

# Life in the Army in British India

## (Related reading)

- 1) **“Stringer Lawrence: Father of the Indian Army”** by Colonel J. Biddulph, London, 1901, first edition; hardcover; 1 map; 2 tables; 133pp. The life of the British Army officer who rose to become the first Commander-in-Chief of the HEIC’s army and became known as “*the Father of the Indian Army*”.
- 2) **“From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army ( as translated by Lt. Colonel Norgate, Lahore, 1873)”** Edited by James Lunt (late 16<sup>th</sup>. Royal Lancers and 4<sup>th</sup>. Burma Rifles). A 1970 reprint; London; hardcover; The Hindi original was printed as the text-book which young British officers of the Indian Army had to translate into English as part of their language competency examination. An excellent and rare insight into service in the old pre-Mutiny Bengal Army of the Hon. East India Company by an Indian who rose through the ranks.
- 3) **“Tales of the Mountain Gunners”** edited by C.H.T. MacFetridge and J.P. Warren; Edinburgh, 1973; hardcover; 22 illustrations; 11 maps; 327 pp. An anthology of tales and short stories by those who served in one of the most unusual and colourful units in the history of the British Empire: the Mountain Artillery. Its reputation for action attracted a collection of adventurous, able and eccentric officers; usually with a combination of all three qualities.
- 4) **“The Martial Races of India”** by Lt. Gen. Sir George MacMunn, KCB; KCSI; DSO; London, 1932; hardcover; 19 illustrations; 2 maps; 368 pp. A very good account of the various ethnic groups that the British fondly identified as “the martial races” - from which they predominantly recruited - of what was, and is, one of the largest, multi-cultural volunteer armies in the world.; written in the somewhat romantic style of another age.
- 5) **“The Sepoy”** by Edmund Candler, London, **1919**; hardcover; 17 illustrations; 234pp. The author, a journalist (*The Guardian*) who was allowed to accompany Britain’s imperial forces during the Mesopotamian Campaign in the Great War, was intrigued by the “*sworn confraternity between the British and Indian officer and the strong tie that binds the sepoy to his Sahib which has given the Indian Army its traditions and prestige.*” There are good descriptions of the origins and histories of the 18 ethnic groups which the British (quite arbitrarily in hindsight) identified as the desirable “martial races” which comprised the Indian Army. These include:- Gurkhas; Garwhalis; Sikhs; Jats; Rajputs; Brahmans; Dogras; Mahrattas; Punjabi Mussalmans; Pathans; Khattaks; Ranghars; Mers; Meenas; Jharwas; Drabis and, surprisingly, Santal labourers, Bhils and Kahars. At the outbreak of WW1 the Indian Army contained 316,514 troops (76,953 British and 239,561 Indians). During the war a further 1,215,338 Indians answered the Empire’s call making a total of 1,454,899 who served the King-Emperor. 101,439 of them made the ultimate sacrifice.
- 6) **“Coote Bahadur: A Life of Lt. General Sir Eyre Coote KB”** by E. W. Sheppard London, 1956, first edition, hardcover; 13 illustrations; 9 maps; 247pp. Born in 1726 in Ash Hill, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, Ireland the son of a minister of Anglo-Irish stock he was commissioned into HM’s 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. His regiment was amongst the King’s forces routed by Scots highlanders at the battle of Falkirk. The general commanding, General Hawley, was so enraged by the defeat that he determined to “*make some necessary examples*”. Coote was one of four junior infantry officer scapegoats court-martialled for “cowardice” and ordered to be dismissed from service. However, he was retained and attained the rank of Captain in the 39<sup>th</sup> Foot (Adlercron’s (later the Dorset) Regiment) with whom he went out to India in 1754. He went on to become the Commander-in-Chief of the

Company's Army in India in 1779 where his campaign in the Carnatic (1781-1783) saved the Madras Presidency. For his leadership and bravery, he achieved fame, recognition and his honorific appellation and, after his death in 1783, his grateful employer (the HEIC) erected a statue to his memory in Westminster Abbey. Reputedly avaricious, at the time of his death he owned vast estates in England and Ireland.

