

50th Indian Parachute Brigade (1)

Headquarters, 50th Indian Parachute Brigade & Signal Section

50th Indian Parachute Brigade Headquarters Defence Platoon

152nd (Indian) Parachute Battalion (2)

153rd (Gurkha) Parachute Battalion (3)

154th (Gurkha) Parachute Battalion (4)

50th Indian Parachute Brigade Medium Machine Gun Company

411th Parachute Squadron, Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners (5)

80th Parachute Field Ambulance, Indian Army Medical Corps

Attached at Sangshak

4th Bn. 5th Mahratta Light Infantry

Kali Bahadur Infantry, Nepalese Forces

'D' Troop, 582nd Mortar Battery, 158th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

15th (Jhelum) Mountain Battery, Indian Artillery

NOTES:

1. The original parachute brigade in the Indian Army, this formation was raised on 1 October 1941 at Delhi. It trained at Delhi, Dehra Dun and near Poona, and it was deployed in Delhi on internal Security duties. Brigadier (Acting) William George Hugh GOUGH, M.C., 2nd Gurkhas, raised the Brigade and was its first commander, even though he had lost the use of one eye and had a damaged arm as a result of a grenade injury. GOUGH was relieved of his command in June 1942 due to his age, and his failure to recover from a leg injury resulting from a parachute jump. He was replaced by Brigadier (Acting) Maxwell Richard Julian HOPE-THOMPSON, M.A., Royal Scots Fusiliers (who was known as 'Tim' HOPE-THOMPSON). He had been sent out from the U.K. where he was the commanding officer of the 4th Bn. The Parachute Regiment because of his knowledge and experience in airborne forces. The Brigade moved to Campbellpore near Rawalpindi in October 1942 and trained at the Air Landing School. It also undertook some jungle training and the Brigade, less the 154th Battalion, moved to Kohima for jungle training in a forward area with effect from 4 March 1944. On 15 March, the Brigade Commander was ordered to send the 152nd Battalion to the Sangshak area to relieve the 49th Indian Infantry Brigade. The Brigade H.Q. moved forward to Litan, with the M.M.G. Company at Ukhrul and the 153rd Battalion remaining at Kohima. On 19 March, the Japanese attacked the forward locations held by 152 Battalion, with 'C' Company being wiped out on Point 7378 after a gallant defence of that location. The Brigade Commander consolidated his Brigade at Sangshak, although only about half of the 153rd Battalion managed to reach Sangshak before it was surrounded. The Brigade held on against repeated determined attacks until 26 March, when the survivors broke out in small groups. For various reasons, in the main unjustified, the actions of the Brigade were criticized, and Brigadier HOPE-THOMPSON was relieved of his command on 1 April 1944 and he was sent back to the U.K. Colonel B. E. ABBOTT officiated until Brigadier (Acting) Edward Galbraith WOODS, M.B.E., 17th Dogra Regiment, *p.s.c.*, was appointed as the new Brigade Commander on 22 May 1944. In June, the Brigade continued to operate in the Litan area north of Imphal, and it served under the 17th Indian Infantry Division in the Tiddim and Kalemyo areas. The Brigade returned to India in August 1944 and was reunited with the 154th Battalion. In September 1944, it came under command of this Division, but trained independently in the Secunderabad region. It was not until 5 February 1945 that it actually joined this Division in practice. A composite battalion group from this Brigade was dropped at Elephant Point on the approaches to Rangoon on 1 May 1945, which turned out to be the only use of Indian Airborne Forces during the Second World War. In August 1947, the Brigade was stationed at Quetta.
2. This battalion was raised in October 1941 from volunteers from across the Regiments of the British Indian Army. On 1 March 1945, it was reorganised to become an all Hindu battalion, and was redesignated as the 1st Bn. The Indian Parachute Regiment. It was disbanded on 26 October 1946 with the demise of the Indian Parachute Regiment.
3. Also raised on 15 October 1941, this battalion drew its volunteers from nine out of the ten regiments of the Gurkha Rifles in the British Indian Army. It was redesignated as the 3rd (Gurkha) Bn. The Indian Parachute Regiment on 1 March 1945, but it was disbanded on 26 October 1946 in line with the other battalions of the Indian Parachute Regiment.
4. This battalion had been formed by the conversion of the 3rd Bn. 7th Gurkha Rifles. It remained in India when the Brigade was deployed to Burma. It was redesignated as the 3rd (Gurkha) Bn. The Indian Parachute Regiment on 1 March 1945, and it remained with this Brigade until 26 October 1946 when the Indian Parachute Regiment was disbanded.
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6. The 411th Parachute Field Squadron was originally formed in November 1941 as a Parachute Section under Captain M. J. J. ROLT, R.E., as a component of the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade. It was composed of volunteers from both the Royal Bombay and King George V's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners, but it became part of the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners Group as there were more volunteers from Bombay as opposed to Bengal. The basic parachute training was carried out at Willingdon Airport at Delhi, using three Vickers Valencia biplane bombers. The pilot and co-pilot both flew in an open cockpit, but the troops were inside the aircraft. In November 1942, the unit moved to Campbellpur and training commenced using Dakota aircraft. The initial dropping height was set at 250 feet, but this was increased to 500 feet after a number of fatal accidents. Sikhs could not be recruited into the Squadron because of their hair and turbans, so by late 1943 it comprised one Pubjabi Mussalman troop and two troops of Mahrattas. When the Brigade deployed to Assam, the Squadron was employed on the Kohima – Jessami track, under the command of now Major M. J. J. ROLT. On 20 March, the Squadron was ordered to move to Sangshak, and it reached Kohima at 20.00 hours that day. The Squadron was driven to Imphal, and then made its way to Litan. It helped form a defensive box at Litan comprising the Support Company of the 153rd Parachute Battalion, and elements of the 4th Bn. 5th Mahratta Light Infantry. They were joined by a detachment of the 2nd Bn. 1st Punjab Regiment. Captain R. A. McCLUNE, who was the Squadron Second-in-Command, managed to reach Sangshak and fought there with the Brigade Headquarters. Overnight 24/25 March, the box at Litan was attacked repeatedly by Japanese troops. The Japanese penetrated the 'box', but the situation was restored. On 27 March, the garrison at Litan was ordered to withdraw, but as no transport was available, supplies had to be destroyed before the troops marched out after nightfall. They moved southwards and met the rest of 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade, who were advancing up the road towards Litan. The 411th Parachute Squadron was then placed under the command of the 5th Indian Infantry Division on tasks including building a command post for H.Q. 5th Indian Division, road maintenance, culverting, and water points. It also had to build its first Bailey Bridge to allow Admiral MOUNTBATTEN access to a field where he addressed the troops.

