

1927 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY
SUMMARY OF THE SECOND BATTALION DIARY 1927.

January 1.—Proclamation Day Parade held in Dehra Dun.

January 2.—The Regiment and 2nd Gurkha Rifles under command of Lieut.-Colonel Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., marched to Mohun (19 miles).

January 3.—The Column arrived at the manoeuvre camp at Kheri.

January 13.—Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., proceeded on the Meerut District Staff ride till January 16.
Major J. L. Portal, D.S.O., assumed command of the Regiment.

January 16.—The District Commander inspected the Regimental Lines.

January 17.—The District Commander inspected the Regiment at training.

January 19.—The Regiment under Major J. L. Portal, D.S.O., took part in a Brigade Rear Guard scheme.

January 21.—The Regiment took part in a Brigade defence scheme.

January 22.—The Machine Gun Platoon under Lieut. R. T. Conant took part in a Brigade demonstration.

January 26.—The Regiment as part of the 17th Indian Infantry Brigade took part in an Advanced Guard operation.

January 27.—The Regiment under Major J. L. Portal, D.S.O., took part in a Brigade night operation.

January 29.—All Officers attended the 18th I. I. Brigade demonstration of Artillery and Machine Guns in the defence at Dhanauri.

January 31.—A Regimental Cadre Class for Non commissioned officers was started under Captain E. A. Smith, M.C., who ceased to hold the appointment of Brigade Machine Gun Officer from to-day.

"B" and "C" commenced field firing.

February 1.—"B" and "C" Companies finished field firing.

February 2.—"A" and "D" Companies commenced field firing.

2nd Lieut. C. L. C. Ward proceeded to Landour to take up the temporary appointment of Station Staff Officer.

February 3.—The Machine Gun Platoon carried out field firing.

February 5.—The Regiment marched to Mohan (12 miles).

February 6.—The Regiment marched into Gangora Camp (19 miles).

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February 7th.—A party of casuals under C.S.M. Bailey, D.C.M., began preliminary musketry. All 3rd class shots included.

February 14.—Lieut. J. Thorne rejoined from attachment to the British Infantry Training Company, Jullundur, and took over command and payment of letter "B" Company.

February 22.—Extract from London Gazette dated January 28, 1927, 2nd Lieut. C. L. C. Ward to be Lieutenant (January 29).

February 23.—Information received that Lieut. R. H. Cooke had been cross-posted to the 52nd from the 43rd and had already embarked for India.

March 4.—Inspection of books for the Annual Inspection Report of the Brigade Commander.

March 12.—Inspection of the Regiment by the G.O.C.-in-C. Eastern Command.

March 14.—A draft of 2 Corporals and 130 Other Ranks joined the Regiment having arrived from the United Kingdom.

March 15.—1st Echelon of the Regiment under Captain C. B. Crawford composed as follows marched from Gangora Camp to Jumnipore. "B" and "C" Companies, Rest Camp Staffs, Band, Signallers.

March 16.—1st Echelon marched from Jumnipore to Kalsi.
2nd Echelon (consisting of: "A" and "D" Companies, remainder of Headquarter Wing, Indian Platoon) under Major J. L. Portal, D.S.O., marched to Jumnipore.

March 17.—1st Echelon marched from Kalsi to Saiah.
2nd Echelon marched from Jumnipore to Kalsi.

March 18.—1st Echelon marched into Chakrata.
2nd Echelon marched from Kalsi to Saiah.

March 19.—2nd Echelon marched into Chakrata.

March 27.—2nd Lieut. A. J. W. Macleod, I.A.U.L., proceeded to Alipore on posting to the 3/12th Frontier Force Regiment.

March 29.—2nd Lieut. A. R. E. Walker, I.A.U.L. proceeded to Santa Cruz on posting to the 3/16th Punjab Regiment.

April 4.—Inspection of the Regiment by the G.O.C United Provinces District.

April 6th.—Lieut. R. H. Cooke reported his arrival on cross-posting from the 1st Battalion and was posted to "C" Company.

May 10.—A and D Companies and casuals of B and C Companies started firing Tables R. and L.

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May 25.—Buglers ordered to wear green field service caps.

June 1.—Regimental button taken into wear by all ranks.

June 3.—King's Birthday Parade.

June 23.—A and D Companies and casuals of B and C Companies complete tables R and L.

July 11 .—Re-armament of Regiment begun.

July 15.—Re-armament of Regiment completed.

August 22.—Khaki Field Service Caps ordered to be replaced by all ranks with those of dark green colour as the former become unserviceable, the small bugle (shoulder bugle size of whitemetal) to be worn with the latter.

