

## 4/2 GR (The Sirmoor Rifles) History - Relevant Notes

(gleaned from Col HGW Shakespear's Book on the Regimental History of 2 GR)

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1. On **01 Feb 1941**, the **2 GR Regimental Centre** at Garhi Cantt, **Dehra Dun** was instructed by Army HQs to raise its **4<sup>th</sup> Battalion**. The First Entry in the new Raising's War Diary Book was dated **03 Feb 1941**.

2. As its 'nucleus' and hardcore, the following were immediately transferred from the Training Companies lot in the Regimental Centre:-

(a) Ex **1/2 GR** - **4 x JCOs & 116 x OR.**

(b) Ex **2/2 GR** - **4 x JCOs & 116 x OR.**

Later, both these Senior Battalions contributed **3 x JCOs & 77 x OR** as 'First Draft'.

(As **3/2 GR** had already been raised in **June 1940**, the Regimental Centre & Senior Battalions had given it also similar manpower support at that time.)

**466 x Recruits** who had completed **8 weeks of training** were also posted to this New Raising.

3. Major **Oscar De' Torville Lovett** of 1/2 GR was given the responsibility to raise this Battalion on promotion. But he represented to the Colonel of Regiment and got himself posted back to **1/2 GR** as its CO, after two weeks. By the end of the War, he rose in rank to become a Major General. Major **HFC Armstrong** of **2/2 GR** who had been sent out of the Regiment on promotion to raise **4/3 GR**, then had to be called back and given charge of this new Raising **4/2 GR**. His Team of officers were:-

(a) **Major AW Gascoigne** - ex **2/2 GR** - 2IC & OC 'C' Company.

(b) **Capt CFD Elliot** - ex **1/2 GR** - Adjnt & OC 'D' Company.

(c) **Lt FMPC Cobb** - ex **2/2 GR** - Sp & Adm Companies.

(d) **Lt AG Hayter** - ex **1/2 GR** - 'A' Company.

(e) **Lt MCV Newsome** - ex **2/2 GR** - 'B' Company.

(f) **2/Lt RF Moss** - - 'C' Company.

(g) **2/Lt T Tait** - - 'D' Company.

(h) **Capt PR Collins** joined 4/2 GR in Dec 1941, and was assigned to 'B' Company.

(Thus the defining characteristic of 4/2<sup>nd</sup> Officers became 'achievement-based', like those of 2/2<sup>nd</sup> GR!)

4. **Subedar Major Guman Singh Sahi** came from **1/2 GR**. (Thus the defining characteristic of 4/2<sup>nd</sup> JCOs became 'steadfast-loyalty', like those of 1/2<sup>nd</sup> GR!)

5. The first worthwhile duty given to this New Raising was to escort Italian PWs from Bombay to various Internment Centres in India, in Dec 1941. In **Jan 1942**, the Unit moved to **Manzai** in NWFP to replace **2/13 FF Rifles** (now 8 FF).