- 7) ***"A Soldier of the Company: Life of an Indian Ensign, 1833 – 1843, Captain Albert Hervey"*** Edited by Charles Allen, London, 1988; hardcover; illustrated throughout; 225 pp. A very interesting account of a young officer's life in the pre-mutiny HEIC's Madras Native Infantry.
- 8) ***"Skinner of Skinner's Horse"*** by Philip Mason; London, 1979; hardcover; 2 maps; 241 pp. The history of a dynamic Anglo-Indian leader who was neither British nor Indian (or alternatively was both British and Indian) who raised a regiment of irregular cavalry which became one of the best corps in India. At the height of Empire it was re-titled as the 1<sup>st</sup> (Duke of York's own) Regiment of Bengal Lancers (Skinner's Horse) with the regimental motto, "*Himmat- i-mardan – madad-i- Khuda*" (*The bravery of man - the help of God*); and not, as has been mischievously suggested by less courteous competitors as, "*God helps those who help themselves*". It lives on as the senior cavalry regiment of today's Indian Army as the 1<sup>st</sup>. Armoured Regiment (Skinner's Horse).
- 9) ***"Sepoy Generals: Wellington to Roberts"*** by Sir George William Forrest, Edinburgh, 1901; hardcover; 9 portraits; 478 pp. Cameo biographies of British military leaders who significantly influenced history in India such as: the Duke of Wellington; Sir Charles Napier; Sir Herbert Edwardes; Sir Thomas Munro; Sir David Baird; General John Jacob; Sir Donald Stewart; Sir William Lockhart and Field Marshal Lord Roberts.
- 10) ***"Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier"*** by Charles Allen, London, 2000; first edition; hardcover; 368pp. Covers the pacification (not yet achieved by anyone) of the North-West frontier of India with its border against Afghanistan (now Pakistan). The author was born in Cawnpore into the sixth generation of his family to serve in India.
- 11) ***"Last Post: An Indian Army Memoir"*** by Col. E. W. Robinson-Horley, London, 1985; first edition; hardback; 178pp. The author was a regular Indian Army officer who served past Independence with the new Indian Army until resigning in 1960. He was appointed Comptroller to Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, the last British Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army over the tumultuous period of Independence and its aftermath, giving him a unique view of history in passing.
- 12) ***"The Last of the Bengal Lancers"*** by Brigadier Francis Ingall (late 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Connaught's own Lancers (Watson's Horse)); London, 1988; first edition; hardcover; 157pp. The author, a regular Indian Army cavalry officer began service on the North-West frontier and went on to command the 6<sup>th</sup>. Cavalry (Watson's Horse) - mechanized by this time - against the Germans in Northern Italy in WWII. After Independence he was invited to become the founder and inaugural Commandant of the Pakistan Military Academy, which he did, serving until 1951.
- 13) ***"John Masters: A Regimented Life"*** by John Clay; London, 1992; hardcover; 372 pp. The subject, best known as the author of "*Bhowani Junction*" and a series of novels with India as the backdrop was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1914 in Fort William, Calcutta, where his father, an officer in the 16<sup>th</sup> Rajputs, was stationed. He was the fourth generation of his family to be born in India and the book's first chapter, "*Family Origins*" is almost a standard account of the trials and tribulations of being "country-born", "domiciled-European" or "Anglo Indian" in British India. Sadly, in his books he too perpetrates the customary pejorative stereotypes and attitudes towards Anglo-Indians, probably in denial of his own ancestry and

to disassociate himself from all the negatives and discrimination the race endures to this day. He was still plagued by them Spike Milligan did this too for the same reason. John Masters was commissioned into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Prince of Wales' own Gurkha Rifles (the 4<sup>th</sup> Gorkha Rifles of today's Indian Army). His interesting military career is well covered here. See his two books, "*Bugles and a Tiger*" and "*The Road Past Mandalay*" for further and better details of his military career.

