

1938 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF SECOND BATTALION DIARY, 1938

January 1st — Proclamation Day.
A Brigade Parade took place.

January 2nd— Lieuts. J. W. Warner and R. R. F. T. Barry proceeded to an R.A. Practice Camp at Tuglakabad, to act as Picture Painters.

January 3rd— Regimental Rifle Meeting (Individual day); Commanding Officer's Gold Watch won by Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham.

January 4th — Regimental Rifle Meeting (Team Day).

January 6th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., Captain L. W. Giles, M.C., and Captain C. Clifton, proceeded to Delhi to act as umpires during the Brigade Training of the Delhi Independent Brigade.

January 9th — Inter-Company Cricket League started.
First Short Drill Cadre started (10 days).

January 11th — Inspection of all animals by Veterinary Officer, 7th and 8th Infantry Brigades.

January 17th — Selected Private Cadre (2 weeks).
Long Weapon Training Cadre (8 weeks) started.

January 27th — Visit of Military Secretary to Bareilly.

January 28th-29th — Individual Sports.

February 1st — Boy Ronald Woods died in Hospital, Bareilly. Funeral took place in the evening.
Lieut. M. Darell-Brown and a draft of 52 other ranks arrived in Bareilly from England.

February 2nd— Team Sports. Won by H.Q. Wing.
A two months Mountain Warfare training period started.

February 4th — Annual Inspection of the Regiment by Brigadier A. K. Hay, D.S.O.
Long Service and Good Conduct Medals were presented on parade to R.Q.M.S. White, C.Q.M.S. Thame, C.Q.M.S. Taylor, Sjt. Swadling and L.-Cpl. Elston.

February 7th — Infantry Polo Tournament started. The Regimental sides had to scratch owing to an epidemic of coughing amongst the ponies.

February 11th — Infantry Polo Tournament won by the 1st Bn The Cameronians.
Draft of 42 left for U.K. on being transferred to Army Reserve.

February 14th-15th — Firing of King George V Cup, Royal Irish Cup, Young Soldiers. A.R.A. Matches.

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February 16th — Visit of District Education Officer.

February 19th — Dog racing, organized by Letter S Company.

February 20th — A draft of 25 left for England for transfer to the Army Reserve.

February 24th — 2nd Lieuts. Hari Singh and Muthura Singh reported for their one year's attachment with a British unit on being gazetted from the I.M.A. Dehra Dun.

February 26th — Lieut. J. Granville and two instructors left for Meerut to instruct the Rifle Brigade in the V.B. Gun.

March 1st — Firing of A.R.A. Machine Gun Cup.

Rifle team returned from Meerut after competing in the Central Army Rifle Meeting. The Regiment was fifth out of 48 in the aggregate.

L.-Cpl. Dennis was fifth in the Army Championship and first in Class III.

C.Q.M.S. Blackall was in the Revolver Thirty.

Captain Graham, C.Q.M.S. Blackall, and L.-Cpl. Dennis were in the Army Rifle Hundred.

March 7th — Inspection of Animals by the Veterinary Officer, 7th and 8th Infantry Brigades.

March 8th — Bareilly Horse Show.

March 9th-14th — The Regiment was confined to Cantonments during the festivals of Moharrum and Holi.

March 4th-15th — A child developed scarlet fever and the families were segregated, but no further cases occurred.

March 18th — Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell assumed officiating command of the 8th Infantry Brigade vice Brigadier A. K. Hay, D.S.O., who proceeded on 8 months leave pending retirement.

Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., assumed command of the Regiment during the absence of Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell.

March 16th — Lieut. J. H. Hare and 31 B.O.R.s left for Kaladungi as Guard to the Viceroy during his shooting camp there.

March 18th — The C.C.M.A. started his annual inspection of Arms.

March 21st-23rd — Examination for First Class Certificates of Education (15 candidates).

March 24th — Viceroy's Guard returned from Kaladungi.

Pte. Finlay (H.Q. Wing) reported by B.M.H. as suffering from smallpox.

Stringent segregation of buglers and other precautions were ordered.

March 26th — The Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

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March 29th — Lecture and discussion in the Officers' Mess on the 'Rome-Berlin Axis'.

