



Sikhs in World War I Presentation

Karamsar School
8 November 2014



by Rav Singh



Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly



*“When you go home tell them of us and say:
For your tomorrow we gave our today”*



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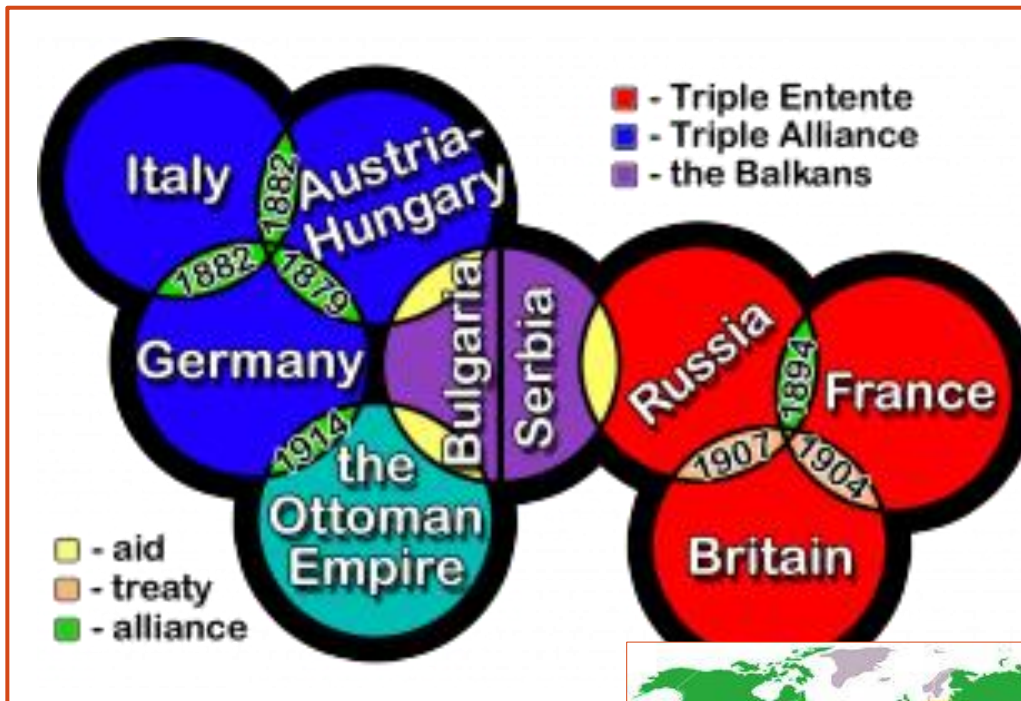
The Outbreak of War in 1914





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The Outbreak of War in 1914





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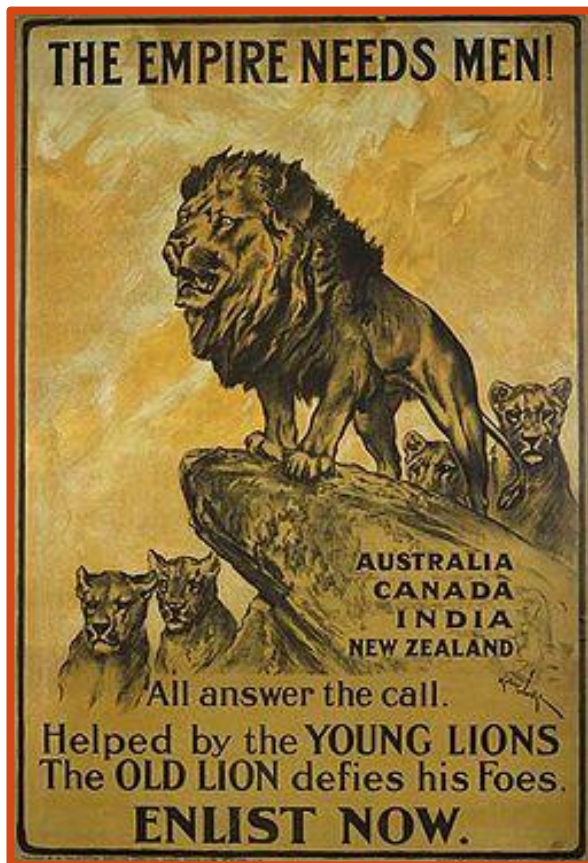
Volunteer Army – Posters in Britain





