

## DURBAR Volume 19, No.1, Spring 2002

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### INDIAN ARMY CORPS OF CLERKS

Alan Harfield

Very little has been recorded in respect of the Indian Army Corps of Clerks, which was formed in 1933 to provide continuity in clerical support for the General Headquarters of the army and for command headquarters. Prior to this an Indian Corps of Clerks had existed, formed on 1 February 1924 under the authority of Army Instruction (India) 352 of 1923. That Corps provided officers for Headquarters staff, such as Supervising Officers, and British warrant officers for office and administrative duties. The Indian clerical staff of the corps were civilians and it was not until 1942 that Indian military clerks were recruited into the Indian Army Corps of Clerks (IACC).

When the earlier Indian Corps of Clerks was formed the officers and British warrant officers were initially transferred from the India Miscellaneous List, where the latter were ranked as Conductors and Sub-Conductors.

Immediately prior to the change of designation in 1933, the *Indian Army List* shows that there were 21 officers serving in the Indian Corps of Clerks, these being 4 Majors (Commissaries), 6 Captains (Deputy Commissaries) and 11 Lieutenants (Assistant Commissaries). All the incumbents had been commissioned from the ranks.

Following the 1933 reorganization and redesignation as the Indian Army Corps of Clerks, the Corps comprised two wings, one British and one Indian. The British Wing consisted of personnel transferred from British units to the Indian Unattached List and employed by the Indian Army Corps of Clerks. The authorized pre-war establishment, excluding the GHQ cadre, was 388 in the British Wing and 360 in the Indian Wing.

In 1942, militarization was introduced into the Corps as it was seen that there was a need to employ soldiers on clerical duties in headquarters and other units and this brought about a marked increase in the establishment of the corps. By the close of the war, in 1945, the numbers had been increased to 3,000 British personnel and 3,500 Indian personnel, but even with this increase the Corps was still in excess of 1,000 clerks short of its established strength.

Within headquarters, personnel of the IACC filled the clerical posts with the exception of artillery, engineer, signals and service branches, which continued to supply trained clerical staff from within their own corps.

Personnel of the IACC were employed in GHQ, command headquarters, district and sub-district headquarters, as well as in training establishments. A report on the Corps records that difficulty was experienced in India in recruiting for the IACC as only a fraction of the men enlisting into the Indian Army had sufficient education to become army clerks. Those who enlisted and had the right educational ability were required to fill posts in the Indian Engineers, Indian Signals and the Royal Indian Army Service Corps; thus there was a continuing shortage of suitable material to fill all the established IACC posts.

The rank structure within the British Wing consisted of WO I (Conductors), WO II (Sub-Conductors), Staff Sergeant Clerks and Sergeant Clerks. In the 1939 *Indian Army List* there are

44 Conductors and 139 Sub-Conductors listed by name under the title of ‘Departmental Warrant Officers I.U.L. - Indian Army Corps of Clerks’.

The distribution of the warrant officers of the IACC in 1939, within the commands, was as follows:

Command	Conductors	Sub-Conductors
Air Headquarters	1	-
Northern Command	15	49
Eastern Command	9	27
Southern Command	9	37
Western Independent District	6	15
Burma	3	7
RT Staff, Bombay	1	-
Not posted	-	4
Total	44	139

With the cessation of hostilities plans were made against further conflicts. One of the recommendations made was that the IACC should continue in peacetime, but with an increased rank structure so that a relatively small number of promotions could be made to commissioned rank, thereby giving promotion opportunities and the possibility of a full career structure. With Partition taking place in August 1947 this scheme was never introduced.

From personal observation, the Indian element of the Corps worked extremely well, but following the end of the war, in 1945, many of the British clerks who had worked in headquarters were due to return to the UK for demobilization and their posts were filled by young, inexperienced clerks who had been conscripted and trained in the UK, and then arrived in India by troopship, with little or no practical experience. In Headquarters North Western Army, at Rawalpindi, drafts of young clerks arrived by train one day, holding the rank of Private or, in a few cases, the rank of Lance Corporal, and the following day were promoted to Sergeant and allocated to a Branch within the HQ. In one exceptional case a Lance Corporal arrived and, as there were a number of vacancies within the branch to which he had been allocated, he was immediately promoted to Sub-Conductor (WO II). Needless to say, apart from inexperienced clerks attempting to deal with the complicated office procedures that existed in India, there was a certain amount of animosity between the clerical staff working for Engineers, Signals and other service departments, and the IACC ‘senior NCOs’. The clerical staff that were provided from within the respective corps for branches within headquarters had a rank structure that was vastly different, with ranks ranging from Private (Clerk) to WO I (Superintendent Clerk). Therefore a vacancy in a corps branch would generally be for a private (sapper, signaller etc.) and promotion granted within the branch in the normal manner. Of course, the differences between clerks serving with the IACC and clerks serving in corps branches were also reflected in pay and allowances, accommodation, as well as regimental duties.

The young British IACC clerks later felt the effect of their quick promotion to senior NCO rank when, with the withdrawal from India, they were repatriated to the UK and on arrival at their parent depot had to revert to their British Army rank, which in many cases was still Private.

The Indian IACC clerks fared much better. They had been trained in India, had been schooled in the complexities of official letter writing as used in India, and in general worked exceptionally well with both British and Indian staff officers in the various headquarters in which they were employed.

Those soldiers serving with the IACC, both British and Indian, wore the dress as stipulated by Clothing Regulations (India) and the 1939 edition set out the dress embellishments for the IACC as follows:

“...Titles, shoulder	I.A.C.C.
Badge, cap or pugri	The Imperial Cypher
Badges, collar	The Imperial Cypher with laurel wreath and a Tudor Crown
Buttons	Devices as for collar badge.”

The button design for the IACC is confirmed in the book *Buttons of the Indian Army, Volume V, Pre-1947* by Lieutenant Colonel N W Poulson, page 44 (Ref No 458).

Under the heading of ‘Articles which may be maintained in addition to scales and worn in lieu of authorised items’ the British element of the IACC were authorized to wear a ‘Cloth Patch or flash on hat’ and is described as:

‘...A helmet patch of blue-red-black-red-blue...’.

This was to be supplied by the IAOC.

After Partition the IACC was split; the Indian element was absorbed into the RIASC in 1949 and the Pakistan element became the PACC.

## References

*Clothing Regulations (India)*, 1939, New Delhi. 1939.

John Gaylor. *Sons of John Company. The Indian & Pakistan Armies 1903-1991*, Spellmount, 1992.

Lieutenant Colonel N W Poulson. *Buttons of the Indian Army, Vol. V, Pre-1947*.

## Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Cliff Parrett for his invaluable assistance with the identification of the dress embellishments of the IACC

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127<sup>th</sup> QUEEN MARY'S OWN BALUCH LIGHT INFANTRY

Lieutenant Colonel N W Poulson

All photos this section R C Worts

## LINEAGE

1844-1846	Belooch Battalion (or) The Sind Belooch Corps
1846-1858	1st Belooch Battalion
1858-1859	1st Belooch Extra Battalion, Bombay Native Infantry
1859	1st Belooch Regiment
1859-1861	1st Bombay Belooch Regiment
1861-1871	27th Regiment Bombay Native Infantry (or) 1st Belooch Battalion
1871-1885	27th Regiment Bombay Native (Light) Infantry (or) 1st Belooch Battalion

1885-1888	27th Regiment of Bombay Light Infantry (or) 1st Belooch Battalion
1888	27th (1st Belooch Battalion) Regiment (or) Bombay Light Infantry
1888-1891	27th (1st Belooch Battalion) Regiment Bombay Light Infantry
1891-1901	27th (1st Baluch Battalion) Regiment of Bombay Light Infantry
1901-1903	27th Baluch Light Infantry
1903-1909	127th Baluch Light Infantry
1909-1910	127th Princess of Wales's Own Baluch Light Infantry
1910-1922	127th Queen Mary's Own Baluch Light Infantry

#### BATTLE HONOURS

1864	DELHI
1869	Added ABYSSINIA
1881	Added AFGHANISTAN 1879-1880
1891	Added BURMA 1885-1887
1901	Added BRITISH EAST AFRICA 1897-1899

#### SECTION I : POUCH

c.1891 Silver bugle [DR 1891]



c.1901 A silver bugle [DR 1901]

c.1903-1922 Silver Light Infantry bugle [DR 1913]

#### SECTION II : POUCH BELT

C.1891 Silver Regimental plate [DR 1891]

c.1901 Maltese Cross surmounted by an Imperial crown resting on a laurel wreath surrounding it; in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed '1st BALUCH LIGHT INFANTRY', in the centre of the crescent. The battles of the Regiment inscribed on the four outer sides of the cross 'DELHI', 'ABYSSINIA', 'AFGHANISTAN', 'BURMA'. [DR 1901]

c.1901 Maltese cross surmounted by a Guelphic crown resting on a laurel wreath surrounding it; in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed 'BELOOCH L.I.', in the centre of the crescent 'I'. The battles of the Regiment inscribed on the four outer sides of the cross 'ABYSSINIA', 'AFGHANISTAN'. 'BURMA 1885-1887', 'DELHI'. Worn as a

separate item beneath the badge, a single honour scroll inscribed 'EAST AFRICA 1897-99'



c.1903-1922 Maltese cross encircled by a wreath, in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed 'BELOOCH' and '127' above. The battle honours of the Regiment inscribed on three of the outer sides of the cross 'DELHI', 'ABYSSINIA', 'AFGHANISTAN', surmounted by a Guelphic crown.



c.1903-1922 Maltese cross encircled by a wreath, in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed 'BALUCH' AND '127' above. The battle honours of the Regiment inscribed on the four outer sides of the cross - 'DELHI', 'ABYSSINIA', 'AFGHANISTAN', 'BURMA 1885-1887' Surmounted by a Guelphic crown



c.1903-1922 Maltese cross encircled by a wreath, in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed 'BALUCH LIGHT INFANTRY' AND '127' above. The battle honours of the Regiment inscribed on the four outer sides of the cross - 'DELHI', 'ABYSSINIA', 'AFGHANISTAN 1879-80', 'BURMA 1885-1887', scroll inscribed 'BRITISH EAST AFRICA 1897-1899' below the Maltese cross. A scroll above the Maltese cross inscribed 'QUEEN MARY'S OWN' and surmounted by the Queen's crown. [DR 1913]

c.1903-1922 Maltese cross encircled by a wreath, in the centre of the cross a crescent inscribed 'BALUCH LIGHT INFANTRY' AND '127' above. The battle honours of the Regiment inscribed on the four outer sides of the cross - 'DELHI', 'ABYSSINIA', '1879 AFGHANISTAN 1880', '1885 BURMA 1887', scroll inscribed '1897 BRITISH EAST AFRICA 1899' below the Maltese cross. A scroll above the Maltese cross inscribed 'QUEEN MARY'S OWN' and surmounted by the King's crown.



SECTION IV : HEADDRESS

PART I : FORAGE CAP

PART 2 : FOR PEACE MANOEUVRES

c.1891 Silver bugle placed on a red cord boss. [DR 1891]



PART 3 : FIELD CAP

c.1901 A silver bugle

SECTION V : SHOULDER TITLE

c.1846-1861 White metal. French bugle horn over '1st BELOOCH'



c. 1846-1861 Black metal. French bugle horn with '1' in the centre and 'BELOOCH' below



c. 1846-1861 Black metal. French bugle horn and 'BELOOCH' below.



c. 1888 Black metal. French bugle horn and 'BALUCH' below.



c. 1888 Black metal. French bugle horn with '1' in the centre and 'BALUCH' below



c. 1901 A bugle [DR 1901]

c.1903-1922 Black metal. Bugle horn with strings above '127 BALUCH' [DR 1913]



#### SECTION VI : BUTTONS

c. 1846-1871 Crown over '1', 'BELOOCH', 'REGT'. Wreath. Rim. Silver plate.

c.1846-1871 Crown over Garter inscribed 'BELOOCH BATTALION'. '1' in centre.

c.1846-1871 Circlet inscribed 'BELLOCHEE BATTALION'. Wreath. Frosted. Scalloped edge. Gilt.

c.1859 Crown over Garter inscribed 'BELOOCH REGIMENT'. '1' in centre. No rim.. Gilt.



c.1871-1891 French bugle horn in centre. Around inscription '1st BELOOCH BATTALION L.I.' Silver

'1st

BELOOCH

c.1871-1901 French bugle horn in centre. Around inscription '1st BALUCH BATTALION L.I.' Silver.

'1st

BALUCH



c.1871-1901 French bugle horn in centre. Around inscription '1st BALUCH BATTALION L.I.' Ball. Silver



c.1903-1922 Mess Dress (?). French bugle horn. No rim. Ball. Silver.

c.1903-1922 Light Infantry bugle with Queen's crown above and '127th BALUCH L I' below. [DR 1913]

c.1903-1922 Crown over bugle and strings '127th BALUCH' below. No rim. Silver.



c.1903-1922 Light Infantry bugle with King's Crown above and '127th BALUCH L I' below.

1903-1922 French bugle horn. Ball. Silver.

SECTION VII : POUCH BELT WHISTLE AND CHAIN

c. 1903 Silvered strung bugle boss, two strand chain and whistle.



