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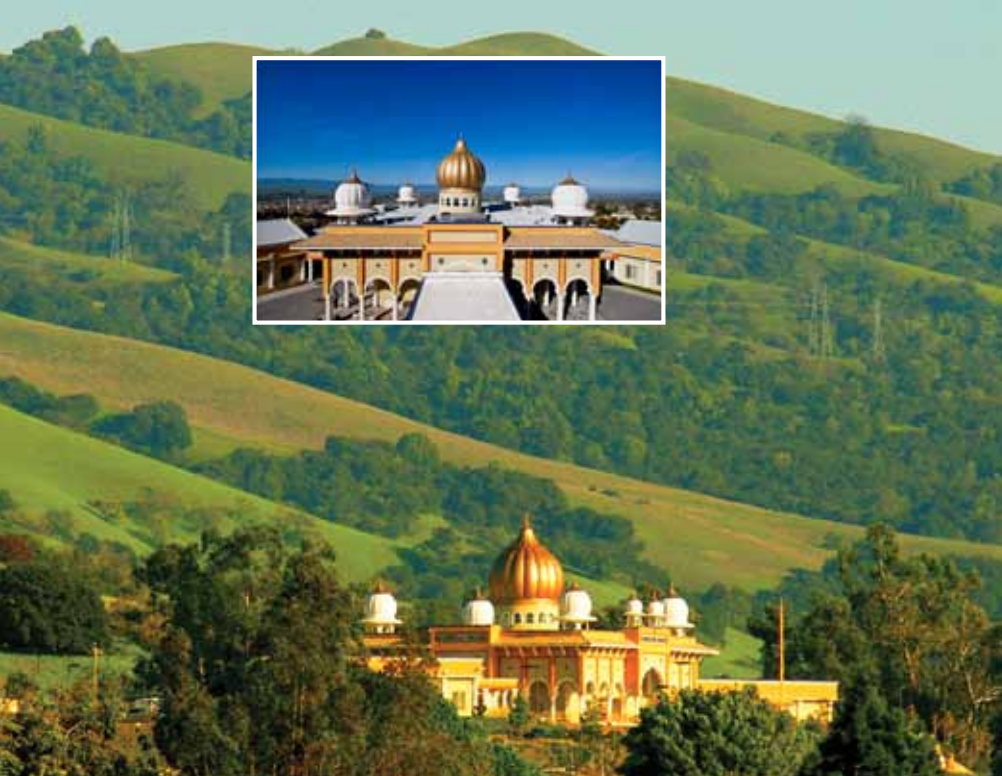
NISHAAN

NAGAARA



SPECIAL ISSUE

Sikh Warriors in the Great War



The Third Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 13 September 2014 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley

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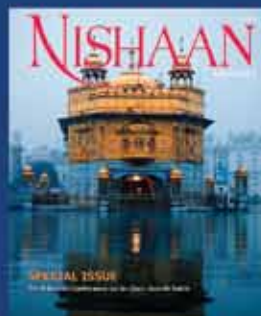
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Photo: by Amardeep Singh

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Published by
The Nagaara Trust
16-A Palam Marg
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi 110 057, India

Associated with
The Chardi Kalaa Foundation
San Jose, USA

Printed by
Colourbar Communications
at G.S. Graphics
Naraina Industrial Area
New Delhi.

Please visit us at:
www.nishaannagaara.com

The opinions expressed in
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Sikh Warriors in The Great War

The ferocious battles during the Anglo-Sikh Wars of 1845-46 and 1848-49 defined for all time, if indeed this was ever necessary, the indomitable fighting prowess and spirit of the Sikh warrior. During the ensuing occupation of the Punjab by the expanding colonists, the Khalsa soldiery was sought to be disbanded and indeed the process had begun when the British administration were confronted by the stark reality of policing and defending the turbulent northwest frontier region with Afghanistan.

Thus, without much ado but certainly some trepidation, the British resurrected the erstwhile Sikh soldiery, albeit as 'irregular' forces for service on the frontiers. This was in fact the beginning of the famed PIFFERs even while the first 'pure' Sikh regiments were shortly raised for service in the land of the five rivers. Overwhelmed by the events of 1857, the chastened British administration were soon to massively expand the percentage of Sikhs in the re-organised Indian Army, and these new regiments, infantry, cavalry, sappers and gunners, served with distinction and characteristic gallantry in various parts of India and overseas, in defence of the Empire.

The several 'expeditions' to China, East Africa, Burma, and other outposts of the far flung Empire, however, were to pale into insignificance in August 1914 when India, as part of the British Empire, was drawn into the vortex of the most terrible war mankind had known, after Germany invaded Belgium on 4th August 1914, followed by Britain's declaration of War.

Two days later, the Imperial Government of India declared their commitment, initially sending troops for defence of the Suez Canal, thus freeing regular British troops for service on the Western Front. Remarkably, within just a fortnight, a Corps of two Infantry and one Cavalry Division were embarked on ships which sailed westwards to War.

First Indian combat troops of the 3rd (Lahore) Division sailed from Karachi and Bombay westwards, these being vanguard of the million more who were to follow. Instead of Egypt, however, the Indian Expeditionary Force were diverted to France where the British Expeditionary Force (the "Old Contemptibles") were shattered and exhausted after two months of bitter fighting against the German Army's overwhelming numbers. The situation was perilous and but for the Indian Army, the German Kaiser's grand plan to smash the French and British armies, secure the Channel ports and declare victory by Christmas 1914, would well have been realised.

The rest is history but the following excerpt from the Viceroy's report sums up the incredible fighting actions of the Indians on the western front. *The Indian Army Corps was to be pitted against the most powerful military organisation on the globe, against a European enemy who had brought to the highest pitch of sinister perfection both the science and the practice of war, and who was about to plunge not Europe alone, but the entire civilised world, into such a welter of continuous devilry and horror as the mind of man had never imagined and history had never known. The landing of the two Indian Divisions, numbering 24,000 men, on the quays of Marseilles in September and October 1914, was a great event, not merely in the annals of the Indian Army, but in the history of mankind.*

Contributing the most volunteers of any of the British imperial forces that fought in the Great War, were some 1.5 million Indian troops, of which Sikhs constituted large percentage. In fact, at the beginning of the War, Sikh military personnel numbered around 35,000 men of the 161,000 troops of the Indian Army, around 22% of the armed forces, yet Sikhs were less than 2% of the total Indian population. During 1914-18, over 100,000 Sikh soldiers fought on various fronts, from northern France and Flanders, also at the Somme, to Mesopotamia, Palestine and in East Africa.

The Sikh soldier did not need any extraneous cause for his heroic deeds on the battlefield as, once he had sworn to serve, his allegiance was unwavering, his bravery unmatched! First Indian troops to land on the continent of Europe (at Marseilles in France) were in fact the XV Sikhs, part of the Jullundur Brigade which had amongst its other constituent battalions, the 47th Sikhs, 59th Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) and 1st Manchesters.

Within days of arriving at the 'Front', the Indian troops were faced by the massive (final) German offensive, aimed to drive the British 'thin red line' back to the French Channel ports. They were not intimidated and in fact, not just stopped the offensive but in counter-attacks the next day, recaptured the vital town of Neuve Chapelle, which was held till the end of the War and along with the Ypres Salient, and was a defining action of war on the Western Front.

As the British commanding general later exulted, *The 47th Sikhs were raised in 1901 and have no battle honours on their colours. Throughout its service in France, this magnificent Regiment never failed to answer all calls. Its reputation would be secure and its right to fight shoulder to shoulder with the best British troops would be established, if based only on the record of Neuve Chapelle, but this action was only one of many in which the 47th distinguished themselves. This history of the Indian Army contains few nobler pages than that of the 28th October 1914.*

The Great War was to continue over the next four years and many battalions of the Sikh Regiment, indeed other Indian Corps, fought with gallantry and distinction in other theatres. One such was at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles where the XIVth Sikhs of the 29th Brigade were involved in ferocious action against the defending Turks. The Commander-in-Chief later recorded: *The history of Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by the XIV Sikhs on the 4th June 1915 has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa.*

A century later, in October 2014, were commemorated several of those great battles, with heirs to those magnificent soldiers gathering first in France and then in England to remember the heroic deeds of their ancestors. On the battlefields of Neuve Chapelle in northern France and Ypres in Flanders, there are numerous memorials to the gallantry of

the soldiers that fought and died one hundred years earlier. The Indian Army memorial at Neuve Chapelle not only witnessed dignified ceremonies and evocative speeches, but had the gracious presence of the Jathedar Keshgarh Sahib from the Punjab, to conduct the *ardaas* and bless those who so gallantly gave up their lives in battle. The Sikh community of Paris served *langar* to the many hundreds of those gathered on that cold and windy morning in this remote part of France.

In England, during mid-June 2015, an emotional commemoration service was held at an iconic church in the heart of London, where the large congregation of Sikhs and Christians prayed together while British Sikh girls sang a *shabad* by Guru Arjun Dev ji which began with the words:

*He alone is called a warrior in this world,
Who is coloured in the Lord's Love...
Through the Perfect True Guru,
He conquers His own mind,
And then all else comes under His control,
Sing the Praises of the Lord,
With the love of your heart,
Those who seek His Sanctuary,
And meditate on his qualities attain the peace of union with
Him and live in His presence,
At the feet of such (in their company) with them abiding in
My heart my body is made pure,
Grant me the dust of their feet oh gracious one,
Nanak craves only this peace.*

Later, in the environs of the beautiful English countryside, the family of a Sikh soldier who had saved the life of the renowned British General, 'A Subaltern of the Sikhs', were welcomed during a poignant service in the village Chapel where, too, resounded the war cry *Deg Teg Fateh* !

This great story of the Sikhs in the Great War is summed up with the inspiring words etched in stone at the Indian Army memorial at Neuve Chapelle:

God is One, His is the Victory.

Neuve Chapelle : 100 years after the First battle



The iconic victory column at the Indian Army memorial, Neuve Chapelle, adorned by the words "God One, His is the Victory"

“There is something unique and central in the faiths that the men-in-arms professed to have made it incumbent upon men of different religions Christian, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu to have lived and fought and died together”.

Thus wrote Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra, founder of The Jullundur Brigade Association in 1989, at the 75th anniversary of the first battle of Neuve Chapelle.



25 years later, those emotive words were recalled at the centenary of that epic battle by Brigadier Peter Rafferty of the British Army and Colonel of the Duke Of Lancaster's Regiment, 'the Lion's of England', who led the ceremonies at the Indian Army Memorial at Neuve Chapelle in northern France. This was on 28 October 2014, exactly 100 years after that historic battle where

the 47th Sikhs of the (8th) Jullundur Brigade of the (3rd) Lahore Division particularly distinguished themselves.

As the Brigadier stated:

Today we are commemorating the actions of the Jullundur Brigade at Neuve Chapelle in 1914. The Brigade, which was then part of the Indian Army, included one of our antecedent regiments, The 1st Battalion, The Manchester Regiment, along with what is now 5th Sikhs and 1st (Scinde) Frontier Force Regiment, from current day India and Pakistan respectively. Indeed, to this day these Regiments remain affiliated and The Duke of

Lancaster's Regiment retains our links with both the Sikhs and FFR.

Significance of the Commemoration

Brigadier Rafferty spoke on the significance of the commemoration *Not only does our commemoration allow us to mark the exploits of our forebears, but it also provides an opportunity to link with some of the*

local ethnic communities in the North West of England for educational and community engagement benefits:

- *The configuration of the Jullundur Brigade, encompassing British, Indian and now Pakistani successor Regiments, as well as the multi-cultural (ethnic, religious and ritual) complexion of the Brigade, represent a microcosm of British society today as in evidence in many of our county towns and cities and the communities from which we now recruit.*
- *There is clear resonance between the UK Government's aims and objectives for the centenary celebrations to be reflective, educational and relevant to our modern society with the celebration of an episode in our Regimental history in which British and Commonwealth soldiers stood together side by side for the common good.*
- *Since that time a significant number of British citizens of Indian and Pakistani origin have settled in our Regimental area; some may have had relatives from older generations who fought in the Brigade; these "golden threads," allied to the healthy and ongoing affiliations between the modern Regiments, represent today, as then, the very strength of our shared Commonwealth values.*





Participation at the Commemoration

"We are glad that we are joined at our Regimental Commemoration

by civic leaders, school children and representatives of ethnic and religious communities who made up the Brigade. We also welcome our French Civic Guests, Army Cadets and Sikh re-enactors.

We will seize this opportunity to demonstrate that the spirit of collaboration, mutual trust and respect, shown by the Battalions of the (Jullundur) brigade a century ago is still as relevant and cherished today as it was then.

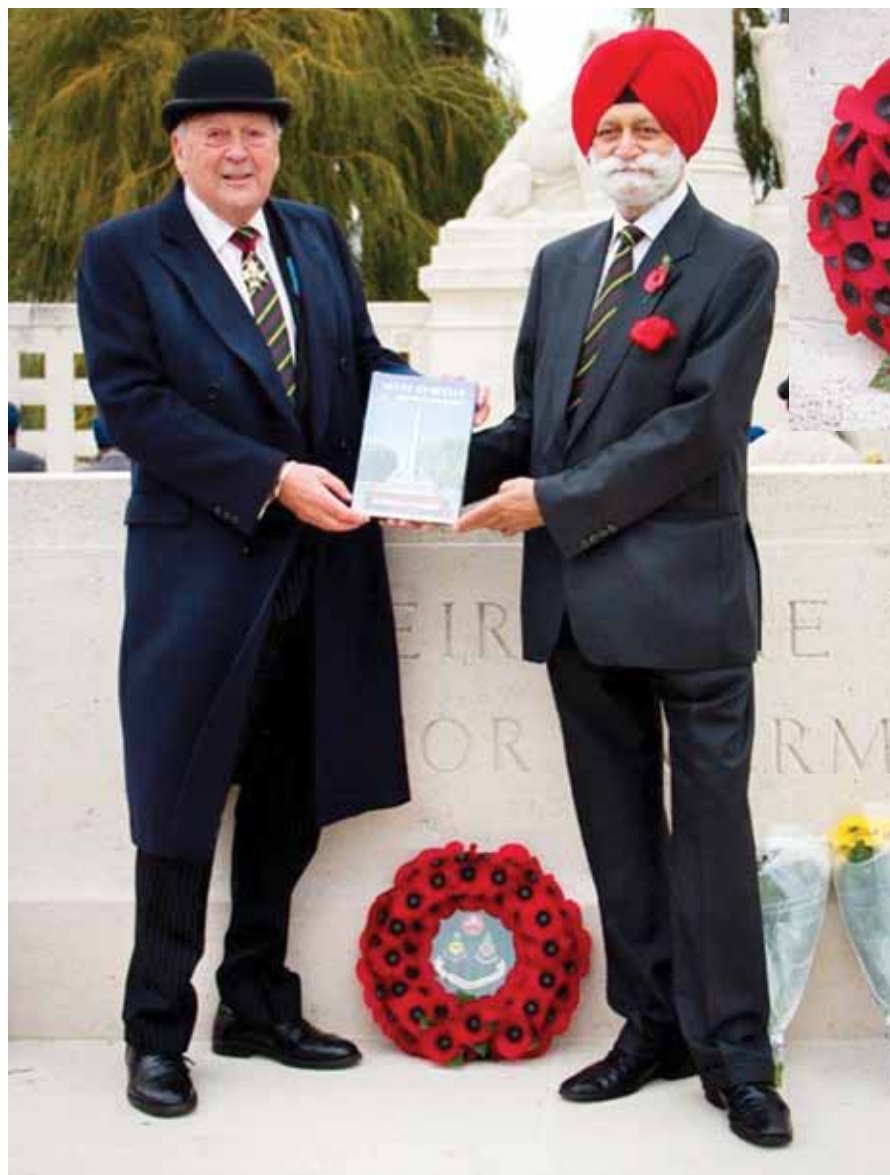
The bugler then sounded "Fall In", the colours were marched in, the service introduced by the Chaplain of the Second Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, the Reverend Dr Simon Bloxam-Rose, CF and the first hymn was sung :

*Guide me, O thou great redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
Hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.
Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer;
Be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield.
When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.*





Contingent of the '1914 Sikhs' at the ceremony



Maj Gen Peter Davies, President of the Jullundur Brigade Association, with Pushpinder Singh at release of the book commemorating the battle at Neuve Chapelle

Letter from the Front

Then followed three readings from representatives of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, the latter represented by Gulab Singh MBE in the form of a letter from the parents of a Sikh soldier in the Trenches on the Western Front.

After a lifetime and a half of searching, we have at last found you. You are no longer an invisible face amongst the alphabetically dead, another body draped out to dry on the blood-stained barbed wire. Now at last we can honour the selfless courage of our beloved Sikh soldier.

We cannot begin to imagine how it must have felt to leave the plum and orange sunshine of the Punjab for the spectral black and white shadows of war. The cold trees that stood sentry over you as you lay waist-deep in mud and maggots, with only the death-tipped shooting stars for company as they spat holes in the velvet canvas of night. No helmet for you, honourable son, to protect you from the shells that whistled overhead. Instead you chose to fight and die with your turban, your faith intact amidst the shattered corpses.

We told you that the war in Europe would make a man of you, little realising that it would make you a hero. If you had known that you were to be baptised in warm blood and rain, would you have been so eager to serve the King?

We suffered drought and famine in India over those hard war years. Our crops died in the fields and so did our boys. We waited to hear from you; not wanting to believe that you were experiencing an even worse



French Sikh serving langar

fate. Perhaps it is just as well that we didn't receive more than the occasional heavily-censored letter from you. You wanted to tell us that your ears were deafened by the sounds of shells, your mouth silenced by the blood of battle, that young men of every colour and creed were being butchered like animals.... If we had known all this, then we would have agreed that there was only one way back to the Punjab.

When we accompanied you to the recruiting centre we didn't know that you were heading for a land that we



British Army veteran at the langar



Singh Sahib Mal Singh, Jathedar Keshgarh Sahib with squad of the '1914 Sikhs' from the UK

had never heard of, let alone that you would be fighting an enemy that did not even threaten our peace. You willingly fought for a power that occupied our own land. Yet that is the legacy of Empire - complete strangers are hurled into the cauldrons of war.

We will never forget you, our Khalsa lion, who roared into battle and surrendered his life at the click of God's fingers. We will not neglect your memory and allow your sacrifice to become meaningless. Your battle cry is the thunder that rumbles through time, your sword is the lightening that cuts to the quick. Your body may sleep, but never your memory.

"Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh"

At conclusion of the readings the Padre said: *Let us pray. Today we offer in proud remembrance those of the Jullundur Brigade who gave their lives and are remembered in this special place. May their memory live forever, and may we never forget the supreme sacrifice they made.*

The Regimental Sergeant Major, 2nd Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, concluded. *They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going*

down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

All present then repeated : *We will remember them!*

The poignant *Last Post* was played on the bugles followed by the *Reveille*. Wreaths were then placed at the Memorial by the Colonel of The Regiment, representative of the Indian Army, French dignitaries and the Faith representatives. The scores of children from north west England schools presented posies at the Memorial, before the colours were marched off.