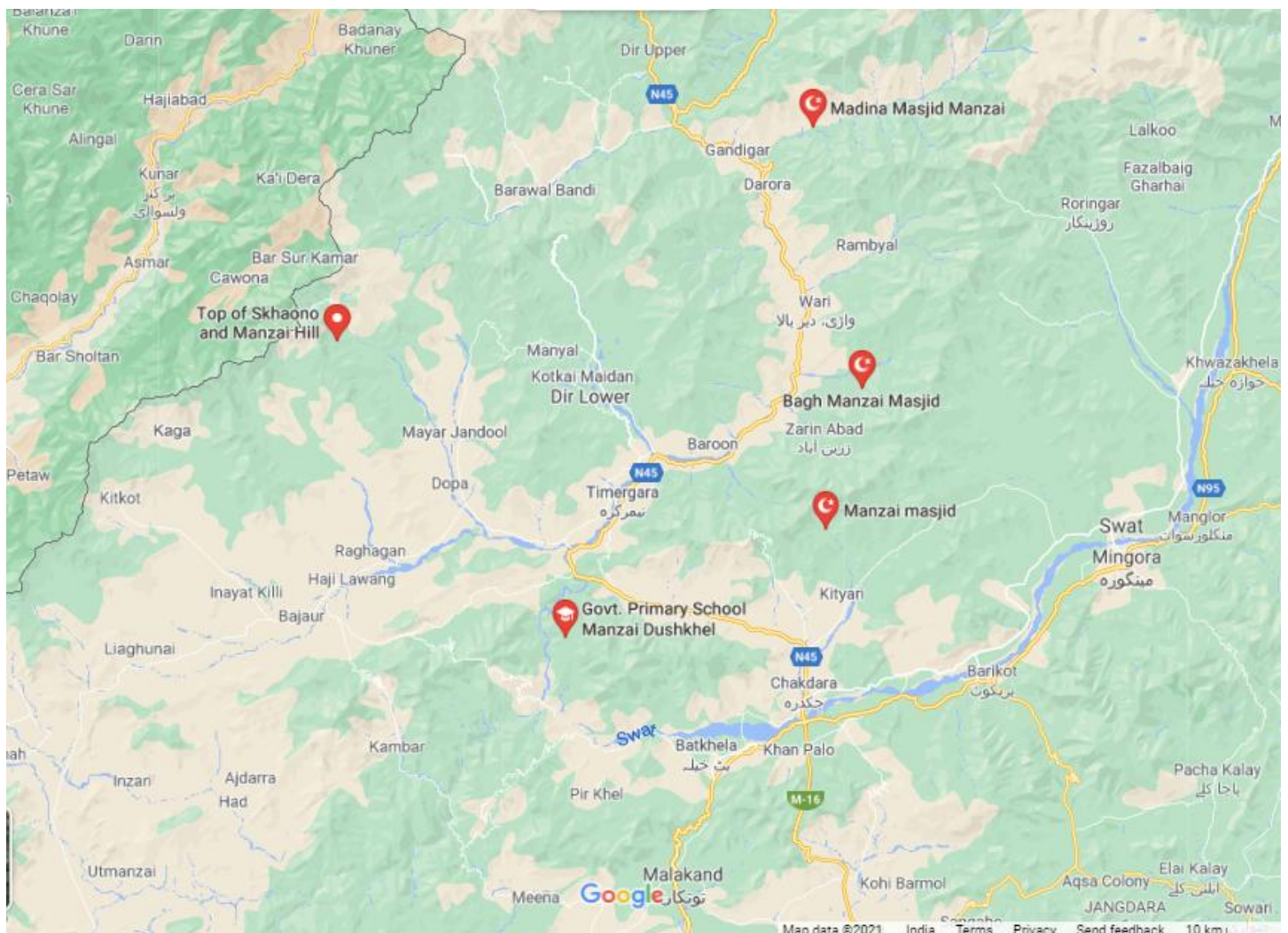
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## Manzai Tenure (12 Jan 1942 to 03 Aug 1942)

Now called **Lower Dir District**, it is a district of **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province** in **Pakistan**. **Timergara** city is the district headquarter and largest town, while the other small towns are **Chakdara**, **Munda**, **Samar Bagh**, **Khall** and **Kumbar**.

