

The Sikh Chronicles

The Official Journal of the WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund



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WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund



THE VIRDEE FOUNDATION

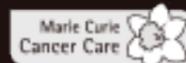


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A Sikh soldier during the Great War (IWM).

About The WW1 Sikh Memorial



“We shall never get such another chance to exalt the name of race, country, ancestors, parents, village and brothers, and to prove our loyalty to the Government. I hope we shall renew our Sikh chronicles.”

The words of signaller Kartar Singh of the 6th Cavalry, who served on the Western Front in 1916, offered inspiration for this publication. They also help us reflect on the significance of the Sikh memorial itself, dedicated on Sunday 1st November 2015 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Stories of heroism throughout the Great War have found new significance and new audiences after the 2014 centenary commemorations. Many thousands of Indians volunteered gladly for service. Sikhs in particular served in every theatre of conflict and their bravery and sacrifice present a narrative of heroism and bravery.

The WW1 Sikh Memorial will ensure these and other sacrifices will be remembered, to inspire Sikh youth through their communal participation in a global historic event and to remind others of the significance of their sacrifice. The new memorial simply reflects the wish that these soldiers should never be forgotten and indeed, to renew our Sikh chronicles for future generations.

The ‘war to end all wars’ was not a wholly European affair; Sikhs played their part amongst all the men of the Empire. They were a small group of under one percent of the population of the then undivided India, but they made up twenty percent of the British Indian Army in action. Those who remember the sacrifices made for our nation’s enduring freedoms will have reason to keep the Sikhs in their thoughts and prayers.

The idea to create a World War One Sikh monument at the National Memorial Arboretum came to me when I discovered there was nothing already in place at that site of country-wide significance. I felt there should be a piece of national heritage that offered a lasting legacy of the Sikhs who fought; remembering our turbaned and bearded ancestors and chronicling the deeds and honour bonds which empower us as British Sikhs.

I soon found out I was not alone; the community-at-large quickly stood behind the idea through our ‘Kickstarter’ fundraising campaign, a modern way of ensuring that those with the most to gain from an idea – the young, the energetic, the willing – were given a positive platform to come together and make something happen. And they did.

These pioneers of Sikh remembrance – our supporters – are deserving of everyone’s gratitude, and are thanked by name in this publication. Particular appreciation is due to our patron organisation the Virdee Foundation, corporate sponsor New Punjab Coaches and co-sponsor Khalsa Aid for their enduring commitment to serving humankind through their various charitable endeavours.

The process of creating the memorial, from artwork to final installation, could not have been possible without a team of dedicated individuals: sculptor Mark Bibby, the team at Sculpture Castings in Basingstoke and G.A. Canells Memorials in Lichfield.

Credit is due to all those who helped pull together the three disparate elements of the project; the memorial, the unveiling and this publication: designer Amit Patel, community organiser Harjinder Singh, copy editor Simon Redgrave, the British Army’s Civil Engagement Team and the staff at the Arboretum, in particular Acting Curator James Shallcross, Events Manager Neill Hoare and Events Co-ordinator Emma Cropper. Credit is given in these pages to the various experts, researchers and writers who have offered articles that provide background to the Sikh war story.

Finally, it is my deep desire to see memorials such as this one appear all over the country, indeed internationally. It is my active hope that this memorial will inspire others. With this project we are watering and feeding the roots of our heritage, so it will grow and blossom for future generations; I am at the service of any who wish to plant such seeds elsewhere. In doing so we are indeed renewing our Sikh chronicles.

J. Singh-Sohal
Chairman, WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund.



- 1999: Albania - Kosovan Refugee Aid
- 1999: Turkey - Earthquake Relief
- 2000: Orissa, India - Typhoon
- 2001: Gujarat, India - Earthquake
- 2002: DR Congo - Volcanic Eruption
- 2003: Somalia - Water Purification
- 2003: Kabul, Afghanistan - Refugee Aid
- 2004: Tsunami Islands
- 2005: Pakistan - Earthquake
- 2006: Indonesia - Tsunami
- 2007: Punjab - Punjab Floods
- 2007: Pathargaat (Dhaka, Bangladesh) - Cyclone
- 2008: Punjab, India - Drugs Abuse
- 2008: Madya Pardes - Water sanitation project
- 2009: Panja Sahib, Pakistan - Displaced Sikhs
- 2009: Pakistan - Assisting internally displaced Sikhs
- 2009: Cambodia - Orphan children
- 2010: Haiti - Earthquake
- 2010: Punjab - Shaheed Parivaar
- 2011: Libiya & Syria - Hunger
- 2011: Kenya & Somalia - Drought
- 2012: Keyna - Water Pump
- 2012: India - Sikhligar Sikhs
- 2012: Haiti - On-Going Relief
- 2013: North India - Floods
- 2013: India Muzzafarnagar
- 2013: Philippines - Typhoon Relief
- 2013: Haiti - On-Going Relief
- 2013: Kenya - Water Pump
- 2014: Philippines - Typhoon Relief
- 2014: Lebanon - Syrian Refugees
- 2014: UK - Floods
- 2014: Kashmir - Floods
- 2014: Iraq - Refugees



KHALSA AID
RECOGNISE THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE AS ONE

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WWW.KHALSAAID.ORG

Foreword

There is a long and celebrated history of Sikhs serving in the British Army. From the famous Battle of Saragarhi, through the mud at Flanders to the deserts of El Alamein and Palestine and more recently in Afghanistan, Sikhs have fought bravely alongside their British counterparts through the most difficult of times.

The Sikh Chronicles honours the actions of Sikh soldiers during the First World War. Far away from home, they demonstrated their considerable courage and the new memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum is a fitting tribute to those of their number that fought and died during the Great War. We should draw inspiration from their acts of heroism and recognise the mutual values that bound us together in our shared endeavour 100 years ago: integrity, duty, courage, loyalty, service and sacrifice. We must ensure that we strive to keep these values alive amidst the challenges and threats of this unstable and complex world.

We are proud that 130 Sikhs serve in the British Army today. We need more. Establishing the British Armed Forces Sikh Association is an important step in bringing the Sikh community closer to the heart of British defence. Together, we must conserve and grow the close bonds between our two communities and in this uncertain world stand ready to defend our values, shoulder to shoulder, like our forebears in 1914.

General Sir Nicholas Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen
Chief of the General Staff

Messages of Support

“It is important that we remember all those who made the sacrifice to defend the country and whose actions protected the freedoms we enjoy today. The Sikh community’s contribution is highly valued and the Prime Minister is delighted that such a tribute is forthcoming.”
10 Downing Street

“Sikh Service personnel have served with great distinction in the British Armed Forces. We recognise their outstanding contribution, and the strong link with the British Armed Forces which continues to this day. As Minister for the Armed Forces, I am grateful for all that they have accomplished; their incredible efforts have helped to build a better world for future generations. Defence recognises that our people are our most important asset; we will continue to do all that we can to ensure that our Services reflect British society, and that we recruit individuals from all communities including the Sikh community.”

Penny Mordaunt MP, Armed Forces Minister

“The Sikh community has long played a role, not merely in the affairs of the sub-continent of the Empire and then Commonwealth, but across the spectrum of international relations, which has vastly outranked its members. Its role in World War 1 is a striking example of all that activity. A physical commemoration of this

fact has been long overdue. I am delighted to be able to add my support to this enterprise and I wish it the greatest possible success.”

Rt. Hon. John Bercow MP
Speaker of the House of Commons

“I would be delighted to support your souvenir publication for the memorial to create a lasting legacy of remembrance for the Sikhs who fought. It is my great pleasure to be associated with such brave people.”

General The Lord Dannat GCB CBE MC DL

“The Royal British Legion is delighted to support the unveiling of this historic monument by the WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund. The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA), part of the wider Royal British Legion family, has a shared ambition to ensure that there is proper commemoration for the Sikh contribution to WW1. The British and Sikh troops were brothers-in-arms, it is only right that the sacrifice of Sikh soldiers is recognised at the site of national Remembrance. The legion is delighted that this important monument is making its home at the NMA and highly commends the WW1 Sikh Memorial Fund for its work with the NMA in making this become a reality.”

John Crisford
National Chairman Royal British Legion

Creating The Memorial

MARK BIBBY

Having for over thirty years studied British military history, and with my sculptures displayed in private collections; I developed a lifelong fascination with the image of the proud Sikh soldier. So it was an honour to be commissioned to create the World War One Sikh Memorial. Research is vital when sculpting military themes, for me this begins by reading regimental histories covering the period the sculpture portrays, then gathering images of the subject - but remembering never to work from just the one image. The internet is an aid with specialist websites such as "Sikhs At War" but so too are living history groups and collectors, that research the minutia of their subject.

Once details of the figure (size, shape etc) have been confirmed any queries regarding material, production rechecked, the creative work begins. Sketching ideas helps imagine what it should look like – before moving on to a Marquette, a small model used to give an idea of how the finished sculpture will look.

Beginning work on the actual sculpture an armature has to be created, a solid wooden metal frame. Any mistakes at this point would cause major problems later. And so surrounding myself with reference photos, sketches and notes I start with the face, getting this right makes the rest fall into place.

This is followed by a rough rendering of the remainder of the sculpture, always viewing the figure from different angles to iron out any flaws. As the scale of the figure

has been set, small details such as buttons and medals are sculpted as separate parts to be added later. The rough rendering of the figure is shaped, adding plus removing over and over. I then cover the figure and try not to look at it for a few days, this way when I return to work on it imperfections are noticed that were missed before.

Once happy with the layering of the clothes texture, seams and buttons are added. Going back to the face the roughly sculpted facial hair is worked on. It was decided to extend the beard in order to ensure the depiction that the Sikhs maintained uncut hair while fighting. Returning to research and references, Sikhs would have maintained their beards tied up, to stop them jamming in their rifles and to be manageable. The look of a longer beard fits well with the image of the Sikh. But I was not happy until my fifth attempt at the facial hair - "that will do" is never an option especially when the model is to last forever!

Finally the medals are added tweaking the little bits that may not be seen by many but I know they are there.

A much larger sculpture could have been created but even this would not represent the sacrifice made by these men.

I see the World War One Sikh memorial as a dignified reminder of the role played by Sikhs to which we are all indebted. In future, those who look upon it must surely feel the same sentiment.



Sculpting The Memorial



Above: From the sculptors model a mould is made of wax. Molten bronze is then poured in to create a highly detailed figure used for casting.



Above: casting work showing the two different model busts; and right, WW1 Sikh Memorial Chairman J. Singh-Sohal with the scale model.



Above: the case is cut into smaller pieces for processing; and right: the finished bronze bust prior to finishing.



The Sikh Dharam

BHAI SAHIB BHAI MOHINDER SINGH

‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’.
Preamble, UNESCO Constitution, 1945

‘Man tu jyot saroop hai, aapna mool pachhan...’
‘Oh my mind, the divine flame is right there, embodied within you;
Recognise your true essence and realise your true potential.’
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, (441)

‘Man jeetai, jag jeet’.
‘Conquer the mind, and you conquer the world’.
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, (6)

Human history has long reminded us that the most challenging battleground we face lies in the arena of our mind. It can be our greatest friend and ally, or our worst and most unflinching enemy. Ultimately it is this internal state of the mind which impacts on the kind of world we are able to create, safeguard, coexist in and pass down to others. Whatever our advancements in military or defence technology, whatever complex political, social or emotional scenarios we struggle to confront, the ‘enemy’ we seek is ultimately invisible. Transform the mind and you unlock a tremendous capacity to do good, by kindling and keeping ablaze the spark of the Creator (as Sikhs see it) which lies within us all.

This vision of the mind’s potential, and determination to work for a better world, lies at the heart of the ethos and identity of the Sikh dharam or faith. It is expressed through the sant-sipahi (‘saintly warrior’) tradition, which is rooted in the defence of peace and wellbeing for all (‘sarbat da bhalla’) and strictly resists offence or any abuse of power. This noble tradition has reverberated in the psyche of Sikhs and in their cherished identity in times of persecution and genocide. They have been inspired - by historic, real-life examples during their faith’s formation - to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the good of others, the many accounts in this book will narrate.

And so it was that, when the world was at war, twice the Sikhs travelled over 5,000 miles to battle oppression and tyranny; in answering Britain’s call they were also answering the call of their faith. How was it that such a tiny minority in British India made up almost a fifth of the British Indian Army? Here I endeavour to unravel some aspects of that spiritual and social legacy, its ethos and identity, which served to spur them on.

To do so, it helps to use a Punjabi word and think in terms of the Sikh dharam more so than ‘religion’, ‘faith’ ‘tradition’ or ‘belief’ which are inadequate substitutes. Dharam conveys a conscious practice of faith, fusing all the parts to the whole. It embraces an overarching vision of human existence; it provides core teachings, values, ethics and practices to be nurtured, shared and carried forward; it also shapes one’s inward and outward identity. It involves an instinctive attitude of thankfulness and responsibility to do what is good and right, to make worthy the life we are blessed with, and to make a difference to the world during our all-but-temporary stay on the planet.

Specifically for Sikhs, their dharam is guided by Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the sacred text exalted to the position of eternal and living Guru, following the founding of the faith by ten successive human Gurus from 1469 to 1708. The legacy of the Gurus is also enshrined in the distinctive identity of the Khalsa order of initiated, amritdhari Sikhs, established by the tenth Guru in 1699. Below are introduced some of the core teachings that guide Sikh life and are transmitted through its identity and practices.

The starting point of the Sikh dharam lies, as I see it, in the opening statement of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, which appears as a spiritual logo, ‘Ik Oankar’. Whilst it eludes any translation, it can be seen as an unambiguous acknowledgment that ‘God is One; and All is God’. Here, the Punjabi numeral one, pronounced as ‘ik’, is followed by a sign for ‘Oankar’, with its descending and ascending arcs representing God’s overarching presence in the seen, unseen and infinite dimensions of existence. It thus evokes an eternal and incomprehensible unity underlying



Sikhs celebrating Vaisakhi, the birth of the Khalsa, in Birmingham (DHP).

the infinitely rich diversity of all that exists, where the Creator and all creation are sublimely interconnected.

Mool Mantar, as it is known and chanted by Sikhs, is the verse which first elaborates Ik Oankar in the sacred text. It builds our founding concepts of God as eternal truth or ultimate reality in a world of flux and change, beyond all divides and boundaries. It underscores God’s essence as being ‘nirbhau, nirvair’, ‘without fear, without hate’. This has long inspired Sikhs to remember that no one is in fact an enemy or stranger and that one must be fearless without being vengeful. It also introduces the vital concept of grace (gurprasad) which is reiterated throughout the sacred text. This puts humility first in the rung of qualities for cultivating and empowering the spiritual self.

Dharam therefore arises from a profoundly felt, sacred responsibility towards all – towards one’s kith and kin, one’s neighbours, all humanity, all living beings, mother-earth and all creation. It is sustained by a constant sense of gratitude, awe and duty towards the Infinite Creator. It is neither a dry mundane obligation nor just an intellectual exercise; it involves the whole of one’s being seen in relation to all creation and ideally involves living this fully with each breath.

Thus dharam relates to our main business or mission here on earth. We arrive on this planet as vanjaaray or traders; our business here is a quest to generate spiritual wealth. This is a metaphor for the accumulation of

spiritual capital made up of attributes such as compassion, mercy, courage, selflessness and love. These Godly values or virtues comprise our core resource, without which all efforts to do good in the world are limited and restricted. Once our journey on this planet is done and completed, they are the only imperishable divine souvenirs or kamai (‘earnings’) we are able to carry forward with us, as the fruits of the life we have lived, into the life hereafter.

Our spiritual awakening and realisation is stimulated and guided by three cardinal questions, concerning our ultimate origin, purpose and goal or destination: ‘kithou upjai, keh rehai, keh mahi samavai?’ (SGGS, 1193) ‘Where have we come from? What are we supposed to do here? Where will we end up?’. Dharam answers all these and especially the second question. Indeed, in Jap Ji Sahib, the first Sikh morning prayer, the earth is likened to a dharamsal. It is where we are domiciled during our temporary stay on the planet, which is envisioned as a place, or school, to practice, engage and trade in dharam.

Whilst we arrive on the planet embodying the spark of the divine, we also face our biggest challenge. As humans, we are prone to succumbing to ‘haumai’ – ‘I-am-ness’. It is the pull of the selfish ‘ego’ – an acronym, one could say, for ‘edging God out’ and blindly putting the self at the centre. It manifests itself when we are taken over by instincts of lust, wrath, greed, possessiveness and arrogance (kam, krodh, lobh, moh, ahankar) amongst others. As part and parcel of our

human chemistry, haumai cannot be totally eliminated; we must learn to control it, by empowering our spiritual self. Dharam provides the right ethos, vision, values, teachings, personal and shared practices to overcome haumai, offering nourishment to the inner spark of the divine. Liberation is emancipation from haumai and loving submission to the hukam or divine will. One can thus become jeevan-mukat - spiritually liberated as an embodiment of Godly traits whilst still alive in the present. Thus for Sikhs, concern for the hereafter is balanced by a firm emphasis on the qualities one lives by, breath-by-breath and moment-by-moment, in the here and now.

For Sikhs, the answer to 'what are we supposed to do here?' is summed up by a threefold formula: 'pray, work, share' - 'naam japo, kirat karo, vand ke chhako'. From this other value-led practices arise to be woven into daily life. Simran is meditation on or remembrance of the Creator and sewa is selflessly serving creation. Both, we are informed, must be of equal magnitude, the first helping us to become wise and the second to maintain humility and for neutralising arrogance. Gradually, such combined inward and outward practice shapes the mindset which drives our day-to-day thoughts and actions. It gains depth, momentum and blessings through spending time in the company of the sadh sangat - spiritually enlightened company, and reflection on Gurbani, the sacred teachings, to successfully navigate through the pitfalls, challenges and opportunities of human life.

As the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji advise us, a Sikh's life must include exercising: compassion, purity and contentment (daya, sat, santokh); unconditional love in the path of devotion and selfless service (prema bhagti, sewa bhavana and nishkamta); being courageous, benevolent and generous whilst also frugal and resourceful in thinking, speech and lifestyle (surma, parupkari and sanjami); being reflective and detached; excelling and being wise whilst being utterly humble (man neeva, mat uchee).

Distinctively for Sikhs, dharmic qualities include: respecting the dignity of all faiths, with no aim to convert or proselytise; allegiance to One God; being self-reliant and taking responsibility; being impartial and promoting cohesion; not succumbing to superstitious practices or believing in damnation; being ever-optimistic (in chardi kala) and praying for the common good (sarbata da bhalla); being a 'saintly soldier' (sant sipahi), upholding goodness and being active in curbing and controlling human vice and insatiable yearning. Right from the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru, the life of a householder was exalted above that of an ascetic. Thus marriage and family life are also part of one's dharam. When the tenth Guru created the Khalsa order, other aspects of Sikh dharmic life were reinforced: to maintain

the kes or unshorn hair; to abstain from eating meat; committing adultery and consuming alcohol or tobacco.

Dharam is associated with 'righteous conduct'. In the hymn which is now considered as the Sikh 'anthem' ('Deh Shiva bar mohe ihai...') the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji stresses that dharam is the practice, not of deeds for the sake of ritual, but of 'shubh karam' - those driven by human goodness and Godly values. The following interpretation of its words sums up the spirit in which a Sikh is to live his or her life till the very end:

'Empower me, God, to never shy away from doing what is good and right; May I thus become fearless in facing life's battles inside and around me, with resolute belief in victory; May my mind then learn, yearning only to praise Your infinite goodness; And so, may I relentlessly continue to do all that is good and right, until my very last breath.'

The lion-heartedness required for this was uniquely exemplified by the ninth Guru, who made a supreme sacrifice in response to the plea from a delegation of Hindu pandits from Kashmir. They faced coercion to convert to Islam, which was the religion of the imperial Mughal dynasty (whose lineage of emperors had paralleled the line of ten Sikh Gurus). The Guru's unwavering stand to uphold religious freedom for all, by resolutely resisting religious conversion, led to his eventual beheading in the capital Delhi by the authorities. This earned him the popular title of 'Hind-di-Chaaddar' ('Shield for the Hindus and Hindustan'). For Sikhs and others, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's historic sacrifice stands as a beacon for the protection of religious freedom throughout the world.

All religious traditions have some form of initiation, baptism or life commitment. For Sikhs, this is called the amrit sanchaar - a sacred ceremony which connects the finite mortal-being with 'Infinite Immortal Creator' providing the initiate with the potent gift of divine naam (God's Name) to be contemplated on and to ceaselessly inspire one's thoughts and actions through one's lifetime. It is an entry point into the order of the Khalsa, characterised by the uniqueness of its ethos, form and identity.

The tenth Guru demonstrated his loving esteem for the Khalsa by bowing down humbly before the first five historic initiates when the order was created in 1699. Each of their names reflected the qualities which a Sikh seeks to live by: daya (the indispensable 'bedrock' of compassion); dharam (rightful and responsible religious living); himmat (courage and initiative); mohkam (steadfastness and detachment) and sahib (mastery, accomplishment and leadership). The Guru extensively praised the Khalsa as 'Akal Purakh ki fauj', 'the army of Immortal God', promising it blessings only so long as its uniqueness was preserved. This includes the distinctive



Sikhs in traditional clothing, or bana, celebrating the Vaisakhi the birth anniversary of the Khalsa.

appearance, given through the gifts of the dastar (turban) and five kakkar (kes, uncut hair; kangha, wooden comb; kara, iron wristlet; kirpan, revered sword of goodness, mercy, blessings and promotion of peace; kachhera, drawer-stringed undershorts upholding fidelity, chastity, high personal morals). It also requires a daily life of spiritual discipline, self-restraint and prayer. The Khalsa's form and way of life reinforces an unwavering commitment to practice and keep dharmic values alive.

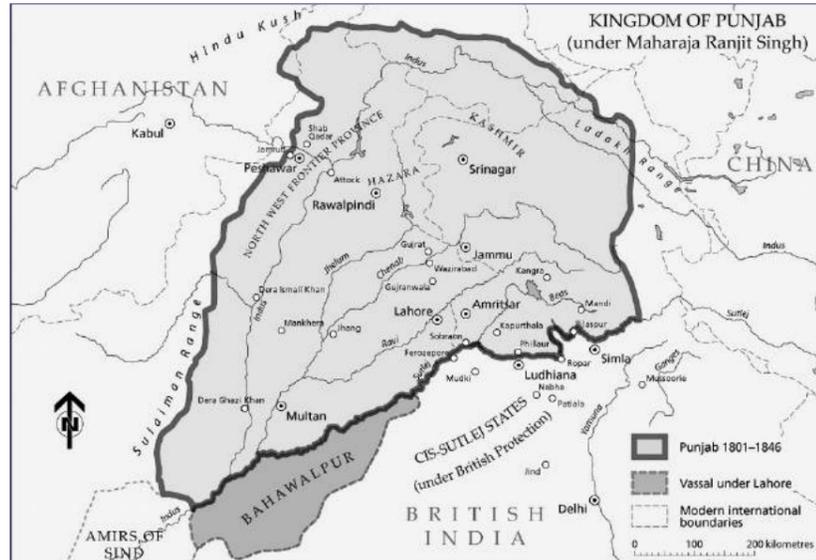
The Sikh Gurus emphasised that dharam is to be embraced and upheld in ways which are non-exploitative, genuine and sincere. Hence Guru Nanak Dev Ji emphasised that 'Truth is high, but higher still is truthful conduct.' Guru Gobind Singh Ji proclaimed that his very purpose of being born was to establish dharam, in a world where hypocrisy (pakhand), apathy, oppression, exploitation and deceit had become the order of the day and where the abuse of religious and political power was endemic.