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Volunteer Army – British Empire





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Arrival on the Western Front

from **26 September 1914** Indian Expedition Force A





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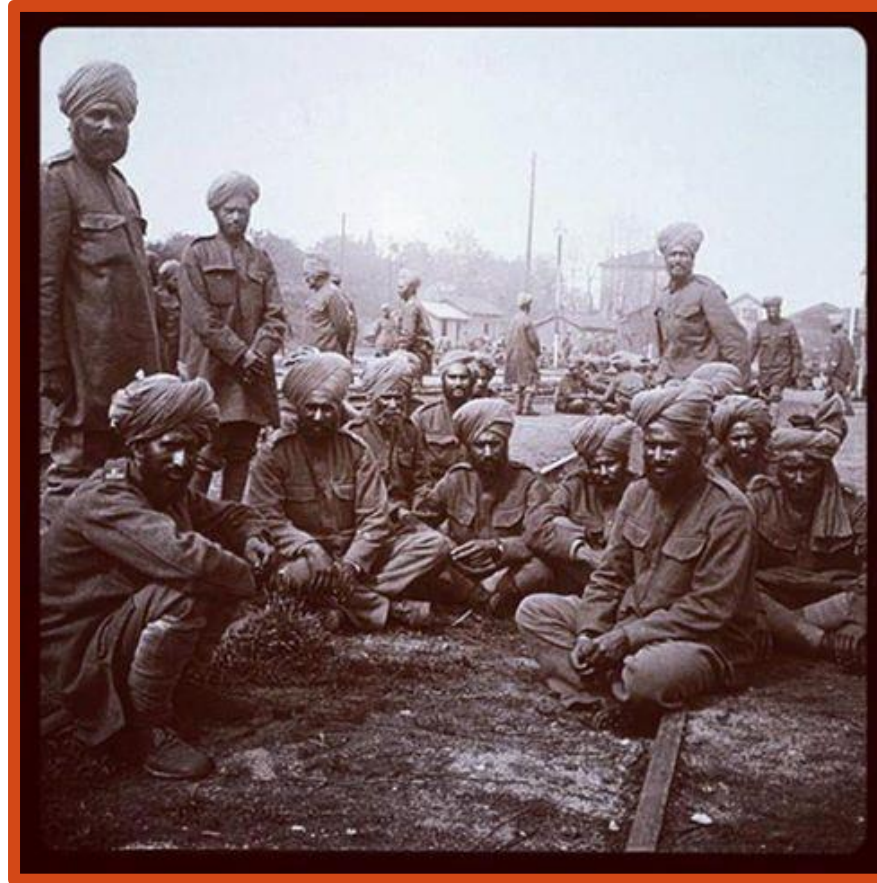




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Arrival on the Western Front

from **26 September 1914** Indian Expedition Force A



Source: www.sikhsinthearmy.co.uk



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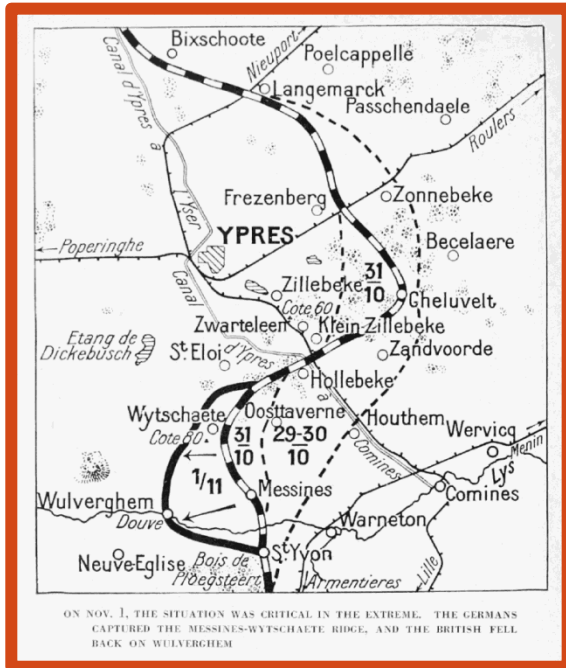
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Wytschaete and Messines, Belgium 25 October 1914 Indian Expedition Force A