Headquarter, 50 Indian Parachute Brigade

Commanding Officer	– Brigadier (Acting) HOPE-THOMPSON, R.Scots.Fus.
Second in Command	– Colonel B. ABBOTT, Indian Army
Brigade Major	– Major G. BEALE,
Staff Captain	– Captain L. RICHARDS,
Intelligence Officer	– Captain Lester ALLEN,
Brigade Transport Officer	– Lieutenant R. SYLVESTER,
H.Q. Defence Platoon	– EC/3755 Lieutenant Robert Rennard Stradling DELAHAY, 15 th Punjab R. (Died) ¹

¹ Died on 23 March 1944, aged 23 years. Officer in 15th Punjab Regiment, attached to 152nd Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of William and Helen Rennard DELAHAY, of Exmouth, Devon. Scholar of Harrow School and Exhibitioner of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Buried in Grave 7.D.10. of the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *UNTIL THE DAY BREAK AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY*

152nd Indian Parachute Battalion

Commanding Officer	– Lieutenant Colonel P. HOPKINSON, (Wounded)
Second-in-Command	– Major R. STEWARD (Wounded)
Adjutant	– Captain T. MONAGHAN,
Quarter-Master	– Lieutenant R. CLARK, (Wounded) – EC/2246 Captain Alan Thomas JOHNSON, 14 th Punjab R. (Died) ² – EC/7627 Lieutenant Wallace David HATTON, 19 th Hyderabad R. (Died) ³ – Lieutenant W. GRIMWOOD,

'A' Company

Officer Commanding	– EC/1166 Major Richard Hamilton GILLETT, 10 th Baluch Regt (Died) ⁴
Second-in-Command	– Captain W. PATTERSON (Wounded)
Platoon Commanders	– Lieutenant A. COWELL (Wounded) – Lieutenant W. GOLLOP, (Wounded)

