

AN
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
RISE AND PROGRESS
OF THE
BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY,
FROM ITS FIRST FORMATION
IN 1757, TO 1796,
WHEN THE PRESENT REGULATIONS TOOK PLACE.

TOGETHER WITH A
DETAIL OF THE SERVICES
ON WHICH THE SEVERAL BATTALIONS HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED
DURING THAT PERIOD.

BY THE LATE
CAPTAIN WILLIAMS,
OF THE INVALID ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BENGAL ARMY.

LONDON:
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Subadar.

THE Bengal Native Infantry have been long noticed for their good conduct and gallantry in the field; and as some of the battalions have, upon all occasions, distinguished themselves in a particular manner, many old officers have expressed their concern that no minute account had been published of them, especially those in the early part of the service. The writer of this has undertaken the task at the request of some very respectable officers, although he is conscious of his inability to do justice to the subject. He hopes and trusts, however, that his endeavours may be favourably received by those for whose amusement they are intended, and allowance made for any errors which may occur in the following sheets, when he informs

them that he has scarcely a document but his own memory to guide him. He owns that the task is in some measure pleasing to him, as it recals to his mind many of the early scenes of his youth, which is gratifying to every man advanced in years, but particularly so to an old soldier, who has been near half a century in the profession.

It is his intention to give the best account he can of the several battalions, from the time of their being raised until the year 1796, when the present establishment took place.

AN

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT,

&c. &c. &c.

PRIOR to the year 1757, the military A.D. 1756. establishment of Bengal consisted of only one company of Artillery and four or five companies of European Infantry, with a few hundred Natives, armed after the manner of the country, for the protection of the several factories. After Calcutta was taken by the Nabob Surajah Dowlah, the Council of Madras ordered Lord Clive and Major Kilpatrick round to Bengal, with such a detachment of their troops as could be spared, so as not to endanger the safety of their own settlement. As several companies of Sepoys accompanied that

detachment, these men laid the foundation of the Bengal Native Infantry.

1757. In January, 1757, on the retaking of Calcutta and re-establishment of the Government, a battalion of Sepoys was ordered to be raised and officered from the Madras detachment. That battalion is still in being, and will be treated of in its present rank. In the course of that year, some other battalions were formed, and officered in like manner.*

The establishment of a battalion of Native Infantry was then one captain, one lieutenant and one ensign, who acted as field officers; and the subalterns had two rupees per day extra for their trouble in disciplining their men, in which they

* In the month of June this year (1757) the battle of Plassey was fought, in which about 2,000 Sepoys were engaged. The present 2d battalion 12th regiment was in that battle.

were assisted by a serjeant-major and a few serjeants. There was a Native commandant, who took post in front with the captain, and a Native adjutant, who remained in the rear with the subalterns. The battalion consisted of ten companies, two of which were grenadiers, as at present. Each company had a subadar, three jemadars, five hawuldars, (one of which was a colour man,) four naicks, two tom-toms,* one trumpeter, and seventy Sepoys. Each company had a stand of colours attached to it, of the same colour as the facings of the men; in the center of which was the subadar's device or badge, such as a sabre, a dagger, a crescent, &c. and the Grenadiers, by way of distinction, had the British Union in the upper corner.

When two or more battalions did duty together, they took post according to the 1764.

* A small Indian drum.

date of their captain's commission; but as that mode created some confusion, in frequently changing corps from one part of the line to another, the Governor and Council, in April, 1764, ordered the battalions to be numbered according to the then rank of their captains, which was as follows, being eighteen in number, viz.—

1. Captain Giles Stibbert.
2. Captain M^cLean.
3. Captain Hugh Grant.
4. Captain Campbell.
- 5.
6. Captain Trevanion.
7. Captain Brown.
8. Captain William Smith.
9. Captain P. Galliez.
10. Captain Ironside.
11. Captain James Morgan.
12. Captain John White.
13. Captain Swinton.

14. Captain Hampton.
15. Captain Stables.
16. Captain Scotland.
17. Captain Goddard.
18. Captain Dow.

Shortly after, another battalion was raised by the Town Major in Calcutta, and numbered the Nineteenth.