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South of Neuve Chapelle, France
28 October 1914 Indian Expedition Force A



An artist's impression of XLVII Sikhs attack against Germans in Neuve Chapelle, France (October 28, 1914)



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Festubert, Belgium

23 November 1914 Indian Expedition Force A



[Printed specially for the occasion]

LANCE-NAIK SAID ANBAR, HAYILDAR YAKUB KHAN AND SEPPOY DAULAT KHAN, WITH CAPTAIN ACWORTH BOMBING THE ENEMY AS THEY PROCEEDED ALONG THEIR TRENCHES.

At Festubert on November 23rd and 24th, 1914, Lance-Naik Saïd Anbar, Hayildar Yakub Khan and Sepoy Daulat Khan of the 17th Sikh Regiment (Frontier Force), accompanied Captain Acworth along the main trench, throwing bombs over the wire as they proceeded, and thus having done so, retreated. For their conspicuous gallantry they were awarded the Indian Order of Merit.

“And there is an expenditure, too great for words, in this country, of black and red pepper (i.e. Hindustani and British troops). You are wise and for the rest you will reply without fail to this letter. [...] The black pepper which has come from India has all been used up, and to carry on with I will (i.e., they will) now send for more men, otherwise there would be very little red pepper remaining, because the black is hard and there is plenty of it. And the black pepper (here) is somewhat less than the red, and this water is not right without black pepper. Now you must understand, and what you can see with the eye, is written; you must multiply it all by 45.”

Aware of censorship, a soldier would often use coded or euphemistic language. Here he conveys his shock at the large number of casualties, which led him (and many others) to believe that they were used as ‘cannon fodder’.



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Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, France