As the ethos of the Sikh dharam reflects its distinctiveness works together with an attitude of openness and embracing of all. This is reflected by the inclusion in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji of verses attributed to Hindu and Muslim saints, creating an interfaith sacred text and in some way a dialogue between them, over some five centuries. The Hindu Saint, Bhagat Kabir Ji,

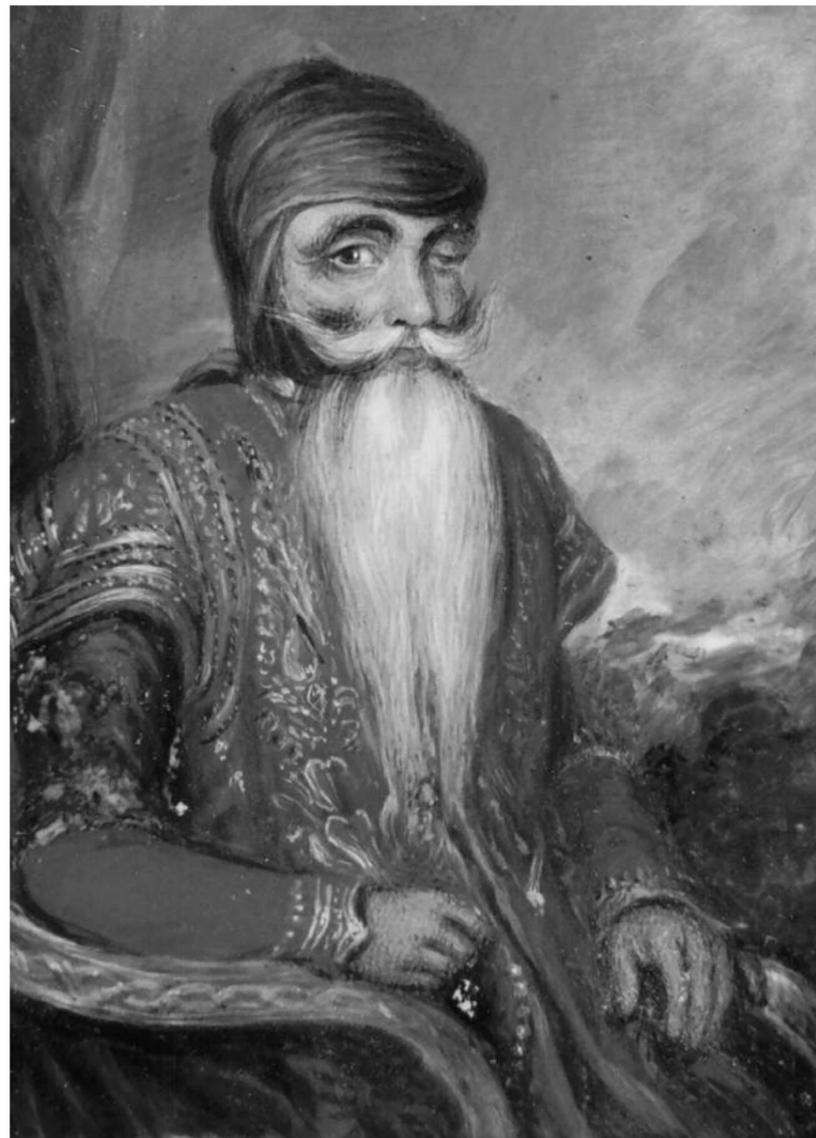
reminds us that dharam is dependent on spiritual wisdom, warning us metaphorically of the spiritual famine which humanity faces in the absence of dharam. Higher than theology and dogma and ritual, are the values, virtues and qualities upon which dharam rests. The highest of these, we are emphatically informed, is forgiveness, since it invokes God's very presence when practiced. Allow me to finish with a scriptural translation. It reflects for me the mindset of the sant-sipahi, or saintly warrior, whose battles are to the very end for inward and outward peace:

Kabir, where there wisdom, there is dharam;
Where there is deceit and falsehood, there is sin.
Where there is greed, there is death and destruction;
Where there is forgiveness, there is God Himself.
Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, (1372) Saloks of Bhagat Kabir

Bhai Sahib (Dr) Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia OBE is chairman of the Nishkam group of charitable organisations based in Birmingham. He is a leading light in furthering interfaith dialogue whose leadership is recognised through many prestigious national and international accolades and roles.



The Punjab Kingdom under its ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh (below) stretched from Peshawar to Ludhiana.



The Rise And Fall Of The Sikh Kingdom

BOBBY SINGH BANSAL

The decline of the Mughal dynasty in India in the mid-18th century saw the political vacuum in the Punjab filled by a new emerging regional power – the Sikhs.

During the last years of Mughal rule the Sikhs had reorganized themselves into autonomous guerrilla brigades, each ruled by a leader controlling a territory known as a Misl. They united as the “Dal Khalsa” to lead the Sikhs in times of danger, the community having been persecuted for much of the previous century. The twelve Misls were each led by their own formidable leaders, known as Misl-dars. While they banded together to fight their common enemies, there was also rivalry present as each worked to expand their territory at the expense of the others.

The most prominent Misls were the Bhangi, Ramgharia and Kanhaiya, but it was the Sukerchakia that grew to be the most powerful, under leader Sardar Mahan Singh. By 1790 he had seized considerable chunks of land through audacious military campaigns. Mahan Singh was killed in battle in 1792, when his matchlock gun accidentally blew up in his face, leaving the task of expanding his territory to his only child, Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit was born in 1780 in the Sukerchakia headquarters in Gujranwala (now in Pakistan) and was raised by his father’s military advisers to become a capable leader, administering the family’s vast estates by the tender age of twelve. In his teens he extended his territory through military acumen and skill in battle. A political marriage to Rani Mehtab Kaur followed in 1796, the daughter of the Misaldar of the Kanhaiya’s, but the union did not produce an heir.

Such was his devotion and determination to rule that aged just nineteen Ranjit Singh consolidated his power over the Misl-dars when in 1799 he seized Lahore, and in so doing reinforced his reputation and position as the leading Sardar. By steel and marriage Ranjit united various factions, wedding Rani Raj Kaur of the Nikkai Misl who gave birth to an heir - Kanwar Kharak Singh in 1801. He brought peace and prosperity to the Punjab, which had been plundered after Mughal decline by the

invading Afghan armies of Ahmed Shah Abdali.

Ranjit was a shrewd ruler and rewarded ability and loyalty, enlisting people of all faiths and backgrounds to serve him.

Ranjit’s key to ensuring stability was to constantly advance the Sikh territory outward, keeping invaders and enemies at arm’s reach. By 1809 the East India Company recognised his significance and drew up the “Treaty of Amritsar” to restrict his military activity south of the Cis-Sutlej territories of the Malwa region, where British interests lay. He continued to expand his dominions to the north. By 1810 he had conquered Kasur, Sialkot and the Kangra valley. His kingdom was inhabited by Muslims and Hindus, with Sikhs making up a minority, and his secular rule was known for religious impartiality and tolerance.

Multan was next to fall in 1814, not an easy victory for the Sikhs as the citadel proved too formidable to be vanquished. Ranjit Singh ordered the infamous Zamzama Gun - captured from the Afghans in 1802 - to be used to storm the fort. Multan fell after heavy losses on both sides. Four years later the Muslim province of Kashmir was incorporated into the Sikh kingdom.

After this, Ranjit Singh’s expansion policy looked towards the frontier tribal regions of the trans-Indus plains bordering Afghanistan, in particular the Pasthun strongholds of Attock and Peshawar. To secure the western boundaries of his empire he marched to Naushera with 8,000 troops under Prince Sher Singh, along with 500 Akalis led by the ferocious Akali Phula Singh, who fell when battle was joined. Peshawar was of immense strategic importance, and the city was taken when General Hari Singh Nalwa stormed the Bala Hisar fort in 1834.

By the early 1820’s, British influence had reached to the southern fringes of Ranjit Singh’s empire. He responded by modernising his army on a western model to meet any potential threat. Europeans mercenaries were employed in his armies - French, Italian, Hungarian, Spanish, Americans and even English officers were enlisted.

Frenchmen General Jean Francois Allard and General Jean Baptiste Ventura became his leading military officers who raised the "Fauj-i-khas" or the Royal Brigade in 1826. Others included the Italian General Paolo Martino Avitabile who became the ruthless Governor of Peshawar in 1838 and the German Dr Martino Honigberger who became the Maharajah's personal physician.

From their positions as military advisers, these "firanghis" became influential courtiers and bureaucrats, gained access to higher civil duties and were elevated to the highest ranks of the administration. They were entrusted with some judicial functions, and discharged administrative responsibilities within large districts — although the autonomy they enjoyed was somewhat limited due to tight control from Lahore. They married local women and adopted the etiquette and customs of the Punjab.

Nobles such as Fakir Aziduddin became his foreign minister, Raja Dina Nath, the finance minister, Fakir Nuruddin, his health minister and Raja Dhyhan Singh Dogra, the prime minister, while his military generals, which usually consisted of Sikh chiefs such as Hari Singh Nalwa, were usually found fighting or administering far-flung outposts of the kingdom.

When Ranjit's territorial expansion reached the mouth of the famed Khyber Pass, he gave instructions to Nalwa to seal the western frontier to any possible attack. Outposts were constructed along the porous Afghan border which included Shab Qadar, Michni, Bara and Jamrud forts. Most of these still exist today and are presently being used by the Pakistani army.

In 1837, during the marriage of the Maharajah's grandson Prince Nau-Nihal Singh to the daughter of General Sham Singh Attariwala, ten thousand Afghans under Dost Mohammad Khan stormed the Khyber Pass and besieged the fortress of Jamrud. Sikh troops had been withdrawn from across the Punjab to put up a show of strength for the visiting British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane. Hari Singh Nalwa was absent from the wedding festivities in Lahore and countered the belligerents with just several hundred troops. He dispatched a communiqué to Ranjit Singh requesting urgent reinforcements, but his letter was deliberately withheld and only delivered to the Maharajah much later by the prime minister Dhyhan, who held a personal animosity towards Nalwa. By the time reinforcements arrived at Jamrud, the Maharajah's most trusted general was dead.

After the Maharajah suffered a minor stroke and as his health continued to deteriorate, factions within the Sikh court began to emerge. The infamous Jammu brothers - Raja Dhyhan Singh, Raja Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh - misused the power entrusted in them for their own gains. Much of the administration sat in the hands of

the omnipotent Dhyhan, whose aim was not to safeguard the Sikh kingdom but to establish a Dogra Empire. Senior courtiers gathered at Ranjit's deathbed in 1839, to pledge allegiance to Prince Kharak Singh, his eldest son and successor. Ranjit ordered his prime minister to donate the priceless Koh-i-Noor diamond to the temple of Jagannath at Puri, in Orissa. His orders were never implemented and his wish for stability in the kingdom was never realised.

The wealth of the Maharajah on his demise was estimated at eleven crore rupees in cash alone, excluding jewels, paintings, horses and other priceless artefacts which surmounted to a similar figure. Colonel Henry Steinbech, a Prussian officer in the services of the Lahore Durbar doubted whether any court in Europe possessed such wealth and opulence. But Ranjit's incompetent successor was too feeble to handle the court politics and the all powerful Dogras. Dhyhan and Gulab Singh schemed to limit the power of the new ruler. The Dogras manoeuvred to create hostility between Kharak Singh and his eldest son Nau-Nihal Singh. Eventually the feeble Maharajah was forced from power by his own son and later poisoned to death.

When heir-apparent Nau-Nihal returned from his father's funeral in Lahore the ceiling of Roshani Gate caved in and the prince was badly injured. He died hours later. Raja Sher Singh ascended the throne in 1841 but was assassinated by the Sandhanwalia's who feared Dogra influence; they then murdered his son Partap Singh and Dhyhan Singh Dogra two years later. The Court of Lahore remained in deep disarray as princes and factions vied for control. Four more of Ranjit Singh's sons and descendants were dead by 1845. Only the youngest son, Duleep Singh, survived. In 1843 he was declared Maharajah at the age of five, and his mother Rani Jind Kaur took firm control of court affairs.

Civil and revenue administration came to a virtual standstill. Except in a few well administered regions the collection of revenues had fallen into arrears and district officials had lost their hold on the local civil administration.

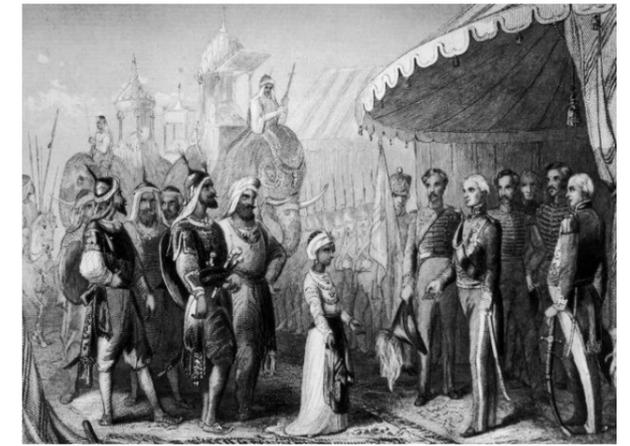
With most of the loyal Sikh chiefs gone, Rani Jinda depended on disgruntled courtiers to administer court affairs. In particular she was ill-advised and manipulated by Lal Singh. Furthermore, the Sikh army took liberties by repeatedly demanding more pay and allowances. High costs for the troops during 1839-1845 saw the darbar devour the dwindling resources of the state treasury. Rani Jinda turned to her brother Raja Jawahir Singh by making him prime minister, but when he became implicated in a murder he was brutally killed by Sikh soldiers in the presence of young Duleep. For this Rani Jinda vowed to destroy the Sikh army.

When British troops amassed south of the Sutlej River it provided a pretext for Rani Jinda to rally the rebellious Sikh soldiers who lay encamped outside the palace gates demanding their salaries. She called on them to protect her husband's legacy and to defend their homeland against the British. The British had spies throughout the Punjab, and had been watching the crisis boiling on the Anglo-Sikh frontier. Sikh troops encamped in enclaves across the Sutlej River recognised as dependencies of the Lahore Darbar, against the Treaty of Amritsar and the British broke all diplomatic relations.

Sir Hugh Gough marched rapidly towards Ferozepore with over 10,000 men and nearly 40 heavy guns. On the 18th December the Sutlej campaign began with fighting in the village of Mudki, losses on both sides were immense. The battle of Ferozeshah followed, one of the hardest fought in the history of the British army in India. Tej Singh commanded the Sikh force of 30,000 men with over 100 heavy guns, but was never a good soldier and marched too slowly. He was joined by Lal Singh who later abandoned the Sikh army on the battlefield. But the brave Khalsa soldiers fought on ferociously without their military leaders. Casualties on both sides were huge, British losses amounted to about 1,800 against 5,000 for the Sikhs.

The British finally achieved their victory on the 10th February 1846 at Sobraon, and the Rani ordered Raja Gulab Singh from Jammu to open negotiations with the Governor-General Lord Hardinge. The British hastily drafted the "Treaty of Lahore" which officially ended the war but reduced the power and territories of Duleep Singh to a third. A British resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, was stationed at Lahore to represent the interests of the East India Company in Punjab. Rani Jinda was given an annual pension of 150,000 rupees and replaced by a "Council of Regency" comprising leading Sikh chiefs under the resident's control and guidance, handing the British effective control of the Government.

Rani Jinda was unhappy with the provisions made for her in the peace treaty and audaciously challenged the British for further concessions. She resented continued British meddling and the loss of her son's sovereign status and authority. But Sir Henry Lawrence brought matters to a head, ordering Rani Jinda's personal staff to be replaced. Prohibited from meeting her ministers in private without his permission, the Rani had become a prisoner in her own palace. When an attempt was made to move her to another fort away from Lahore there was uproar. Sikh veterans were already appalled at Rani Jinda's dishonourable treatment, and the dismissal of a large number of Sikh soldiers was creating widespread unrest in the countryside. As rebellion gathered pace and broke into open war, the British sent in forces to restore order.



The campaign began well for the Sikhs. Raja Sher Singh guided the Sikhs to victory on 22nd November 1848 at the battle of Ramnagar, fighting the British with zeal and ferocity. The battle of Chillianwala, which followed on the 13th January 1849, was seen by the British as a mini Waterloo with over 2,800 men lost and thousands more were wounded. But Sikh losses were equally high, and senior Sikh soldiers including General Ilahi Bakksh began to defect to the British. Defeat at the Battle of Goojerat on the 21st February 1849 proved to be the turning point, the Sikhs surrendered near Rawalpindi. At the Lahore fort a month later the Sikh empire was formally annexed by the British.

Rani Jinda had lost her husband's kingdom, but further heartache was to follow. Maharaja Duleep Singh would be torn from the land of his ancestors; transferred first to Fatehgarh in the United Provinces - now Uttar Pradesh; where he converted to Christianity before being moved on to England in 1854. In later years he brought his mother to join him in his London exile. Inspired by her tales of his magnificent inheritance he tried to reclaim his lost kingdom, but died penniless in Paris in 1893.

Bobby Singh Bansal is a military historian and writer who has travelled extensively in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to document people and places of historical Sikh value. His books include "The Lion's Firanghis: Europeans at the Court of Lahore".

Sikhs On The Frontier

J. SINGH-SOHAL

The lasting legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reforms to the Sikh army was a modernised military force; adaptable and disciplined in European drill. His legacy was to prove immensely beneficial to British interests after the Anglo-Sikh Wars. While Sikhs were still strong, courageous and imbued with a sense of adventure, their morale had suffered as the Court of Lahore descended into factional infighting. With the annexation of the Punjab, the Khalsa army was broken. Without clear purpose or leadership, many feared that Sikhs would be assimilated into the Hindu fold. Their unlikely saviour came in the form of the very power which had taken the Sikh Kingdom - the British.

The East India Company needed to do something quickly with these fearless Sikh warriors to keep them out of trouble in their homeland. So in May 1849, a month after the annexation of Punjab, a small irregular body called the Trans-frontier Brigade was created by Sir Henry Lawrence. This force originally consisted of six infantry regiments and five cavalry, as well as an artillery unit. Four Sikh regiments came from the disbanded Sikh units, now called the Regiments of Sikh Local Infantry. For some the new units offered a stable job during uncertain times. Others saw it as an adventure, rekindling memories of Sikh heroes who had fought the Pathans, such as Hari Singh Nalwa.

The British had learned harsh lessons in dealing with the Pathan tribes during the First Anglo-Afghan war. This ended in disaster in 1842 with a retreat from Kabul in which more than 4,500 British and native Indian soldiers and 12,000 camp followers were killed. Their policy thereafter was to utilise local levies and, after the first Anglo-Sikh war, the Sikh army was led by British officers to areas including Multan and Hazara to maintain order. The British knew all too well the mutual fear and resentment that existed between Sikhs and Pathan tribes because of their past.

Sikh soldiers were well-respected by the British, who had seen their spirit and courage at first hand in the hard-fought Punjab and Sutlej campaigns. However, while

British respect was not immediately reciprocated, soon large numbers of Sikhs began to accept the new status quo. One explanation for this turnaround is the effect of the *sau sakhis* ("100 stories"), apocryphal predictions of Guru Gobind Singh which were circulating around this time, some of them outlining potential benefits to the Sikhs in British rule. While the origins of these disputed tales are unclear, the effect they had is all too apparent.

The significance of the allied Sikh units' importance in checking the Pathan tribes can be seen in 1851, with the transition of the Trans-frontier Brigade into the more structured Punjab Irregular Force (PIF). The Piffers, as they became known, came under the control of the British chief magistrate of Punjab and was rather a means of policing the frontier than a regular army unit. Meanwhile in India an event would soon take place which would establish real trust and respect between Britain and the Sikhs.

In 1857 trouble flared when native units within the Bengal Army mutinied; of the 148 major infantry and cavalry units only 55 remained loyal while others were disarmed or disbanded because they were likely to mutiny. In the Punjab, the 11 infantry battalions and all six cavalry regiments, including all Sikh ones, remained loyal. The mutiny would have a dramatic effect on the administration of British India, with the East India Company being nationalised and all its possessions transferred to the Crown. The Indian Army was reorganised, with those units that remained loyal being rewarded and those that had mutinied disbanded and the gaps filled by regiments being raised from the north - particularly the Punjab.

During the British debate about the causes of the mutiny, a theory developed about the so-called "martial races" of India and why certain classes had not remained loyal. For example, the Bengal Army that had mutinied had comprised mainly high-caste Brahmins from the plains. They had issues over dietary needs and would not serve alongside men of lower castes. The Gurkhas and Sikhs, who had none of these social issues, were seen as



An Afghani sepoy and Sikh Subedar of the 24th Punjabis on the North West Frontier (NAM).

A.C. LOVETT



Remains of Saragarhi outpost, 1897 (BL).

naturally strong and brave; born warriors, better inclined to accept the harsh realities of war. Accordingly the Punjab became the centre of British recruitment, with the new Indian army comprising not just the Sikhs but the other tribes that were to be found in the land of five rivers – Hindu Dogras and Jatts and Punjabi Muslims.

On the frontier in September 1865, the Piffers were re-organised. Reflecting the professional soldiery now being developed in of the Punjab, the Punjab Frontier Force consisted of the 1st, 2nd (Hill), 3rd and 4th Regiment of Sikh Infantry, alongside four cavalry and five infantry units representing the various castes and religions in the Punjab. These policed the frontier and their presence ensured a swift response was dealt to any Pathan uprising or aggression. But it was no longer just the Afghans who were the enemy

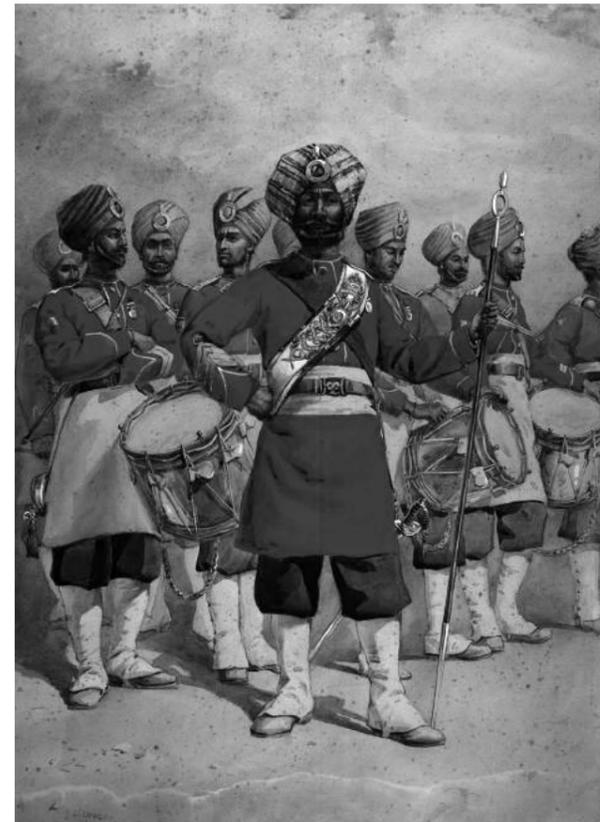
The so-called “Great Game” saw Britain and Russia vying for control over the Khyber area, the access route to India. Russian overtures to the Emir of Afghanistan led to the Second Anglo-Afghan war in 1878. Forty thousand British and Indian troops marched on Kabul. These included a large number of Sikhs either in class regiments or class company regiments. The former included: 14th King George’s Own Ferozepore Sikhs, 15th Ludhiana Sikhs, 23rd Sikh Pioneers, 45th Rattray’s Sikhs, 51st Sikhs (Frontier Force). The class company regiments included cavalry such as 11th Probyn’s Horse and 21st Daly’s Horse; and infantry units such as 20th Brownlow’s Punjabis (and six other Punjabi regiments) and 55th Coke’s Rifles. Such regiments were awarded

the battle honour of fighting in Afghanistan from 1878.

The war ended with the Emir relinquishing Afghan foreign policy to Britain and, amid other agreements, a representative being placed in Kabul. The following period saw some semblance of stability in Afghanistan but the British presence and the drawing of boundaries led to ongoing disquiet. Mullah’s would rally for a jihad against the British and periodically tribesmen would rally together to attack forts and outposts. The British response was to raze villages and place soldiers in strategically-built outposts, such as on the Samana, overlooking the Tirah homeland.

