

2021

www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

Author: Robert PALMER, M.A.



A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

LUSHAI BRIGADE

A concise history of the Lushai Brigade, an ad-hoc formation in the British Indian Army, which was formed in March 1944 to operate in the Lushai and Chin Hills on the border between India and Burma during the Second World War.

Copyright ©www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk (2021)

A Concise History of the Lushai Brigade

Version: 1_4
This edition dated: 24 September 2021
ISBN: Not Yet Allocated.

All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means including; electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, scanning without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Author: Robert PALMER, M.A. (copyright held by author)
Assisted by: Stephen HEAL
Published privately by: The Author – Publishing as:
www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

Contents

	<u>Pages</u>
The Background	3 – 4
Formation of the Lushai Brigade	4 – 8
First Actions	8 – 11
The Brigade Joins XXXIII Indian Corps	11 – 15
Advance to the Chindwin	16 – 18
Attack on Gangaw	19 – 20
Transfer to IV Corps	20 – 22
The Brigade Reorganises in India	23 – 26
Photograph	27
Appendix 'A' – Career of Brigadier MARINDIN	28 – 29
Bibliography and Sources	30

The Background

In March 1944, the Japanese Army launched Operation U-Go against the Assam region of British India. This came a month after the Japanese had launched Operation 'Ha-Go' in the Arakan, with the intention of pulling British forces into the Arakan prior to launching their main offensive in north-eastern India.

The Japanese forces in Burma had been reorganised in mid-1943, with the creation of the Burma Area Army under Lieutenant General KAWABE. Under this formation was the Fifteenth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Renya MUTAGUCHI, who had previously commanded the 18th Division in Burma. He was a forceful commander, who advocated the invasion of India in order to cut the supply lines to Nationalist China, and to destabilise British India in support of the Azad Hind movement. MUTAGUCHI had originally thought that the terrain was too difficult through which to invade India, and that the logistical problems would be impossible to overcome. Ironically, the first Chindit expedition had shown him that troops could operate in the mountainous jungle areas in northern Burma and north-east India. MUTAGUCHI was also an officer who believed that it was his destiny to achieve a decisive victory over the British, which would secure Japan's status in Asia.

The other influence on MUTAGUCHI was that of Subhas Chandra BOSE, a Bengali, who was determined to overthrow British rule in Bengal and had sought Japanese support in doing so. BOSE was also the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army (I.N.A.), which had been formed following the British surrender at Singapore from many of the Indian soldiers taken prisoner there. BOSE was keen for the I.N.A. to play a significant role in the invasion of India and lead his troops into his country to take control after the collapse of British rule. The I.N.A. actually consisted of one, weak, divisional formation. A British officer who operated in the Chin Hills and fought the I.N.A. during the 1944 campaign assessed that a third of them were advocates of BOSE's political aspirations and believed that they were fighting to give India independence. The next third enlisted in the I.N.A. to escape the punishing reality of incarceration by the Japanese and hoped to be able to escape and return to serve with their regiments again in the British Indian Army. The final third were opportunists, who saw the possibility of gaining personal advantage, and were generally ill-disciplined and were prone to raping women and girls and looting villages in the Chin Hills. The behaviour of this group in the Chin Hills understandably caused significant outrage and hatred amongst the Chin people, and it reinforced their support of the British in the region.

In early 1944, the I.N.A. comprised about 14,000 men, with most of them organised into the 1st Division under Mohammed Zaman KIANI. The division was composed of the 1st Guerrilla Regiment (Subhas Brigade) of three battalions under Colonel Shah Nawaz KHAN. The 2nd Guerrilla Regiment (Gandhi Brigade) had two infantry battalions under Colonel Inayat KIANI; the 3rd Guerrilla Regiment (Azad Brigade) had three battalions and was commanded by Colonel Gulzara SINGH; and finally, the 4th Guerrilla Regiment (Nehru Brigade) was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel G. S. DHILLON. Each battalion had five companies, all lightly armed using captured British rifles and machine guns.

MUTAGUCHI's plans were approved by the Japanese Prime Minister in late 1943, and from then on, Operation U-Go was his personal objective. The plan was to send three Japanese divisions across the Chindwin River to attack and secure the British bases at Imphal and Dimapur, thereby taking advantage of captured British supplies and obviating the need to provide a Japanese logistical line of communication through the mountainous terrain. The main lines of Japanese advance were on Imphal from the south and east, and to Ukhrul to cut off Imphal from the north using the Japanese 15th and 33rd Divisions, while the 31st Division struck towards Kohima and onwards to Dimapur. The I.N.A. were to be used on the left flank of the Japanese advance to cover the southern part of Manipur State in the Chin and Lushai Hills between Burma and India.

Formation of the Lushai Brigade

When the Japanese launched their offensive in Assam in March 1944, it became apparent that their main target was the Imphal plain, which was defended by the British IV Corps comprising three divisions. This left the southern flank of the Indian border open and vulnerable to enemy penetration, so to provide a suitable British force in the Lushai and Chin Hills, Lieutenant General SLIM ordered the formation of the Lushai Brigade to operate in this area. To lead this new formation, he chose Brigadier MARINDIN, who was known to him from the 1942 campaign in Burma. On 28 March 1944, Brigadier MARINDIN assumed command of the Lushai Brigade, which comprised various units that were already in the area.

The Lushai Brigade was an independent brigade formed in North East India in March 1944 with the role of halting a perceived threat of a Japanese assault from Haka and Lunglei to Silchar and Chittagong. Later, Headquarters 14th Army modified the brigade's role to that of supporting the long, right flank of the main advance into Burma proposed by the 14th Army.

Brigadier Philip Charles MARINDIN was the one and only commander of this brigade. Born on 23 October 1896, MARINDIN commissioned from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, on 13 January 1915 into The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (service number 19679).¹ MARINDIN served in France and Belgium during the Great War, being wounded twice. In 1916, he was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. After the end of hostilities, MARINDIN's battalion (the 2nd Battalion) served in India from 1921 through to 1928, seeing service on the North West Frontier and Kurdistan. For six years from November 1928 until November 1934, MARINDIN was seconded for service with the King's African Rifles with the local rank of Major. In 1934, he returned to regimental service with the 1st Battalion, which was based in India. Between the wars, promotion was slow for Regular Army officers, so it was not until 15 December 1936 that MARINDIN gained his promotion to the rank of Major at the age of forty years and with twenty-one years' service.

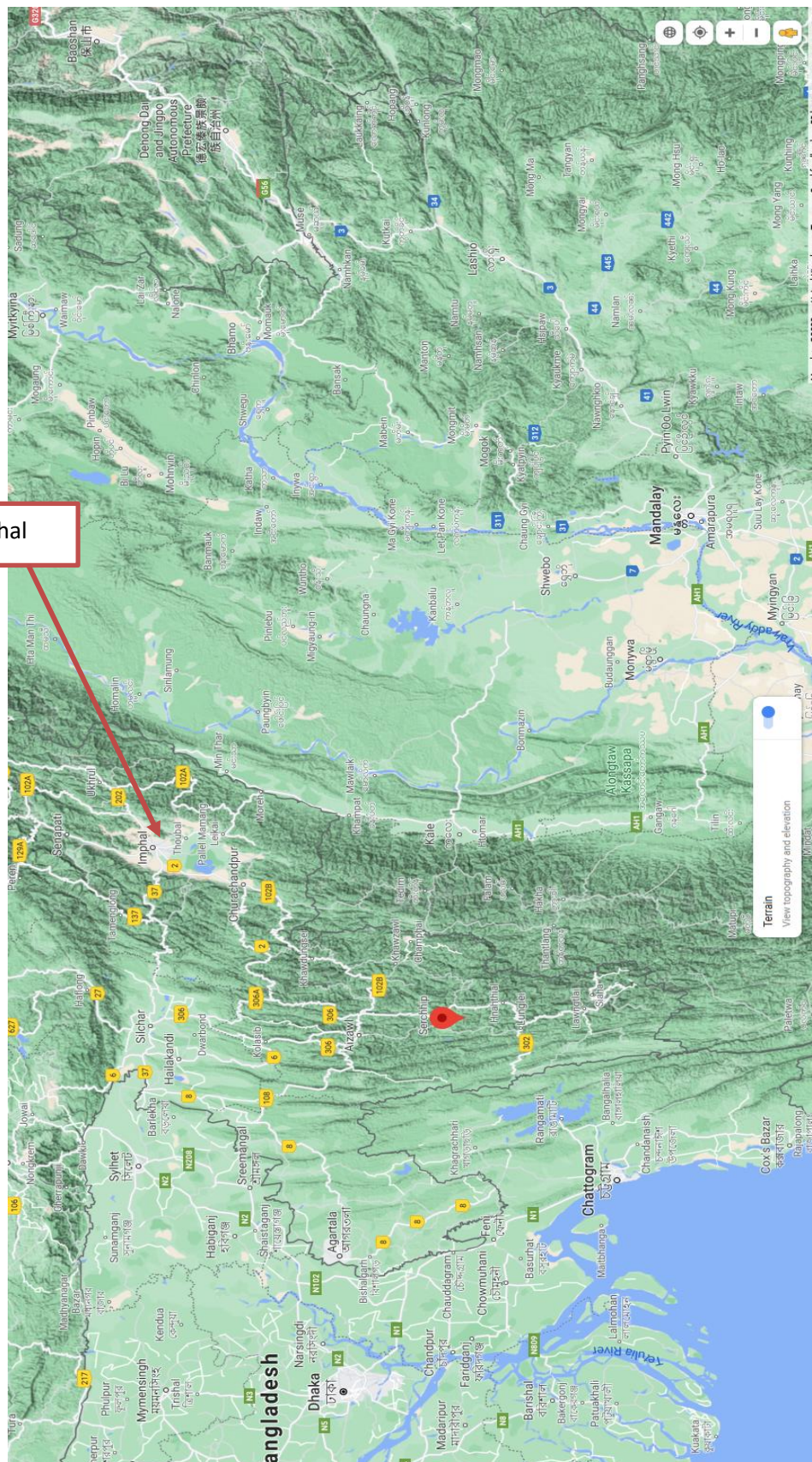
¹ On 1 January 1921, the regiment was redesignated as The West Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Own)