September 30.—No. 5378596 Bandsman Collett drowned whilst bathing on leave at Kalsi.

October 18.—Draft consisting of 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 28 men left for the United Kingdom on discharge and transfer to the reserve.

The Machine Gun Platoon proceeded to Dehra Dun to fire the Annual Machine Gun Course.

October 29.—2nd Lieut. G. W. S. Burton, Indian Army Unattached List, proceeded to join the 1/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles at Abbottabad on posting having completed his year of attachment to the Regiment.

November 2.—2nd Lieut. J. W. H. K. Greenway, Indian Army Unattached List, proceeded to join the 1/8th Gurkha Rifles at Shillong on posting, having completed his year of attachment to the Regiment.

November 4.—The Machine Gun Platoon rejoined from Dehra Dun having completed the Annual Machine Gun Course.

November 11.—Nonnebosschen Day.

November 21.—Captain W. L. Barnard proceeded to the United Kingdom to take up the appointment of Adjutant to the Bucks (T.F.) Battalion of the Regiment.

November 26.—Captain T. E. Withington, A.F.C., assumed Command of the Regiment during the absence on leave of Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O.

December 1.—A draft of 1 Sergeant, 2 Corporals, 83 men and 4 boys arrived at the Rest Camp, Dehra Dun, from the United Kingdom remaining there under the Command of Lieut. G. G. Hughes to await the arrival of the Regiment.

Advanced party of the 42nd Royal Highlanders arrived at Chakrata,

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December 4.—1st Echelon consisting of C and D Companies, Buglers, Indian Platoon and Advanced Party left at 8.15 a.m. for Saiah.

December 5.—1st Echelon marched from Saiah to Kalsi.

December 6.—2nd Echelon consisting of A and B Companies and remainder of the Headquarter Wing left for Saiah at 8.15 a.m.
1st Echelon marched from Kalsi to Jumnipore.

December 7.—1st Echelon marched from Jumnipore to Dehra Dun.
2nd Echelon marched from Saiah to Kalsi.

December 8.—2nd Echelon marched from Kalsi to Jumnipore.
1st Echelon spent the day loading baggage.

December 9.—1st Echelon still loading heavy baggage into trucks.
2nd Echelon marched from Jumnipore to Dehra Dun.
Number of men who fell out from both echelons in the march from Chakrata to Dehra Dun: Nil.

Both Echelons entrained as follows:

1st Train leaving Dehra Dun 9.30p.m., Advanced Party (1 Officer and 70 Other Ranks) all heavy baggage,

2nd Train leaving at 10.30p.m. 1st Echelon (less Advanced Party).

3rd Train leaving at 11.30 p.m., Followers and Chargers.

4th Train leaving at 12 midnight, 2nd echelon.

Trains joined as follows at Hardwar:

1 and 2, 3 and 4.

December 10.—In the train.

December 11.—No. 1 Train slipped and proceeded to Calcutta arriving Howrah at about 7.0 a.m.

All baggage had to be unloaded that day.

The Advanced Party had very hard work, but with the aid of a large working party of the 1st Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment all baggage was carried to Fort William by lorry and dumped there.

Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O., assumed command of the Regiment.

December 12.—Regiment detrained at Chatra between 5.15 and 6.0 a.m.

1st Echelon moved off about 7.0 a.m.

Bullock transport very bad and undisciplined.

Road bad and dusty.

Some of the baggage was despatched by train to Rampurhant the first camp.

2nd Echelon arrived camp Rampurhant about 1.30 p.m.

Bullock transport arrived about 4.0 p.m. Schedule capacity of bullock carts was 10 maunds but they would not carry more than 8.

Camping ground cramped, dirty and bad. Day's march 9 miles.

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December 13.—5 sick despatched to Calcutta.

Two truck loads of kits to Mullarpur owing to shortage of carts which were not supplied by contractor.

Moved off 7.0 a.m.

Arrived Mullarpur 10.0 a.m.

Road very bad.

Bullock carts came in about 12 noon.

Loaded two trucks at 6.0 p.m. for despatch to Suri.

7 sick despatched to Calcutta.

Day's march 8 miles.

December 14.—Contractor having failed to supply bullock carts the night before Commanding Officer decided to send baggage by train to Suri and march there direct making a double march of 25 miles by night and arriving at Suri early morning of 15th.

This was done.

All loading of baggage into railway trucks completed by 12 noon.

Regiment moved off at 4 p.m.

