



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front
Association**



ISSUE 88 - June 2023

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2023

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

| | | |
|-----------|-----|---|
| January | 4th | . AGM + `British League of Help` by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. |
| February | 7th | ` The First AIR War` ` by Grant Cullen. Based on a collection of rare photographs acquired over 20 years ago at a yard sale in Hazelwood, Missouri, US, this will look at the various protagonists in WW1 - people and Planes |
| March | 7th | ` Voie Sacree` by Roy Larkin. The story of the road that connects Bar-le-Duc to Verdun It was given its name because of the vital role it played during the Battle of Verdun in World War I. |
| April | 4th | " For Home and Honour` by Yvonne Ridgeway and James Kay. A bit of a history of our local community in North Sheffield during WW1, from their own research, looking at recruitment, the 1st Sheffield blitz, the tribunals for those wishing to avoid military service and some of the local soldiers' stories. |
| May | 2nd | The First World War contribution of Dulmial Village, in present day Pakistan by Dr Irfan Malik. His Gt. Grandfathers experiences in WW1, and the wider role of muslim soldiers during that conflict |
| June | 6th | Stepbrothers in Arms: the Conscript Experience in 1918 By Tim Lynch who will examine the myths and realities of the army of 1918 and what the evidence actually tells us about ideas of cohesion, morale and professionalism in the BEF. |
| July | 4th | Dr Rebecca Ball ' Daddy, what did you do in the great War? ' Drawing upon fifty working-class autobiographies, this talk examines the impact of the Great War on fifty English families with a particular focus on fathers. |
| August | 1st | Dr. Adam Prime - a newly appointed WFA Trustee who will talk about ' India's Great War ' This talk looks at India's contribution to the First World War in every sense of the word. |
| September | 5th | " Dark Satanic Mills - How Britain's Industry Went to War ". By Andy Rawson This is an insight into the wide range of factories across the country, which worked around the clock to keep up with the expanding requirements of the armed services. |
| October | 3rd | Hedley Malloch ' Left Behind - the fate of British soldiers trapped behind German lines in Belgium and France after the Retreat of 1914 |
| November | 7th | Peter Hart - Trench Humour -a look at how soldiers use humour to get through the horrors of trench warfare. |
| December | 5th | David Blanchard - The Casualty Evacuation Chain from Hill 60, Ypres, in early 1915 |

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Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter / Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general



Secretary`s Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the issue 88 of our Branch Newsletter for June 2023.

Well, that`s us at the half way point in the year - where has all the time gone ?

On Tuesday, we are back to our usual room at the excellent venue, Chesterfield Labour Club. Our speaker is our old friend, Tim Lynch.



Tim`s talk is ***Stepbrothers in Arms: the Conscript Experience in 1918***

Just over half the men who served in the First World War did so after the introduction of conscription in 1916 yet despite their numbers, the voice of the conscript is rarely heard. Very few of them published memoirs and, overwhelmingly, the view of the conscript as a soldier has been determined by what others said about them rather than by what they themselves achieved. In this talk, Tim examines

the myths and realities of the army of 1918 and what the evidence actually tells us about ideas of cohesion, morale and professionalism in the BEF. Tim is a military historian, writer and battlefield guide whose search for his great uncle led to one of the first academic studies of small unit cohesion in the latter stages of the First World War.

Due to the unavailability of one of our speakers in the second half of the year, I had to put out an appeal for a replacement and I was delighted at the response I got. On a first come, first served basis, the job was given to Hedley Malloch who will be giving a talk about the British soldiers who during the retreat to the Marne were left behind the German lines in occupied Belgium and France. This talk will focus on The Iron Twelve. On the morning of 25th February 1915, a volley of shots rang out and eleven British and Irish soldiers and one French civilian fell dead into a freshly prepared grave. They had been brutally executed under the walls of the Chateau in Guise by the occupying German forces. Their crime? Being trapped in occupied territory and treated as spies.

I am grateful to Hedley - and the others who came forward with offers to deputise - I will be offering a slot next year to those who also offered. Another example of the strength in depth of Chesterfield Branch. The speaker who dropped out will be coming next year and I am sure his talk will be well worth the wait!

You are all aware of the loss of one of the most popular - and knowledgeable Great War historians and speakers - Rob Thompson . To honour his memory the Western Front Association and the Great War Group are getting together to organise a seminar at the Tally Ho Conference Centre in Birmingham. As soon as I have details of this event I will let everyone know.

After a gap of several years - covid y`know....Workshop Royal British Legion are having an Armed Forces Day at Shireoaks Sports and Social Club on June 24th - 1pm til 5pm...there will be two brass bands, a singer and a variety of stalls manned by the cadet forces and ex services groups plus there will be entertainments for kids. At 4.30 there will be a flypast of a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire - weather permitting of course. Chesterfield WFA will be in attendance with a display of models, medals and other artifacts...please come along..enjoy the day...and say hello.

Best wishes,

Grant Cullen Branch Secretary

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or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.

Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)



| | | | |
|----|-------------------|----------|--|
| 1 | Fridge Magnet | (£5) | 59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover |
| 2 | Anniv' Coaster | (£8.50) | 4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize |
| 3 | Mousemats | (£6) | 196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer |
| 4 | Bookmarks | (£2) | (dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage |
| 5 | Baseball Caps | (£8) | Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all |
| 6 | Ties | (£11) | Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester |
| 7 | Lapel Badges | (£2.50) | 25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin |
| 8 | Mug | (£10) | 11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides) |
| 9 | Messenger Bag | (£27) | 37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres |
| 10 | Despatch Bag | (£30) | 40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres |
| 11 | Shoulder Bag | (£25) | 40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres |
| 12 | Oxford Shirt | (£27) | Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester |
| 13 | Breathable Jacket | (£71) | Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating |
| 14 | Rugby Shirt | (£25) | Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton |
| 15 | Fleece | (£24) | Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill |
| 16 | T-shirt | (£17) | Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton |
| 17 | Sweat Shirt | (£22.50) | Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan |
| 18 | Polo Shirt | (£20.50) | Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton |

May Meeting



Our May meeting speaker was Dr Irfan Malik, a Nottingham chap, born and bred, still living in the city in the Carlton district. He is a GP and has practised for over 20 years. He is married with two children

His well-illustrated talk told the unique story of the 460 soldiers - including his great-grandfathers, from Dulmial village in present day Pakistan who fought in the Great War and their subsequent reward of a 200 year old Scottish cannon!

The second half of the presentation also explored the wider role on the Muslim soldiers in the First World

War. Dr Malik had been researching this topic since 2014 after a chance remark from one of his patients and has subsequently been featured on Sky News, BBC News, Channel 5 News and in the Daily Telegraph . Because of the imminent local elections, our usual room at Chesterfield Labour Club wasn't available and our meeting was held in the bar area. Thanks to Committee Member Jon-Paul Harding who came early to the venue to set out the bar seats making it suitable for our meeting for members to view the presentation.

Dr Malik began by describing the location of the village and some of its early history which goes back to 630AD. This village, called Dulmial, is located about 40km from Chakwal city, nestled in the stony hills of Punjab's salt ranges, 150 km from Islamabad.



There are letters in the village going back to the Indian Mutiny of 1857 that soldiers from this village had supported the British from that time.

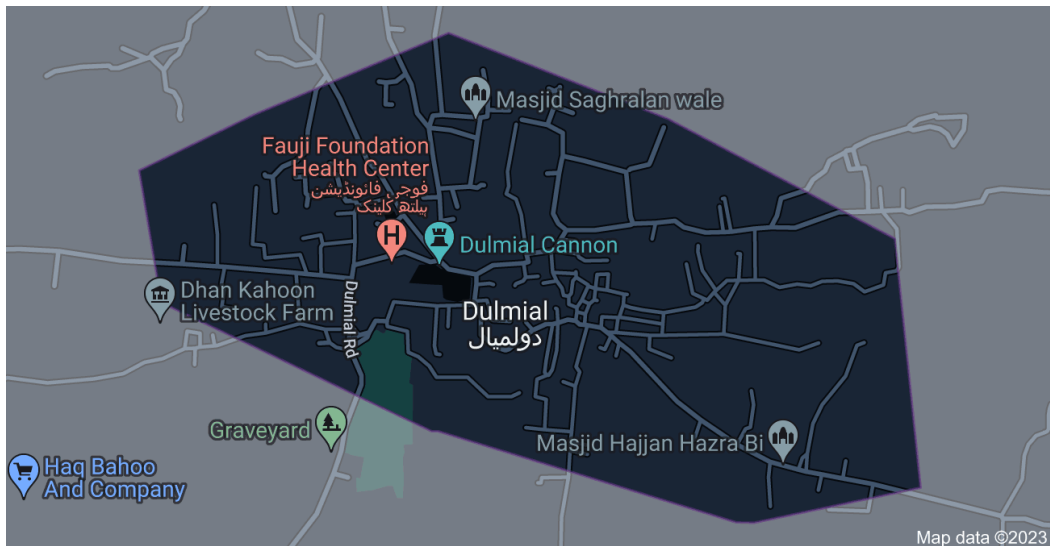
Dulmial is a small, dusty, Punjabi village but it has its place in history for supplying 460 men to serve in the British Indian Army in World War One and more than 100 of them were Viceroy Commissioned Officers. In World War Two many men from this village went to war and after partition in 1947 there was a big contribution to both the Pakistan and Indian armies, the latter having migrated over.