It was perhaps divinely ordained that Jathedar Keshgarh Sahib from Anandpur Sahib in the Punjab, Singh Sahib Mal Singh, visit the Indian Army Memorial at Neuve Chapelle that very morning and conduct the *Ardaas* to bless those who gallantly gave up their lives in battle one hundred years before.

The Sikh Community of Paris, who had prepared an elaborate *langar* for the many hundreds visiting the Indian Army Memorial at Neuve Chapelle on that cold and windy morning, then served *naans* and vegetable curry to the visitors, followed by *halwa* and cups of hot tea.

Hurnam Singh*

A tribute by General Sir James Willcocks

- I Beneath an ancient pipal-tree, fast by the
Jhelum's tide,
In silent thought sat Hurnam Singh,
A Khalsa soldier of the King
He mused on things now done and past,
For he had reached his home at last,
His empty sleeve his pride.
- II Five years before a village lout, beneath the
self-same tree,
He met the Havilder, who'd come
With honeyed words and beat of drum
Cajoling all who glory sought,
And telling how the regiment fought
The Zakha and the Mohmand clans,
With shouts of victory.
- III Wah Guru Ji! rang in his ears, the famous
battle cry,
And since three days Hurnam had seen,
On Flanders plains, from fierce Messines,
To Festubert and Neuve Chapelle,
'Mid festering bogs and scenes of hell,
How Khalsa soldiers die.
- IV The village yokels round him flocked to
hearken to his tales,
How he had crossed the Kala sea
From India's strand past Araby,
Thro 'Egypt's sands to Europ's shores
Thro 'Egypt's sands to Europe's shores
Where the wild stormy mistral roars,
And anchor'd in Marseilles.
- V "Is it the truth," said one more bold than village
yokel be,
"That men with wings ascend on high
And fight with Gods in yonder sky?
That iron monsters belching wrath,
Beneath their wheels of Juggernaut,
Claim victims for Kali"?



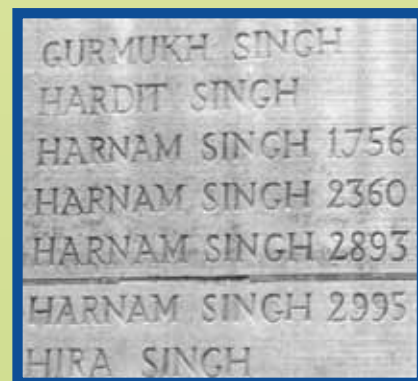
- VI "Now list all ye", said Hurnam Singh, "the aged
and the youth,
The tales they told in bygone days,
Of Gods and Ghouls in ancient days,
Are true, not false; mine eyes descried,
Mine ears have heard as heroes died,
The Mahabharut's truth".
- VII "The land of France is wide and fair, the people
brave and free
I fain would tell, but orders came,
'Push on the foe awaits the game'
The game of death; the Khalsa cry,
The warrior's slogan, rent the sky,
Fateh Wah Guru Ji!".

- VIII "The Sahib's faces told their tale; no craven thought or sloth
In those brave hearts, as we had learned
When Gujerat the tide had turned,
And left the names of Aliwal
And Chillianwala as a pall
Of Glory to us both".
- IX "And thus the sons of Hindustan, from
Himalaya to Scinde,
From Hindu Kush to Deccan plains,
Rent in a day the ancient chains
Which isolated class from clan,
And joined in battle as one man,
To die for Mata Hind".
- X "Hur Mahadeo! Guru Ji! and Allah's sacred name,
Shri Gunga Jai! from brave Nepal,
Reechoed loud through wild Garhwal;
From Dogra vale, Afridi clan,
To the proud homes of Rajistan
Was lit the martial flame".
- XI "As pitiless the bullets rained, 'mid angry storm
and flood,
Khudadad Khan! immortal name,
Stood by his gun, for India's fame
Was in his hands; the Huns advance
Recoil; Retire; the soil of France
Is richer with his blood".
- XII And Hurnam paused as he recalled, one dark
November morn,
When twice three thousand foes had rushed
Our trenches, powdered in to dust,
And bayonet point and kukry blade
Avenging retribution made,
Before the break of dawn.
- XIII "Garhwal will tell", he said, "with pride her
children oft recite,
How Durwan Negi, lion-heart!
Was first and foremost from the start
He led the charge which won the day,
Oh, brother's, 'twas a glorious fray,
For victory came with light".
- XIV "Shabash! Shabash! from every tongue, and

mothers' heart stood still,
As sons stepped forth and made demand
They too should join the glorious band,
They too should hear the battle's din,
Or purge the soul of every sin,
If such were Ishwar's will".

- XV Hurnam went on : "At Neuve Chapelle, at
Festubert, we bled,
On Wipers field, at Moutin Pietre,
We heard the German hymn of hate;
Above our lines the war-ships soared,
Our trenches rocked while cannon roared
The requiem of the dead".
- XVI The Jhelum's bank had witnessed oft her waters
stained with gore,
Had known the tramp of countless feet,
Had known both triumph and defeat,
But never had her waters swirled
A prouder message to the world
Than Hurnam's story bore.
- XVII For India's sons had sealed their oath, according
to their laws;
Sealed it with blood across the sea,
From Flanders to Gallipoli,
On Tigris' banks, on Egypt's sands,
'Mid Afric's swamps and hinterlands,
And died in England's cause.
- XVIII For ages long the Mullah's cry, the temple bells
shall wile,
And call to prayer for those who died,
The father, mother, son, and bride,
Descendants of the loyal brave
Who rest in warrior's simple grave,
And need no marble pile.

*There were many
soldiers named
Hurnam Singh in the
15th (Ludhiana) and
47th Sikhs as also
the 57th, 58th and
59th Frontier Force
Rifles, Sikh Pioneers,
Punjab Regiments,
Cavalry Regiments
and State Forces, who
went to France in
1914-15.



"A Man's Destination is not his Destiny"

*A Man's destination is his own village,
His own fire, and his wife's cooking;
To sit in front of his own door at
sunset*

*And see his grandson and his
neighbour's grandson*

Play in the dust together.

*Scarred but secure, he has many
narratives*

To repeat at the hour of conversation

*(The warm, or the cool hour, according
to the climate),*

*Of foreign men, who fought in foreign
places,*

Foreign to each other.

A man's destination is not his destiny

Every country is home to one man

*And exile to another. Where a man dies
bravely*

At one with his destiny, that soil is his.

Let his village remember.

*This was not your land, or ours: but a
village in the Midlands*

*And one of the Five Rivers, may have
the same memories.*

*Let those who go home tell the same
story of you :*

*Of action with a common purpose,
action*

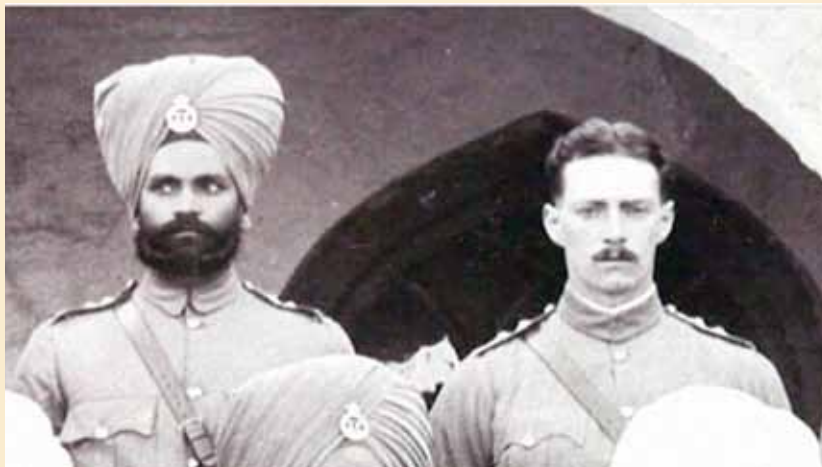
*None the less fruitful if neither you
nor I*

Know, until the judgment after death,

What is the fruit of action.

T.S. Eliot

Abiding friendship and faith



Manta Singh and George Henderson of the XV Sikhs in World War I

On 27 October 1914, Major George Henderson commanding No.4 Company of the 15th Sikhs, was wounded in action around Neuve Chapelle, after they had overrun the German positions. His Company Subedar Major Manta Singh was also severely wounded in the legs, but carried his Commander back to safety. Later, both were evacuated to England for medical treatment. Unfortunately, Manta Singh later died of his wounds and

was cremated near Brighton, site of the present *Chatri*.

George Henderson continued in service with the Indian Army and his son, Robert Henderson also joined the 15th Sikhs, Manta Singh's son Asa Singh being coincidentally in the same Company. Both were wounded in action during the Second World War but happily survived.

Their sons, and grandsons, continue their family links and friendship into the next century.



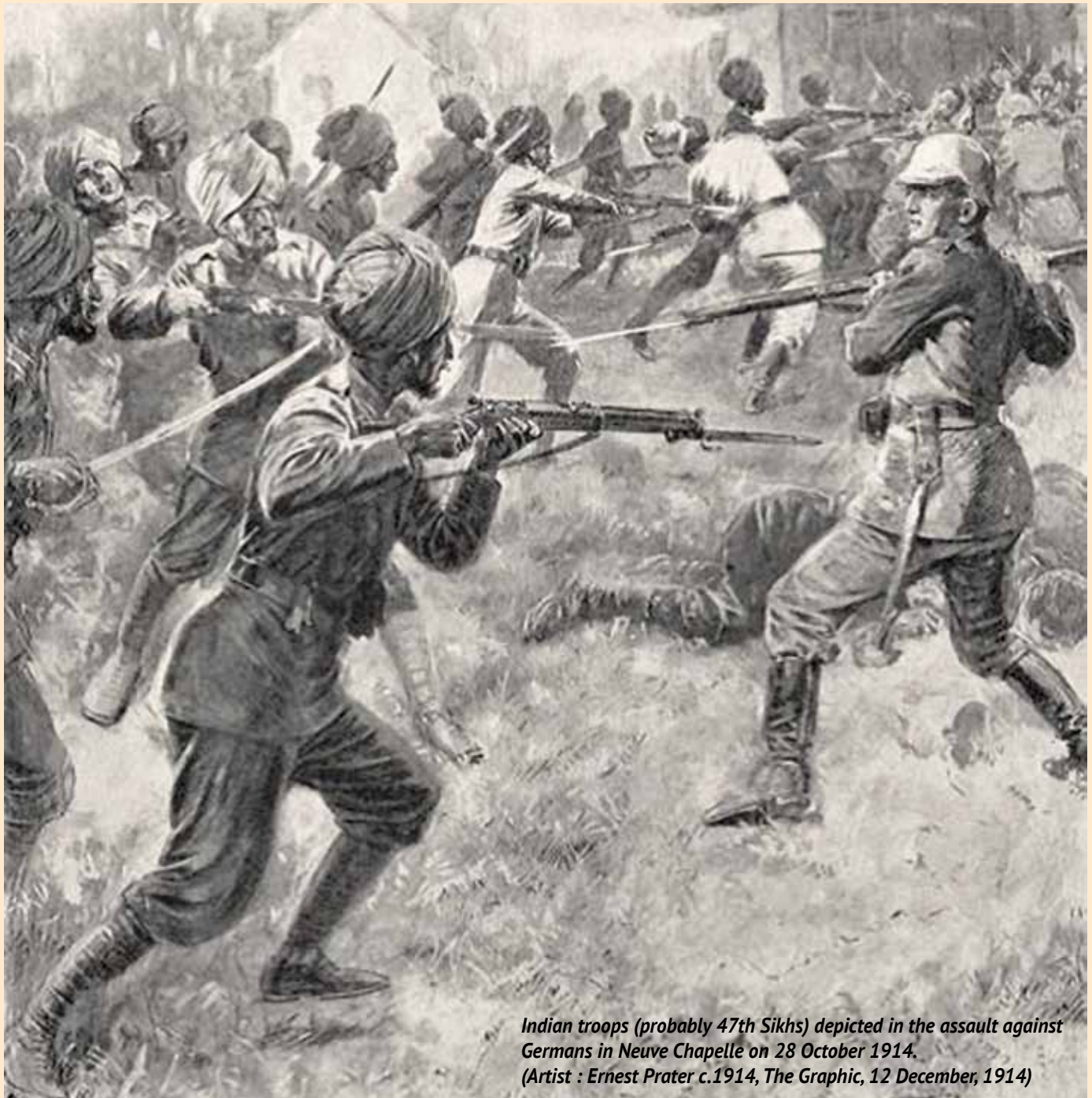
Ian Henderson, grandson of Colonel George Henderson, seen with the great, great grandson of Manta Singh, at an event in 2014.

Gallantry of the 47th Sikhs

Extracted from the book

'Neuve Chapelle : The Jullundur Brigade in France & Flanders 1914-1915'

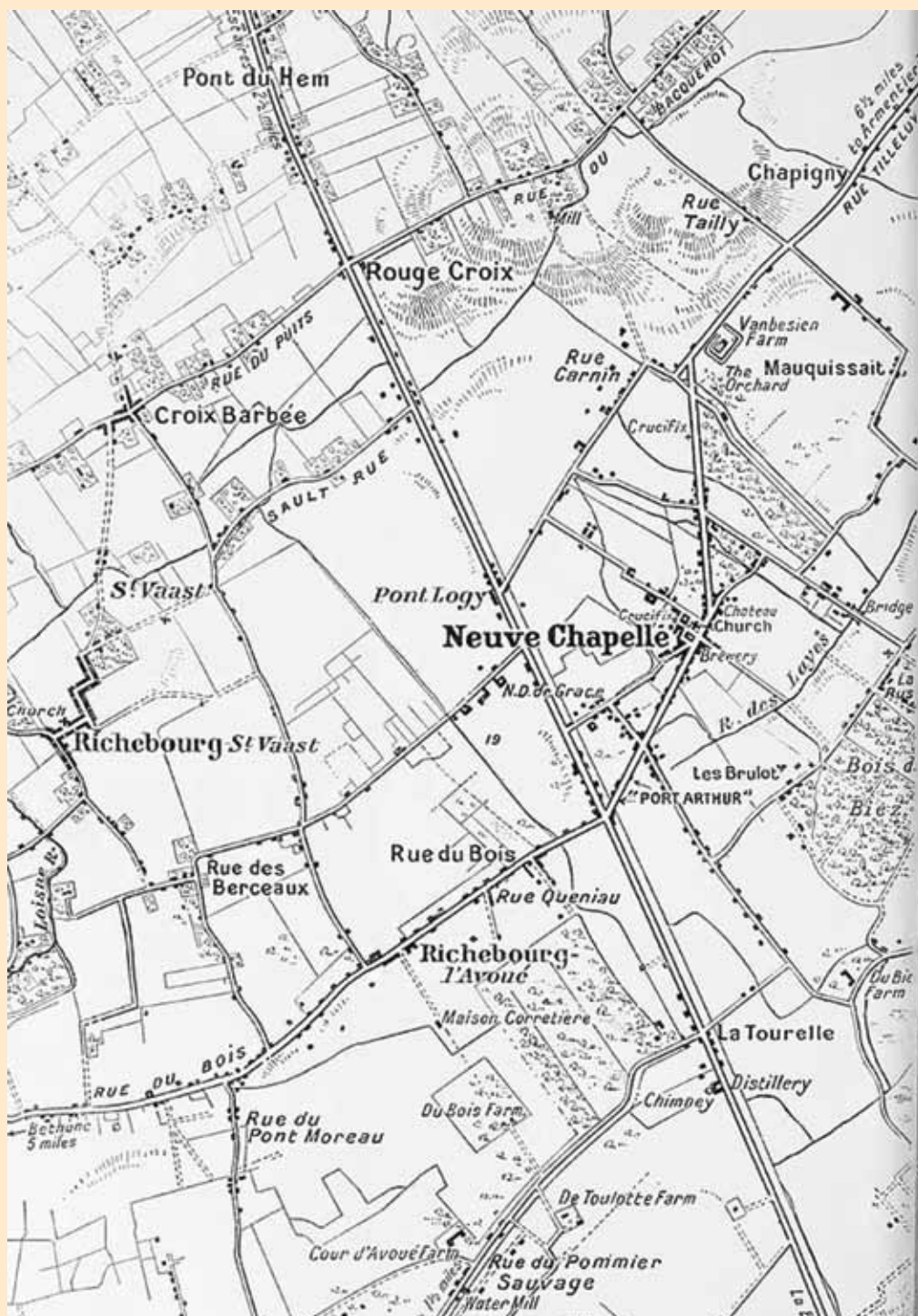
This fateful action took place on 28th October 1914 only days after Indian troops had taken over the front from the decimated British and French. They faced overwhelming numbers of German and Bavarian Divisions in northern France and Flanders, racing towards the Channel ports and expected victory! Then they were countered by Indian Divisions.



*Indian troops (probably 47th Sikhs) depicted in the assault against Germans in Neuve Chapelle on 28 October 1914.
(Artist : Ernest Prater c.1914, The Graphic, 12 December, 1914)*

Fog and mist prevented an early advance and it was not until 11.00 am, that a short general bombardment of the positions was begun by four British and nine French batteries. At 11.15 a.m. the artillery lengthened five hundred yards and the Infantry should have moved forward. However, no properly combined movement between the units of the three different nationalities involved resulted, and the

attack on Neuve Chapelle was carried out only by four companies – two of the 47th Sikhs, with the 20th and 21st Companies of the Sappers and Miners on either side of them – and with the greatest of gallantry. Their right was to have been protected by the 9th Bhopals but as the unit advanced, it came under very heavy fire and halted, and only continued to fire from a trench they had reached.



The battlefield, with Neuve Chapelle in the centre of the map

The Sikhs and Sappers went on. Covering the 700 yards of open ground between them and Neuve Chapelle by rushes alternating with fire, as if on a training ground, the four companies reached the ruins of the village. Casualties were numerous but the excellence of their fire control saved much heavier loss. The Indians drove out the Germans (battalions of the 16th Royal Bavarian Regiment) by close hand-to-hand fighting.

“When our men were about 100 yards from the outskirts of the village, the Germans in the front trenches began to bolt, pursued by the gallant Sikhs and Sappers with the bayonet, a few being killed and others captured. The Indians then tore on into the village. Sikhs and Sappers mixed together, and worked in parties up the streets, under a furious fire from the roofs of buildings.

By degrees, the houses were cleared after desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which a man of the 47th is reported to have captured three Germans out of eight, having previously killed the other five. From another house, the 47th recovered a wounded British soldier and two wounded Germans. The latter were searched and one of them

lifted his voice and wept bitterly, evidently thinking that our men were feeling for a soft place in which to insert a bayonet, until comforted by a stalwart Sikh who patted him kindly with the words "Be not afraid".

