the far side of the River Dikhu and was thus outside the area of our political control, had been guilty of raids on Ao villages within our control area, and upwards of 200 persons, mostly children were murdered. Mr A. Porteous, the Deputy Commissioner, carried out the expedition with a force of 100 police. No serious opposition was encountered and casualties on either side were light. This was the first introduction of this tribe to firearms, and Lieutenant R.M. Maxwell, of the Lakhimpur Military Police, wrote at the time that they thought as fire came from the muzzle of the guns, all that was needed was a chunga (or hollow bamboo) of water to put them out. They were soon disillusioned and, in fact, gave little or no trouble at any time afterwards.

Again, in 1911, raids committed on a frontier village in the upper Chindwin district of Burma led to a joint expedition with Burma against Makware, a village high up at 700 feet on the great divide between Assam and Burma, lying close under the snows of Sarameti (12,557 feet). Colonel A.E. Woods, the Deputy Commissioner, was in command of the Assam force,

with forty Naga Hills Military Police and a number of British Officers as well. The village was burnt after little opposition. The difficulties on the route were great, two ridges having to be crossed at over 8000 feet in the last six days of the march.

In more recent times there have been occasions when news of traffic in slaves in some remote village in the unadministered territory lying between Assam and Burma has caused an expedition to be organised to remind the offenders that, if Geneva is far away, the British Government is bound by the term of the Geneva Convention and will not tolerate slavery within its borders. Such was that in 1936 against Pangsha, a Kalokenyo village, which had been guilty of traffic in slaves and also of raiding within the Control Area, taking 241 heads. Mr J.P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, was in charge with an escort of 125 men of the 3rd Assam Rifles under Major W.R.B. Williams. The main village was burnt, the slaves were rescued, and undertakings given for future good behaviour. Though the objects of the expedition were thus successfully accomplished, it met with strong, though not prolonged opposition. Indeed, the leaders of the expedition had a narrow escape from being wiped out on their return journey, when a heavy attack by the Pangsha warriors, who approached unseen through high crops, was only prevented from ending in disaster by the courage and tactical skill of a Gurkha Officer.

These are only a few instances taken at random in the long history of the pacification of the border, but they perhaps give some idea of one aspect of the normal duties of the force. In addition, they form a second line in support of the Civil Police of Assam in times of serious civil disturbances. For such duties, distasteful as they are to both officers and men, such a body as the Assam Rifles, highly disciplined, well-armed, endowed with police powers and to some extent accustomed to police duties, is a most valuable aid to the civil power. Not only have they been used for this purpose within Assam, but they have more than once come to the aid of a neighbouring province of Bengal, as in 1930 when Gandhi's subversive Civil Disobedience Movement, accompanied by the most dangerous terrorist campaign that the province has known, was straining the resources of the police to the utmost.

In the war of 1914-18 the Assam Rifles took no part as a unit, but they furnished no less than 23 officers and 3174 men in drafts to Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army, all of whom earned the highest praise from their commanding officers. It was in recognition of their services in the Great War that in 1917 their title was changed to "Assam Rifles".

In the recent World War they have done invaluable work in furnishing trained men to serve in the Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army, in providing a trained nucleus of 500 men to the newly raised Assam Regiment, in assisting in the evacuation of Burma refugees, in carrying out their normal duties with depleted cadres, and not least in fighting the Japs on the Burma border. The 3rd and 4th battalions formed the backbone of the guerrilla force, which was organised along the frontier of Burma, and Assam, and whose activities extended beyond the border and even across the Chindwin. These battalions also furnished detachments to protect observer posts stationed far out in the forward area to cover the northern airfields, in which position they were supplied entirely by air. Typical of the spirit of these men was the action of an officer of the 4th Battalion when in command of a small party which had been hopelessly outnumbered and overrun during the great Japanese attack in 1944. He sent a brief message to say he had been overrun, but had six men left and was proposing to attack the enemy in the rear. An equally gallant action was that of a platoon of the 3rd Battalion under a Gurkha Officer on 23rd-24th December, 1943, east of Chindwin near Homalin. Attacked by a Japanese force some 600 strong, they not only repulsed the enemy with heavy casualties in a

two days' battle, but also pursued them until all contact was lost. For this the Platoon Commander was awarded the Indian Order of Merit, and a Cachari rifleman, who had volunteered to fetch ammunition from a secret dump, to reach which he had to go through the enemy lines was awarded the Military Medal.