16 December 1914 Indian Expedition Force A

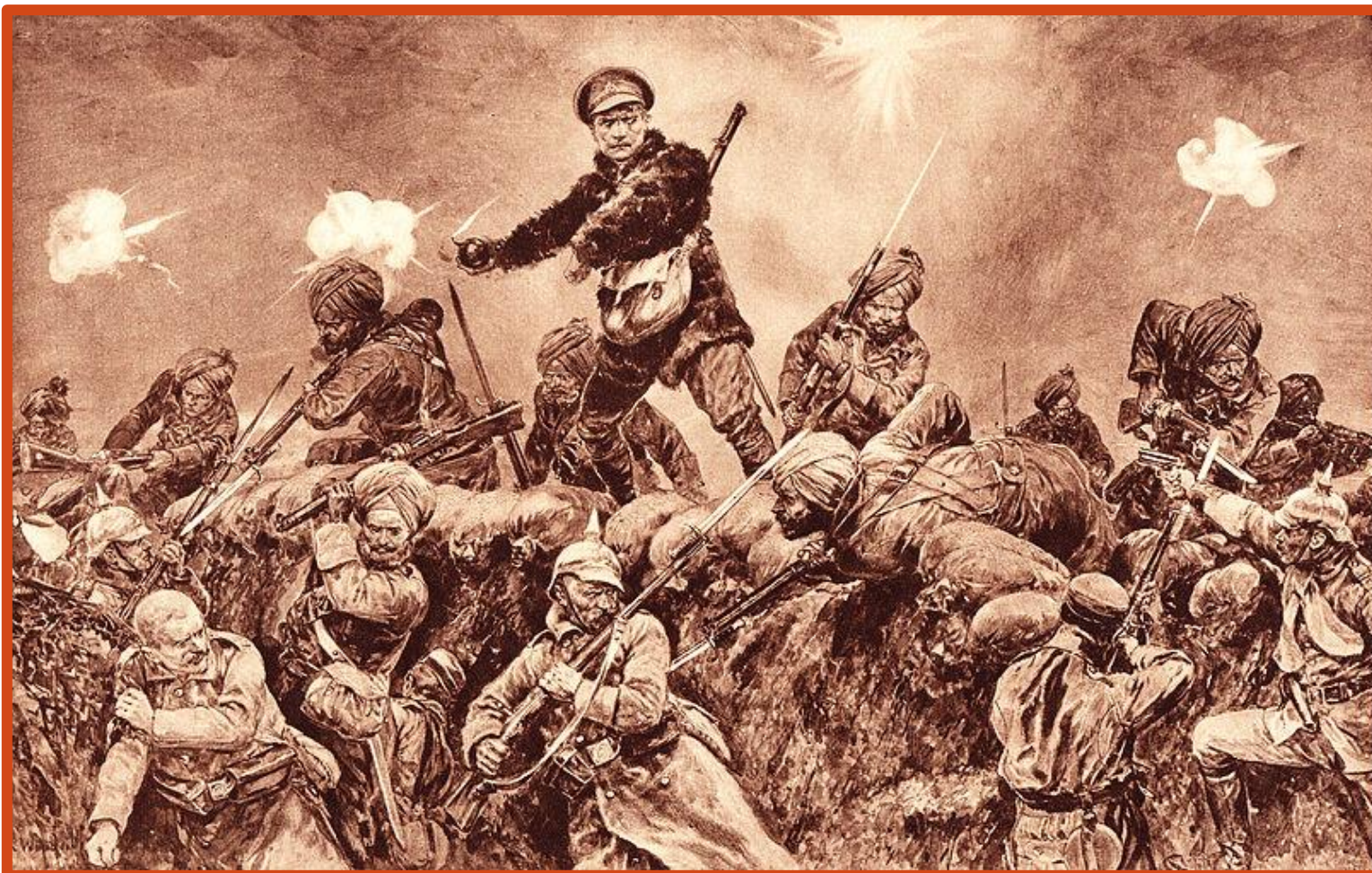




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Neuve Chapelle, France

10 March 1915 Indian Expedition Force A





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

Neuve Chapelle, France

10 March 1915 Indian Expedition Force A

“The battle is being carried on very bitterly. In the Lahore Division only 300 men are left. Some are dead, some wounded. The division is finished. Think of it – in taking 50 yards of German trench, 50,000 men are killed. When we attack they direct a terrific fire on us – thousands of men die daily. It looks as if not a single man can remain alive on either side – then (when none is left) there will be peace.”

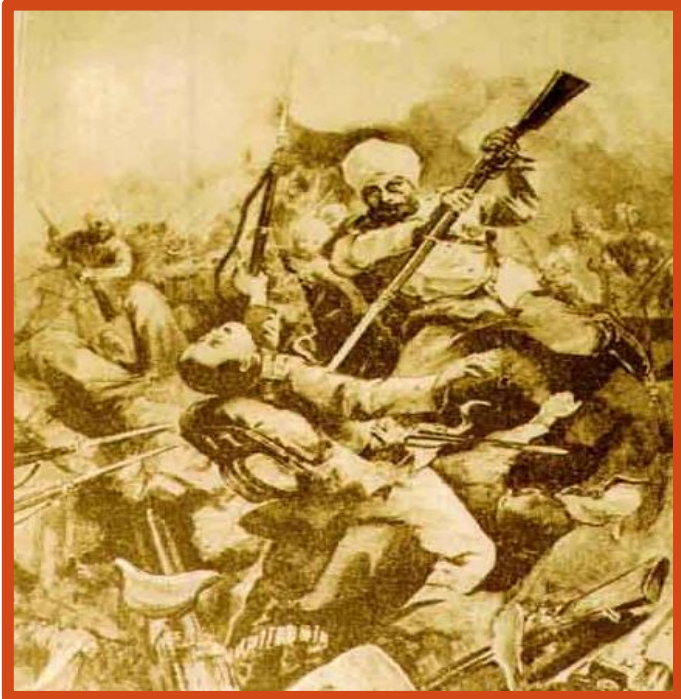
When the German attack they are killed in the same way. For us men it is a bad state of affairs here. Only those return from the battlefield that is slightly wounded. No one else is carried off. Even Sahib (English officers) is not lifted away. The battleground resounds with cries..... Here thing are in a very bad way. “

Isher Singh (Sikh, 59th Rifles) to a friend (50th Punjabi, Punjab) wrote in Gurmukhi on 1st May 1915 from Indian General Hospital, Brighton describing the war of New Chappelle.



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Neuve Chapelle, France 10 - 13 March 1915



Sikh soldiers charging the German Trenches at Neuve Chapelle between 10 and 13 March 1915 (from a local newspaper of that time).