In 1925 the village was rewarded for its contribution in WW1 by the presentation of a cannon, indeed it was a conversation about the cannon with another chap studying the contributions of Commonwealth soldiers in both wars that kick started Dr. Malik`s project .



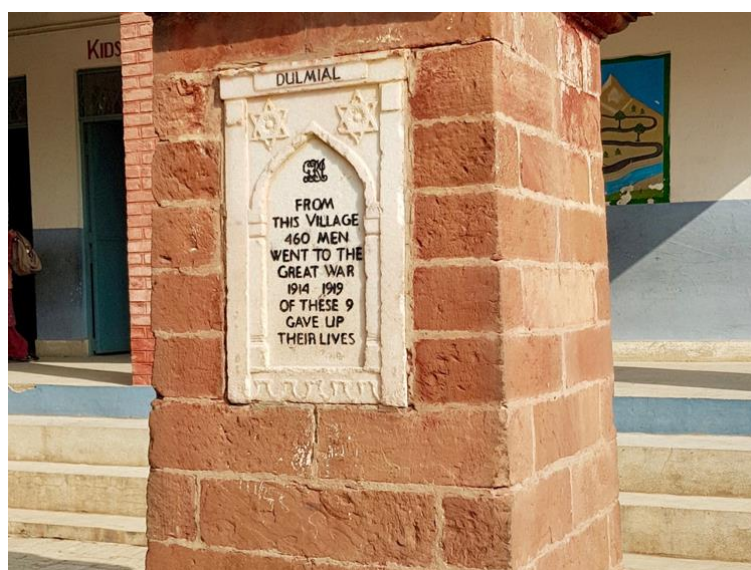
Dr Malik then described the village, with its lake and temples. The picture shows the village at sunrise.



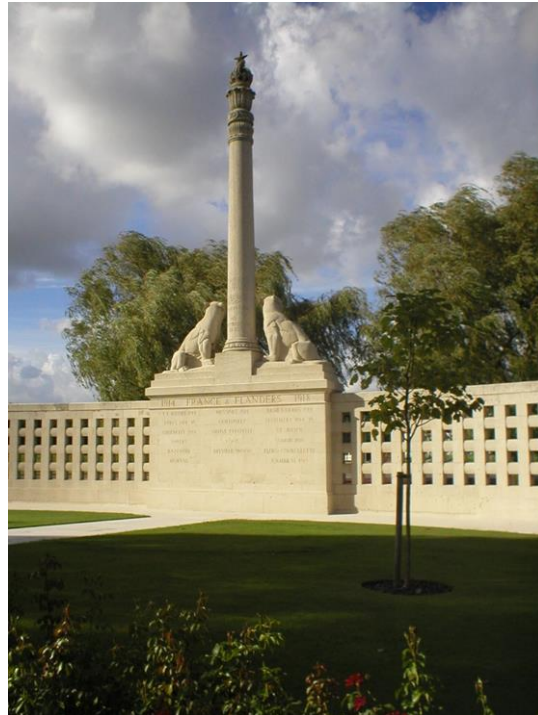


There were many salt mines in the area and Himalayan salt is still much sought after, not from the mountain range itself, but from the foothills. There are still many hundreds of miles of tunnels in the area.

So looking at the First World War, an undivided India, up to 1.5 million men participated from the sub-continent, with eleven Victoria Crosses being awarded and a further 13000 medals being awarded for acts of gallantry. Out of the 1.5 million, 400,000 were Muslim soldiers, 124,000 Sikhs and 680000 Hindus. 75000 Indians died, 9000 on the Western Front. As well as men, India contributed 180000 animals, horses, camels, mules etc and nearly 4 million tons of supplies. The cost to India, at that time, in today`s currency was 19 Billion pounds. The soldiers were involved in all theatres of war. There is a plaque in the village commemorating the men who went to the war.



We have details of some of those soldiers who passed away, one Ismail Khan being commemorated at the Indian Gate Memorial at Neuve Chappelle having been killed at the Battle of Loos.



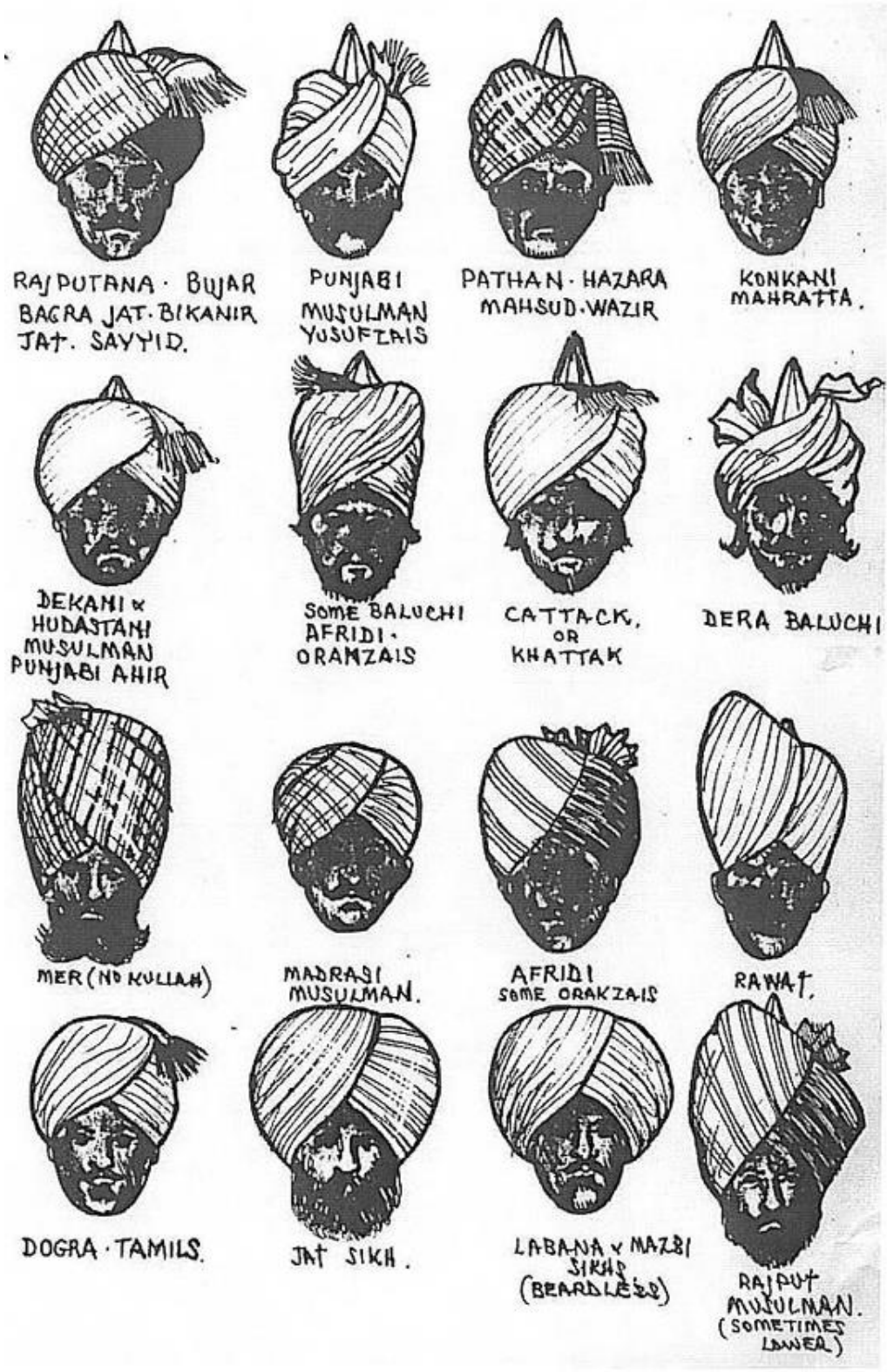
Others are remembered at Dar es Salaam, Tehran, Basra and New Delhi.