With the outbreak of the Second World War, MARINDIN's battalion remained in India, with him assuming command of the unit on 26 October 1940 with his promotion to the rank of Acting Lieutenant Colonel. The battalion served in Burma during the retreat from that country under command of the 17th Indian Division, his leadership being recognised by a Mention in Despatches in 1942. In March 1943, MARINDIN was promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier upon taking command of the 23rd Infantry Brigade in the 70th Infantry Division, then serving in India. The brigade saw action in the First Arakan Campaign of 1943, after which it returned to India and began conversion to a Long-Range Penetration Role.

At forty-six years of age, MARINDIN was considered too old to lead the brigade in the forthcoming Operation 'Thursday', so handed over to Brigadier PEROWNE in November 1943. For a period, MARINDIN commanded 'V' Force in the Assam Region, until he was appointed to command the newly formed Lushai Brigade.

'V' Force came into being during the first Burma campaign of 1942, and it was originally foreseen that the force would be a stay behind organisation to operate deep behind enemy lines, but it evolved into a reconnaissance and intelligence gathering force. Brigadier (Acting) Arthur FELIX-WILLIAMS, D.S.O., M.C., 13th Frontier Force Rifles, was appointed to the command of 'V' Force on 27 April 1942, and he was to remain in command of this force throughout the war. 'V' Force operated along the entire border of India and Burma, and it was organised into six area commands, each corresponding with an Indian Civil Service administrative area, which in turn reflected the ethnicity of the tribes in that area. Each Area Command, usually just known by its numerical designation, e.g. 5 'V' Force Operations, was commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel, a Second-in-Command, an Adjutant, and a Quarter-Master and a Medical Officer. There were usually four platoons of the paramilitary Assam Rifles, and up to one-thousand locally enlisted men. The Commandants of each area were chosen for their knowledge of the local people, and could usually speak the local language, or learnt to do so. Many officers held emergency war-time commissions, and were formerly tea planters, police officers, or administrators who lived in these areas.

Imphal



Left – Map showing the location of the Lushai Hills, marked by the red 'drop', but essentially comprising the mountain area from Silchar southwards along the border between India and Burma.

The units allocated to the brigade on its formation were:

- 1st (Royal) Bn. 9th Jat Regiment,
- 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment,
- 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment,

- The Lushai Scouts,
- The Shaws Levies,
- The Falam Levies,
- The Haka Levies.

The 1st (Royal) Bn. 9th Jat Regiment was a pre-war Regular Indian Army battalion, and it was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel L. S. SPEARMAN. It had seen active service in the Burma campaign of 1942, after which it refitted back in India. After serving with a training formation, the battalion moved to Assam to operate protecting the lines of communication until it joined this brigade in March 1944, the first battalion to do so.

The next battalion to come under command of the brigade was the 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment, which also joined in March 1944. This was a war raised unit, formed in March 1941, after which it served with various formations until December 1943 when it found itself guarding the Assam Lines of Communication in a similar manner to the 1st Bn. 9th Jat Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel S. GOODCHILD commanded this battalion. The 8th Bn. 13th Frontier Force Rifles was a war raised unit, formed in August 1940. From July 1941, it was under command of the 36th Indian Infantry Brigade, 26th Indian Infantry Division, and saw action with this division in the First Arakan Campaign. It transferred from that brigade to the Lushai Brigade in July 1944.

The 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment was formed in 1941 by the mobilisation of the 11th (Territorial Force) Bn. 19th Hyderabad Regiment. The Class Composition of the battalion was Adivasis from Bihar, Orissa and Bengal, Ahirs, Rajputs and Mussalmans (Muslims) from Bihar State. These classes had not been recruited into the British Indian Army before, and so they had to prove themselves to their contemporaries. Lieutenant Colonel John TWEED commanded the battalion, and it had been operating in the Haka region since December 1943. An example of the nature of the operations undertaken by the battalion can be seen in the citation for the award of the Military Cross to Major Michael Sunil CHATTERJEE, who came from Ranchi and was a Christian. It states:

On 23 March 1944, Temporary Major CHATTERJEE personally led a platoon raid on a Jap position just south of Haka, and again on 15 April, he led a raid on a nearby position. These raids involved a difficult approach march lasting two days, and a still more difficult withdrawal at first followed by the Japs.

Both raids were entirely successful, gaining valuable information and inflicting heavy casualties on the Japs, largely due to the leadership and personal disregard of danger shewn by this officer.

Lieutenant Colonel John (Jack) LONGBOTTOM, M.C. raised and commanded The Lushai Scouts. Recalled to the Army at the outbreak of war, LONGBOTTOM joined the Coldstream Guards as a training serjeant. He was commissioned into the West Yorkshire Regiment on 21 December 1940, being posted to the 1st Battalion stationed in India, where his commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Philip Charles MARINDIN. In the Burma campaign, Captain LONGBOTTOM was the battalion's Adjutant, so he worked closely with MARINDIN. Lieutenant Colonel LONGBOTTOM had the task of raising and training a new guerrilla unit which came to be known as the Lushai Scouts. As there were so few officers, he undertook this task single-handed, travelling into the Lushai Hills to raise four-hundred troops. The Lushai Hills lay behind the Japanese lines and to the west of the Chin Hills and was a remote area. Brigadier MARINDIN ordered that although the Lushai Scouts would be used as guerrillas in the rear of the enemy they had to be raised and trained as regular troops. Their speciality was to be jungle warfare with special emphasis on mobility and minimum transport. There were two companies in the Lushai Scouts, each comprising some one-hundred and fifty men.

Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Balfour OATTS commanded The Falam and Haka Levies, which together comprised the Western Chin Levies. The soldiers were a mix of regular Indian Army soldiers and locally recruited irregulars. Both the Falam and Haka Levies comprised a number of sectors; each sector having two British officers. Their transport was six mules and forty elephants per sector, and their weapons were rifles, light machine guns and 2" mortars.

The four groups of Levies took time to raise and train to be soldiers. Most were young men of eighteen to twenty years of age, and as they were locally enlisted, they had a knowledge and familiarity with the jungle and the hills they covered. They started patrolling in May 1944, with some patrol exercises in the Chin Hills. The range and duration of their patrols increased as their confidence grew, with some Lushai Scouts undertaking a patrol of eighty miles during the monsoon. For the first three months, the brigade operated in the areas around Haka and Falam engaged on reconnaissance and watching for Japanese activity in the Lushai Hills.

First Actions

Fourteenth Army gave Brigadier MARINDIN revised orders in July 1944. The Japanese forces that had attacked Imphal and Kohima were withdrawing from the Imphal plain along the road that led to Tiddim. The Lushai Brigade was ordered to dislocate the Japanese movement along the road, whilst the 5th Indian Division advanced down the road from Imphal to Tiddim. The brigade established its three main battalions in secure bases within striking distance of the road, from which they launched attacks at night against the road. The Japanese had by this time stopped using the road during day light hours because of the Allied air supremacy. The units of the brigade were to be supplied by Allied aircraft throughout this phase of operations.

Brigadier MARINDIN consulted with the commanding officers of his units, and then decided to deploy his Brigade in the following manner:

- The 1st (Royal) Bn. 9th Jat Regiment, with a platoon of 5 'V' Operations under command was to patrol the area to the north of Tipaimukh to Churachandpur,
- 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment, less one company, was to concentrate at Champhai, near Aizawl (which was the capital of Mizoram State),
- In the Falam area there was one platoon of the 7th/14th Punjab Regiment, one platoon of the 1st Bn. The Assam Rifles, and detachments of the Western Chin Levies.
- In the Haka area was the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment, one company of the 7th/14th Punjab Regiment, 8 'V' Operations (comprising four platoons, each of about fifty men) under command of Lieutenant Colonel W. J. PARSONS, and detachments of the Western Chin Levies and Assam Rifles,
- H.Q. 5 'V' Operations, under Lieutenant Colonel W. G. ORD, were deployed in a screen between the 1st/9th Jats and the 7th/14th Punjabis to provide a screen in order to monitor any enemy activity in the vicinity.