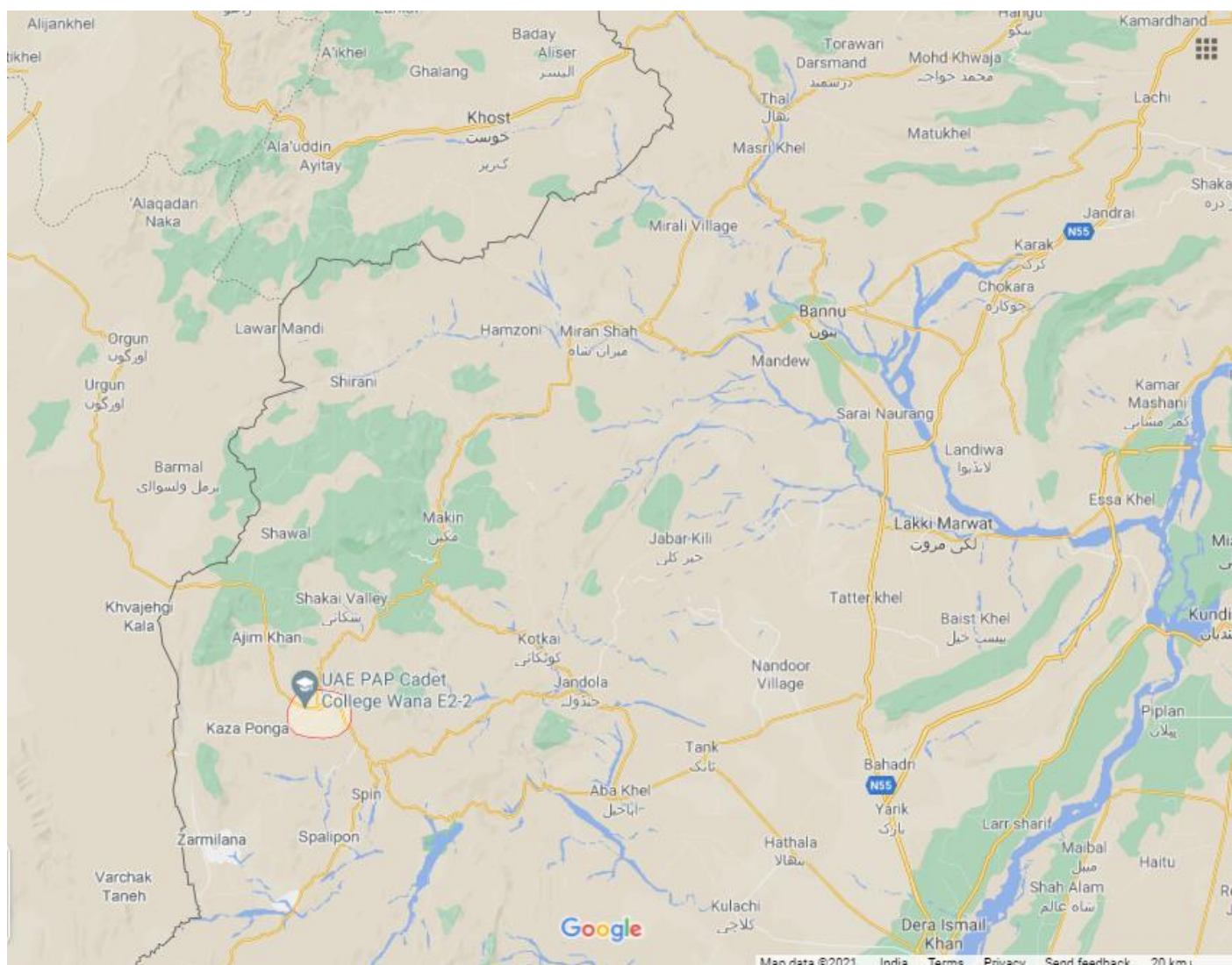
At the time of independence, **Dir** was a princely state ruled by **Nawab Shah Jehan Khan**. It was merged with Pakistan in 1969 and later declared a district in 1970. The district was formed in 1996, when the district of **Dir** was divided into **Upper Dir** and **Lower Dir**. The district borders **Swat District** on its East, **Afghanistan** on its West, **Upper Dir** and **Chitral** on its North and North-West respectively, and **Malakand** and **Bajaur Agency** on its South.

The strength of the Unit when it arrived at **Manzai** was **8-17-634**. It had snowed in the Manzai Hills. The Unit spent 7 months in this barren and hilly area having extremes of weather. In **August 1941** it was relieved by **4/7 GR**, and moved to **Wana**. The Unit contributed **2-2-15(NCOs)**, in May 1942 when **5/2 GR** was raised.



## Wana Tenure (10 Aug 1942 to 10 Feb 1943)

**Wāna** is the largest town of **South Waziristan Agency** of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. It was the summer headquarters for the administration, **Tank** being the winter headquarters.