This picture shows men of the village resplendent with their medals in 1925 on the occasion of the presentation of the cannon.

This picture, Irfan said was of special significance to him as he has two great-grandfathers in it, Captain Ghulam Mohammed Malik and Subedar Mohammed Khan,

Irfan then put up a slide which generated a lot of interest with the attendees, that showing the different types of turbans worn by soldiers of the Indian Army during the Great War.



Irfan pointed out that all soldiers in the Indian Army, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus all wore turbans at that time, with different styles representing the different areas across India from which the men were recruited to the army.

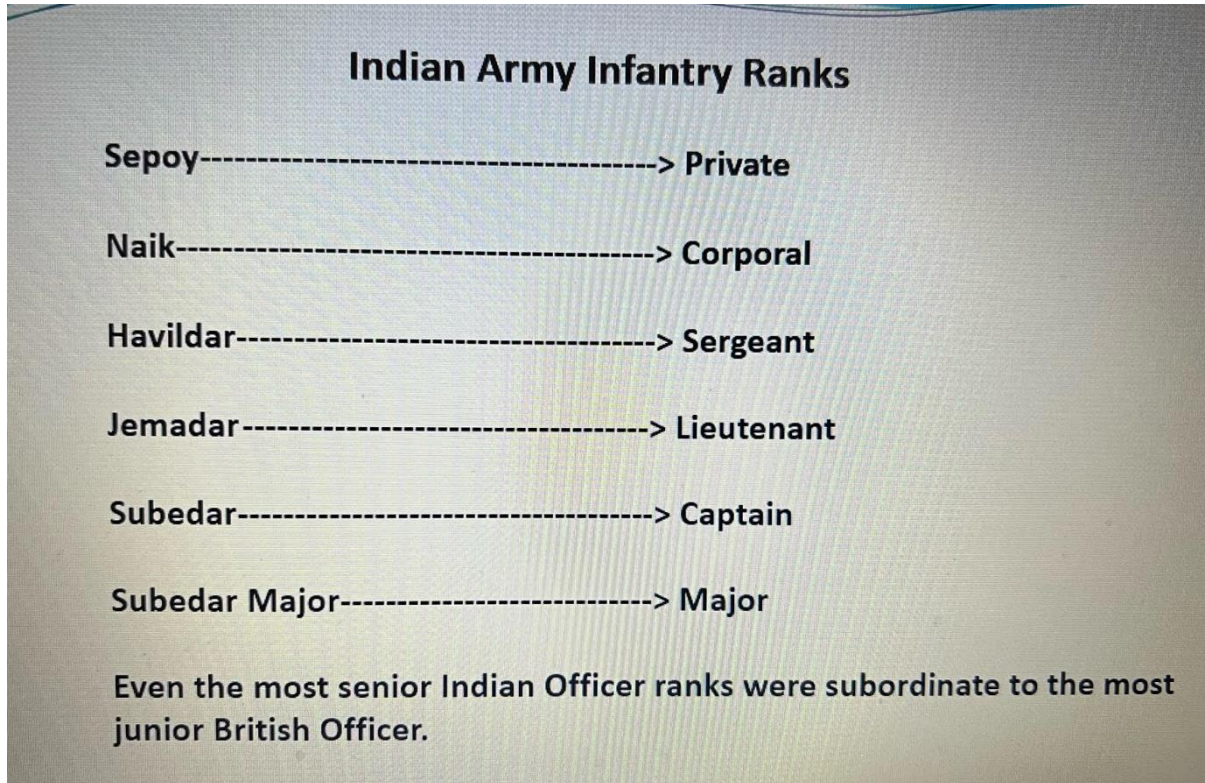


Typical Indian Army uniforms

Irfan said that he was fortunate that he got in touch with a Punjabi Research Group in London which had links to the Lahore Museum and they managed to get a complete list of all the soldiers from the Punjab villages and from this he ascertained the names of all the Dulmial men, their fathers` names, their rank and what happened to them as well. From this information it was found out that most of the Dulmial

soldiers served in Punjab regiments in big numbers so they would have known family friends etc in the regiments. Some, too, served in the Camel Corps, Cavalry, Labour Corps and the like.

The next slide showed the equivalent in rank between the Indian Army and the rest of the British Army.



Even the most senior officer in the Indian Army was subordinate to the most junior officer in the British Army.

Not only did Dulmial contribute, but all the surrounding villages gave men to the army and they too, are remembered.

The cannon was presented in 1925 to Dulmial village, a 12 pounder Bloomfield design, cast by the Carron Company near Falkirk in Scotland, it weighs 1.7 tons and it is over 200 years old. It was brought by train to the nearest railway station and brought the last 24 miles by oxen cart, originally pulled by six, but it eventually required an additional ten to pull the cart, the journey taking two weeks.



The cannon was sometimes referred to as the `Birdwood` gun as Lord Birdwood was CinC of the British Indian Army in 1925 when the gun was presented. Irfan said that 4 years ago he met the great-nephew of Lord Birdwood. Even today Dulmial gets a lot of visitors coming to see the cannon





If you look closely at the gun carriage you can see the name of Captain Arthur Broome of Cossipore Gun Foundry, where the carriage was made. The cannon itself was made at Carron Ironworks in 1816.




In this picture we see Captain Ghulam Muhammad, a gunnery officer and the most senior officer in the village. When he was approached by the Government in the 1920s to see what he wanted for the village to recognise what Dulmial had contributed to the war effort, he asked for the gun, a request which raised a few

eyebrows in the village at that time. However, it was a good choice as the gun has proven to be a permanent memorial, withstanding the passage of time.

In the next village to Dulmial there is a missionary school run by Belgian Cappucin monks to which many of the boys attended meaning they could read and write English a useful attribute for recruits to the army as many recruits from Punjab at that time were illiterate.

Here we see Irfan`s great grandfather....



Subedar Mohammad Khan
33rd Punjab Regiment

Joined Indian Army 24.3.1891

Commissioned 1.1.1905

Retired 1.7.1918

**Indian General Service Medal,
Tochi Campaign, NW Frontier,
India**

**1 clasp for Punjab Frontier
1897/98**

**Qualifications: Musketry &
Transport duties**

**Silver Medal King George V
Coronation, Delhi Darbar 1911 +
London**

King George the Fifth sent a message to the departing Indian troops in August 1914

“Officers, Non Commissioned Officers and Men, I look to my Indian soldiers to uphold the Honour of the British Raj against the aggressive and relentless enemy. I know with what readiness my loyal and brave Indian soldiers are prepared to fulfil this sacred trust on the field of battle shoulder to shoulder with their comrades from all parts of the Empire. Rest assured that you will always be in my thoughts and prayers, I know you go forth to add fresh lustre to the glory, courage achievements and chivalry of my Indian army “



This picture shows King George V in Indian Army Uniform wearing a Muslim style turban.

In November 2014, the Foreign Office was going to unveil a plaque in Islamabad to remember the three Victoria Cross winner in the Great War in what is now Pakistan and Irfan wrote to the Foreign Office and told them about Dulmial and they kindly mentioned the village in their press release. They also invited members of the Dulmial village to attend the unveiling, to recognise the fact that the 460 soldiers who went to war from the village being the largest contribution of any village of this size in South Asia



Irfan now showed pictures of the three men who won the VC....the ranks on the plaque were the ranks they held at the time they won the honour.