The enemy opposing the Lushai Brigade were two battalions of the 1st (Subhas) Regiment of the Indian National Army, strengthened by some Japanese troops. These troops were operating in the Falam, Haka, and Fort White areas, and the members of the I.N.A. were surprised to come up against other Indian troops, as they had been told that the British Indian Army had disintegrated and had withdrawn to India to await independence and the arrival of the I.N.A.. This was particularly ironic as many of the members of the 1st (Subhas) Regiment were former soldiers with the 1st Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment, which had been at Singapore when the British surrendered on 15 February 1942, and now they were facing men of the 7th Bn. of the same Regiment.

One of the first clashes between the Lushai Brigade and the I.N.A. was when the Commander of the 1st (Subhas) Regiment, Colonel Shah Nawaz KHAN ordered his Adjutant, Mahboob AHMED to attack the British post on Klang Klang Ridge, which was held by a detachment of the Western Chin Levies. The Dogra Company of the I.N.A. unit managed to penetrate the defences, but as the Western Chin Levies were not equipped, nor trained, as standard infantry, they simply melted away into the jungle, and then harassed the Dogras as they withdrew.

The state of the I.N.A. troops was disclosed in an intelligence summary in April 1944. The so called 'crack' 1st Battalion of the Subhas Regiment was composed of Sikhs, Jats and Dogras, all of whom were former prisoners-of-war. The battalion had no signals equipment, bicycles, or motorcycles, and only one, three-ton lorry to carry rations. Each platoon had a mule cart, which had to be handled by six men, which carried ammunition and the officers' kit. There were no stretchers, and little medical equipment apart from a few field dressings. Most of their arms were captured British rifles, with a few Bren guns and some anti-tank rifles as well. In simple terms, the I.N.A. were very neglected by the Japanese and left to their own devices.

The 1st (Royal) Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment had taken up positions at Seling, near Aijal, on 14 April 1944, when it was brought under command of the Lushai Brigade. Aijal lies about halfway between Imphal and Chittagong, and about seventy miles from Tiddim. The role of the battalion was to act as a block on any Japanese movement towards southern Assam, and to act vigorously against any small parties of the enemy in the area by operating as movable columns. If any element of the battalion was attacked by a larger force, it was to form a 'box' and to be supplied from the air until relieved. Patrols from the battalion went out as far as sixty miles from their base, but they did not encounter any enemy forces up to the beginning of July.

On 7 June, the 8th Bn. 13th Frontier Force Rifles was ordered to withdraw from operations with the 26th Indian Infantry Division in the Arakan, and two weeks later, its commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel J. C. LEWIS, received secret orders to move to an unknown destination. It left Cox's Bazaar by sea for Chittagong, and then made its way to Assam by rail. On its arrival at Silchar, Lieutenant Colonel LEWIS was informed that his battalion was to come under command of the Lushai Brigade. The task given to this battalion was to harass all enemy movement on the Imphal to Tiddim road. This road had been used by the Japanese as one of their main routes of advance to Imphal, and it now formed part of their line of communication. The battalion was to base itself in a small village called Hnahlan, and it set off on 3 July to cover the two-hundred miles over mountainous country to reach its new base. All ranks had to carry heavy loads, with the monsoon as its height, as they marched along the single-file hill tracks. The battalion lived off the country, and this was augmented by supply drops from Dakota aircraft of the R.A.F.. The battalion was concentrated at Hnahlan on 24 July, by which time, the Japanese offensive against Imphal and Kohima had stalled.

Two companies and the Advanced H.Q. of the battalion moved forward to a base in a clearing on a hill on the west bank of the Manipur River. As soon as they arrived at the forward base, this force commenced laying ambushes along the Tiddim road. Each ambush party consisted of a platoon, with an officer in charge, and they usually required three days and two nights to complete their task. The conditions were hard for the men, with no change of clothing in the incessant rain, and no casualty evacuation arrangement possible because of their location. Most nights, a successful ambush was laid which resulted in Japanese casualties, with sometimes up to four ambushes in a single night. Fortunately, British casualties were low, with only two Indian other-ranks wounded. The Japanese had to deploy troops to keep the road open, along which they were now retreating.

On 5 September, British Indian troops reached Milestone 84, which was the area in which the 8th/13th Frontier Force Rifles were operating, so the battalion was ordered to concentrate on the Tiddim Road. The men of the battalion had endured considerable hardship, and by September, about 25% of them were unable to walk and had to be evacuated by pony and mule. Each man had walked about four-hundred miles in the three-month deployment, and although the state of their uniforms and equipment was very bad, their morale was high due to their considerable achievements in the field.

On 22 September 1944, the battalion left the command of the Lushai Brigade, and they moved to Imphal by road, from where they returned to India to rest and recuperate, and to enjoy some well-earned leave. One of the members of the battalion, Subadar Chuhar SINGH was awarded a Military Cross during this period. His citation stated:

During August 1944, Subadar CHUHAR SINGH, who was second-in-command of a Company, went out on several patrols operating in the vicinity of milestone 100 on the Imphal – Tiddim road well into territory then held by the Japanese. On all occasions, he showed himself to be a cool and determined leader with the ability to choose the right occasion to attack with great gallantry and initiative, as is shown by the following example.

On 6 August 1944, Subadar CHUHAR SINGH was in command of a party of twelve Indian other-ranks who were to cooperate with a party from another unit in attacking the village of Saipimaul, in which it was reported that there were nine enemy. On arrival at the prearranged position for the attack, Subadar CHUHAR SINGH found that the other party had failed to arrive and that there were between forty and fifty Japs in the village itself.

Fearing that a good opportunity might be lost if he did not take it at once, he immediately attacked, personally leading one party, encouraging the men, and hurling grenades at the enemy. After a fierce fight, the enemy retreated, covered by a light machine gun leaving seven dead on the ground, along with arms and ammunition which were captured. On this and other occasions, this Viceroy's Commissioned Officer showed great courage, initiative and devotion to duty.

This citation illustrates well the nature of the campaign in Burma in 1944 and 1945, with many small, other insignificant, actions, that all assisted in the eventual defeat of the Japanese Army in Burma.

The Brigade Joins XXXIII Indian Corps

On 14 August 1944, the Brigade came under command of the XXXIII Indian Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Monty STOPFORD. At this time, the Brigade was operating from bases in the Lunglei – Chapal area against the Japanese lines of communication along the Tiddim to Imphal road. On 2 August, STOPFORD had been given the directive to clear all Japanese forces from west of the River Chindwin from Tamanthi to Kalewa, and to secure crossing places over the Myittha and Chindwin Rivers. STOPFORD gave the Lushai Brigade the task of harassing and disrupting the retreat of the Japanese towards Tiddim. The brigade was placed under the command of the 5th Indian Division at 12.00 hours on 15 August 1944. The brigade reported brisk movement southwards and was trying to hamper the retreat. On 16 August, the 3rd Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment from 5th Indian Division and the 1st Royal Bn. 9th Jat Regiment from the Lushai Brigade met at Milestone 70 on the Imphal to Tiddim road.

As the 5th Indian Division continued to advance down the Tiddim road, the Lushai Brigade kept up its harassing role from the flank. The 8th Bn. 13th Frontier Force Rifles was at this time securely based at Zampi and was raiding the Japanese traffic along the road (see above). They then attacked the Japanese in the area of Milestone 109, while Levies from the brigade ambushed some Japanese troops near Lungpi and inflicted casualties on them. Further south, the 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment also staged an ambush killing twenty-seven Japanese soldiers.

The 1st (Royal) Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment was given the section of the road from Imphal to Tiddim between milestones 45 and 70 on which to harass the Japanese lines of communication. Movement was difficult because of the monsoon rains making small rivers into raging torrents. At one location, the mules refused to cross, so the battalion had to improvise using small craft to ferry men and supplies across to the other bank. They engaged some local men as coolies, and then 'A', 'C' and 'D' Companies advanced in platoon columns, and on reaching the road, they built roadblocks and ambush locations. 'D' Company was the first to engage a mixed force of Japanese and Indian National Army troops at Milestone 46, and they killed two and captured eight enemy soldiers.

On 11 August, the battalion was ordered to form a roadblock at Milestone 70, and soon retreating Japanese soldiers appeared in large numbers. The Mortar Platoon had man-handled all its equipment and ammunition to this location, a journey of about seventy miles, which it completed in four days, and they proved decisive in the ensuing engagement. Members of 'D' Company were pleased to meet soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment, who were leading the advance of the 5th Indian Division down the Tiddim road. In the middle of October, the battalion was allowed a period to rest and recuperate, having lost three men killed and nine wounded since April.