A detachment of some 400 men of the 2nd Battalion had the distinction of being the only Indian troops with a British Brigade which was put in to make a flank attack from Mokokchung at this period, and it greatly distinguished itself in the subsequent advance to Ukhrul.

The 1st Battalion formed part of the Lushai Brigade and, as such, had frequent heavy engagements with the enemy at the time when the 17th Indian Division was withdrawing from Tiddim to Imphal in the early stages of these operations. A Subadar and a Jemadar of the battalion obtained the Military Cross for gallantry in these operations.

The 5th Battalion was unlucky in not having the same opportunities of active service as a unit as did its sister battalions; for it was at an early stage ordered to play the indispensable, if humdrum role of a training battalion for the whole force.

The crowning glory of the force was the great deed performed by the seven platoons of the 3rd Battalion in the defence of Kohima, 2nd to 3rd April, 1944, against the great Japanese attempt to drive through into India. Led by their three British Officers, Lieutenant Colonel G.A.E, Keene, Major M.K. Smith and Captain D. Cleland, and their Subadar Major Sardar Bahadur Bol Bahadur Gurung, they fought with the Assam Regiment, the Royal West Kents and a scratch collection of gallant men drawn from all sorts of units in one of the finest episodes of that hard-fought campaign. As the memorial to the dead of the 161st Infantry Brigade Group, which stands at the foot of the hill where so much hard fighting took place, simply but finely puts it "At Kohima in April 1944 the Japanese Invasion of India was halted." The 3rd Battalion have their own memorial as well, close to the Kuki Piquet on the small ridge which formed the front line of their sector on the main Garrison Hill. Numerous honours were won in this action, including the immediate award of the Military Cross to a Gurkha Officer for rallying his men at a critical moment in the battle.

What of the men who have made this force? They are mostly to be numbered among those whom Maud Diver has named the "Great Unsung". Unlike the well-publicised and romance-surrounded North West Frontier, the North East Frontier has never except perhaps for the temporary interest excited by the Manipur 'rebellion' of 1891, when five British Officers were murdered at Imphal, and Abor expedition of 1911, been in the news. Yet men did their duty as devotedly and successfully there as anywhere else in our Empire, and it was only accident that deprived them of the fame and the rewards that they earned. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the historian of our relations with the tribes of the North East Frontier up to 1884, recorded of David Scott, the first Agent to the Governor General in the North East frontier, who died at the age of forty-five in 1831, words which apply in more or less degree to any such number of men. He said: "*Had the scene of his life's labours been in North West or Central India, where the great problem of Empire was then being worked out, instead of amid the obscure jungles of Assam, he would occupy a place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe. As it is, his writings lie buried amid the dust of official record- rooms, though his name is known to most of our frontier officers, his work in its extent and power is still little understood*".

In the early days officers employed with the civil administration had command of the Military Police in addition to their civil duties. Such were the two John Butlers, a father and son famous in Naga history. John Butler senior, was Assistant to the Agent to the Governor General on the North East Frontier in 1844, and his son succeeded him some thirty years later. Similarly, officers of the Civil police were frequently employed as Commandants of the Military Police, but of recent years it has been settled practice to employ officers of the Indian Army in the post of Commandant and Assistant Commandant. The motives that led them to join the corps were mixed. Some, perhaps, were tired of the iron routine of life in the Indian Army, with its annual round of individual training, troop training, squadron training and so on, and sought a life where a man had more scope for initiative. Others were attracted by stories of good shooting and fishing or in the expectation that allowance and cheap living would replenish an exchequer impoverished by the charges of an expensive mess. None the less, they were empire builders in the true sense of the word, for they not only built up a fine force, but with their aid gained the loyalty and the trust of the wild tribes they worked among. It is difficult, perhaps invidious, to single out names for mention. But Colonel L.W. Shakespear, C.B., C.I.E., whose "*History of the Assam Rifles*" is a record not only of the services of that force but of events on that frontier over a period of more than a hundred years, should not be forgotten. He was Commandant of the 3rd Battalion from 1897 to 1902, and later became Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of the force in 1917, when that post was created in connection with the war, till its abolition in 1921. The Commandant with the longest record of service with the force was Colonel G.H. Loch, C.I.E., who served for twenty-two years (1892-1914) with the Lushai Hills Battalion in Aijal. He left an enduring monument in the fine stone buildings that house the battalion to this day, and in the spacious parade ground formed by paring off the top of a steep and rocky ridge so as to make the only level ground of any size in the station. Loch, alas, spoilt his reputation as a soldier in the Chinglong Expedition of 1913, when a disastrous start in the operation led to his being relieved of his command by a regular officer. Chinglong was a Konyak village which had been guilty of taking heads of British subjects. The force under Loch's command included 150 men of the Dacca Battalion of Military Police and 140 of the Naga Hills Military Police, and was accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr J.E. Webster. They burnt the village on 5th February 1913, but while they were thus engaged the Nagas got in among the baggage coolies and stampeded them, inflicting forty-five casualties and carrying off three rifles. Loch retired and decided to abandon further operations until the following cold weather. But other counsels prevailed; the expedition, reinforced by two companies of 1/8th Gurkhas, was handed over to the command of Major Alban Wilson, and matters were brought to a successful conclusion. The fact was that Loch, good soldier as he was, had been too long engaged in administrative and engineering work in a quiet cantonment and had got out of the habit of vigorous action in the field. But in his own line as an administrator and a builder he was unsurpassed, and the Aijal Lines are still the best that the force possesses, all built for almost nothing by the men themselves out of local materials.