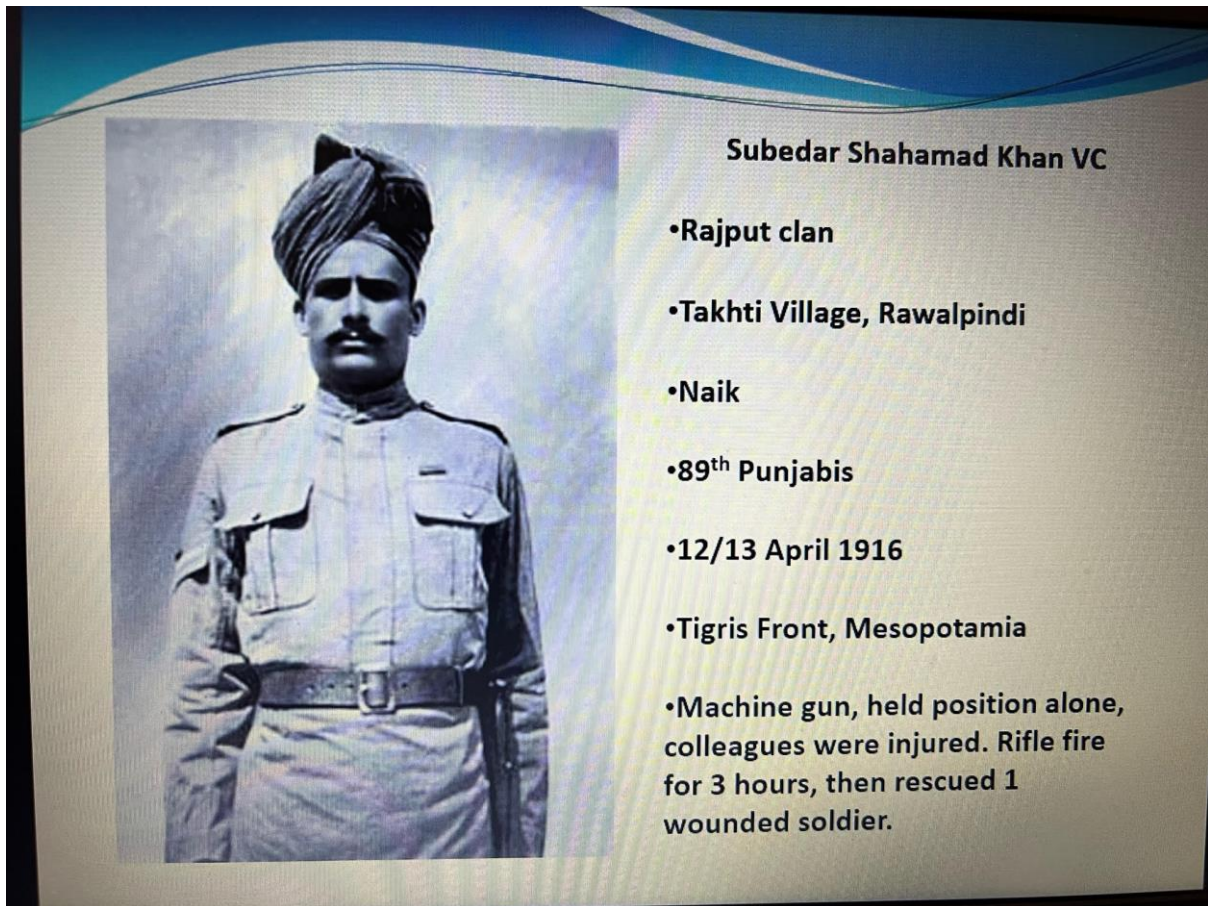
Subedar Khudadad Khan VC

- Rajput clan
- Dab Village, Chakwal, Punjab
- 1st Indian & Muslim VC recipient
- Sepoy
- 129th Duke of Connought's Own Baluchis
- 1st Battle of Ypres, Belgium
- 31st Oct 1914 Hollebeke
- Vickers machine gun, injured, 5 others died

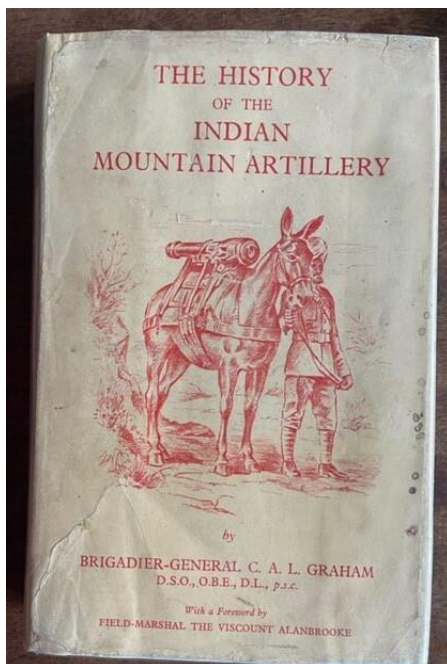


Subedar Mir Dast VC

- Afridi clan
- Tirah Valley, North West Frontier Pakistan
- Jemadar
- 55th Coke's Rifles Frontier Force Attached to 57th Wilde's Rifles
- 2nd Battle of Ypres, Belgium
- 26th April 1915 Ypres, Belgium
- Attacked by chlorine gas, no masks, injured & wounded, helped bring back 8 men & held his position



Irfan explained that retired officers trained young men from the village so that when the recruiters came those young men were well prepared for the inevitable questions and testing.

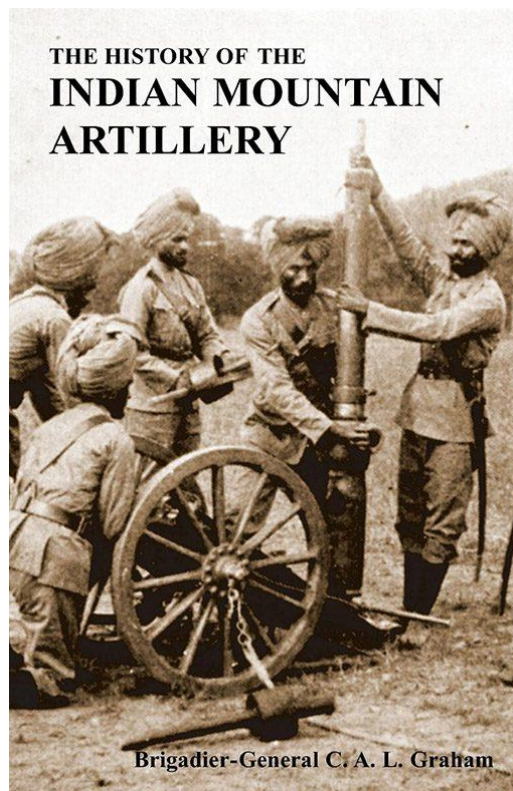


In 1957 a book was published The History of the Indian Mountain Artillery and in it there is a picture of Captain Ghulam Mohammad. He was the officer from the village who chose the cannon. He took part in the famous 1880 march with Lord Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar in the Second Afghan War. Recently his uniform was discovered in the village and has now been preserved for posterity. His medals are in the care of a family member in Islamabad