The 7th/14th Punjab Regiment were deployed further down the Tiddim road, at a location where the road zig-zagged up the side of a hill beside the Manipur River. This location was affectionately known as 'the Staircase'. The river could not be forded at this location, but the Punjabis found some excellent fire positions on their side of the river with the road between 100 and 300 yards distant. The battalion deployed their 3" mortars, and along with machine gun and rifle fire, they made this part of the road difficult for the Japanese to negotiate. It is believed that the Punjabis alone destroyed about two-hundred Japanese lorries and vehicles, and also inflicted a large number of casualties on the Japanese and I.N.A. soldiers using the road. The Japanese did force their way through with a convoy of about two-hundred vehicles in their desperation to withdraw from the Imphal area, doing so at night, with only the lead vehicle using headlights, while Japanese tanks provided covering fire to subdue the Punjabis. Even so, the battalion estimated that about 10% of the Japanese vehicles were destroyed. By 21 September, the 5th Indian Infantry Division reached the Tiddim Staircase, and the Punjabis were allowed a period to rest and recuperate.

Early September found the Lushai Scouts on the other side of the Manipur River. They were now about one-hundred and twenty men, with a column of fifty Chins acting as porters as they did not have any mules or motor transport. The Scouts executed several small successful raids on the main Tiddim Road behind the Japanese main force.

The next main attack came on the night of 7/8 September 1944 when a column of Scouts marched fifteen miles through the jungle to come up between two Japanese companies with artillery and a platoon outpost on a hill feature covering Tiddim itself. At dawn, the outpost was attacked, and the surprise was so great that the Scouts received no casualties. The Scouts then blended back into the jungle from whence they came.

The Japanese were understandably rather peeved by all these guerrilla tactics and put a strong platoon in position at Saizang. Two Lushai troops who could speak Chin, dressed in Chin clothing, and went down into Saizang selling vegetables. They came back with immensely accurate information on the position of the platoon and its sentries. After the position was taken, the Scouts again only had four men wounded and were in high spirits. The large hill Kum Vum dominated the country from Tiddim to Kennedy Peak. The hill had previously been occupied by the Ghurkas who had made it a really strong strategic point. Brigadier MARINDIN ordered Lieutenant Colonel LONGBOTTOM and the Scouts to take the hill, as it would be an important one if Tiddim fell. It was impossible to approach unseen and, although the Scouts knew the hill as they had patrolled there previously, the idea of taking it without the element of surprise was a difficult one. Time was of the utmost importance, as the Japanese would be strengthening their position all the time. It was decided to try the hit and run type of raids, which were small but constant, together with an Air Strike. Until the Medical Officer arrived it was necessary to evaluate the cost of an attack on Kum Vum in the terms of the wounded. If there were too many for the Scouts to deal with, the necessary evacuation and escort would seriously deplete the Force.

The Free Chin Resistance Movement was approached to help to make a big show of force to the Japanese. The Chins were told to approach Kum Vum from the West and were expecting to be joined by the main force of the Scouts approaching from the North, fifteen minutes later for the final assault. As the Scouts reached the top of the hill all they could see was hundreds of rounds of tracer and grenade explosions in the air. It looked like a firework display!

The Scouts managed to fire the odd 2-inch mortar into the nearest position, but they could not engage small arms fire on an unseen enemy. The firing from the Chins became more sporadic and finally one platoon made a dash for the Japanese position, successfully over running it. The rest of the Japanese had had enough by now and decided to make a run for it. Before the Scouts could open fire, the Chins were up and chasing the enemy. The Japanese disappeared into the jungle, closely pursued by the Chins who had no ammunition left but did a good line in blood curdling cries.

Another ambush was laid by men of the 1st Assam Regiment and some elements of 'V' Force, and in late July, Captain E. A. C. PASCOE, who was attached to the Lushai Scouts, led a patrol of twenty-five men over a distance of thirty-five miles to lay an ambush on the Japanese lines of communication. Overnight 25/26 July, the patrol hit an enemy column retreating down the road, killing about thirty enemy soldiers, and wounding others. In the confusion, an enemy post opened fire on their own troops, allowing Captain PASCOE to withdraw his men without incurring any casualties. For his gallantry, he was awarded the Military Cross.

By the end of September 1944, the 5th Indian Division was nearing Tiddim. The Lushai Brigade was continuing to operate against the left flank of the Japanese forces on a broad front from Tiddim to Falam. At this time, the 8th Bn. 13th Frontier Force Rifles was posted away from the brigade. The order of battle of the Brigade now was:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • 1 st (Royal) Bn. 9 th Jat Regiment | – Lieutenant Colonel L. S. SPEARMAN |
| • 7 th Bn. 14 th Punjab Regiment | – Lieutenant Colonel S. GOODCHILD |
| • 1 st Bn. The Bihar Regiment | – Lieutenant Colonel J. R. H. TWEED, M.B.E. |
| • 1 st Bn. The Assam Regiment | – Lieutenant Colonel F. WILLIAMS, D.S.O., M.C. |
| • 5 'V' Force Operations Area | – Lieutenant Colonel W. G. ORD |
| • 8 'V' Force Operations Area | – Lieutenant Colonel W. J. PARSONS |
| • The Lushai Scouts | – Lieutenant Colonel J. LONGBOTTOM, M.C. |
| • The Western Chin Levies | – Lieutenant Colonel L. B. OATTS |

The supporting services allocated to the Brigade were:

- 5th Animal Transport Company, Royal Indian Army Service Corps – Major DUCKETT
- 35th Animal Transport Company, Royal Indian Army Service Corps – Major HALFORD
- 77th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps – Lieutenant Colonel O'NEILL
- 1616 Company, Porter Corps – Captain B. PINDER
- The Lushai and Chin Porter Corps

The Levies and Scouts from the Lushai Brigade had crossed the Manipur River in the middle of September and then about five-hundred troops from the brigade were operating from the hills around Mualbem. There were various ambushes laid, many of which were successful for the brigade. As this was going on, the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment was advancing towards Haka.

The 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment carried out raiding operations from across the Manipur River to aid the advance of the 5th Indian Division. When the 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade reached Milestone 150, the 7th/14th Punjabis ceased their raiding operations, and on 27 September, they were withdrawn for a short rest.

Major General WARREN, the General Officer Commanding the 5th Indian Division issued new tasks to the Lushai Brigade, namely:

1. To protect the right flank of the 5th Indian Division in its advance to Kalemmyo,
2. To capture Haka and Falam,
3. To collect information about Japanese strengths and intentions in the general area of the valley of the Myittha river, lying south of Kalemmyo and west of the Chindwin.

The brigade took up their positions in a long line running south from the Tiddim area. The Tactical Headquarters of the brigade and the 1st Royal Bn. The 9th Jat Regiment moved south and reached Heilei on 4 October. By the first week in October, all the tracks leading south from Tiddim had been cut by the Lushai Brigade.

After the arrival of the 5th Indian Division the Lushai Scouts were dispatched to Falam where they were to join up with the Lushai Brigade. They were within half a day's march of Falam when Lieutenant Colonel LONGBOTTOM decided to give the Scouts a day's rest. Battledress was cleaned, equipment was polished, and every man had a haircut. LONGBOTTOM's Coldstream Guards training shone out like a beacon as he marched the Lushai Scouts proudly into Falam! Here they were joined by about one-hundred reinforcements, so the Scouts now numbered about three-hundred men. It became apparent that the Japanese were beginning to know where the Scouts were operating, probably because of their airdrops. It was decided therefore to take enough ammunition and supplies for fourteen days on the next sortie. This was a particularly successful ploy and resulted in many surprise attacks.

On 10 October, units from the brigade ambushed Japanese troops in the vicinity of Pine Tree Camp on the road from Fort White to Falam. At this period, the units of the brigade were disposed as follows:

- Tactical Brigade Headquarters and the 1st Royal Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment were located at Heilei, with two companies of the 1st/9th Jats en route to Kiau,
- The 7th Battalion, 14th Punjab Regiment was resting at Champhai, with one company under command of the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment,
- The 1st Battalion, The Bihar Regiment was moving towards Haka and Falam with one company of the 7th/14th Punjabs under command,
- The Lushai Scouts were located around Vangte and Mualbem,
- The Shaws Levies were based around Tsawngthu, Langhrawh, Zuitu and Zamaul,
- The Falam Levies were located around Dihai, Khuangli, Lungpi and Mangkheng,
- The Haka Levies were around Klangklang, Kuhchah and Kokhua.

In the next week, the Lushai Brigade steadily pressed eastwards thereby assisting the advance of the 5th Indian Division. On 17 October, units from the 5th Indian Division eventually entered Tiddim, and on the same day, units from the Lushai Brigade secured Falam. The next day, a three-hour battle was fought between some Japanese troops and some Levies, supported by a platoon of the 7th/14th Punjab Regiment, who were trying to maintain a cordon around Falam. The Japanese managed to break through, but they left behind most of their equipment and supplies. Two days later, the Japanese withdrew from Haka, leaving the Lushai and Chin Hills free of Japanese. The success of the Lushai Brigade operating in the flanks and the rear of the Japanese troops trying to hold Tiddim was seen as one of the important reasons why the Japanese could not hold the town. The Lushai Hills were now clear of the Japanese and under Allied control.