- 14) "***Forty-one Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief***" by Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Baronet, Earl of Kandahar and Waterford, VC. KG, KP, GCB, GCSI, & GCIE, Field Marshal; London, 1911; hardcover; 44 illustrations; 601 pp. Born in Cawnpore, India, the son of General Sir Abraham Roberts GCB of the HEIC's Bengal Army, he was commissioned into the Bengal Artillery and won the Victoria Cross early in his career, during the Indian Mutiny. He fought in every Indian campaign during Queen Victoria's reign (and there were many) rising to the rank of Commander-in-Chief. of the imperial Indian Army He commanded the British Army in the Boer War and died, still in harness, as Field Marshal on the Western Front at the outbreak of the Great War.
- 15) "***The Chief: Field Marshall Lord Wavell, Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy, 1939-1947***" by Ronald Lewin, London, 1980; hardcover; 11 illustrations; 3 maps; 282 pp. A fair assessment of a distant and difficult man. Commissioned into the Black Watch (The 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highland Regiment) in the Great War, he did his apprenticeship under General Allenby, the WWI cavalry general who won the war in the Middle East. He was a competent general who as C-in-C, Middle East Forces in WWII did not want to play Churchill's politics and, as a result, got "kicked upstairs" being returned to India, as Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy of India. He unfairly blamed Major General Sir Jack Smith VC, commander of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, for the failure to stop the Japanese at the Sittang Bridge, publicly humiliated him and cruelly sacked him. As Viceroy he turned his back completely on the Anglo-Indian community in India and in the negotiations for India's independence, he abandoned them to their fate.
- 16) "***The Auk: Auchinleck, Victor at Alamein***" by Roger Parkinson; London, 1977; hardcover; 272 pp. Initially commissioned into the 62<sup>nd</sup> Punjabis (which was later absorbed into the 16<sup>th</sup> Punjab Regiment (the famous Solah Punjab) which is now part of today's Pakistan Army), he saw action in Mesopotamia in the Great War. By the World War he was a General and relieved Wavell as C-in-C. Middle East by Churchill's direction. The author carefully describes the painful relationship between Churchill, Auchinleck and his subordinate at the time, the rapaciously ambitious Bernard Law Montgomery. Auchinleck laid the foundations for victory in the Western Desert when he won the decisive 1<sup>st</sup> Battle of Alamein in July 1942. This made possible Montgomery's later triumph in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Alamein. Churchill publicly (unfairly?) kicked Auchinleck upstairs to be C-in-C., Indian Army in favour of Montgomery. Auchinleck never forgave having his moment of glory thus snatched from him and, at the wars end, retired to a self-imposed exile in Morocco, never returning to England, for the remainder of his life. He boycotted Montgomery's funeral – ignoring the British Army's tradition that all living Field Marshals customarily attend the funeral of any of their number.
- 17) "***UNDER TEN VICEROYS: Reminiscences of a Gurkha***" by Major-General Nigel Woodyat CB CIE, late Colonel, 7<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles, London, 1922, hardcover, 320 pp. 26 illustrations. Commissioned into the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Cheshire Militia Light Infantry in 1880; the regiment was subsumed into the British Army's Order of Battle as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment (H. M.'s 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of Foot) in 1881. While the 'Cheshires' were in India, he transferred to the 11<sup>th</sup> Bengal Lancers and eventually arrived in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha Rifles (The Kumaon Regiment) via stints in the 30<sup>th</sup> Punjabis and the 1<sup>st</sup> Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment). He spent the next 29 years in the Gurkha Brigade serving under 10 successive Viceroys. An interesting view of the old, imperial Indian Army.