Manta Singh

Manta Singh was part of the Indian Corps that played an important role in the battle for Neuve-Chapelle in March, 1915.

He was born in the Punjab and joined the 2nd Sikh Royal Infantry after leaving school. Manta Singh's regiment was part of the Indian Force sent to France.

On the first day of the battle, British and Indian troops captured the town. However, the Germans counter-attacked with 16,000 reinforcements. In three days' fighting, the British and Indian troops suffered 13,000 casualties. The Allies' ammunition ran out, and the troops had to retreat. 5,021 Indian soldiers - about 20 per cent of the Indian contingent - were killed in heavy fighting.

Manta was injured in action after helping to save the life of an injured officer. Manta was sent back to England, to a hospital in Brighton but his legs had become infected with gangrene and he died from blood poisoning just a few weeks later.





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Neuve Chapelle, France

“The Sikhs did not turn even their noses. They were keen for the fight, and where one man fell, another from behind stood in his place. And we took pleasure in the battle... Until now God has preserved us, but there is no hope of any one of us returning to India. This is no war, but the destruction of the world.”

*From a Sikh soldier in hospital, England, to his friend in India
(Gurmukhi, dated 31/3/1915)*



Withdrawal from the Western Front, 1915

- The enormous casualties that the officers and men had suffered in less than a year, exacerbated by the difficult climatic conditions of Flanders and Northern France.
- Heavy losses of experienced British Indian Army officers in the fighting were keenly felt by the Indian troops. Many of their replacements did not speak the Indian soldier's languages, and had little understanding of the traditional Indian Army ways.
- The mutiny by Indian Sikh troops in Singapore in February 1915, and the subsequent execution by shooting of 47 of them, had also unsettled the Indian troops.
- Wisely, it was decided to withdraw the Indian Corps infantry from the Western Front and relocate them in areas to which they were more suited climatically and this took place in the latter months of 1915.
- Two Indian Cavalry Brigades remained on the Western Front until the end of the war, both serving with distinction.



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Neuve-Chapelle Indian Memorial



Sunny Dewal: PremierShoot.co.uk ©

Photo: Sundeep Dewal. PremierShoot.co.uk

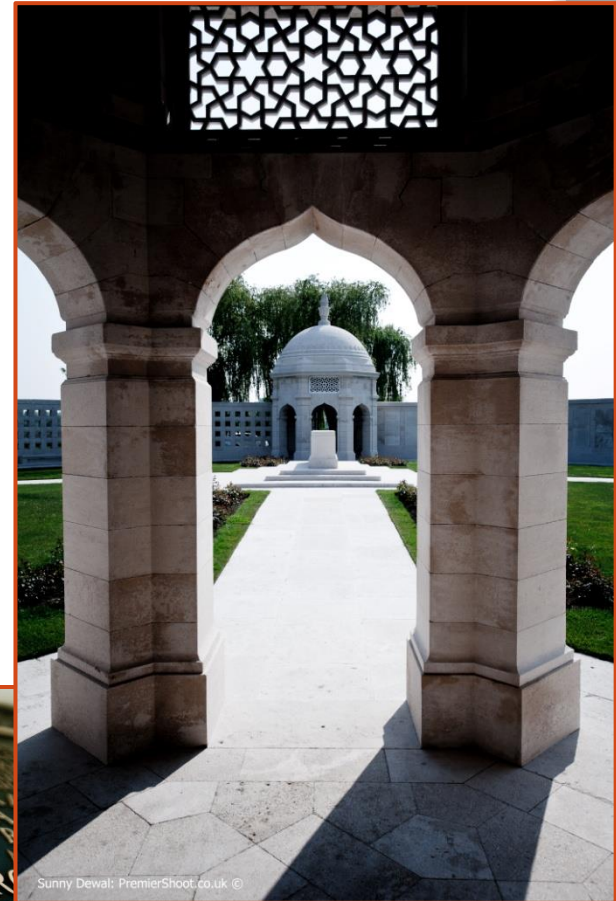


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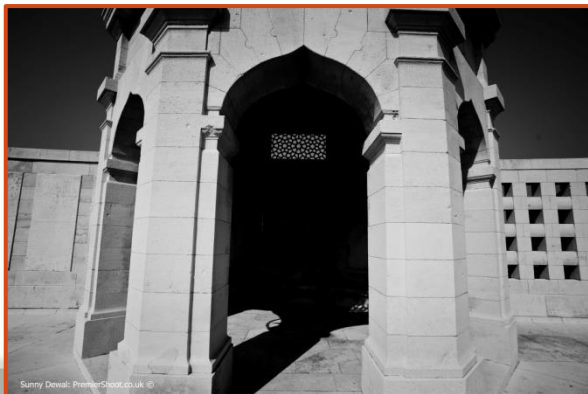
Neuve-Chapelle Indian Memorial