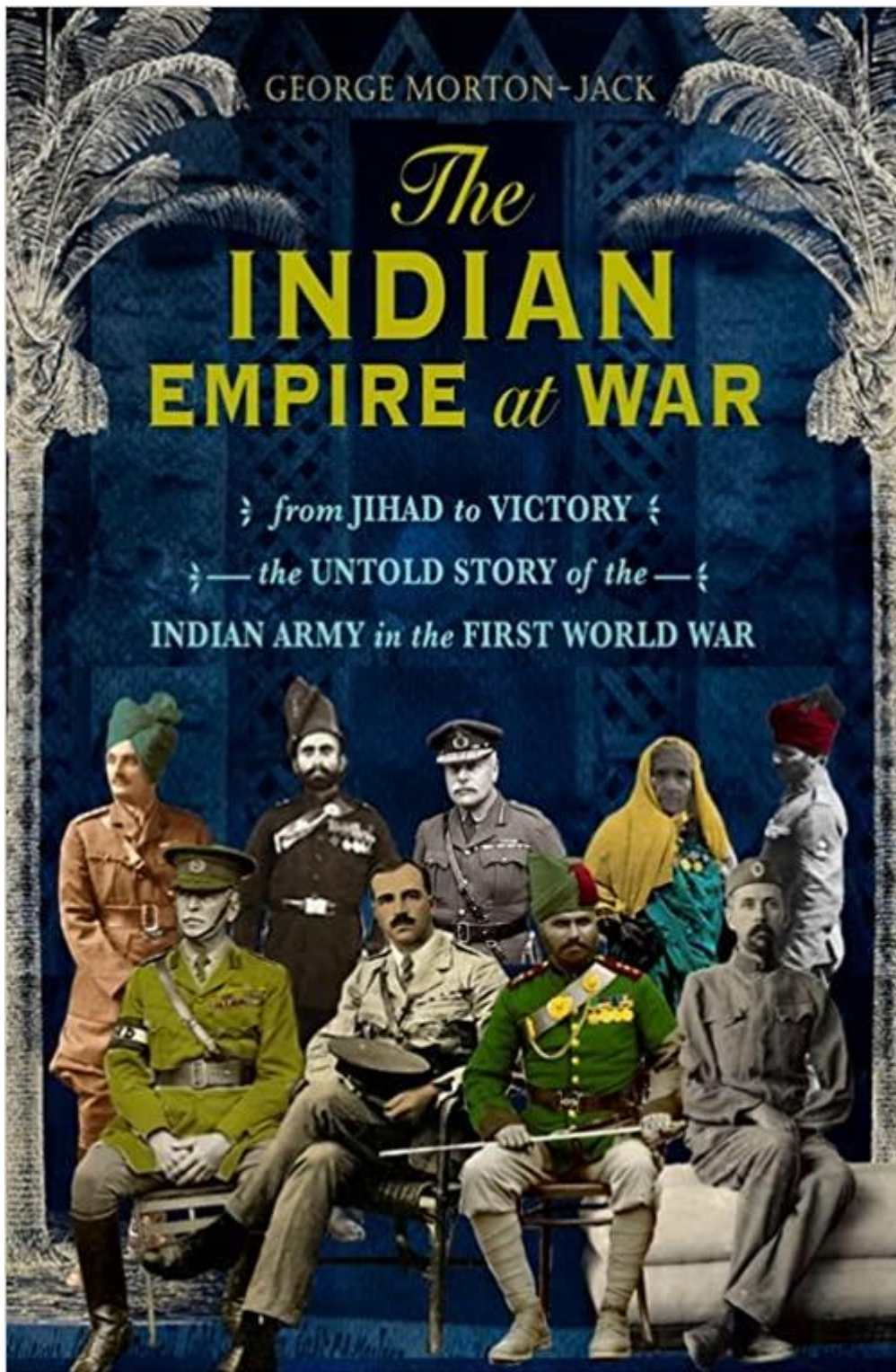


Captain Ghulam Mohammed, Sirdar Bahadur
 Was a sirdar in the Derajat Mountain Battery in Lord Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar. When old enough, he was enlisted as a driver, and having risen to the rank of havildar, his services were so much appreciated that he was commissioned as Jemadar in that battery. He was known as Ghulam Mohammed Dusra. His predecessor was a gunner in the same battery in that celebrated march. He also retired with the honorary rank of Captain, having been Subadar-Major and Sirdar Bahadur

The book has been re-issued more recently by Naval and Military Press




In 2018 this book was published...



Moving on Irfan said you don't often hear much about women in The Great War but there are letters (in English) from Punjabi women in the village to Eva Mary Bell who had visited the village before the war.

Irfan now moved on to the second part of the talk, the more general contribution of Indian Muslim soldiers during the Great War. He put up a slide of an iconic figure Subedar Khudadad Khan.



Subedar Khudadad Khan VC

- Rajput clan
- Dab Village, Chakwal, Punjab
- 1st Indian & Muslim VC recipient
- Sepoy
- 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis
- 1st Battle of Ypres, Belgium
- 31st Oct 1914 Hollebeke
- Vickers machine gun, injured, 5 others died

He was from the Rajput clan and came from a village near Dulmial. He was the first Indian and the first Muslim soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross. His act of bravery took place at the First Battle of Ypres, 31st October 1914 .

His Majesty the KING-EMPEROR has been graciously pleased to approve of the grant of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned soldier of the Indian Army for conspicuous bravery whilst serving with the Indian Army Corps, British Expeditionary Force: –

4050, Sepoy Khudadad, 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis.

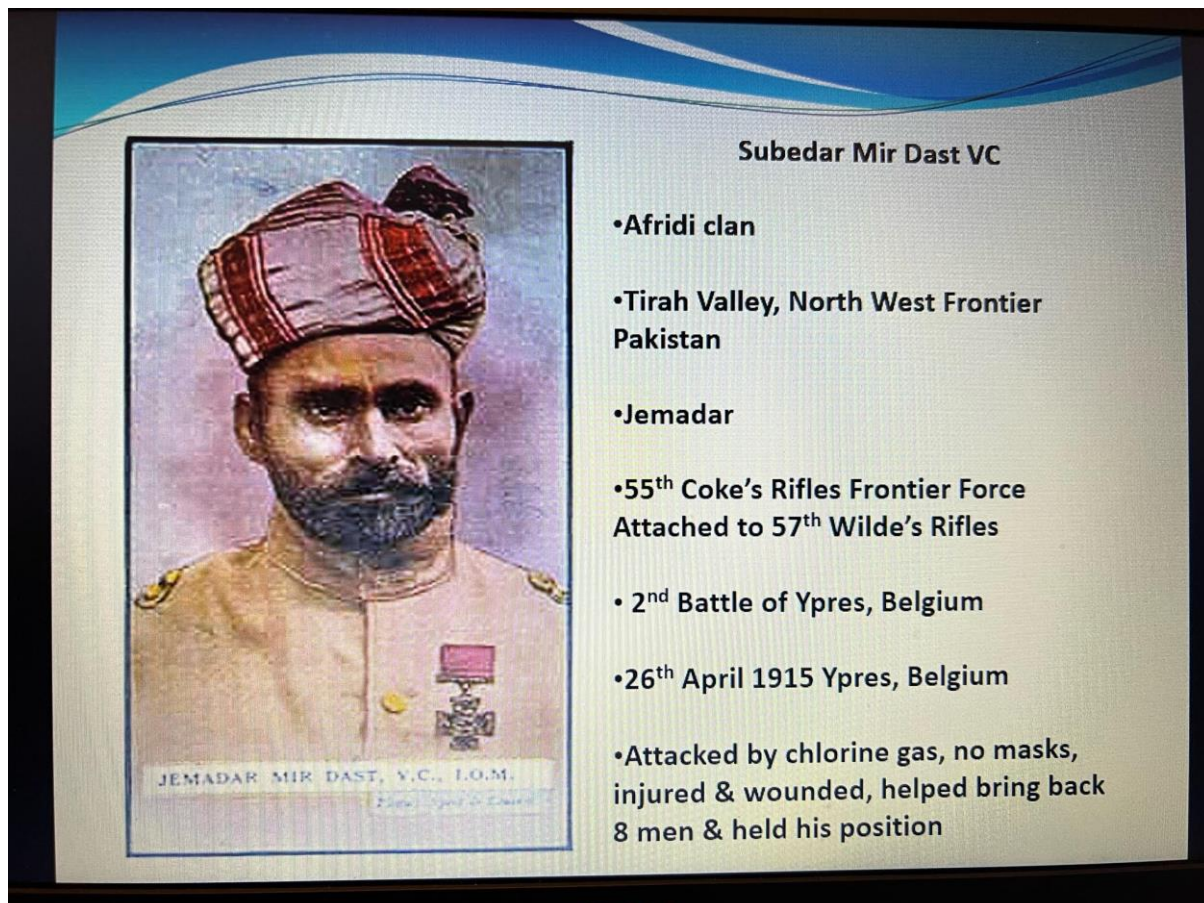
On 31st October, 1914, at Hollebeke, Belgium, the British Officer in charge of the detachment having been wounded, and the other gun put out of action by a shell, Sepoy Khudadad, though himself wounded, remained working his gun until all the other five men of the gun detachment had been killed.

– London Gazette, 7 December 1914.¹

He was supposed to be awarded the medal on the same day, 5 December 1914, as Darwan Singh Negi VC but Khan was too ill. Khan was presented with the Victoria Cross by King George V during a visit to troops in France on 26 January 1915. As such Khan is regarded as the first Indian recipient, as Negi's VC action was on a later date.

Khan was taken to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton to be treated for injuries suffered during the battle. Khan retired as a Subedar in 1929, after which he settled in the Punjab. He made several visits to Britain in connection with the Victoria Cross, including the Victoria Cross centenary review parade in Hyde Park, London, in June 1956. He died on 8 March 1971 aged 82, and is buried in Chak No. 25, Mandi Bahauddin. His Victoria Cross is on display at his ancestral house in Village Dab (Chakwal), Pakistan. He was at the time of his death the last surviving British Raj World War I veteran who had served on the Western Front.