THE WOMEN'S ROYAL INDIAN NAVAL SERVICE

Shamus Wade

(This article follows on from those produced on WAC(I) by Alan Harfield and Bill Carman (Vol. 18, No. 4, Winter 2001, pp95–106)

The W.R.I.N.S. started in an untidy manner, typical of the British Empire. To quote the "Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War":

"At the commencement of the war in 1939 the Royal Indian Navy decided to employ the wives of some R.I.N. officers to assist in the code and cipher departments... At the beginning of 1941 it was decided to expand this organization by accepting all European civilian women who proved suitable for the job... In 1943, all civilian women working with the R.I.N. were asked to join the WAC(I) and continue in service...On the whole the response was good...By November 1943, recruiting was almost at a standstill. Accordingly the WAC(I) naval wing with its own distinctive uniform was formed early in 1944. This at once produced good results."

The odd situation arose where the W.R.I.N.S., the W.A.C.(I) naval wing, working with the Navy was officially a part of the Army. The Official History is very tactful about some of the organizational difficulties, but eventually things were sorted out. Interestingly, although the rest of the W.A.C.(I) were never very successful in recruiting ethnic Indians, the W.R.I.N.S. had no trouble at all. To quote the Official History:

"The service had been purely European to start with but the proportion of Indian women increased gradually. About the end of 1945 the proportion of Indian members of the W.R.I.N.S. were as follows:-

Officers ..... 43%

Ratings ..... 77%

Of the 20 W.R.I.N.S. Cadet Officers who passed out of the final cadet course at H.M.I.S. Feroze, 16 were Indians."

The uniform is described in the Official History:

"They (Europeans and Anglo-Indians) wore naval uniform resembling the one worn by the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service) except that the brass buttons bore the crown and

Star of India under the “foul anchor”. For officers the smart tricorne topped off a trim blue jacket and skirt, with white shirt and black tie. On the shoulders appeared “W.A.C.(I)” in light blue. Ratings also wore initials on their shoulders and sported the same snappy caps as worn by WREN ratings. Hot weather “rig” was equally smart with a few minor differences from its opposite number in the British service. As more and more naval personnel appeared in India, and the country became more sea-minded, its women were eager to do their bit for the navy. Enrolled Indian ladies wore white jackets and saris with the same initials and ‘distinction lace’ if they were officers, and initials and ‘distinction badges’ in the case of Auxiliaries (ratings).”

The W.R.I.N.S. served as cipher operators and coders, teleprint operators, switch-board operators, stenographers, typists, clerks, confidential book correctors, mess caterers, drivers, communication officers and “movers” at the Anti-Submarine Tactical School.

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## THE H.E.I.C. COLLEGE OF HAILEYBURY and its *GREAT PURVEYOR*

Tim Ash

The Civil Service of the East India Company was not, of course, a military organization, though civil servants of the Company were often involved in military affairs. Likewise, officers of the H.E.I.C. Armies also, on occasion, filled vacancies normally occupied by civil servants. After all, it has been said that the East India Company wielded a pen in one hand and a sword in the other – the two services, civil and military, entwined in the task of governing the Company's Indian Empire.



**The Arms of the East India College, Haileybury**

As Cadets for the E.I.C. armies were given a specialized education at the Military Seminary at Addiscombe, so the Civil Service had a specialized college for the education of its civil servants. This was Haileybury College in Hertfordshire, which was opened in 1809 and closed in 1857. During its 48 years some three and a half thousand successful entrants for the Civil Service passed through its portals.

Recently I was fortunate to obtain a copy of the volume *Memorials of Old Haileybury College. An account of the E.I.C.'S College in Hertfordshire* by Frederick Charles Danvers, and others, published in 1894. This volume of 650 odd pages, whilst containing a great deal of information on the College, its buildings, Professors, and personal reminiscences etc., also contains a list of all students at Haileybury giving their dates at the College, their period of service in India with their most senior appointments and date of pension. In addition there is a section giving a *Brief Record*

of the Active Service of Haileyburians during the Mutiny of 1857-58. It records about 150 individuals of the Civil Service who relinquished their pens and took up the sword, two of whom received the Victoria Cross.

However, the students of Haileybury not only required to digest food for the mind to fit them for service, but also of the stomach to fortify their studies and future constitutions. Mr Coleman, the College Purveyor, was the man in charge of this important function and from his portrait, and what is written of him, one can see that it was not only the students who fed to such an excellent degree! Sir M. Monier-Williams, at Haileybury 1839-41, writes of him as follows:

*At six o'clock came Hall-dinner. The food provided for us was good and wholesome as to quality, and sufficient in quantity, and was as a rule fairly well cooked. Conspicuous in the Hall was the enormous bulk of the College Purveyor, Mr Coleman, whose weight as long as I knew him always exceeded 30 stone. I seem to see him now – a huge mass of flesh supported on massive legs like pillars – standing majestically at the further end of the Hall in an attitude of uncompromising solidity, and with a visage of imperturbable complacency, as if defying every one of us to say that the beef or mutton which we were eating was not of the very best quality and cooked in the most artistic manner. When the time came for the entrance of the puddings and sweets, Coleman always thought it part of his duty to serve us himself. Hence, a waiter followed him about with an immense tray, whilst the gigantic Purveyor sidled about with a kind of rolling gait from table to table, putting the dishes before us himself, and taking an especial pride in his jam tarts.*

On his demise in 1865 the *Hertfordshire Mercury* carried this obituary:

*"Died on the 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1865, at Rose Cottage, Hertford-Heath, Mr George James Coleman, Purveyor to the late East-India College, Haileybury, aged 77. Mr Coleman was a rather remarkable person. A contemporary, speaking of him, says:-*

*"He was connected with the Haileybury College almost since its foundation, and lived to recollect it as a thing of the past. The post he filled was of no little importance; for as a man's history depends greatly upon his digestion, who can tell to how great an extent the successful careers of many Haileybury students, who have distinguished themselves in the Civil Service of India, were due to Mr Coleman's dinners. Professors taught, but he fed the rulers of our Eastern Empire. They came and went, but he remained. There is not a living member of the Civil Service in India, educated at Haileybury, but has pleasant recollections of Mr Coleman. Born at Hertingfordbury, of humble parents, he entered the service of the celebrated Mr Malthus, who was Professor of Political Economy at the College, when it was housed at Hertford Castle, about 60 years ago, and he removed with the College to Hertford-Heath. Here he found an excellent and able helpmate in the housekeeper whom Mr Malthus brought with him from his Surrey home, and who survives him. There never was a better Purveyor, as those who remember his half-yearly luncheons, when the Directors met English Statesmen and Indian Princes, at the hospitable table spread by him in the great dining hall, will readily allow. The situation was not an unprofitable one; and Mr Coleman expanded in a manner which made his prosperity obvious. Haileybury has given India many great men, but there is a sense in which it gave to England one of the greatest men who ever trod its soil. Mr Coleman weighed 29 stone and 11 and a half lbs., a few weeks before his death, and no hearse was large enough to receive the immense coffin which contained his remains. It was found necessary to remove the box from the hearse, and to substitute for it a sort of open car or stage, upon which the coffin was placed."*

Mr Coleman, late Purveyor of Haileybury College, has won worthy praise indeed but not, I suspect, from the Pall Bearers of his coffin, or the Sexton who dug his grave!