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Indian Expedition Force B East African Campaign



"It was the dark days of 1914 when our men had to face mortars, hand grenades, high explosive shells for which they themselves were not provided. They could reply only with their valour, their rifles and two machine guns per battalion. And yet they did it."

*Lt. General Sir James Wilcox,
Commander of the British Indian Corps*



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Indian Expedition Force D Mesopotamia Campaign





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Indian Expedition Force D Mesopotamia Campaign





Mesopotamia Campaign

Battle of Ctesiphon – 22-26 Nov 1915

At 9 p.m. the 6th Division and the 30th Brigade began to advance for the attack on Ctesiphon. We moved noiselessly. Some twenty thousand men marching and not a sound. Even the horses that were pulling the cannon and mules of the transport carts were quiet. Even they seemed to understand that we were in enemy territory. The earth was soft and dry along the route so our boots, and the hooves of the animals, made no sound. It was almost unnatural – so many men and animals on the move but not the slightest sound.

'On To Baghdad' by Sisir Sarbadhikari (Calcutta, 1958)



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Mesopotamia Campaign

Battle of Ctesiphon – 22-26 Nov 1915



“No matter where we went, the arch of Ctesiphon was always visible....”



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Mesopotamia Campaign

Battle of Ctesiphon – 22-26 Nov 1915

By this time the fighting had started in earnest: the boom of cannons could be heard continuously. Battalions were advancing one after another, right before us. In front of us were the 66th Punjabis; now they moved too. We understood that it our turn was coming.

We began to advance slowly. Now there was no sound other than the boom of cannon fire and the report of rifles. We began to advance, with the whine of bullets passing over our heads and shells exploding behind us. We had to advance with great care. After every few moves we would have to fall into a 'lie down' position. In the meantime shells and bullets were falling like hail, all around us. Many were killed and wounded.

'On To Baghdad' by Sisir Sarbadhikari (Calcutta, 1958)



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Mesopotamia Campaign

Battle of Ctesiphon – 22-26 Nov 1915

“What I saw after I woke up on the morning of the 23rd is beyond my powers of description. On all sides, the corpses of men and animals. In some places they seemed to be in each others’ arms; in some places men had been pinned under animals and were lying there, groaning. In front of the trenches, along the lines of barbed wire, was where the greatest number of wounded lay. In some places men were hanging from the wires; some were dead (they were the lucky ones) and some were still alive. Here there was a severed hand hanging from the wire; there a foot. One man was hanging on the wires with all his entrails tumbling out. In some trenches four or five men had died with their limbs thrown over each other – Turkish, Hindustani, British, Gurkha, all mixed up together.”

‘On To Baghdad’ by Sisir Sarbadhikari (Calcutta, 1958)



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Mesopotamia Campaign

Battle of Ctesiphon – 22-26 Nov 1915

I saw a Sikh sitting with a smile on his face – his white teeth were shining in his black beard. I thought, why are you smiling at a time like this, have you lost your head? When I approached I saw that he had been dead a while. He must have grimaced in pain as he was dying.