Halted for tea and haversack ration after 15 miles, by 11 p.m. Resumed marching about 3.0 a.m. Road very bad and dusty particularly through the river beds which were deep and sandy. This caused several sprains and twisted knees.

The baggage was unloaded at Suri by the Advanced party and some sick men sent on by train.

The Regiment arrived at Suri about 6.0 a.m.

Breakfasts finished tents, and kits carried from station and camp pitched by 9.30 a.m.

Night's march: 25 miles.

December 15.—Halted at Suri.

December 16.—Despatched 6 sick to Calcutta.

Moved as usual arriving Hetampur about 11.0 a.m. Camped in Guest House Compound of Rajah of Hetampur.

Bullock carts in by 1.30 p.m.

Day's march, 14 miles.

In bathing in a tank a signaller was nearly drowned.

December 17.—Halt at Hetampur.

One sick man (the signaller) was despatched to Calcutta.

December 18.—Moved as usual.

Camped Pandaveswar.

Day's march, 10 miles.

Trouble with bullock carts crossing the Ajay River. They were, however, helped across by B Company.

Took over Mechanical Transport consisting of 7 hired motor lorries.

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December 19.—Despatched 2 sick to Calcutta.

Moved as usual.

Lorries left camp at 6.15 a.m.

Some did two journeys.

Arrived in camp at Ondal about 11.30 a.m., joining the Grand Trunk Road about 1 mile from Ondal.

Day's march, 15 miles.

Camping ground good.

December 20.—Marched to Gopalpur a distance of 12 1/2 miles.

1 sick man despatched to Calcutta.

Camping ground bad and water was insufficient in quantity and finally failed altogether.

No water for washing available.

December 21.—Marched to Bud Bud 11 1/2 miles.

Water failed; there being only enough for cooking, drinking and a little washing.

The Medical Officer proceeded by motor ambulance to Sarul and reported that water supply there was also inadequate so it was decided to march straight through to Burdwan passing Sarul and only remaining there for dinner and a midday rest through the heat of the day.

December 22.—2 sick to Calcutta.

Moved off as usual.

Dinners were eaten at Sarul.

Regiment marched on from Sarul at 4.0 p.m., and arrived at Burdwan about 9.0 p.m.

Day's march, 25 miles.

Camp at Burdwan had already been pitched in the police compound by the lorry escorts.

Camping ground good but infested with malaria mosquitoes.

December 24-26.—Halted at Burdwan.

Bathing parades held.

Christmas day was observed as a holiday.

Lieut. K. S. Wootten and 2 other sick to Calcutta.

December 27.—Marched to Dulla Bazar, a distance of 1 1/2 miles.

Camping ground good and water plentiful.

December 28th.—1 sick man despatched to Calcutta.

December 28.—Marched to Goara, a distance of 14 miles.

Camping ground good but small, water plentiful.

5 sick men evacuated to Calcutta.

Captain D. C. Colvill, M.C., proceeded to Bombay (having rejoined from leave) on posting to the Depot in relief of Captain P. Booth.

December 29.—Marched to Tarangani, a distance of 11 1/2 miles.

Camping ground good but small.

2 sick evacuated to Calcutta.

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December 30.—Marched to Gourhati a distance of 15 miles.

A halt was made at the old Portuguese settlement of Bandal about 9.0 a.m. for a civil reception.

Remained there for dinners and marched again at 3.45 p.m.

Passed through the old Dutch Settlement of Chinsura and the present French Settlement of Chandernagore.

Arrived Gourhati about 7.0 p.m.

Camping ground good, close to the Hooghly.

December 31.—Marched to Rishra a distance of 8 miles.

Camping ground very small and cramped, but fortunately enclosed by a wire fence which kept off the crowd.

Officers' lines in the Hastings Jute Mills.

4 men of the band arrived from Calcutta.

A free entertainment was given.

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SECOND BATTALION LETTER, 1927

DEAR EDITOR,

The record of our doings for 1927 resembles that of the Ishmaelites who were "wanderers and dwellers in tents"; in fact our tour of India cannot so far be accused of lacking in variety.

We started the year by moving to Kheri Camp for manoeuvres where we remained for one month.

The Brigade Training was neither particularly strenuous nor interesting, and the really bright spot was the shooting, which was by no means bad, as our game book will show. Our bag was mainly partridge and peacock.

Early in February we marched back to Gangora Camp after having learnt that our next station was to be Calcutta.

Arrived at Gangora it was not long before we were preparing for our march to the hills for the hot weather.

This duly came off in March without anything unusual happening. There was a good deal of snow still lying about and, of course, the nights were bitterly cold at Chakrata on our arrival.