A statue of Khudadad Khan is at the entrance of the Pakistan Army Museum in Rawalpindi.



Subedar Mir Dast VC of the Afridi clan. On 26 April 1915 at [Ypres](#), Belgium, Jemadar Mir Dast led his platoon with great gallantry during a German counter-attack, and afterwards collected various parties of the regiment (when no British officers were left) and kept them under his command until the retirement was ordered. He also displayed remarkable courage that day in helping to carry eight British and Indian Officers into safety, while exposed to very heavy fire which left Dast wounded. Dast was subsequently sent for treatment in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton where he received his medal from King George V. His was the fourth VC awarded to an Indian since Indians had become eligible for the award in 1911.

Later life and legacy

Dast was retired from active service in 1917 with the rank of subedar. He died on 19 January 1945 at Shagi Hindkyan Village, Tehsil, Peshawar, and was buried at Warsak Road Cemetery, Shagi Hindkyan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan.



Today a monument stands at the Memorial Gates at Hyde Park Corner in London to commemorate the VCs of Indian heritage, including Mir Dast.

A blue plaque was erected in May 2016 in honour of Mir Dast next to the Indian Gate at Royal Pavilion Gardens in Brighton.



Lord Kitchener and Mir Dast shaking hands in Royal Pavilion Garden, 1915

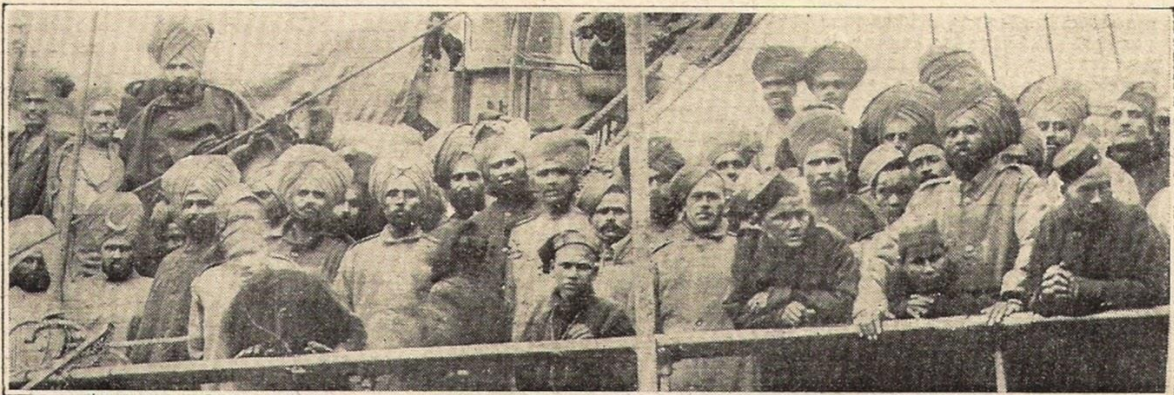
Irfan told of the stories in the British press in 1914 telling of the coming of 70000 Indian soldiers to fight for King and Empire. To begin with the government were not sure how the public would react to the arrival of these Indian soldiers so the press releases were delayed for a few weeks. However the troops received a very warm welcome when they arrived in Marseille in 1914.



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The War Illustrated, 10th October, 1914.

Indian Contingent Reaches the Seat of War



Lithe, keen, and fit, these Indian troops, who are here seen in the transport that carried them to Marseilles, disembarked eager for the smell of powder and were not long before they were bearing their part in the hard fighting in Northern France.

Many of these troops had originally been based in Mesopotamia but the need was so great they were transferred to France. When originally sent to the trenches, there was a delay in getting sufficient supplies of footwear suitable for these conditions. The troops were transported to the front buses, mostly from London. The Indian army had, of course British officers and to avoid them being identified to potential snipers, many wore turbans - held in place by elastic to prevent them falling off!

After 2nd Ypres in 1915 gas was a danger and the Indian Army adopted gas hoods large enough to cover the turbans



At the Somme in July 1916, many Indian troops made their way to the front on bicycles.



This next picture shows Indian soldiers in a Somme trench, the picture has been colourised using modern techniques.



Irfan then showed a chart which detailed the breakdown of soldier contributions from Britain and its Empire

| | | |
|---|------------------|---------------------------|
| Men from United Kingdom in army in August 1914: | 733,514 | |
| plus recruited from England : | 4,006,158 | |
| plus recruited from Scotland: | 557,618 | |
| plus recruited from Wales and Monmouth: | 272,924 | |
| plus recruited from Ireland: | 134,202 | |
| plus Empire contingents sent to serve overseas: | | |
| From Canada: | 418,035 | of total 628,964 in arms |
| From Australian and Tasmania: | 330,000 | of total 416,809 in arms |
| From New Zealand: | 100,471 | of total 220,099 in arms |
| From South Africa: | 74,196 | of total 136,070 in arms |
| From Newfoundland: | 10,610 | of total 11,922 in arms |
| From West Indies: | 16,000 | This total to end of 1917 |
| From other Dominions: | 31,000 | |

| | | |
|---|------------------|--|
| Total British Army servicemen available for deployment: | 7,165,280 | |
| From the Indian Army : | 1,524,187 | |
| Total force available for deployment: | 8,689,467 | |
| | | |
| | | |

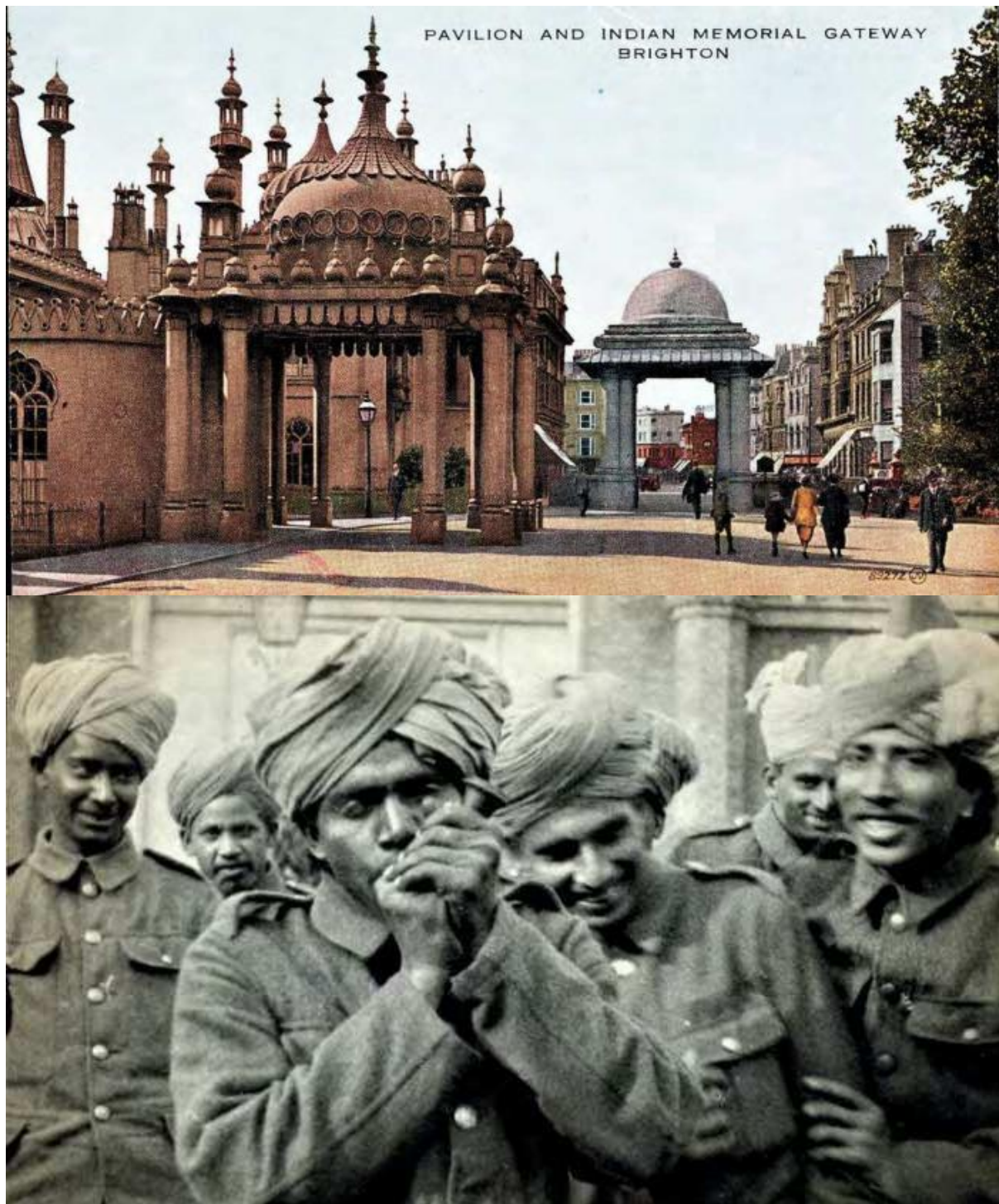
It has to be remembered that it was not just Muslims from the Indian sub-continent who fought with Britain and its Allies - they came from all over - sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East - even 5000 of the American Expeditionary Force were Muslims. On the Eastern Front approx. one million of the Russian army were Muslims. Many of the Chinese whose contribution is often overlooked - a situation being righted in recent years - were often Muslim.