It is even more invidious perhaps to pick out the names in more modern times. But there are two names at the mention of which no one will cavil. The first is Lieut. Colonel W.F. Brown, D.S.O., who after a successful period of service in the Assam Rifles was selected to succeed to the command of the newly raised 1st Battalion Assam Regiment. He led the battalion in the fierce fighting in the Naga Hills against the Japanese onslaught in 1944, where his men covered themselves with glory, only to be killed in a minor operation in the subsequent pursuit of the defeated Japs. The second is that of Lieut Colonel G.A.E. Keene, who commanded the men of the 3rd Battalion who formed part of the heroic garrison of Kohima in the siege of 1944.

What of the future? It is perhaps idle to speculate. But a dozen questions at once leap to mind. What view will the future Indian Government take of North East Frontier problems? How will they deal with the administration of the tribes on those borders? Will this fine force be allowed to continue in its present form? Who is going to pay for it? Who will officer it? For the answer to these conondrums (sic) anyone's guess is as good as another's.

INDIAN CAVALRY 1857-1861

C.J. Parrett

Continuing the series, herewith the fact sheet for 13th Bengal Irregular Cavalry. The generous and expert assistance of Tim Ash, who read my draft and helped me to avoid several errors, is greatly appreciated

(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).

13TH BENGAL IRREGULAR CAVALRY

13th Bengal Irregular Cavalry		IOL L/Mil/5 reference
	Clasps	None traced
Total known claims	Nil	

COMMENTS ON HISTORY OF REGIMENT, 1857-1861

There is no evidence that Mutiny medals were issued to this regiment although it is known that several of its officers and other ranks claimed medals on the rolls of other units in which they subsequently served against the mutineers.

It was strategically essential for the British to retain control of Benares, being a holy city of importance astride the Grand Trunk Road and the Ganges, and a potential focal point for anti-British feeling. Thus in May the 13Bgl IC, previously headquartered at Sultanpore, was brought into Benares to strengthen the garrison. It was believed, incorrectly as it turned out, that irregular cavalry sowars, who were relatively well paid and found their own horses, were more reliable than the native infantry of the Bengal Army.

On 3 June 1857, the HQ with 70 sabres under Capt. H.J. Guise (28Bgl NI; Commandant) was at Benares. Lieut C.H. Palliser (63BglNI; 2i/c), possibly accompanied by Lieut E.H.C Simpson (39BglNI; Adjutant), with approximately 50 sabres was escorting a substantial treasury of currency coins from Gorakhpore to the relative security of the Benares mint. The

remainder of the regiment was spread out in small detachments at Sultanpore (12 miles from Benares) and several other civil stations in the Benares District. The regiment's medical officer, Assistant Surgeon J.B.S. Brown, was probably with the HQ at Benares.

Soon after Palliser marched out of Azimghur on the evening of 3 June on the final leg of the march to Benares, his column was attacked by mutinous sepoys of the 17BglNI. The Irregulars did nothing to prevent the rebels from taking the treasury, although they protected their officers and brought them safely into Benares.