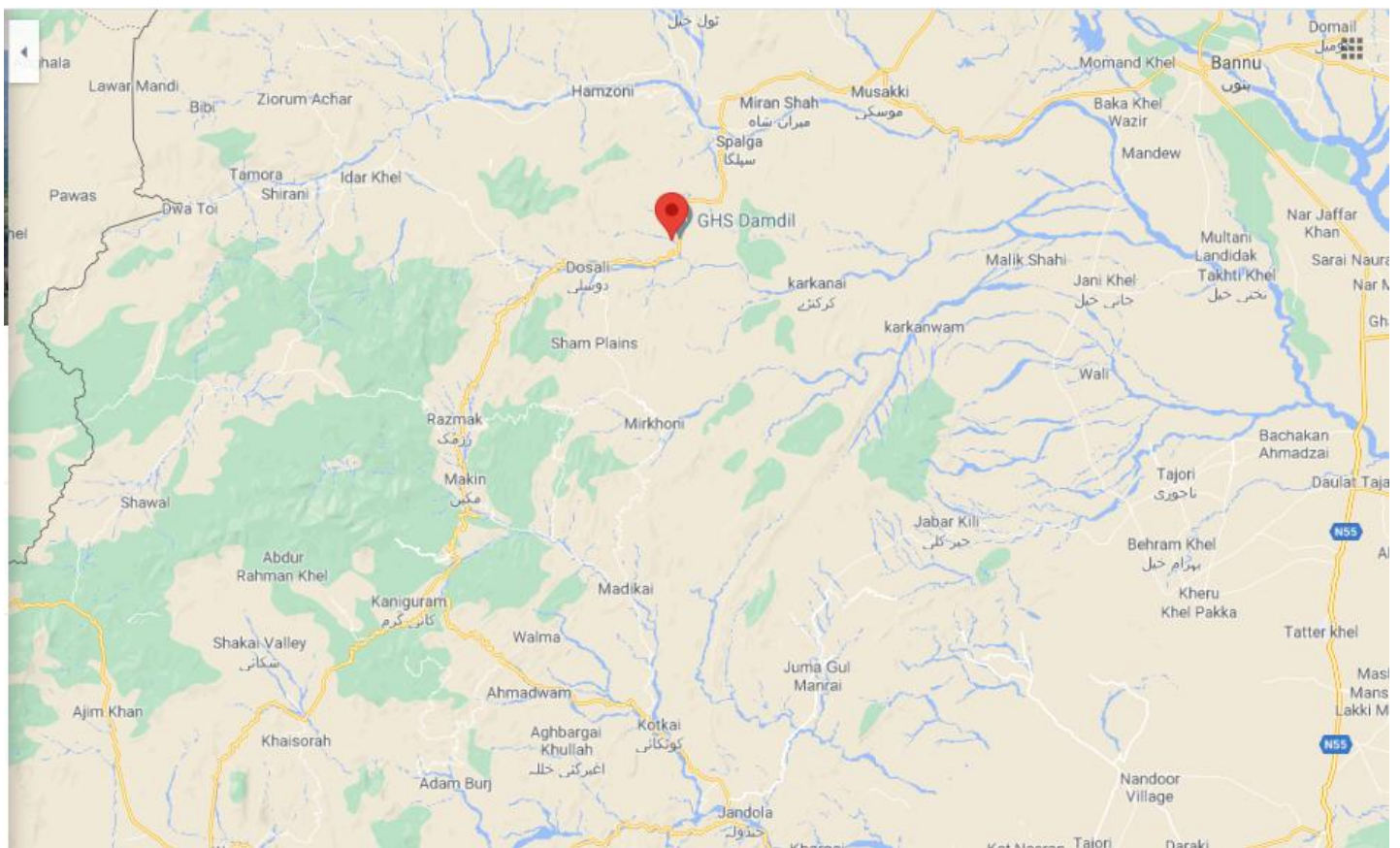


**Wana** was a comparatively pleasant location. In Sep 1942, the Unit received a ‘Fresh Draft’ and was brought to strength. In **Dec 1942**, the Unit was inspected by the GOC North-West Frontier, and certified “Fit for War Duty”. In Feb 1943, it received orders to move to **Bannu**.

## Bannu Tenure (17 Feb 1943 to 10 July 1943)

Bannu Division is located in the mountainous region of southern NWFP, bordering **Afghanistan**. It comprises the area between the **Kurram River** (Tochi) to the north, and the **Gomal River** to the south. **Bannu** town lies to the east, while the largest town on the Afghan side is **Khost**. The main tribes are the **Waziri**, **Yusufzai**, and **Mehsud**.

The other Units at Bannu were the **Tochi Scouts** and **5/17 Dogras**. The Unit was deployed with two Companies at **Mirali** and the remainder of the Unit at **Kajuri Fort**. On **25 February 1943**, the Unit sustained its first ‘Battle Casualty’ when **Havaldar Kul Bahadur Mall** got sniped by the Waziris. In **July 1943** the Unit received orders to move to **Damdil**, in **North Waziristan**.



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### Damdil & Razmak Tenure (15 July 1942 to 10 Nov 1944)

North Waziristan district is in the Bannu Division. It is divided into Mirali, Miranshah, and Razmak Sub-divisions.

In end October 1942, the Battalion was further shifted ahead to Razmak. The Razmak Brigade Frontier Column (Raz-Col) consisted of 2<sup>nd</sup> Green Howards, 4/3 GR, 4/17 Dogras and 4/2 GR. On 24 Oct 1943, Lt Col EHM Parsons, ex 153 Gurkha Parachute Regiment/ 2 GR relieved Lt Col HFC Armstrong as the CO. In Nov 1943, Subedar Major Sire Rana of 1/2 GR replaced Subedar Major & Hon. Lt Guman Singh Sahi, who proceeded on retirement. Both these 'Pillars' had put this New Raising on a very fine footing, and developed Team-work and 'professional pride'. Major J A Kitson (ex 2/2 GR) also got posted to 4/2 GR in Jan 1944, from Razmak Brigade HQ.