The next task given to the Lushai Brigade was to advance down the Myittha valley to isolate Kalemmyo from the south. This advance was coordinated with the advance of the 11th (East Africa) Infantry Division which had now entered the field of operations and was advancing down the Kabaw Valley.

Advance to The Chindwin

Fourteenth Army issued revised instructions to XXXIII Indian Corps to cross the River Chindwin and advance on Ye-U. The Lushai Brigade was tasked with continuing to protect the flanks of XXXIII Indian Corps, in conjunction with the 28th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade. The two brigades were to operate on the west bank of the River Chindwin south of Kalembo. The Brigade was advancing in a conspicuous way down the Myittha Valley, to give the impression to the Japanese that this was a major advance by the Fourteenth Army. The aim of the brigade was to dominate the area around Gangaw, thereby again supporting the operations of the 5th Indian Division. Between 21 October and 3 November 1944, the brigade spent time at Falam and Haka resting and reorganising. Brigadier MARINDIN adopted a plan that involved four distinct columns of advance towards Gangaw.

1. The brigade headquarters, Assam Rifles, Lushai Scouts, 1st/9th Jats and 7th/14th Punjabs were to establish a secure base at Yeshin, and they were to clear the valley eastwards to the River Chindwin and then southwards to Myittha and northwards to Kinyan.
2. The Falam Levies were to advance northwards to Natchaung and then move eastwards to the River Chindwin.
3. The 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment and 8 'V' Force Operations were ordered to establish a firm base in the area of Kan, and then to operate in and around that area.
4. The Haka Levies were to operate in the valley between Gangaw and Tilin, and they were to harass the Japanese forces in that area.

The first column made good progress and by 11 November, the 1st/9th Jats had reached within eight miles of Myittha. The village itself was occupied by 15 November, and it became clear that the Japanese had evacuated the entire valley. The Lushai Scouts, 5 'V' Force Operations and the Assam Rifles were directed to clear the area to the eastwards up to the River Chindwin. The Falam Levies reached the River Chindwin on 17 November, and the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment finding the area in front of them clear, so crossed the river and moved towards Kan. The river was crossed overnight 26/27 November, but as the Bihars moved southwards, they encountered strong opposition.

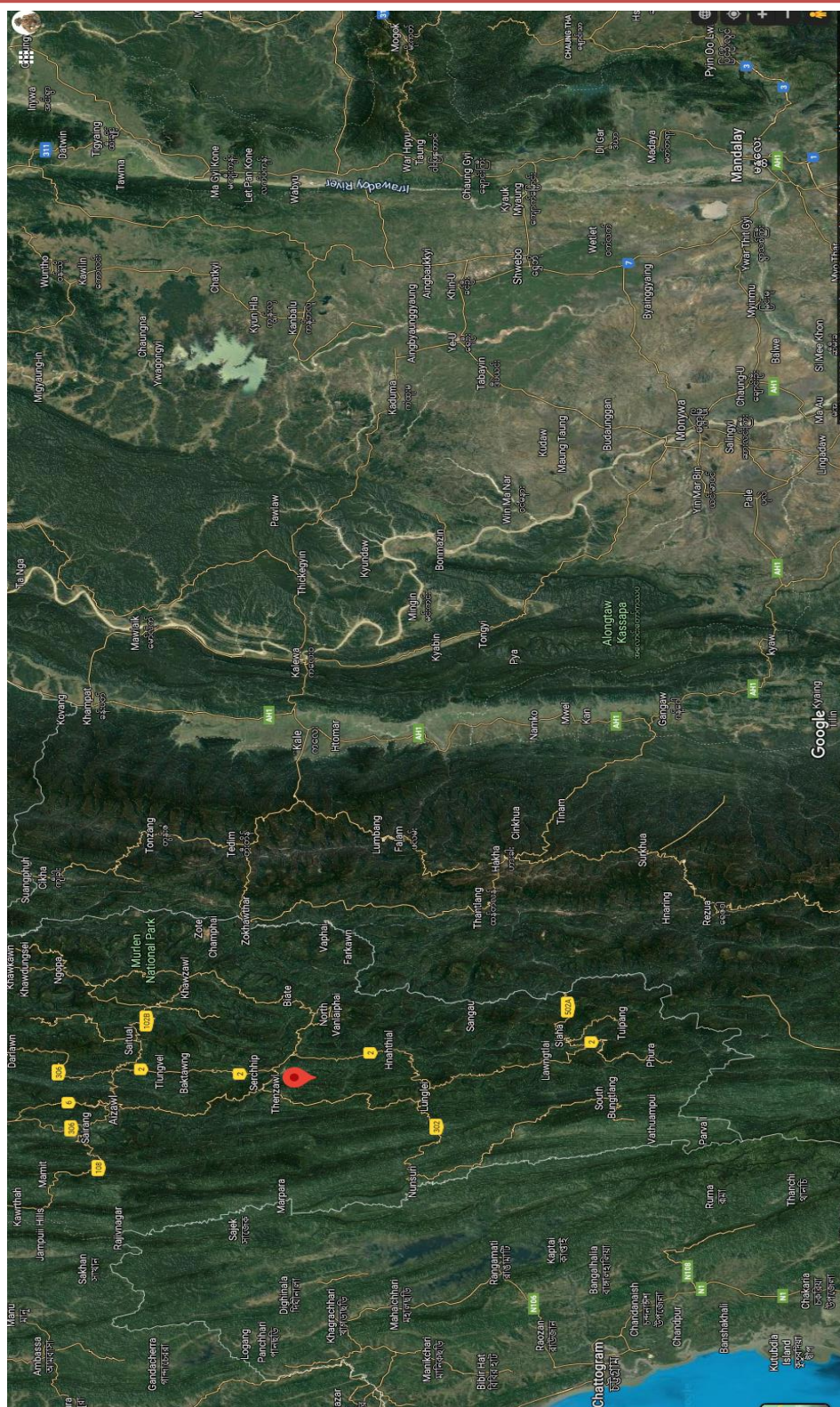
The Bihars continued fighting on the east bank of the River Chindwin during the afternoon of 27 November, but then decided to withdraw back to the western bank, only leaving one company on the east bank of the river to secure the crossing point at Taguang. The company on the east bank continued to send out patrols, and one of these found that Kan was empty of Japanese as they had withdrawn after setting fire to their dumps of food, clothing, and ammunition. The Haka Levies comprising the fourth column met up with the 1st Bihars having engaged in several actions against the Japanese rearguard. By the end of November, the Lushai Brigade had successfully cleared the Myittha valley and was within striking distance of Gangaw, where the Japanese appeared to be preparing for a determined stand.

On 13 December, a patrol from 'D' Company, 1st Bn. 9th Jat Regiment, had a skirmish with an enemy party, wounding five of them, and setting on fire their bullock cart carrying their ammunition. As the battalion moved closer to Gangaw, it found stronger opposition from Japanese defensive positions with well-constructed bunkers. The battalion carried out several reconnaissances in force, each about company strength, and in one of these that occurred on 22 December 1944, 'A' Company suffered the loss of 19217/IO Subadar Ram SINGH, and two other men. Thirty-three-year-old Ram SINGH was the son of Ram PARKASH and Surjan, and the husband of Maryan, of Paposa, Hissar. The others who died were twenty-year-old 29908 Lance Naik BODAN, from Piranpura, Nabha, India, and thirty-one-year-old Sepoy SOHAN, who was married to Suraj KAUR and came from Raipur, Rohtak, India. All three are commemorated on Faces 38 and 39 of the Rangoon Memorial in Myanmar.

The Lushai Brigade maintained contact with the Japanese rearguard and was closing in on Gangaw. For the first time, the brigade was concentrated having operated in a dispersed formation previously. The brigade now had one-thousand troops in total, but they were lightly equipped. There were believed to be about two-hundred and fifty Japanese troops in Gangaw, with about an additional two-hundred at Tilin and another two-hundred at Kyin.² To the north of Gangaw lay the village of Myaukkon, about one mile from Gangaw. It lay on a bluff overlooking the river. A belt of open paddy land extended for about a quarter of a mile to the north and east of Myaukkon. This made the village a natural strong-point, with the Japanese garrison varying between thirty and seventy troops. There were other strong-points in the west and east of Gangaw.

Brigadier MARINDIN devised a plan which meant the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment with four platoons of the Assam Rifles under command was to attack by moving through the hills to establish itself at Lema. The 1st/9th Jats were to attack Gangaw from the north, with the Levies blocking the southern exits from Gangaw. The 1st/9th Jats were suffering from a bad outbreak of scrub typhus, and now numbered about five-hundred and fifty men of all ranks. The 1st Bihars were stronger with about six-hundred and fifty men. The men were tired, and so MARINDIN was taking a significant risk in maintaining the attack and many things could have gone wrong.

² Brigadier MARINDIN estimated in his own dispatch that there were four-hundred Japanese troops in Gangaw and five-hundred at Tilin.



