

National Army Museum Information Sheet 1:

Researching soldiers of the East India Company's Armies and the Indian Army



Introduction

Although from 1754 British Army regiments and formations were stationed in India, the largest number of troops in British pay in the subcontinent were those serving in the armies of the East India Company and later the Government of India. Before the imposition of direct rule by the British Government in 1858 British possessions in India were run by the East India Company, a commercial undertaking established in 1600. For administrative purposes it divided India into three presidencies – Bengal, Madras and Bombay – each of which had its own army. Apart from a small number of regiments recruited entirely from Europeans (including men from the Continent as well as the United Kingdom), most of these armies comprised men recruited in India commanded by European officers, the vast majority from the British Isles. The wholly European regiments were transferred to the British Army in 1862, and the Indian Army began to commission Indians as officers in the interwar period. On the partition of India in August 1947 the Army was divided between the two independent dominions of India and Pakistan.

Research at the National Army Museum: the Templer Study Centre (TSC)

Researchers who wish to view material held by the National Army Museum may do so in the Templer Study Centre (www.nam.ac.uk/tsc). This contains one of the largest collections of books and archives relating to the pre-1914 Army in this country, including all the published works mentioned in this leaflet. The TSC is open from 10.00am to 5.00pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and the first and third Saturdays of each month. It is closed from Sunday to Tuesday. If you do not already hold a Reader's

Ticket, please bring with you some form of identification which has your name and address on it, such as a driving licence card, or a passport with an additional utility bill as proof of address.

Published sources

Depending upon their periods of service it is possible to obtain a great deal of information about the careers of European officers and warrant officers, and Indian officers, both commissioned and viceroy's commissioned officers, from various contemporary published lists, in particular the *East India Register* 1800–58, *Bengal Army Lists* 1781–1889, *Madras Army Lists* 1759–1895, *Bombay Army Lists* 1759–1898, *India Lists* 1861–76 and *Indian Army Lists* 1876–1947. Also to be noted are privately-published compilations such as J Philippart, *The East India Military Calendar; containing the services of General and Field officers of the Indian Army*, London (3 vols, 1823–8) and E Dodwell and J S Miles, *Alphabetical List of the officers of the Bengal Army ... from the year 1760 to the year 1834*, London (1838)

A more recent publication, V C P Hodson's *List of officers of the Bengal Army 1758–1834*, London (4 vols, 1927–8, 1946–7) is a good source of family and genealogical information. A card index which he began of biographical and service data on officers of all of the Company's Armies has been continued to 1947 by other researchers, principal among them Lieutenant-Colonel H K Percy-Smith, to include officers who joined the Indian Army from Sandhurst, chaplains, warrant officers and some Emergency Commissioned Officers of the Second World War. The Hodson Index is in the collections of the National Army Museum which also has a good collection of the lists mentioned in the previous paragraph and 3400 questionnaires completed in the 1960s, 70s and 80s by former Indian Army officers about their careers and families.

Original records

Surviving documents in the UK relating to personnel of the EIC and Indian Armies are among the India Office

Records in the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library. They are described in A Farrington's *Guide to the records of the India Office Military Department*, London (1982), which is also available on line at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/.

I A Baxter, *Baxter's Guide, Biographical sources in the India Office Records*, London (3rd edn. 2004) is an essential guide to anyone researching individuals from the UK who lived in India.

The following notes describe the main sources of information available at the British Library for those seeking further information than can be obtained from material available at the National Army Museum.

British officers

Registers of applicants for cadetships in the EIC armies 1775–1860 survive in L/MIL/9/255-69, and papers (application forms) from 1789–1860 (L/MIL/9/107-254). Applications for Queen's/King's India Cadetships at Sandhurst 1858–1930, Sandhurst Cadets 1898–1940 and Wellington and Quetta Cadets 1915–18 will be found in L/MIL/9/292-332.

Records of service covering c1794–c1814: (IOR/O/6/1-20) and 1799–1835: (IOR/D/153-252) are available for the EIC Armies. Service Army Lists contain detailed information from 1762–1859 for officers who had not died or retired before 1830: Bengal, L/MIL/10/20-69; Madras L/MIL/11/38-60; Bombay L/MIL/12/67-84. For the Indian Army there are the following series of service records which were compiled when an officer returned to UK on leave: 1860–93: Bengal L/MIL/10/75-102; Madras L/MIL/11/73-92; Bombay, L/MIL/12/88-101; 1892–1916: L/MIL/14/1-49; c1900–50: L/MIL/14/239+.

Indian officers

Other than a few files in L/MIL/14 there are no records in the UK relating to Indians who held commissions in the pre-Independence Indian Army

European departmental and warrant officers

Records of service of conductors and warrant officers

will be found among the officers' records in L/MIL/10, 11, 12 and 14 described above.

European other ranks

Depot registers describing recruits survive from 1817–60 (L/MIL/9/1-46). There are muster rolls and casualty lists for Bengal, 1716–1865 (L/MIL/10/130-200); Madras 1762–1861 (L/MIL/11/109-69); and Bombay 1708–1865 (L/MIL/12/117-97); registers of soldiers in the presidencies: Bengal 1788–1860 (L/MIL/10/122-29); Madras 1786–1860 (L/MIL/11/101-08); and Bombay 1795–1862 (L/MIL/12/109-16).

Non-commissioned officers of the British Army serving with Indian Army regiments 1859–1907 are listed in L/MIL/10/201-52 (Bengal), L/MIL/11/186-231 (Madras) and L/MIL/12/198-280 (Bombay).

Indian other ranks

There are no records in the UK relating to Indian other ranks. Surviving records are understood to be held by the National Archives of India.

Medals and awards

Rolls listing recipients of campaign medals from the Army of India Medal (1799) to Egypt (1882) are in L/MIL/5/42-141. These lists include some Indian other ranks. At the National Archives at Kew references to some Indian Army personnel who served in the First World War appear in the index to the medal rolls for that campaign, and there are rolls for Indian Army officers in WO 339/2347-52.

Researching a soldier's regiment

There are published histories of many regiments of the Indian Army, details of which may be found in R Perkins, *Regiments; Regiments and Corps of the British Empire and Commonwealth 1758–1993*, Newton Abbot (1994). In addition to providing background information of the regiment's activities while an individual was serving, those covering the First World War shed light on the experiences of Indian other ranks during the campaign.

Useful books

A J Guy & P B Boyden, *Soldiers of the Raj, The Indian Army 1600–1947*, London (1997)

T A Heathcote, *The military in British India: The development of British land forces in South Asia, 1600–1947*, Manchester & New York (1995)

S L Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour, The Indian Army from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century*, New Delhi (1999)

B Mollo, *The Indian Army*, Poole (1986)

Useful addresses

British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB
www.bl.uk

National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew,
Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

National Archives of India,
Janpath, New Delhi 110001, India
www.nationalarchives.gov.in

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