By this time, tension in the city was running high. Colonel James Neill had just marched into Benares with a small reinforcement of European soldiers from his own regiment, 1st Madras Fusiliers (Neill's Blue Caps) and HM's 10th Foot, the whole totalling 270 men. Neill immediately took the initiative from the station commander, Brigadier G.C. Ponsonby, who appeared to be unwell and indecisive, and on 4 June he set about disarming the 37BglNI which was considered to be on the verge of rebellion. The Irregulars were paraded (with other units) to witness the disarming, and it was this event which triggered the outbreak of mutiny in Benares. Although Guise was the first British casualty, shot down by a sepoy of the 37BglNl, it appears that the Irregulars did not play a key role at the outset, but rather were caught up in the general chaos and panic that enveloped proceedings on the parade ground, the result being that most of them fled along with the other mutineers.

Some of the Irregulars came back to surrender, but the majority rode on, spreading mutiny throughout the surrounding district. Indeed, 13Bgl IC sowars were responsible for the most savage of the atrocities committed at Jaunpore on 5 June. They went on to Azimghur, and later joined Nana Sahib's army at Cawnpore where they participated in the infamous massacre of Europeans at the Sati Chaora Ghat. There is evidence that another group joined the rebel general Bakht Khan's army at Delhi and took part in the defence of the city. Some of these sowars served with a rebel force threatening the besieging army's lines of communication in the area of Rohtak during August 1857. As late as December 1858, other remnants of the 13 Bgl IC were reported to have been with a rebel force destroyed in the Etawah district.

While the bulk of the regiment mutinied, there were a number of native officers and other ranks who remained loyal. Around 80 men continued to serve reliably under Palliser, acting essentially as a mounted police force in the Benares area. Moving up to Allahabad on 18 June, these men were then amalgamated with a small remnant of about 40 loyal troopers of the 3rd Cavalry, Oude Irregular Force, and this combined 120-strong mounted unit came to be known as Palliser's Irregulars. A fourth British officer, Assistant Surgeon E.J .Gayer, joined Palliser at Allahabad. It seems unlikely that Assistant Surgeon Brown, who had been posted to the Depot Hospital at Benares on 24 June, and then instructed on 28 June to re-join his regiment at Allahabad, actually caught up with the Irregulars. He apparently served as a supernumerary with HM's 64th Foot en route from Allahabad to Cawnpore, and thereafter with the volunteer cavalry.

Apart from the small but renowned band of mounted Europeans known as Barrow's Volunteer Cavalry, Palliser's Irregulars was the only cavalry unit in Havelock's Allahabad Moveable Column. The Irregulars formed part of a small force under Major S.G.C. Renaud (Madras Fusiliers) which, on Neill's initiative, moved out of Allahabad on 1 July in advance of the main relief column. But when spies brought in the news that the Cawnpore defenders had capitulated, and that Renaud was likely to be engulfed by overwhelming numbers of

rebels, Havelock held Renaud back and caught up with him at Futtehpore. It was here, on 12 July 1857 during Havelock's first action against a rebel force, that the Irregulars showed signs of disaffection by refusing to charge the enemy. Then later, as the relief column marched on towards Cawnpore, they tried to cause further trouble by turning the baggage train away from the main advance. It was then clear to Havelock that, in spite of his desperate shortage of cavalry, Palliser's Irregulars could no longer be relied upon. On 14 July at Kallaypore he ordered them to be dismounted and disarmed. Thereafter they were relegated to the menial task of baggage carrying and general fatigues. Their British officers were immediately snapped up by other units. Palliser joined Barrow, Simpson was attached to Maude's battery of Royal Artillery, and Gayer was employed by HM's 84th Regiment.

A small number of 13BglIC irregulars had remained behind in Benares, and they continued to contribute to the maintenance of law and order in the surrounding district under Capt. J.B.Y. Matheson (52BglNI) until they were also disarmed and deprived of their horses on 31st July1857. At least seven of these men, all Afghans, were transferred to the Benares Horse (raised in November 1857 as Local Cavalry) and claimed Mutiny medals on the roll of this unit. They were later joined by six others who had been disarmed by Havelock at Kallaypore but who had proved their loyalty and been re-armed and given further employment. Details of these four native officers and nine other ranks of the 13BglIC are given in IMCS member Tim Ash's interesting article "Mutiny Medals to the Benares Horse, and the Demise of the 13th Regiment Irregular Cavalry" (OMRS journal Spring 1 990, page 11).