'B' Company

Officer Commanding	– EC/2228 Major Michael Howard WEBB, 10 th Baluch Regt (Died) ⁵ – EC/3200 Lieutenant Frederick George CORY, 13 th F.F.Rif (Died) ⁶ – EC/2754 Lieutenant Archibald Dorset Stewart BUCKLE, (Died) ⁷ – Lieutenant R. WALBER,
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² Died on 26 March 1944. Officer in the 14th Punjab Regiment, attached to 152nd Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Buried in Collective Grave 7.D.4-6 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

³ Died on 20 March 1944. Officer in the 19th Hyderabad Regiment. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

⁴ Died on 26 March 1944, aged 27 years. Officer in the 10th Baluch Regiment. Son of Aubrey Scott and Margaret Elsie GILLETT, of Clutton, Somerset. Buried in Grave 8.G.23 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone *ONE SHORT SLEEP PAST, WE WAKE ETERNALLY, AND DEATH SHALL BE NO MORE.*

⁵ Killed on 26 March 1944. Officer in the 10th Baluch Regiment, and CWGC shows his rank as Captain. Commemorated on Face 39 of the Rangoon Memorial, Burma.

⁶ Died on 26 March 1944, aged 33 years. Officer in the 13th Frontier Force Rifles, attached to 152nd Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Albert Frederick and Evelyn Cecilia CORY. Buried in Joint Grave 7.D.2-3, at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAT THIS" EVER REMEMBERED BY BROTHER AND SISTERS*

⁷ Died on 26 March 1944, aged 24 years. Officer in the 8th Punjab Regiment, attached to 152nd Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Lewis M. and Magdalen M. R. BUCKLE, of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Buried in Joint Grave 7.D.2-3 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *HE MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE*

'C' Company

- Officer Commanding – AI/891 Major John Annesley O'Donnell FULLER, 13th F.F.Rif (Died)⁸
 Second-in-Command – EC/2835 Captain Thomas Henry Maurice ROSEBY, 16th Punjab R. (Died)⁹
 – 162674 Captain Alfred James MCKAY, Seaforth Highlanders (Died)¹⁰
 Platoon Commanders – Lieutenant H. EASTON (Wounded)
 – EC/7836 Lieutenant John Andrew FAUL, 18th R. Garhwal Rif (Died)¹¹
 – 197203 Lieutenant Ronald Lewis BOLTON, Hamp R. (Died)¹²

Support Company

- Officer Commanding – IA/1032 Major Ernest HOCKINGS, 9th Jat R. (Died)¹³
 Second-in-Command – EC/2780 Captain Edwin Douglas FROST, 10th Baluch R. (Died)¹⁴
 Company Officers – Lieutenant B. SEATON, (Wounded)
 – EC/10535 Lieutenant Sidney Robert LAYTON, 9th Jat R. (Died)¹⁵
 – Lieutenant B. MANICO, (Wounded)
 – Lieutenant HYSLOP,

⁸ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 24 years. Officer in the 1st Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles. Son of Ralph Annesley and Madeline Mary FULLER, of Fleet, Hampshire. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone *'HE PASSED OVER, AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE' R.I.P.*

⁹ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 22 years. Officer in the 16th Punjab Regiment. Son of Thomas Ernest and Alice Peirce ROSEBY (nee COLES) of Kensington, London. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

¹⁰ Died on 20 March 1944. Officer in the Seaforth Highlanders, attached to the Indian Parachute Regiment. Commemorated on Face 17 of the Rangoon Memorial, Burma.

¹¹ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 27 years. Officer in the 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles. Son of Archibald and Elizabeth FAUL; husband of Josephine FAUL, of Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *SIT TIBI TERRA LEVIS*

¹² Died on 19 March 1944. Officer in the Hampshire Regiment, attached to 152nd Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Mr and Mrs L. W. BOLTON, of Walthamstow, Essex. Commemorated on Face 14 of the Rangoon Memorial, Burma.