We settled down into our routine of the previous year; individual training and musketry, followed by the rains. The rains, with the exception of one bad period, when the road was blocked by landslips for some days, were not particularly heavy.

Mildew gathered on our boots like the dew upon the fleece, but it was generally possible to take some form of exercise and moreover we were getting used to the Chakrata climate.

There were the usual monsoon activities in the way of theatricals; a production of "Bull Dog Drummond" by the Officers, "starring" Colvill, and a very successful Regimental Concert Party. Both were excellent and kept a number of us busy through most of July and August, which, after all, was all that they were intended to do.

The end of the rains came in September and then came that most delightful time—the Autumn in the hills.

If it had not been for the lack of open space and the isolation of a small hill station we do not think that anyone very much wished themselves elsewhere.

The time went by quickly enough. Owing to the fact that Christmas Day was to be spent on the march it was celebrated, so far as Christmas dinners and their attendant potations were concerned, on November 17. Thanks to a miracle of ineptitude on somebody's part we nearly had the first draft from England thrust upon us the day we moved from Chakrata.

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However, the powers that be finally consented to their being accommodated in the Rest Camp at Dehra Dun for some ten days before the arrival of the Regiment there, during which time it was possible to get them moderately fit after their sea voyage and to equip them more or less satisfactorily for the march. The march from Chakrata to Dehra Dun of both Echelons was uneventful and we had nothing worse to grumble at than the dust on the roads.

The 1st Echelon had a full two days' work loading heavy baggage at Dehra Dun.

The 2nd Echelon marched from Jumnipore to Dehra Dun on the day of entrainment whereby they did a full day's work, as the last train did not leave before midnight.

The train accommodation was good, and the only difficulty was to prevent ourselves from suffering from an enlarged liver due to over-eating.

On the morning of December 12 both Echelons arrived at Chatra, our detraining station.

There a large mob of unruly and incredibly "jungly" bullock carts were awaiting us and we rather missed Clare's commanding presence. These carts were reputed to be of 10 maunds capacity, but we found that the owners' goods and chattels occupied so much room that it had to be given up as a bad job and the only alternative was to send part of the baggage by train. This we did, which, of course, saved the Regiment a great deal of trouble and the Government unnecessary expense.

From this day onwards our march was enlivened by continual difficulty in getting the bullock cart contractor to deliver the required number of carts in sufficient time.

Twice he failed, and twice we had to send the baggage by train. As a consequence of this we did one double march of twenty-five miles by night avoiding a camp off the railway to meet our baggage, which had been sent on in trucks hurriedly requisitioned from the local stationmaster.

The stationmasters were generally very helpful and obliging, otherwise we might well have been stranded without food or transport.

The difficulty was that as soon as one lot of drivers and bullocks had become accustomed to the sight of white men and had been dragooned into some sort of discipline by dint of much vituperation on the part of Cooke and Sgt. Carter they were promptly changed for a fresh lot and our troubles began again. In addition to this, the dust, bad roads and heat did not make marching more comfortable and with bullock carts we rarely got the transport in before dinners, in spite of an early start at dawn.

The climate and general beastliness of Bengal produced more sickness than we have yet had, chiefly dysentery produced by the dust.

After our long march of twenty-five miles we had a two days' rest, which was a great boon as everyone was incredibly dirty and generally dishevelled.

"Gentlemen in England now abed" may rather laugh at a paltry twenty-five miles being considered a long march. We only ask them to come out and try it here.

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After our rest we continued the march and halted a day at a place called Hetampur, where we camped in the Rajah's Guest House Compound.

There we nearly had a fatality through one of the signallers getting cramp in the stomach while bathing in the tank, but Sergeant-Major Bailey just got him out in time.

We were now approaching the Grand Trunk Road and getting into a Colliery District. It is perhaps worth noting that when we started our march the inhabitants were obviously terrified of us. They had not seen British troops for some sixty years and as they patently did not believe the statement that we were merely on our way to Calcutta they hid all their women folk away, evidently expecting murder, rape, and violence.

As soon as they discovered that we were quite harmless individuals they plucked up courage and at Hetampur where they had cleared out for ten miles around before our arrival they flocked in from everywhere to watch us.

Just before we got on to the Grand Trunk Road we bid a heartfelt and thankful farewell to our bullock carts and took over seven real, solid and apparently completely efficient motor lorries. Never before have we travelled in such luxury, as it was possible to have the whole camp pitched before we arrived in.