On reaching the cross roads in the centre of the village, the troops came under frightful machine gun fire. Captain McCleverty, always in advance, cheering on his men just as he had cheered on the regimental hockey team, dashed across the roads, the rest following close on his heels. but he was shot dead at a corner by a German concealed only a few yards away. A PM of the Sappers soon stalked the German and killed him on the spot. Losses were rapidly becoming serious from enemy rifle fire in the houses and several machine guns posted outside Neuve Chapelle which swept the main street. The Indian troops had even penetrated to the eastern and northern outskirts where they were met by heavy shell and machine gun fire and counter-attack after counter-attack was launched against them. "The blood of our men was up and nothing could stop them. After a prolonged and ferocious struggle, the whole of the main street was captured".

The Germans held on like a vice and each house formed a small fortress which had to be stormed before further advance could be made. The Sappers & Miners were also taking terrible losses, especially their officers, charging with impetuous valour ahead of the men. The fighting went on, counter-attack following counter-attack, the German's using the bodies of their own dead as cover. Major SR Davidson of the 47th Sikhs was collecting his men for a final charge when the Germans came on in overpowering numbers from the north and east and at the same moment, the machine gun fire re-doubled its fury down the main street. Without immediate reinforcements, the position of the 47th was now quite untenable as their losses had been very heavy. Thus Major Davidson was compelled to give up all he had won at such fearful cost, and retire, the line lying over some 500 yards of open ground, exposed to a tornado of shell and machine gun fire and the bodies of the gallant Indians soon lay thick on the ground. Eventually, the remains of the two Companies of the 47th got back to comparative safety, but only 68 out of the gallant 289 actually collected on the La Bassée road.

The troops were suffering terribly from want of water and were already dead beat but the Germans were counter-attacking all along the front and every man was required. Major Davidson was ordered to collect at Rouge Croix as many of the 47th Sikhs as were left with a view to holding the cross roads, which were almost certain to be attacked.

"He asked his men whether they could do it, exhausted as they were, and to his delight, found that they dearly resented such a question. Off they marched again towards Rouge Croix, but were met by orders to go into billets".

Such was the spirit of the Sikhs and it is on record that during the retreat from the village, under a fire described as hellish, the men were laughing and joking with each other and Captain Brown, afterwards killed at Neuve Chapelle, stood up at the halts to fire, his example being followed by many of the men. Major Davidson throughout this confused and ding-dong fighting showed the highest qualities of bravery and leadership and was awarded a brevet Lt. Colonelcy in recognition of his services.

In the end, the 20th Sappers & Miners were left with just 20 men in the centre of Neuve Chapelle. Lt. Kerr, leading some reinforcements, was wounded but Sapper Dalip Singh stood over him and kept up rapid fire to deter several parties of Germans from advancing, incredibly charging at a party of 20 Germans who then turned and fled. He then carried his officer back to safety. Another officer, Lt. Nosworthy displayed an incredible example of bravery combined with an irrepressible love for fighting !

As recorded in official war history "The attack was magnificently carried out and was within an ace of success. It is probable that, had reinforcements been available, the 47th and Sappers would have held the village which they took with such superb elan and at such a heavy cost".

The magnificent conduct of the Indian troops was recorded for posterity by Field Marshal Sir John French who, in his dispatch dated 20th November 1914, said

On the 28th October 1914, especially the 47th Sikhs and the 20th and 21st Companies of the Sappers & Miners, distinguished themselves by their gallant conduct in the attack on Neuve Chapelle, losing heavily in officers and men.

As Sir James Willcocks later wrote,

The 47th Sikhs were raised in 1901 and have no battle honours on their colours. Throughout its service in France, this magnificent Regiment never failed to answer all calls. Its reputation would be secure and its right to fight shoulder to shoulder with the best British troops would be established, if based only on the record of Neuve Chapelle, but this action was only one of many in which the 47th distinguished themselves. The history of the Indian Army contains few nobler pages than that of the 28th October 1914.

100 years later The XLVII (DCO) Sikhs Now the 5th Battalion, The Sikh Regiment



The present 5th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment, then the XLVII (Duke of Connaught's Own) Sikhs were part of the 8th (Jullundur) Brigade of the 3rd (Lahore) Division whose other constituent battalions were the 1st Manchester's now The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and 59th Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) now The 1st Battalion, Frontier Force Regiment. Heirs of the three Battalions remain affiliated through The Jullundur Brigade Association



Accompanied by the CO, Colonel Rajiv Mehta, Major General Peter Davies, President JBA and Lt General Devraj Singh, former Colonel of the Regiment, paying obeisance at the battalion Gurdwara Sahib.

A Century of Gallantry

The 5th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment erstwhile (XLVII Sikhs) were raised in the first month of the 20th century and have continuously distinguished themselves in war and peace, in India and overseas. The 47th Sikhs went to China in 1905 during the Boxer revolution and in 1914, were amongst the first Indian troops to go into action in northern France during the critical weeks of the Great War.



Guard of Honour at the 5th Sikhs War Memorial

Their action at Neuve Chapelle on 28 October 1914 is an epic which has inspired succeeding generations. For well over 5 years, as part of The Jullundur Brigade, the 47th Sikhs fought in France, Flanders, Mesopotamia and Palestine, earning 16 battle honours, numerous gallantry awards and were bestowed the appellation 'Duke of Connaught's Own'.

Between the World Wars, and redesignated as the 5th Bn., 11th Sikh Regiment, they received their colours, and earned the first Military Crosses plus other awards at the start of World War II, in Waziristan. Moved to



Still in his teens, jawan of the 5th Sikhs...and one of the battalion's more senior NCOs



Towering above the visiting British Army General, a senior JCO of the 5th Sikhs at the Sainik Sammelan

Malaya for the defence of that peninsula, the 5/11 were dogged in defence and earned a battle honour for the only offensive in that short campaign.

In independent India, the battalion have continued their distinguished service, in war and peace. In December 1971, the 5th Sikhs tenaciously defended the Chhamb against massive armoured offensive and "saved the day". More recently, the 5th Sikhs displayed steely courage at the Siachin Glacier, the highest battleground in the world. They have achieved success in counter insurgency operations during Op. *Rakshak* earning numerous gallantry awards.

Off the battlefield, the 5th Sikh sportsmen have represented the Nation in the Olympics, Asian Games and SAF Games, living up to the tradition, *Nische Kar Apni Jeet Karon*.

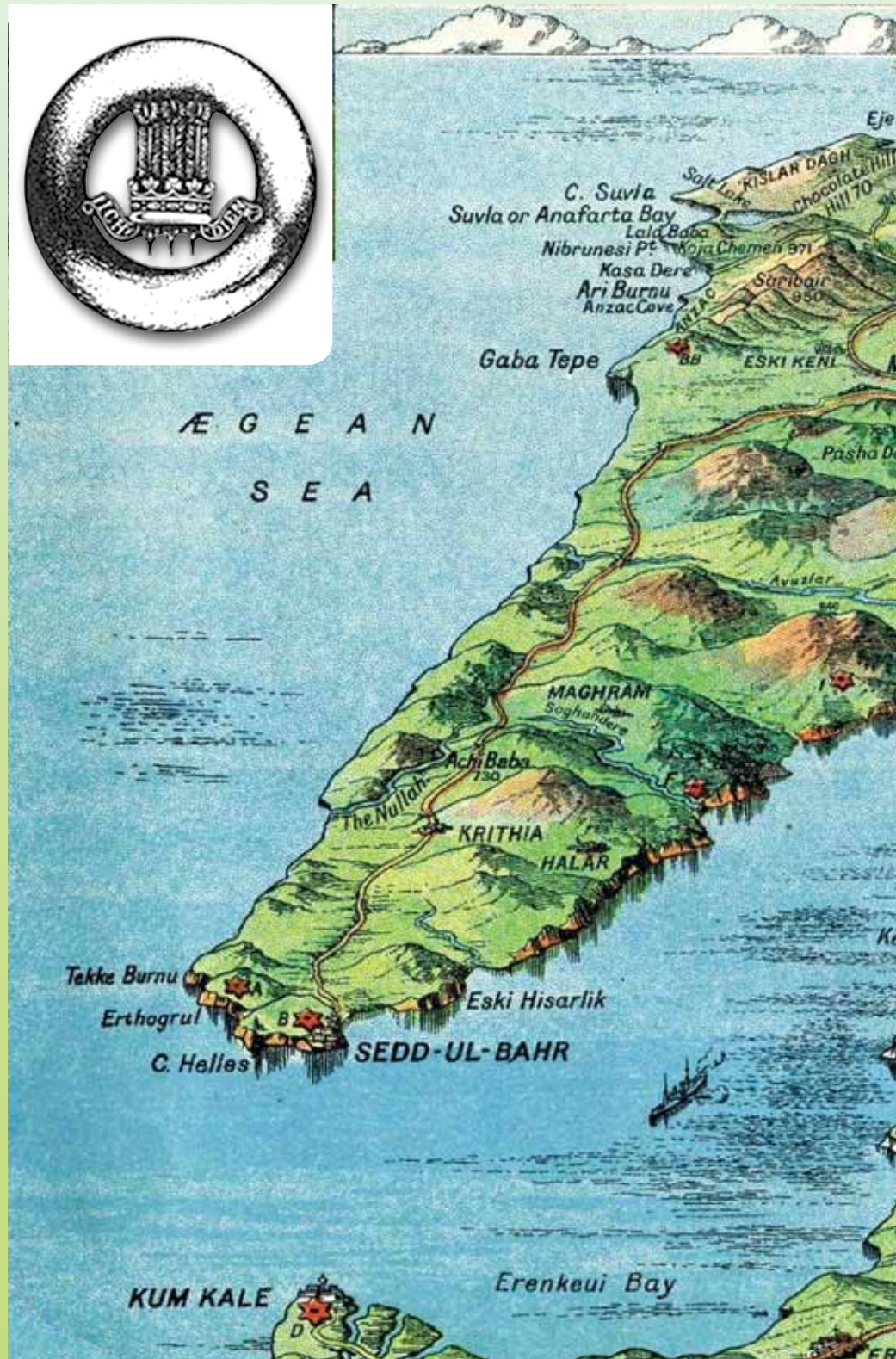
XIV Sikhs at Gallipoli and Mesopotamia

1st Battalion of the Sikh Regiment were raised as the XIV Sikhs in 1846. Over the past 170 years, theirs has been a saga of valour and courage against the most formidable of odds.

As part of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, the XIV Sikhs commanded by Colonel Philip Palin had moved from Karachi on 3 November 1914 and were at the Suez a fortnight later. From the end of November 1914 till April 1915, the unit was involved in constant reconnaissance and search for Turks and in the course of one of those intensive searches, Jem Narain Singh provided vital clue to an anchored mine and was awarded the IDSM for his commendable work. The Turkish advance to the West towards the Suez Canal in the northern Sinai was checked at El Kantara, south of Port Said where the XIV Sikhs worsted the Turkish Army in night attacks.

The Gallipoli Campaign

In October, Russia had joined the Allies while Turkey became part of the German axis which now changed complexion of the war. At the behest of Russia, the British agreed to create a diversion both in the Mediterranean as well as in Mesopotamia and Palestine. Gallipoli provided a direct and short route from the Mediterranean to Constantinople (today's Istanbul); the Dardanelles divides Asia from Europe which lends the Strait much strategic importance. The Turks challenged anyone attempting to get even a toehold on the Dardanelles and the Allies boasted that they would capture Constantinople within a predetermined time frame. As the situation developed, neither side was successful in its intentions.





Very rare photograph of XIV Sikhs in a lighter, embarking at Port Said in Egypt enroute to Gallipoli (Lt Savory in the middle with pith topi)

The mouth of the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean is at Cape Helles, which is 4000 yards wide with open bands of four and a half miles on either side until they close again at the narrows. Above it again opens out to a width of four miles up to the Sea of Marmara, above the town of Gallipoli. The jagged peak of Sari Bair forms dominating ground over the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean, its central crest called Chunuk Bair.



XIV Sikhs in Gallipoli in 1915 in Gallipoli in 1915

The Gallipoli operations started on an ominous note. A British naval assault on Gallipoli in March 1915 was aborted. General Ian Hamilton was then appointed to command an amphibious force of about three Divisions, being the Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) Division, the 29th British Division and the Royal Naval Division to be landed at Cape Helles, leading to the narrows. This was expected to open a sea passage up to the Sea of Marmara. The Turks, determined to oppose the landing, had deployed some 250,000 troops in echelons to contest every landing. The legendary Kemal Ataturk later to be known as the father of modern Turkey, commanded a key Division in Gallipoli.

The beach landing on 26 April 1915, despite great losses, enabled General Hamilton to establish a toehold but this was counter-attacked vigorously, and what ensued was 'action, reaction and stalemate'. It was at this stage that the Indian Brigade with XIV Sikh, 1/5 Gurkhas (FF), 1/6 Gurkhas and 1/4 Gurkhas were detached from Egypt to reinforce General Hamilton's force. With this reinforcement, General Hamilton hoped to reach Achi Baba, the most dominating point, providing him the desired springboard for future operations.

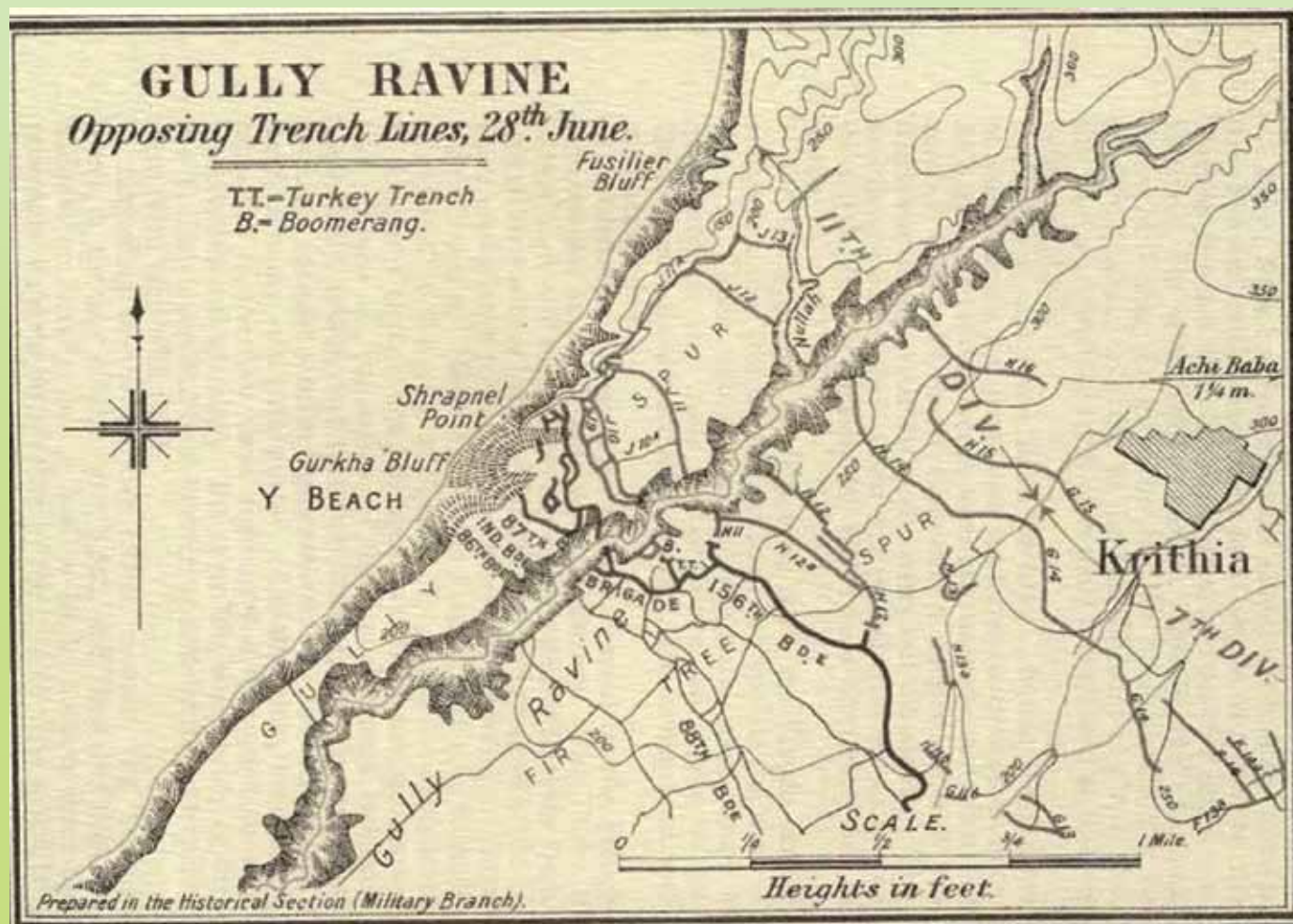


Men of the XIV Sikhs in the trenches of Gallipoli, 1915
(Photograph by Lieutenant RA Savory).

Action of XIV Sikhs is best described in the history of the battalion as recorded by Colonel FEG Talbot: "The distance from the summit of Achi Baba, two hundred feet above the sea to Cape Helles at the south-western extremity of Gallipoli peninsula is nearly six miles. On 1 May, the Anglo-French forces, which went ashore in this area were holding a line astride the peninsula,

from sea to sea, three miles in length. This line, barely entrenched, was under three miles distance from Cape Helles, or less than halfway between that point and Achi Baba. The French were on the right and the British on the left. The British 29th Division was in front line had suffered heavy casualties, and the only reserves at hand, in addition to the 29th Indian Brigade were three Battalions of the Royal Navy Division.

XIV Sikhs had moved into trenches facing Krithia, surviving the misery of the first night in wet and broken trenches, with the Turkish snipers in the area inflicting casualties. The second battle of Krithia was fought from 6 to 8 May and gained about 600 yards, maintaining the front from 9 May till relieved. It is here that 1/6 Gurkhas captured Gurkha Bluff. XIV Sikh was employed for 'relief operations' and yet suffered 78 casualties as a consequence of devastating Turkish artillery and their prompt and numerous counter-attacks. All the British attacks were made from the front and none succeeded in altering the front line by perhaps just some hundred yards.



Then began a period during which the front was advanced by digging a forward line by night, abandoning it by day, and reoccupying it on subsequent nights. This led to some of these being occupied by the Turks which had to be recaptured at considerable cost.

4 June, 1915

By the time serious action (the third battle of Krithia) was attempted on 4 June, the defence line of XIV Sikhs lay astride the gully ravine. General Hamilton wanted to gain ground in front of the Allied front. The half battalion of XIV Sikh formed part of the first wave of the brigade attack along with half Gurkhas and the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Sikhs were to maintain links between them. Rest of the XIV was in the second wave with the Royal Inniskillings. The assault was meticulously planned to the minute, but the end result was capture of a single enemy trench at the cost of 82 per cent casualties of the effective strength. With 12 BOs, 11 VCOs, and 371 men killed, it was the highest sacrifice after the battle of Samana Ridge. As Talbot summarised : "On both the allied flanks the attack was a complete failure ... the final result was a gain of two hundred and fifty yards of ground on the frontage of a mile. The French had 2,000 casualties; the British 4,500; the Turkish losses perhaps ran to 9000. It is however noteworthy that Colonel Palin and troops held on to their trench lines under murderous fire until ordered to retire".