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AN IOM?.....

Peter Chapman.

Those of us who rely heavily – almost entirely – on standard works of reference will, I sincerely hope, learn a lesson from this modest piece.

It all concerns Temporary Lance Daffadar Rhoda Singh, of the 11th King Edward's Own Lancers, Probyn's Horse. Several years ago – and for the ridiculously small sum asked for such splendid things – I was fortunate enough to buy his IDSM. Do please, at this stage, look him up in *'Honours and Awards'* (and now *Rana Chhina's book. Ed.*). There he is, 2937 Rhoda Singh, and with the additional information that his award is for 'Mesopotamia'. Confirmation. However, on looking him up in the 1924 Indian Army List (you have a copy I hope?) he failed to appear. Retired, I thought. But, seeking for further amusement (as Stanley Holloway certainly did say) I turned to the Order of Merit lists. And there, to my great delight, was 2937 Temporary Lance Daffadar Rhoda Singh ...for 14<sup>th</sup> August 1920. So, a date! And thus to reference books, Indian Cavalry and so on to discover that Mesopotamia in this case meant Iraq, or Kurdistan. The realization that Rhoda Singh now required me to find an IOM to accompany his IDSM put me on the qui vive and, sure enough, I found a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class IOM, nice colour, a good match, and bought it. And the two medals joined my modest collection.

They hung there for a year or two until mounting inquisitiveness prompted me to contact a medal researcher. But the researcher, admitting that my request was the first time he had been asked to deal with an Indian recipient, drew a blank. The years passed. And then, then ... Peter Duckers brought out his excellent book on the IOM...I could barely wait for my copy to arrive. But Rhoda Singh was not in it. I wrote to Mr Duckers. He replied. He will not mind me quoting his second sentence. "Rhoda Singh has turned out to be a problem". And indeed he was. For although a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class IOM was awarded to a Ressaldar in the same regiment – Bhagga Singh – on the same date, it would appear that Rhoda Singh won his IDSM on the same occasion, but was wrongly credited in the Army List with the IOM. Mr Duckers suggested other lines of enquiry including the Gazette of India for 1920, and kindly suggested that occasionally forenames were wrong – and cited an example for me.

I was not convinced. Mr Duckers was letting me down lightly. Rhoda Singh's IDSM – which is correctly named and beyond dispute – hangs alongside 'his' IOM, which is not named. What IOM of this period is? I have not had the heart to separate them. But I feel I delude myself.

I have put you through all this because, reluctantly, I am of the persuasion that however 'official' things may appear, they can be wrong. I know, in my romantic eye, that Rhoda Singh did indeed take part in one of the last cavalry actions in history because Major General Gurcharn Singh Sadhu's excellent "The Indian Cavalry" bears it out. Who would be without his book? But Mr Duckers' exhaustive research – despite his kindness to me – makes me believe that we should not place unquestioning trust in Army Lists ... however much we would like to. I'll bet Rhoda Singh deserved that IOM! I wonder if he wore it.

[This presents the ideal opportunity to introduce an appeal by members Cliff Parrett and Rana Chhina in connection with a new project of theirs on the IOM. Before doing so, however, I put to them the point made by Peter Chapman and the following is their opinion of the Rhoda Singh query. Ed.]

...OR NOT?

2937 TEMPORARY LANCE-DAFFADAR RHODA SINGH I.D.S.M. - 11TH KING EDWARD'S OWN LANCERS  
(PROBYN'S HORSE)

Peter Chapman's article is a useful reminder that the Indian Army List must be treated with a degree of circumspection. It contains inaccuracies and omissions, some of which are repeated year after year. In the case of Rhoda Singh's entitlement to the Indian Order of Merit, the most reliable and efficient means of getting at the hard facts is to consult the *Gazette of India* – as Peter Duckers has quite rightly suggested.

Supplements to the Indian Army List contain tables of serving and pensioned I.O.M. members. There is a reasonable amount of information in these tables, which generally include both the date and number of the General Order announcing I.O.M. admissions and promotions. Thus the G.O. detail given against Rhoda Singh's name in the January 1924 List is No.1635 of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1920. This G.O. includes the posthumous admission of Ressaïdar (i.e. not Ressaldar) Bhagga Singh to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class of the Indian Order of Merit, and the award of the Indian Distinguished Service Medal to 2937 Temporary Lance Daffadar Rhoda Singh – both of 11th K.E.O. Lancers. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Gazette of India* detail kindly confirmed by Rana Chhina

The obvious conclusion is that Rhoda Singh was not admitted to the Order of Merit. This may be a disappointment for Mr Chapman, but there remains the slim possibility that Rhoda Singh was indeed admitted to the I.O.M., that his admittance was announced in another G.O. on a different date, and that the Indian Army List has simply got the details wrong. The only way to be absolutely sure is to plough through the Gazette of India, as it is by no means clear that all awards are as yet evident to researchers.

(Which brings us on to their appeal)...

## IOM PROJECT

Rana Chhina and Cliff Parrett are working on a definitive history of the Indian Order of Merit. It is envisaged that this will require two substantial volumes. It will cover the entire history of the Order, both military and civil, including conception, establishment and development, with full details of all awards from 1839 to 1947 (citations, GO numbers/dates, etc.). One important objective is to capture the numerous awards and citations missed in Hypher's two volumes. In the case of the more important awards, such additional information as is available in the Military in the National Archives of India and the British Library's Oriental & India Office Collection will be considered for inclusion. It will be greatly appreciated if members of the Society contribute any information they may have in the following areas: IOM badges/groups in their collections or otherwise known to them; recipient naming detail on reverse of badges; hallmarking and makers' marks on early badges; detailed description of J.W. Benson badges; photos or pictures of recipients wearing IOM badges; biographical data on IOM recipients. All help will be fully acknowledged. Information please to Cliff Parrett, 7 ave Camille Normand, La Celle St Cloud, 78170 France, email parrettc@easynet.fr or to rana@nde.vsnl.net.in

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## AN AD HOC INDIAN ELEPHANT BATTERY IN WW2

John Randle

The letter regarding the elephants and the Chirkuttah of the Hazara Mountain Train Battery in the Summer 2001 issue of Durbar has encouraged me to relate a light-hearted reminiscence of my involvement with an ad hoc elephant battery in Burma in WW2.