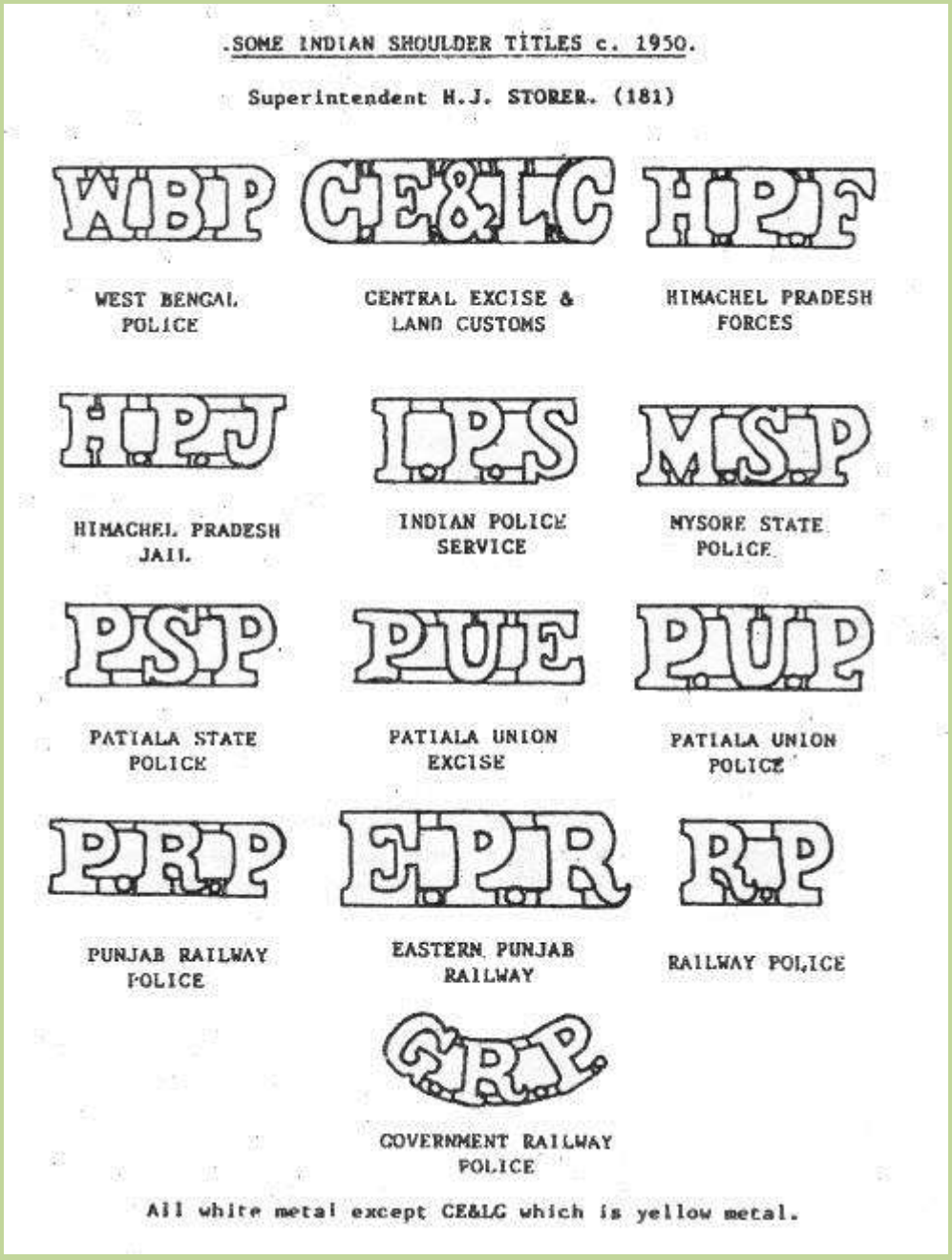
A Disposition Return for the Bengal Presidency, submitted by the QMG's office at Cawnpore on 12 Feb 1858, shows remnants of the 13BglIC as being organised into two troops, each 64 strong, stationed at Benares (disarmed) and Allahabad (armed) but there is no evidence that the latter armed remnant was ever usefully employed, and it is not by any means clear that this Report is accurate. In effect, the 13BglIC ceased to exist after July 1857 and, on account of the mutiny by the majority of its men, and the atrocities subsequently committed by them both at Cawnpore and in the Benares district, there was no possibility that the regiment might be reconstituted after the mutiny. It is interesting to note that four ex-13BglIC officers were on the strength of the Benares Horse in 1858, namely Matheson, Palliser, Simpson and Brown.