In 1887, seeing the continuing need to fight on the frontier, the British raised two new regiments of Sikhs specifically for this purpose - the 35th and 36th Sikhs, which not only saw service against Pathan tribesmen but would go on to create a long-lasting legacy of Sikh gallantry. The 35th Sikhs fought (and earned a battle honour) at Malakand during a Pathan uprising in July 1897, where a young Winston Churchill saw action alongside them. The 36th Sikhs were sent to the Samana that same year to control movement around the mountainous area and provide security against marauding tribesmen. The main forts of Gulistan and Lockhart were out of sight of each other. Between them stood a small communication post of stone and mud which relayed flashing messages between the forts. This post was named Saragarhi

In September 1897, tens of thousands of Orakzai and Afridi tribes gathered to attack the posts. Descending upon the Samana Suk they spent a fortnight searching



45th Rattray’s Sikhs in 1908 (NAM).

for weaknesses in the better equipped defenders. The tribesmen saw that the communications post of Saragarhi, manned by 21 Sikhs, was the key to the troop manoeuvres around the range, and lay siege to it. Lt Colonel John Haughton who commanded the 36th at Lockhart could see from his position at least fourteen Afghan battle standards and deduced that the tribes numbered around ten to twelve-thousand. At Saragarhi, Havildar Ishar Singh resolved that their only choice was to try and defend Saragarhi and wait for reinforcements to arrive.

The Afghan tribes rushed the post but were beaten back by gunfire. Two diggers remained behind and at a dead-point unbeknown to the defenders began to work on a section of wall. The Sikhs defended Saragarhi for six hours before a section of wall collapsed, and the Pathans rushed in. The Sikhs defended the breach in hand-to-hand combat but it was too late and they were slaughtered. While Saragarhi was a defeat, the fighting continued on in the defence of Gulistan where many brave and heroic deeds also took place. It led to the 36th being awarded a battle honour for their bravery on the Samana – and later in Tirah during the punitive expedition against the tribes who had risen up. Those 21 killed at Saragarhi were posthumously awarded the Indian Order of Merit.

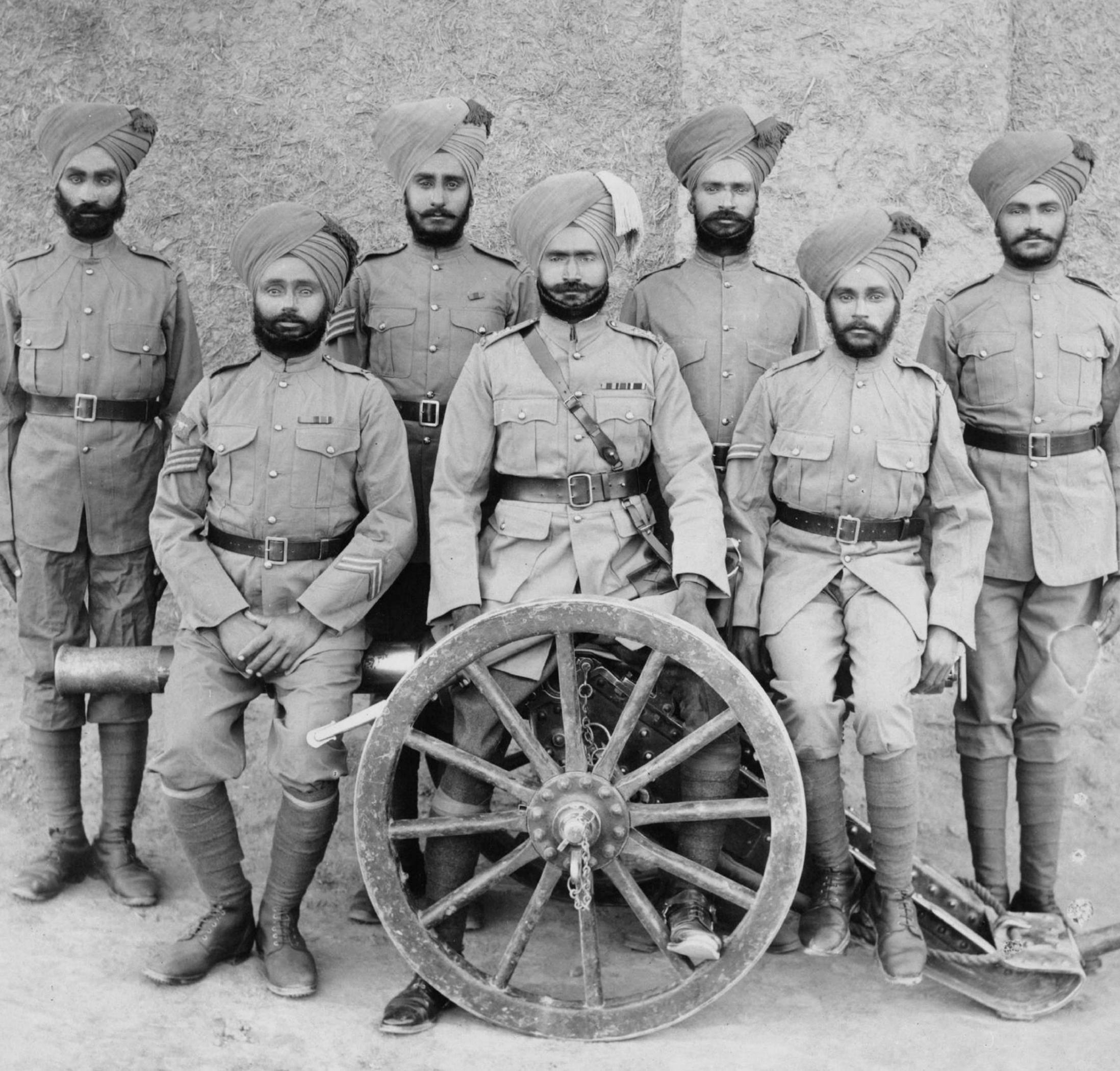
These Sikhs were brave beyond doubt but also true to their Guru in seeking to die fighting for justice and righteousness. The British saw immediately how this remarkable spirit could inspire many more Sikhs and set about ensuring the tale was remembered with a memorial Gurdwara built in their memory at Amritsar and at Ferozepore.

It was on the frontier that the Sikhs went from being feared foes to trusted friends of the British, it was where they cemented their reputation as courageous and hardworking soldiers; and where such heroic episodes as Saragarhi set a benchmark of how a Sikh acts on the battlefield – without fear and with selfless commitment to a just cause. So when the call to war came in 1914 the Sikhs were ready to do their duty – in doing so they would spread their name and heroism worldwide.

J. Singh-Sohal is a communications expert, writer and filmmaker who has extensively researched Anglo-Sikh history. His books include “Saragarhi: The Forgotten Battle.”







Introduction To WW1

In June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was assassinated by a Serbian Nationalist. This single act cut through the complex web of strategic alliances that had kept peace in Europe by ensuring no single nation could come to dominate the continent. Austro-Hungary retaliated in late July 1914 by invading Serbia. Their German allies invaded France, Belgium and Luxembourg – and in response their allies entered the fray. Germany's secret pact with the Ottoman Empire would soon create a world conflict as the crisis spread into the Middle East and North Africa.

Battle lines were now drawn between the Central Powers and the Allies. Great Britain was one of the Allied nations and entered on the side of those being attacked. Treaty obligations ensured Britain could not avoid a call to aid. The Allies had to act to stop the swift German advance through France and Belgium to the crucial Cinque Ports. The British Army was in good shape in 1914 due to reorganisation under Viscount Haldane, but more men would be needed quickly. By calling up regular reservists, one cavalry and six infantry divisions could be put into the field straight away, although they were not all deployed. Behind them were 14 mounted brigades and 14 first line infantry divisions of the Territorial Force. But Britain was not an isolated island, it was a global power, and now looked to its territories in undivided India to provide troops for a global fight.

Much has been said and written about the Great War, but surprisingly little about the bravery and heroism of those Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims who volunteered to fight thousands of miles away from their homes. These men made up the regiments mustered into various Indian Expeditionary Forces and sent to the Western Front, to Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), East Africa, Egypt and Palestine. They fought in China, at Gallipoli, and in overlooked battles such as in Transcaspia and Persia. They defended India's borders on the North West Frontier and put down rebellions in East Libya and Somaliland. They acted in Britain's interests and fought against tyranny and oppression.



August 1915 - soldiers of the 15th Sikhs billeted in France (IWM).



July 1918 - Maharaja of Patiala Bhupinder Singh inspecting a 12 inch howitzer near Borre (IWM).

The Western Front

GORDON CORRIGAN

It was said at the time, and has been said many times since, that the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that crossed to France and Belgium after the British declaration of war on Germany on 4 August 1914 was the best led, the best trained and the best equipped body of troops ever to leave these shores. That is probably correct, but it was pitifully small: four British infantry divisions compared to sixty-two French ones, one British cavalry division to ten French ones. Even the Belgians and the Serbs provided more than that, and if Britain was to have any significant influence on the war on land the BEF would have to be reinforced and expanded hugely, but where was that reinforcement to come from?

In due course the Territorial Force (later the Territorial Army, now the Army Reserve) would be available, but not all its members had yet signed for overseas service, and much of its equipment was out of date. The dominions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand would make a major contribution in time, but when war broke out their armies were tiny and they would need time to raise, train and equip contingents for war. In 1914 the only other source of trained manpower was the Indian Army, a regular all-volunteer force of about 200,000 men. Before the war successive Secretaries for India in the British government had told the Indian government that if war broke out in Europe the Indian Army would not be involved. This was a budgetary decision, if the Indian Army was to be prepared for an intensive war against a first class enemy then it would have to be equipped as for the British Army. While the equipment used by the Indian Army was perfectly adequate for punitive expeditions on the frontier and actions in India's near abroad, it only had mountain artillery and its infantry was equipped with the Mark II Enfield rifle, whereas the British had the Mark III. Neither government was prepared to spend the money to prepare the Indian Army for a war that might not happen.

Fortunately the Indian Army knew very well that if war came they would inevitably be involved, and units were earmarked for overseas deployment with movement

orders and plans already prepared. Sure enough, the British government's stance was swiftly reversed. Shortly after war broke out the Poona Division (containing four regiments with Sikhs) was sent to the Persian Gulf to protect the British-owned oil fields; and on 6 and 7 August two more infantry divisions, the Lahore and the Meerut, plus the Secunderabad cavalry brigade; were ordered to mobilise for overseas service. The Lahore Division included the 34th Sikh Pioneers, as well as nine other regiments containing companies or squadrons of Sikhs. The Meerut Division contained the 30th Punjabis, as well as five other regiments with Sikhs in them. The Secunderabad brigade contained the 20th Deccan Horse which included one squadron of Sikhs.

For security reasons only the commanders were told where that overseas service was to be, although most could guess that it would be Europe. The various battalions and regiments were moved by train from their peacetime stations to the embarkation ports, Karachi and Bombay. As no army has a permanent fleet of troop transporters which may only be required very rarely, movement was by what the army, in its long lexicon of acronyms, calls STUFT – shipping taken up from trade – where civilian ships were hired and then modified to take troops, horses, mules and all the equipment needed for war. At this stage the field and heavy artillery came from British units, although this would change during the course of the war.

The Indian Army of 1914 (and indeed of today, come to that) was in no sense representative of the Indian population, for the British recruited from what were known as the Martial Classes, those races that had traditionally been soldiers and had proved themselves over many decades and many campaigns. About a third of the Indian army was recruited from the Punjab: Sikhs, Hindu Jats and Punjabi Mussalmans, with most of the rest from the north: Gurkhas, Garhwalis, Pathans and Rajputs, and Mahrattas from Central India. It is of course politically incorrect in these days of multi culture and diversity to suggest that any one race is better at

anything than any other, but common sense might indicate that if one were required to attack a well led, well equipped and very fierce enemy, one might prefer to do it with a dozen Sikhs rather than with a hundred members of certain other nationalities (although if one were opening a restaurant one might come to a different conclusion). And if that makes this author a racist, then he pleads guilty.

The Indian Infantry was composed of “Class Regiments” and “Class Company Regiments”. A class regiment had all its members of the same race – all Sikhs, all Gurkhas etc; while in a class company regiment each company might be of a different race – for example 57th Wilde’s Rifles had a single company of Sikhs, Dogras, Pathans and Punjabi Mussalmans. Many were the arguments as to which type of regiment was better. In some ways the administration of a class regiment was simpler because only one language was spoken and all ate the same food, but a class company regiment allowed the talents of several races to be utilised, and there was always somebody to do guards and fatigues on a religious holiday. Of the twenty Indian infantry and pioneer battalions that went to the Western Front in 1914 thirteen were from class regiments and seven were class company battalions. Of the four cavalry regiments all were mixed except for the Jodhpur Lancers (made up of Rajputs). The Sappers and Miners (equivalent to the Royal Engineers) were all mixed units. The truth is that both types were equally capable, and the system worked.

There were two sorts of commissioned officer in the Indian Army. The middle management of platoon commanders and company seconds-in-command, Jemadars and Subedars who held their commissions from the Viceroy and were known as Viceroy Commissioned Officers (VCOs), were men who had joined as the equivalent of privates and had worked their way up through the ranks of Lance Naik (lance corporal), Naik (corporal), and Havildar (sergeant). These were highly experienced men with long service, and while uneducated academically were possessed of plenty of sound common sense. The senior management in a battalion or regiment of 720 men consisted of eleven British officers who held their commissions from the King, and filled the appointments of commanding officer (lieutenant colonel), adjutant (lieutenant or captain), quartermaster (lieutenant or second lieutenant), four company commanders (captains or majors) and four ‘company officers’ (lieutenants or second lieutenants) who were there to learn their trade and assist the company commander. In addition there was a medical officer from the Indian Medical Service.

To obtain a commission in the Indian Army a British applicant had to pass out in the top thirty from the Royal Military College Sandhurst, after which he spent his first

year as an officer attached to a British regiment stationed in India, during which time he had to learn Urdu and pass the examination in that language. Urdu was the lingua franca of the Indian Army: all pamphlets and official communications were printed in Urdu and potential VCOs had to be able to speak it. Having passed the Urdu examination the young officer then had to study the language of the regiment to which he was going: Punjabi, Gurkhali, Mahratta etc and pass an examination in that too. Only then could he report for duty to his regiment, where he was expected to learn about the culture and religion of his men, and while on leave to trek around the areas from where they came.

Having sailed from Bombay and Karachi under escort from the Royal Navy, the convoy passed through the Suez canal into the Mediterranean and on 26 September the first ships arrived at Marseilles and the troops began to disembark. The original plan had been to concentrate the Indians at Orleans and to give them two months to get accustomed to Europe, to zero their new Mark III rifles issued to them on arrival and to change their battalion organisation from eight small companies to the British model of four large ones. It was not to be, for the First Battle of Ypres was raging and reinforcements were desperately needed. In August the BEF had taken station at Mons in Belgium, on the left of the French, and when the Germans launched a major attack the British, with the French, fell back to the River Marne, when a gap opened up between two German Armies. General Joffre, commanding the French army with the BEF in support, saw an opportunity and went on the offensive, pushing the Germans back to the River Aisne. Now began what came to be called “the race to the sea” when both sides attempted to outflank each other by shifting farther and farther north, until the Allies won the race by getting to the Channel coast at Nieuport. Now the war changed to what was effectively siege warfare, with both sides digging in and creating even more complex trench systems. The Germans were desperate to break through at Ypres, held by the BEF, to get to the Channel ports. By October the British had suffered heavy casualties and were hanging on grimly around the Ypres salient, but there were huge gaps in the line which the British could not fill. The Indians were thrust into the line as soon as they arrived, and they came just in time and in just sufficient numbers to fill those gaps, and the Germans never did break through. It was said at the time that the Indian Army had saved the Empire, and while that is probably an exaggeration, they had certainly saved the BEF.

Of the Indian infantry on the Western Front the largest racial group was the Gurkhas, with twenty-four companies, all in class regiments, followed by the Sikhs with twenty-one companies in both class and class



A woman pins flowers on a Sikh during a march past in France (IWM).

company regiments. Others represented were Punjabi Mussalmans, Pathans, Garhwalis, Dogras, Rajputs, Jats and one company of Brahmins (rare due to caste restrictions on what they could eat and who they could mix with). Despite the mixture of race and religion and different dietary requirements, the administration worked surprisingly well. All ate rice, which was grown in southern France, and while Hindus did not eat beef nor Moslems pork, all could eat goat, sheep and chickens, which the procurement organisation could obtain locally; and anything else, such as atta to make chapattis, could be imported from India.

Having saved the day at Ypres, despite being thrown in by companies and platoons scattered all along the line, the Indian Corps was now allotted a sector of its own and of the thirty-five miles of front held by the BEF in late 1914 and 1915, eight miles, or almost a quarter, was held by the Indian Corps. They took part in all the major battles of late 1914 and 1915, their greatest moment being the capture of Neuve Chapelle, the first time the German line had been broken and the gains held. There was much nonsense talked about Indian troops on the Western Front, one being that “they could not stand the cold”. Apart from the fact that many Indian units arrived in Europe in tropical uniforms, which took time to replace with warm serge, these soldiers came from the Himalayan foothills, hilly Garhwal or the Punjab,

which in winter could be a lot colder than Europe. This canard arose from the fact that the sick rate in the Indian Corps was much higher than that of the BEF as a whole. Investigation revealed that this figure was escalated by the sick rate of the British battalions in the Indian Corps (one battalion in each four-battalion brigade) which had been in India for up to seven years and had failed to re-acclimatise to the cold and wet. The sick rate in the Indian battalions was actually slightly less than that of the rest of the BEF.

By November 1915 Territorial Force, New Army and Canadian divisions were arriving on the Western Front and the infantry of the Indian Corps was transferred to Mesopotamia where British units were having problems with the climate and the terrain. Staying behind was the Indian cavalry, now expanded to two divisions, who would remain in Europe until 1918 when Allenby, in Palestine, needed more cavalry. The artillery units, now increasingly Indian rather than British, were formed into the Indian Artillery Group and remained on the Western Front until the end of the war.

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Tsingtao And China

PROF. ROBERT BICKERS



Captain Martin alongside Sikh officers with a captured machine gun at Tsingtao, China (IWM)

The siege and capture of the German colony of Jiaozhou and the city of Qingdao (Tsingtao) at the heart of it, was the only battle of the First World War that was fought in East Asia. In 1914 the Republic of China was still neutral, and it did not join the war on the allied side until 1917, but between September and November some 30,000 troops came to be involved in this battle on the republic's soil in which both sides ignored Chinese sovereignty. Amongst those fighting were two companies soldiers of the 36th Sikhs, who lost two men killed during the assault on the city. The half-battalion had been shipped down with the South Wales Borderers from Tianjin, where they were on garrison duty as part of a mostly token British contribution to the Japanese force arrayed against the German colony.

Sikhs had fought under the British flag in China before, and would do so again. There was never a period of British military operations in China that was not substantially dominated by units despatched from India, within which Sikh soldiers were always to the fore. India served as the source of British military power throughout its Asian empire, and around the Indian Ocean arena. In 1840-42, 1858-60, and in 1900, British Indian forces were involved in the three military campaigns against the Qing rulers of China, taking Canton, fighting on the Yangzi, and marching twice to the capital Peking. After 1900 a permanent garrison was established at Tianjin. In 1891 an entirely Indian unit had been established in China, the Hong Kong Regiment. Recruited from North West Frontier districts and European-officered, it garrisoned Hong Kong and provided a further resource to be drawn on in case of China emergencies. Described as a 'swagger' regiment, the men were relatively well-paid, and they marched in London on Queen Victoria's jubilee, and at King Edward VII's coronation. The Hong Kong Regiment saw action in the 1898 in the 'Six-day war' - the 'pacification' by the British colonial authorities, of the recently-transferred Kowloon New Territories -- and in 1900 in the North China campaign. Garrisoned at Tianjin until late 1901 the Hong Kong Regiment was then

transferred to India and disbanded, although many of the men joined other units. Its disbandment was ordered not because it was superfluous or problematic, but because it was replaced in Hong Kong by a permanent garrison of three regiments of the regular Indian Army.

It was from the Tianjin garrison, however, that the British contingent for Tsingtao was drawn, a thousand men of the South Wales Borderers sailing south first on 19th September 1914, followed by the five hundred men of the 36th Sikhs. After landing on the 22 October, the 36th moved forward and entered the front lines on 28th October. The weather had been atrociously wet, and conditions were difficult. Operationally, relations between the British and Japanese forces proved fractious, and press comment in Japan later proved quite critical. The Japanese commander placed the British just to the right of centre of his forces, which had been transported by sea and landed to the rear of the massive ocean-facing German guns. In the course of the next week of fighting the regiment lost Lance-Naik No. 2819 Bishan Singh, and Sepoy No. 2806 Udham Singh, while another fourteen officers and men were wounded. Ten non-commissioned officers and men of the South Wales Borderers were killed. The Sikh casualties were taken during a German artillery assault on the night of 4th November, and several were wounded on the following day -- when most of the Borderers were killed -- as the British forces were slowly pushing forward towards the line of concrete redoubts that defended the colony. The defenders surrendered on the morning of 7th November just before an all out assault was due to start. British forces were able to march into the city, following the Japanese. The British contribution to the battle was a political gesture, albeit one costing a dozen British army lives, and it did not prevent the Japanese staking a claim to occupy Qingdao permanently thereafter. They were only dislodged in 1922.

In peacetime too, the British presence in China substantially relied on Sikh security personnel, and not just those in the army garrisons. From 1884 onwards,

Sikhs were recruited into the Shanghai Municipal Police; the force raised by the British dominated Municipal Council of the International Settlement at Shanghai. Their numbers would peak at 691 men in service in 1930, with some 2,789 individuals joining this force alone between 1884, when a first complement of 16 was drafted in from the Hong Kong Police Force, until 1942, after which records cease. Sikh policemen would also be recruited to the British Concessions in the city of Tianjin, and Hankou (Wuhan), at Zhenjiang on the Yangzi River, and to the International Settlement established on the island of Gulangyu (Kulangsu) in the harbour of the port of Xiamen. Several thousand more worked as watchmen across China. They were recruited into the police forces of the concessions of other nations, but mostly worked in private security roles. Kin and native place networks brought many others along through chains of migration, as family members reported opportunities back to India, and encouraged others to join them. Thousands of Lascars – Indian sailors -- stepped on to Chinese shores from their ships. And they did not work for the British alone. They worked for local Chinese authorities, the Maritime Customs Service, and for the French concession at Shanghai. Fifty worked for the German concession at Hankou in 1914. It was reported that ‘Hundreds’ of Sikhs came to work in Russian employment at Port Arthur (Dalian) and in Manchuria by 1914.

Although many men had long careers in the police force at Shanghai (for example, Sardar Sahib Veryam Singh had served for 25 years by 1922), perhaps most had less settled careers, as shown in some indicative biographies extracted from intelligence records after the Second World War. Katar Singh, born 1905, served for five years in the Indian army, travelled to Shanghai four years later via Singapore and Bangkok; was employed as a private gate guard, then worked in a Japanese steel mill. For four years he worked as a door guard at the Customs building, and then joined the Shanghai Municipal Police Reserve Unit (its riot squad). Gurbakh Singh, a farmer, travelled to Shanghai aged 23, worked as a prison warder for seven years, then as a Chinese Maritime Customs Service door guard. Hardit Singh served in the Indian army in the First World War and was discharged in 1919. Five years later he travelled to Shanghai, worked at the Horse Bazaar until 1930, then spent three years in India before returning, and worked as a watchman at the Palace Hotel for seven years, then in the Customs Service for two. Ganthoor Singh arrived in Peking in 1925 as a salesman for an Indian merchant. From 1930 he worked for six years in Hankou as a watchman at a Japanese ice factory. After three years in India he worked as a private watchman at a Chinese warehouse in Shanghai, then as a police watchman at the General Hospital, and then in Nanjing as a watchman at a flourmill for two years,

before returning to Shanghai and similar work there. These men were generally highly mobile, moving back and forth from India, and around treaty port China, and they worked for employers of all nationalities.

Increasingly, as Sikhs moved, they were watched, and they routinely provided the agents of the British state in China with a good part of their daily work. The British relied on Indians in different types of military and security organisations, but the politics of British India, and different nationalist and revolutionary movements also travelled with the Sikhs who served. The men of the Shanghai Municipal Police were ready to stand up for their rights as employees, if they felt that these had been infringed, and there was more than once instance of labour unrest. These could be closely connected to trends in migration, such as in 1906 when men attempted to leave the force to move to seek better pay and opportunities in Canada. But the biggest concern of the British was the growth of revolutionary politics, and connections between Sikhs in Shanghai and the Ghadar Party, and later communist activities aimed at suborning Sikh troops. British Government of India intelligence agents worked closely with the Special Branch of the Shanghai Municipal Police on surveillance of the community in the city, and passport and other regulations were tightened up in the 1930s in a bid to control movement of Indians to and from the city. During the Pacific War the Japanese seized full control of Shanghai, and largely took control of Indian National Army and Indian Independence League organisations in the city.