On the arrival of Lord Clive in 1765, 1765. he found the Bengal army to consist of twenty-four companies of European infantry, four companies of artillery, a troop of hussars, and about twelve hundred irregular cavalry, with the Sepoys as above.

As soon as peace was concluded with Sujah Dowlah, the hussars were dismounted and incorporated with the infantry, and the irregular cavalry dismissed, except three hundred. His Lordship ordered two more battalions to be raised, and then divided the whole into three divisions or

brigades, except one company of artillery which was set apart for the duty of Fort William. Each brigade consisted of a Rossalah or troop of cavalry, one company of artillery, one regiment of European infantry of nine companies, and seven battalions of Sepoys, as follows:—

1st Brigade.	}	2d	2d Brigade.	}	1st	3d Brigade.	}	6th
		3d			7th			9th
		4th			8th			11th
		5th			15th			12th
		10th			16th			14th
		13th			18th			19th
		17th			20th to be raised			21st to be raised.

1766. In 1766, his Lordship, having obtained from the Emperor Shah Allum, the Devancee, or management of the revenues, of the Bengal provinces, ordered a battalion from each brigade to be turned over to the Revenue Department; but they were to retain their rank in the line, and continued on the strength of their brigades. At the same time he ordered six new battalions

to be formed for the same duty, which were denominated Purgunnah or Provincial Battalions. Those corps, although numbered in the line, were solely dependant on the Revenue Board.

In 1773, in consequence of some misconduct of the Purgunnah battalions, in the northern parts of Bengal, against the Senasses,* the three old battalions were returned to their brigades, and the new ones broke, except the 24th, which was then on particular duty at Ramgur, under the command of Captain Camac. 1773.

At the same time an alteration took place in the rest of the Native establishment. The extra pay to Sepoy subalterns was discontinued, and an allowance of one rupee per day was added to the pay of all the subalterns in the service. The number of subalterns in each battalion was in-

* Itinerant tribes of religious fanatics and marauders.

shot Admiral Byng, in the year 1757. The other twenty were ordered to the several stations of the army, where they all suffered death in the same manner. After which, the battalion was weeded of such men as had been active in the mutiny, and then ordered to Patna, where it was again completed; since which it has generally gone by the name of its Captain, "Galliez." A little before this, it was fixed as the Ninth in number, being the rank of its commander. It remained at Patna until after the battle of Buxar, when it again joined the army.

In 1765, it was posted to the Third Brigade. Its uniform was then blue facings, blue turbans and cummerbands, and made a handsome appearance under arms. It remained many years with its brigade, before it had an opportunity of distinguishing itself again. In 1775, on



Grenadier Sepoy.

1802. In the course of this year the Commander in Chief directed that the hawuldars of the Native corps should be armed with pikes instead of muskets. They were likewise ordered to wear pantaloons and sashes, and in all respects to conform to the situation of serjeants in European corps, instead of being included, as heretofore, amongst the rank and file.

1803. Early in this year a large force was called into the field in consequence of some of the chiefs of districts in the upper part of the Dooaub, recently ceded by the Newaub Vizier, having refused to conform to the regulations and authority of the Honourable Company's administration.

The fort of Saussnie was first attacked, and an attempt to carry it by storm having failed, the Commander in Chief, who was then at Kinouje superintending the disci-



Hawuldar.

preparations on the north-west frontier, 1809. with reference to the probability of French invasion, in alliance with the Court of Persia.

Some of the Sikh chiefs had likewise shewn indications of hostility, and a large force was accordingly assembled in Sirhind, which ended in a post being established at Loodhiana, on the left bank of the river Sutludge, where three battalions of Native infantry, with a regiment of cavalry and artillery details, cantoned, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Ochterlony.

A large force was likewise still on service in Bundelkund, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Martindell; and early in this year, the strong hill-fort of Adjegurh was captured, after a smart affair on the heights of Ruggowly, in which the 4th Light Infantry Battalion, and the



Light Infantry Sepoy.