¹³ Died on 26 March 1944, aged 26 years. Officer in 1st Royal Battalion, 9th Jat Regiment. Son of Major Rupert Henry and Margaret Jane HOCKINGS, of Andover, Hampshire. Buried in Collective Grave 7.D.4-6 at the Imphal War Cemetery, India. Inscription on headstone *GOD'S PEACE BE WITH YOU 'NIBS' AND THE LOVE OF MUM, DAD, MARY, BEE AND DICK.*

¹⁴ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 24 years. Officer in the 10th Baluch Regiment, attached to the Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Arthur Edwin and Edith Adelaide of Enfield, Middlesex. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

¹⁵ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 23 years. Son of Sidney and Janet Annie LAYTON, of Beckenham, Kent. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone *MY HOPES AND JOYS AND LOVE ARE WITH YOU, MY ONLY CHILD. MOTHER.*

153rd Indian Parachute Battalion

Commanding Officer – Lieutenant Colonel R. WILLIS, (Wounded)
 Second-in-Command – Major G. NEWLAND, (At Litan)
 – Captain G. LORIMER (Wounded)
 – Captain W. KAY (Wounded)
 – Lieutenant R. KYNOCK-SHAND, (Wounded)
 – Lieutenant W. MCKAY,

'A' Company

Officer Commanding – Major Jimmy ROBERTS,
 Platoon Commander – EC/13969 Lieutenant William Francis Digby RADCLYFFE, 5th R. Gurkha R. (Died)¹⁶

'B' Company

Officer Commanding – Major V. BROOKES,
 Platoon Commander – EC/3795 Lieutenant Hereward Kirby COCKIN, 5th R. Gurkha Rif (Died)¹⁷

'C' Company

Officer Commanding – Major John SANDERS, (Wounded)
 Platoon Commanders – Lieutenant H. HAMMOND-SEAMAN
 – Lieutenant D. LITTLE,

Support Company

Officer Commanding – Major H. BUTCHARD,

At Litan

Second-in-Command –
 – Captain J. AUBREY,
 – Lieutenant J. WEAVER,
 – Lieutenant J. PATERSON,
 – Lieutenant Brian Frier McALISTER, 2nd K.E.VII's O. Gurkha Rifs (Died)¹⁸
 – Lieutenant J. VICKERS, (Died) (Unidentified)

¹⁶ Died on 26 March 1944. Officer in the 4th Bn. 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), attached to the 153rd (Gurkha) Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Major Ralph Arthur and Frances Alice Backhouse RADCLYFFE, of Romsey, Hampshire. Buried in Grave 8.G.24. at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *WE WILL REMEMBER HIM*

¹⁷ Died on 28 March 1944, aged 22 years. Officers in the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force). Son of Joseph and Nadia COCKIN, of Shanghai, China. Commemorated on Face 63, of the Rangoon Memorial, Burma.

¹⁸ Died on 21 March 1944, aged 22 years. Officer in the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (Sirmoor Rifles), attached to the 153rd (Gurkha) Bn. Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Colonel R. F. J. McALISTER, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and Nora McALISTER. Buried in Grave 8.C.4 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *HE WAS LOVELY AND PLEASANT IN HIS LIFE*

Unknown	– 153269 Captain Harry LUSCOMBE, Hamp R. (Died) ¹⁹
Unknown	– 89773 Lieutenant Christopher Philip Bernard COX, R.A. (Died) ²⁰
Possible	– EC/5692 Captain Alan Gordon BOSWELL, 5 th R. Gurkha Rifs (Died) ²¹

50th Medium Machine Gun Company (Parachute)

Officer Commanding	– IA/1066 Major Robert Emmett John BALL, 15 th Punjab R. (Died) ²²
Second-in-Command	– 145614 Captain Christopher Arthur Pax GAYDON, Middlesex R. (Died) ²³
Platoon Commander	– Lieutenant P. LEWIS,

'D' Troop, 582nd Mortar Battery, 158th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

Officer Commanding	– 67045 Major John Vigne Percy SMITH, R.A. (Killed in Action) ²⁴
Battery Captain	– Captain B. HUTTON,
Battery Officers	– Lieutenant L. HOLLAND (Wounded) – Lieutenant P. HEPBURN, – Lieutenant R. WATSON, (Wounded)

15th (Jhelum) Mountain Battery, 28th Mountain Regiment, Indian Artillery

Officer Commanding	– 63509 Major Robert John Penton LOCK, R.A. (Killed in Action) ²⁵
Battery Officers	– Lieutenant J. KIDD – Lieutenant O. MALHOTRA (Wounded)

14221819 Signalmán Gerard Francis McCREANOR, R.Sigs.²⁶

¹⁹ Died on 20 March 1944, aged 25 years. Officer in the Hampshire Regiment, attached to the Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Henry and Gertrude Mary LUSCOMBE, of Guildford, Surrey. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

²⁰ Died on 26 March 1944. Officer in the Royal Artillery, attached to the Indian Parachute Regiment. Buried in Grave 4.F.5. at the Imphal War Cemetery.