REGIMENTAL AFFILIATIONS

Members will undoubtedly be aware of the many changes taking place in the British Army at present, amongst which are a number of regimental amalgamations. One of these is the amalgamation of the 13th/18th Royal Hussars and the 15th/ 19th King's Hussars which, on 1st December 1992, became The Light Dragoons. Amongst the regimental affiliations which the 13th/18th Royal Hussars enjoyed was one with Skinner's Horse and Colonel Douglas Gray tells me that the affiliation is to be carried over to the new regiment. There will undoubtedly be similar changes involving other units and I invite members to let me know of any others that come to their attention affecting either the Indian or Pakistan Armies. I will publish them as an occasional series of notes. Editor.

SOME INDIAN SHOULDER TITLES, c. 1950

Superintendent H.J. Storer



BOOK NOTES

MEERUT, The First Sixty Years (1815 - 1875). Alan Harfield. Putney, London; BACSA. 1992. 360 pages, 30 illustrations. £18.00 +. £1.50.p&p)

Our member Alan Harfield has written this useful guide to the Meerut Cantonment Cemetery for the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA). As with other BACSA publications (whose authors write such handbooks voluntarily and freely), once the

publication costs have been covered the proceeds of the sale go towards the up-keep of the Meerut Cantonment Cemetery.

Meerut became a garrison town in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This book gives details of the military and their families who died there and were buried in the Cantonment Cemetery during the first sixty years of the burial register's existence, i.e. up to 1875. Some mention is made of deaths in the period 1806, when Meerut was first established, to 1815, though the burial register has not been traced. It is intended to publish a companion volume for the remaining seventy two years, 1876 to 1947.

The book starts with a brief history of the military development of Meerut and also includes at the back lists of British and Indian Army units which served there. The bulk of the work is taken up with listings from the burial registers as well as details of some of the cemetery inscriptions. As such it will be of particular interest to military historians and family researchers. A.N.M.

GURKHA CASUALTY REGISTERS - SECOND WORLD WAR

Our member Ashok Nath has compiled a series of Casualty Registers for the Gurkha regiments during the Second World War. The copy that I have seen is of the 9th Gurkha Rifles and begins with a one page fact sheet giving Second World War battle honours and ORBAT during the war. This is followed by a statistical table showing casualties, by theatre, and the remainder of the booklet, which runs to 44 pages, lists casualties by battalion. They are broken down into Killed in Action, Died and Wounded and each entry gives Number, rank, name date of casualty and theatre of casualty. For those interested in the Gurkhas I would have thought these Registers would prove a valuable source of information.

Books from India, 45, Museum Street, London, WC1 1LR has published a select book list compiled by Shreeram Vidyarthi covering works which deal with the events of 1857. Twenty seven books are listed and anyone interested should contact Books from India direct.

LETTERS AND QUERIES

Shamus Wade writes: I had always thought that the only Naval Brigades in India were temporary units raised for duty in the Indian Mutiny from respectable sailors of the Indian and British Navies. However, Frances Stewart Robinson in "*The V.Cs of Little Andaman*" (Army Quarterly, October 1981) writes, "The Naval Brigade, which had been raised during the Indian Mutiny, partly from deserters from ships, dock toughs and similar types, was a fearless, if at times undisciplined branch of the armed forces of India. The majority of guards used at first in the newly formed penal colony in Port Blair were drawn from the Naval Brigade." Several sailors from the Naval Brigade took part in the action of 1867 when four V.C.s were won.

L.P. Mathur in his "*History of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (1756 1966)" also refers to "The Naval Guard " in 1859 and "Naval Brigadesmen" in 1864.

Can anyone shed any light on this later Naval Brigade?

R. Thornton writes: I would like to correspond with any members interested in medals awarded to the Indian Army. I live quite near the Public Record Office at Kew and would be pleased to check medal rolls etc. There are a surprising number of rolls for native regiments, mostly appertaining to medals struck by the English Mint, e.g. A.G.S., Q.S.A., Sudan, but very few for the Calcutta Mint issues, e.g. I.G.S. etc. My particular area of interest is bronze medals.