In June and July 1945 our division, the legendary 17<sup>th</sup> Indian, was strung out along the main Rangoon-Toungoo road in strongly fortified redoubts. The Japanese 28<sup>th</sup> Army, marooned in the Arakan and in the Irrawaddy Valley by the swift recapture of Burma earlier in the year, was struggling to escape to the safety of the east bank of the Sittang. Having fought their way across the Irrawaddy, they were now in the Pegu Yomas, the low jungle covered hills between the Irrawaddy and the Sittang valleys. Our division's task was to destroy them as they emerged eastward from the Pegu Yomas.

About this time a new experimental heavy mortar, with mortar experts, arrived in the Division, with the task of carrying out trials as to the mortar's efficacy in the untried conditions of Burma. It was decided to carry out these trials in the paddy area between the Pegu Yomas and the main road. Additionally, some military genius decided that elephants would be a suitable portage vehicle for carrying the mortar, there being a number of tame ex-forestry elephants and their

Burmese mahouts available in the area. I, commanding the Pathan company of 7<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Baluchis, was detailed to provide the escort for this party. I was additionally tasked with the secondary (and as it turned out wholly incompatible) role of establishing my base in a good defensive position covering a likely exit from the Yomas, so that I could inflict maximum casualties on any Japanese parties emerging.

On the morning of our departure we immediately ran into difficulties. Elephants can of course pull enormous loads, but surprisingly as it turned out, they are not, for their size and strength, very good load carriers, not much better than the big mountain artillery mules. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that these elephants had no experience or training in carrying loads and we had no proper equipment for lashing the mortar and ammunition. This considerably delayed our departure, with a great deal of exasperation by all concerned. We eventually arrived in the designated area and I sited my company in a good, well camouflaged position covering the possible exit from the Yomas. It had been made clear to me that I was responsible that the elephants were not shot up by any Japanese and so I had to keep them in or very near the perimeter of my position.

That was only the start of my problems. Firstly, elephants consume vast quantities of greenery and after a couple of days what had been a well camouflaged position had been eaten bare by the voracious elephants and the position stuck out like a sore thumb. If I moved the position, we would no longer be in a good tactical position to cover the likely exit from the Yomas. Secondly, elephants also produce vast quantities of dung, which in the hot monsoon conditions attracted equally vast numbers of flies and a hefty “pong”. The Indian soldier, for religious and cultural reasons, was very averse to handling any sort of excrement. The company sweeper insisted that he had been enlisted to deal with human excrement, not elephant, and in any case he could not be expected to dig it down, because any hole soon filled up with monsoon water. I eventually persuaded my Pathans to agree to shift the dung out in the paddy, away from our position, on the grounds that they had handled mule dung earlier in the war, when we had mules - and an elephant was a sort of big mule. It was not a happy business.

After a couple of days the mortar experts decided that it was time to test fire the mortar. They selected as a base plate position a small mound rising above the sodden paddy. Although I had no responsibility for the trials, I decided to see how the test firing went. I went with the OP party to a point several hundred yards forward of the base plate position, but well short of the planned impact area. The customary bedding-in rounds were ordered and we, in the OP position, stared ahead of us for the anticipated fall of shot. Off went the first bedding-in round, which dropped between the OP position and the base plate position! We went back to the base plate position to discover that the base plate had been driven about a foot into the sodden ground and was all at an angle. My interest in participating as a spectator in the trials abruptly ended!

After about a week my company was relieved, as originally planned, by a company from 1<sup>st</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas commanded by an old friend, Tom Boyes. Eighteen months earlier we had both been adjutants of our respective battalions and been leading lights in the “Adjutants’ union”. He was not wildly excited by what he found, but to me the arrival of the Gurkhas had never been more welcome. Thereafter Tom and I always greeted each other with “How are the elephants?”

The Atom Bomb and the unexpected Japanese surrender put paid, as far as I can recall, to any introduction of the new mortar - just as well perhaps for the safety of our own troops.

Years later Tom and I were both living in the West Country and he and his wife came to dinner. This anecdote went down very well with my other guests as the post-prandial port was circulated.

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## A MILESTONE FOR THE INDIAN AIR FORCE

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2002 Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, Padma Vibhushan, DFC, was appointed the first ever Marshal of the (Indian) Air Force. Details of any special insignia to be worn have yet to be released. Commissioned at the beginning of the Second World War, he flew missions in the North West Frontier Province before flying against the Japanese in the Arakan campaign, for which he was awarded the DFC in 1944. In 1964 he became Chief of Air Staff, with the rank of Air Marshal, and led the IAF during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, for which he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan and promotion to Air Chief Marshal, the first to hold such rank. He retired in 1969.

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## LETTERS AND QUERIES

### ● Shamus Wade writes:

The story of the RIASC in France and Britain during World War II (Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 2000 ; Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer 2001 ; Vol. 18, No. 4, Winter 2001) is being continued by Mrs Giovanna Bloor of the Croesor Valley, in the Parish of Llanfrothen, eight miles inland from Port Madoc in Wales.

All three companies (25, 29 and 32) were camped in the Croesor Valley from the beginning of April to 17 July 1942. The Valley is a remote, sparsely populated, Welsh speaking area. It is so today and was even more so during the war. The population of the parish was about 300, so the arrival of the RIASC was quite an event. Locals say that the mules were taken out for exercise each day and, three abreast, took an hour and a half to pass. The general picture that Mrs Bloor had from talking to the locals is that the children particularly got on well with the soldiers. The soldiers did not speak much English and the children, at that time, were monoglot Welsh, but they all seemed to communicate anyway. Some people, children of 8 or 10 years old at the time, can still sing songs the Indian soldiers taught them.

Mrs Bloor has set about recording this chapter of local history while it is still possible. She discovered the War Diaries of 25, 29 and 32 Companies (completely new to me) at the Public Record Office (PRO ref: WO 179 – 5879 to 5930). They were marked closed for 100 years and the bow of the ribbon or tape round them was still in pristine condition.

(I assume this means the 100 year rule has since been relaxed. Ed)

### ● Brian Stevens writes:

Regarding the article on the Exodus Hunt (Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer 2001, p 60), 110 Company Supply and Transport Corps can only have existed between 1919 and 1921 as the Army List for January 1919 shows no company with a number higher than 102 whilst the July 1922 Army List has the following companies serving in Iraq : 116, 124, 127, 129 & 130.