### First Combat Action on the Frontier

On 12/13 December 1943, the Battalion went out in strength on a 'Domination Mission' onto the High Ridges around Razmak about 5 kms away. There were Mahsud Tribe villages on either sides of these ridges. The Battalion Column was accompanied by the Political Tehsildar. During the return march, at about 1600 hours while crossing the Second Lay-Back Position, the Battalion was fired upon and attacked in strength by the Mahsuds from the neighbouring heights. Captain Theed and Subedar Laldhoj of 'C' Company were the first to react. Capt Theed got

wounded in the head. Artillery support was called for, but it was not effective in dispersing the Attackers. Thereafter **Captain Lockey** alongwith **Havaldar Aiman** and **Naik Ganga Bir Gurung** of 'D' Company came to the engagement site and dispersed the Attackers. The weapons of the dead were not allowed to be taken away. **4/3 GR** also had been ordered to move to the engagement site from Razmak, immediately after this engagement had started. They reached the scene of fighting at last light. Initially it was decided to establish a Firm Base and wait out the night, but Brigade HQ directed both Units to fall back to Camp. The Mahsuds followed the Unit's Column with exceptional boldness, right up to the Camp. At 2100 hours, **Capt Lockey** was again sent out of the Camp with a strong Fighting Patrol, to bring back the stragglers and wounded. The CO **Col Parsons** and **Capt Fox** had also got injured in this fight with the **Mahsuds**. Total casualties of the Unit were **17 killed** and **13 wounded**, with about 10 weapons lost. In retaliation, on 19 December 1943 the Unit escorted an Artillery Battery which was sent out to bombard the Mahsud Villages which had taken part in this attack. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1944, **Capt Lockey** was conferred the **Military Cross** and **Naik Ganga Bir Gurung** got the **IDSM**.

In **mid Sep 1944**, **Lt Col EHM Parsons** got posted out. Later, he also had the honour to command **1 ASSAM** during the Burma Campaign from 7 March 1945 (serving under 19 Infantry Division) and got it the Battle Honours of **Kyaukmyaung** and **Taungoo**. (*He was an honoured Guest of the ASSAM Regiment when it celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in June 1981, and he took pains to come and visit our Unit in Dehradun, then.*) **Lt Col JA Kitson** took over the command of 4/2 GR on promotion. The Unit soon received the order to get converted as a Reconnaissance Battalion (which was the successor to the Div Cavalry Regiment) with additional Motor Transport, Radio Sets and Mules, for being employed on the WW II Battlefield.