Comrades of my early youth, and of the best portion of life, which has been cherished and rewarded through the medium of your meritorious conduct,

FAREWELL!

NOTE.—The custom which prevailed in former times, of calling corps by the name of the officer who raised, or who commanded them for a series of years, has been gradually falling into disuse, with regard to all corps raised since the establishment was condensed into twelve regiments, in 1796. All the battalions of those old corps still retain their original appellation: but the practice could no longer be observed with the same degree of propriety or effect, with regard to corps raised since that period, which, under the fluctuating circumstances of the service in regard to commanding officers of corps, compared with the different state of things in former times, are generally described by the Natives as the Right (1st) or Left (2d) Battalion of regiments respectively; which are expressed by their numerical arrangement.

APPENDIX A.

*A List of the Officers of the Bengal Army,
in the Year 1760.*

CAPTAINS.

John Gowan	10 Henry Oswald
Thomas Fenwick	Hugh M'Kie
James Spear	Thomas Robertson
Christian Fisher	Lauchlan M'Lean
5 Martin York	Giles Stibbert
Ranfur Lee Knox	15 Henry Spelman
Peter Carstairs	Martin White
Charles Earnest Joecher	James Tabby
Alexander Champion	18 Patrick Moran

CAPTAIN-LIEUTENANT.

1 John Broadburn.

LIEUTENANTS.

William Turner	10 Anthony Casteel
George Wilson	John Price
Ambrose Perry	James Treadwell
Henry Sommers	John Trevanion
5 Hugh Grant	Sir William Hope
John Nollickens	15 Lewis Brown
Christian Hasencliver	John M'Dowall
John Mathews	William Ellerson
Francis Cozens	John Downie

George Alston	George Morrison
20John Bourne	Gilbert Ironside
William Smith	James Morgan
Primrose Gailliez	26John White

ENSIGNS.

Anthony Polier	Samuel Hampton
Richard Parry	10Maurice Roach
John Mauve	Benjamin Wilding
Thomas Fenwick	James Jones
5William Glenn	Richard Holland
Archibald Swinton	John Walkins
Walter Furlong	15John Mackleron
George Hay	

Total Officers—60.

At present there are upwards of 1600 officers on the military establishment of Bengal.

NOTE.—It appears by a memorandum with Captain Williams's manuscripts, that in the year 1756, immediately preceding the capture of Calcutta by the Newaub Suraja Dowlah, the officers and troops in the service of the East India Company, in Bengal, consisted as follows:—

In the garrison of old Fort William,

Infantry - - - - -	145	} inclusive of officers.
Artillery - - - - -	45	

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Of that number 60 only were Europeans, the rest were native Portuguese, dressed as Europeans, and called Topasses

About 200 of the latter description were detached at the subordinate factories of Cossimbuzar, Dacca, Lucky-

poore and Ballasore, but they could not reach Fort William before it was invested.

The troops in the Fort were commanded by Captain Minchin, commandant; Captains Clayton, Buchanan, Grant, and Witherington commanding the artillery. Captains Minchin and Grant accompanied Governor Drake to the ships, some days before the Fort surrendered; the former was dismissed, but the latter returned to the service, and served under Clive at Plassey. Captains Clayton, Buchanan and Witherington died in the black-hole.

The lieutenants and ensigns were as follows:—Lieutenants Bishop, Hays, Blagg, Simsom and Bellamy; Ensigns Piccard, Scott, Hastings, Wedderburn and Walcott. All of whom, except Mr. Walcott, perished in the black-hole; and Mr. W. died shortly after. Ensigns Carstairs and Muir were detached at the out factories, and thus escaped the miseries of the black-hole.

APPENDIX B.

PROCEEDING from Calpee, the detachment lost, on the second day's march, one of its most valuable officers, Captain James Crawford, commanding the 4th battalion, who died from a stroke of the sun. Connected with that unfortunate event, the following relation of facts will doubtless be read with unfeigned sympathy and admiration.

Captain Crawford had acquired the character of an excellent Sepoy officer, and the battalion which he com-