Chris Kempton's 'A Register of Titles of the Units of the HEIC and Indian Armies, 1666-1947' does not, so far as I have been able to check, list the 110th or the five companies serving in Iraq in 1922. Presumably it was disbanded prior to July 1922. However, if the Army Lists between April 1919 and April 1922 were consulted they might provide a clue as to the period that 110th existed. These companies may also be noted in section L/MIL/17/15 of the records of the India Office Military Department at the British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections. Another possible source is the 'Distribution of the Army in India by Corps and Stations', a monthly return held for the period January 1919 – December 1922 (OIOC, L/MIL/17/5/914-961).

● Brian also poses the following query:

Prior to control of the Hyderabad Contingent, formerly the Nizam's Army, passing to the Commander in Chief, the authority was vested in the British Resident at Hyderabad who issued such General Orders as were required. It seems that the authority for the Battle Honours 'MAHEIDPORE' and 'NOWAH' to the 1st Field Battery, 1st and 2nd Infantry, 'NOWAH' alone to the 3rd Infantry, and 'NAGPORE' to the 4th Infantry was a Resident's General Order issued sometime in 1864. My question is, can any member provide the date of and the authority granting these Honours?

Although there were two Battalions of the then designated Berar Brigade engaged at Nagpore, the identity of the other battalion has not been preserved. It was most likely to have been either the 3rd or 4th Battalion of Berar Infantry. These were, from 1826 to 1853 respectively, the 5th and 6th Nizam's Infantry, being disbanded in the latter year, the previously numbered 7th and 8th assuming these numbers.

Nowah was a hill fort captured on 31 January 1819 after a siege lasting from the 8<sup>th</sup> of that month. Had it not been disbanded in 1853 the 5th Regiment of Nizam's Infantry would have been entitled to 'NOWAH'. Although neither was granted 'NOWAH', both the 20th Deccan Horse, formerly the 1st Lancers Hyderabad Contingent, and 3rd Lancers Hyderabad Contingent, which was broken up in 1903, were employed. The designation of the third Risala has not been preserved.

● Terry Morrison seeks help in identifying the following badges, both shown actual size. The first is a Raj naval puggaree (the cloth hat band worn on sun helmets) badge, Silver, marked 1875. The second Colonial or Raj pagri badge features a QVC within a wreath, is well made in stamped out silver and has a pin fitting.



● New member Mr Shamsher Singh is trying to trace records (muster rolls, army lists, regimental records etc.) and any group photo of Lumsden's Guides Infantry taken between 1855 and 1865 on

the North West Frontier. He is particularly interested in Havildar Karam Singh, a forebear of his family. He is keen to correspond with anyone having an interest in The Guides.

● Another new member, Mr Jatinder Barn, is writing up his PhD thesis on military and administrative ethics of service to India in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and would welcome any help in tracking down the curriculum of study at the Staff College, Camberley, in 1896. What was taught and how? Both Haig and Allenby were there at the time. .

● I was recently contacted by Colin Cummings of Northamptonshire who is compiling a record of RAF aircraft accidents in the years towards the end of the Second World War. On 23rd November 1945, an RAF Dakota aircraft was ferrying Indian Army personnel when it suffered an engine failure near Kemajoran in Batavia (Java). The pilot made a successful wheels-up landing on a beach and an escorting aircraft saw the aircraft's occupants; 5 RAF crew and 20 Indian Army soldiers, leave the aircraft safely. However, when a rescue party arrived, the aircraft was surrounded by a mob and there was no sign of the occupants. Eventually, it was discovered that the occupants had been taken to a jail in the nearby village of Bekasi and all had been murdered on 25th November. Their bodies, with one exception, were found badly mutilated and decomposed, buried in a river bank, about one week later. Since none of the occupants could be identified, and as one was missing, they were buried as 'unknown'. The RAF aircrew are commemorated on the Singapore Memorial and the Indian Army casualties should also be commemorated there. Unfortunately, a check of the registers of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Singapore Memorial and the Djakarta War Cemetery do not show twenty Indian Army casualties with a date of death of 25th November.

The Singapore Memorial Register shows a significant number of Indian Army personnel whose date of death is recorded as 15th November 1945. Some of these have simply a record of their death, others say 'missing', whilst there are others from 5th Battalion 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles who are shown as 'Prisoner of War – died in captivity', despite the fact that the war was over. (Perhaps 15th November was a date when some sort of reconciliation was done and, in the absence of any positive information concerning the casualty, this was the date recorded).

I shared the query with a couple of members and Cliff Parrett came up with something of an answer (the 5th/18th Royal Garhwal Rifles lead turned out to be a red herring). *The Fighting Cock, Being the History of 23 Indian Division 1942-1947* by Lt Col A J F Doulton, Gale & Polden 1951, and *Official History of the Armed Forces in WW2, Post War Occupation Forces Japan & South East Asia*, B. Prasad, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section India & Pakistan 1958, both contain references to the incident. In the first of these references, at page 280, the Indian Army personnel are identified as Kumaon reinforcements to Semarang. The second reference identifies them as 7 Hyderabad.

As Cliff Parrett pointed out, 19th Hyderabad Regiment became the Kumaon Regiment in October 1945 – this being merely a title change, so Hyderabad and Kumaon are one and the same. However, he raised a doubt as to the accuracy of the *Official History* account with its reference to 7th Bn 19th Hyderabad Regiment, as this war-raised battalion did not serve in Java – indeed it did not leave India during World War 2 and was disbanded in December 1946. Cliff felt the unit involved was more likely to be 2nd Hyderabad which was attached to 23rd Indian Division in Java. But might they have been 7th Battalion jawans on their way to a posting with 2nd Battalion? Cliff then checked the Singapore Memorial Register (a random check of 30% of entries); Singapore Cemetery Registers 1, 1a, 1b, 1c, 2; Indonesia 2, 2a, 3; Malaya 1 to 12; all to no avail. Perhaps they are recorded on the Delhi Memorial, though it seems odd their remains were not returned to one of the main sites for burial or cremation. Is this one of the rare occasions when CWGC got it wrong?

It is worth noting that, following the recovery of the remains, the Indian Army razed Bekasi in reprisal and, though shocked by the massacre, this led Lord Louis Mountbatten to issue a directive that such punitive action was opposed to his policy and was henceforth prohibited. Any recurrence would be 'punished with the greatest vigour'.

Can any member add anything to this sad tale? In particular, can anyone confirm the identity of the Indian Army unit involved and does anyone know where the 20 Indian soldiers are commemorated? Replies to the Editor please.