On the other side there was of course the Ottoman Army which was Muslim, the Ottoman Caliph being the spiritual leader of the faith. This of course may have caused issues with Muslims fighting on one side against Muslims on the other.



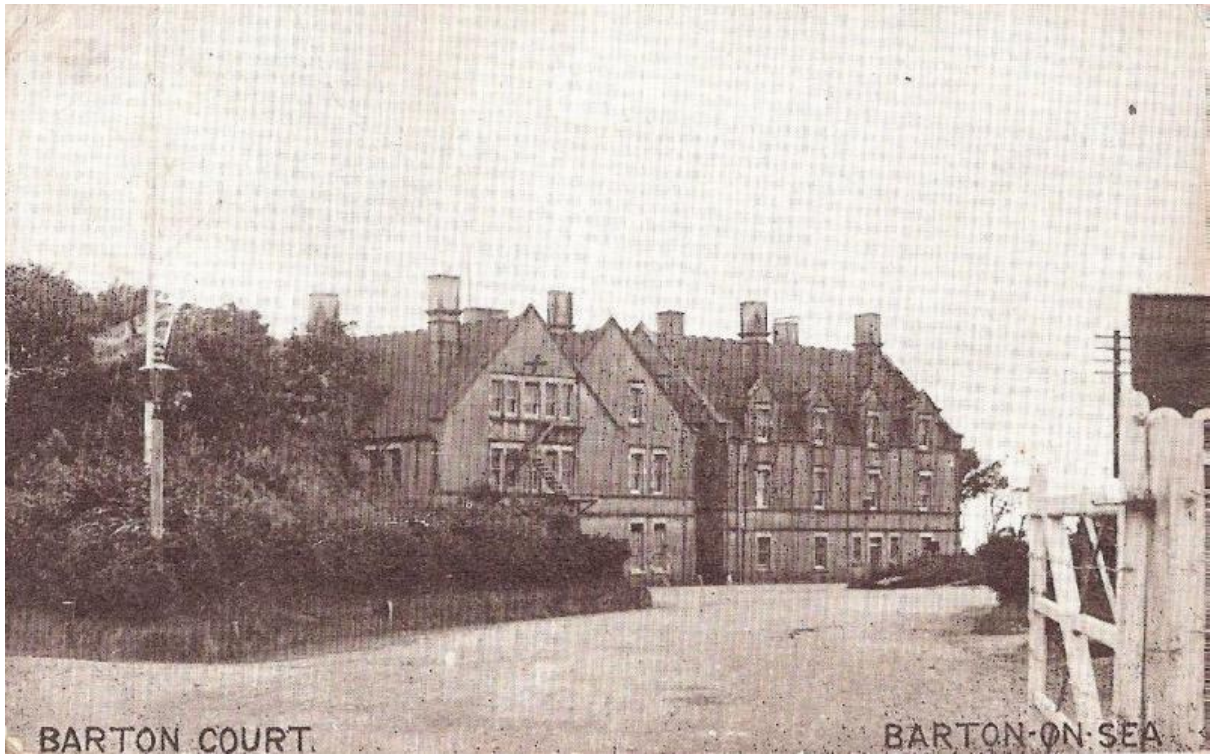
This picture shows David Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions and then Prime Minister visiting Indian troops on the Somme in 1916.

The Pavilion in Brighton was an Indian Army military hospital



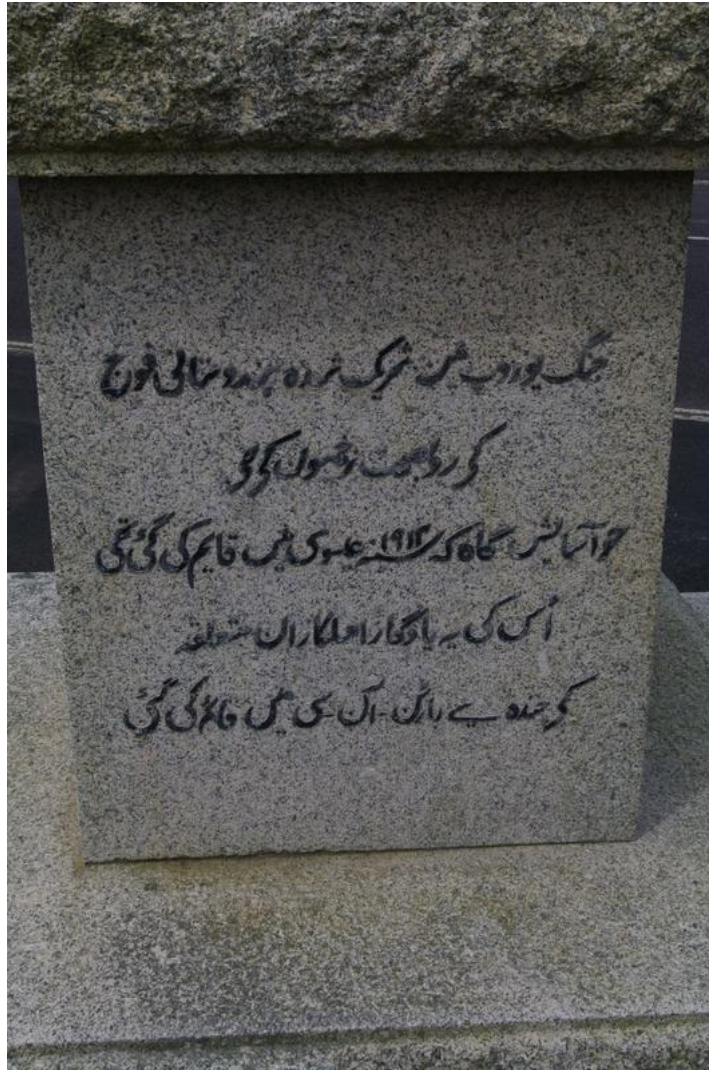
The men were very well looked after as the British government wanted to send a signal back to India that they were taken care of, if injured. In total 4360 patients were treated here

The British were very conscious of the religious differences with separate sections for Muslim and Hindu soldiers, lessons having been learned from the time of the Indian Mutiny. This was particularly important with respect to food preparation. There was also a large hotel in Bournemouth which was used as a military hospital for injured Indian troops.



There was another hospital at Barton on Sea and there is a commemorative obelisk across from the building used for the hospital.





The inscription is in Urdu and commemorates the establishment of this hospital for wounded soldiers of the Indian army



This is the Commonwealth Memorial and Gates on Constitution Hill in London which was unveiled in 2002 and commemorates the 5 million Commonwealth soldiers in both World Wars.



This pillar shows the names of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, remembering the present day areas from where those troops had come from.