- 18) **“BENGAL LANCER”** by F. Yeats-Brown, London, 1930; hardcover; 288 pp. Born in 1886, the author of this autobiography was commissioned into the 17<sup>th</sup> Bengal Cavalry (unique in the Indian Army for being the only cavalry regiment with a mounted pipe band) in 1905 a mainly-Muslim regiment which recruited Afridis, Khattucks, Tiwanas and Khalils. It is an excellent account of a young regimental officer’s life in the old Indian Army – including action in the Mesopotamian Campaign of the Great War.
- 19) **“Mangal Pandey: Brave Martyr or Accidental Hero?”** by Rudrangshu Mukherjee; 2005; softcover; 108pp. On Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1857, in the late afternoon an incident occurred in the sepoy lines at Barrackpore, 16 mile north of Calcutta, India. Sepoy 1446 Pandey, Mangal, 5<sup>th</sup> Company, 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Bengal Native Infantry of the Honourable East India Company’s Presidential Army, while off duty and apparently under the influence of drink and/or other substance(s), armed himself and while calling upon his contemporaries to join him in rising against their British officers, fired upon the said officers. While this is widely, and mistakenly, believed to be the starting point of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, it was a late indicator of the long-deteriorating relationship between the British officers and the Indian soldiers they led and foreshadowed the conflagration that was to follow. In fact the starting point of the Sepoy Mutiny proper began with the mutiny of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bengal Light Cavalry in Meerut on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1857 – 42 days after the Barrackpore incident.
- 20) **“Indian Cavalryman”** by Captain Freddie Guest, London, 1959; hardcover; 20 illustrations; 220pp. Selected in England to be trained as an Officer Cadet in Wellington, Southern India, he was commissioned into the 8<sup>th</sup> King George’s own Light Cavalry, Indian Army, a regiment which resulted from the 1922 amalgamation of the 26<sup>th</sup> King George’s own Light Cavalry and the 30<sup>th</sup> Lancers (Gordon’s Horse) both from the old Madras Presidency Army.. This story covers the period between the wars and up to the end of the World War. He saw active service in the North-West Frontier; Africa; China and was the first prisoner-of-war to escape from the Japanese in Hong Kong; ending the war as the Equitation Instructor at the Officer Cadet School in Bangalore.
- 21) **“Bokhara Burnes”** by Maj. Gen. James D, Lunt, London, 1969; hardcover; 10 illustrations; 2 maps; 220pp. Alexander Burnes, born in Montrose, Scotland, in 1805 went out to India, aged 16 as an HEIC cadet. Showing an aptitude for Oriental languages, within a year he was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Bombay Native Infantry as an interpreter in Hindi while commencing studies in Persian. . By the age of 27, he had traveled through Afghanistan to the little-known regions of Balkh, Bokhara and Samarkand to the shores of the Caspian Sea. He wrote of his travels thus earning his sobriquet. Promoted and transferred to the Political Service he led an ill-fated expedition to Kabul in November 1836 from which the disaster of the 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War ensued. This intelligent and capable, if conceited, officer was murdered by a mob in Kabul in 1841, aged 36 years in the start of what became the debacle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War.
- 22) **“Sepoy in the Trenches: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914-15”** by Gordon Corrigan, Kent, UK; first edition. 1999; 16 plates; 9 maps; hardcover; 274 pp. An excellent, updated account of the sufferings and heroism of the Indian regiments sent to France in the bitterest of winters clad only in tropical uniforms until transferred to the Mesopotamian Campaign in 1915. The author, a retired Major (late Royal Gurkha Rifles and ex-10GR), 1998), has an authentic feel for the old Indian Army and the times. For an excellent insight into this theatre also read John Master’s *“The Ravi Lancers”* a fictional work based loosely upon the Jodhpur Lancers, an Indian States Forces regiment from the Maharaja of Jodhpur’s personal troops sent to France as his contribution the Indian Army’s Imperial Expeditionary Force.