● Another recent query concerned the Swat Levies. I have found no mention of this unit in Chris Kempton's *A Register of Titles of the Units of the HEIC & Indian Armies*, nor Charles Chenevix Trench's *Frontier Scouts* and Ashok Nath did not feature it in his article on Frontier Scout badges (DURBAR, Vol. 13, No 1, Spring 1996, page 1). Cliff Parrett has found a mention in Part 3 of *The Official History of Operations on the North West Frontier of India 1920-35*, this part dealing with the Loe Agra operations of 1935, though no information is given about the unit. Reading between the lines, it would seem to have been an armed local police establishment employed by the civil authority and controlled by the appropriate Political Agent. Its raison d'etre would have been keeping an eye on outposts of the so-called Malakand Protected Area. As Cliff has commented, the Frontier Scouts were probably just a little further above ground zero than the Levies from the military point of view, and so units such as the Gilgit Scouts, Chitral Scouts, Tochi Scouts and South Waziristan Scouts got a slightly better press. But what of the Baluch Levies, Punyal Levies, Mekran Levies and others? Has any member made a study of these units which could be shared through these pages? The Editor would be grateful to hear.

● On the subject of obscure units, those who subscribe to *Dixon's Gazette* may have been equally stumped by an entry in the latest catalogue, No 29, Spring 2002, for a Tibet Medal 1903-04, no clasp, to 4 Jemadar Kharaq Singh, Pradhan Siddum Pioneers. Can anyone throw any light on this unit?

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## BOOK NOTES

● *BRITISH CAMPAIGN MEDALS 1914-2000* by Peter Duckers. Shire Album 393. 40 pages, soft covers, 69 colour and 3 black & white illustrations. ISBN 0 7487 0515 6. £4.50. Available from Shire Publications Ltd, Cromwell House, Church Street, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9AA, or from booksellers.

Another book by our member Peter Duckers in the same format as his "*British Campaign Medals 1815-1914*" (see DURBAR Vol. 18, No.1, SPRING 2001, p 36 for a review) and there is little more to say about this one. Produced to the same high standard, the book covers, as the title suggests, British campaign medals issued from the beginning of the First World War up to and including The Gulf Medal 1990-1, though clasps issued later than that date to the General Service Medal 1962 (referred to in other works as Campaign Service Medal) are also covered. The book concludes with a brief reference to UN and NATO awards. There is nothing new about the information contained here, but as with the earlier book, the attraction must be for the beginner and at £4.50 represents a good buy. For further information contact Patience Dizon on 01844 344301 or fax 01844 347080 or email [shire@shirebooks.co.uk](mailto:shire@shirebooks.co.uk).

● *BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH ARMIES 1939-43* by Mark Bevis. Helion Order of Battle, Volume 1. 87 pages, soft cover, no illustrations (except front cover) or maps. ISBN 1 874622 80 9. £16.95. Helion & Company, 26 Willow Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1UE. Tel. 0121 705 3393, fax 0121 711 4075. email [publishing@helion.co.uk](mailto:publishing@helion.co.uk). Website <http://www.helion.co.uk>.

Despite the series title "Order of Battle" under which this book appears, it does not offer the sort of information that one might expect from, say, Lt Col H F Joslen's "Orders of Battle – Second World War 1939-1945", nor does it offer "a complete guide to the organisation of British and Commonwealth armies" as stated on the cover. What it does offer, and in detail that must be hard to find elsewhere, is tables of organisation and equipment (TOEs). Written by a wargamer, the concept of the book grew out of a frustration at incomplete and inaccurate TOEs which existed for wargamers in the 1980s. The layout of the book is therefore directed primarily at the interests of wargamers seeking detail of unit organisations at 'the sharp end'. The text is sub-divided into theatres of operation; within each theatre a broadly similar concept showing Armoured Divisions; Armoured Brigades; Independent Armoured and Armoured Recce units; Mechanised Divisions and Brigades; Motorised Divisions and Brigades; Infantry Divisions; Infantry Brigades; Airborne; Horsed Cavalry; Corps support units; Army support units; Special Forces; Miscellaneous/Garrison forces.

For the more general reader, however, the content seems to be patchy. For instance, the section headed "Indian Infantry Division, early 1942-43, North Africa" (p 38) gives detail of the Division's composition (3 Infantry Brigades, each of 3 Infantry Battalions - of the 9 Battalions, two were Gurkha and one Scottish), followed by Support Units (e.g. 9 artillery batteries with details of numbers of lorries, guns, trucks, radio vans etc.), and then the breakdown of the infantry battalion and its equipment. But nowhere is there a mention of any unit by name.

Part 5, "Far East, Australasian and Indian Theatres 1939-late 1943" (pp62ff) identifies a few units, especially in the sub-section headed "Malaya and Singapore Garrisons 1942" but otherwise the format is much the same as for the previously quoted section.

For those who are not wargamers, I think the most contentious aspect of the book will be the references to morale and training values. Though having never been involved in wargaming, one can understand the need for rules and guidance to determine whether or not a unit has been "knocked out" of the game. The book correctly identifies that morale and training issues are important in operational terms, but it goes on to judge the ability of the forces listed by a form of what it calls descriptive grading, though others might see it as proscriptive. Rule of thumb criteria are given for each level of grading (excellent, good, average, poor and bad). Thus in the section "Indian Infantry Division, early 1942-43, North Africa" troops are rated at average training and good morale except the Gurkhas who are rated at good training and excellent morale. In the "Malaya and Singapore Garrisons" section "Most troops should be rated poor training and average to poor morale". This sort of categorisation may be useful to allow wargamers to play their games, but there is a danger that such categorisations will in due course be subsumed into other works purporting to be historical accounts. They need to be treated with extreme caution and empirical evidence produced before they become "lore".

● *THE INDIAN ARMY 1914-1947* by Ian Sumner, with illustrations by Mike Chappell. Osprey Publishing, Elite Series No 75. 64 pages, soft cover, numerous black & white photographs, maps, 10 plates of coloured illustrations. £9.99. ISBN 1 84176 196 6.

This book, written by our member Ian Sumner with illustrations by Mike Chappell, does not purport to be anything other than a brief introduction to the Indian Army. Divided into six

sections, it begins by describing the Indian Army in 1914 and the effects on it of Kitchener's reforms. The section on the First World War describes a representative action, the battle of Megiddo, September 1918, though there are also panels showing the composition of Indian Expeditionary Forces during the war and the service of Indian formations. The next section – between the wars – looks at recruitment, regimental re-organisation, British and Indian officers, the Indian Territorial Force and the Frontier column. The Second World War section is similar to that for the First World War and describes a representative action, the capture of Meiktila, 1945. A couple of paragraphs describe Partition. The final section looks at the regiments with a brief description each of cavalry, artillery, sappers and miners, pioneers, infantry, supporting services, followers, the Indian States Forces, Auxiliary Force (India) and the Frontier Corps. Mike Chappell's paintings are clear and informative, as are the photographs and accompanying text describing aspects of uniform or equipment. Produced to the usual Osprey high standard, the book represents a useful beginner's guide to the pre-Partition Indian Army.