The position of the Indian population in occupied China during the war grew perilous: the wartime economy proved fragile, and many in the police lost their posts. Destitution was not uncommon. After the end of the conflict, the British organised the repatriation of large numbers. A third of the community left on a 29th November 1945 transport to Madras, more followed the following week. We should remember that although this was a sojourner population of men working for security organs, some of them managed to bring wives out to China, or married locally, had children, ran businesses, and attended Gurdwaras in Shanghai or Tianjin. Indians formed the fourth-largest foreign community in Shanghai in 1935, with a census showing 1,655 men, 325 women, and 361 children. There were roughly equal numbers of watchmen and police employees. Remittances were sent home to Punjab, where Chinese earnings built houses or secured land; army pensions were received in Shanghai. They had made their own decisions to join the military, or police, or make their way to China. Economic circumstance certainly narrowed their options, but as the biographical sketches show, many of these men moved from job to job, and city to city, as opportunities arose.



October 1914 - the 36th Sikhs landing at Tsingtao during the China operation (IWM).

The British have certainly been neglectful in the past of their debt to the Sikh personnel who fought with them in China, or policed the streets of Shanghai, or the island of Gulangyu. A privately-organised memorial was unveiled at Qingdao on 11 November 1924 in the British Military Cemetery that had been laid out at the site of the British field hospital during the siege. An ‘impressive’ ceremony was held around the ‘handsome granite shaft’ that was erected, the British Bishop of Shantung officiated, and the British and Japanese Consul-Generals spoke. But no mention seems to have been made during the ceremony of Lance-Naik Bishan Singh, or Sepoy Udham Singh, and no indication appears to have been made, then, or in later accounts of the British Military Cemetery, that they too had died during the battle. That defect was corrected at the Sai Wan (China) Memorial, established in 1972 in Hong Kong to replace the British war graves in China that were by then largely inaccessible. Bishan Singh and Udham Singh are now commemorated there, alongside those who fell with them.

Shanghai’s Sikh history, however, is better known and remembered. Almost the first sight that greets your eyes as you enter the large Shanghai History Museum that is installed at the bottom of the prominent river-side Orient Pearl TV Tower, is a life-size waxwork model

of a Sikh member of the Shanghai Municipal Police. The city’s folk memory has kept a place, too, albeit an ambivalent one at times, for the hundreds of Sikh men who along with others from British-controlled India, lived and worked in their city until the early 1950s. Sikh recruitment was greatly accelerated after 1905, when the Britons on the Municipal Council, worried about steadily rising Chinese nationalism, attempted to replace all their Chinese policemen with Indians. Although the proposal was rejected by British diplomats, recruitment was doubled, and the men were trained as a first line of military defence of the settlement against attack. By the 1920s, however, the Sikh Branch had become the mainstay of the traffic policing of the settlement. Sikhs became a fixture of Shanghai’s urban life, and it is rare to find a photograph of Shanghai’s busy, crowded, streets which does not have somewhere in view a member of the Indian branch. In this manner, Shanghainese people came everyday to encounter the Sikh police, as they still do in the museum of Shanghai’s history.

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Indian troops marching through New Street in Baghdad (IWM).



Men of the 45th Sikhs at a tug-of-war (IWM).

Mesopotamia

DR PAUL KNIGHT

Mesopotamia, which is Iraq today, is the greatest sideshow of the First World War. It grew to about 400,000 men strong with two Army Corps, a cavalry division, three squadrons of aircraft and a huge fleet of gunboats and supply ships. Most of the infantry and cavalry came from Indian, not Britain.

Mesopotamia in 1914 was actually three provinces of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire – Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Britain had been friends with the Ottomans for over a century and feared Russian expansion into the Mediterranean Sea or in Central Asia towards India. Britain also feared regional instability in the Middle East if the Ottoman Empire broke up.

The campaign makes more sense if you look at it from an Indian rather than a British perspective. Royal Navy, the Royal Indian Marine and diplomats answering to Delhi not London were active in the Persian Gulf, stamping out piracy, gun running and slavery. Oil had been discovered in Persia (Iran) and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (BP today) built a refinery on Abadan Island, in the Shatt-al-Arab between modern-day Iraq and Iran. The Royal Navy was interested in this oil supply because it meant its ships could be converted from coal to oil, which was a more efficient fuel supply.

When the First World War broke out, there was a lot of interest in whether the Ottoman Empire would join the Germans or remain neutral. As a precaution, plans were made to protect the Abadan oil facilities. When the Indian Corps left for Europe, Brigadier-General Delamain commanding 16th Indian Infantry Brigade, received secret instructions only to be opened when at sea. He was to take his brigade into the Persian Gulf and await diplomatic developments: if the Ottomans remained neutral, he was to land in Persia and guard the oil facilities; if the Ottomans declared war, he was to capture Basra to protect the oil.

The 16th Brigade was a microcosm of the Raj and the 'Army in India'. It contained one British battalion (2nd Battalion, The Dorset Regiment) and three Indian regiments: 20th Duke of Cambridge's Own (Brownlow's

Punjabis), 104th Wellesley's Rifles and 117th Mahrattas. The 20th Punjabis contained soldiers who were Pathans and Dogras, as well as Sikhs. There were also mountain artillery units, engineers, signals, medics and mules for the supply train.

The Ottoman Empire declared war on the British Empire and on 6th November 1914, 16th Brigade landed on the al-Fao Peninsular and defeated the defenders in a fort there. They advanced up the Shatt-al-Arab and were joined by the rest of 6th (Poona) Division which included more regiments of Punjabis, Mooltans, Rajputs; together with battalions from the Norfolk Regiment and the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. They fought another battle south of Basra, and then entered the abandoned city.

They had completed their task relatively easily. Over the winter, they were reinforced by a new division from India, the 12th, and set about strengthening their positions. When defending a position, it should always be held in depth. From Basra (which was very crowded with the influx of the soldiers and sailors), a camp was built at Shaiba to the west. Shaiba would become RAF Shaiba until the 1950s, and after 2003, it became Shaiba Logistics Base, and home to thousands of British troops in Iraq again. They also captured Qurna, a town where the River Euphrates and Tigris meet, and traditionally the site of the Garden of Eden. They also marched into neutral Persia to find a German agent, Wilhelm Wassmuss, stirring up anti-British sentiment in the Gulf and helping German agents reach Afghanistan to encourage a jihad across the North West Frontier into India. This did not happen, but hundreds of thousands of British, Indian and even Russia troops were kept in Mesopotamia, eastern Persia and on the North West Frontier just in case. While they were there, they could not be fighting in France, which is precisely what the Germans wanted.

In 1915, there was stalemate on the Western Front and Mesopotamia was the only theatre where any sort of victory could be achieved. So, what became known as 'Townsend's Regatta', named after the commander



Men of the 45th Sikhs on their way to a Divaan with their Holy Scriptures (IWM).



A Sikh waves a fly-whisk over the Holy Scriptures at a Divaan in the desert (IWM).

of 6th Division, launched an audacious amphibious attack against Ottoman positions north of Qurna, and then advanced 85 miles by river (hence 'Regatta' for all of his boats) in three days to capture Al-Amara and 2,500 Ottoman soldiers, all for about 30 casualties. It is probably the most impressive action in the whole of the war.

12th Division then attacked along the Euphrates in a very difficult campaign which reached Nasariya. Townsend's offensive on the Tigris resumed with a series of very successful battles all the way to Ctesiphon, about 16 miles from Baghdad. Although the battle was a victory, Townsend's exhausted and under strength force could not hold their positions and started to retire back down the Tigris, eventually reaching Kut. Ctesiphon is one of many 'near misses' of 1915 – had Baghdad been captured then it would have been the greatest military achievement of the year and the credit would have gone to the Indians of 6th (Poona) Division. Unfortunately, Baghdad did not fall, and the Siege of Kut would become a by-word for military disaster.

Townsend's exhausted army halted at Kut and prepared for a siege over the winter of 1915 – 1916. He had been promised that a relief force was on its way, and the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Division were on their way from France. The 47th Sikhs were part of 3rd Division, as were the 34th Sikh Pioneers. In 7th Division, the 2nd Leicesters, 31st and 53rd Sikhs fought side by side. Also arriving in Mesopotamia was 14th Division direct from India with the 36th and 45th Sikhs.

What happened over the winter of 1915-16 was, I would argue, the worst part of the First World War anywhere. It was here that the Sikhs, who were either veterans of the Western Front, or new regiments from India, had to fight. They were joined by a British division, the 13th, who had been fighting at Gallipoli in 1915. One of their young officers was a former student teacher called Bill Slim, who would command the 14th Army in Burma in the Second World War.

The topography and climate of Mesopotamia created particularly difficult conditions for any soldier or

commander. Mid-summer was incredibly hot, so that there could be no campaigning. Men died of sunstroke, there was very little water, corned beef liquefied in the tin and could be poured out, and flies and other biting insects were a constant source of irritation.

But in the winter, there was too much water. This is the land of the Biblical Great Flood, and today the Iraqi Marshes still cover extensive areas. Mesopotamia is also incredibly flat. This meant that there was nowhere for the flood waters to drain too and, in fact, winter marshes would change location and actually move if the wind direction changed. Soldiers on either side who dug trenches and used marshes to secure one end found the marsh water pouring in and flooding them out. The other end of the trench would be secured against the Tigris, and river water poured in that end. The mud in Mesopotamia is that sticky kind which balls on your feet and makes walking difficult. It also jammed rifles.

It was trench warfare, just like in France, but here the Ottomans knew that any attack must come within a mile or two of the Tigris. The only question was which side of the river? This meant that the Ottomans were able to concentrate their rifles, barbed wire and machine guns, making a successful attack very difficult.

Throughout the winter of 1915-16, the Ottomans besieged Kut but made only one attempt to attack the garrison. Instead, they dug trenches further down the river to halt the relief force and eventually the garrison would be starved into submission. A series of desperate battles were fought as the relief force made its way up the river. Sometimes they were successful and the Ottomans withdrew a mile or two, at other times, the attack was a failure. In either case, there were casualties which could not be replaced.

Kut surrendered on 29th April 1916. It was the longest siege in British military history. It was also the largest surrender at the time. That unfortunate record would be exceeded at Singapore in 1942.

The surrender allowed all the soldiers to rest and recover. Summer was coming, and so there was no campaigning for months to come. A new commander

was appointed, General Maude, who set about building up his army, which required adequate logistical support. The river navigation was improved and more steamers arrived. Bunds were built to control the flood and roads built on top of them. Railways were built using tracks from India and stone from Arabia as there was no local stone. Ford lorries and ambulances were imported from America. They used petrol from Persia which reduced the demand for horses – all of the fodder for animals had to be imported from India because there were none in Mesopotamia. But while this was going on, there was little space for food in the front lines, so everyone was on half rations. The army attempted to meet all the dietary requirements of the different races, religions and castes of the soldiers, which complicated the supply chain. The lack of fresh fruit and vegetables meant that soldiers suffered from avoidable diseases like scurvy.

In the autumn, when the weather became cooler, Maude was ready to launch his attack. The infantry casualties had been replaced, the commanders had good maps, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the artillery had perfected destroying the Ottoman artillery. Maude attacked up the right bank of the Tigris until he was north of Kut. He then prepared to cross the Tigris at the same time that he launched another attack on the left bank, and nearly captured that half of the Ottoman army. Maude advanced again. He was held up on the Diyala river for a few days, but that was crossed and Baghdad fell on 11th March 1917 in what was the most peaceful capture of the city ever.

The capture of Baghdad meant that British and Russian forces joined up, so the route to Afghanistan was blocked and no more German agents could promote jihad. But the fighting was not over. The river systems radiated out from Baghdad. The Euphrates went west to Syria, the Tigris north through Kurdistan to Turkey and the Diyala went east towards Persia. There was not enough logistical support to advance on all three fronts at once.

Rather than go through every little battle in detail, the Battle of Ramadi sums up for me the advances made in Mesopotamia, and all these made fighting for the Sikh soldier easier. The first attempt to take the town failed due to sunstroke and heat exhaustion of the attacking troops. The second was a great success. The RFC photographed the town and produced accurate maps all in one day. The cavalry rode round the south of the town and took up positions to the west with aircraft to keep in touch. The infantry marched through the desert with Ford lorries bringing drinking water to keep them going. When they attacked, surprise was complete, and the Ottomans tried to escape to the west where the cavalry captured them all.

Strategically, the main war effort against the Ottomans changed from Mesopotamia to Palestine and

Syria. Victory in Mesopotamia would never defeat the Ottoman Empire, but victory in Syria would. 3rd and 7th Division were transferred to the Palestinian campaign and their place was taken by two new divisions from India, the 17th and 18th. 17th Division included the 14th Ferozepore Sikhs and the 45th Rattray's Sikhs, and the 18th included the 1/52nd Sikhs.

Their main thrust was north up the Tigris into the mountains of Kurdistan. The Ottomans knew the war was over by this point, but they still put up vigorous defences all the way to Mosul. Hostilities between the British and Ottoman Empires officially ceased on 31 October 1918, but both divisions were fighting at Sharqat in the week up to the 30th.

It is difficult to examine the personal experiences of Indian soldiers in the First World War because, unlike British soldiers, they did not leave memoirs and diaries to record their experiences. We do have accounts from British officers and soldiers in Mesopotamia, and from British officers in Indian regiments. There is even an account by Kermit Roosevelt, son of the American president. From these we can gather some information, but they have to be used with caution. Roosevelt, for example, had to explain to his American readers what a chapatti was, or a kebab, and about wearing shorts.

For a British officer to get promoted, he had to learn the language, religion and culture of the men he commanded, which was fine in peacetime but with casualties on the scale of the First World War, it became very difficult to find new officers with the necessary skills. Only about half of the officers in a unit were British, the rest were Indians.

Similarly, the military authorities were very conscious to meet all of the diverse dietary requirements of the various races and religions, even though this made the logistic supply chain from India via Basra to some obscure depot in the desert on the banks of the Tigris extremely difficult. An extreme example of this occurred during the Siege of Kut in the winter of 1915/16. Authority was obtained from a range of religious and political leaders to absolve the soldiers from eating food which was not religiously 'clean'.

What we do know from the accounts of Mesopotamia by all those who participated, it was a most difficult campaign for all who involved. It is now all but forgotten, consigning their stories and achievements to history.

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Indian troops marching through the North Citadel Gate in Baghdad (IWM).



March 1919 - The Maharaja of Patiala Bhupinder Singh with his Imperial Service Troops in Egypt (IWM).

East Africa

ANNE SAMSON

The history of the Sikhs who served in the East Africa campaign is inextricably linked with that of the total 47,704 Indians from the Asian mainland who saw service in the theatre. Although there were attempts by the authorities to keep the different ethnic and religious groups separate, mainly for dietary purposes, the campaign saw men of all colour and creed fight and die side by side against a common enemy – the Germans and nature.

2,980 Indians are known to have died in the East African campaign, including 110 between 14 November 1918 (when the last battle fought in the theatre) and May 1920 (most likely of the flu pandemic).

Sikhs came to serve in East Africa through five main routes:

Firstly, there were those already resident in British East Africa (Kenya) who joined the East African Railway (EAR) units to protect the Uganda Railway. It does not appear that any lost their lives in the line of duty; however, five EAR men were to succumb to the flu in November 1918.

Similarly, there were Sikhs present in Nyasaland (Malawi) who joined the Nyasaland Volunteer Reserve and helped to protect the southern border with German East Africa.

The third group arrived as part of Indian Expeditionary Force C under the command of Brigadier General Jimmie Stewart in September 1914 and included the four Sikh companies of the 29th Punjabis led by Ernest Collins of the 35th Sikhs, two half-battalions each from Bharatpur, Jind and Kapurthala as part of the Imperial Service Troops, the 27th Mountain Battery, a field battery of the Calcutta Volunteer Artillery, a machine gun battery and ancillary units.

The fourth group arrived as Indian Expeditionary Force B under the command of Major-General Arthur Aitken in early November 1914. This included half-battalion 3 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles, half-battalion 3 Gwalior Rifles (one per cent Sikh) and Faridkot Sappers and Miners.

The final group arrived in the theatre from the Western Front and India as reinforcements for the forces already serving in the theatre. This included 51st Sikhs, 55th Coke's Rifles (Frontier Force) and 57th Wilde's Rifles (Frontier Force).

Between their arrival in September and the planned invasion of German East Africa in November 1914, Indian Expeditionary Force C was involved in protecting the Uganda railway against attack from the German forces. The most famous, or infamous, battle the Indian troops were involved in was that of Tanga. On 3 November, the force under General Stewart launched what was meant to be a simultaneous attack, with Tanga, on Longido and Taveta near Mount Kilimanjaro. However, the force under Aitken disembarked onto the battlefield at Tanga on 4 November after six weeks at sea, many men never having sailed before. During the battle of Tanga which was regarded as a fiasco and for which General Aitken lost his command, a total of 87 Indian troops died. The attacks against Longido and Taveta also failed in their task.

Following Tanga, the forces were placed on the defensive and the War Office took over command from the India Office, the latter remaining in control of supplies and equipment. Although the forces were mainly on the defensive, when it appeared that there was an opportunity to defeat the German forces at little cost, action was permitted. This led to the next battle at Jasin on 18 January 1915 when 39 Jinds and three Kashmiris lost their lives. The British had initially occupied Jasin on Christmas Day 1914 only for the Germans to attempt to regain it on 12 January when they were repulsed. Their second attempt, on the 18th, only succeeded after they had completely encircled the garrison force which surrendered after running out of ammunition on the 19th. The Germans took 135 prisoners.

Elsewhere in the theatre, preparations were being made to launch an attack on the German colony when the time was right. As part of this process, the Faridkot Sappers and Miners were involved in building a railway line and

water pipeline from Voi towards Taveta in preparation. However, the Germans continued to raid the Uganda railway line which led to various encounters between the two sides. At Mbuyuni on 14 July, 26 men of the 29th and 30th Punjabis lost their lives whilst at Mzima Hill; a month later, 15 Kapurthalans died in fighting.

The anticipated reinforcements finally arrived in East Africa from South Africa in early 1916 in time for the battle of Salaita on 12 February 1916. This marked a change in the direction of the war and was significant as the South Africans realised the value of the Indian troops which they had until then disparaged. This time, the Indian troops held their ground whilst the untested South Africans fled the field.

A week later, the South African General Jan Smuts arrived to take command of the theatre. He immediately pushed forward and by mid-March 1916, British East Africa had been cleared of all German forces. All along the line of invasion, various troops were to lose their lives. Eventually in August 1916, the Wami River was reached where a battle was fought on 17 August 1916 in which seven Punjabis died amongst others. This marked the start of almost continuous action as various Indian units containing Sikhs lost men on an almost daily basis until on 11 September; they occupied Mikindani on the south coast with the loss of at least six Indian lives, mainly those of the Frontier Forces.

Of the troops he served with, the author Francis Brett Young noted that: "No Indian Regiment [a Mountain Battery] can show a finer set of men. Sikhs, and picked Sikhs, led by the best gunner officers in India and equipped with all the care that goes to a crack corps." Later, when he realised that his ambulance had been cut off from the main forces, Young reflected that if he was "to be caught in a trap I would as soon be with the Punjabis as any regiment in the country. Most of them were Sikhs, and though many Sikhs have degenerated, becoming lazy and dirty and fond of liquor, they are not men who will lightly surrender, at any rate, to a Mohammedan enemy." What led Brett Young to this negative view is not known, however, what is significant is his recognition of their fighting qualities, particularly at a time when the leading commanders and administrators in East Africa were trying to have Indian forces returned to India for political reasons.

Elsewhere in the German colony, 57th Wilde's Rifles (including one company of Sikhs) fought various battles, including Matomondo in July 1916, and continued in pursuit of the German forces to the Rufiji River. The 40th Pathans were involved in the occupation of Bagamoyo on the northern coast and encountered a German force near Ruvu Station which they routed. This secured the Central Railway for the Allies, but the Germans had destroyed what they could of it. The

Faridkot Sappers and Miners together with units of the Indian Railway Companies worked to repair the bridges whilst the forces continued on their march to Kisangire where another battle, led by the Jinds, was fought on 9 October 1916. In addition to Captain PN Gurdon of 14th King George's Own Ferozepore Sikhs, 16 Jinds died.

From December 1916 to January 1917, Sikh Mountain Gunners were involved in the stalemate battle at Kibata, one of the very few battles in East Africa fought along similar lines to that on the Western Front. The German commander began his move across the Rufiji River.

A change in Commander saw General Reginald Hoskins take over from Smuts who proceeded to London to represent the Union at the Imperial War meetings and announced that the war in East Africa was over except for mopping up operations. Hoskins had a struggle to retain the troops he had and to obtain replacements for those exhausted by disease and malnutrition after two years of fighting.

Indian replacements had started arriving in late 1916 including the Sikh based 22 (Derajat) Mountain Battery Field Force under Major S Perry on 18 December 1916. Over the two years they served in East Africa, the 22nd lost 959 artillery mules, with only 11 from battle actions. The Derajats saw action at Narungombe and Nanyati in 1917 before moving into Portuguese East Africa where they continued to encounter the enemy.

The final two years of the campaign, most of which was fought in Portuguese territory was a foot-slog for the Allies, mainly Black and Indian troops, trying to catch the Germans. It remains an area which requires far more study by scholars, as does the work of the Indian Medical, Supply and other auxiliary services.

Apart from the main East African campaign, Sikhs were involved in the struggle against the Somali Dervishes. In February 1915, Sikh Pioneers participated in the action at Shimer Berris. For their work, two members of the 23rd Sikh Pioneers were awarded the Indian Order of Merit. Following their success, the Sikhs returned to Aden.

Indian forces from the mainland served almost constantly from September 1914 through to the end, many not being relieved for nearly two years. Together with Black and Arab Askaris, Cape Coloured and White South African, White Rhodesian, East African and British soldiers, Black carriers and Chinese labourers, the Indians faced extremes of temperature on variable rations, which often could not be prepared as required due to rain or the instruction not to light fires. The Indian reputation was tarnished by the perceptions prevalent at the time amongst certain British officers and officials who passed judgement based on hearsay, mainly drawn from the Western Front. The poor performance of the forces at



January 1918 - Indian troops near Ndanda after driving the Germans into Portuguese territory. (IWM)

Tanga did not help and was to follow the men for much of the war and subsequently. The battle at Salaita did much to redeem their reputation and prove their worth as soldiers, yet the perception prevails despite recent assessments proving that overall the performance of the men was not to be questioned but rather that of their officers who failed to plan properly and underestimated the enemy they were facing

"I can never say enough about the men" was Alec Kerr's assessment of the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (15 per cent Sikh) with whom he served in East Africa. But perhaps the words of a South African marching song by Cyril Campbell in *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1917 pays the greatest homage to the Sikhs who fought in East Africa. Given the ongoing tensions between the Union of South Africa at the time, the placing of Springbok and Sikh in the same sentence can only be significant.

D'ye ken Jan Smuts when he's after the Hun?
D'ye ken Jan Smuts when he's got 'em on the run?
D'ye ken Jan Smuts when he's out with his gun
And his horse and his men in the morning?
Yes, I ken Jan Smuts and Jourdain too,
Van der V, and the sportsman Selous,
Springbok and Sikh, for they're all true-blue,
When they're strafing the Hun in the morning.

Dr Anne Samson is the author of "World War 1 in Africa: The forgotten conflict of the European powers" (IB Tauris, 2013) and "Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign, 1914-1918: The Union comes of age" (IB Tauris, 2005). She is co-ordinator of the Great War in Africa Association (www.gweaa.com).



Summer 1918 - Indian
Pioneers in Palestine
cleaning undergrowth on
the banks of the Auja to
prevent breeding malaria
mosquito (IWM).



The Holy Lands

PER HAEGGLUND

To protect the strategic and important Suez Canal, Britain mobilised a force in Egypt which repulsed an Ottoman attempt in January 1915. But by the middle of 1916, Indian forces in Egypt were greatly reduced, for service in other theatres of war.

At the battle of Romani in August 1916, a Turkish force consisting of 16,000 was defeated and ended the Ottoman attempt to attack towards the British protectorate of Egypt. The British force now pushed on into Ottoman territory. The battles of Magdhaba and Rafah followed and saw the Turks in disarray. The Sikh gunners of Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Garrison Artillery took part in these battles, and four of their number became the only Indian soldiers ever to be awarded “The Distinguished Conduct Medal” for services in the field.