- 23) ***The Retreat from Burma: An Intelligence Officer's Personal Story***” by Lt. Colonel Tony Mains (late 9<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles); London, 1973; hardcover; 4 illustrations; 3 maps; 151 pp. This is the story of the “last ditchers” out of Rangoon in the face of the seemingly unstoppable advance of the Imperial Japanese Army. A vital view of one of WW2’s least documented episodes
- 24) **“A Soldier of the Company: Life of an Indian Ensign, 1833-43: Captain Albert Hervey”**, by Charles Allen (London 1988);”
- 25) **“A PERSONAL JOURNAL OF THE SIEGE OF LUCKNOW *from its Commencement to its Relief* By Sir Colin Campbell”** by Robert P. Anderson.
- 26) **“Cavalry Surgeon: The Recollections of J. H. Sylvester”** London, 1971, by A. McKenzie Annand. He was a cavalry medical officer in Sir Hugh Rose’s Mutiny ‘mop-up’ of Central India in 1858;
- 27) **“Eight Month’s Campaign against the Bengal Sepoy Army”** by Colonel George Bouchier (1858)
- 28) **“District Duties in the Revolt in the North-West Provinces of India in 1857”** by Dundas Robinson (1859)
- 29) **“MY ESCAPE FROM THE MUTINEERS IN OUDH - *by a Wounded Officer*”** by Robert D. Gibney (1858)
- 30) **“Ten Years in India, or the Life of a Young Officer”** by Captain Albert Hervey, (London, 1850)
- 31) **“Twelve Years of a Soldier’s Life in India”** Rev. George A. Hodson (Ed.) (1864).
- 32) **“Recollections of a Winters Campaign in India in 1857-57”** by Captain Oliver J. Jones (RN). A re-print of a London, 1859 publication.
- 33) **“Lives of Indian Officers”**. (In two-volumes) London, 1867 by Sir John Kaye.
- 34) **“THE WHITE MUTINY”** by Michael MacLagan, London, 1964. The post-Sepoy Mutiny refusal by the European regiments of the HEIC’s Presidency armies to be absorbed into the forces of the British Crown.
- 35) **“VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA: *or an Authentic Narrative of the Military Services of the Bengal Yeomanry Cavalry during the Indian Mutiny and Sepoy War*”** by John Tulloch Nash. A 2007 re-print of a London, 1893 publication
- 36) **“Journal of an English Officer in India”** by Major North (60<sup>th</sup> Rifles), Deputy Judge Advocate General & *Aide- de-Campe* to General Havelock. (1858)
- 37) **“Forty-one Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief”**; London, 1911; 44 illustrations; 601 pp. Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts. Baronet, Earl of Kandahar and Waterford, VC. KG, KP, GCB, GCSI, & GCIE, Field Marshal, was born in Cawnpore, India, the son of General Sir Abraham Roberts GCB of the HEIC’s Bengal Army; he was commissioned into the Bengal Artillery and won the Victoria Cross early in his career, during the Indian Mutiny. He fought in every Indian campaign during Queen Victoria’s reign (and there were many) rising to the rank of Commander-in-Chief of the imperial Indian Army where he was affectionately known as “Bobs Bahadur” (lit: ‘Bob the brave’). He commanded the British Army in the Boer War and turned the reversals there into victory. He died, still in harness, as Field Marshal on the Western Front at the outbreak of the Great War.

- 38) ***“THE MEMOIRS OF PRIVATE WATERFIELD, Soldier in H. M.’s 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of Foote, 1842-1857”*** by Robert Waterfield A contemporary account by one who served in the ranks of a British infantry regiment during the period between the Sikh Wars and the Sepoy Mutiny.
- 39) ***“Indian Army Uniform Under the British: Cavalry – from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to 1947”*** by W. Y. Carman, FSA, FRHistS, London, 1968; 216 illustrations; 234 pp. This, first of a two-volume series, contains an excellent account of the changing uniforms and colours as the cavalry forces of the Hon. East India Company’s presidential armies evolved into the imperial army of India providing a kaleidoscope of the most colourful and exotic uniforms in the British Empire. This book was written and compiled by the then Deputy Director of the National Army Museum, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, who had access to what is probably the greatest collection of pictures, paintings, photographs and manuscripts relating to the old Indian Army extant. Out of print..
- 40) ***Indian Army Uniforms Under the British: Artillery, Engineers & Infantry – from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to 1947”*** by W. Y. Carman, FSA, FRHistS, London, 1969; 22 colour plates; 61 illustrations; 258 pp. This, second of a two-volume series, contains a comprehensive and fascinating survey of the evolution of the uniforms - from the practical to the exotic - of the biggest military organisation in the world in the imperial age. Out of print.