March 30th-31st — Fire Orders Competition. Won by No. 12 Section of B Company.

March 31st — All smallpox restrictions lifted.

The following Officers of the Unattached List Indian Army arrived from England to do their one year's attachment with the Regiment before being posted to their Indian Army Units:

2nd Lieut. J. R. Parbury

2nd Lieut. Hon. L. C. F. Shore

2nd Lieut. A. H. Campbell

April 1st—Lecture and discussion in the Officers' 'Mess on America and Japan'.

April 6th — Lieut. M. Darell-Brown assumed the duties of S.S.O. Bareilly.

April 8th — First Hill Party left for Ranikhet.

April 10th — Lieuts. F. Lowndes-Stone-Norton and J. W. Warner sailed for home on combined leave pending reversion to the Home Establishment.

April 11th — Major T. E. Withington, A.F.C., arrived to join the Regiment.
10 weeks' Weapon Training Cadre started for all U.L.I.A. and S.L.I.L.F. Officers.

April 12th — Polo team returned from Dehra Dun having won the Subsidiary Tournament.

April 18th — Bank Holiday.
Pagal Gymkhana held in the evening.

April 19th—Inspection of animals by Veterinary Officer' 7th and 8th Infantry Brigades.
Lieut. J. R. P. Montgomery returned after a six months' attachment to the B.I.T. Company, Jullunder.

April 20th — A draft of 17 and 4 boys arrived from England; 2 more remained in Hospital at Bombay.

April 21st — Commanding Officer and Adjutant carried out a reconnaissance of the proposed Collective Training Area at Faridpur, about 13 miles from Bareilly.

April 22nd — A draft of 4 for transfer to the Army Reserve, 4 for transfer to the Home Establishment, and 19 for leave in Great Britain left Bareilly.
A and B Companies carried out Night Firing on the range.
Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham and C.Q.M.S. Thame completed a three weeks attachment to units on the frontier.

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April 23rd — Brigadier F. V. B. Witts, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., arrived and assumed command of 8th (Bareilly) Infantry Brigade.
Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell resumed command of the Regiment.

April 29th — Brigadier visits the Regiment. Usual work continued. He also visited A and B Companies on the range.

April 30th — Lieut. T. G. D. Rowley returned from a two months attachment with the 28th (A.C.) Squadron R.A.F. at Ambala.
A and B Companies concluded their Annual Weapon Training Course.

May 2nd— 2nd Lieut. A. D. Tatham-Warter transferred from the Unattached List Indian Army to the Regiment (April 27th) and posted to the second battalion.

May 4th — New method of carrying the pack as a rucksack tried out on the weekly route march.

May 7th — Last joined draft was passed off the square by the Commanding Officer.

May 8th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., and Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham returned from leave in Kashmir.

May 9th — Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell proceeded on two months⁵ leave to East Africa.

May 10th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., assumed command of the Regiment during the absence of Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell.
A Company carried out a reconnaissance of the City as an Internal Security precaution.

May 14th — 2nd Lieut. G. N. A. Astley-Cooper proceeded on a short Anti-Gas Course at Lansdowne.
Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

May 18th — Pte. J. Eltham died at B.M.H., Bareilly, as a result of injuries received from a fall of sand when he was working on the Range Butts. The funeral took place the same evening.

May 19th — First Hill Party returned from Ranikhet.

May 20th — Buglers annual test resulting in following appointments:
Commanding Officer's Bugler — L.-Cpl. Hughes;
Adjutant's Bugler — L.-Cpl. Sykes.

May 21st — Second Hill Party departed for Ranikhet.

May 22nd — L.-Cpl. Stone (S Company) died at B.M.H., Bareilly. Funeral took place the same evening.

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May 23rd — The Mobile Column (C Company) was called out at 6 p.m. on practice Internal Security alarm. It remained out until 8 a.m. on 24th.

May 24th — Inspection by Inspecting Ordnance Officer of Respirators Anti-Gas. Lecture by Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., to all officers on the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.

May 28th — Internal Security exercise for all officers, conducted by 8th Infantry Brigade, H.Q.