Attention now turned to invading Palestine itself, but it did not bode well at the first battle of Gaza in 1917 as the corps faced a renewed Turkish counterattack. In April a second battle took place which was also called off after minor gains. These setbacks alarmed London and General Archibald Murray was replaced as commander by General Edmund Allenby. The strong defensive positions were proving a problem but a successful attack on Beersheva enabled the Allenby to finally push back the Turks on the third attempt on Gaza in November.

Jerusalem was next, and as the infantry advanced the 58th Sikhs in particular distinguished themselves, winning gallantry awards in the fighting there and in the capture of the Judean Hills.

Allenby’s final push against the Ottoman Turks in the Sinai Peninsula and into the Holy Lands, saw the number of Indian forces increase – Sikhs formed the backbone of the corps with squadrons in each of the thirteen cavalry regiments as well as infantry units such as 27th, 28th, 29th Punjabis and 47th Sikhs. These and more fought alongside Australian, New Zealand and French troops.

The autumn of 1918 saw the last great cavalry campaign in history as allied forces swept north through

Ottoman Palestine, spearheaded by the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade which consisted of a regiment of lancers from four Indian Princely States including the Sikh state of Patiala.

It was a campaign which culminated in the battle for Haifa on 23rd September, where Indian cavalry displayed outstanding courage and skill in a daring charge on the Turks which brought about the liberation of this great port on the Mediterranean, today Israel’s third largest city. At the time, Haifa was placed under a debilitating sea blockade by the Turks who had also mined the whole bay area.

Following lightning action by the brigade, a decisive moment came as the Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers, armed only with swords and spears daringly attacked the much superiorly placed Turkish army artillery positions on the slopes of Mount Carmel in a dashing and victorious raid. For their bravery during this charge, Dafadar Jor Singh was awarded the Indian Order of Merit; while Captain Anoop Singh and 2nd Lieutenant Sagat Singh were awarded the Military Cross. The battle is still commemorated to this day by the Indian Army on the 23rd September as ‘Haifa Day’.

As the official history of the British war effort and the operations in Egypt and Palestine was later written, it was remarked about the Battle of Haifa that: “No more remarkable cavalry action of its scale was fought in the whole course of the campaign”.

Indeed, some 900 Indian soldiers sacrificed their lives in the campaign to liberate what was then to become the British Mandate - later the State of Israel and the Palestinian territories. These soldiers found their last resting place in a range of war cemeteries stretching from Haifa in the north to Israel’s desert capital of Beersheva in the south.

Having myself lived next to the British War cemetery on French Hill in Jerusalem as a student at the nearby Hebrew University, I can personally attest to the great regard in which this important and imposing monument is held - enclosing between its walls the graves of

the fallen among Jerusalem's brave liberators under General Allenby. The war cemetery in Beersheva is a very striking sight - a paradoxically blooming oasis of life in the surrounding desert landscape. The famous light horse charge during this battle holds a significant place in the annals of the Australian army and is commemorated in different ways in Israel's southern desert capital.

The debt of gratitude to the valiant Indian liberators of the Holy Land has of course never been forgotten in Israel. Since 2010 an annual official ceremony in the Haifa Indian Cemetery, one of the city's four cemeteries that contain Commonwealth burials of the First World War, marks the anniversary of the city's liberation. The inaugural ceremony was particularly impressive, with a great number of dignitaries in attendance and the Indian ambassador to Israel, wearing the proud turban of his people, laying a wreath at the monument.

These memorials serve to illustrate the unbreakable bonds of friendship between the Sikh and Jewish peoples as well as between the States of Israel and India.

Let us all remember the heroic Sikh liberators of Haifa - and may their memory be a blessing; yehiye zichronam livrachal!

Per Haeggund is a Sikh enthusiast and collector in Sweden where he serves as a political affairs officer in the Embassy of Israel.



Haifa War Cemetery which commemorates Indians.



Indian Ambassador to Israel, Navtej Sarna, on Haifa Day.



The 82nd Punjabis, with its two companies of Sikhs clearly visible, digging trenches (HHC).



December 1917 - An officer of the British Indian Army 58th Vaughan's Rifles (Frontier Force) speaking to Sikh NCO's during the Palestine Campaign. (IWM)



The 62nd Punjabis which contained Muslims, Hindu and Sikhs in 1918 (HHC).





August 1915 - Col. Kishan Singh (Sardar Bahadur) and Dr Sampuran Singh, officers of an Indian mule company involved in the evacuation of Suvla Bay, Gallipoli. (IWM).

Gallipoli

PROFESSOR PETER STANLEY

In 1914 India sent trained soldiers to fight for the British Empire and Sikh regiments joined the expeditionary forces embarking for Egypt, where they guarded the Suez Canal after Ottoman Turkey entered the war in November 1914. Sikh troops of the 14th Ferozepore Sikhs formed part of “Indian Expeditionary Force E”, which in January and February 1915 helped to defend the canal from Turkish attacks. In April 1915 a British force was created in Egypt to form part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, it included Sikh troops.

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force was made up of troops from Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, as well as India. Its task was to support the British and French fleet attempting to break through the strait of the Dardanelles, the sea route to the Turkish capital of Constantinople. This, it was hoped, would bring relief to Britain and France’s ally Russia and defeat Turkey. The plan was visionary and optimistic but failed due to poor planning, inept command decisions and tenacious Ottoman resistance.

Indian troops, including Sikhs, formed a relatively small part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, which mostly comprised British and Anzac infantry, but they were to make significant contributions to the campaign. The 7th Indian Mountain Artillery Brigade comprised two mountain batteries, about half of whose members were Sikhs. The Ferozepore Sikhs formed one of the four infantry battalions of the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade initially sent to Gallipoli, and about a quarter of the men of two Punjabi battalions, the 69th and 89th were Sikh too; though they were withdrawn after two weeks over fears that the Punjabis’ Mussalmans might be unreliable fighting Muslim Turks. (Though the concern seems to have been misplaced, they were replaced by two Gurkha battalions). Sikhs also formed a proportion of the muleteers and drivers of the large Supply and Transport force sent to Gallipoli.

The first Indians to land on Gallipoli – mountain artillery gunners – went ashore with the Anzacs on the morning of 25 April 1915. Each of the two mountain

artillery batteries was armed with four 10-pounder mountain guns, transported on mules and intended to be used in the quite similar country on India’s north-west frontier. They fired in support of Australian and New Zealand infantry trying to establish a beach-head around what became known as Anzac Cove. The Anzac infantry soon came to appreciate the gunners’ skill in handling their guns in defeating Turkish attacks on their trenches. Though the Anzacs had failed to take their objectives on the first day – and never came close to gaining them ever again – the Indian gunners provided front-line fire support in holding the Anzac position.

The mountain gunners remained at Anzac for the entire campaign. They formed close bonds with the Anzac troops whom they supported. Anzac diaries and letters record their admiration for the smartness and skill of Indian regular troops, and describe encounters between them. For example, in May Sergeant Fred Aspinall, an Australian signaller, recorded how he made friends with Subedar-Major Paktar Singh of the mountain artillery. The two chatted at Aspinall’s signal post and Aspinall established that Paktar Singh hailed from Ludhiana. The subedar wrote his name in Aspinall’s notebook; apparently the only handwriting by an Indian soldier on Gallipoli that has survived.

Meanwhile, on the British sector of the Gallipoli peninsula, at Cape Helles, the Indian infantry, including the 14th Ferozepore Sikhs, landed early in May and took their place in the front line. They provided a skilful, professional force, which for two months held the vital coastal sector of the British line. Indian infantry adopted an aggressive stance that pushed the British line forward, though it never reached as far as the objectives set for the day of the landings, 25 April 1915.

The Indians took part in a series of major, though ultimately unsuccessful attacks as the invaders attempted to break out of the beach-head. In the attack at Gully Ravine on 4 June the 14th Sikhs lost heavily as its men repeatedly tried to force their way through strongly held Turkish trenches. The Sikhs attacked in two waves,

separated by fifteen minutes, most along the bed of the ravine, between the Gurkhas on the left and British troops to the right. The British novelist-turned-staff-officer, Compton Mackenzie, listening to the reports as they arrived, described what he heard: “The Sikhs ... came into the full cross-fire of rifles and machine-guns as they moved over the exposed slope... the day went badly for the Sikhs”.

The Sikh battalion's losses were staggering. Of those who took part (15 British officers – including Captain Herajee Cursetjee, the battalion's Parsi medical officer), 13 Indian officers and 450 sepoy, no fewer than twelve officers, eleven Indian and 371 sepoy were killed or wounded. The battalion suffered losses of 80 per cent, most within a few hours. With Cursetjee wounded and evacuated, the battalion's sub-assistant surgeon, Jemadar Bhagwan Singh took over until a new medical officer arrived, for which he was awarded the Indian Order of Merit.

The debacle had several effects. The losses of 4 June crippled the 14th Sikhs for months. Heavy casualties among its British and Indian officers and Sikh ‘other ranks’ led to the Sikh Patiala Infantry being sent to Gallipoli. One of the units of the Indian princely states serving in Egypt, the Maharaja of Patiala's infantry were regarded as being as good as regular Sikh infantry of the Indian Army. From July the Patiala Infantry reinforced the 14th Sikhs. Though British officials assured the Maharaja of Patiala that his regiment would be recognised, the Patialas became part of the 14th Sikhs and their contribution remained largely overlooked. The other effect was to stimulate Sikh recruiting, which previously had lagged under the influence of Ghadr nationalist activists. Ironically, heavy losses Sikh units convinced Sikh leaders to support recruiting, and Sikhs became the community most supportive of the war. Patiala alone sent 15% of its male population as volunteers, one of the highest rates of enlistment in the empire.

After a brief rest on the nearby island of Imbros (within earshot of the sound of gunfire on the peninsula) the 29th Indian Brigade returned to the battle, from early August in the Anzac sector. There it formed part of the spearhead of what became known as the August offensive, the invaders' final chance to break through the Ottoman defences and resume the advance on Constantinople. The offensive involved diversionary attacks at Helles and Anzac, a complex plan involving advances over the rugged Chunuk Bair range north of Anzac and a large British landing at Suvla Bay, to the north. The 29th Indian Brigade, reinforced and rested, was one of three attacking brigades. The Indian mountain artillery supported the attack, the climax of the campaign.

The offensive ended after a week of costly fighting.

Though the British area had been enlarged with the opening of the ‘Suvla’ sector, the offensive had failed to break through the Ottoman lines. The Sikh battalion, reinforced by the Patialas, then held the trenches on the boundary between the ‘Anzac’ sector and the British Suvla sector, around a hill named Demakjelik Bair. Later in August the Indians took part in further costly assaults on the Turkish lines near Hill 60, the last offensive actions in the campaign.

Throughout the campaign the mule and cart trains of the Supply and Transport Corps, about a quarter of whose personnel were Sikhs, continued to carry supplies, food, water and ammunition forward from the beaches to the trenches. Their muleteers and drivers supported the entire British Empire force on Gallipoli, not just the Indian component, braving sniper fire and shelling as they brought their animals and carts up the gullies. Many were wounded, and over 2000 of their animals were killed or had to be destroyed.

As autumn turned to winter, the Sikhs held trenches under frequent artillery bombardment and sniper-fire (the Turks held higher ground, generally looking down into their enemies' trenches). Though having served for so long and suffered so much – from wounds, sickness, and monotonous rations, inadequate and bad water and, as the winter worsened, frostbite, Sikh morale remained remarkably sound. A few men wounded themselves to escape from the trenches, but the Sikhs' morale and cohesion held, even when in December, gales lashed the peninsula and blizzards left hundreds of men crippled with frostbite.

In the meantime, the failure of the August offensive persuaded British commanders that the campaign could not succeed, and in December the force planned an elaborate program of evacuations and deceptions before the last troops left the deserted front line on the night of 19-20 December. The Cape Helles lodgement was evacuated the following month. Despite the best that Indian, British, French and Anzac troops had done the invasion had failed.

The Gallipoli campaign had cost the lives of at least 1,600 Indian troops, among them about 300 Sikhs; a death rate of about 10 per cent, while a further 750 men died in 14th Sikhs alone, a total casualty rate of about 50% of the approximately 2100 men who passed through the battalion in 1915 – not including those men evacuated sick.

Their faith made cremation the preferred method of treating their dead, and the British Indian Army respected its members' religious sensibilities. While Supply and Transport units provided wood and oil, cremation was not always possible in the trenches. After the war, however, war graves parties tried to identify Sikh (or Gurkha) remains and cremated them where possible. All Indian



Anzac Cove, December 1915 - Men of the 14th Sikhs burying one of their comrades, killed by a bomb. (IWM).



Troops of the 14th Sikh Regiment at Gallipoli (IWM).

dead, however, are recorded, individually by name, on the panels of the Cape Helles memorial to the missing. Memorials in Patiala and Ferozepore commemorate the Sikh contribution and losses especially.

The Indian presence on Gallipoli is remembered on trench maps from 1915 that indicate a communication trench named ‘Sikh Walk’. Today that trench, like all the others, is filled in and, once again part of fields and orchards, can barely be traced. Except for Turkish battlefield markers and the ‘British’ cemetery of Hill 60, it is as if the battles of 1915 had never occurred. The Sikh contribution to the Indian Army's part in the campaign

is, however, once again becoming better known, with greater attention paid to the Indian experience of Gallipoli than ever before. Lest we forget.

Prof. Peter Stanley's history of the Indian Army in the Gallipoli campaign, *Die in Battle, Do not Despair: the Indians on Gallipoli, 1915*, was published by Helion & Co in 2015. A Research Professor at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, specialising recently in the history of the Great War, Peter has published 26 books including on Australian military history and the history of the Indian Army.



Tribute stained glass window in the Indian Army Memorial Room, Old College, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (NAM).

The North West Frontier 1914 - 1919

DR ANTHONY MORTON

During the First World War the departure of much of the Indian Army overseas to the Western Front, East Africa, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, Sinai and Palestine in support of the British war effort left India vulnerable to hostile attention from Afghanistan and internal unrest. Sikh soldiers, renowned for their loyalty and martial prowess played a significant role in both the policing the North West Frontier Province of British India and its defence against external threats during a period when the British and British Indian Armies were severely stretched fighting the Central Powers of Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire across the world.

Although the ruler of Afghanistan, Amir Habibulla, remained strictly neutral during the Great War and abided by his treaty obligations with Britain he could not prevent a combined Turkish and German mission arriving at Kabul in October 1915. Even before their arrival pro-Turkish mullahs responding to the Ottoman Sultan's call for a Jihad against the Allies (the Sultan was the titular head of Islam) had been working to foment unrest among the frontier tribes. As a result there were a number of local uprisings along the frontier during the war.

From November 1914 to March 1915 tribesmen from the Khost region of Afghanistan launched a number of raids into North Waziristan in the area of the Tochi Valley. During 28th-29th November 1914 the first raid, mounted by 2,000 Khostwal tribesmen was defeated by the North Waziristan Militia near their headquarters at Miran Shah. Unfortunately a later raid was more successful when Miran Shah was attacked on 9 December and largely destroyed. The attackers withdrew before the Bannu Moveable Column, a counter-insurgency formation based around the 52nd Sikh Regiment arrived to relieve the besieged fort. Skirmishes in the area continued and it was during another raid that Captain Eustace Jotham of the 51st Sikh Regiment died on 7th January 1915 while trying to rescue one of a small party of twelve North Waziristan Militiamen he was leading

while under attack from 1,500 tribesmen. Captain Jotham was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

In March 1915 the final and most dangerous raid by Khostwal tribesmen was launched, the target once more being the town of Miran Shah. The Bannu Moveable Column, had been operating out of Miran Shah since December 1914, found itself surrounded by over 7,000 Khostwals, Zadrans and Waziris on 25 March. The next day, the Column's commander Brigadier General V B Fane divided his troops into three columns, each of which was formed around elements of the 52nd Sikh Regiment with supporting elements of the 10th Jats Regiment and North Waziristan Militia. The success of his subsequent attack against the enemy was mainly attributed to the rapid advance of Column B, consisting of the majority of the 52nd Sikhs, that managed to drive the tribesmen against a concealed position held by Column A who then able to open fire at close range with devastating effect. Tribal losses were over 1,000 killed, wounded or captured while the British suffered only three casualties, none of which were Sikhs.

The 52nd Sikhs later twice neutralised gangs of Mahsud raiders in the Bannu district, on 13 January and 15 March 1917. On the first occasion a gang of Mahsuds, having caused considerable suffering to the people of the Bannu and Derajat Districts and escaped without loss, fled to a cave on the left bank of the Kurram river opposite Kurram Garhi. After artillery and rifle fire had failed to dislodge the raiders they were smoked out of the cave by soldiers setting fire to a large heap of dry jowar at the mouth of the cave, and shot down as they rushed out. On the second occasion a large gang of Mahsud raiders hiding out in caves near Bannu were 'bombed out' using hand grenades resulting in the capture of the entire gang.

At the beginning of 1915 the Mohmand tribe launched a small raid in the neighbourhood of Shabkadar, a fortified post eighteen miles north of Peshawar. It was easily beaten off but in April 2000 Mohmands attacked the 1st Peshawar Division (a formation that included at different times during the period 1914-1919 the 14th,

36th, 54th 1/15th and 1/35th Sikh Regiments), and were defeated near Hafiz Kor. Punitive Operations against the Mohmand and neighbouring tribes (the Bunerwals and Swatis) of the northern half of Peshawar began in August with the defeat of about 3,500 Bunerwals near Rustam. A number of engagements followed that included the rout of 3,000 Bajuris near the village of Wuch north of Chakdara, and the second Battle of Hafiz Kor in September when 10,000 tribesmen were defeated in the largest engagement seen on the North West Frontier since 1897. Operations finally ceased in October after another 9,000 Mohmands, stirred up by local Mullahs launched another attack against the 1st Peshawar Division, which at this time included the 36th Sikh Regiment. The Mohmands were defeated with the help of armoured cars, the first time that such vehicles had been used in combat operations in India. In 1916 Mohmand raids into Peshawar began again, this time prompting the Indian Army to build a series of blockhouses and barbed wire defences along the Mohmand border on the North West Frontier known as the Mohmand Blockade in order to contain the threat. The most important engagement of this second series of raids by the Mohmands occurred in November when a large number of Mohmands were defeated at Hafiz Kor. The Blockade, whose garrisons included the 36th, 1/15th, 1/35th and 52nd Sikh Regiments, was eventually lifted in July 1917 when the Mohmands finally submitted.

Sikh soldiers also played an important role in combating the most serious external threat to the North West Frontier during this period. On 20 February 1919 Habibullah Khan, Emir of Afghanistan was assassinated. He was succeeded by one of his sons, the anti-British Amanullah who engineered a war with Britain (subsequently known as the Third Afghan War) within three months of his father's assassination, hoping to recover Peshawar and other territories for Afghanistan. Hoping to provoke unrest in the Peshawar district in support of his invasion the new Emir called for a jihad against the British and sent Afghan troops over the border to occupy the approaches to the Khyber Pass and the town of Bagh. The British response was to send the 1st Infantry Brigade consisting of British, Gurkha and Sikh regiments to attack the Afghans in the Khyber area with the aid of bombing sorties by the RAF.

The attack was launched on 9 May but failed when the brigade's commander, Brigadier G.D. Crocker, decided to split his forces and detach almost half his force to protect his flank. As a result the assault, mounted by the 1/15th Sikhs and 1/11th Gurkha Rifles, contained too few troops to retake Bagh, garrisoned as it was by five Afghan infantry battalions and six guns. Instead the two regiments had to dig in to hold what little ground they had taken at the foot of the Afghan position. The

situation further deteriorated with mass desertions from the Khyber Rifles disrupting the British line of communications through the Khyber Pass, resulting in the disarming and disbandment of that regiment. Two days later, on 11 May, a second attack was made on Bagh by the 1st and 2nd Infantry Brigades, under Major General Fowler, again with RAF support. This time the attack was successful and Bagh was recovered from the Afghans who, having lost 100 killed and 300 wounded compared to British losses of eight killed and 31 wounded fled back across the frontier.

Ordered to continue the advance British and Indian troops pursued the Afghans across the border, seized control of the western Khyber without opposition and occupied Dacca. The British force soon came under attack from large numbers of Amanullah's Afghan Regulars and the situation was only saved by a cavalry charge mounted by the King's Dragoon Guards and fierce holding actions fought by the 2nd Somerset Light Infantry and the 1/35th Sikhs. The advance continued and on 16th May an attack was launched against an Afghan force of about 3,000 men occupying a steep ridge west of Dacca known as 'Stonehenge Ridge'. Under cover of preliminary artillery bombardment to soften up the Afghan defences the 11th Sikh Regiment launched their assault. However they were forced to stop their attack at 0800 hrs when they ran out of ammunition. It was not until 1400 hrs that resupplied with ammunition the 11th Sikhs were able to resume their assault after another artillery bombardment. Attacking in the heat of the day the Sikh soldiers carried the ridge and broke the Afghan defenders. The fleeing Afghans left most of their equipment, artillery and a number of standards behind. During the assault the British and Indian forces lost 22 killed and 157 wounded, while Afghan losses were estimated at around 200 killed and 400 wounded.

Further south in the North West Frontier Province the Afghans came closer to success. Mass desertions by the North and South Waziristan Militia meant that British forces in the Kurram Valley and Waziristan were vastly outnumbered by the Afghan troops commanded by General Nadir Khan. Nadir Khan's invasion force reached as far as the fort at Thal on 28 May. As the Frontier Constabulary had abandoned their posts, on the night of 28/29 May the Afghans were able to occupy a tower 500 yards (460 m) from the fort and from there they were able to set fire to a number of food dumps. This made the supply situation in the fort that had already been low, even worse. There were other factors that put the British garrison at a severe disadvantage. Brigadier General Eustace's force was outnumbered and outgunned. He possessed no regular British infantry and his Indian forces were all inexperienced units, consisting mainly of young recruits. Nevertheless the beleaguered

garrison, consisting of only four battalions including the 1/151st Sikhs repelled an attack by Nadir's fourteen-battalion strong force the next day. On 30 May the garrison came under heavy bombardment from Afghan artillery prompting the British authorities to send a relief force consisting of the 45th Infantry Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Dyer. Between 31 May and 2 June the 'Thal Relief Force' defeated rebel tribesmen and Afghan Regulars blocking the way to the fort. The climax of the action was the assault on an Afghan position on Khadmakh Hill north-west of Thal by the 1/151st Sikhs and 3/9th Gurkhas during which Nadir Khan asked for a truce. The following day the Afghans withdrew. For their actions during the defence of Thal two NCOs from the 1/151st Sikh Regiment were awarded the Indian Order of Merit. On 8 August 1919 the Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed bringing the Third Afghan War to a close.

Throughout the era of the Great War Sikh regiments proved their worth on the North West Frontier, not only

in displaying their customary martial prowess but also in maintaining their reputation for loyalty and integrity at a difficult time for the British on the frontier, with local militias frequently proving untrustworthy and even hostile. Whether helping to maintain law and order within the North West Frontier Province or taking part in repelling external invaders Sikh soldiers once again proved to be one of Britain's most valuable assets in British India. It is entirely appropriate therefore that the image of a Sikh in the uniform of the British Army should be the centrepiece of the North West frontier window in the Indian Army Memorial Room at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, a permanent memorial in beautiful stained glass to some of Britain's most loyal and valued soldiers.

Dr Anthony Morton is the Curator of the Sandhurst Collection which preserves the archives of the Royal Military Academy.



July 1919 - Sikh contingent of the Indian Army pass along the Mall during the Victory March in London (IWM).

Sikh Gallantry In WW1

NARINDAR SINGH DHESI

Introduction

Nowhere is the Sikh contribution during the Great War more apparent than in the records of the medals they were awarded.

In total, Sikhs received 290 Indian Orders of Merit (IOM), 23 Military Crosses (MC) and 706 Indian Distinguished Service Medals (IDSM). This number excludes the post 1918 campaigns in Waziristan and on the North-West Frontier. European powers also recognised the Sikhs with 13 Croix de Guerre (France), 15 Crosses of St. George (Russia) and many Serbian, Rumanian and Italian gallantry awards.