The 'Regimental History of XIV Sikhs' enumerates the action of a depleted battalion of 4 June: "On the morning of 4 June, own Artillery opened up but had little effect on the enemy. At 12 noon, the first wave dashed forward. Fusiliers were mowed down by the enemy fire and their advance held up. The Gurkhas on the left gained a little ground, but were forced to withdraw to their original line".

On the right, two Companies of XIV Sikhs rushed forward astride the Gully Ravine in the face of very heavy machine gun fire hidden on both sides of the Ravine. Two British officers were killed but the Sikhs rushed on and captured the first line of the enemy trenches. Hav. Maghar Singh [later Sub. Maj. OBI] particularly showed courage and determination during the assault. The unit suffered very heavy casualties and was reduced to a fraction in a very short time.

The second wave of the attack, comprising No.3 and No.1 Companies and Battalion Headquarters was launched at 12.15 p.m. This wave went through to the enemy's third line of trenches and held on to it till the morning of 5 June. The troops had to be withdrawn as they found they were being encircled by the Turks. This wave also suffered heavy casualties.

One of the subalterns with XIV Sikhs was 2/Lt. Reginald Savory who later wrote a graphic account of the plan: "The orders were short and clear. At 11 a.m. on 4 June all guns were to bombard the enemy's front line trenches for twenty minutes. Then for ten minutes they were to stop while the Infantry were to cheer and fix their bayonets.... then the bombardment was to come down again. At noon we were to advance. It all sounded simple...." He narrates the story of his Sikhs running across the no-man's-land with his messenger, killing a Turk in his trench, being hit by another and falling temporarily unconscious and then running back again, but collapsing and then being lifted by the battalion wrestler, Ude Singh, on his shoulder and carried back to the trench line, all under a hail of bullets" [see later].

By 5 June the Commanding Officer, Medical Officer, and only 47 men were left unwounded, the regimental camp being guarded by the carpenters, armourers and boot-makers. Over the next two days the total number of survivors rose to three BOs and 134 VCOs/OR from the assaulting strength of 15 officers and 574 VCOs/ORs. It was sheer manslaughter, but there were words of great praise from General Hamilton.

A new offensive was launched at the end of June. The action at Gully Ravine fought between 28 June and 5 July achieved some success compared with the previous battles. XIV Sikhs, now reduced to skeleton strength, still acted as reserve to the 29th Division. The casualties continued unabated and when Colonel Palin, the commanding officer, temporarily took over command of 156 Brigade. 2/Lt. Savory succeeded him and was amused to receive his father's mournful letter to which he replied that though the unit had suffered heavily "your ward is well and officiating as Commanding Officer."

The next action took place just four weeks later with General Hamilton's offensive from three axes at Helles, Anzac and Suvla. The plans were secret and the movement concealed. XIV Sikhs took part in the Battle of Sari Bair as part of the Indian Brigade under Field Marshal Birdwood, commanding the Allied forces and forming part of the left assaulting column. It now had a double company of the Patiala Infantry under its command and was assigned to capture Hill 'Q' and Koja Chemen Tape. The element of surprise seemed to have been lost as the movement plan could not be sustained, although two companies of Gurkhas reached Chanuk Bair but were not reinforced. Unfortunately, the effort of three weeks of fighting resulted in nothing more than more casualties and eventually the assault was called off.



Sikh soldiers watching Turkish prisoners in a compound at Gallipoli

It was all over by the end of December 1915, when, having suffered an enormous number of casualties (27 BOs, 20 VCOs and 1,000 men) the XIV Sikhs moved to Egypt. Given the number of dead and invalided, the battalion would have been raised twice over.

Although General Hamilton was unable to achieve neither the assured victory envisaged nor was able to beat back the frontal attacks, he was full of admiration for the Sikhs, recording that : In the highest sense of the word, extreme gallantry has been shown by this fine battalion... in spite of these tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground gained was given up and not a single straggler came back.... ends of the enemy's trenches were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at close quarters, the glacial slope is thickly strewn with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of the Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by them on 4 June 1915 has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa. Their devotion to duty and their splendid loyalty to their orders and to their leaders nu like a record that their nation should look back upon with pride for many generations.

The XIV Sikhs left Gallipoli with a great reputation and their gallantry and devotion to duty were recognised by the award of 35 Indian Distinguished Service Medals (IDSMS), a unique and unparalleled record.

In Mesopotamia

On evacuation from Gallipoli on 14 December 1915, XIV Sikhs reached the Suez Canal ten days later where they remained till April the following year. By the end of April 1916 the unit left for Busheir where they played an important part in the campaign against the Turks in Mesopotamia during 1918, in the operations to pursue them up to the Tigris, which won them many more awards, two DSOs, four MCs, three IOMs, and eight IDSMS.

Sub. Major Sardar Narain Singh Bahadur MC, MBE, IDSMS, had arranged to fly Shri Guru Granth Sahib to Kirkuk. This was perhaps the first time in history that the holy Granth Sahib had been airborne, and became a source of great inspiration to every officer and soldier.

At the beginning of autumn 1918, when the war in Europe was ending, the British planned to deliver a knock-out blow to the Turks both in Mesopotamia and Palestine. XIV Sikhs played a useful part in the advance of 51 Brigade of the 17 Division along the Tigris against the Turkish defences at Mushak. The Turks, however fought valiantly. On 26 December the battalion casualties rose to 337, or over 40 percent of their strength.

Iconic image of Sikh troops on march in Mesopotamia, led by soldiers reverently carrying the Guru Granth Sahib



Typical Sikh soldier in uniform of the time at Mesopotamia



It is interesting from the point of view of the Regiment's history that XIV and 45th Sikhs, although part of separate brigades, were both committed here. In the assault that ensued, a time came when XIV Sikhs had to replace 45th Sikhs but the Turks surrendered soon thereafter on 30 October.

The DSOs, five MCs and 11 IOM/IDSMS were awarded. The gallantry of the units was also eulogised by Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, in his moving speech in the House of Commons. A special memorial service was held for the Sikhs in St. Paul's Cathedral in memory of the British and Indian officers and "all those wonderful men who fell fighting that day".

It is difficult when one reviews the deeds of the Indian forces in this war to select for illustrating any particular instance, but the House will not forget and the country will not forget such episodes as in France, the recapture of Neuve Chapelle in October 1914 by the 47th Sikhs... who lost in that attack 178 out of the 289 engaged and the Sappers and Miners lost 119 out of 300'.

Referring to the actions of the XIV Sikhs at Gallipoli he remarked, "who is there who can read without emotion their action at Cape Helles, when the supporting troops on either side unable to get to them, fought their way and held on to the last, with the loss of nearly all their British and nearly all their Indian officers and with the loss of 130 men out of the 550 engaged. When, a day or two afterwards, the same ground was traversed again in a successful advance of our troops, the General who was in command had told me that every Sikh had fallen facing his enemy and most of them had at least one of their enemies under him".

Sikh Pipers in Gallipoli



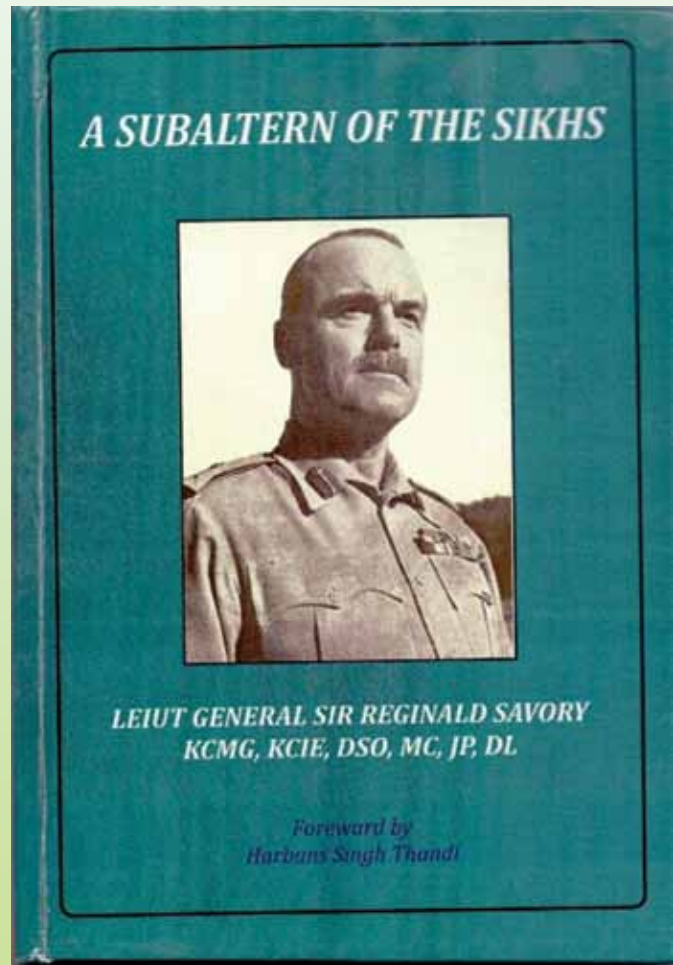
On centenary of the Gallipoli Campaign, the Sikh Regiment sent Pipers to the site of battle. They are seen here at the Indian Army memorial

Extract from Lt Gen Sir Reginald Savory's book 'A Subaltern of the Sikhs'

The XIV Sikhs were to attack astride the Gully Ravine. Two companies were on the right of the ravine, one behind the other; and two companies down in the bottom of the ravine, one behind the other. My company, No.4, was on the top of the right hand side of the ravine and was in the front line. My company-commander was Fowle, who had replaced Spankie. He was a subaltern with some nine years service (there was no 'acting' rank in those days); a most capable, gallant man, with a tremendous sense of humour.

As dawn came on the 4th June, Fowle and I carried out routine duties; we liaised with the British battalion on our right and with the company of our own regiment on our left, down in the ravine below. We also made contact with the company behind us, whose duty it was to attack fifteen minutes after us. We were to go over the top at twelve noon. We saw that our men had their food, and then sat down on the fire-step for a bite of breakfast. By then, there was considerable noise. The guns had started registering at eight o'clock, and even before the real bombardment had begun, it must have been clear to the enemy that something was about to happen. Their artillery retaliated. One of their shells fell on our parapet just above our heads. The trench fell in, and Fowle and I were nearly buried. We had to be dug out with our ears buzzing and try to pretend that we had not been shaken. Fowle even started laughing. My watch had been broken, and as so much depended on our attack starting right on time, I had to try to borrow another. One of our signalers produced an army watch of turnip-type, and this I stuck into my breast pocket. Our breakfast was ruined. Time was now getting on. We allotted each man his place, opposite the step he had dug for himself the evening before; about one yard of front per man and waited for the time to cheer. It was now 11.20 a.m. Our cheers and war-cries could scarce be heard, even in our own trench. Perhaps my ears were buzzing too much. However, we did our best.

There was still another half-hour to go, before assaulting-time, and one or two last-minute adjustments to be made. One or two men had been wounded, and had to be replaced. Time went on. Fowle and I took up our positions. He was with the right half of the company, so as the better to liaise with the battalion on our right; and I was in the centre of the left half. Those last few minutes before zero-hour made no deep impression on



me, except possibly the familiar feeling of waiting for the pistol before a sprint with a void in the pit of one's stomach and anxiety as to the result. And then.... twelve noon ... blow the whistle scramble over the top.... off you go. I waited a second to see the men up, looked for Fowle, but could not see him, and then popped over myself.

From that moment, I lost all control of the fighting. The roar of musketry was so intense as to drown all other sound, except that of the guns. To try to give an order was useless. The nearest man to me was a yard away, and even then I could not see him. Soon I found myself running on alone, except for my little bugler, a young handsome boy, just out of his teens, who came padding along behind me and whose duty it was to act as runner and carry messages. Poor little chap. I was fighting a lone battle. The sooner I could get across no-man's-land and reach the cover of the enemy's trenches



Veterans of Gallipoli had remembered their service on the peninsula for decades after the battle. Here, Reginald Savory, now a Lieutenant-General, seen with retired former soldiers of the XIV Sikhs.

the better. And then, before I could realize it, I found myself standing on the parapet of a Turkish trench and looking down at a Turk inside it. He seemed an ordinary person. There was none of the 'Terrible Turk' about him. He was not even firing, but was leaning against the back of his trench. Yet, if I had given him time, he would have shot me and there were others on either side of him. I jumped in and skewered him to the back of his trench with my bayonet. Poor devil! I can see his grimace to this day. I then went on a bit along the trench

My next recollection was of lying on my back on the parapet of the trench, with two enemy using my body as a rest over which to shoot, at our second line coming forward, I must have been knocked out. It was not pleasant being used as an aiming-rest. I suppose I must have gone to sleep again. When I woke, there was silence. The Turks seemed to have gone. I began to look around me, and saw my little bugler lying dead, brutally mutilated. No one else was near. My head was bleeding and I was lifted up. An older Sikh came out from the trench and picked me up, Uday Singh by name, once of our regimental wrestlers, a grand fellow with a red beard. He looked like a Greek wrestler and

he took me down to the doctor and they patched me up. I went down to the field ambulance and they put me to bed there. I was very shaken and when I was better they talked about sending me off but I wouldn't go and I came back joined my regiment and found I was about the sole surviving chap.

But my next recollection was of walking by myself down the Gully Ravine, with my head bandaged and feeling very dicky. A head popped-up out of a small trench on the crest of the slope. I recognised a gunner friend, Ormonde Wynter (later: Brigadier General Sir Ormonde Wynter). "Hello Savory" he shouted, "How are things in front?" Little did I know And then, "Come on and have some food and tell me all about it".

He gave me curried bully-beef and a strong tot of rum. I was hungry and very thirsty... the next I know, I was in the field ambulance with doctor bending over me. I had two little wounds in my forehead; the result, said the doctor, probably of a glancing blow with the tip of someone's bayonet. I stayed in the field ambulance for three days, having been shaken rather than hurt and then left and walked back up the Gully Ravine to find my Regiment and found I was about the sole surviving



On his visit to the Sikh Regimental Centre, General Reg Savory being carried away by his enthusiastic fans!

chap left. We had very heavy casualties. There were not very many of them. Of those who have been in the fighting only two British officers, two Indian Officers and seventy-nine men had come back and there was our most gallant medical-officer, Captain Cursetjee, a Parsee. One of the two British Officers was our Commanding Officer, Colonel Palin. He had been in the thick of it and had been saved by his long Sikh turban, in which three bullets had lodged. That evening, Colonel Palin said "Well Savory, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. I am going to make you Adjutant".

This day, 371 officers and men were killed or wounded.

From the book 'A Subaltern of the Sikhs' by Lt General Sir Reginald Savory KCMG, KCIE, DSO, MC, JP, DL. Reprint Foreword by Harbans Singh Thandi (son of Uday Singh)



Lt General Sir Reginald Savory KCMG, KCIE, DSO, MC, JP, DL

Educated at Uppingham School, Savory then attended the Royal Military College, Sandhurst from where he was commissioned into the Indian Army and posted to the XIV Sikhs in 1914. He served in World War I initially in Egypt and then took part in the Gallipoli Campaign and then the Mesopotamian campaign. Promoted to lieutenant on 14 April 1916, he was awarded the Military Cross in June 1916.

After the War Savory became Staff Captain with the British Military Mission to Vladivostok, went on to be an Instructor at the Army School of Education in India in 1925 and an Instructor at the Indian Military Academy in 1932 and was appointed commanding officer of 1st Battalion 11th Sikh Regiment in 1937.

During World War II, Lt Colonel Savory initially served as Assistant Quartermaster-General with the 5th Indian Division from 1939 and went on to be Commander of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade which was deployed in the Western Desert. In early 1941 Savory took his brigade, part of 4th Indian Infantry Division, to Sudan and fought in the East African Campaign. After the Battle of Keren the brigade returned to the campaign in the Western Desert, taking part in *Operation Battleaxe*. In January 1942 he was given command of 23rd Indian Division in Burma and in 1943 was appointed as Director of Infantry for India. In 1945 he became General Officer Commanding Iraq.

After the War, Savory became Adjutant-General, India before retiring in May 1948. Savory was also colonel of the Sikh Light Infantry and so he was 'claimed' by both the Regiments as "their own". Long after retirement, 'Savory of the Sikhs' visited India to meet with his 'beloved' Sikhs and the feelings were reciprocal. In the picture above, General Savory is given such fond treatment by officers of the Sikh Regimental Centre, after a lunch in his honour at the Officer's Mess.

The Sharing of Faith

Commemoration Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London on 8 June 2015



550 engaged ? When a day or two afterwards the same ground was traversed again in a successful advance of our troops, the General who was in command has told me every Sikh had fallen facing his enemy, and most of them had one of their enemies under him".

Nearly a century later, on 8 June 2015, a solemn commemoration of the contribution of the Sikh Regiment at the Battle of Gallipoli, and throughout the Great War, was held at St Martin-in-the-Fields. As stated by the Vicar, the Reverend Dr Sam Wells, "it is fitting that almost a hundred years later to the day we are assembled here to once again honour that bravery, in a joint act of commemoration. The Sikh and Christian faiths share a recognition of the virtues of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Peace. In this sense they both reach beyond their faithful to a vision of a better world. It is for the vision of that world, and in commemoration of those who have died seeking it, that we are gathered today".

St Martin-in-the-Fields at Trafalgar Square in the very heart of London, is sometimes described as the church with the ever-open door, which description not only reflects its status as an iconic landmark in London but also its tradition of serving the multinational community to which the UK's capital plays host. By virtue of its position amongst the prominent churches of London, St Martin's has also been at the confluence of history and acts of worship. The memorial service for HH Prince Victor Albert Duleep Singh of Lahore, the eldest son of the last Maharajah of the Punjab, took place here in June 1918.

However it was in June 1915 that well-wishers of the Sikh Regiment first assembled here in solemn commemoration of its heroism at the Battle of Gallipoli: heroism that had immediately then been mentioned in the Houses of Parliament. As Sir Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India stated at the House of Commons in June 1915,

"Who is there who can read without emotion of the action of the 14th Sikhs at Cape Helles, when the supporting troops on the other side, unable to get to them, fought their way, and held on to the last, with the loss of nearly all their British and nearly all their Indian officers, and with a loss of 430 men out of



Reverend Dr Sam Wells Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields (left) and Mandeep Kaur, Sikh Chaplain to the British Armed Forces

The order of Service had the Welcome & Opening Prayer read out by Major General Peter Davies, CB, President of *The Jullundur Brigade Association* and Patron of the *1914 Sikhs* which was followed by Mandeep Kaur, Sikh Chaplain to the British Armed Forces, speaking on the importance of faith to the Sikh soldier. She introduced the first Shabad, recited by *Acapella Jatha*, after which Field Marshal Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank GCB LVO OBE DL read out his passage.



At the front bench are (left to right) Lord Indarjit Singh, Field Marshal Guthrie and the Viscount Slim

The XV Sikh's gallantry in northern France and Flanders was also recalled.