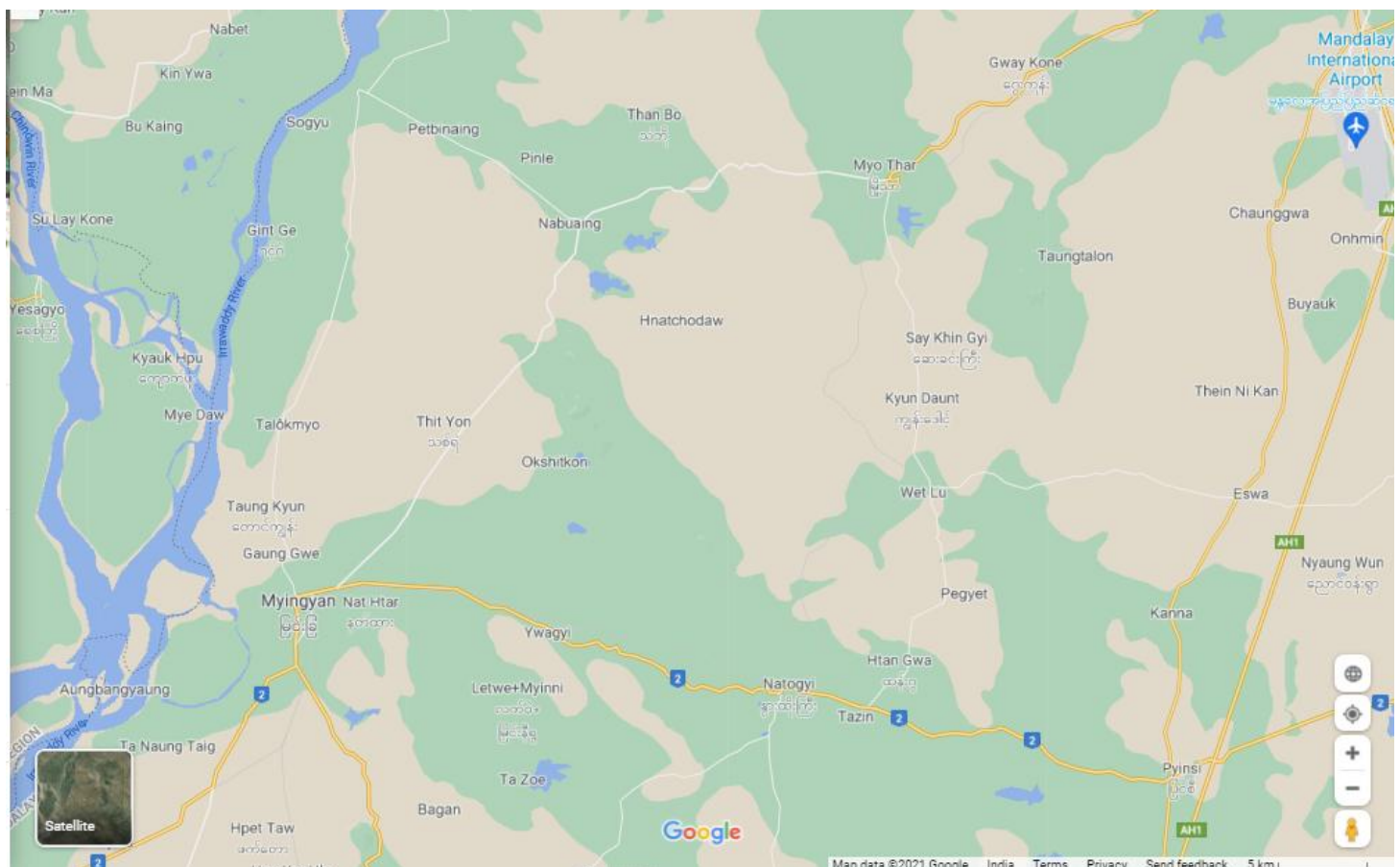
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### **Rawalpindi Tenure (17 Nov 1944 to 10 Feb 1945)**

In November 1944, 4/2 GR was shifted to **Tahlian Camp** at **Rawalpindi** to undergo retraining for its new 'Op Role'. In Dec 1944, **Major FMPC Cobb** returned to the Unit from the Regimental Centre and took over as 2IC. The Unit left for Burma to be part of the 20 Indian Division's offensive, and reached its Op Location passing across to the other end of British India and into Burma by **10 March 1945**.

## Participation in the WW II Burma Campaign

4/2 GR crossed the **Irrawady River** on **26/27 March 1945** at **Kyauk Padang**, and the next day harboured at a place called **Dwehla** which is 24 kms West of **Kyaukse** and 43 kms Southwest of **Mandalay**. The Unit had traversed over 960 kms over the previous 10 days to reach here! **Maj Gen Douglas Gracey**, the GOC of **20 Inf Div** assigned 4/2<sup>nd</sup> as the additional Battalion of **80 Infantry Brigade**. 20 Infantry Div as part of **Lt Gen Messervy's 4 Corps** had the task to sweep down the **Irrawady Valley** and make a dash for Rangoon before the outbreak of the Monsoons in May, while the rest of the Corps laboured South down the heavily defended Mandalay-Rangoon Road. 20 Infantry Div got the support of Partisans of the 'Burma National Army' of legendary 'Maj General' **Aung San**, who later became the elected Premier of Burma before it gained Independence, *but he was however assassinated*. There was also a 'Special Operations Executive' Grouping called **Force 136** which operated behind the Japanese Army Front, and who liaised with local sympathetic groupings especially of the **Karens** living in the Irrawady Valley. They carried out sabotage, and provided intelligence. The opposing Forces were those of the Jap **15<sup>th</sup> Army**.



The roll of officers of 4/2<sup>nd</sup> GR, on induction in Burma were:-

1. Lt Col JA Kitson - CO

2.	Maj FMCP Cobb	-	2IC
3.	Capt M Cotter	-	Adjt
4.	<b>Maj Brian Davies</b>	-	'A' Company
5.	Maj PR Collins	-	'B' Company
6.	<b>Maj CR Theed</b>	-	'C' Company
7.	Maj N Lockey, MC	-	'D' Company
8.	<b>Capt P Fox</b>	-	HQ Company
9.	<b>Capt GH Reddick</b>	-	Adm Company
10.	<b>Capt F Simson</b>	-	QM
11.	<b>Lt RA Sparks</b>	-	MTO
12.	<b>Lt DC Purves</b>	-	IO
13.	<b>Lt GJD Brookes</b>	-	Signals Officer
14.	<b>Lt R Bishop</b>	-	Supernumerary Officer

The Battalion's initial task was to clear and secure the area North of the **Kyaukse** Bridgehead across the Irrawady, up to the **Rangoon-Mandalay Railway Line**. This it cautiously accomplished by **29 March 1945**, meeting with only light opposition. 'B' Company opened the tally when its Platoon killed 4 x Japs who were defending a bridge on a canal, West of **Letpan** village.