Above – Another map of the region, but better showing the nature of the terrain over which, the Lushai Brigade operated and fought.

The Attack on Gangaw

The assault by the Lushai Brigade on Gangaw commenced on 8 December 1944. The 1st/9th Jats marched southwards down the west bank of the river, with one company on the east bank. By 10 December, the Jats were established on the Zahaw Chaung. On 11 December, the company on the east bank made a probing attack on Myaukkon, supported by the battalion's mortars firing from the west bank. The main aim of the probe was to confirm the strength of the Japanese defences in the village, and if possible, to gain a foothold on the bluff itself. The attack made progress through the heavily wooded foot of the bluff, taking a few positions, but they came across well dug in Japanese positions.

The next day, 12 December, the 1st/9th Jats established their reserve base in the jungle at Yazi about one and a half miles from Myaukkon. The Bihar Regiment had still not reached their objective at Lema and the danger was that the Japanese could counter-attack the Jats as they were exposed, or they could break out as they were not contained. Lieutenant Colonel L. S. SPEARMAN of the 1st/9th Jats therefore launched a series of probing attacks against the Myaukkon positions on 14 and 15 December. These attacks showed that the 1st/9th Jats alone had insufficient strength or support to successfully take these positions without a potentially significant cost in lives, so they were ordered to pull back and conduct vigorous patrolling until reinforcements arrived.

The brigade headquarters and other troops reached the 1st/9th Jats on 16 December. By this date, the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment, together with four platoons of Assam Rifles under command had now reached Lema and begun probing towards Gangaw. Although only ten miles from brigade headquarters, such was the nature of the terrain that it was a two-day walk to reach the Bihar battalion, so they were out of effective personal contact.

Brigadier MARINDIN established his headquarters in a strong, defensive position overlooking the Zahaw Chaung and his troops commenced work building a light aircraft landing strip. His concern was that his reserves were limited to one platoon of the Assam Rifles and one platoon of the Lushai Scouts. The 7th Bn. 14th Punjab Regiment had left the command of the brigade by this date to transfer to the 5th Indian Division, but the replacement unit, The Chin Hills Battalion of the Burma Rifles had not yet arrived. The Chin Hills Battalion had been formed in October 1942 at Falam in the Chin Hills. It comprised locally recruited Chins, and Gurkha soldiers from Nepal. There were also a few Sikh soldiers in specialist roles. The officers were British. Following its formation, the battalion acted independently in the Chin Hills, and then in December 1943 it formed part of an ad-hoc formation called Barforce, which acted as a screening force in the Chin Hills until March 1944. The battalion formally joined the Lushai Brigade on 22 December 1944, having acted independently in the Lushai Hills since July. The Lushai Scouts and the Western Chin Levies both left the Brigade at about this time.

As the main body of the brigade drove southwards towards Gangaw, the rest of the brigade was continuing to operate on the flanks. The Haka Levies (together with the four platoons of the Assam Rifles) were still probing the Japanese lines of communication between Gangaw and Tilin. The Lushai Scouts and the Falam Levies were clearing the area between the Myittha river and the River Chindwin. Due to the lack of artillery, an air-strike was ordered on the Japanese positions at Myaukkon. The 1st/9th Jats followed up immediately after the air-strike, but they found that the Japanese positions were relatively unaffected, and they were repulsed. The battalion tried again on 18 December however, it suffered a similar result and despite gaining a foothold on the bluff, withdrew to consolidate.

Transfer to IV Corps

On 26 December 1944, the Lushai Brigade transferred from XXXIII Indian Corps to IV Corps. IV Corps had returned to Burma after resting and reorganising in India had been given the task of moving onto the right flank of the Fourteenth Army and to drive down the Kabaw valley, cross the River Irrawaddy and then strike for Meiktila. After the regrouping, IV Corps comprised the:

- 7th Indian Infantry Division,
- 17th Indian Infantry Division,
- 255th Indian Tank Brigade Group,
- 28th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade Group,
- Lushai Brigade,
- 11th Cavalry (Prince Albert Victor's Own),
- 'B' Group, 'V' Force,
- 437th Forward Airfield Engineers.

The Lushai Brigade was the first formation of IV Corps to be deployed at the end of December, and it was in contact with units from the Japanese 33rd Division north of Gangaw. By this date, the units of the brigade had been in contact with Japanese forces for over four months during the monsoon, and they had advanced through the Chin Hills. The brigade had no artillery and needed reinforcement before being given its new task. A battery of 25 pounder guns was allocated to the Lushai Brigade, and Brigadier MARINDIN also gained the services of the 62nd Indian Field Company, Queen Victoria's Own Madras Sappers and Miners from the 7th Indian Division.

The Brigade was to advance down the valley to Pauk, but it was felt that the opposition may be beyond the units of the brigade, so the 28th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade was ordered to support the Lushai Brigade and if necessary to take over the lead in the advance. It was also felt by Fourteenth Army Commander that having the 28th (East Africa) Brigade in the lead would deceive the Japanese into believing that the 11th (East Africa) Division, part of XXXIII Indian Corps was advancing down the valley. The guns had to be brought down one-hundred and eighty miles from Tamu; the first ninety miles being on a road, the next sixty along a jeep track, but the last thirty miles along a track only suitable for mules. The guns were in position by 27 December.

The need to clear Gangaw became much more important and urgent. The 1st/9th Jats had moved into reserve on 23 December, being relieved by the Chin Hills Battalion, The Burma Regiment. Lieutenant General MESSERVY, the General Officer Commanding IV Corps arrived at the airstrip built by the Lushai Brigade on 24 December. He met with Brigadier MARINDIN and impressed upon him the need for prompt action. A plan of action was agreed, beginning with a series of air strikes to soften up the Japanese positions. If the Japanese had not withdrawn by 1 January 1945, an attack was to be launched to clear the Myaukkon and Gangaw area.

The 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment were having a difficult time near Lema. The Japanese had reacted against their presence in the area with regular sniping and harassing fire. Clashes between the Biharis and the Japanese became daily with mixed results. On one occasion, a company ambushed a party of about seventy Japanese in a chaung and caused several casualties.

The air-attack was scheduled for 30 December, however, because of a failure to agree a safe start line, the attack was postponed until 10 January. Active patrolling continued, which only proved that the Japanese remained entrenched, with their positions now booby trapped. The air-attack was a new type of bombing called 'earthquake minor', and because of this, Lieutenant General SLIM, G.O.C.-in-C. of Fourteenth Army; Lieutenant General MESSERVY, G.O.C. of IV Corps; and Lieutenant General SULTAN from the U.S. Army all came to view the attack. The attack by four squadrons of medium bombers (B-25 Mitchells), supported by three squadrons of 'Hurribombers' and one of Thunderbolts, went in at 14.00 hours, having been delayed by a heavy mist.

The bombing pinpointed the six main Japanese positions, and then the Chin Hills Battalion went in at the point of a bayonet. They found that practically all the Japanese had fled as soon as the potential scale of the air attack was apparent. Only five Japanese were killed by the Chins, who only suffered two men wounded. By nightfall on 10 December, the Chin Hills Battalion was consolidating at Myaukkon, and probing towards Gangaw itself.

The 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment had launched a coordinated attack from the east of Gangaw, but it ended up being delayed and grinding quickly to a halt. However, the Japanese by now had had enough and withdrew from Gangaw, bypassing the Biharis. Lieutenant General MESSERVY realised that the Lushai Brigade had itself now had enough of offensive action. It was tired and under strength, having fought through the monsoon period in challenging terrain. MESSERVY decided therefore to withdraw the brigade and replace it with the 28th (East Africa) Infantry Brigade. The relatively fresh Chin Hills Battalion was transferred to the command of the 7th Indian Division, as were the Lushai Scouts. The rest of the brigade was withdrawn to Kan (pronounced Karn) with effect from 12 January 1945.

One amusing anecdote occurred early in 1945. A platoon from the Lushai Scouts was ordered to escort a party of American troops to Mount Victoria 150 miles away through thick jungle full of Japanese soldiers. The platoon was under the command of a Subadar who could speak little English.

Apparently, they managed to find about eleven different enemy parties in the area, cut off from the main force and in hiding. The Subadar said they had had a thoroughly exciting and enjoyable trip! Two months later a letter was received from the Commander of the American forces in South-East Asia telling them how *“the Scouts had resisted all Japanese attempts to prevent the ‘valuable beam’ set reaching Mount Victoria.”*

On 12 January 1945, the 28th (East Africa) Brigade commenced the advance southwards from Gangaw. The Lushai Brigade had to construct an airstrip at Kan, after which the following units were flown out from that strip back to India to rest and recuperate, namely:

- Headquarters, Lushai Brigade,
- 1st (Royal) Bn. 9th Jat Regiment,
- 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment,
- 1st Bn. The Assam Rifles,
- 231st Indian Cipher Sub-Section,
- 232nd Indian Cipher Sub-Section,
- 5th Indian Animal Transport Company, Royal Indian Army Service Corps,
- 35th Indian Animal Transport Company, Royal Indian Army Service Corps,
- 1616th Company, Porter Corps,
- The Lushai Porter Corps,
- The Chin Porter Corps.