These awards are listed here by theatre of battle, in alphabetical order.

1. Aden

The 29th Indian Infantry Brigade (which included the 23rd Sikh Pioneers) proceeded to Aden shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914, where it was reinforced by the Malay States Guides, composed entirely of Sikh infantry and artillery.

Their main actions against the Turks and their allies were fought at: Shaikh Sa'id, Perim, Lahej, Sheikh Othman, Fiyush, Waht, Sabr, Imad, Mahat and Hatum.

Jemadar Gudit Singh (Malay States Guides) was awarded the IOM; on the night of 15th February 1918 he showed great gallantry and determination in commanding a platoon in an attack against an enemy piquet.

Sepoy Sohan Singh (23rd Sikh Pioneers), Subedar Molar Singh (53rd Sikhs), Havildar Kehar Singh and Sepoy Sarwan Singh (both Malay States Guides) were also awarded the IOM. Eleven other Sikh soldiers were awarded the IDSM.

2. Bushire

Bushire was the main Persian port, with a garrison which included the Sikh soldiers of 15th Lancers, 14th Sikhs, and 22nd Punjabis. The main actions were fought against Tangistani tribesmen at Bushire, Dilwar and Mashileh.

Risaldar Prem Singh (16th Cavalry) was awarded the posthumous IOM for conspicuous gallantry and coolness in action on the 9th September 1915, courageously leading his troop into the middle of 400 enemy, where he was killed.

Subedar Dhan Singh and Sepoy Mehar Singh were awarded the IOM while Sowar Kirpa Singh and Kahan Singh, Jemadar Mota Singh, and Sepoy Ishar Singh received the IDSM.

3. East Africa

The following units with Sikh soldiers saw action against the Germans in East Africa: Faridkot Sappers and Miners, Kapurthala Infantry, Jind Infantry, 25th Cavalry (Frontier Force), 24th Hazara Mountain Battery, 27th Mountain Battery, 20th Punjabis, 29th Punjabis, 30th Punjabis, and 33rd Punjabis.

The main actions took place at Tsavo River, Gazi, Tanga, Longido, Jassin, Bukoba, Mbuyuni, Kilimanjaro, Kisangire, and Behobehe Chogwali.

The Jind Infantry earned the highest opinions of all the Generals they served under. Sepoy Sada Singh (Jind) was awarded a posthumous IOM for conspicuous gallantry in action on the 9th October 1916, where he proceeded forward under fire along a communication trench and removed a number of dead bodies which were stopping the advance. 13 Sikhs were awarded the IOM, and 54 the IDSM.

4. Gallipoli

The 29th Indian Brigade at Gallipoli included the Sikh soldiers of 21st Mountain Battery, 26th Mountain Battery, and 14th Ferozepore Sikhs plus a detachment of 1st Patiala Infantry.

The main actions of 1915 were fought at: Gaba Tepe, Krithia, Achi Baba, Gully Spur, Sari Bair, Chunuk Bair, Kota Chaman Tepe and Kabak Kuyu.

Lance Naik Karam Singh of 21st Mountain Battery was awarded the IOM for conspicuous gallantry on the 19TH May 1915 near Gaba Tepe. Despite being blinded

Sub Assistant Surgeon Ram Singh who was awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM).

by a bullet he continued to pass orders and lead his section in an attack.

10 other Sikhs were awarded the IOM and 44 more the IDSM for their gallantry at Gallipoli.

5. Mesopotamia

The force fighting in Mesopotamia included the 14th Ferozepore Sikhs, 23rd Sikh Pioneers and 45th Rattray's Sikhs. Sikhs were also represented in 21 Punjabi Regiments, 4 Frontier Force Infantry Regiments, 2 Frontier Force Cavalry Regiments, 2 Regiments of Guides Infantry and Cavalry, the Patiala Lancers and 1 Regiment of Mountain Battery.

The main battles were fought at: Fao, Basra, Qurna, Shaiba, Barjisiya, Amara, Nasiriyah, Kut – al – Amara, Ctesiphon, Sheikh Saad, Wadi (Fort Chibibat), Hannah, Dujailah, Sannaiyat, Kut – al – Amara, Hai Bridge – Head, Sannaiyat, Baghdad, Jebel Hamlin, Khan Baghdadi, Mosul, Kurdistan.

Both the 36th and 45th Sikhs were in Mesopotamia, and participated in the Battle of Hai River in early 1917. 1,200 Turks held a position in very well prepared entrenchments. Both regiments assaulted the position shoulder to shoulder in the face of heavy machine-gun fire. Although the first three lines were captured, casualties were very heavy during the course of the day. At one time, the 45th was more or less isolated as an enveloping counter attacks were launched by the Turks. These were eventually pushed back. The fierceness of the fighting can be judged by the fact, that at the end of the day, the 45th was left with just three British and three Indian officers and 200 men. The 36th Sikhs also suffered heavily, between 28th January to 1st February 1917 the regiment sustained 620 casualties (83% of its strength).

Subedar Major Thakur Singh led the regiment out of battle; as the only survivor of all the British and Indian officers. He was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and leadership. Sepoy Kahn Singh (attached to 59th Rifles) was awarded the IOM for an attack on Turkish trenches. In total, 132 IOM, 8 MC and 354 IDSM's were awarded to Sikhs.

6. North East Frontier

Sowar Kala Singh was awarded the IOM and 14 others of Burma Military Police received the IDSM on 24th February 1915, during the Kachin Hills expedition.

7. Palestine

In 1917 a force had been gathered sufficient for an assault on the large Turkish force in Palestine. Sikh units were represented within 6th King Edward's Own Cavalry, 9th Hodson's Horse, 19th Lancers, 20th Deccan Horse, 29th Lancers, 36th Jacob's Horse, 38th King George's

Own Central India Horse. Infantry included the 21st and 29th Punjabis. The Sikh gunners of Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Garrison Artillery were also involved after a tour of duty in the Suez Canal defences.

The main battles were: First Battle of Gaza, Second Battle of Gaza, Third Battle of Gaza, El Mughar, Battle of Nabi Samweil, Capture of Jerusalem, Battle of Jaffa, Battles of Megiddo, Sharon and Nablus.

The Corps destroyed three Turkish Armies and took 46,000 prisoners out of 83,000 captured by the whole force. Havildars Fateh Singh, Kishen Singh, Chajja Singh and Rur Singh became the only Indians ever awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for services in the field during this campaign. 35 Sikhs were awarded the IOM, 8 the MC and 51 the IDSM.

8. Seistan

The British force in East Persia was designed to keep peace in the region and frustrate the activity of German agents. It consisted of 28th Light Cavalry, 36th Mountain Battery and 19th Punjabis, which all contained companies of Sikhs.

Small actions were fought under trying conditions of climate and terrain at Kalag, Lirudik, Kalamas and Chorab. Subedar Karam Singh (36th Mountain Battery) was awarded the IOM on 16TH June 1918.

9. Senussi

In 1915 the East Libyan Senussi began supporting the Turkish war effort. On 20th November 1915 the British formed the Western Frontier Force (WFF) with four British battalions plus the 15th Sikhs.

They fought major actions at Wadi Senab, near Matruh and Halazin. The 15th Sikhs bore the brunt of the fighting and had provided the backbone for a very untrained, inexperienced and under-staffed Western Frontier Force.

Jemadar Basant Singh was awarded the only IOM during the campaign for gallantry at Halazin on 23rd January 1916. Seven other Sikhs were awarded the IDSM during this action.

10. Somaliland

The operations in Somaliland from November 1914 and February 1915 were separate to the aims of Great War and against a Mullah who had proclaimed Jihad against the British.

Naik Sher Singh and Havildar Teja Singh (both 23rd Sikh Pioneers) were awarded the IOM for bravery in action on the 4th February 1915 at Shimerberris.

11. South Persia

The British undertook punitive operations against bandits and armed robbers, carried out mainly by the



From left to right - the Indian Order of Merit, Indian Distinguished Service Medal and Military Cross (DHP).

Burma Mounted Rifles, composed of Sikhs and Punjabi Mussalmans.

The main actions were fought at: Dehbid, Qashqais, Khwaja Jamali, Gumun, Northern Fars, Ziarat May, Khan -I-Zinian, Ahmadabad, and Firozabad.

Sowar Uttam Singh was recommended for the award of the Victoria Cross but was reduced to the IOM for gallantry near Gumun. Risaldar Gulzar Singh, Jemadar Kishan Singh and Subedar Karam Singh were awarded the IOM and 17 others the IDSM.

12. Suez Canal

The Indian Army took over the first-line defence of the Suez Canal with troops from regiments including the 56th Punjabis, 89th Punjabis, 92nd Punjabis, Sikh Princely Units of 1st Patiala Rajindra Infantry and Patiala Lancers. Their main actions against the Turks were at Bir-en-Nuss, Qantara, Tussum, and Serapeum.

Havildar Suba Singh (56th Punjabis) was awarded the IOM. While in command of a patrol of nine men on the 22ND March 1915 he surprised and engaged a raiding party of 4,000 Turks under the command of German officers. In the fight that ensued, he fought with great gallantry and although severely wounded he continued to lead and encourage his men and extricated his patrol from a very difficult situation with a loss of two killed and three wounded. The losses to the enemy were estimated at 12 killed and 15 wounded.

Naik Nihan Singh (92nd Punjabis) and Sepoy Dasunda Singh (89th Punjabis), Captain Bhagwan Singh and Subedar Dharm Singh (Patiala Infantry) were also awarded the IOM and 22 other Sikh soldiers were awarded the IDSM for their gallantry at Suez.

13. Transcaspia

Intervention in Transcaspia in July 1918 brought British and Indian troops into conflict with Soviet Russian military forces. The British force included Sikh soldiers in 19th Punjabis and 28th Light Cavalry.

The main battles were fought at: Bairam Ali, Kaahka, Dushak, Annenkovo, and Trans-Caspia.

Subedar Bal Singh (19TH Punjabis) was awarded the IOM for fighting against the Bolsheviks at Dushak

on the 14th October 1918. He led his platoon with great bravery under heavy machine-gun fire. He took command of the company when the British Officer had been wounded and by his coolness and power of command ensured their orderly retirement.

Subedar Hukam Singh and Sepoy Dalel Singh (both 19th Punjabis) were also awarded the IOM at Dushak. 14 Sikhs of 19th Punjabis were awarded the IDSM.

14. Western Front

Three class regiments of Sikh infantry formed part of the Indian Corps in France - the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs, 47th Sikhs, and 34th Sikh Pioneers. The Sikhs were also represented in a company of men in the 27th, 33rd, 69th, and 89th Punjabis, 57th, 58th, 59th Rifles and 107th Pioneers. All the Indian cavalry regiments in France contained Sikh squadrons.

The main actions fought were at Wyschaete, Messines, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, Festubert, Hooge, and Loos.

While Indian infantry was withdrawn from the Western Front in 1915, two cavalry divisions remained until 1918. These took part in the Battle of the Somme, the Battle of Bazentin, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the advance to the Hindenburg Line and finally the Battle of Cambrai.

At Neuve Chapelle on 27th October 1915, an attack took place over 200 yards of open ground. While under heavy fire the British officer was severely wounded and Subedar Thakur Singh took command of his company. He led it towards the Germans with skill and gallantry till he was also hit. He received the Military Cross for his conduct in this action – the first MC awarded during the First World War

In total, 76 Sikhs received the IOM, 7 Sikhs the MC, 130 the IDSM and 6 French Croix de Guerre for their gallantry on the Western Front.

Narindar Singh Dhese is a former member of the British Army and military historian. His books include the five-volume "Sikh Soldier" series which contains extensive research on the battles, individuals and the awards won by Sikhs.





August 1914 - Men of the 15th Sikhs singing holy prayers in a barn in Flanders (IWM).



The 15th Sikhs at prayer outside their billets in Flanders (IWM).

Sikh Letters

DR DAVID OMISSI

When war broke out in 1914, the Commander-in-Chief in India was asked to pick his best troops for Europe. He chose the Lahore and Meerut infantry divisions, in which Sikhs were slightly over-represented. Indian troops were thrown into most of the early battles of the British Expeditionary Force in late 1914 and early 1915, including First and Second Ypres, and Neuve Chapelle.

The experience of combat came as a great shock to troops used to colonial campaigning. Conditions in the hastily-constructed and waterlogged trenches during the exceptionally cold winter of 1914–15 were terrible. A British officer of the Indian Army, Captain Roly Grimshaw, recalled seeing: “Little Gurkhas slopping through the freezing mud barefooted; Tommies with no caps and plastered in blood and mud from head to foot; Sikhs with their hair all down, and looking more wild and weird than I have even seen them; Pathans more dirty and untidy than usual – all limping or reeling along like drunken men, some helping an almost-foundering comrade, in most cases misery depicted on their faces.”

The welfare of Indian soldiers on the Western Front soon became the object of charitable concern in Britain. An Indian Soldiers’ Fund was set up, initially to provide warm clothing for the troops; it then provided all kinds of minor luxuries such as sweets, as well as religious items, including the five ‘K’s for Sikhs.

The Indian Army set up a free postal service for troops; and although many must have been illiterate the soldiers employed scribes, such as company clerks or battalion officers, to write to their loved ones. They and their families seem to have taken great advantage of this opportunity, although not always in ways that were intended. Bir Singh wrote home to say: “Send off the opium but write ‘sweets’ on the outside of the parcel. ‘Have no fear. Parcels are not opened on the way and cannot be lost. Keep on sending the drugs’”.

We know a lot about the morale of the Indian Army in Europe because of the survival of the British military censor’s reports. The censorship was set up to monitor the morale of Indian Army troops, and it produced very

detailed reports about Indian soldiers’ letters, including translations of them. Letters from Sikh soldiers sometimes evoked the warrior tradition of Sikhism. For example one soldier wrote home: “You should always be thanking the Guru for giving your family a chance of serving the King in Europe. We believe that the Guru will soon give victory to the King, and that you will receive great izzat.”

British officers would sometimes play on this tradition in order to motivate Sikh soldiers in combat. One letter home from a wounded soldier of the 47th Sikhs recalled a British officer’s exhortation to an Indian officer going into battle: “Chur Singh, you are not a Sikh of Guru Govind Singh, who sit in fear inside the trench. Chur Singh was very angry. Chur Singh gave the order to his company to charge. He drew his sword and went forward. A bullet then came from the enemy and hit him in the mouth. So did our brother Chur Singh become a martyr.”

The two Indian Army infantry divisions were withdrawn from France at the end of 1915, and were sent to the Middle East. The hospitals in England were closed down once the Indian infantry divisions had left. Some historians have argued that the history of the Indian Army in Europe should be understood as a ‘story of failure’, but there were in fact sound military, political and logistical reasons to move the Indian infantry to the Middle East.

Two Indian cavalry divisions remained in France until March 1918, and they therefore had long experience of contact with Europeans, and with European culture. One of the main concerns of Indian Army troops of all faiths in Europe was the preservation of religion in an alien land. Sikh soldiers, like other Indians, wrote home asking for religious advice. One soldier was told: “You should strictly abstain from eating flesh and drinking wine, which are both forbidden and noxious; and also antagonistic to that state of mind and body which is necessary for the proper contemplation of God. You must also abstain from having any liaison with another

man's wife. If you have a book of extracts from the Guru Granth, read a portion whenever you have time. This will keep your mind pure."

For Sikh troops in particular, the issue of steel helmets posed a problem but there is evidence from photographs that they did not wear steel helmets. Maintaining the outward signs of religion was very important to Sikhs. For example, during the battle of the Somme, a Sikh officer wrote home: "I am off for a cavalry attack on the 15th September. It is quite impossible that I should return alive because a cavalry charge is a very terrible affair, and therefore I want to clear up several things which are weighing on my heart at present. Firstly the sharp things that you have written to me have not annoyed me. Don't be grieved at my death because I shall die arms in hand, wearing the warrior's clothes. This is the most happy death that anyone can die."

In general, Indian soldiers were very positive about the French civilians among whom they were billeted. In October 1915 an unnamed Sikh wrote home to Patiala State: "We are in France. It is a very cold country... It is a fair country and the people are like angels. All they lack is wings."

The soldiers praised the wealth of France, its productive agriculture and perceived social equalities. They admired French education and literacy, particularly of women. They praised French emotional restraint. For example a Sikh cavalry officer wrote home to his wife in February 1917: "It is very wrong of you to work yourself up into a state of illness through anxiety for me. Just look at the people here. The women have their husbands killed, and yet they go on working just as hard as ever. It does one's heart good to see them. May God teach our women to behave like them!"

The main theatre of war for the Indian Army was, however, not Europe but the Middle-East – meaning mainly Mesopotamia (now Iraq), which where many Indian casualties were suffered. Service in Mesopotamia was generally not popular with Indian troops. In January 1916, for example, a Sikh officer in Mesopotamia wrote to another Sikh officer in France: "You are having a very different time from us, for you have everything you can want while the country here is absolutely uninhabited and desolate"

It is clear from their letters that the soldiers wanted to be remembered, and indeed that was one main motive for fighting. The principle of the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission was that all soldiers should be remembered equally, without regard to race, rank or religion; and were to be commemorated in two places: where they fell and in their home countries.

Broadly speaking, Indians were commemorated equally. There were, however, some inequalities by race, rank and religion, but also by place of death. Indians who died in Europe were commemorated by name. There are many Indian names on the Menin Gate at Ypres and on the main Indian memorial in France at Neuve Chapelle. But the Commonwealth war memorial in Basra names only British and Indian officers, and British other ranks. The Indian other ranks, however, are commemorated as simply as a number of men per Indian regiment.

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Sikhs listen to prayers at Brighton.

Indians In Brighton

DAVINDER SINGH DHILLON

It became increasingly apparent with the high number of casualties that the field hospitals set up on the Western Front to accommodate British and Indian wounded were inadequate, especially following an attack where expected casualties would require existing hospital beds. Therefore a policy was adopted to evacuate Indian wounded to military hospitals in England where they could convalesce, heal and either return to the front or be invalided back to India.

Initially, the wounded were transported from Calais or Le Havre to Southampton in hospital ships and then taken to temporary hospitals nearby. These were mostly converted hotels or small private hospitals along the coast in Brockenhurst, Barton on Sea, Bournemouth, Milford on Sea, New Milton and Netley.

Collins quotes from a diary entry by a nurse attached to one of the hospital trains en route to the French ports:

"On November 25th 1914 she (Sister Luard) helped to care for a number of Sikhs, most of them wounded in the hand and arms. She was clearly moved with compassion for these men, so far from their homes and families, and admired 'their long, fine, dark hair under their turbans, done up with their yellow combs; glorious teeth and melting dark eyes'."

Sir Walter Lawrence, Commissioner for Indian Hospitals, found the accommodation in hotels to be inadequate. He therefore sought suitable accommodation along the coast. Being a tourist town, Brighton had a number of large hotels and the advantage of having very good transport links to London.

Whilst in Brighton, Sir Walter met with the Mayor, Alderman John Otter, who proposed the Royal Pavilion (RP) Estate (Royal Pavilion, Corn Exchange, and the Dome) as an alternative. The RP Estate had been a pleasure palace for the Prince Regent who later became King George IV, and his successors William IV and Queen Victoria. It was purchased from the Royal family by Brighton Corporation in 1850.

By 1914 the Royal Pavilion had lost its allure and hosted community events such as jumble sales, cookery

demonstration lessons, and civic balls. Sir Walter Lawrence accepted the Mayor's suggestion as it would provide adequate accommodation and was a cheaper option than requisitioning hotels. He also secured two other sites which were to be used exclusively for Indian casualties.

The transformation of the RP Estate into the Royal Pavilion Hospital took just six days. In that time, two operating theatres and an x-ray room were established; nine separate kitchens and taps were installed to reflect the differing dietary and caste needs of the impending patients; heating, hot and cold water systems were updated; and signs were put up in Hindi, Gurumukhi and Urdu. In addition, a high fence was erected around the grounds to protect the patients from being disturbed by the public and to enable them to convalesce in comfort. Once the first Indian patients had arrived on 30th November 1914, and in recognition of the important part faith played in their lives, places of worship were established including a tented Gurdwara in the Pavilion grounds.

It must be noted that the hierarchy of the British Army were extremely sensitive to ensuring that the cultural mores and religious requirements of their Indian troops – Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims; were as far as possible, fully observed in all the Brighton hospitals. Indian food was cooked on the premises including dhal and roti, and mutton (non-halal and halal).

The second site secured for a hospital was the Brighton Workhouse. It housed vulnerable, needy and poor people, including children and provided lodgings and care. The existing 1,050 inmates were evacuated to alternative accommodation within the town and the county. On converting it to an Indian military hospital with 2,000 beds, the largest of its kind in England, by January 1915, it was renamed as the Kitchener Hospital in honour of Lord Kitchener who had previously been commander of the Indian Army from 1902 to 1911. It is now called the Brighton General Hospital.

The third Indian hospital and the smallest in Brighton



A nurse adjusts the blanket of a wounded Indian as he is placed into a motor ambulance on the Western Front (IWM).



October 1914 - Indian soldiers at a camp in the New Forest, England (IWM).

with 600 beds, was York Place School building (now part of City College Brighton and Hove). Little is known about this hospital and there appear to be no images of the Indian patients accommodated there - it would appear that there was an embargo of photographs about this hospital.

Whilst recuperating at the hospitals, the soldiers wrote thousands of letters to their loved ones back in India. Although generally illiterate, those patients who couldn't read or write were able to dictate their thoughts to scribes who wrote on their behalf.

All the letters were censored officially by the British Army and translated into English before they reached their destinations. The reasons for censorship are complex but essentially they may have contained military information of value to the enemy, should they have fallen into the wrong hands. Letters were also censored if they were clearly dishonest or those that requested drugs and, unsurprisingly, any letters which reflected negatively on white people. Another reason was to gauge the morale of the soldiers.

There was a strong strand running through them which indicated that the reaction of many of the Indian soldiers to the opportunity to fight for the Empire, was every bit as patriotic and jingoistic as that of their British counterparts. They also provide a vignette into the lives of ordinary people in the villages of India, pointing to everyday concerns, such as family relationships, disputes, marriage issues, worries about money, state of the crops, high prices and various domestic subjects:

"The battle is being carried on very bitterly. In the Lahore Division only 300 men are left. Some are dead, some wounded. The division is finished. Think of it - in taking fifty yards of a German trench, 50,000 men are killed. When we attack they direct a terrific fire on us - thousands of men die daily. It looks as if not a single man can remain alive on either side - then (when none is left) there will be peace. When the Germans attack, they are killed in the same way. For us men it is a bad state of affairs here. Only those return from the battlefield who are slightly wounded. No one else is carried off. Even the Sahibs are not lifted away. The battle resounds with cries. So far as is in your power do not come here. Do not be anxious about me. We are very well looked after. White soldiers are always besides our beds - day and night. We get very good food four times a day. We also get milk. Our hospital is in the palace where the King used to have his throne. Every man is washed once in hot water. The King has given strict order that no trouble be given to any black man in hospital. Men in hospital are tended like flowers, and the King and Queen come to visit them".

Issar Singh (Sikh, 59th Rifles) to a friend (50th Punjabis).

"My father and mother, brothers and sisters, here the ladies tend us, who have been wounded, as a mother tends her child. They pour milk into our mouths, and our own parents, brothers and sisters, were we ill, would only give us water in a pot. There you see the brotherhood of religion, and here you see the brotherhood of the English, who are kind to us without any further motive. The ladies even carry off our excreta, so kind are they; and whatever we have a liking for, they put it in our mouths. They wash our bed clothes every week and massage our backs when they ache from lying in bed. They put us in a motor cars and take us through the city. When, at four o'clock, we go out of the hospital, the ladies of the city give us fruit. They say "we have never seen such men. Only have we heard of them that they are Sikhs of India who once fought against England. Now we do see them with our own eyes as we see our sons." They cheer us for routing the Germans. Their King says "brothers what manner of men are the Indians?" The Government gives us envelopes every week. This is the devil's war. When will it end? If I recover, I shall not remain a soldier, but serve my parents who have food enough and to spare. Military service is great weariness. I shall browse on the grass at home and keep myself alive. I am wounded. Only the man who has lost a leg or arm returns to India. My ankle is broken. I was hit twice. My life is safe but my leg is useless".

Unnamed Sikh soldier to his father.