An heir to General Sir John Smyth VC read out an extract : *Early on the morning of 18 May 1915, the Germans started attacking the forward position and a few hours later we had a signal to say that our people were running short of ammunition, particularly bombs, which were the principal weapons in a close trench battle. A carrying party of twenty men were sent up under an officer, but all were shot down before they had reached half way. Then their forward company tried to send a party back, but with the same result.*

An order was then given for me to make another attempt. I asked for ten volunteers to go with me – and the whole company stepped forward! This was really incredible as they had been watching the two fatal dress rehearsals. They really put courage into me. I wanted to take as small a party as possible, which would give us a better chance of getting through. I chose ten stalwart Sikhs.

There was an anxious hush as we made our preparations, I felt as though every German machine-gunner was waiting with his finger on the button. In the mid-afternoon I led my little party over the top.

The Germans had laid on an artillery concentration and it was that which really gave us an outside chance. The smoke and the earthy and dead bodies thrown up from the bursting shells hid us from view for a time. We had covered about a third of the distance before the machine-guns and rifles got on to us. Then it was a matter of crawling forward, taking what cover we could, including from a small stream up which we managed to wade undiscovered for a short time.

Eventually, we succeeded in delivering one of the two boxes of bombs. There were few survivors and those who still lived were desperately wounded.

The Viscount Slim OBE DL, son of the legendary Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Commanding XIV Army in the Second World War and author of the iconic book 'Defeat into Victory', addressed the gathering before Pushpinder Singh of the *Nishaan* journal read out from 'Martial India' by F Yeat-Brown.

The battle of Gallipoli was fought to capture Constantinople so as to reach the Turkish land, who had entered the war scene on the side of Germany. The 2nd Royal Fusiliers were finding it difficult to fight the Turks so the Regiment of Sikhs was sent for their help. Although the allies did not succeed, the bravery shown by the Sikhs during this operation became a glorious chapter in the history of warfare. The task given to the Sikhs was highly dangerous. They were to capture two Turkish Trench lines named as J-11 and J-13. The brave soldiers of the 14th Regiment Sikhs were equally divided for the task on these two lines. The fierce battle took place on 3rd and 4th June, 1915, wherein the brave soldiers of the 14th Sikhs lost 371 men. Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton was the General at that time. When Hamilton had landed on 25th April at the Southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, he found that their strength as compared to that of the Turks was highly inferior. He also realised that the terrain greatly favoured the Turks, who were well dug-in. He had made the 14th Sikhs of the Indian Brigade a part of his expeditionary force.

Sir Hamilton wrote to the Commander-in-Chief in India: *"In spite of the tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground was given up and not a single straggler came back. The ends of the enemy's trenches were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at close quarters, and the glaucis slope was thickly dotted with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by them on the 4th June has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa."*



The large congregation had Sikhs and Christians praying together



Choir of St Martin's Voices, conducted by Dr Andrew Earis

David Bellamy, representing the family of Lieutenant General Sir Reginald Savory then read out:

The brave Sikhs, who earned a very high degree of appreciation included Sardar Uday Singh, who had saved the life of 2nd Lt. R.A. Savory. This handsome Sikh was over 6ft tall and had a fair beard and light green eyes. He was a wrestler from his very childhood and when in 1907 he went to take part in a wrestling match in a nearby village, he was selected by the British to join the 14th Sikhs. He was with the unit when Hamilton's forces landed at the Gallipoli Peninsula. It is interesting to note that when after the war he was offered a gallantry award, he pleaded that he should be allowed to go back to his village so that he could pursue wrestling which was dear to his heart.

Another prominent Sikh soldier associated with this battle was Bhola Singh. When Lt. Gen. Sir Reginald Savory came to India in 1968 to attend the presentation of colours ceremony, Bhola Singh was also present on that occasion. Remembering the past, the General spoke about the close relationship between British officers and their Sikh men. In his own words:

"Only this morning (8th February 1968) Lance Naik Bhola Singh of the 14th Sikhs, who had been wounded in Gallipoli in 1915, took the trouble to come all the way from his home to call upon me, and after 52 years we saw each other again. I was deeply touched, not only at having the pleasure of seeing him again, but also at the thought of all the trouble he had taken to come and see me.

"When he was wounded, he and I were both young men. Now he is a 'chitti dari wala' (white bearded man) and I am old and bald, but although we have both grown much older, yet our affection for each other and our mutual pride in our old Regiment stays as young as ever. Long may this continue."

'Wahe Guruji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guruji Ki Fateh!'



Gursevak Jatha students of the Gurmat Sangeet Academy



The well known artists from Liverpool, the Singh Twins at the Church

Lord Indarjit Singh of Wimbledon CBE gave his 'Thought for the Day' live, just as he has for several decades over the Radio to a largely British audience numbering millions, following which Mandeep Kaur Sikh Chaplain to the British Armed Forces introduced the second Shabad, 'He alone is called a Warrior' which verse by Guru Arjan Dev ji was sung by Acapella Jatha in Raag Dhanasri.

*He alone is called a warrior, in this world,
Who is coloured in the Lord's Love,
Through the Perfect True Guru,
He conquers his own mind,
And then all else comes under his control,
Sing the Praises of the Lord,
With the love of your heart,
Those who seek His Sanctuary,
And meditate on his qualities attain the peace of union
with Him and live in His presence,
At the feet of such (in their company) with them abiding in
My heart my body is made pure,
Grant me the dust of their feet oh gracious one,
Nanak craves only this peace.*

Ian Henderson CBE, whose father and grandfather had distinguished careers with the XV Sikhs in War and Peace read out Rupert Brooke's famous poem while the Choir sang 'Greater Love hath no Man', the programme of the day culminating in the talk on Sikhism and the concept of a just war by Dr Gurnam Singh.

The National Memorial Service on this day was conceived by Harbinder Singh Rana, Honorary Director of the 1914 Sikhs Campaign whose relentless pursuit of history, particularly of the Sikhs in the UK over the centuries, has manifested itself also in the establishment of the 1914 Sikhs Platoon, some members of which were smartly turned out in uniform of the period.



Harbinder Singh Rana, with Harbans Singh Thandi, son of Sepoy Uday Singh who rescued the wounded Lt Reginold Savory on the battlefield at Gallipoli in June 1915



English and Sikh officers of the British Army ...



... General Peter Davies with Sikh Major of the British Army ...



Member of the '1914 Sikhs Platoon' outside St Martin-in-the-Fields

Deg Teg Fateh at Hampton Estate



The iconic painting of Uday Singh rescuing Reginald Savory on the battlefield of Gallipoli in June 1915

It was a most beautiful moment when in the village chapel at Seale, near Farnham in Surrey, the nonagenarian Harbans Singh, son of Uday Singh, placed a wreath at the memorial tablet to Lt

General Sir Reginald Arthur Savory. This was on 9 June 2015 when a special service was held at Seale, almost exactly 100 years after that epic battle day at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles.



Harbans Singh with his daughter at the memorial tablet



David Bellamy, member of Lt General Sir Reginald Savory's family presenting the famous painting at Hampton Estate



At the Seale Chapel

Harbans Singh, escorted by his daughter from the Punjab, had been specially invited by Harbindar Singh Rana and the Savory family to England for Commemoration of the battle where the XIV Sikhs had so distinguished themselves.

The homage to Lt General Sir Reginald Arthur Savory was read out by Iain Smith of the Sikh Pioneers and Sikh Light Infantry Association, who recalled that the visionary, war decorated and successful wartime General, because the first Colonel of the Sikh Light Infantry Regiment, from 1946 to 1953. In fact, it was the General's vision and guidance that the Sikh LI, which was formed from the erstwhile Sikh Pioneers and M&R Sikhs, is presently amongst elite formations of the



After the Service

Indian Army. It was during his Colonelcy too, that the regimental motto 'Deg Teg Fateh' was adopted.

Lt General Sir Reginald Savory's family home is at Hampton Estate in Seale, and it was at this magnificent setting that the family hosted the visitors from India and a score of Sikhs from the UK for lunch and much fellowship.

As some of the photographs show, this was not for the first time that the Savory family have had large numbers of Sikhs visit the Estate : In the early 1960s, a contingent of the XV Sikhs, then serving with the UN at Gaza, had visited the UK and, naturally, been invited to Hampton Estate.



At entrance of the beautiful family home 'Hampton Estate' in Seale



At the same place, 55 years earlier, soldiers of the 2nd Sikhs (XV Sikhs)



Farmers at heart : Sikh soldiers inspecting the fields at Hampton Estate in 1961

Sikhs of the Frontier Force

Those men who were to form the 'Irregular' forces to defend the erstwhile frontiers of the independent Sikh Kingdom, were recruited largely from the disbanded contingents raised in the Phulkian states and the Malwa region but there were many 'soldiers of fortune' at large and the newly appointed British Governor General conceived the formation of such brigades as a means of employment. Thus was born the 'Punjab Irregular Frontier Force', or PIFFERS as they are universally known since, with two Regiments of Infantry in the Pakistan Army, one with the Indian Army (5 Gorkha Rifles), four Cavalry Regiments (all with the Pakistani Army, four mountain batteries of artillery, equally divided between the two Armies). However, owing to the terms of their service, they could not be deployed on the 'Bengal Side' of the River Jumuna but this did not deter them from volunteering for the Burma War of 1852, the 4th Sikhs being the first Punjab Corps to ever "cross the seas".

At the relief of Pegu, the 4th Sikhs led the assault, the Governor General Lord Dalhousie having earlier remarked: They are still untried; let them prove that they can fight as well for us as they did against us" ! As history records "the bearded warriors and their blue steel were too much (for the enemy) who quickly surrendered".

In 1857, the 51st Sikhs (later 1st Bn, 12th Frontier Force Regiment) took part in suppression of the insurgent Poorbia Sepoys while the 52nd (2/12 FFR) chased the Mardan mutineers, 'the Lost Legion' of Kipling.

At turn of the century, the 51st Sikhs fought alongside the 11th American Infantry at Peytsang-Yangstan in China, the brunt of fighting done by them.

During 1911, just some years before the Great War, the Crown Prince of Germany visited the Khyber area and expressed some doubts as to the speed with which the Khyber Movable Column, based at Peshawar, could reach the Pass. "His Imperial Highness was amazed to review the 52nd Sikhs just two hours later marching towards Jamrud, in full fighting kit", the whole affair entirely unrehearsed.

Three years later, when the German 'Der Tag' dawned, the Central Powers were to face the steel and resolve of the Piffer Sikhs on the bloody fields of northern France and Flanders no less than the Turks on the Tigris and in Palestine.

The Frontier Force was re-organised after the Great War, the various units being designated as battalions of the 12th Frontier Force Regiment (including the Guides) and 13th Frontier Force Rifles (including the 6th Royal battalion (Scinde), the erstwhile 59th Scinde Rifles (FF). The Cavalry Regiments were the Guides, 10th, 11th and 12th Cavalries. The Mountain Gunners, which too had a high proportion of Sikhs, were the Kohat, Derajat, Peshawar and Hazare Batteries.



General Roberts' Sikh Orderlies, Dewa Singh and Dehan Singh, of the 3rd Punjab Frontier Force



Officers and men of the 1st Sikh Infantry, later 1/12 FFR photographed in 1860, including the Regimental Granthi (in white)



Troops in China during the Boxer Rebellion included those from the 1st Sikh Infantry (Punjab Frontier Force), various Cavalry Regiments and the Gurkhas



Pre-Second World War, Sikhs of the 1st Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles

'Sikhs' of the Pakistan Army



Those visiting Abbottabad in north-western Pakistan and chancing upon name-boards outside many a bungalow in this important cantonment, may well be surprised to read 'Sikhs' under the name of serving Pakistan Army officers. This in 2015? Well yes, if that officer belongs to, or has served with the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Battalions of the Frontier Force Regiment in the Pakistan Army.



The crest on blazer of many serving officers of the Pakistan Army Today



The PIFFER War Memorial in the verdant campus of the Frontier Force Regimental Centre at Abbottabad

Many senior Pakistan Army Generals still sport the nomenclature 'Sikhs' as part of the Regimental crests on their blazers (see picture on the left). Yes, most of these officers are proud of their paltan's ancestry and many zealously maintain their historical past, dating back to 1846 after the First Anglo-Sikh War in the Punjab. Those severely fought battles, which shocked the British by their ferocity, could well have changed future history of the sub-continent but for the betrayal of Dogra-origin Generals of the Sikh Army particularly during the battle of Ferozashah.

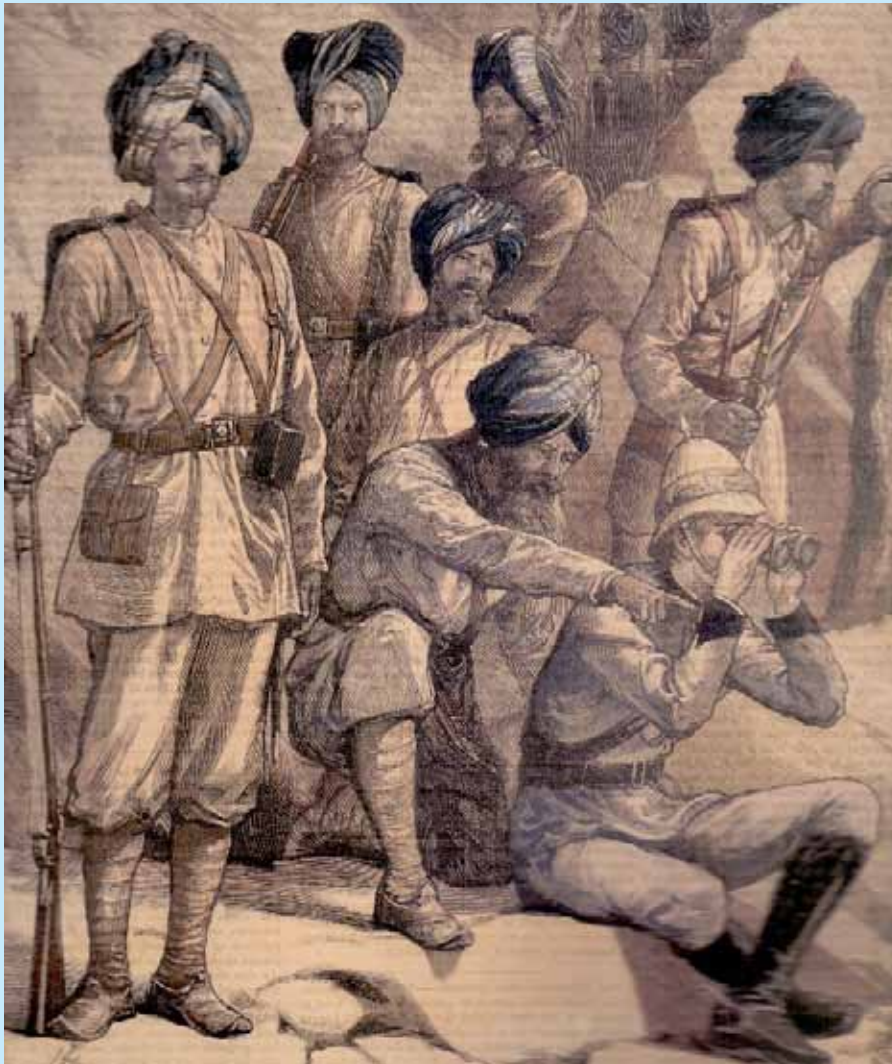
Three years later, in January 1849, during the second Anglo-Sikh war military history repeated itself at the battle of Chillianwalla on eastern banks of the river Jhelum where the British Army was worsted by the Sikh Army, which



Painting of Sikh gunner of the Hazara Mountain Battery (1885)



Sikh troops at a camp on the Frontier, circa 1880



Painting of the Guides Infantry on patrol in the Frontier

included Punjabi Muslims (mostly gunners) but again “defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory”! The sun soon set on the Sikh Empire which was incorporated into the expanding British Raj, the last independent state of the sub-continent.

Tens of thousands of Sikh soldiery were ordered to lay down their arms but the British remained in awe of their discipline and prowess. It did not take very long for the Sikh Warrior to be wooed back into his profession of arms and so, soon enough, in 1846 were raised the first ‘irregular’ forces for defence of Punjab frontiers with Afghanistan.

The first of these - 51st Sikhs (Frontier Force) - were raised in 1846 as the 1st Regiment of Infantry The Frontier Brigade. In 1851, this regiment became part of the Punjab Irregular Force, which later became famous as the Punjab Frontier Force or *The Piffers*, an elite Army within the Army. The Piffers eventually grew to incorporate three regiments of cavalry, eleven regiments of infantry and three batteries of mountain artillery. There were also the Corps of Guides, a single battalion of infantry and a cavalry Regiment.

Responsibilities of the Piffers were to maintain order on the Punjab Frontier; a task they performed with great aplomb. The 1st Sikh Infantry took part in numerous frontier operations besides the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, when it out fought the mutineers in Rohilkhand and Oudh.

During the Second Afghan War of 1878-80, they took part in the capture of Ali Masjid and the advance to Jalalabad. In 1900, they went to China to suppress the Boxer Rebellion and were soon designated as the 51st Sikhs (Frontier Force) in



Colours being paraded at Abbottabad in the late 19th century

1903 and owing to their splendid performance in the Great War, became the 1st Battalion (Prince of Wales's Own Sikhs) 12th Frontier Force Regiment in 1922.