In the roof of the rotunda are the names of those who won the Victoria Cross and George Cross
 The Shah Jahan Mosque in Oriental Road, Woking is the first purpose-built mosque in the UK, built in 1889 and was a significant place in the Great War Indian Muslim congregated here



The Khatri Memorial in Brighton was unveiled in 1921



The Chattri Memorial was unveiled by the Prince of Wales in 1921 with an inscription that reads: 'To the memory of all the Indian soldiers who gave their lives for their King-Emperor in the Great War, this monument, erected on the site of the funeral pyre where the Hindus and Sikhs who died in hospital at Brighton, passed through the fire, is in grateful admiration and brotherly affection'

After describing some other memorials in India and Pakistan, Dr Malik concluded and there then followed a lively discussion with some interesting questions - well responded to by Irfan, before Branch Chair Tony Bolton brought the evening to an end with a well-deserved Vote of Thanks to our speaker, Dr Irfan Malik

The Grieving Mother

Reverend Langley walked from his St Mary's vicarage to an unfamiliar address in Elsternwick. He opened the picket-fence gate, walked up the path, and knocked on the door.

Widow Mary Reid answered. Langley guided Mary into a room, sat her down, and shared the 'sad tidings' that her son Lindsay had died on Gallipoli. Reverend Langley offered Mary words of comfort, but she would have no memory of them, and would not recall how long he stayed or when he left.

The news of Lindsay's death overwhelmed Mary. Everything seemed swept away by the hand of fate. She struggled to comprehend how, in her declining years, she would cope without Lindsay's much-needed financial support.

In Mary's grief she drew the curtains and took to bed. Reverend Langley attempted to nurse Mary through her grief with soon-to-be familiar rhetoric about a noble sacrifice. Mary understood that Victorian sensibilities meant that displays of emotion in public were frowned upon.

Mary sent a letter to the 'military authorities' that explained her dilemma: 'I depended upon my poor boy to support me during my declining years – am I not entitled to a pension?'

Mary duly applied for a pension. After months of silence, the claims office advised Mary that her application had been rejected because an investigation showed 'the claimant was not dependent on the deceased soldier'.

In her last letter to Base Records, in 1932, 82-year-old Mary sought financial support for her growing medical needs. Base Records curtly advised that her request had been passed on to another department, 'who will no doubt communicate with you in due course'.

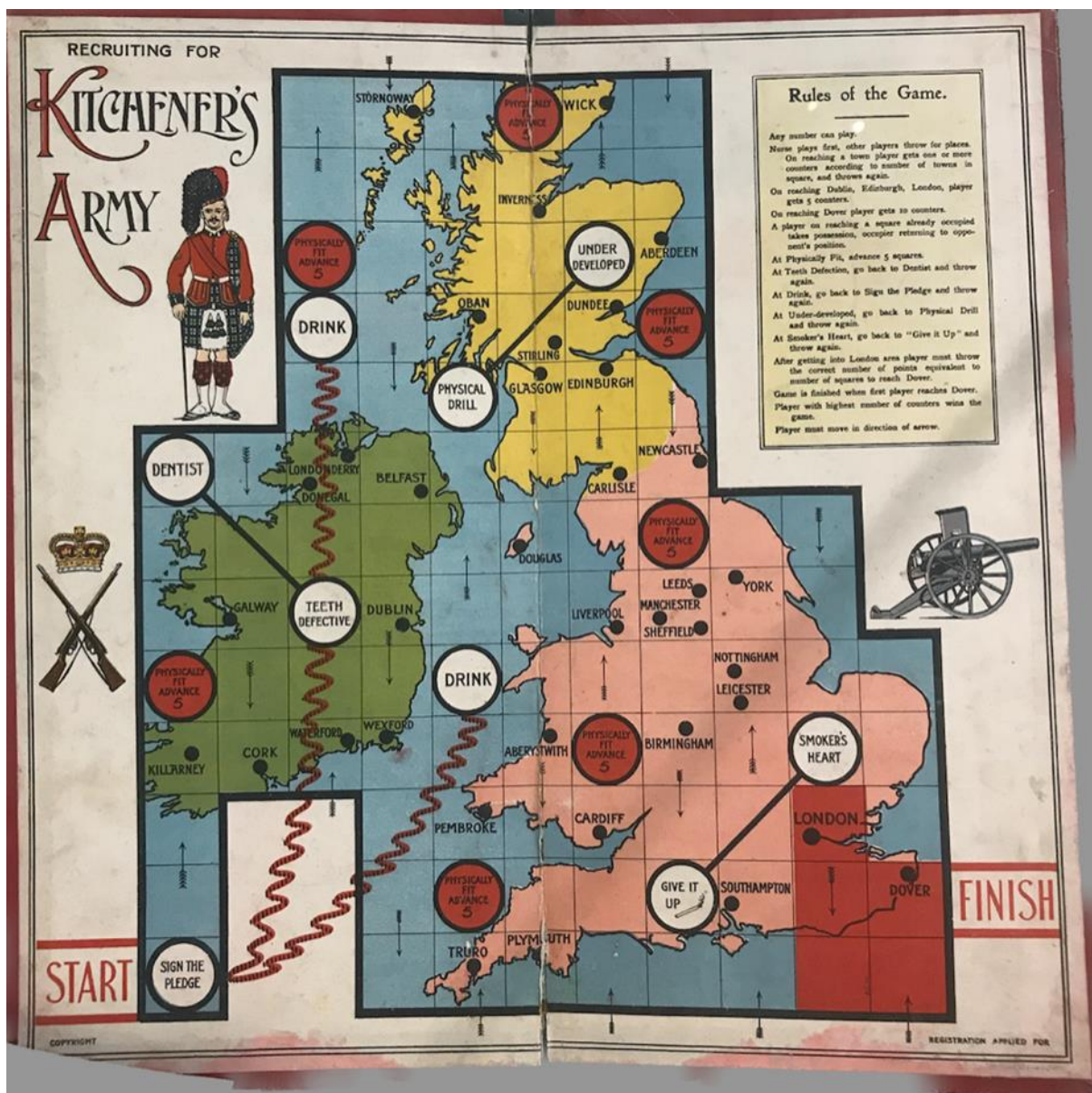
Mary died in 1942.

The Garden of the Grieving Mother in Ballarat commemorates the grieved, like Mary, who lost loved ones during the war.



From Edwin Astill

Saw this board game in the Radnorshire Museum at Llandrindod Wells. A form of Snakes and Ladders. Landing on a physically fit square advanced you. Being unfit, having bad teeth or smoking dropped you down to get the problem fixed. If demon drink was the issue you had to go all the way back to start. The aim - to get to France.



‘The Hand that Fate Deals.’

Robert Archer was in a bad way. It was September 1917, and a battle raged all around him, as he lay, wounded, in the Passchendaele mud.

His injuries were serious: shrapnel had torn into his temple, leg and arm. The two German prisoners tasked with carrying him to an aid station had bolted back to their own lines.

He lay out there for two days, until a fellow soldier reported that ‘Bob Archer is out there and still breathing.’ It prompted three mates to rescue him.

Yet it was too late save his sight. He was completely blind. Both eyes were removed and he was sent to St Dunstan’s in England to recover.

But it could have been worse. Robert’s leather wallet had stopped a bullet. Here, his daughter Joan Matthews peers through the bullet-hole shot through the image of her aunt.

After returning to Australia, Robert remained close friends with his battlefield rescuers, and Joan later married Jim, the son of one of the rescuers, Reuben Matthews.

Joan remembered, that despite his blindness, her father lived a full and happy life, mostly at Sandringham, in Melbourne, and died aged 85 in 1983.





World War I ammunition dump discovered in Zonnebeke

An ammunition dump from the First World War has been discovered in the Schipstraat in Zonnebeke. Firefighters received a call at 1 pm on Wednesday. The caller had reported a smoke bomb that needed extinguishing. However, when they arrived fire fighters found an ammunition dump containing 38 bombs some of which were possibly leaking poisonous gas. On their arrival at the Schipstraat in the West Flemish village of Zonnebeke fire fighters soon realised that the site was ammunitions dump from WWI. The bomb disposal service DOVO was called. One DOVO team dealt with a smoking phosgene bomb and two additional bomb disposal teams went to the scene in case any more of the 38 bombs found at the site started leaking.

Toxic gas

Phosgene is a poisonous gas that was used as a weapon during World War I. Three houses downwind of the ammunition dump were evacuated. A mother, her two young children and two neighbours had to leave their homes. The fire service cordoned off the area. Kristof Louagie of the Westhoek Fire Service told VRT News that “There is always a risk of explosion. But here the greatest danger lies in the possibility that more bombs will start leaking”. As phosgene gas is so toxic, 3 DOVO bomb disposal teams were sent to the site to clear up the ammunition dump.