● *A GUIDE TO MILITARY TEMPERANCE MEDALS* by David A Harris. Stewart Publishing and Printing, Ontario, Canada. 84 pages, soft cover, 103 b/w photographs and a two page colour chart of ribbons. £10, \$25 Cdn or \$16 US (inclusive of postage). ISBN 1 894183 24 X

Produced by our member David Harris for the Orders and Medals Research Society's Diamond Jubilee, David secured the agreement of the OMRS to sell other copies after distribution within the Society.

In the British Army in the 1800s drunkenness among soldiers was a constant problem, particularly in India where there was little attempt to provide alternative amusements and recreation for the troops. Several of the more enlightened officers established Temperance Societies within their regiments to encourage sober habits, but it was not until 1862 that the Army in India organised the "Soldiers' Total Abstinence Association". These men were encouraged to sign a pledge to abstain entirely from alcohol. Similar organisations were formed for the Royal Navy in 1868, and for British soldiers outside of India in 1893. All of these organisations issued medals for varying lengths of time that a man had retained the pledge, from 6 months to 20 years, as well as additional medals for anyone who had rendered special service in the cause of temperance. Over 100 different types of medal were produced and this useful reference and identification guide catalogues all such medals issued from 1860 to 1939, as well as introducing a history of the temperance movement, the Associations and identifying the 51 Regiments and Corps which issued their own medals. Much of this information has not been published before – the book helped one member of IMHS identify a Prince of Wales's Medal awarded to a member of his family – and will be of interest to those with an interest in the British Army in India.

Two books based on family letters from the First World War:

● *SEVENTEEN LETTERS TO TATHAM – A WWI SURGEON IN EAST AFRICA*. Ann Crichton-Harris. Keneggy West, Toronto, Canada. 231 pages, index, maps, illustrations. \$Cdn 29, \$US22 £16.50 inclusive of postage. ISBN 0 9689142 0 9. Available from the author at 295 Indian Road, Toronto, Ontario, M6R 2X5, Canada. Tel: 416 769-5071 Fax: 416 769-6155 email [jwsenders@post.harvard.edu](mailto:jwsenders@post.harvard.edu).

Dr E T Harris was a surgeon with the Indian Medical Service who left India for East Africa with the first Expeditionary Force in October 1914 and remained there throughout the war, rising from Captain to Lieutenant Colonel. During this time he regularly wrote to his brother Tatham, initially in India where he was a district judge, and later in England where he worked in the War Office, often apparently by-passing the military censor by slipping letters out with officers leaving Africa.

Seventeen of these letters have survived and form the background to this story of the East Africa campaign, though the letters themselves tend not to throw too much light on the military activities. The author, granddaughter of Dr Harris, has used the existence of the letters to research this little known campaign and this book is the result. Thought provoking and hard hitting, it does not make comfortable reading for those with an interest in the Indian Army, which comes in for a pasting from the author. This was not the Indian Army's first excursion into the African continent, yet it must be recognised that this deployment was not the most professional, and the initial landing at Tanga in November 1914 was nothing short of a disaster. The Germans were already based there and numbered amongst their ranks a brilliant military tactician in Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. He recognised early on that he could not actually beat the British, so set out to harass them, destroying railway lines and other lines of communication and generally keep them so busy that no troops could be spared for Europe. Nevertheless, successful in this though he undoubtedly was, it has to be remembered that he did not beat the British, though it is hard to discern this message from the book.

More than half of the book is taken up with the first year of the war. The author states at page 174:

*"In researching the events of the campaign I was surprised to discover I had lost any partisanship I had begun with. It had evaporated as my admiration for the German guerrilla leader [von Lettow-Vorbeck] and my embarrassment and disgust at the arrogance of my own country's leaders rose.....The British did not really recover until General Smuts appeared on the scene in 1916."*

But there is very little detail about the events of 1916 onwards. The author continues:

*"I wondered about the Indian parents whose sons fought in a war that had nothing to do with them and in which they had no interest? Perhaps these parents thought their sons would acquit themselves nobly and bring honour to an impoverished family. Some of them did. Those Indian regiments, so harshly criticized by Meinertzhagen [despite his German sounding name, actually a British intelligence officer in East Africa] went on to distinguish themselves admirably."*

Sadly the author produces little or no evidence of this to balance the harsh criticism that *she*, let alone Meinertzhagen, gives the Indian troops for their conduct in the early phases of the campaign. She acknowledges in the briefest of sentences that "Some achieved awards of gallantry" – actually at least 1 MC, 40 OBIs, 67 IOMs and 264 IDSMs – such awards were not given away with the rations and it would have been interesting to see the book develop to cover this aspect of the campaign. Instead we are treated to several chapters of how the author pursued her study of the campaign in East Africa in the late 1990s. Some might be drawn to the view that the author's admiration for von Lettow-Vorbeck has coloured what might otherwise have been a useful account of the campaign. It is thought provoking, but it feels unbalanced and one is left with the conclusion that further research in the primary sources is necessary before this book can, with any confidence, be treated as an authoritative account.

● *SUNLIGHT AND BLUE SHADOW – 1916-1919 – A SOLDIER WRITES FROM INDIA.* Selected and Edited by Wendy Henningsson. Nork Books, Sweden. 190 pages, soft cover, illustrations. £13 (inclusive of postage). ISBN 91 631 0957 3. Available from the author at P.O. Box 41, SE – 425 02 Hisings Kärna, Sweden.

Private Edgar Phillips volunteered for the 25th Cyclist Battalion, The London Regiment, in August 1914, though just over a year later he was deprived of his bicycle and became a non-cycling infantryman. In February 1916 he and his battalion sailed for India where, as a Territorial

battalion, they were to relieve Regulars for front line service. This book, drawing on Edgar's many letters home to his family, tells the story of an ordinary soldier's life in India – often monotonous and boring, occasionally lively or even exciting, frequently lonely and longing for an end to the war so that he could return home. The story takes us from Bangalore in 1916, to Dagshai and the Kashmir border in 1917, Jullundur, Subathu and the Simla Hills in 1918 and then, after a false hope of a return to England, a forced retention in India and deployment into the Third Afghan War, though Phillips missed the action through being hospitalised.

He developed an ability to draw and paint while in India and supplemented his meagre soldier's income by producing advertising copy for various commercial enterprises, as well as paintings for exhibitions, some of which were sold. He also illustrated the battalion's Christmas Cards and produced several cartoon postcards of note.

Well-illustrated with photographs and Phillips' own sketches and pictures, the book is a delightful reminder of what army life in India could mean for the majority of troops sent there.