May 28th — Commanding Officer inspected all animals. Captain T. G. D. Rowley attached to Brigade for two months as Officiating Staff Captain.

May 30th — A Company started Individual Training.

June 4th — Weapon Training Cadre for U.L.I.A. and S.L.I.L.F. Officers ended.

June 7th — Brigade Practice for King's Birthday Parade.

June 8th — Visit of District Hygiene Officer.

June 9th — King's Birthday Parade. The Regiment was congratulated on its march past. Remainder of the day was a holiday.

June 11th — The Commanding Officer carried out his training and kit inspection at the conclusion of B Company's individual training period.

June 13th — A two weeks Physical Training Cadre started.

June 14th — All officers, warrant officers and serjeants took part in a T.E.W.T., organized in conjunction with the 84th Field Battery, R.A.

June 18th — Waterloo Day.

Aquatic Sports took place in the morning.

In the evening all ranks entertained other units in the station at the Globe Cinema.

The detachment in the Hills at Ranikhet organized a Waterloo Ball.

June 21st — The Brigadier visited the Regiment and inspected the Regimental Transport. Three Signallers went to Chakrata for a 5 weeks Wireless Course.

June 22nd — The first of a series of 10 Law Exercises for Officers was issued.

June 24th — Lecture to all Officers by Major T. E. Withington, A.F.C., on 'Some Notes on the Investment of Money'.

June 25th — Demonstration by Regimental Transport of loading mules into a lorry.

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June 27th — A 2 weeks' Drill and Anti-Gas Cadre started for 2nd Lieut. M. H. Mulholland, 3 U.L.I.A. officers and 2 S.L.I.L.F. officers.

The Regiment paraded as strong as possible for the reading of the Proclamation on the occasion of Lord Brabourne temporarily taking over the duties of Viceroy.

June 29th — Inspection of all animals by the Remount Officer, Saharanpur.

July 2nd — Lieut.-Colonel H. E. F. Smyth, M.C., returned from leave in England and went on to Naini Tal to take over the duties of G.S.O. 2, Eastern Command.

July 5th — Lecture to all officers, warrant officers and Serjeants by Major J. MacP. Mackinnon, R.A.M.C., on the R.A.M.C. Organization in the Field.

July 8th — The Commanding Officer examined the Drill Cadre.

Brigade Veterinary Officer inspected all animals.

Lecture to all Officers by Capt. T. G. D. Rowley on 'Second Turkish Attack on Suez Canal Defences'.

July 9th — Commanding Officer inspected the kits of letter A Company at the conclusion of their Individual Training Season.

Training Inspection cancelled owing to wet weather.

Serjeants Mess held a swimming gala in the evening.

July 11th — Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell returned from two months' leave in East Africa and reassumed command of the Regiment.

Eastern Command Remount Officer and the A.D.V.S. inspected the Chargers.

July 12th — The Medical Officers inspected Barracks.

Paper for all officers, 'Lessons learnt during the Spanish Civil War'.

July 13th — S Company and the Band returned from Ranikhet and C Company left to take their place.

Lieut. R. R. F. T. Barry left Bareilly to take over the duties of Adjutant, Alma Hill Depot.

July 14th — Regimental Audit Board began.

July 15th — Captain West left for two months leave in the U.K.

Capt. Graham, 2nd Lieut. Hornsby-Wright and 35 other ranks of S Company ordered to 'Stand by' at half an hour's notice owing to riots in Pillibit.

July 16th — 'Mobile Column' platoon ordered to 'Stand Down', the Police having got the situation under control.

July 19th — Lecture to all officers, warrant officers and Serjeants by Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell on 'Mobilization for War'.

July 23rd — The Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

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July 24th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., held a conference of Company Commanders to discuss the new organization.

S Company will revert to D Company and a double platoon of Machine Guns will go to H.Q., Wing.

July 25th — Brigade Air Photography Course under Lieut. J. Granville began. Six officers attended.

July 26th — Paper for officers, 'Organization of the Empire — Mediterranean Problem'.

July 29th — Internal Security exercise in the City. S Company, Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., and 2nd Lieut. G. N. A. Astley-Cooper took part.

The Regimental Pigeons were tried out very successfully for the first time. Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell was an umpire.