Subsequent to the reforms brought about by Lord Kitchener

with four companies of Sikhs, two of Pathans, and one each of Punjabi Muslims and Dogras, this pattern remaining till August 1947 when they were allocated to the newly established Pakistan Army where they continue today as 3rd Battalion The Frontier Force Regiment (but



Sikh troops with their British officers during a Frontier campaign

in the Indian Army in 1903, the regiment's designation had been changed to 51st Sikhs (Frontier Force) but by 1914, the Regiment's class composition was also changed,

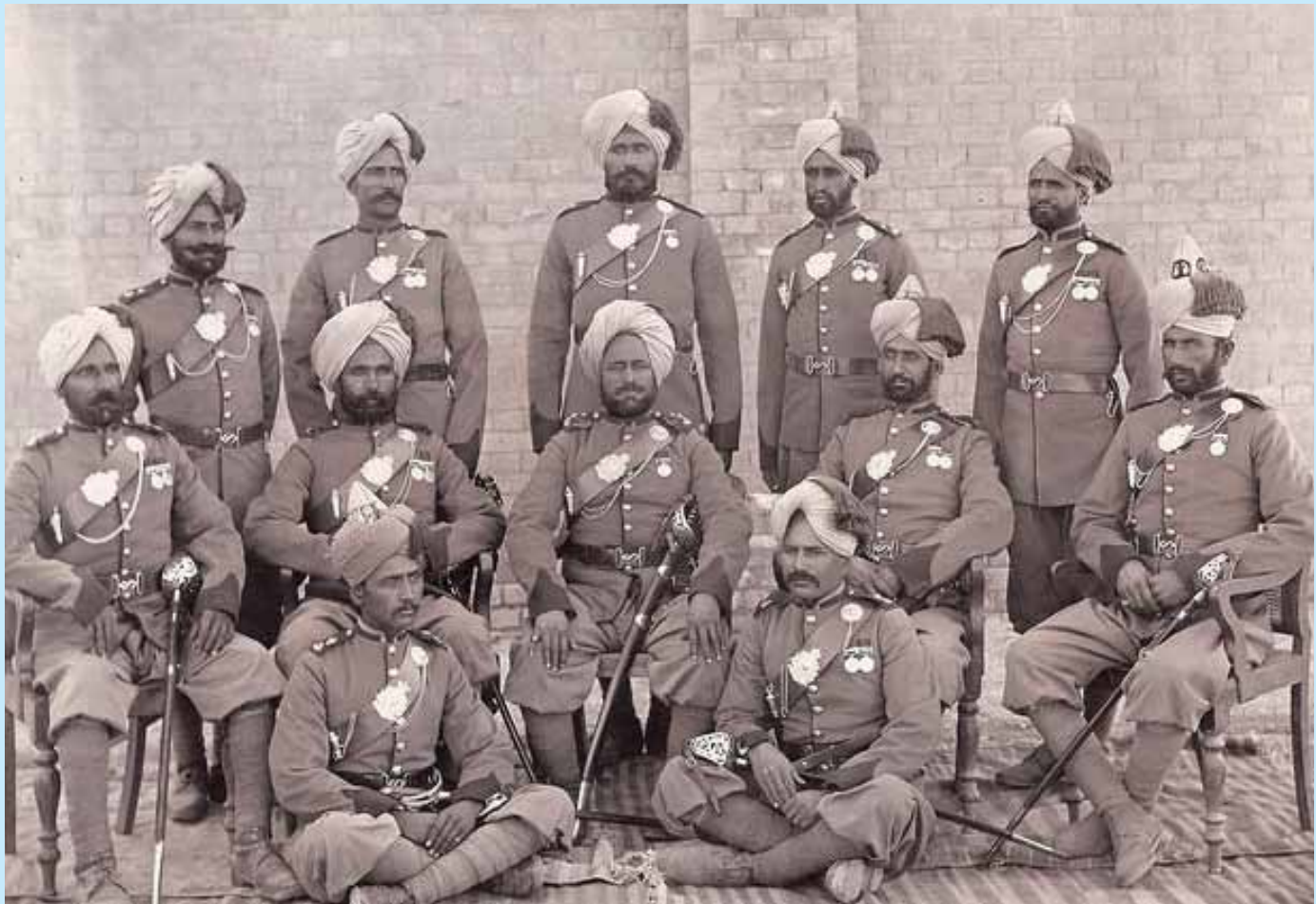
still, though informally, known as the 51st Sikhs).

The 52nd Sikhs (Frontier Force) were raised in 1846 as the 2nd Regiment of Infantry, the



Frontier Brigade. In 1847, they were designated 2nd (or Hill) Regiment of Sikh Local Infantry, becoming the 2nd (or Hill) Regiment of Sikh Infantry in 1857 serving largely in the Hazara and Murree Hills.

After the First World War, the 52nd Sikhs were grouped with the 51st, 53rd and 54th Sikhs and the two battalions of Guides Infantry to form the 12th Frontier Force Regiment in 1922. The 52nd Sikhs then became 2nd Battalion (Sikhs) of the new Regiment. During the Second World War, the 2/12 FFR fought with distinction in the Malayan Campaign. In 1947, the Frontier Force Regiment was allotted to Pakistan, thereafter

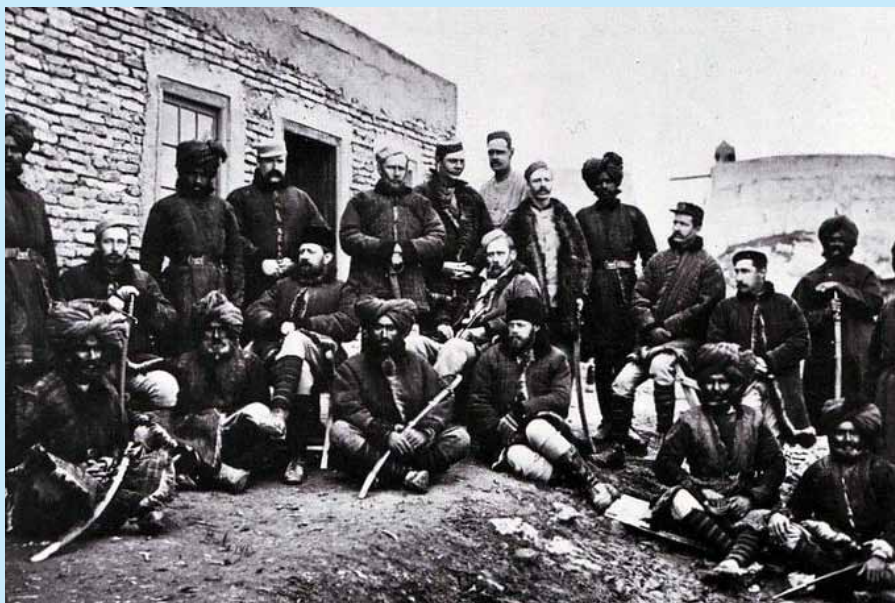


Viceroy Commissioned Officers of the 52nd Sikhs (Frontier Force) at Kohat 1905

taking part in the Kashmir Ops (1948) Sialkot (1965) and Hilli (1971), their history being succinctly

recorded in the book 'The Wardens of the Marches' by Lt Gen M Attiqur Rahman, earlier Military

Governor of West Pakistan and whose younger brother was India's Ambassador to Germany.



3rd Sikh Infantry at Kabul during the Second Afghan War, 1879

The 53rd Sikhs (Frontier Force) were raised in 1847 as the 3rd Regiment of Infantry, the Frontier Brigade at Ferozepore and designated as the 53rd Sikhs (Frontier Force). They became 3rd Battalion (Sikhs) 12th Frontier Force Regiment in 1922 but in 1947 were allocated to the Pakistan Army, where it continues as the 5th Battalion The Frontier Force Regiment.

The 54th Sikhs were raised in 1846 at Ludhiana as the 4th Regiment of Infantry, the Frontier Brigade and were designated as the 54th Sikhs (Frontier Force). They became 4th Battalion (Sikhs)



12th Frontier Force Regiment in 1922 and 25 years later, in 1947, being allocated to the Pakistan Army, where it continues to serve as 6th Battalion The Frontier Force Regiment.

The battalion has the distinction of having a field marshal, albeit in the Indian Army, Sam Manekshaw who was commissioned in the 4th/12th FFR in 1934, later winning



The resplendent officers Mess of the Frontier Force Regiment at Abbottabad today, which was Officers Mess of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (FF) till the partition of India in 1947

a Military Cross in 1942 in the Burma campaign during World War II.

Today, the PIFFERS are an intrinsic part of the Pakistan Army – except for six battalions of Piffer Gurkhas (5th Gurkha Rifles FF) and two Mountain Batteries (FF) which have remained with the Indian Army. The 5th Gorkha Rifles (FF) proudly wear the red lanyard to

symbolise their 'Royal' status which was granted after the 1st World War. The PIFFER GORKHAS of the Indian Army today have six battalions, with their Regimental Centre now at Shillong in the Meghalya Hills, some 2000 kms to the east of Abbottabad which was their original Regimental Centre and where a monument to them is maintained with due military reverence.



5th Gurkha Rifles (FF) patrol in the erstwhile north-west frontier province (NWFP) of undivided India



The Sikh Regiment

A brief history

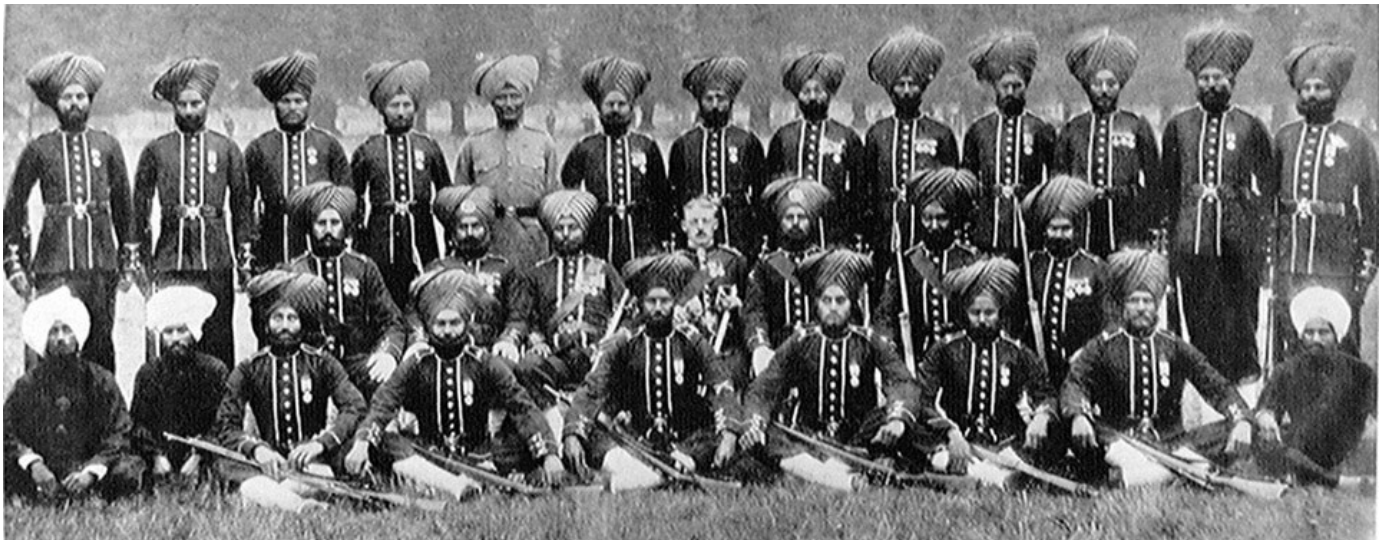


The Sikh Regiment's senior battalions (XIV Ferozepore and XV Ludhiana) were formed in 1846 on the left bank of the river Sutlej to garrison the Jullundur Doab and the new spheres of influence resultant upon the settlement of hostilities with the Lahore Durbar.

The Regiment's recruited soldiers from the disbanded Khalsa forces and although, originally, the troops were intended for 'local' service in the Doab, by 1857 they were cantoned well away up to the Oudh area and it was there, in Benares, that the Ludhiana Sikhs held their charge with steadfastness. The Regiment of Ferozepore, meanwhile, force-marched to Allahabad,

secured the fort there, and then advanced to Cawnpore. The Ferozepore Sikhs fought in all the actions to relieve Lucknow and, with the Seaforth Highlanders, were the first troops to reach the beleaguered Residency. A remarkable consequence was the promotion by a rank of every soldier and award of the 1st Class Order of Merit to every Subedar. At the close of the campaign, the right to wear the red pagri (turban), a special mark of esteem, was bestowed upon the Ferozepore Corps.

In 1855, Captain Thomas Rattray recruited Sikhs and some others at Lahore for service as Military Police in the Santhal Parganas of Bihar. During 1857, 'Rattray's Sikhs' soldiered heroically to restore the established



Officers and men of the XV Ludhiana Sikhs



Colour party of the 45th (Rattray's) Sikhs

authority and two officers' received the Victoria Cross. An outstanding epic was defence of the house at Arrah by 11 civilians and 50 Sikh soldiers against 2000 armed mutineers and a vast rabble of insurgent peasantry. With passing of the Company's armies to the Crown, the senior Sikh Regiments became the XIV (King George's Own) Ferozepore Sikhs, the XV Ludhiana Sikhs and the 45th of the Bengal Foot, later Indian Infantry, was popularly known as 'Rattray's Sikhs'.

The XV Sikhs saw service in Shanghai during the second Chinese War in 1860-61 defending that city against the Taiping rebels while all three senior Battalions served in the Second Afghan War of 1878-80. The XIV Sikhs fought in the battle for Ali Masjid, suffering the bulk of casualties. The XV formed part of the South Afghanistan Field Force which occupied Kandahar for many months while the 45th also fought at Ali Masjid and afterwards in the Bazaar Valley. The 45th joined the march by 'Bobs Bahadur' (later Field Marshal the Earl Roberts of Kandahar) to Kabul, fighting in the



Sikh troops on the north west frontier with Afghanistan

disputory struggle at Charasiah and, together with the XV Sikhs, were part of the forces which occupied Kabul. Bobs Bahadur took the XV Regiment for the relief of Kandahar and the finale of the Afghan operations.

The XV Sikhs joined the Suakin Expedition in 1885, sailing for the Sudan and fighting the Dervishes at Tofrek where defensive stockades were built. Their gallantry and discipline saved the column from complete destruction.

In 1887, there was a Russian threat to Afghanistan and the Indian Army was expanded, the 35th and 36th Sikh Regiments being raised, formerly the numbers of two old Bengal units which had been disbanded a few years earlier and now resurrected as Sikhs units. In 1895, a company of the XIV Sikhs, together with some Kashmir State troops, defended the fort at Chitral against very heavy odds for forty-five days, meriting recognition accorded by special battle honour while the XV Sikhs joined the relief force, heavily engaged in the forcing of the Malakand Pass.



Officers and men of a Sikh Regiment during the late 19th century



VCOs and men of the 36th Sikhs

The 36th Sikhs (now the 4th battalion) gained an incredible special honour in 1897, when two companies were detached for the defence of Fort Gulistan on the Samana range of the North-West Frontier. The detached post of Saragarhi, which was a mere mudbrick blockhouse set up for the purpose of visual communication between Forts Lockhart and Gulistan, was defended by 19 men and 2 cook-boys for over six and a half hours against some 7000 fanatical Orakzais, an action that excited the admiration of the world. The attack on Gulistan was one of the incidents which led to the Tirah campaign and the Sikh Regiments' recorded many brilliant episodes during that Afridi fighting.



Sikh troops in China during the Boxer War in early 20th century

In 1901 was raised the 47th Sikh Regiment of Bengal Infantry whose first overseas service from 1905 to 1908 was with the International Force in China. Earlier, in 1901, the XIV Sikhs had served in China and were one of the Regiments that came within the observation of the German Army Headquarters staff there. Field Marshal Von Waldersee reviewed them on the race course in Shanghai and expressed his unbounded admiration for their splendid physique and soldierly bearing. "In 1914, the Sikh Regiments in France and Flanders were able to persuade the Germans more feelingly of their worth" !



Sikh soldier in the high Himalayas

The XIV, XV and 47th Sikhs left Indian shores in August 1914 for fighting in the Great War. The XIV were earmarked for active defence of the Suez Canal, and it was their patrol which discovered the attempt to mine the passway, and thence for six months continuous fighting on Gallipoli. from the second battle of Krithia until the evacuation (*see article*). The XV and 47th Sikhs were part of the Jullundur Brigade which pioneered the Indian troops in France, the former being amongst the very first Indian troops to land on the mainland of Europe (*see article*).

The 1921 reorganisation of the Indian Armies led, in 1922, to new titles and amalgamations : the XIV, XV, 35th, 36th, 45th and 47th Sikhs became, respectively, the 1st, 2nd, 10th, 4th, 3rd and 5th Battalions of the 11th Sikh Regiment.

The 5/11 Sikhs fought in the Second World War as part of the Indian Army's III Corps deployed in Malaya during opening stages of the war against Japan. The Malayan Campaign was a short-lived affair but the

Battalion's role was one of a saga of bravery, heroism and endurance.

Within two years of the end of World War II, the subcontinent was partitioned and the Sikh Regiment remained part of the Indian Army. The constituent Sikh companies of the 12th Frontier Force Regiment and 13th Frontier Force Rifles, apart from the numerous battalions of the 1st, 8th, 14th, 15th and 16th Punjab Regiments, all of which were allocated to the Army of a new country (Pakistan) were transferred to the Indian Army. As an example, the 16th and 17th Battalions of the Sikh Regiment were formed with the troops from the Frontier Force Rifles.

Today, the Sikh Regiment consists of some 22 regular battalions plus several RR battalions serving in J&K as also a number of Territorial Battalions. The Sikh Regimental Centre which was till 1947 at Naushera on the Indus, was moved to Meerut and later to Ramgarh 30 km from Ranchi in the state of Jharkhand.

The First World War

Sikh Regiments served in various theatres during World War I, being the first troops to land on mainland Europe, then taking part in the desperate battles in northern France and Flanders, later in Gallipoli in the Dardanelles and finally in Mesopotamia and Palestine.



Clockwise from top: First contingent of Indian troops to arrive on the continent of Europe in late September 1914 were the XV Sikhs; Sikh troops at camp; troops were re-equipped with modern weapons including Vickers machine-guns; XIV Sikhs on the beaches of Gallipoli; wearing gas masks in the trenches of Flanders, led by an officer on horseback, Sikh troops in Marseilles

The Second World War

Battalions of the Sikh Regiment took part in various theatre campaigns during the Second World War. In this montage are seen the troops in North Africa, Italy and Burma. Their British Officers often assumed the identity of the Sikh troops, going into battle fully bearded and wearing turbans.



Clockwise from top: Troops with the 8th Army in North Africa; British officer and Sikh jawan outside Mandalay, during the recapture of Burma; iconic picture of the 1st Sikhs clearing enemy bunkers at Pagan in Burma; patrol of the 1st Sikhs during the Arakan campaign; holding the German flag captured in Italy

The Sikh

Battalions of the Sikh Regiment and other formations of the Indian Army are deployed in various roles and fronts of the sub-continent, as also serving with the United Nations on Peace Keeping duties in various theatres.



'The Sikh Regiment today' captions: Clockwise from below: at the Siachen glacier, the highest battleground in the world; on patrol in the jungles of north-east India; in the high Himalayas; with Carl Gustav anti-tank rocket in the desert; before boarding strategic airlift aircraft; mechanised infantry with BMP-2; with the United Nations; 'Jaikara' in northern Kashmir

Regiment Today





The Order of Military Merit being presented to Lt Col Harjit Singh Sujan OMM MSM CD, commanding the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) at Vancouver, British Columbia

First Canadian Sikh in Army command

Lt. Col. Harjit Singh Sajjan became the first Sikh in Canada to take command of a British Columbia regiment. In a historic ceremony, a change of command in the British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) had taken place some years ago, in September 2011 at the Beatty Street Armoury in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Harjit Singh had joined the British Columbia Regiment as a Trooper in 1989 and was commissioned in the Regiment in 1991. He was promoted to Captain in 1995 and to Major in 2005, having served in Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as having led three deployments to Afghanistan, the last in November 2010.



Insignia of the Regiment

Established in 1883, the Regiment is the oldest military unit in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and has received forty battle honours in its history, being a formation of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps since 1942.

In the course of his deployments, Lieutenant-Colonel Harjit Singh has been awarded Mentioned-in-Dispatches, Commander-in-Chief Commendation, two Chief of Defence Staff Commendations and a US Army Commendation. He is also the recipient of the Deputy Minister's (National Defence) Award, besides the Order



Lt Col Harjit Singh in Afghanistan

of Military Merit, one of Canada's highest military recognition. He is the first Sikh to receive this award and continues to be a role model for youth across the country.