On **3<sup>rd</sup> April 1945**, the Unit was placed under **32 Infantry Brigade** as replacement for a British Battalion. **3/8 GR** and **9/14 PUNJAB** were the other Units in this formation. The Battalion was tasked to clear and secure the **Myittha-Kume** area, 30 kms South of **Kyaukse**. On **9 April 1945** the Corps Commander visited the Unit and informed that 4/2 GR will no more be "Reconnaissance Unit", but switch over to a **Regular Infantry Battalion's** Organisation. He also informed that 20 Inf Div task hereafter would be to seize the **Kyauk Oilfields** and make a dash for **Rangoon** along the Irrawady Valley, so as to reach there before the Monsoons. The Battalion enbussed on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and reached **Taungdwingyi** by 15 April 1945, where it established a Firm Base. It had moved a distance of 186 kms, passing through **Meiktila** which had been seized by a Brigade of 5 Infantry Div flown in from Manipur, and thereafter switched Southwest towards the **Irrawady** to block the retreat of Japanese Forces there. By **20 April 1945**, the Unit shifted to **Myingun** on the banks of the Irrawady, 55 kms West of Taungdwingyi, where they could better intercept the retreating Jap Bodies of Troops.



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On 22 April 1945, 4/2 GR was relieved at this position by 3/1 GR and ordered to move to **Singbaungwe** which was a Steamer Station 48 kms further South. On reaching there on 26 April 1945 by forced marches day and night, they were asked to proceed to **Nyangbintha** which was further 16 kms downstream. The Unit reached there by 27 April 1945. On receiving the information from the locals that there was a sizeable body of INA troops located at **Magyigan** village about 8 kms further South, Col Kitson sent 'D' Company under **Major N Lockey** on a wide detour, tasked with establishing a 'Block Position' South of the suspected Renegades' location. Further in conjunction with this movement, 'C' Company under **Major CR Theed** was tasked to advance cautiously and attack the INA Position from the North. In a brilliant simultaneous Attack action which surprised and demoralised the renegades completely, by the evening the Battalion obtained the surrender of HQ INA's **2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment** led by **Col Prem Kumar Sehgal** (which had given tough opposition to **7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division** and its **5<sup>th</sup> Motorised Brigade** during **March 1945**, who were trying to relieve the isolated 17 Infantry Division at Meiktila, at the **Battles of Mount Popa/ Defence of Yenangyaung Oilfields**, to the East of Meiktila) and a Battalion of the INA which numbered **45 Officers and 455 x OR.**