July 30th — The Commanding Officer carried out his inspection of H.Q., Wing.

August 1st — Lieut. J. R. P. Montgomery attended a Cipher Course at Brigade H.Q. A conference was held for all officers who took part in the Internal Security Scheme.

August 2nd—Sand Model T.E.W.T. for all officers, warrant-officers and Serjeants directed by Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell, on 'Mountain Warfare'.

August 5th —The Senior Medical Officer inspected barracks. Campaign discussion for all Officers — 'The Battle of Gaza'.

August 6th — The Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

August 9th — All officers, warrant officers and serjeants took part in a T.E.W.T. organized in co-operation with 84th Field Battery, R.A.

August 12th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., left Bareilly for England on six weeks' leave.

August 15th — The Assistant Director of Hygiene and Pathology, Eastern Command, visited the Regiment and inspected barracks.

August 16th — The Brigade Veterinary Officer inspected the animals. Second Sand Model T.E.W.T. for all officers, warrant officers and Serjeants directed by Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell, 'Mountain Warfare — Withdrawals'.

August 18th — Company Gymnastic Competition for letters B, C, S Companies and H.Q., Wing.

August 19th — The D.A.D.M.S. Meerut District visited the Regiment and inspected the ration stand.

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August 22nd— Letter C Company started Individual Training.

A Brigade Defence exercise for all Officers started.

The Third Hill Party under the command of Capt. R. H. Doyne returned to Bareilly.

August 23rd — Brigade T.E.W.T. continued.

August 24th — Finish of Brigade Exercise.

The Fourth Hill Party under the command of Capt. T. G. D. Rowley left for Ranikhet.

August 29th — 2nd Lieut. A. D. Tatham-Warter becomes officiating S.S.O. in place of Lieut. M. Darell-Brown, on leave.

September 3rd — The Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

Captain J. E. D. Kilburn took over command of H.Q. Wing.

September 6th — T.E.W.T. for all officers, directed by Major J. E. D. Kilburn, 'Withdrawals'.

September 10th — The Brigade Commander visited the Regiment and saw C Company's individual training and the Signallers.

The Commanding Officer inspected the kits of letter S Company.

September 13th — T.E.W.T. for all officers, warrant officers and Serjeants directed by Capt. S. C. P. Slattery, 'The Attack'.

September 14th — Demonstration for all officers and N.C.O.s arranged by C.S.M. Ireland on the new L.M.G. Anti-Aircraft mounting.

September 16th — Classification of the Signallers began.

Lieut. J. R. P. Montgomery left for Poona to undergo a Signalling Course.

Campaign Discussion for all officers arranged by S Company syndicate, 'The Second Battle of Gaza'.

September 17th — Classification of Signallers ended.

The Commanding Officer inspected all animals.

The Commanding Officer inspected all kits of the Indian Platoon.

September 19th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., and Capt. M. M. A.R. West returned from leave in the U.K.

September 21st — Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell left for Ranikhet to visit the detachment.

September 26th — Aerial Photography Course started under Lieut. J. Granville for 4 officers and Intelligence Section.

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September 27th — Discussion for all officers, warrant officers and Serjeants on 'Probable Role of the Fighting Services in the event of a Major "War'.
Telegram received from A.H.Q. cancelling all moves out of India and re-introducing the 'one year holding' system, in view of the international crisis.

September 30th — News received that an international agreement had been reached between Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

October 1st — The Regiment reorganized to the following:

Battalion Headquarters
Headquarter Company of 6 platoons
4 Rifle Companies each of 3 platoons

The Commanding Officer inspected the kits of Letter C Company.

October 2nd — Thanksgiving service took place in the Garrison Church.

October 4th — Non-commissioned officers' promotion examination started.

October 5th — Annual Inspection by the D.A.D.O.S. His general observation was 'Very good'.

October 6th — Cricket Match, Officers v. Serjeants.

October 7th — Raikes Range Exercise in co-operation with 84th Field Battery, R.A.

October 10th — Presentation of Long Service and Good Conduct Medals by Brigadier F. V. B. Witts, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., to

Serjeant Philpin,
Private Dufty,
Sepoy Kaka Singh,
Sepoy Jetha Singh.