Lieutenant-Colonel Harjit Singh was born in the Punjab and moved to Canada with his parents at the age of five. Prior to joining the army, Harjit Singh remained a police officer for 11 years with the Vancouver Police Department. He completed his last assignment as a Detective specialising in organised crime in the Gang Crime Unit and also spent five years as a certified Technical Search Specialist with Vancouver's Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Team.

Father of two children, Harjit Singh is married to Kuljit Kaur, a medical physician, and they reside in Vancouver.



Lt Col Harjit Singh at the Battalion's base

Sikhs in World Armies



A part from the Indian Army where nearly 20 percent of the 1.2 million men are Sikhs, members of this formidable 'Warrior race' have long served in international armed forces. They have fought for their rights to retain their articles of faith while defending their respective countries. And despite being a minority, Sikhs in the American, Canadian, British and Singapore armies, have found success and climbed the ranks.

Sikhs have a historic military culture and have long kept their articles of faith in the militaries of Britain, Canada and India. Small numbers of Sikhs have served in the US armed forces for years without incident, but in the 1980s, the post Vietnam War military moved to increase conformity and banned displays of religious identity for new recruits. In 1986, the army banned "conspicuous"

religious articles of faith, including turbans and unshorn hair, for its service members.

On Vaisakhi Day of 2009, The Sikh Coalition (US-based NGO that defends Sikh civil rights) launched a campaign calling on the army to accept Captain Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi with his Sikh identity intact into the military. In October, the army announced that Capt Kalsi would be able to serve with his Sikh articles of faith, the first time in 23 years. Captain Tejdeep Singh Rattan scored the next victory for Sikhs in the US armed forces when he appealed the army's ban and completed US army officer basic training without sacrificing the articles of his faith.

Captain Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi, a doctor from Riverdale, New Jersey, was the first Sikh recruit to serve in the US army after decades with his turban and other articles of faith after appealing the army's ban. Born in India, he is



married with two children. Capt Kalsi signed up for the army during his first year of medical school. His father and grandfather were part of the Indian Air Force and his great grandfather served in the British Indian army.

The US Sikh community, estimated at more than half a million, have long suffered hate crimes after the September 11, 2001 attacks by assailants whose crass ignorance, falsely associated Sikhism with deceased al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. "I think the only way for that perception to be eliminated is when young Sikhs come up and say -I want to serve in the military," asserts the Captain.

Captain Tejdeep Singh Rattan was recruited and commissioned by the US Army in 2006 as a part of the Health Professions Scholarship Programme (HPSP). After completing his final year of dental school, he joined the US Army officer basic course. However, after completing his education, he was told that he must remove his turban and cut his hair before he begins active duty. He submitted a request to the army to keep articles of faith while serving in the army and became the first Sikh in decades to complete US army basic officer training with his intact hair and turban in March 2010 at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.

Capt Rattan attended Wright State College in Dayton, Ohio, where he obtained both a masters degree in bioengineering and a MBA. He studied dentistry at New York University College of Dentistry. Later stationed at Fort Drum, New York, Rattan has served in the United States Army Dental Command, as one of the US military's 760 dentists on active duty.

Thanks to his Punjabi and Hindi language skills, 27-year-old Delhi-born Simran Preet Singh Lamba, along with Rattan and Kalsi, became one of the first Sikh soldiers in



the US army in more than two decades to complete basic training without giving up articles of his faith. The army recruited him in 2009 through the *Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest* (MAVNI) programme for his language skills, although he was not a US citizen at that time. The MAVNI programme is for legal non-citizens who have requisite skills in a designated foreign language or are healthcare professionals who meet army standards.

Spc Lamba also completed basic training at Fort Jackson outside Columbia, South Carolina, while keeping his turban and unshorn hair. "I am thrilled to serve with



my fellow soldiers and serve the US," says Lamba, who has now become a US citizen. "I humbly believe that I was able to excel in all aspects of my training. Most importantly, I was overwhelmed by the support and camaraderie I felt with my fellow soldiers and base leadership".

He was initially told that his Sikh articles of faith would likely be accommodated. But, in March 2010, his formal request for religious accommodation was denied. Lamba appealed the decision, and his appeal was accepted in September 2010.

Contrary to the concerns of some, Spc Lamba was able to meet all the requirements of a soldier during basic training. He wore a helmet over a *patka* (small turban) during field exercises. During gas mask exercises, he successfully created a seal. He used petroleum jelly to get a tight grip between his beard and gas mask and was able to keep his hair clean under all conditions, meeting all the military's concerns about training and appearance.

He also enjoyed deep bonds with fellow soldiers and his superiors. "When the bullets begin flying, it doesn't concern anyone what religion you are -I bleed the same colour," Lamba said, after his graduation ceremony from basic combat training.

Canada

Before Sikhs were allowed to immigrate to Canada, nine of their numbers joined the Canadian army and fought in World War I in France and Belgium. The first Sikhs are believed to have come to Canada after British Empire soldiers traveled to London in 1897 to take part in Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Sikh soldiers who made the trip returned to India via Canada and some settled there, finding work in lumber mills and later in railway building.

From an army background, Spc Captain Prabhjot Singh Dhanoa has been serving in the Canadian army for a decade. According to Dhanoa, there is no confirmed census but as per estimates, about 200 Punjabis, mostly Sikhs, are serving in the Canadian armed forces. Dhanoa, born in Hoshiarpur, completed his education from Chandigarh.

He was a civil engineer before joining the army. "I have never faced any challenges in the Canadian army because of my turban as Canada respects our role in the World Wars," he shares. "In fact, there are more liberties regarding practicing religion and maintaining symbols of faith in the Canadian army as compared to India." He had completed his training with his turban and at times

a helmet during arms training due to safety concerns.

Spc Lieutenant Jasbir Singh Tatla is the first turbaned Sikh to become a regular officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. The airfield engineer officer was born in Dhothar village, Ludhiana district. He studied engineering at GNE Engineering College, Ludhiana, and completed his Master of Technology at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Tatla, who immigrated to Canada in 1999, passed the Canadian forces entrance examination in 2003 and waited four years for a security background check from India. He was detailed to undergo training at Venture Naval Officers Training Centre, Esquimalt, Victoria.

Britain

Spc Captain Makand Singh a 51-year-old from Kuala Lumpur, joined the British Army at the age of 17, following in his father, Baldev Singh's footsteps -the first turbaned Sikh to join the British army. "My father came to the UK and wanted to join the army with a turban and beard but was told he was not allowed to.

He took his case to the House of Commons and won and the rest is history. The army has come a long way -it has changed and evolved. "For me, it was a lot easier because the path was already made". Today's army is very welcoming to all religious groups," says Singh.

Capt Singh studied in India until the age of 14 when he moved with his family to the UK. He enlisted with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) in 1977 and then became a member of the Royal Logistics Corps when it formed in 1993. Having only lived in England for three years, he spoke very little English, but with the support of the army, worked hard to learn the language. During his 33-year army career, Capt Singh has worked his way up the ranks to a captain and has been posted in Germany, Belize and Hong Kong.

The father-of-two has represented his regiment and the army at hockey and coached military and civilian teams. The soldier from the West Midlands was appointed the ethnic minority liaison officer for his area and regularly visits schools, colleges, gurdwaras and community centres, dispelling misconceptions and talking to youth about a career in the army. He has been honored with the Long Service and Good Conduct medals as well as the prestigious Meritorious Service Medal for his commitment to the recruitment of black and Asian youth into the army.

Capt Makand Singh has become a role model for many young soldiers. Private Ranvir Singh is soon to become the first Sikh soldier with a turban and beard in the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, which

performs ceremonial duties on state and royal occasions. The 27-year-old says, "I feel quite privileged, but there is pressure on me to make sure I uphold the Sikh name and culture. It is the most prestigious regiment in the world and the soldiers and horses look absolutely fabulous. "I am proud to be the first."

Originally from Huddersfield, he enlisted as a Territorial Army soldier with the 562 Transport Squadron and 151 London Transport Regiment at the age of 20. He was inspired to pursue a career in the forces after a talk from Captain Makand Singh at his local gurdwara when he was 13. "Joining the Territorial Army was the best move I ever made. I am very proud to be a Sikh in the British Army," he says.

He has been deployed to Bosnia with the 2nd Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles and is keen to promote the opportunities that exist in the army. Pte Singh has been instrumental in forging closer ties with the British army and local Sikh community by visiting gurdwaras in the Hounslow and Southall areas of London. "We have done a lot in the past two years and built massive ties. Today, we have Sikh ration packs catering to vegetarians and with our numbers increasing, we have turbans to match our uniforms and a Sikh chaplain".

Pte Singh and his wife Pte Pardeep Kaur, who serves as a chef with 16th Regiment Royal Artillery, are also the first Sikh couple in the army.

Spc Mandeep Kaur is the first Sikh and only female chaplain in the British armed forces. As an agricultural engineering graduate from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, the 32-year-old moved to England to study a PhD in the same field, but an interest in community work drove her to apply for the position of Sikh chaplain to the military.

In October 2005, the mother-of one became one of five newly recruited chaplains for the army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force tasked with the *moral, pastoral and spiritual care of all serving personnel*. "I took up this role because I thought it would be a unique opportunity and challenge for me as no one has done it before," she says. "Even now, five years on, the role is still developing everyday and brings new challenges.

"The Royal Army Chaplains' Department was founded in 1796, but until 2005, the faith needs of all British soldiers were the responsibility of the Christian padre. There are now five chaplains for Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh servicemen and servicewomen. Kaur was appointed at C1 grade, which is equivalent to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Her role requires her to fulfil a range of responsibilities from providing emotional and spiritual support to officiating funerals and weddings.



Singapore

There are only about 15,000 Sikhs in Singapore, a nation of five million people, but their presence is very obvious in the Island State cannot be ignored. Sikhs first came to this part of Southeast Asia as soldiers, policemen and guards during the British era. When India and Pakistan attained independence, many Sikhs uprooted from their homes in West Punjab and migrated to this region.

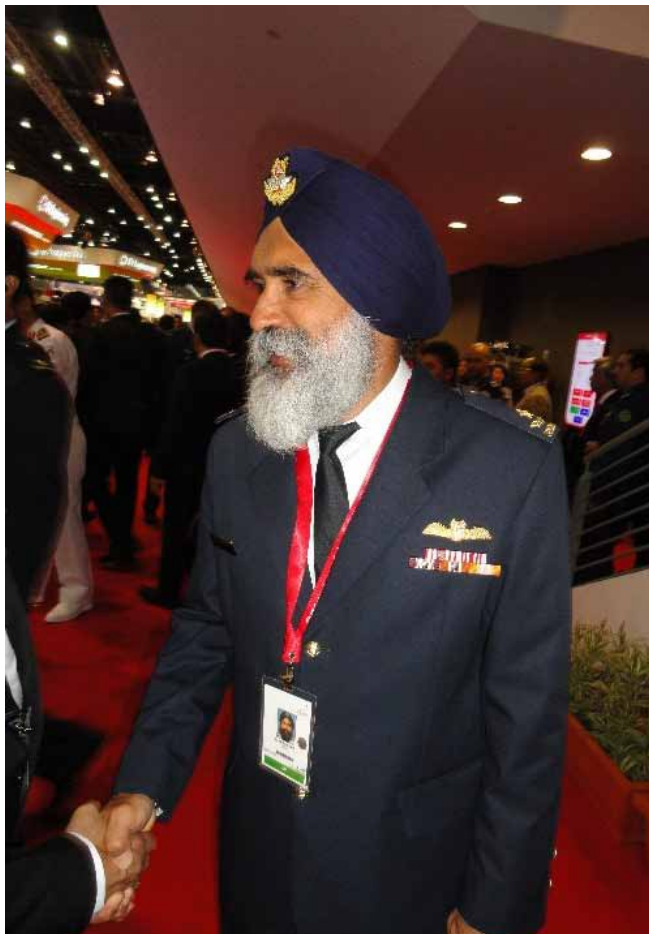
Brigadier-General Ravinder Singh took over from Major-General Chan Chun Sing as chief of the Singapore army 'the first non Chinese army chief in nearly 30 years. The 46-year-old, who was previously deputy secretary (technology) in the Ministry of Defence, joined the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in 1982 and

was awarded SAF Overseas Training Award (Academic) in 1983. He did his masters in engineering science from the University of Oxford, UK. He also holds a Master of Science (management of technology) from the US.

His previous appointments in the SAF include commanding officer, 3rd Signal Battalion; commander, 2nd Singapore Infantry Brigade; assistant chief of general staff (plans); head joint communications and information systems department; head joint plans and transformation department; commander 6th Division; chief of staff -joint staff.

Ravinder Singh has made significant contributions to the development of the 3rd Generation SAF, which includes the application of Integrated Knowledge-Based Command and Control (IKC2) as the key driver for the SAF's transformation efforts. "I am honored to be given this unique opportunity to lead our army and serve our country," he says.

Apart from Ravinder Singh, Sikhs have held senior appointments in Singapore's other armed forces and in fact the first Chief of the Singapore Navy was a Sikh officer. There are several Sikhs in the Republic of Singapore Air Force, including Commanding Officers of fighter squadrons, one of whom, Brigadier General Sarbjit Singh is holding a senior staff appointment (see on left).



Of Berets and Turbans



This is written in response to Elaine Donnelly's views on the US Army allowing a Sikh doctor (and potentially a Sikh dentist) to retain the beards and turbans their faith requires of them. Donnelly (whose work I usually admire) compares this dispensation to the Army's deliberately turning a blind eye to the blatant jihadism of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan. The two are in no way comparable. The latter was an egregious dereliction of duty on the part of the authorities, while the former is merely bureaucratic nitpicking of the sort that Paul Fussell characterised so accurately as "chickenshit."

Donnelly should consider that the Sikhs have a long and distinguished history of military service in the British Indian Army. Sikh regiments were not only unfailingly loyal (once the British had occupied the Sikh Kingdom, a feat that required two wars between 1845 and 1849) but were usually in the forefront of the battle. Perhaps only the Gurkhas equal the military reputation of the Sikhs. Throughout their service to the Raj, which ended only with Indian independence, the Sikhs not only served with their religious symbols, were in fact enjoined to do so. This did not affect their performance in combat rather, it was a mark of distinction, of regimental loyalty and unit cohesion--the intangible morale factors that lead to high combat effectiveness.

Unfortunately, the United States Army has a tin ear when it comes to such matters. Take, for example, a simple matter such as headgear. Up through the tenure of General Eric Shinseki as Army Chief of Staff, only elite units were permitted to wear a beret - a privilege earned in blood. The Army Rangers wore a black beret, the paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne wore maroon, and the Special Forces wore the famous green beret.

In an effort to "transform" the Army and make it more "expeditionary oriented," Shinseki directed all troops to begin wearing the black beret. It was a fitting gesture for the Clinton era in military affairs. The Rangers, of course, were outraged--a black beret means something, just as the maroon beret and jump boots mean something to paratroops, and the green beret to the Special Forces. And now a bunch of fat, sloppy REMFs were wearing it and walking around with Ranger swagger. As for the paratroops and the Special Forces, well, they didn't want to be mistaken for Rangers, either. There was pretty close to a full blown headgear rebellion that was squelched only when the Army relented and allowed the Special Forces and Airborne to retain their distinctive colours. As for the poor Rangers, they were given a rather washed-out looking tan beret, and still haven't gotten over it.

The point is seemingly minor matters such as headgear and footwear matter when it comes to morale, unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. These small marks of individuality, especially when earned, allows the soldier to gain pride in himself and his unit. It makes him part of a larger tradition, not just a cog in the Big Green Machine, and should be encouraged, not suppressed.

A truly clever Army would not try to make Sikhs shave their beards and discard their turbans, but would go so far as make them special marks of distinction. Tap into the Sikh community, form Sikh platoons, companies and battalions wearing the traditional Sikh uniform. I wager the Sikhs will serve the United States with the same zeal and loyalty they showed to the British Raj.

Stuart Koehl

The Weekly Standard, Washington, DC



“Sikhs also
bleed red,
white and
blue”

I recently went for a run. It started to rain, but I kept on going. I thought back to the countless times I ran the fence line during my deployment to Afghanistan in 2011. I was a US Army captain serving my country by providing emergency care to our soldiers on the very austere front lines of war.

We ran in the rain, in dust storms and in unforgiving heat. One of my lasting lessons during those runs and over my 13 years of service was that we rarely had ideal conditions for what we needed to accomplish, but whatever adversity we encountered we were always there for each other regardless of the conditions or our differences.

I joined the Army during medical school, seven months before the 11 September attacks. Although some civilians at the time called me a “terrorist” and “Osama” and told me to “go home,” my fellow soldiers treated me like a brother and understood that my New Jersey home was no different from



Army Capt. Tejdeep Singh Rattan during training at Camp Bullis, Texas.
(Photo: US Army)

their own. The Army respected my Sikh religious beliefs by giving me a special accommodation so that I could wear a turban and maintain uncut hair in accordance with my Sikh faith.

Two other soldiers, Capt. Tejdeep Singh Rattan and Cpl. Simran Preet Singh Lamba, received similar accommodations. Let me be clear, we were not given a free pass on any of the safety and uniformity standards that protect and define soldiers. We completed basic training and proved that we could wear protective gear, including helmets and gas masks. We were required to maintain our beards neatly and wear turbans of a specific colour to match our uniforms. Two of us successfully deployed to Afghanistan. The three of us have received awards and promotions for our service. Far from being an impediment, our faith gives us the strength to succeed as soldiers, just as it did for my father and grandfather and for thousands of Sikhs in armies throughout the world.

Sikhs believe that all people are equal in dignity and divinity. The

turban is both a spiritual crown and a reminder to lead an ethical life. Our hair is left uncut out of respect for God's creation and required to be groomed. Observant Sikhs also carry a kirpan, a small religious sword, as a reminder to stand up against injustice. During their formative years in India more than three centuries ago, Sikhs maintained these articles of faith in spite of religious persecution by Mughal and Afghan invaders. Our Sikh legacy represents a proud and patriotic people who served by the hundreds of thousands in both world wars, and maintains its articles of faith in the modern military forces of Canada, India and the United Kingdom. Our faith and traditions are not in conflict with American values; they embody them in the most fundamental ways.

Earlier this year, with the support of the advocacy group The Sikh Coalition, 105 members of the House of Representatives and 15 senators sent letters to the Department of Defence urging the US armed forces to modernise appearance regulations so patriotic Sikh Americans can serve the

country they love while abiding by their articles of faith. These letters had bipartisan support; however, this policy isn't a political issue, it's not a safety issue, and it's not an issue for the non-Sikhs with whom I have gone to war. This is a basic employment discrimination issue.

The lawsuit filed recently by Hofstra University student Iknoor Singh should lead to an accommodation into his school's ROTC programme. This isn't about just resolving the rights of one Sikh American, it's about reversing a policy against all Sikh Americans that runs counter to our founding principles of religious freedom.

If my time in the Army taught me anything, it's that when adversity strikes we band together and find solutions. This policy might be bureaucratically complicated, but the solution is as simple and straightforward as it gets.