Lieutenant Colonel Lee Stanley SPEARMAN (AI/124), the commanding officer of the 1st (Royal) Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment, was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) on 15 November 1945 for his period in command of the 1st (Royal) Bn. The Jat Regiment. His citation, prepared by Brigadier MARINDIN, stated:

This offr assumed Comd of his Bn in about March '44. In July, he took his Bn into the Lushai Bde Operations Jul 44 to Jan 45. During these difficult operations, and in spite of occasional bouts of ill-health, he commanded his Bn in a manner worthy of high praise. He set a fine example in devotion to duty and disregard of hardships. His military dispositions and plans, when operating independently, as he sometimes was, were markedly efficient. His drive and power of Comd were illustrated in the fine work of his unit. I strongly recommend him for the award of the Member of the British Empire (MBE).

This recommendation was upgraded by the Military Secretary in India to an O.B.E.. During the six months that the battalion had been operating with the Lushai Brigade, during which it was supplied on a pack and air basis, it suffered seven men killed and sixteen wounded. These were negligible compared with the losses from sickness. One-hundred and fifty-six men contracted typhus, of whom five died, and in total, seven-hundred and fifty-seven men were evacuated due to illness and disease, nearly representing the entire strength of the battalion.

The Brigade Reorganises in India

The Lushai Brigade was concentrated in and around Lohardaga, just to the west of Ranchi in Bihar State. It was decided to reorganise the brigade as a Long-Range Penetration (L.R.P.) formation, in a similar role to the now dispersed Special Force (The Chindits).

At the beginning of July 1945, the brigade comprised the following units:

- Headquarters, Lushai Brigade,
- 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment,
- 6th Bn. 9th Jat Regiment,
- 6th Bn. 19th Hyderabad Regiment,
- 1st Bn. The Chamar Regiment.

The brigade was also allocated support arms and services. The 6th Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment, had been the reconnaissance unit of the 17th Indian Infantry Division, and it comprised 'A' Company (Jats), 'B' Company (Punjabi Mussalman), 'C' Company (Jats) and 'D' Company (Mussalman Rajputs), and Lieutenant Colonel J. D. GUILLE commanded the battalion. The battalion had been involved in the heavy fighting in and around Meiktila, but it was relieved by a British battalion and became supernumerary. It was flown from Meiktila to Dohazari on 15 April 1945, and it moved from there to Shillong where it came under command of the Lushai Brigade. For a short period of time, therefore, the Lushai Brigade contained two battalions of the 9th Jat Regiment. At Shillong, Lieutenant Colonel E. D. NEWELL replaced Lieutenant Colonel GUILLE.

Instead of returning to Burma to undertake the L.R.P. role, the brigade was moved by sea from Calcutta to Rangoon in early July 1945. On arrival, it relieved the 268th Indian Infantry Brigade in the Prome area. Hostilities ceased in Burma on 15 August 1945, but the brigade remained in Burma following the ceasefire moving into the Karen Hills bordering Thailand. A shortage of shipping prevented the brigade moving as a complete unit, and the 6th Bn. 9th Jat Regiment did not arrive at Rangoon until 24 October 1945. By this time, the Japanese had ceased hostilities, so the brigade was spilt up to undertake various responsibilities in connection with the aftermath of the war. 'A' Company of the 6th Bn. 9th Jat Regiment was sent to Waw to assume control of Japanese surrendered personnel, and to supervise the reconstruction of a railway bridge by them. 'C' and 'D' Companies took charge of about twenty-thousand enemy prisoners awaiting repatriation to Japan.

The 6th Bn. 9th Jat Regiment moved to Toungoo by rail on 11 December, and then made its way into the Karen Hills, where it joined the other units in the Brigade, so for the first time since the cessation of hostilities, the formation was reunited. The Karen Hills were littered with the detritus of war, with explosives and ammunition lying everywhere. The jungle was full of unexploded booby traps, so movement was restricted, particularly at night. Although the Japanese had left the area, dacoits or bandits had been operating in the hills, so the Brigade had to resume operations against them.

This resulted in a full, brigade level operation, to drive the dacoits out of the area, but this proved very difficult as they melted away before the British troops, and they reformed elsewhere. The 6th Bn. 9th Jat Regiment, moved to Pasawng on the west bank of the Salween River at the end of January 1946 to supervise about six-hundred Japanese soldiers that had recently come out of the hills and were uncertain where to report for internment. During their stay here, two Sepoys were killed when they were working in an area supposedly cleared of mines. Their pickaxe struck an undetected mine, and the two unfortunate men were killed. They were twenty-two-year-old 37816 Sepoy Ghulam QADIR, a married man from Bathwala, Gurdaspur, India, and twenty-one-year-old 32628 Sepoy Taj DIN, from Khanewal, Gurdaspur, India.

The Lushai Brigade began returning to India with effect from 21 January 1946, and it was dispersed by the end of February. Probably the best compliment given to the Brigade came from Lieutenant General (later Field Marshal) SLIM, who said: *'what it lacked in equipment, the Lushai Brigade made up in initiative.'*

Brigadier MARINDIN was promoted to the rank of Acting Major General on 7 February 1946 to assume command of the 19th Indian Division, then stationed in Burma. He was made a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) on 28 June 1945. He was recommended by Lieutenant General 'Bill' SLIM, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Fourteenth Army, and his citation read:

Period May – Aug 1944

Has commanded his Brigade in intensive operations with outstanding success. He was set the task of cutting the L of C of the Japanese between Churachandpur and Tiddim. This entailed a complex, difficult and prolonged air-supplied operation through the most difficult jungle hill country at the height of the monsoon. The determination and skill with which his troops carried this out was in the first place due to Brig MARINDIN's determination, skill and refusal to allow any obstacle to overcome him. He imbued his troops with his own spirit, and thus inspired, they inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and contributed in no small way to the rout of the Japanese forces.

On 13 September 1945, MARINDIN was awarded a Bar to his D.S.O., as a result of a recommendation by Major General WARREN, who was the G.O.C. of the 5th Indian Infantry Division. His citation read:

Period Aug 16 – 15 Nov 1944

Assam – Burma Border.

During the operations for the clearing of the Imphal – Tiddim – Kalemmyo road, Brigadier MARINDIN's Bde covered the right flank of the 5th Indian Division. His Bde fought its way from Churachandpur to the Chindwin River over the most appalling tracks, keeping pace with and often operating ahead of the Division.

Brigadier MARINDIN's bold and skilful leadership and his personal example were an inspiration to his Bde throughout the operations, in which a large number of enemy were killed, and quantities of enemy equipment destroyed; and were a major factor in enlisting the loyal and enthusiastic support of the Chin tribesmen.

The rapid and successful advance of the 5th Indian Division was in a great measure due to the skilful and daring way in which he handled his Bde., his readiness to accept the calculated risk, and his unfailing assistance and co-operation.

He is recommended for the award of the D.S.O.

Lieutenant General Sir Oliver LEESE, the G.O.C.-in-C. of Allied Land Forces South East Asia endorsed the citation by adding: '*Recommended for a Bar to the D.S.O. subject to the approval of the award for the D.S.O. submitted for the period 16 May to 15 Aug 1944*'.

Lieutenant Colonel John Reginald Howard TWEED, M.B.E., the Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn. The Bihar Regiment, was also awarded the D.S.O.. His citation read:

I wish to strongly recommend this officer for qualities of leadership, initiative, courage and endurance well above the average, displayed during the period November 43 to November 44 in the Lushai and Chin Hills. In Nov 43, he took his Battalion, the 1st Bihar Regiment, for whose raising and training he was responsible and whose efficiency is a tribute to his inspiring leadership, into the Lushai Hills. From Dec 43 to March 44 under circumstances of great difficulty, he conducted operations against the Jap forces in Haka. Though not strong enough to turn them out of Haka, the vigour of his operations called halt to their further advance and held them static.

Later, between September and October 44, as I was too far away to take personal charge of operations on this part of the Brigade front, the responsibility for carrying out the plan which led to the fall of Haka and the retreat of its garrison from the Chin Hills fell on him. This he carried out with the greatest vigour and efficiency, and though the nature of the country precluded their extermination, they were chased out and suffered very heavily.

I therefore strongly recommend him for the award of the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.)

Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Balfour OATTS, who commanded the Chin Levies, was also awarded the D.S.O. for his period of service with the Lushai Brigade. His citation read:

Lieutenant Colonel OATTS took over command of the Chin Levies in May 1943 and continued to command them for two years. During this period the Japanese reached the peak of their strength in the Chin Hills, and practically all regular troops were withdrawn.

Colonel OATTS retained the loyalty of his men and continued offensive operations against the Japanese and their puppet troops throughout the whole period in spite of the gravest difficulties, and, finally, took part in the offensive which drove the Japanese from the hills. The Chin Levies destroyed at least 1,000 of the enemy and in addition, caused much damage to enemy communications and supplies.