Test Mobilization (clerical work only) started.

Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Powell left Bareilly having completed his four years' tenure of command.

October 11th — Lieut.-Colonel R. J. Brett, D.S.O., assumed command of the Regiment. He also assumed command of the station and Brigade during the period the Brigadier will be acting as District Commander.

Veterinary inspection of all animals by the Veterinary Officer of the 7th and 8th Infantry Brigades.

His Excellency the Governor of the United Provinces, Sir Harry Haig, dined in Mess.

October 12th — Training Conference for Company Commanders.

Extract from the *London Gazette* dated September 6th: 'Lieut. M. Darell-Brown to be Captain August 28th'.

October 15th — A draft of 19 men left Bareilly for England for transfer to the Army Reserves.

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October 17th — Officers Mess Meeting. Various decisions on dress were made including:

The wearing of Hot Weather Mess Kit only on Band nights.

The wearing of trousers instead of breeches and puttees for ceremonial parades.

The introduction of 'Greenly' field boots or gaiters instead of puttees, when mounted.

The wearing of shorts, stockings and shoes for office work and interior economy.

October 19th — The Fourth Hill Party returned.

The Fourth Hill Party system has proved to be an outstanding success, every man being given a change in the hills during the hot weather.

October 21st — B and D Companies started platoon training.

A short Gas Course started.

The Eastern Command Aerial Co-operation Course started at Bareilly. The Regiment provided numerous signallers, runners, and 'picture painters'⁵.

October 22nd — The Adjutant-General visited Bareilly.

October 29th — Lieut. J. E. B. Freeman went to Lucknow on assuming the appointment of A.D.C. to H.E. the Governor of the United Provinces.

The Bareilly October Polo Tournament finished with the following result:

1st 52nd Light Infantry, A Team

2nd A Royal Artillery Team

3rd 52nd Light Infantry, B Team.

November 1st — Advance Party proceeded to Faridpur Camp (distance 13 miles).

November 4th — Veterinary Inspection of all animals by Veterinary Officer yth and 8th Infantry Brigades.

November 5th — The Inspector of Army Catering visited the Regiment.

November 6th — The regiment marched to camp.

November 7th — B and D Companies marched on to Camp at Fateghang Sharki.

November 11th and 12th — Field Firing by A and C Companies at Pachomi.

November 12th — One mule in Fateghang Sharki died of anthrax. The camp was evacuated and all personnel there returned to Faridpur Camp. Animals left there in isolation.

November 18th — First Inter-Company exercise.

A and C Companies commanded by Capt. S. C. P. Slattery.

B and D Companies commanded by Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham.

November 19th — *London Gazette* received notifying the promotion of Capt. S. C. P. Slattery to Major as from August 1st, 1938.

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November 20th — Drumhead Service on the Camp football ground.
Captain C. Clifton returned from leave and took over D Company from Capt. J. P. A. G. Graham.

November 21st — Field Firing by B Company at Pachomi.
The officiating District Commander was present.

November 22nd — Disbandment of the Indian Platoon. All Mule Leaders now provided from British Troops.
Field Firing by D Company at Pachomi.

November 23rd — Animals in isolation reported clear of anthrax and rejoined at Faridpur.

November 24th — The officiating District Commander visited B and D Companies taking part in an inter-Company exercise.

November 25th and 26th — Inter-Company exercise directed by the Commanding Officer.

November 28th — Battalion training started. Exercise No. I, Battle Drill (Attack).

November 29th — Exercise No. II, Battle Drill (Defence).

November 30th — Exercise No. III, Field Firing at Pachomi.

December 1st and 2nd — Exercise No. IV, Capture and destruction of a village followed by outposts.

December 4th — Drumhead service on Camp Football Ground.
No. 5381105 Private Westall died from pneumonia in the British Military Hospital, Bareilly.

December 5th and 6th — Exercise No. V, River crossing by night.
Funeral of Private Westall.

December 7th — Battle Drill (Action against hostile aircraft).

December 8th — A draft of 15 left Bareilly for transfer to the Army Reserve and Vocational Training.

December 8th and 9th — Exercise No. VI, Night attack, Defence, Night withdrawal.