Iknoor Singh should have the right to serve like I did, but shouldn't require a special accommodation or a lawsuit to make that possible. That's not who we are as a nation and it is time that our armed services finally recognise that.



Major Kamal Singh Kalsi served in Afghanistan in 2011, running a field hospital in Helmand Province. Kalsi, who received the Bronze Star, serves in the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion at Fort Dix, New Jersey, as a disaster medicine expert in the Army Reserve.

Preserving the Legacy

The Jullundur Brigade Association



The Jullundur Brigade Association, incorporating the original regimental crests



The resplendent Jullundur Brigade Trophy, seen with the 5th Sikhs ceremonial Quarter Guard

'The Jullundur Brigade Association' (JBA) is unique amongst all armies of the world, particularly those of the erstwhile undivided Indian Army, in that the original constituent battalions that formed its order of battle in 1912, some years before the Great War (1914-18), remained together till 1919, having served in peace and various theatres of war during those times. In 2014, the JBA marked its 25th anniversary on the battlefields of northern France and Flanders, having earlier been formed in 1989 at a poignant ceremony in the Manchester area of north west England.

As founder President of The Jullundur Brigade Association in 1989, Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra was perhaps the seniormost officer from amongst the heirs to the magnificent battalions that constituted the old Jullundur Brigade in its pristine glory during the Great War of 1914-18. As he wrote in the Foreword of the book which commemorated the Association in 1989:

The close fellowship between the British officers and their Indian soldiers, camaraderie between the British and Indian battalions is classic and unrivalled in the history of Armies. There is something unique and central in the faiths the men-in-arms professed to have made it incumbent upon soldiers of different religions - Christian, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu - to have lived and fought and died together.



Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra



November 1989: Officers of the 59th Scinde Rifles FF, past and present, seen at Port Arthur, at the crossroads of Neuve Chapelle, La Bassée and Armentières.

I was commissioned into the Army from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst in 1928 and after some years attachment with the British Infantry, was the first King's Commissioned Indian Officer to join the 6th Royal Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Scinde) at Hangu in the NWFP, in 1932. This was the old 59th and with what elan we marched into action, black puttees at quick pace, 'Ready, Aye Ready!' The senior subaltern was Jimmy Green whose great grand uncle George Green, had raised the battalion as the Scinde Camel Corps in 1842.

The 59th evoked great awe in the young subalterns selected to join the few battalions then being 'Indianised'. Some of them were VD Jayal, who later earned the DSO in Eritrea, Nazir Ahmed, Bikram Singh and Akbar Khan. We hand-picked the first Indian Commissioned Officers from the IMA Dehra Dun for joining the 59th and the first of these was Mohammed Musa (later C-in-C Pakistan Army and Governor of Baluchistan). Soon after came Bakhtiar Rana, later to command the 59th in 1947 and becoming a Lt. General and Corps commander in the Pakistan Army. We were very choosy!

The glorious feats of the Battalion in First World War which had taken place just a decade before I was commissioned, were great inspiration. But more glories were to come, in the Second World War just a decade ahead. The 59th fought with distinction in Eritrea and in the battles for Monte Cassino, gaining even more battle honours, VCs and other gallantry awards, including those to Jimmy Green, Bakhtiar Rana and Anant Pathania. (the latter's uncle having gained the MC at Neuve Chapelle in 1915).

Another great General of the Indian Army is Harbaksh Singh, who was commissioned into the 5th Bn., Sikh Regiment, the old 47th Sikhs which were brigaded

with the 59th in the Jullundur Brigade and whose deeds in the Great War are legendary. Harbaksh was a young officer when the 47th went to war in 1941, fighting the Japanese with great grit and gallantry in Malaya, losing 90 percent of its officers and men while the remnant were in Singapore when the Allied Army capitulated. After World War II, Harbaksh rose to eventually command the Western Army during the 1965 conflict with Pakistan. His opposite number was Bakhtiar Rana. After ceasefire, the two Generals met in Lahore to work out arrangements for disengagement but they met like the long-lost brothers they were.



As President of the Jullundur Brigade Association, Major General Peter Davies visiting New Delhi in December 1993. To his right are Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh (former Colonel of the Sikh Regiment), Major General Prem Khanna (former CO 5th Sikhs) and Lt Gen Manjit Singh Bhullar (former Colonel of the Sikh Regiment).

Another distinguished officer of the 47th, Brigadier Mohinder Singh was first to be awarded an MC in 1939. His father had won a gallantry award with the Cavalry Division in Flanders in 1918.

The arbitrary line that runs down dissecting the Punjab, that divided our Regiments and lives, has nevertheless not succeeded in dividing our hearts and we have always followed the fortunes of our paltan in the years after 1947.

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the acute joy and fulfillment felt when, as the senior most PIFFER in the Sub Continent, I was invited by the Frontier Force Regiment to visit the Centre at Abbotabad and the old 59th at its location in Bahawalpur during February 1988. It was "going home again" and the nostalgia was overwhelming. The 59th remains in great form.

It was during the formal dinner at Bahawalpur that the 59th's Jullundur Brigade Trophy was displayed and my son Pushpindar, so fascinated by the background to its inception, was inspired to begin the 'search' for the other two Trophies.



As part of the Indian Army Association, the JBA took part in the 75th anniversary of the battles at Neuve Chapelle and Ypres during November 1989. At the Indian Army Memorial is seen the Duke of Kent in conversation with Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra.

Considerable correspondence and research went into the preparation of this story of the Jullundur Brigade in France and Flanders in 1914-15 and Pushpinder's enthusiasm has fuelled his dogged pursuit of various histories now tri-sected with the three famous Battalions serving in three different countries. On return from Pakistan, he visited the 5th Sikhs at their then location and saw their Jullundur Brigade Trophy given a place of honour in the officer's mess amongst other trophies of war, including drums of the 16th Royal Bavarian Infantry Regiment captured by the 47th at Neuve Chapelle.

Brigadier Robert Pike of the British Army, then Defence Advisor to the High Commission in New Delhi, and equally imbibed with enthusiasm, was instrumental in establishing that the third Jullundur Brigade Trophy, of the 1st Manchesters, was also in good shape, now with the 1st King's Regiment (heirs of the Manchester's) at Berlin (part of the BAOR). The triumvirate was complete !

As Major General Peter Davies, then Colonel of the King's Regiment, wrote "we value our links with the past and none more than those with the Indian Army. Our copy of the Jullundur Brigade Trophy is a prized possession of this particular association".

It is to General Peter Davies and the King's Regiment that we owe a debt of gratitude in organising the historic reunion of the officers and heirs of the three battalions of the 8th Jullundur Brigade at Manchester in November 1989, or almost exactly 75 years after the Brigade went into action on the Western Front in France and Flanders.

Long may this Association last and the generations that follow remain conscious and proud of the deeds of their forefathers. I would propose that the Jullundur Brigade Association be formalised and such reunions be perpetuated. We owe such an Association to posterity".

In his Foreword to the second Edition of his *The Jullundur Brigade in France and Flanders 1914-1915*, Major General Peter Davies wrote:

"2014 is the Centenary year of the commencement of World War I in which the Jullundur Brigade participated with such valour.

In 1989, having become Colonel of The King's Regiment, I met Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra on my first visit to India. He impressed upon me –and he was a very persuasive General – that my first task as the new Regimental Colonel was to re-establish the formal affiliations between The King's Regiment and the 5th Sikhs and with the 1st (Scinde) Frontier Force Regiment which for a variety of reasons had lapsed. This task was eventually completed once the protocols of obtaining the authority of HM The Queen and the Presidents of India and Pakistan had been met.

Then, with the approval of our Founder, General Mohindar Singh, the Jullundur Brigade Association was formed to give substance to the history of the Brigade and to rekindle, where possible, comradesly linkages reflecting the proud history of the Brigade.

The original Brigade which left India for France in 1914 was primarily composed of the 1st Battalion The Manchester Regiment, which in 1958 had merged with The King's Liverpool Regiment to become The King's Regiment and which more recently has become The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment of the British Army; the 47th Sikh Regiment which has become 5th Battalion The Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army; and the 59th Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) which has become the 1st Battalion (Scinde) Frontier Force Regiment of Pakistan. It is of particular note that the bonds of brotherhood between the three Regiments who fought together as the Jullundur Brigade were later marked by the commissioning of three magnificent and identical pieces of silver, the Jullundur Brigade Trophy, each of which sits proudly in the safe keeping of the respective Regiments to this day.

2014 is a very special year, marking as it does the commencement of WWI one hundred years earlier. There are many parades and services to be held around



Major General Peter Davies



Major General Peter Davies, Colonel of the King's Regiment inspecting the Quarter Guard mounted by 5th Battalion the Sikh Regiment at Rudraprayag in April 1989

the world. The Association were at Ypres and Neuve Chapelle on 27th and 28th October, commemorating the centenary of the commencement of the battles of Neuve Chapelle in which the Jullundur Brigade played such a prominent part and during which all three Regiments suffered heavy losses. Wreaths were laid at the Menin Gate by the JBA on 27th October at the daily evening service. The next day, under the arrangements made by



Joie de vivre ! General Peter Davies persuaded to join the bhangra troupe of the 5th Sikhs during his visit to the battalion in April 1989

the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, and with the Colonel of the Regiment present, a commemoration parade and multi-faith service was held within the Indian Army War Memorial at Neuve Chapelle in which representatives of the three Regiments and of their three Countries participated Regimental, Association and civic wreaths were laid".



Lt Christopher Coleman and Kingsmen with officers and jawans of the 5th Sikhs marking their centenary at Mamun Cantonment, March 2001

And now to vanquish America's enemies comes the "SUPER SIKH"



Launched earlier this year, the Super Sikh is a superhero in a turban fighting injustice and ignorance. This all started when a group of American Sikh children were recently asked who their favourite superheroes were, their answers were barely surprising: "Iron Man, Batman, Superman and the usual list of DC and Marvel old-hands". But when they were asked if they knew of a Sikh comic book superhero, their response was unanimous: an emphatic "no"!

"And then we asked them, 'Would you like to see one?' The looks on their faces was just priceless," says Supreet Singh Manchanda, a technology executive and comic creator based in San Francisco. "They just beamed."

And that was how Super Sikh, the Elvis-loving, Taliban-fighting super agent, came to be. Created jointly by Manchanda and Eileen Alden, an Oakland-based screenwriter, the series follows Deep Singh, a 20-something turbaned superhero, as he makes a trip to Graceland while fighting off his enemies who want him gone.

The project has more than just schoolchildren excited. A preview at San Francisco Comic Con brought overwhelming support, and the first issue, available online, has been downloaded all over the world.

Illustrated by award-winning artist Amit Tayal, the intro shows Deep Singh wearing aviator glasses and a turban, putting paid to the evil plans of a Taliban commander who intends to burn books outside a girls' school in Afghanistan, even as he blares Blue Suede Shoes on his car stereo. The Elvis connection is one of many motifs. Deep Singh's father was an Elvis fan, and the hero's parents disappeared in Africa when he was a child, explains Manchanda. There's also a nuclear scientist called Gurpreet Kaur, Deep's ninja master cousin. Manchanda describes her as similar to Q in James Bond.

This new comic era began when Manchanda met Alden in 2011 and suggested she work on creating a Sikh superhero character. "Would you believe all these Marvel comic characters that are being made into movies?" asks Manchanda. "They're more than 50 years old, they're very two dimensional, there's very little cultural nuance to them, they're all white."

From the very beginning, Alden and Manchanda were clear that Super Sikh would have no superpowers. "[Superheroes] have to have this mutation or something of the sort that makes them abnormal and therefore they get some powers." Deep Singh would have no such mutations.



"He's trained, he's educated, he's multicultural," Manchanda explains. He wants to emphasise to their young readers that the character is not so different from them. "This can be you and that's a very powerful message." The creators are certain that their project will help inject a modern Sikh character into the popular consciousness. Deep Singh represents strength, its creators say, and he doesn't tolerate bullies.

Translating Super Sikh's values and character traits into the visual language of the comic was hard work, Manchanda and Alden say, and the bulk of it was left to illustrator Amit Tayal.

There were naturally many iterations of the comic. Over various drafts, Deep Singh became fitter, younger,

and calmer. "We're like 'No we've got to tone it down because he's cool, he doesn't get fazed. He smiles, he's happy, he doesn't get angry,'" Manchanda says. Alden adds that their design brief sees Super Sikh as a humble but stylish person. The creators worked over many tiny details. This meant answering questions such as how long would his beard be at his age, Alden observed.

Most interesting is Deep Singh's choice of antagonist, a megalomaniacal Taliban commander called Salar Al Amok. There is no ambivalence about Deep Singh's Sikh values. Yet the creators don't dwell on the fact that his main antagonist is a Muslim fundamentalist. They do not explore the distortions of Islam by fundamentalists, for that is a story for someone else to tell according to Alden.

"Our story is, you're presented with this situation, how do you respond as a Sikh?" explains Alden, who through the process of researching the comic, learnt the written Punjabi language Gurmukhi to study scriptures and eventually converted to Sikhism.

"We went out of our way to say this has nothing to do with Islam, this has to do with crazy people who don't know how to live with normal values," Manchanda clarifies cautiously.

Deep Singh's battle against terrorists in Afghanistan is used as a device to address the often confused American views of Sikh people.

The pair say this misunderstanding is a particularly American phenomenon. "Remember, in the British ethos, Sikhs don't have that same [identity]: they may be victims but there's a lot of respect," says Manchanda who grew up in Ethiopia and Zambia and went to college in the UK, before moving to Silicon Valley. "But in the US there's no positive foil. There's no Sikh military, there's no Sikh policemen and that is only now starting to happen," he says.

"So if you see this person, he's wearing a turban, there's this immediate association to a terrorist," Alden says. She describes placing a Sikh character as the good guy in Afghanistan as combating a two-dimensional image in the "diaspora".

"So here are the bad guys in turbans doing bad things, and here are the good guys doing these good things so

we had to create this counterfoil," Manchanda explains.

Super Sikh is an artistic project of personal significance to its creators. Manchanda's parents were teachers working in Africa who encouraged his obsession with comics. Every time the other expats left to go elsewhere, his father would go over and buy all their books, and that's how Manchanda gathered (and read) comics in different languages and from various places.

Manchanda's parents encouraged his obsession with comics. His other inspirations were the books of Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey. "The protagonist is always some lone cowboy who doesn't put up with nonsense where there's either a crooked sheriff or someone's trying to take over the ranch."

Alden says her mixed-race children faced bullying in school, and the idea of a superhero of colour resonated personally. "The kind of drama that kids have to deal with today, the bullying; it's hard to live with those good values."

Alden and Manchanda are particularly pleased with the reception they have received so far. Four issues of the comic will go into print this year, with 1,000 print runs of each issue. The comics are also set to be translated into Spanish, Mandarin and Hindi. But they don't intend to remain independent publishers and are considering approaching large publishing houses if that will make distribution easier. Alden says: "The main goal is not a profit motive - it is a purpose motive."



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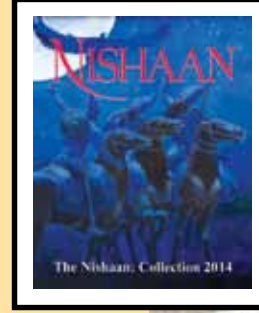
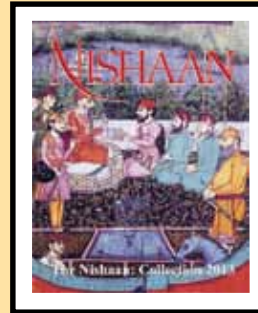
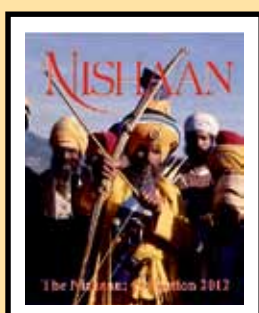
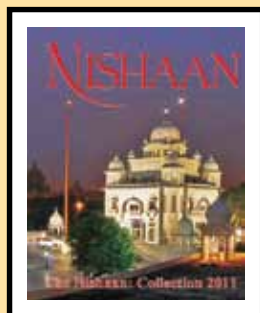
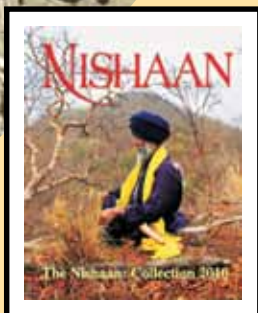
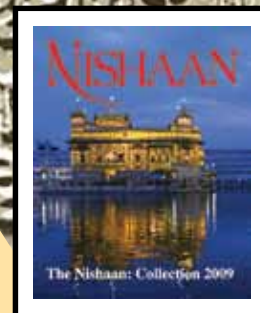
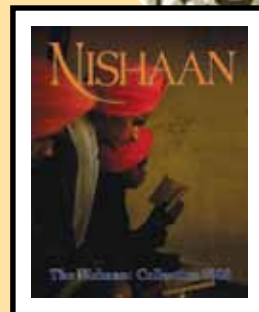
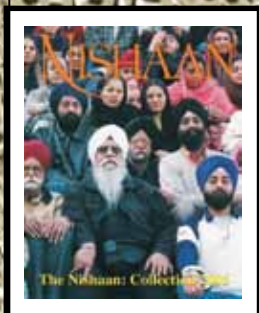
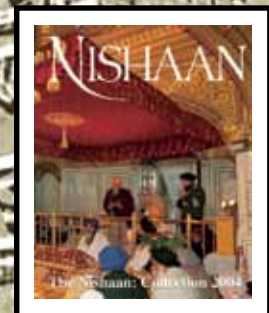
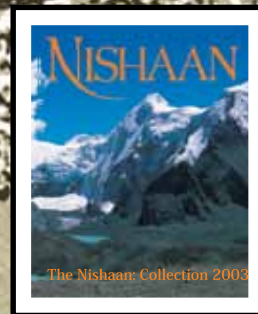
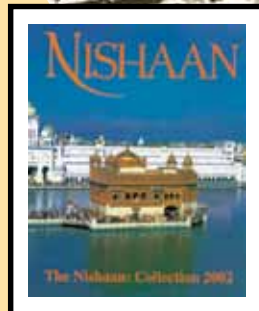
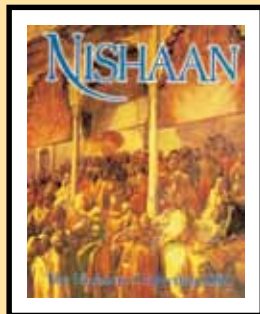
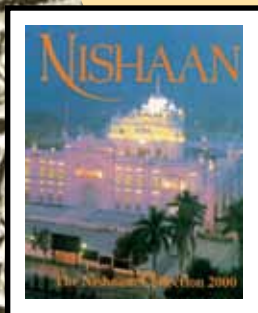
Cover: Victory Column at the Indian Army Memorial at Neuve Chapelle. The bayonet was that of Subedar Thakur Singh MC and the poppy an internationally recognised symbol of Remembrance.

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