'On To Baghdad' by Sisir Sarbadhikari (Calcutta, 1958)



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Mesopotamia Campaign



Source: Imperial War Museum



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Mesopotamia Campaign



Source: Imperial War Museum



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Mesopotamia Campaign

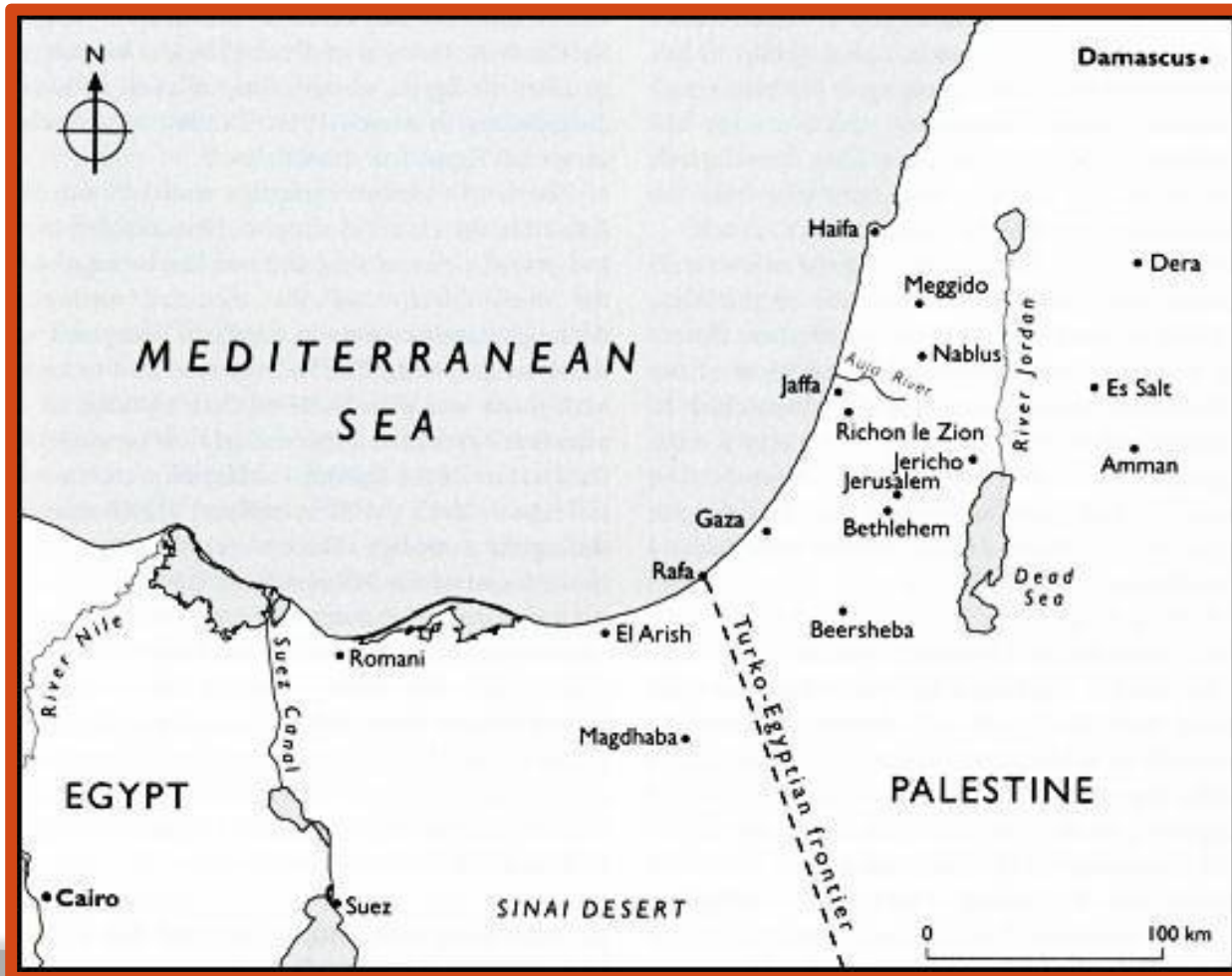


Source: Imperial War Museum



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Indian Expedition Force E Sinai and Palestine Campaign