December 11th — Cross Country Race, won by B Company. Individual winner, L.-Sjt. Briggs.

December 12th — Tug-of-War completed. Winners, B Company.

December 15th — Exercise No. VII, Action against two forces not yet concentrated.

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December 16th — Regiment and 84th Field Battery, R.A., moved to Fateghang Sharki Camp.

December 17th and 18th — Inter-Battalion Exercise with 2/12th Frontier Force Regt. Escorting a convoy against regular and irregular enemies. On the night 17th-18th the convoy successfully outflanked the enemy and reached Bareilly intact. The Regiment covered 30 miles in 18 hours.

December 30th — Brigade Practice Parade for Proclamation Day.

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SECOND BATTALION LETTER

Dear Editor,

I cannot think why we go on writing letters to you year after year, as you make no effort to answer them. Personally I do not mind much, as this is the last time that I myself will write to you under the glorious pseudonym '52nd' (goodness, how sad) for I am about to relinquish ('give-up' for non-military readers) my present appointment and proceed ('go' to N.M.R.s) on long leave, Hitler, Mussolini and W.P.

I am glad to see that I have already used the word "I" six times. It shows the writer's confidence in the attractiveness of his own personality.

The real way to write a letter of this sort, of course, is to make notes throughout the year and then string them together on December 31st; but naturally no one ever dreams of doing this in actual fact. The result is that when the moment comes to put pen to paper, it appears that the year has passed without anybody doing anything of note whatsoever, in fact without having even thought of doing anything (goodness, how sad).

I have just read the 'Digest of Service' for the year to try and refresh my memory, and am glad to see that we had twenty-eight veterinary inspections during 1938. One hopes that readers in the Mother Country will appreciate how the Englishman's love of animals is apparent even in these distant climes where men are men and women are glad of it (goodness, how nice). Incidentally why is it called a 'Digest of Service'? Nothing could be more utterly indigestible to readers or more completely unserviceable to writers.

I ought to be writing this from Ahmednagar, but in the middle of the year the usual piece of paper arrived from Simla to say that in the interests of economy all moves were being reduced to a minimum and that the Regiment had better stay at Bareilly for yet another year. Comment is superfluous.

However, the Regiment is in very good heart and form at the end of its fourth year in Bareilly and this I am sure is partly due to our having been allowed to send four parties to the hills during the hot weather instead of the usual two. Hitherto two companies have gone up for three months each, the remainder of the Regiment not going at all. This year every man went up for six weeks. Moreover, instead of treating the hills as another duty station, each six weeks period was turned into a holiday, so that every man had a chance of a real rest in a pleasant climate. We only hope that we are allowed to do the same during the next hot weather.

In October, Colonel and Mrs. Powell left us. Colonel Powell had been in the Regiment thirty years and I know he hated leaving it as much as we hated seeing him go. This letter is not the place for eulogies on members of the Regiment, so I will only say that Colonel Powell did as much for the Regiment as anyone else has done and, perhaps, a bit more.

Just before camp we reorganized into Headquarter Company and four rifle companies. Headquarter Company became ridiculously overloaded, being almost three times as strong as any other company. At the same time the Indian Platoon was disbanded so that we had to produce thirty mule leaders out of the hat, thereby reducing our fighting personnel more and more.

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About this time the higher authorities started viewing with the deepest anxiety and the gravest concern the growing habit of officers in India talking shop in public places and thereby disclosing vital military secrets to spies and adventuresses in the pay of foreign countries. We were delighted to think we were so important, because we had never known that we were in possession of any secret, vital or military.

For the first time since we arrived in Bareilly we had a battalion camp this year as opposed to a brigade one. We went to Faridpur, about thirteen miles away, for six weeks, and I think everyone enjoyed it. We arranged buses to take the men into Bareilly for the weekend, which made a break in training, something we never got in previous years when marooned miles from anywhere. We finished up with an inter-battalion exercise with the 2nd Sikhs, who came down from Lansdowne for their annual training in Bareilly. The idea was for us to escort, against a savage enemy, a convoy of sixty carts along the main road during the whole of the first day, sit in a perimeter camp all night and then do the same again the next day. By the time, however, that we had reached the perimeter camp, our commander's patience (and everybody else's) had given out. Two hours after arrival he ordered us to pack up again and continue the march. The umpires and directing staff went mad. They had to go without their dinner, miss their night's rest, and, what's more, continue the march without their horses.