Sergeant Carter's remarks when he saw the last of the bullock carts are not on record. The motor lorries actually did not break down and we thought our troubles were over.

However, there is no exhausting the surprises of 'this delightful country, and, one or two camps farther on, the water started to fail in the wells owing to the fact that the Prince of Wales' Volunteers had used these camps a short time ago; so there had been no reconnaissance of the camps since they had marched at after using up most of the water.

We went short and did practically no washing at two camps and then did a double march of another twenty-five miles, this time by day, to avoid a waterless camp.

We marched in the early morning and late evening, arriving at Burdwan in the dark. We were fed like fighting cocks and nobody felt particularly tired.

At Burdwan we were camped in the Compound of the Police barracks, quite a pretty spot, but infested with malaria mosquitoes even at that time of year. Thanks to our nets we suffered very little.

We stayed at Burdwan over a very sober Christmas and Boxing Day, and then resumed our march.

We now encountered a positively pestiferous individual who dogged our footsteps nearly into Calcutta. This creature, an Indian and a minor official of some kind, had apparently set himself to devise entertainments for us at every camp. Whether this was a political move we never discovered.

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The first entertainment., consisting of some dances by the local aboriginals and a peculiarly cruel and brutal form of cock fighting, was not uninteresting, also he had prevailed upon the local worthies to make presents of fruit, vegetables, fish and so on, but the entertainments were repeated at every camp and we were expected to turn out and watch. Moreover, this individual's charm of manner was lost upon most of us, and we thought we should never see the last of him. Just before New Year's Day we reached the banks of the Hooghly and a large Jute Mill district.

These establishments looked amazingly large and prosperous to us, accustomed as we were to the poverty-stricken appearance of military cantonments in the North.

One day's march was rather interesting. It started with a species of reception in the middle of the morning at the old Portuguese settlement of Bandal. Here a most benign old gentleman presented the Colonel with a bouquet, or, as our officious friend of the entertainments had it: "Grand old man of Chinsura will present O.C. with bucket" After dinners we marched on through the old Dutch Settlement of Chinsura.

Soon after this we marched into Chandernagore, one of the few remaining French Settlements in India.

Here there was a distinctly Gallic flavour about our reception.

Official permission had duly been applied for asking that we might march and play our band through French Territory and we were escorted by the local police (in blue plush hats and heavily armed with pistols) down the main street.

After watching the Regiment pass, the Administrator insisted on taking the Colonel and one or two others to partake of a bottle of champagne in the local Government House which, by the way, has a certain amount of historical interest, having been the palace of Dupleix when he was the French Commander-in-Chief in India.

The next day we marched to Rishra the last camp of the march. We were here camped on a small football ground with railings round and space was rather limited. The following day was New Year's Day and the entire staff of the local Jute Mill celebrated it well and truly, even to the extent of one of their number forcing an entry into the Colonel's tent in the morning of New Year's Day in a completely intoxicated condition. This the Colonel took in very rood part we thought.

Our ubiquitous provider of entertainments was rather getting on everybody's nerves by this time, but in the evening of New Year's Day he atoned for past sins by hiring a cinema and showing a very good "Charlie Chaplin" film in the open air which went down very well.

Early the next morning we were much edified by the sight of various members of the Calcutta Scottish going off to their Proclamation Day Parade in Calcutta.

One imagines that the sight of the Calcutta Scottish arriving *en masse* at their place of parade in hundreds of cars ranging from rich limousines down to the humble but useful Morris must be a sight worth seeing.

The last day's march being through the suburbs of Calcutta was not very interesting. We struck the tarmac some five miles from our late camping ground.

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The word "struck" is used advisedly and literally, in fact one might almost say that we "hit it a crack" because it was exceedingly slippery.

As the buglers set foot upon it several staggered and one hit the dust or rather the tarmac. The Adjutant's charger then slipped up in three directions at once and men slipped and fell at every step.

After a few miles everybody seemed to get more or less accustomed to the surface and the "casualties" ceased. Thanks to the police we were not held up by traffic and we marched into the Fort just as the Proclamation Day Parade was over and nearly bumped into the North Staffords entering through another arch.

We found a standing camp ready for us on the Fort Glacis and this closes the account of our doings for 1927.

It may be of interest that in the whole march from Chakrata to Dehra Dun and from Chatra to Calcutta, roughly a distance of 270 miles, portions of which were performed under comparatively trying conditions notably our first twenty-five mile march when no one had more than two hours sleep in 36 hours, that only 4 men fell out on the line of march and of these 3 were cases of total collapse due to sudden illness.

Yours,
5 2ND.