"Brother, I fell ill with pneumonia and have come away from the war. In this country it rains a great deal: always day and night it rains. ...now I'm quite well and there is no occasion for any kind of anxiety.....Our Government takes great care of us, and we too will be loyal and fight. You must give all the help it requires. Now look, you my brother, our father the King-Emperor of India needs us and any of us who refuses to help him in his need should be counted among the most polluted sinners. It is our first duty to show our loyal gratitude to Government."

A wounded Sikh to his brother (Amritsar, Punjab).

By the end of December 1915, just over a year after their arrival in Europe, Indian troops were withdrawn from the Western Front and sent to Egypt, East Africa and Mesopotamia. The Brighton hospitals continued caring for the wounded Indians until early 1916. In total, 12,000 Indian troops were cared for in the three main hospitals with 72 fatalities. Of these, the 53 Hindus and Sikhs were cremated on a specially built funeral ghat on the Downs in Patcham, on the outskirts of Brighton. Their cremations were carried out in accordance with their respective religious rites, and their ashes scattered on the sea. Their 19 Muslims brothers in arms were transported to Woking where they were buried in a purpose built burial ground in Horsell Common, near to

the Shah Jehan Mosque.

In August 1915, Lieutenant Das Gupta of the Indian Medical Service approached the then Mayor of Brighton, John Otter for permission to erect a permanent nishani (memorial) for the Indian soldiers. The Mayor embraced this idea whole heartedly and became the driving force behind it. He communicated it to the India Office who “gave it favourable consideration, as it was felt appropriate to publicly acknowledge the nation’s gratitude to the Indians”.

Within days, it was agreed that India Office and Brighton Corporation would equally share the costs of the erection of the new memorial and that Brighton alone would be responsible for the on-going care and maintenance. By July 1916, the land upon which the cremations had taken place, and the area immediately around it, was conveyed to County Borough of Brighton from the Marquess of Abergavenny.

The Mayor then consulted, Colonel Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, an eminent architect who had designed numerous buildings in India about a suitable form for a memorial. He sketched out a chatri, (umbrella), a traditional Indian style of memorial and recommended E. C. Henriques, a young Indian architect from Bombay completing his studies in England for the task of undertaking the design, which was completed by December 1916.

After delays due to the war, the memorial was completed by the end of 1920 at the spot where the cremations had taken place. The inscription carved on the memorial plinth, in both English and Hindi, attributed to Sir John Otter, reads:

“For the memory of all Indian soldiers who gave their lives for their King-Emperor in the Great War, this monument, erected on the site of the funeral pyre where the Hindus and Sikhs who died in hospital at Brighton, passed through the fire, in grateful admiration and brotherly affection dedicated.”

The memorial was unveiled by the Prince of Wales (the future Edward the VIII) on 1st February 1921 who in his speech acknowledged the debt owed by Britain to the Indian forces at the commemoration:

“It is befitting that we should remember, and that future generations should not forget, that our Indian comrades came when our need was the highest, free men – volunteering soldiers – who were true to their salt – gave their lives in a quarrel of which it was enough for them to know that the enemy were the foes of their Sahibs, their Empire, and their King.”

(Brighton Herald, 5 February 1921)

Over the next few years, the Chattri was neglected by Brighton Corporation. After the end of the Second World War a retired Indian Army Officer, complained to Field Marshal Lord Birdwood that it was “in a thoroughly dilapidated condition and has apparently been used as a

target by troops during training as the memorial is now cracked and pitted by rifle bullets”. In 1946, when the area was derequisitioned, the War Office, accepting some of the blame, agreed to restore the Chattri to its original state.

The Patcham Branch of the Royal British Legion initiated an annual Pilgrimage in 1950 and continued the commemoration until the last Sunday of June in 1999. Citing old age and dwindling membership they decided they could no longer maintain the ceremony. On hearing of this, the author took over the running of the Chattri with support from the Undivided India EX-Services Association (UEISA), a group of Second World War Indian veterans.

The Chattri Memorial is a tribute to all Indian soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice during the First World War and it particularly remembers the Hindu and Sikh soldiers who were cremated there. An annual service takes place on the second Sunday in June, which has grown from a handful of attendees in 2000 to a regular attendance of hundreds.

Another commemorative structure, The Patcham Down Indian Forces Cremation Memorial, built by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, records the names of the combatants and non-combatants who were cremated at the Chattri. It was inaugurated on 26th December 2010 by the High Commissioner of India, Shri Nalin Surie and is situated near the entrance to the Chattri.

A third memorial, commemorating Brighton’s link with the Indian soldiers is the Indian Memorial Gateway. Designed by Thomas Tyewitt in 16th Century Gujarati style, it was paid for by subscriptions raised from rich Indian Princes and gifted to the people of Brighton as a thank you for nursing their kinsmen. On its unveiling by Maharajah Bhupinder Singh of Patiala on 26th October 1921, he remarked that his own state had provided 28,000 Imperial troops for the war and that some of them had received “Brighton’s abounding hospitality”.

The original inscription on the Gateway reads:

“This gateway is the gift of India in commemoration of her sons who, stricken in the Great War were tended in the Pavilion in 1914 and 1915. Dedicated to the use of the inhabitants of Brighton, BN Southall, Mayor.”

Davinder Singh Dhillon is Chair of the Chattri Memorial Group.

For more information visit www.chattri.org

For their input the author would like to thank Tom Donovan, author and local historian and Kevin Bacon, the Digital Development Officer for the Royal Pavilion and Museums in Brighton.

The Flying Sikh Who Defended London

CHRISTY CAMPBELL

The big guns of the World War One centenary bombardment have opened fire and the contribution of Britain’s ‘empire’ troops has not been overlooked, Sikhs especially and rightly so.

But one extraordinary aspect of that contribution might easily have been forgotten. There were four Indian fighter pilots in the Royal Flying Corps (which became the Royal Air Force). Three of them were killed in action. One, Honorary 2nd Lieutenant Hardit Singh Malik, survived the war.

The story of the Sikh fighter pilot deserves to be much better known. He flew combat mission on the Western Front and in the defence of London against raiding German bombers. In fact Malik fought two enemies. Manfred von Richtofen’s famed ‘Flying Circus’ was one of them; the other was the institutionalised racism of the age. His combat victories did not spare him from being treated as a ‘native.’ It is a story of courage tinged with shame.

As a child I myself was obsessed with First World War flying. It began with a Hollywood film, the Blue Max, in which a German soldier stuck in the mud of the trenches, dreams of being fighter pilot. To do so he must battle class prejudice but Germany by 1917-18 needs a working class hero - who defies the aristocratic code - then proves expendable to save the Army further embarrassment. The plane he must test fly has been tampered with.

It was fiction – but there were parallel narratives of the khaki-clad side of the front line. The story of Hardit Singh is not about class. It is about race – ‘untold’ perhaps because it invokes a pre-politically correct world of sahibs and natives and in its outcome, the brute force realities of how the British Empire in India was held at all.

And just like our fictional German hero, Hardit Singh Malik was warned: ‘We don’t want Indians in the Air Force - one fine day you might go up and your plane will break up in the air.’

Young Hardit, from a prosperous family, had been sent to England when painfully young. He remembered



his arrival aged 13: ‘London in those days was exciting, the centre of empire of course, full of its own importance crowded with horse buses and hansoms...I had traveled down from Rawalpindi to Bombay, took ship at Marseilles, a train to Calais and finally a bus to proper school in Notting Hill Gate. It was 1908. I went to Clifton College, Bristol, but when I arrived they told me chapel was compulsory. I told them I was a Sikh and I went straight back to London.’

After his self removal from Clifton, as he wrote: ‘My family sent me to Eastbourne College where I was not forced to go to chapel. When I arrived some of the boys started ragging me. They started grabbing at my turban, I said I would kill the first boy who touched it. I must have looked very fierce because they all backed away and never troubled me again.’

When war broke out in August 1914, many young Indian students in London rushed to volunteer, but all of them were rejected outright as ‘nationalist revolutionaries.’ Resentment smoldered. At the time, Britain’s tiny air force was just two years old. Under the command in the field of Brigadier-General David Henderson, it hopped across the Channel. On 25 August ‘air fighting’ had begun with rifle shots fired from open cockpits.

Hardit Singh was by now in his second year at Balliol reading modern history. As he recalled years later:

'Everyone at Oxford began to join up, all my friends went. It seemed such an adventure. I was told at the recruiting office there no vacancies for Indians. 'Sligger' got me into the French Red Cross and I started by driving an ambulance presented by Lady [Emerald] Cunard from London to France. I learned to drive it on the road to Southampton. I was with the French for a year and went all over the front.'

In an interview for an Indian newspaper he was more direct: 'Now in those days the British Army did not like the Indian students...they were not trusted' He was told he could be a medical orderly – for wounded native troops,' that or the French Red Cross might have him as the driver of an ambulance.

'I became tremendously excited by the idea of flying,' he would write later, 'fliers were heroes and I wanted to be one. Finally the French gave me a commission. I wrote to Sligger Urquart [his tutor at Balliol] and he was furious. He complained about it to General Henderson, head of the air force, and he asked to see me.'

The young Sikh's connections were impeccable - Francis Fortescue 'Sligger' Urquhart, was Dean of Balliol, famous for his ability to pick out and encourage young men of talent (and good looks). And American born Lady Cunard, was one of London's leading society hostesses. She donated a motor ambulance to the French Army along with its exotically-turbaned driver).

General David Henderson would prove the most significant figure in the ménage. He was appointed Director-General of Military Aeronautics in 1913 and assumed command of the Royal Flying Corps in the field on the outbreak of war. But what could he do about the well-connected young Sikh who wanted to fly? Pilots were officers. And no 'native' could be an officer.

This is how it was, in the race and caste-imbued world in which Britain had managed to establish its dominions in southern Asia. To defend it from military threats within and without, there were both regiments of the British Army (tiny in terms of manpower) and the much larger Indian Army. The crisis of 1914 saw volunteer Indian soldiers shipped to France. Their major contribution took place in the first year of fighting. Casualties were horrific - and in the freezing trenches morale began to waver.

Their officers were British. In the Indian Army, non-commissioned officer was the highest rank to which a 'native' might rise, with authority only over Indian troops. Anglo-Indians (mixed race) were also excluded.

In the British Army it was the same. The Manual of Military Law published by the War Office in 1914 classed any 'person of colour' as an 'alien,' who, although they might be enlisted in special circumstances and limited numbers, could not 'hold any rank in His Majesty's regular forces above that of non-commissioned officer.'

When the Military Service Act of February 1916 introduced compulsory military service for those appropriate among the King's subjects, there was widespread confusion. Were Indians in London or Oxford (those well connected students again) to be caught in the draft? There were complex religious sensitivities. The British traditionally recruited from the 'martial races' to be found in the Punjab and Nepal - from backward rural populations - warlike but obedient.

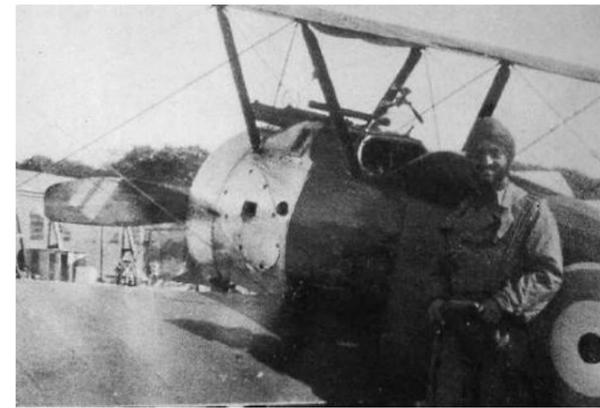
There was administrative chaos until an Army Council instruction of September 1916 excluded 'coloureds' from the general call-up. 'Native' units wherever they came from might only act as labourers. That meant any 'aliens' already in Britain. Soon after Lord Kitchener's famous call for half a million volunteers, the principal clerk at the Colonial Office noted: 'I hear privately that some recruiting officers will pass coloureds. Others however will not, and we must discourage coloured volunteers.'

For educated Indians in London, caste-imbued already, the humiliation of rejection by the Empire, even as private soldiers was total. An official noted: 'The majority of Indian students who volunteered in 1914-15 were so disgusted they were not given commissions, they refused to have anything more to do with the war.'

Via his influential friends, Hardit Singh Malik's case reached the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, anxious to find a sop to Indian nationalist sentiment. But no 'native' could be an officer. It was suggested by an official that he could be an 'honorary' officer - like the German Kaiser who was indeed a Field Marshal in the British Army.

It was pointed out: '...the bearer does not exercise any actual power.' And the life expectancy of a novice pilot was ten days. So the rules were bent and the young Sikh was in. Thus on 6 April 1917, Hardit Singh Malik became Hon. 2/Lt H. S. Malik, RFC, Special Reserve. The first days were a bit like being back at Eastbourne College. As he recalled: 'When I went for initial training at Aldershot, the sergeant looked pop-eyed at my turban and said I would have to dress like everyone else. An officer smoothed the trouble out and the Flying Corps and I reached a compromise, I was allowed to keep my turban but I had to wear an outsize flying helmet over it when I was in the air. I had one my made by a hatter in Piccadilly.'

Hardit was billeted on a 'working class family' in a red-brick back street of Reading. On one account: 'At first they did not know how to treat him, but after the initial reserve and shyness he became like a member of the family.' Later in the war when he was shot down and wounded in France his picture appeared in the Daily Mirror. His landlady sent him a note from the family saying they 'were all very proud of their wounded hero.' The neighbours were not so sure.



Posted to France as a fighter pilot flying a single-seat Sopwith Camel, he found a mentor in the Canadian ace, Billy Barker. In a week of frantic action he shot down three enemy fighters – then on 26 October 1917 Barker and Malik were intercepted by Jasta 18, the elite 'Red Noses.'

Malik was shot down – by Lieutenant Paul Strahle who would write: 'This was the hottest fight of my whole career. The pilot was good, his machine faster and more maneuverable. But I would have got him but for the rain.'

Hospital followed, then a posting to Northern Italy and more air fighting. He was now a minor public hero. Powerful figures were appalled. He was still subject to constant official petty humiliations.

In early 1918 he was posted to No. 141 Squadron based at Biggin Hill flying two seat Bristol Fighters against German Gotha bombers raiding London. On his first day, his batman brought him a jug of shaving water. Malik kept his beard.

With the war won, it was down to the new Royal Air Force to formally decide whether it wanted an Indian as an officer. Malik expressed his desire both to stay in the RAF and return to the Punjab. It was then he got the warning: 'We don't want Indians in our air force.'

A secret memo said: '...we should not train natives in a branch of the service [flying] where a traitor might be of enormous danger to us...'

The anguished Montagu wrote: 'I will not consent to any new racial disqualification, indefensible after the use we were prepared to make and did make during the war of Indians who could fly.'

He was overruled. The Chief of the Air Staff insisted: 'this is not an Indian Royal Air Force but a British Royal Air Force.'

Soon the RAF would be bombing 'native' villages in the Punjab. In Rawalpindi Malik received a hero's welcome. He would write: 'I fell in love, got married, but I had to promise to leave flying.'

The Flying Sikh had survived – but had lost his greatest battles. He went on to become a diplomat, serving as a Trade Commissioner and the Prime Minister of Patiala.



After Indian Independence he was High Commissioner to Canada and Ambassador to France before retiring in 1957. Hardit Singh died in Delhi in 1985 aged 91. He will be remembered.

Christy Campbell is a British journalist and author of books including "The Maharaja's Box which extensively details the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh. His next book "The Flying Sikh" will be published in 2016.



Depicting WW1 Sikhs In Art

JAG LALL

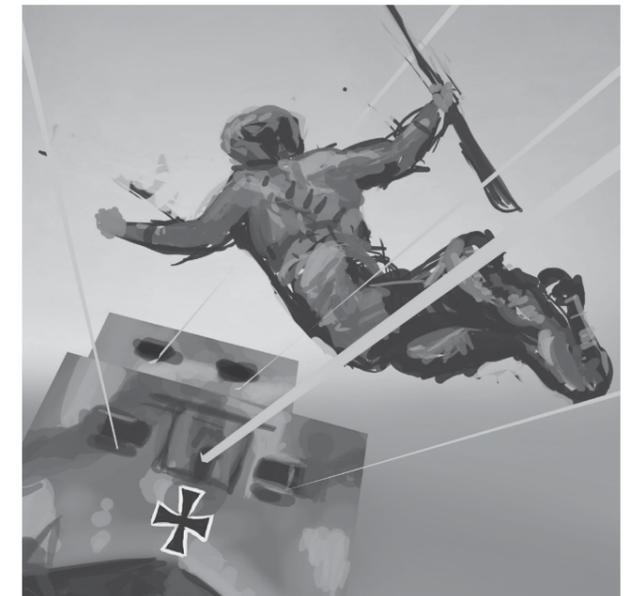
It was a tremendous honour to be asked to depict the image of the Subedar for the cover of “The Sikh Chronicles” publication. The whole look and feel of the Sikh soldier, in bronze and standing proud at the National Memorial Arboretum, is one which will convey an inspirational message to future generations of the role of Sikhs during the Great War.

In trying to create an artwork for the front cover illustration which provokes strong emotions, many concepts were drafted and discussed. At first the ideas revolved around a dynamic scene, perhaps an action shot similar to other works I’ve had the pleasure of creating for the Sikhs at War project, contained herein.

Having covered various action shots ranging from one-on-one fighting, a cavalry charge, of soldiers in the trenches etc; I decided to try and take the dynamism up a notch and create a draft of a Sikh soldier leaping to take on a German tank. Whilst the art was energetic it was not a realistic moment of the war, nor was there much of a profile on the Sikh soldier which was the focus of the publication and memorial. Those draft forms are shown opposite, and give some idea of the creative but highly ambitious concept.

We decided instead to focus directly on a Sikh soldier – unidentified in name but personable in appearance, to show the pride and integrity of one who had survived the war with medals pinned on his chest – but with a hint of sorrow and reflection upon the human tragedy of conflict he had witnessed.

The first several drafts had the soldier looking straight on at the viewer but in doing so this lacked depth. Also in the first draft the beard was too short with a trim look so I corrected this by replicating a much more similar style to what the Sikh soldiers had in WWI. I looked at bringing a slight tilt to the angle by having the soldier look like he was standing to attention, perhaps after receiving a new medal or having met a General. This brought his head and chin up a little and made the image look less flat and one dimensional. In a way it helped give more character to the soldier and depicted a scene



which the viewer should hopefully think about.

I felt the eyes were an important feature in this artwork and I wanted to bring emotion and substance to them. Whilst there is strength in the soldiers’ eyes there is also a somewhat sombre look in them too, a moment of remembrance of the reality of war he had witnessed. In turn I wanted the viewer to try and feel the same sentiment, of not forgetting the sacrifices of the Sikhs.

It was important for me to show some tainted joy, to bring emotion to the piece and show the human element by creating a strong sentiment. I did this through the use of the colours I chose and in slightly discolouring the medals to convey grit and to symbolise the sorrow that ties in with war.

I feel in many ways that this cover art is a reflection of the pride and admiration we have for our Sikh soldiers coupled with the contemplation for all that they witnessed and endured. Hopefully it – and the memorial – will get people thinking and remembering the sacrifices of our ancestors.

Jag Lall is an artist who has created visually engaging images for comics and exhibitions. Visit www.jagallart.com for more.

Sikh History On The Streets of London

RAV SINGH

The streets of London reveal a wealth of Anglo-Sikh history, drawing upon a relationship between the British and the Sikhs which goes back more than three centuries.

While the most well-known artefacts are the Kohinoor diamond at the Tower of London, and items from the Court of Lahore including Maharaja Ranjit Singh's crown at the Victoria and Albert Museum in Kensington; not many will know that "The Ferozepure Regiment of Sikhs" is inscribed on a plinth in the middle of Trafalgar Square.

Most certainly nearly every Sikh who visits the capital will have been to see Nelson's column (or seen it from afar) but how many would spot or pay attention to the inscriptions on the plinth. Stumbling upon this I was both surprised and motivated to ensure other such historic gems do not remain hidden or forgotten.

Having a deep interest in our past led me to develop the "Anglo-Sikh Monopoly Board", with tours around the capital to reveal a fascinating account of key episodes and players from our history. From the Old Kent Road through to Mayfair, there are stories of jewels, weapons and religious relics to be found in Museums and Private Collections, events in the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh and his children, works of art in public galleries and memorials to the Sikhs all hidden along the busy heaving streets of London.

Presented here are some of those you might wish to see for yourself:

Location: Strand (1840s onwards)

The Illustrated London News was the world's first illustrated newspaper, founded at Ingram House on the Strand on 14 May 1842 by Herbert Ingram. With the Kingdom of Punjab annexed by the British in the late 1840s, the newspapers articles provided eye-witness accounts of soldiers of the East India Company discovering the Sikhs and the landscape of the land of the five rivers. Illustrations and articles are now collected by Anglo-Sikh history enthusiasts and provide a step

back in time to the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab and the events that followed its annexation.

Location: The Chillianwala Memorial, Marlborough Street (1849)

Marlborough Street located in Chelsea is a short walk from the Royal Hospital. It was under an Act of Parliament in 1593, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, that a weekly tax on parishes was levied to raise funds to support soldiers and sailors. In 1681, King Charles issued a Royal Warrant authorising the building of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to care for those 'broken by age or war' - Sir Christopher Wren designed the building.

Chillianwala stands out as a battle in which the British failed to defeat their opponents despite having the advantages of weight of numbers, ideal weather and terrain, and superior logistics. The Chillianwala Memorial, in memory of the soldier of the East India Company who fought, is located in the grounds of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

The Battle was fought on 13th January 1849 during the Second Anglo-Sikh War in a region now in Pakistan. The battle was one of the bloodiest fought by the British East India Company. Both sides claimed a victory – with the Sikhs claiming that they forced the British to retreat. But since the Sikhs disengaged first, the British claimed the win, although they admitted that the Sikhs had missed an opportunity to gain a victory. However, the forcing back of the British, together with the loss of several guns and the colours of three English regiments, along with the rout of the 14th Light Dragoons, dealt a blow to British morale and was testament to the tenacity and martial skill of the Sikh army.

A testimony left by a British observer stated: "The Sikhs fought like devils, fierce and untamed... Such a mass of men I never set eyes on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets and struck their assailants when they were transfixed."

Two Sikh canons from the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh are also found in the ground of the Royal Hospital.

The cannons are Indian six-pounder Bronze guns dated 1790-1, with Devanagari and Persian inscriptions. They are believed to have been taken at the Battle of Chillianwalla in 1849, and were presented to the Royal Hospital Chelsea by the East India Company in 1856.

Location: Pall Mall (1849)

At the junction of Pall Mall with Waterloo Place stands a statue of the imperial statesman and viceroy of India John Lawrence – largely unknown by the UK Sikh community despite him being the administrator of the Punjab following its annexation in 1849.

In 1849, following the Second Sikh War, Lawrence became a member of the Punjab Board of Administration under his brother Henry Lawrence, and was responsible for numerous reforms of the province. He encouraged the development of Punjabi infrastructure, earning him the sobriquet of “the Saviour of the Punjab”.

Location: Trafalgar Square (1857)

At the corner facing Northumberland Avenue stands a statue of Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, KCB, a British general particularly associated with India and noted for his recapture of Cawnpore from rebels during the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The rebellion led to the dissolution of the East India Company in 1858, the reorganisation of the army and the direct governance of India by the crown.

The Regiment of Ferozepore was raised at the close of the First Sikh War in 1846, and recruited ex-soldiers of the Khalsa Army, mainly from the cis-Sutlej area of the Punjab. In 1857 the Regiment received orders to march to Allahabad, a military stronghold where there were reports of disturbances when the Native Infantry had mutinied. Lieutenant Brayser, the commander in charge, quickly paraded his men and disarmed all the guards of the mutinous regiment, controlling the situation and saving the Allahabad Fort.

After Allahabad, the Regiment joined the Ferozepore Relief of Lucknow under General Havelock. The Sikhs took a large part in this campaign and their role is commemorated by the unique dual Battle-Honour of “Lucknow, Defence and Capture”.

For their services, General Havelock promoted all Indian soldiers in the Ferozepore Regiment to Subadar, in lieu of promotion to the 1st Class Indian Order of Merit (IOM). As a special distinction for its conduct during the mutiny, the Ferozepore Regiment was granted the privilege of securing a “red pagri” as its head-dress, which its descendant regiment still uses in India today.