Off we went into the blackest night of all time with our sixty carts and a horse-drawn battery. We left the road and struck across country, in order to slip the enemy who were in camp near the road. We went over canals that were on the ground but not on the map, past imaginary woods that were on the map but not on the ground, and through villages that were marked on the map but in the wrong place. However, we at last got back on the main road and started marching *ventre a terre* for Bareilly. Meanwhile the enemy, who had been busily harassing our empty camp, suddenly realized what had happened, commandeered a lot of buses, and pursued us madly. Our rear guard, however, caught all the lorries in a trap, with the result that the directing staff gave up the unequal contest and declared the war over. So we continued our march back to Bareilly, arriving in barracks at 3 a.m.

The Regiment covered 30 miles in 19 hours; good going considering we were fighting most of the time.

A notable sight in camp was provided by one officer who had an electric razor, the battery of which resembled something from the inside of a radio gramophone. When going out on an exercise his bearer was always seen toiling along in rear with the battery strapped on to a special carrier on a bicycle. These electric razors are so handy.

The crisis passed off quietly except for the Commanding Officer and Adjutant who found themselves returning to India from leave by air and landing at Leipzig for lunch. They expected every moment to be interned for three years or the duration. However, apart from a few dirty looks and a plethora of Heil Hitlers, they escaped (goodness, how dangerous).

One of the year's excitements is always the arrival of an R.A.F. Squadron to take part in an annual air co-operation course at Bareilly. The great moment this time was when the aerodrome was shared equally by ten water buffaloes grazing, three officers playing polo, one officer driving his pony and trap, five soldiers going for a run and one aeroplane landing. The aeroplane won easily.

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On Christmas night the dance band went to Rampur to play at the State ball. The spectacle of the staid and portly Indian 'lovelies' in 'saris' making that rather questionable gesture at the end of the Lambeth Walk was magnificent.

I will not pad out this letter by mentioning all the arrivals and departures of officers, as by the time it is published, everybody will have changed round again. So, my editor, I will say,

Yours,
52nd.

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THE INDIAN PLATOON

THE year 1938 has witnessed the demise of the Indian platoon, which has existed in the 52nd since 1922 when we last arrived in India from home.

Indian platoons were first introduced into the Army in India in January 1921, to take over the leading of the mules of the machine-gun platoon in the Headquarter Wing of British Infantry battalions, to avoid reducing the strength of rifle companies by taking men away for this purpose.

Thus it was that, on our arrival at Rawalpindi at the end of March 1922, we took over our first Indian platoon which had originally belonged to the 1st Battalion of the Connaught Rangers who had just left India to be disbanded. The platoon, then, about thirty strong, under Jemadar Nihal Singh, was composed of Hindu Gujars and was attached to the Headquarter Wing. Included in this number were one Quartermaster Havildar, another Havildar and one or two Naiks.

Whitfeld was the first commander and had no easy task with the language difficulties. The Colonel was almost the only officer who had been to India before and, consequently, the country, the sepoys, their customs and language were subjects about which little or nothing was known. Of the platoon the Jemadar knew no English, but was very keen to learn; the Quartermaster Havildar knew a little, the remainder none at all. Whitfeld, therefore, had to spend every afternoon with the Munshi learning the names of the various bits of saddlery and other useful phrases connected with the care and management of mules.

The Gujars, country folk from the Delhi area, were a pleasant lot to deal with, and on the whole were quite good with their mules. The intricacies of their pay were a source of wonder to anyone unaccustomed to India, the more so as to many of them were due small sums for recruiting; these caused much correspondence with the babus of the C.M.A.'s Department.

The mules these men had to look after were a motley crowd; they varied from flat-sided Chinese to narrow and spindly country-breds, and were of all shapes and sizes. Many men were very old and worn out; consequently the fitting of pack saddlery, a difficult enough task at any time, was made even more difficult by the shape of the mules, not to mention the inexperience of those responsible for it.