The Lushai Scouts remained in Burma, and towards the end of the war, they were given six-hundred Chin Levies together with twenty-seven elephants and about one-hundred hill ponies. Lieutenant Colonel LONGBOTTOM felt more and more like Hannibal leading his unit across the hills of Burma. When the War ended the Lushai Scouts were flown back to India, and they were disbanded at Shillong. They had fought fifty-one separate actions behind the enemy lines and due to their special skills in jungle warfare, their casualties amounted to one British officer and two other ranks killed and twenty-three wounded. At the disbandment parade in Shillong, a message was read out from General SLIM. A copy of that message, together with photographs of General SLIM and Brigadier MARINDIN, cut out from 'S.E.A.C.', the Fourteenth Army's newspaper, were in place of honour on the walls of almost every house in the Lushai Hills. Most of the Scouts returned home to tend their fields and live the quiet life, reflecting on the 'fun' they had in Burma!

As a sequel, Lieutenant Colonel LONGBOTTOM passed away on 25 December 2006, aged ninety-six years, at the Cathedral Nursing Home in Lincoln. A quiet end to a remarkable life, and one that cannot be replicated today.



Above – Havildar RALDON of the Chin Levies, one of the constituent units of the Lushai Brigade. He is carrying a Sten gun and at least three spare magazines. Although it had a reputation for its cheap construction, and being prone to fire if dropped, this 9 mm sub-machine gun was a useful weapon in the close combat fighting often seen in Burma.

Courtesy of: I.W.M. (under licence)

Appendix 'A'

Major General Philip Charles MARINDIN		
D.S.O. *, M.C.		1896 – ??
23 October 1896	Born.	
	Educated at Royal Military College, Sandhurst.	
13 January 1915	Commissioned in The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (19679).	
Jan 1915 – Nov 1918	Served in the Great War. France & Belgium 06/10/15 – 09/07/16; 04/10/16 – 27/10/16 and 23/07/17 – 11/11/18. Wounded twice. 1914-15 S., B.W.M., V.M., M.C.	
14 April 1916	Awarded the Military Cross. Citation: Second Lieutenant Philip Charles Marindin, The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment), Commanding No. 1 Trench Mortar Battery. For skill and gallantry when in command of a mortar battery. By personal reconnaissance under heavy fire he was able to direct his fire with great effect.	
?? – 30/06/16	Service with Trench Mortar Batteries as Temporary Lieutenant.	
9 June 1916	Promotion to Lieutenant ante-dated to 2 nd November 1915.	
23/07/17 – 22/12/17	Seconded as A.D.C. to Divisional Commander as Lieutenant.	
5 December 1919	Restored to the establishment. Joined the 2 nd Battalion in the United Kingdom. In 1921 moved to India, and in 1921 served on the North West Frontier at Peshawar. 1923 served in Kurdistan, and 1925 moved to Bombay.	
	Regiment retitled as: The West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)	
1 January 1923	Promoted Captain.	
1923	Served in Kurdistan.	
15/11/28 – 14/11/34	Seconded for service with the King's African Rifles as Local Major.	
15 November 1934	Returned to Regimental duties with the 1 st Battalion based at Quetta. In 1936 moved to Secunderabad, 1938 Bombay and in January 1942 moved to Burma.	
15 December 1936	Promoted Major.	
26 October 1940	Promoted Acting Lieutenant Colonel.	
26/10/40 – 16/03/43	Commanding Officer, 1 st Bn. The West Yorkshire Regiment. As Acting Lieutenant Colonel. Bombay – Burma (17 th Indian Division)	
26 January 1941	Promoted Temporary Lieutenant Colonel.	
28 October 1942	M.I.D. for services in Burma Dec 1941 – May 1942 as Temporary Lieutenant Colonel (Major).	
16 March 1943	Promoted Acting Brigadier and Acting Colonel.	
17/03/43 – 18/11/43	Commanding Officer, 23 rd Infantry Brigade. As Acting Brigadier. India – Burma (1 st Arakan) – Burma.	
16 September 1943	Promoted Temporary Brigadier, Temporary Colonel and W/S Lieutenant Colonel.	
28 November 1943	Promoted Lieutenant Colonel.	
28/03/44 – 06/02/46	Commanding Officer, Lushai Brigade. As Temporary Brigadier. Burma.	

28 June 1945	<p>Awarded the D.S.O. for services in Burma. Citation:</p> <p><i>Period May – Aug 1944</i></p> <p><i>Has commanded his Brigade in intensive operations with outstanding success. He was set the task of cutting the L of C of the Japanese between Churachandpur and Tiddim. This entailed a complex, difficult and prolonged air-supplied operation through the most difficult jungle hill country at the height of the monsoon. The determination and skill with which his troops carried this out was in the first place due to Brig MARINDIN's determination, skill and refusal to allow any obstacle to overcome him. He imbued his troops with his own spirit, and thus inspired, they inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and contributed in no small way to the rout of the Japanese forces.</i></p> <p>Recommended by Lieutenant General SLIM, G.O.C.-in-C. 14th Army.</p>
13 September 1945	<p>Awarded a Bar to the D.S.O for services in Burma. Citation:</p> <p><i>Period Aug 16 – 15 Nov 1944</i> <i>Assam – Burma Border.</i></p> <p><i>During the operations for the clearing of the Imphal – Tiddim – Kalemmyo road, Brigadier MARINDIN's Bde covered the right flank of the 5th Indian Division. His Bde fought its way from Churachandpur to the Chindwin River over the most appalling tracks, keeping pace with and often operating ahead of the Division.</i></p> <p><i>Brigadier MARINDIN's bold and skilful leadership and his personal example were an inspiration to his Bde throughout the operations, in which a large number of enemy were killed, and quantities of enemy equipment destroyed; and were a major factor in enlisting the loyal and enthusiastic support of the Chin tribesmen.</i></p> <p><i>The rapid and successful advance of the 5th Indian Division was in a great measure due to the skilful and daring way in which he handled his Bde., his readiness to accept the calculated risk, and his unfailing assistance and co-operation.</i></p> <p><i>He is recommended for the award of the D.S.O.</i></p> <p>Recommended by: Major General WARREN, G.O.C. 5th Indian Division. Lieutenant General Sir Oliver LEESE added: '<i>Recommended for a Bar to the D.S.O. subject to the approval of the award for the D.S.O. submitted for the period 16 May to 15 Aug 1944.</i>'</p>
07/02/46 – 28/06/46	<p>General Officer Commanding, 19th Indian Division As Acting Major General. Burma – India.</p>
26 February 1946	Promoted Acting Major General.
29 June 1946	Reverted to rank of Colonel.
14 October 1946	Promoted Colonel.
1 November 1946	Regranted the rank of Temporary Brigadier.
28 November 1946	Completed period in regimental command, retained on Active List supernumerary to the establishment.
21 February 1949	Retired as Honorary Brigadier (Colonel).

Bibliography and Sources

Secondary Sources

- BRAUND, Harold *Distinctly I Remember – A personal story of Burma* (Victoria, Australia, Wren Publishing Pty Ltd, 1972) [ISBN 0 85885 006 0]
- BRETT-JAMES, Antony *Ball of Fire – The Fifth Indian Division in the Second World War* (Aldershot, Gale and Polden, 1951)
- HEARNS Doug V. P., C.D. *Companions of The Distinguished Service Order 1923 – 2010 Army Awards Volume 1; Volume 2; Volume 3.* (Uckfield, Sussex: Naval and Military Press Ltd, 2011).
- JOSLEN Lieut-Col H. F. (Ed.) *Orders of Battle Second World War 1939-1945* (London: H.M.S.O., 1960) (Reprinted London: The London Stamp Exchange Ltd, 1990) [ISBN 0 948130 03 2]
- KEMPTON Chris *'Loyalty and Honour' – The Indian Army September 1939 – August 1947 Part I Divisions Part II Brigades Part III* (Milton Keynes: Military Press, 2003) [ISBN 0-85420-228-5]
- OATTS, Balfour *The Jungle in Arms* (London, William Kimber and Co. Limited, 1962)
- PRASAD, Bisheshwar *The Retreat from Burma 1941- 1942 Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-1945.* (Delhi, Combined Inter-services Historical Section, 1954).
- PRASAD, S. N., BHARGAVA K. D. & KHERA, P. N. *The Reconquest of Burma – Volume I June 1942 – June 1944 Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-1945.* (Delhi, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1958)
- PRASAD, S. N. & KHERA, P. N. *The Reconquest of Burma – Volume II June 1944 – August 1945 Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-1945.* (Delhi, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1959)
- ROSS, Major & HAILES, Lt-Col *The Jat Regiment – A History of the Regiment 1803 – 1947* (India, Jat Regimental Centre, 1967)

Websites

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
<https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/>
The Lushai Brigade
<http://www.kaiserscross.com/304501/617322.html>

Lushai Brigade

www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

Robert PALMER M.A.

Published by: The Author.