²¹ Died on 25 March 1944. Officer in the 2nd Bn. 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force). Buried in Grave 4.E.1 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

²² Died on 24 March 1944, aged 27 years. Mentioned in Despatches. Officer in the 5th Bn. 15th Punjab Regiment. Son of R. E. J. and Mary E. BALL, of Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. Commemorated on Face 47 of the Rangoon Memorial, Burma.

²³ Died on 25 March 1944, aged 26 years. Officer in the Middlesex Regiment, attached to the Indian Parachute Regiment. Son of Arthur Garfield and Ethel Mary GAYDON, of the City of London. Buried in Grave 6.E.25 at the Imphal War Cemetery. Inscription on headstone: *HE DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY. BELOVED BY ALL.*

²⁴ Died on 27 March 1944. Buried in grave 4.F.14, of the Imphal War Cemetery.

²⁵ Died on 26 March 1944, aged 29 years. Buried in Collective Grave 7.D.4-6, at the Imphal War Cemetery. Son of Major General Sir Robert Ferguson LOCK, K.B.E., C.B., and Kathleen Beryl LOCK, of Milford on Sea, Hampshire. Inscription on headstone: *'AS GOLD IN THE FURNACE HATH HE TRIED THEM AND RECEIVED THEM'*

²⁶ Died on 21 March 1944, aged 31 years. Royal Corps of Signals and member of the Brigade Signal Section. Son of Hugh and Jane E. McCREANOR, of Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland. Husband of Annie Josephine McCREANOR of Banbridge. Buried in Collective Grave 8.H.6-13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.

235563 Lieutenant John Horace CHEGWIDDEN, R.E.²⁷

80th Indian Field Ambulance (Parachute)

Commanding Officer – MZ/15936 Lieutenant Colonel Robert Brocklesby DAVIS, I.M.S.

Robert Brocklesby DAVIS was born on 27 December 1911. Commissioned in the Indian Medical Service in the rank of Lieutenant on 31 October 1936, his seniority dating from 13 June 1936. He was promoted to the rank of Captain on 12 June 1937, to the rank of Acting Major on 20 March 1942, and as Temporary Major on 20 June 1942. He was promoted to the rank of Acting Lieutenant Colonel on 7 August 1943 on assuming command of the 80th Indian Field Ambulance (Parachute). He was promoted to the rank of Temporary Lieutenant Colonel and W/S Major on 7 November 1943.

DAVIS was recommended for the award of the Distinguished Service Order by Brigadier B. E. ABBOTT, Commanding Officer of the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade, on 13 April 1944. The award was Gazetted on 27 July 1944. The citation stated:

At SANGSHAK between 21st and 26th March 44, this officer was in comd of the Bde Fd Amb. The posn was being attacked heavily during this time and there were a large number of casualties. The Fd Amb area was at one time penetrated by the enemy, but Lt.-Col. DAVIS organised the attack which drove them out. Under heavy arty and M.G. fire, this officer continued to attend to the wounded and so marked were his personal example and coolness that no-one who encountered him in the course of his duties could fail to be influenced by him.

Under his direction, the Fd Amb was evacuated to another posn when the perimeter in the neighbourhood had been overrun by the enemy. Lt.-Col. DAVIS supervised this move which took place under heavy fire and it was entirely due to his clear orders & direction that very few more casualties occurred. When evacuation of the posn was directed by higher authy, Lt.-Col. DAVIS had to be ordered not to stay behind & look after the men seriously wounded. His selflessness and complete lack of fear were an inspiration to all ranks during this dangerous and critical period.

DAVIS was promoted to the rank of Major on 12 June 1946, and he retired on 24 July 1957, being granted the rank of Honorary Lieutenant Colonel.

²⁷ Died on 22 March 1944, aged 32 years. Officer in the Royal Engineers. Son of John Henry and Thomasine CHEGWIDDEN, of Cannons Town, Cornwall. Buried in Grave 7.B.13 at the Imphal War Cemetery.