In November 1923 the first change in the composition of the platoon occurred when the Hindu Gujars were eliminated and their place taken by Rajputs. These, in their turn, did not remain long, for when we moved to Razmak in February 1925 we exchanged the Indian Platoon and the mules for those of the 1st Battalion the Royal Berkshire Regiment, whom we relieved. Here Subedar Govind Lall joined us in command of the platoon which was now composed of Kumaonis, a race of hill men from the Kumaon Hills beyond Lansdowne, Ranikhet and Almora in the United Provinces.

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In July 1929 at Calcutta the first machine-gun company was formed in the regiment under Whitfield, consisting of two platoons, one pack and one draught, each of three sections of two guns, This necessitated an increase in the strength of the Indian platoon, who were transferred to the machine-gun company; the new establishment was fixed at 1 Indian Officer, 1 Company Quartermaster Havildar, 1 Havildar, 2 Naiks and 37 Lance-Naiks and Sepoys, and this establishment maintained till the end. Subedar Govind Lall remained in command, and by his energy and loyalty produced a very keen and excellent platoon; his knowledge of English was of untold value and helped considerably towards the efficiency of the platoon.

In 1931 the organization of the company was changed to three platoons each of two sections, all on pack, a vast improvement from every point of view, giving greater flexibility, a better chain of command and more efficient tactical handling. The draught platoon, however, had always been remarkably mobile and invariably surprised inspecting officers by the way it dashed across country.

The next change took place in January 1933 at Mingaladon when the Kumaon platoon was disbanded and replaced by one composed of Lobana Sikhs, caused by the abolition of pioneer regiments in the Indian Army. Thanks to pressure from outside, Army Headquarters was forced to find other employment for those of the Sikh pioneers who could not be absorbed into the sappers and miners, and so a place had to be found for them in the Indian platoons of British regiments at the expense of Kumaonis. It was with a sad heart that we said good-bye to Subedar Govind Lall and his merry men who had become known in the regiment as the "jaldi Bang Bangs". This soubriquet originated from a word of command given on the range by a Weapon Training Instructor when ordering them to open rapid fire! The platoon had served the regiment well and we were very sorry to see them go.

The Sikhs arrived at Mingaladon station and were met by the band and buglers behind whom they marched to barracks, bearing aloft at their head the 'Grant Sahib', the bible of the Sikh religion. The change increased considerably the work of the machine-gun company, or support company as it had now become, as it was soon obvious that the Sikh, though he may have been a good pioneer, knew comparatively little of mules and their management. Keeness for their new work was not their strong point at the beginning. Training under these conditions was slow, but by the time we left for Bareilly in November 1934 things were looking better and an improvement on training that year was soon noticeable, especially after taking over a much better batch of mules from the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry whom we had relieved.

In 1936 Jemadar Lall Singh who had arrived with the platoon, retired on pension, and in October of that year Jemadar Pertab Singh arrived on promotion from the Indian platoon of the Royal Scots from Lahore.

The standard of mule management and of efficiency was increasing all the time till a definitely high standard was reached in 1937. Then a new threat appeared in the form of the proposed new organization for rifle and machine-gun battalions, which, as far as the regiment was concerned, meant the eventual disappearance of the platoon.

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Although we were told that little or no change would take place for two or three years when we were due to leave the country, with reorganization in the air the consequent unsettling soon started. Conditions of transfer for the younger men to other branches of the service were published and, ere long, men who had accepted the terms were transferred and men brought in from battalions which were already in the throes of reorganization. The strength of the platoon remained the same, but soon there were not more than 50 per cent left of those who had joined the regiment in 1933.

The final blow fell in 1938 with the introduction of yet another organization which, though it abolished the support company, transferred four sections of machine-guns to a carrier platoon in the headquarter company. With this came the curtain for the Indian platoon; and the final disbandment took place at Bareilly on November 21st, 1938.

With their departure the hands of the clock have once more been put back, the original reason for the existence of an Indian platoon having been pushed on one side, and now, again, are valuable riflemen to be taken from weak and attenuated rifle companies to lead the mules for this new carrier platoon, while their old and trusted leaders are scattered to their fields and villages in the Punjab.