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

Indian Expedition Force E Sinai and Palestine Campaign

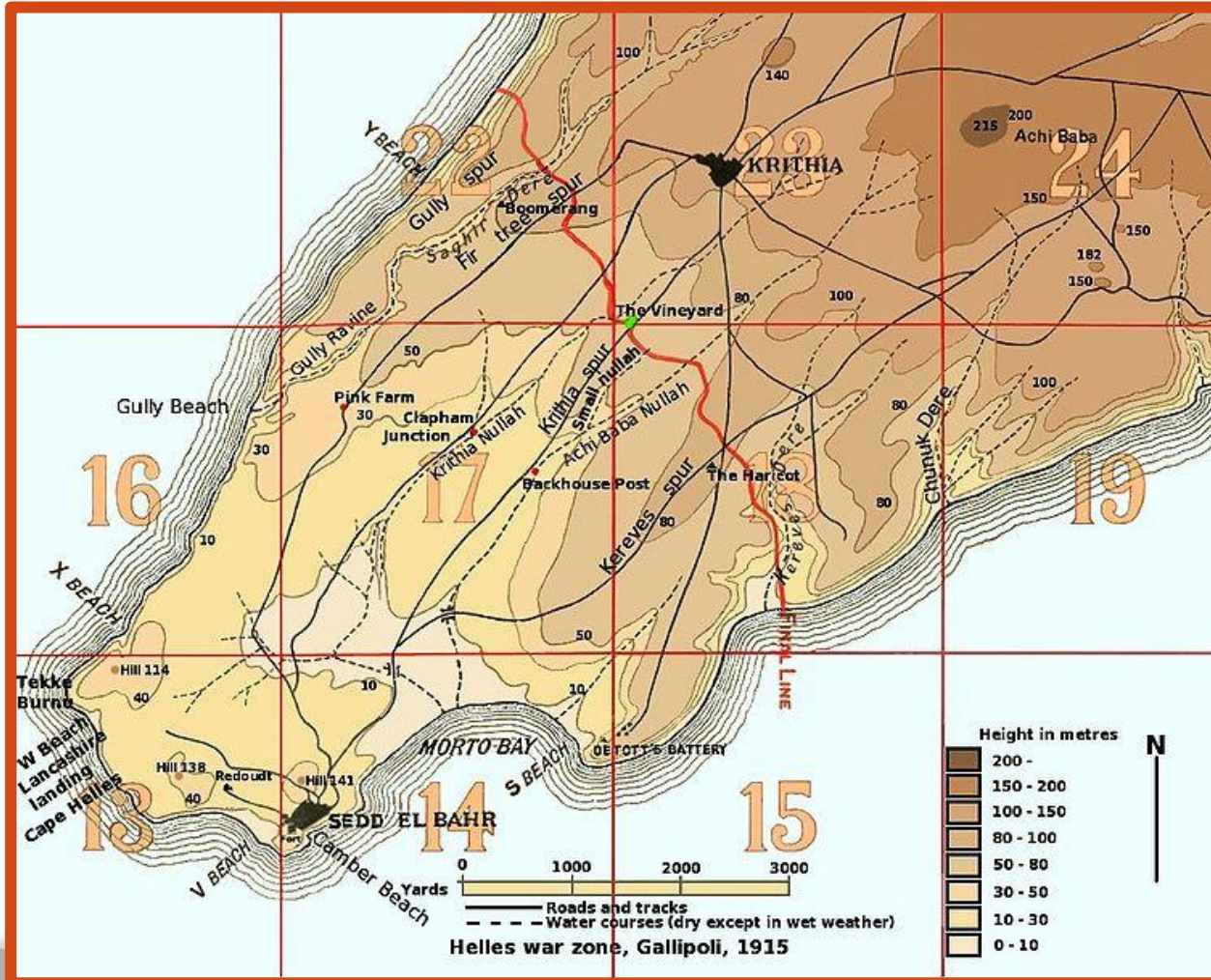


British and Indian officers of the 18th Lancers (Indian Army) at Tel el Kebir on arrival from France in April 1918



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Indian Expedition Force G Gallipoli Campaign





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

Indian Expedition Force G Gallipoli Campaign





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

Indian Expedition Force G Gallipoli Campaign





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

Indian Expedition Force G Gallipoli Campaign





Sikhs and WW1- Karamsar School Assembly

"In the highest sense of the word extreme gallantry has been shown by this fine Battalion. In spite of these tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground gained was given up and not a single straggler came back. The ends of the enemy's trenches into leading into the ravine were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at close quarters; and the glaxis slope is thickly dotted with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of the Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by them on the 4th June has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa. Their devotion to duty and their splendid loyalty to, their orders and to their leaders make a record their nation should look back upon with pride for many generations."



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Neuve-Chapelle Indian Memorial



Photo: Sundeep Dewal. PremierShoot.co.uk