Today, Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southall is located on Havelock Road which is named after this very General who was served by Sikhs in the Ferozepore Regiment and provided the special distinctions to this historic

Regiment.

Location: Piccadilly/Coventry Street (1916)

Named after Henry Coventry, Charles II’s Secretary of State; Coventry Street joins Haymarket at Piccadilly Circus. It is at this junction that a photo of Princess Sophia Duleep Singh taken on 19 October 1916 and currently kept in the collections of the Museum of London.

Princess Sophia Duleep Singh was the fifth of six children of Maharaja Duleep Singh. The Maharaja and his first wife Bamba Müller settled at Elveden Hall in Norfolk, where Sophia was born in 1876. In 1896, Queen Victoria gave Sophia Faraday House in Hampton Court as a grace and favour home, where she lived for most of her adult life.

Sophia was highly involved with the women’s suffrage movement. She joined the Women’s Social and Political Union and became an active campaigner at its Richmond branch. On 18 November 1910, she took part in the first deputation to the House of Commons with Emmeline Pankhurst, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and others. Sophia was highly engaged in the patronage of Indians in Britain and also involved in bringing attention to the contribution of Indian soldiers in the First World War. Sophia visited wounded Indian soldiers in Brighton, and organised Flag Days to raise money for wounded soldiers. The first of these took place on 19 October 1916 at Haymarket/Coventry Street, where women sold Indian flags decorated with elephants, stars and other objects.

Location: Park Lane - Memorial Gates and the Memorial Pavilion (1920s – 1940s)

This war memorial located at the Hyde Park Corner junction with Park Lane of Constitution Hill commemorates the armed forces of the British Empire who served in the First and Second World Wars. The soldiers came from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka as well as Africa and the Caribbean.

The Memorial Gates were inaugurated on 6 November 2002 by Queen Elizabeth II, in the Golden Jubilee year of her reign. The Memorial Pavilion is located next to it has a list of the 74 overseas soldiers awarded the George Cross or Victoria Cross in the two World Wars.

The names include Captain Ishar Singh who was the very first Sikh to be awarded the VC for bravery in Waziristan in 1921; and Havildar Prakash Singh, who was awarded the VC during the Second World War in January 1943.



Sikh cannon in Chelsea, captured and brought to England after the Anglo-Sikh Wars.

Location: Marlborough Street, Chelsea – St Luke’s Church, Punjab Frontier Force Memorial Chapel (1951)

St. Luke’s Church is the tallest parish church in London, and is often referred to as “Chelsea’s Cathedral”. It is here that the Punjab Frontier Force (PFF) chapel commemorates one of the great fighting units of the British Indian Army with a repository of the memories and tradition of the PFF.

More popularly as the Piffers, the Regiments of the Punjab Frontier Force served with distinction on the North West Frontier, but also during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, The Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 and the Great War.

Volunteers who signed up to serve with the PFF reads:

“I.....inhabitant of.....son of.....swear by the Gooroo Grunth Sahibjee (holy scripture of Sikhism) and if I tell a falsehood may the Gooroo Grunth Sahib cause misfortune to descend upon me, that I will never forsake or abandon my Colours, that I will march wherever I am directed whether within or beyond the Company’s Territories, that I will implicitly obey all the orders of my Commanders, and in everything behave myself as becomes a good Soldier and faithful servant of the Company, and failing in any part of my

duty as such I will submit to the penalties ascribed in the Articles of War, which have been read to me.”

Post partition, there was some anxiety about the preservation of the memorials that had been set up in the garrison churches of the Punjab region. St. Luke’s Church agreed to receive the memorial brasses, stone plaques and memorabilia from India and a sanctum was created in the crypt of the Church, as well as a memorial chapel designed in a section of the main Church. Both the sanctum and the chapel were dedicated on 3 June 1951 by the Bishop of London.

The Piffer Chapel features badges of fourteen units of the Frontier Force, and the altar frontal is presented in the red, gold and green colours of the regiment. On the wall is engraved a description of how the chapel came to be established, and the colours of the Second Punjab Infantry.

The lecture by Rav Singh covering all the Anglo-Sikh Monopoly Board locations is available upon request. Regular Sikh history tours take place in London - for more information email: ravsingh01@gmail.com



Guardsmen Jatenderpal Singh Bhullar (Scots Guards) guarding Buckingham Palace in 2012 (PA).



L. Cpl Sarvjit Singh (Army Air Corps) and Signaller Simranjit Singh (Royal Corps of Signals) became the first Sikhs to guard the Queen in summer 2009.

The Way Of The Warrior

DR PAVANDEEP SINGH SANDHU

History has given us many great heroes. Men and women from all cultures have risen to glorious deeds and are remembered by generations. The Sikhs who fought in WW1 continued a tradition of bravery and indomitable spirit spanning some five hundred years. We look back at them today in remembrance and inspiration.

But inspiration means nothing if it is not followed by action. What was the path these warriors, and the many great Sikh warriors before them, took? And, how can we walk this path today, help our own societies, and create our own chronicles for the future?

Sikhi is ultimately about divine love and continuous advancement in all spheres of life. With the elimination of falsehood and duality, this eventually leads to union with the Truth ('God', 'Vaheguru'). In the Jap ji Sahib, Guru Nanak explains that in order to totally destroy falsehood and live a Truthful life, man must walk in the Way of God's Will: "Everyone is subject to His Command; no one is beyond his Command. O Nanak, one who understands His Command has no ego."

Ego is regarded as the largest obstacle between ourselves and union with Waheguru. It is from ego that our worldly desires and needs originate and it is these that keep us tied to mortality. The Guru teaches us that the true enlightened individual has no worldly desire. He has no care for winning or losing, no preference for praise or slander and is indifferent to pain or pleasure. This state of mind is also developed in the field of martial arts as it allows freedom of expression and mastery of combat. As warriors, Sikhs should be intimately acquainted with martial arts and physical training.

The concept of the Warrior-Saint is the cornerstone of Sikh thought. Martial arts, physical training and meditation on Vaheguru are all a form of training for the Warrior-Saint. Sainly virtues and discipline embellish the martial strength of the Warrior whilst the martial prowess and discipline of the Warrior intensify the power and wisdom of the Saint. The concept of the Warrior-Saint is not to join together two unrelated qualities to form a versatile individual, but to bring about

the synergistic union of the Warrior and the Saint into a single form which ascends the powers of both.

Physical training allows us to push the human body to its limits. If you are brave enough to push to the extremes of your strength and endurance, you will learn a lot about yourself. Here, the world around you seems to stop. There is no past or future, only the present reality of what you are faced with. This is, in itself, a form of meditation, as your senses are heightened and the mind falls into sharp focus. What you do in these precious primal moments, this game of survival, makes you the person you are. And when you keep going back for more, you start to become a true Warrior.

Meditating on Vaheguru gives focus and understanding of the self, as God is within us, and simultaneously brings us closer to Him. It allows us to understand and accept why things happen and how they are supposed to happen in times to come.

Used together, both meditation and physical training increase a Sikh's self-knowledge and focus, slowly chipping away at his ego and bringing him closer to Waheguru. As ego diminishes, outcomes such as winning or losing start to mean nothing to him as he only concerns himself with the act of doing; the rest is left to the Way of His Will. When a Sikh achieves this state he expresses himself freely and without desire. He becomes a Warrior-Saint and his actions are now all a form of meditation on Vaheguru.

The Warrior-Saint's life is permeated by discipline from his training. He accepts God's Will in all situations and not only combats external evil physically and morally but also takes the fight internally to the Five Sins: lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. Fists are no use against these foes, and so the Warrior-Saint uses the sword of virtue in this epic battle. He slowly breaks the hold of the Five, freeing his mind and enhancing the effectiveness of his meditation. As the Five increase their attack, he concentrates harder on Vaheguru and continues to push himself physically so that he may overcome his limits and focus his mind further. Self-

knowledge continues to increase as the Warrior-Saint comes full circle – meditation and physical training are now one. He continues in this way until he reaches the ultimate goal of liberation from mortality itself.

What does it mean to be a Warrior in this day and age? Anyone can work out. Anyone can carry a weapon. The true Warrior must always do the right thing, regardless of circumstance (“Truth is high but truthful living is higher” – Guru Nanak), and his state of mind is one of total awareness and preparation – the authentic representation of ‘tiar-bar-tiaar’ (Khalsa concept of being forever ready). To be a Warrior is a vocation, and this comes with its own skillset and knowledge.

In his book, *On Combat*, retired U.S. Army Colonel Dave Grossman divides society into three categories: Sheep, Wolves and Sheepdogs. Most people fall into the category of Sheep. This is not derogatory but simply means that most people go about their day with no real concern for happenings outside their immediate spheres of life. As long as their needs are attended to, Sheep don’t make much noise. They are untrained and when faced with conflict Sheep try to do the right thing without upsetting the status quo. Sheep are important because without them there would be no society in the first place.

Wolves are the bad guys in society. With no moral compass or ethical boundaries, they prey on the Sheep when and how they please. From the backstabbing work colleague to the prolific serial killer, the Wolf can take many guises.

Sheepdogs are the noble minority of folk who walk the Way of the Warrior and are forever ready to repel the aggression of the Wolf. They stand out from the crowd and in times of conflict, “walk into the heart of darkness, into the universal human phobia, and walk out unscathed”. Importantly, Sheepdogs have an intense love for their fellow citizens and always look to use their knowledge and skills to help and empower those around them.

A Warrior makes a conscious decision to live a life of service to his fellow man, to run towards danger when others flee, and to stand up for the right thing no matter what the cost. But the Warrior’s claim to virtue is weak if he does not possess the strength and fortitude to back it up when challenged. The Warrior should be proficient in combat and also possess overall strength and fitness (so start a strength program at your local gym, or join a mixed martial arts club). He should also train his mind and intellect with education as many battles are fought and won long before they reach the field. It is also important to train for emergency situations such as adverse weather or terrorism. The Warrior’s mantra is “Not if, but when” so one should prepare for any situation. If you find yourself lacking in a particular skill area – train it! “You do not rise to the occasion in combat, you sink to the

level of training.”

By mentally rehearsing, or visualising, we can further enhance the benefits of our training. This technique is well known amongst security personnel and involves meditating on a difficult or hostile situation which can range from standing up to a cruel boss or having a suicide bomber walk onto your train. The trick is to make the visualisation as vivid as possible and to try and feel all the emotions you would feel if it were happening for real. Make a note of the problems that occur – fear, indecision, panic etc. – and then try to address these in turn. Whilst visualising you have the luxury of slowing down, re-winding or even pausing the ‘tape’ so you can make sure you do the correct thing. Always visualise yourself overcoming the problem as this helps build confidence. Through visualisation you can learn to stay calm and to act decisively. Furthermore, the scenarios you’ve run through may provide easily accessible solutions if these events should occur in real life.

In order to ensure he is never caught off guard, the Warrior remains in a state of situational awareness. Former United States Marine and defence expert, Jeff Cooper, refers to this as ‘Condition Yellow’. In this state, we are constantly scanning our environment and are on the lookout for potential threats. It is not a form of paranoia but a state of relaxed alert. Examples include being aware of the number of people in a room, where the exits are, and if anyone is behaving suspiciously. You should already be thinking a few steps ahead leaving you all the more prepared should anything untoward occur.

In a difficult situation, the Warrior does not think that someone else will turn up to help, but rather thinks: “If not me, then who?” Be it in the workplace or on the street, this is an attitude we should adopt when faced with wrongdoing and dishonesty. Starting with small incidences first, this can be practiced on a daily basis so that we start to build up the courage and confidence to tackle larger problems.

A Warrior’s efforts flow freely and he no longer hopes for ‘good’ things to happen to be ‘happy’, nor does he hope that ‘bad’ things don’t happen as they will make him ‘sad’. Emotional control and contentment are achieved as we learn that although we cannot control what happens in our lives we can control how we feel about it. The Warrior understands that whatever happens will occur according to the Will of God, and that dwelling on outcomes restricts us from the important process of doing.

Start to accept small things, both positive and negative, in your life with good grace. Someone insulted you? Or your favourite football team lost an important game? Accept it as God’s Will. Likewise, if someone showers you with praise, or you get that promotion at work, don’t go crazy throwing parties either. The Warrior learns to

stay neutral and focussed at all times. Practicing with relatively small life incidents will prepare you to deal with larger problems and rewards that occur in life.

But whilst the Warrior accepts the Will of God in all things, he does not sit by and allow evil to take place unchecked. Indeed, evil exists by the Will of God, but so does the Warrior and it is his job to fight. Whether he is victorious or not is not up to him.

The defining quality of the Warrior-Saint isn’t his knowledge of God or his strength at arms, but his love for all beings. The Warrior sees his training as his duty and everything he does becomes a form of service to those around him. We must learn to be empathetic, and a good way to do this is to volunteer, mentor, or just find ways to help people in our daily lives. Don’t judge people on appearances and try to understand the difficulties

When The Sikhs Came To War!

AMAR SINGH BASSI

The Sikhs were fearless fighters on the British side
They fought with spirit and pride, ready to collide!
The Sikhs could survive being hit by a shell
They made massive contributions at Neuve Chapelle.
To the city of Marseille
They came to make the enemy pay.
Sikhs never gave up on burning sands
Even though they were fighting on foreign lands.
They wore their turbans and uniforms with pride
They never looked down, frightened or cried.
They fought with character and passion
Even though their food was a system of ration.
The Sikhs that died but were never found to cremate
Are inscribed in memorial at the Menin Gate.
They hailed from India, of the Punjab and,
Came to aid Britain in NO MAN’S LAND!
And to this day Britain pays loyal respect
To the Sikhs full of intellect.
In the town of Ypres they faced up to gas
Continued to fight as the bodies started to mass.
Killed tons of opposition during the war
Sikhs fighting like lions - Roar!!
After fighting for their lives
As the century mark sparked, the story continues
to thrive.

people go through on a daily basis. This in turn will help you step up your training as you realise you will only be able to help those around you if you possess a skill set strong enough to address the problems of today’s society.

Life throws many challenges at us. We Sikhs recognise that our history is rich with men and women who faced difficult challenges with the finest courage and grace. If we are to truly honour their sacrifice let us not confine their glory to storytelling, but instead let it shine through us and our actions as we move forward, together, to set out our own chronicles.

Dr Pavandeep Singh Sandhu has a 3rd Dan black belt in Taekwondo and is a keen military enthusiast and philosopher. By day, he works as an ophthalmologist in Surrey.

About the Sikhs fighting (Another man’s war)
They deserved Victoria Crosses but no one saw.
The valour of the Sikhs
Who stood on high peaks, after their well-earned sleeps.
To kill the enemy
When cowardice was never a remedy.
Fortunately people saw the impact the Sikhs made
In the First World War, more explosive than a grenade!



Amar Singh Bassi, 11, visited the battlefields of Flanders in summer 2014, and saw sites in remembrance of the Sikh war contribution at Neuve Chapelle and the British cemetery at Festubert where Indian soldiers are remembered.



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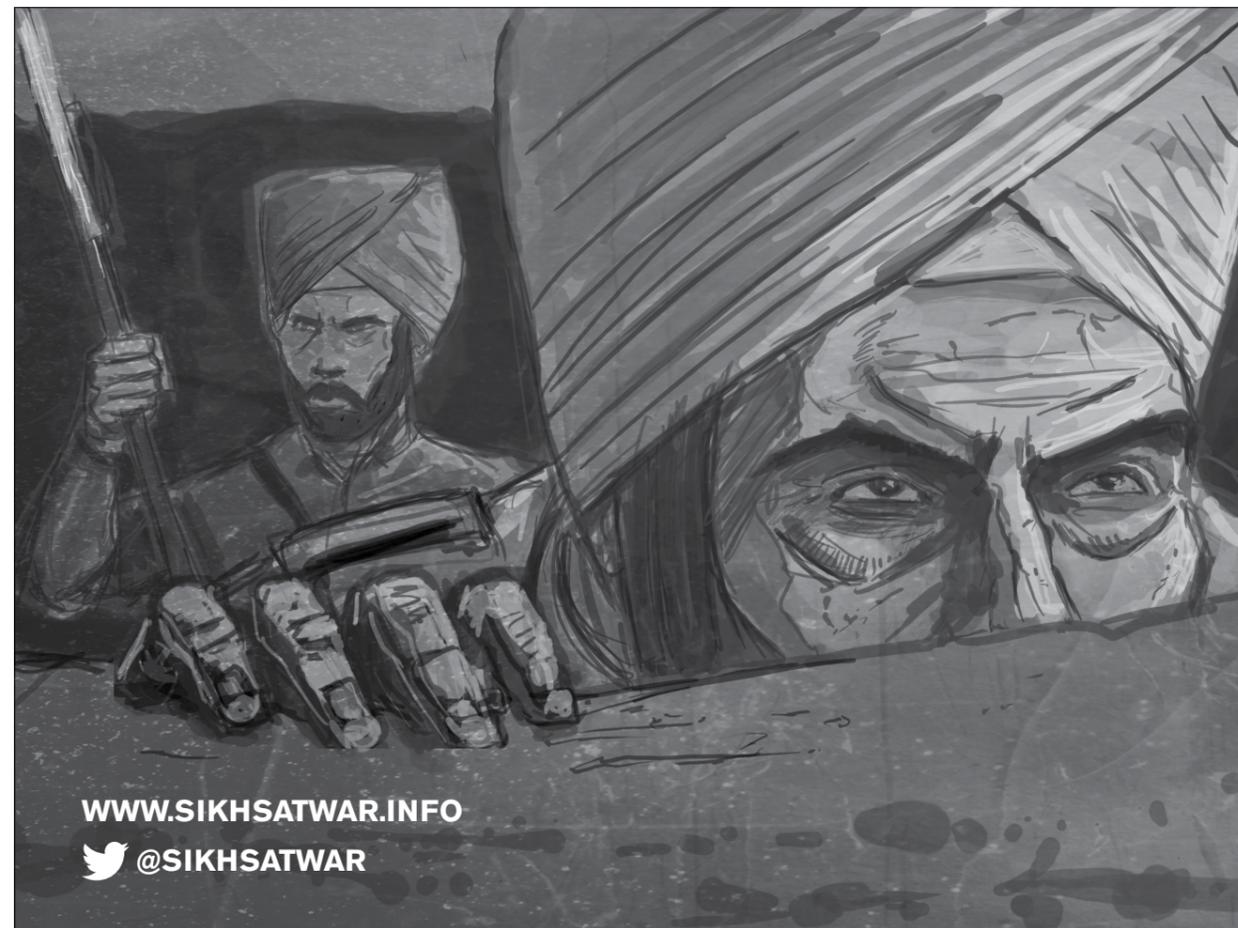


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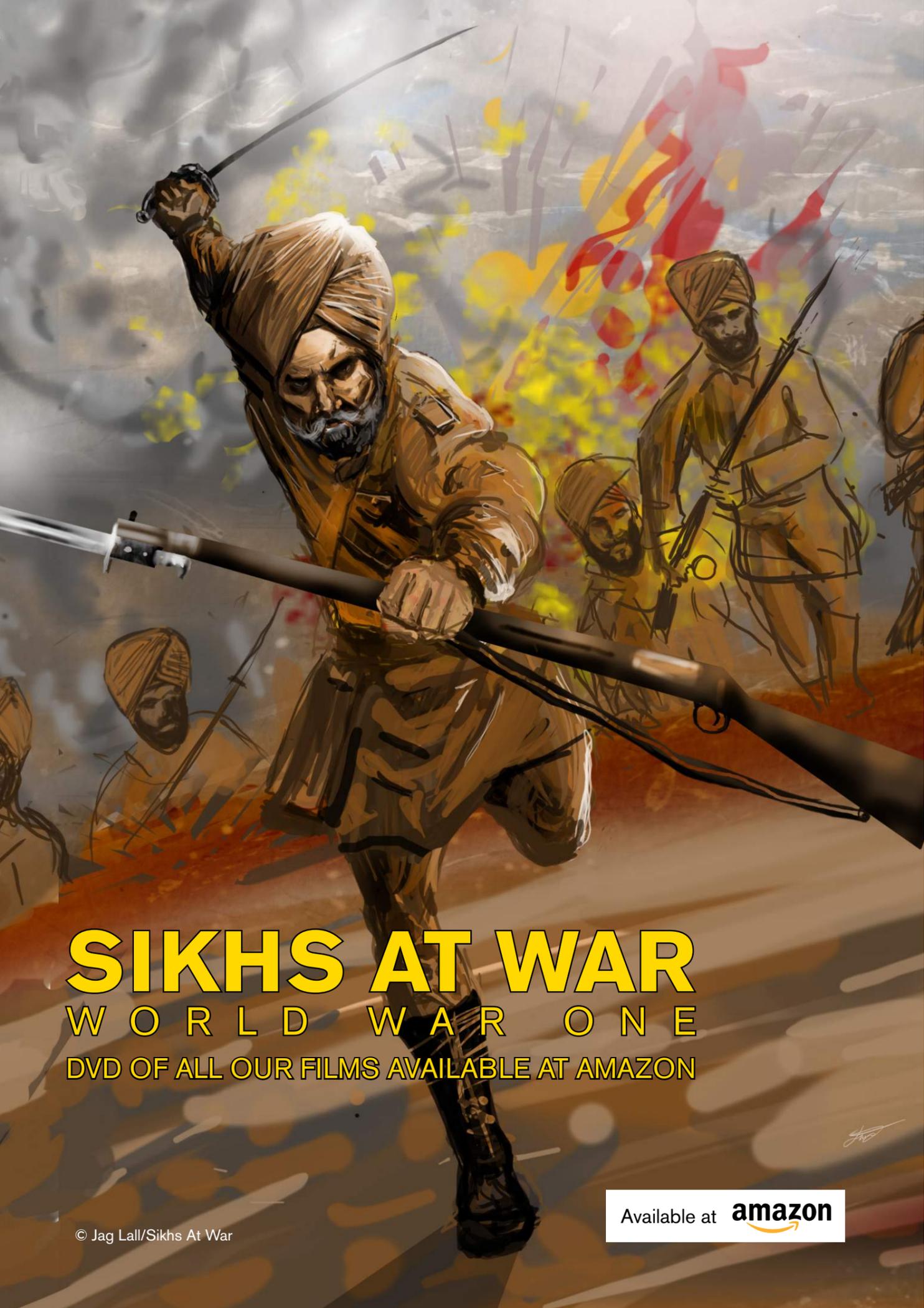
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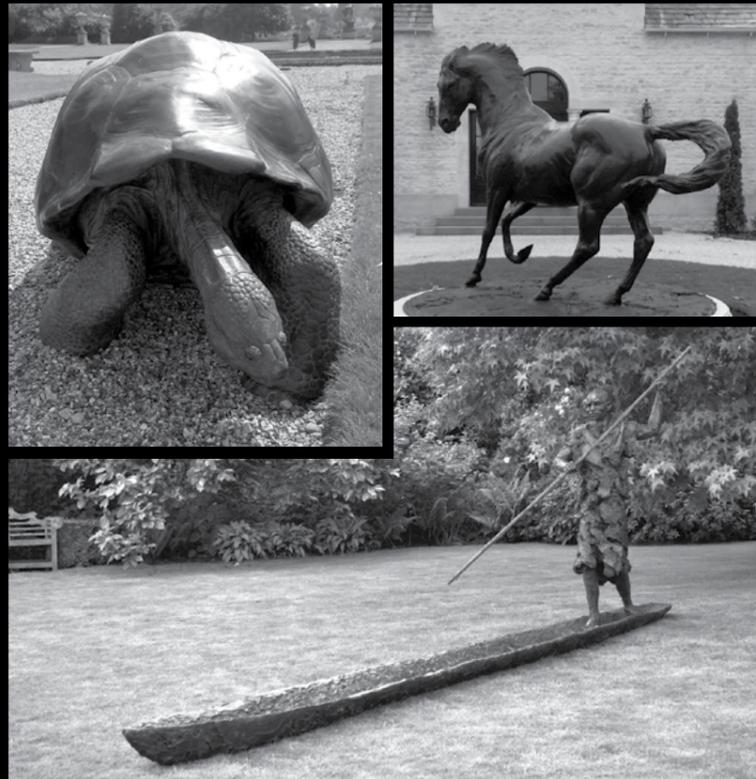
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