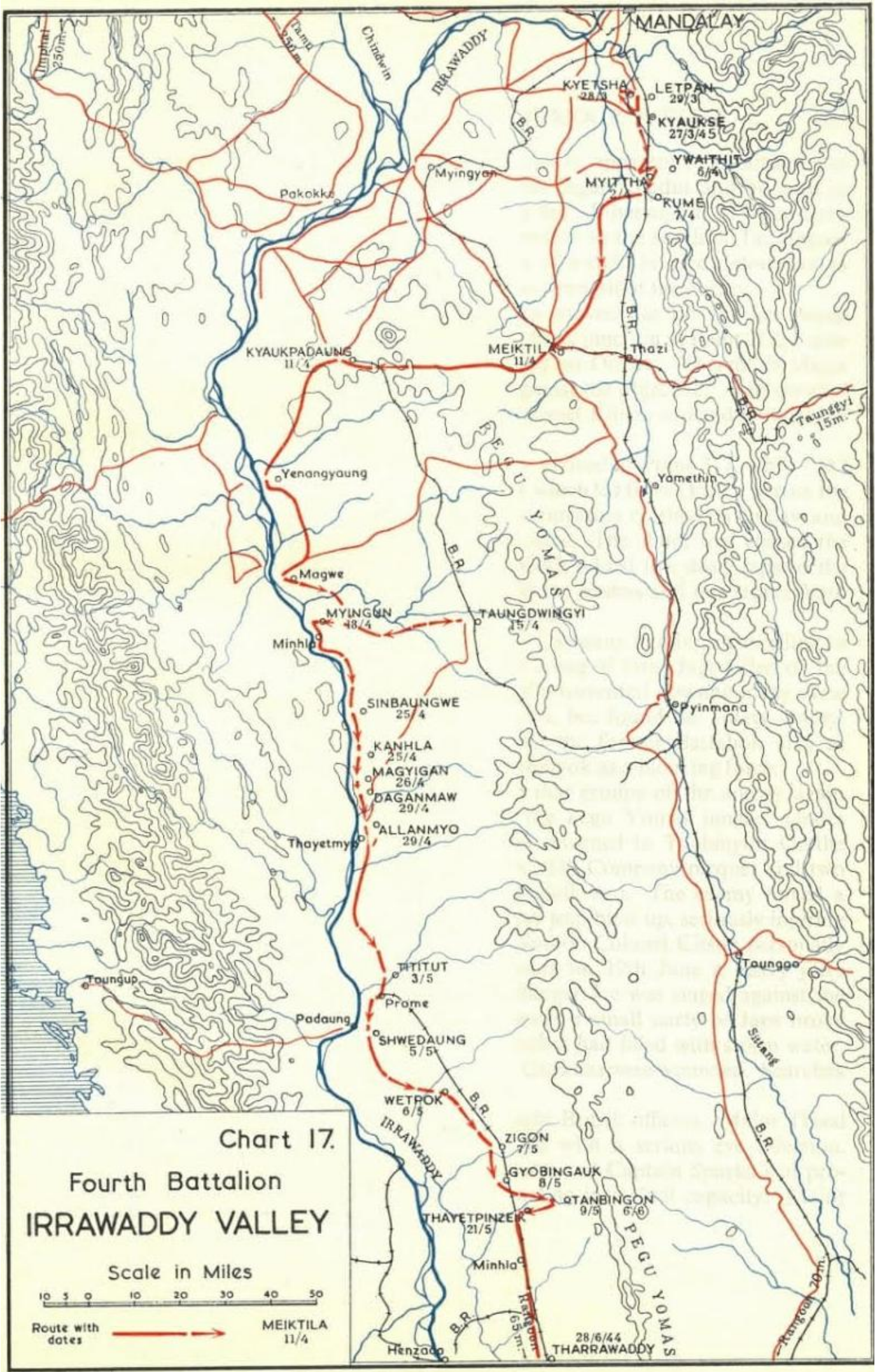
They also surrendered **29 Machine Guns, 300 Rifles**, one long range Radio Set, 5 Short Range Radio Sets, huge quantity of ammunition, and other warlike stores. A valuable '**War Diary**' of this INA Grouping was also captured intact. This greatly helped the Prosecution proceedings in the subsequent famous INA Trial held in the Red Fort in August 1946, in which Col Kitson was an important witness. Congratulatory messages poured in from both Gen Frank Messervy the Corps Commander and Gen Douglas Gracey the Div Commander. The next day the Battalion continued its march southwards along the Irrawady River and cleared the area of Jap remnants. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May the Unit was provided Motor Transport Troop Carriers and asked to proceed further through **100 Infantry Brigade** which was at **Prome**, a further 40 kms away.

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The Indian 4 Corps Plan was to advance onto Rangoon by the main **Mandalay-Rangoon Highway**, with a Subsidiary Thrust along the Irrawady Valley and West of the Pegu Yoma Hills, along the **Prome-Rangoon Road** through the **Tharrawady** Province, using **20 Infantry Division. 32 Infantry Brigade** was to lead this advance, with **80 Infantry Brigade** following as Reserve. **100 Infantry Brigade** was tasked to clear up all Opposition astride this Axis of advance, so that the all-important 'momentum' factor was maintained. On **30<sup>th</sup> April** the Japs abandoned **Rangoon** and started their full-fledged retreat from Burma. Rangoon was soon occupied by an Allied Amphibious Force. However as planned, by **7 May** the Unit as part of 100 Infantry Brigade followed 32 Infantry Brigade, and had reached a place called **Zigon**, which was **192 kms** away from Rangoon. The next day 'A' & 'D' Companies were sent to **Okpo** which was 22 kms further South, to relieve 3/8 GR from there. From Okpo heading towards the Village of **Tanbington** at the foothills of the **Pegu Yoma**, was a proper road. The Japs were known to use Tanbington as a vital Staging Post, to facilitate their orderly retreat across the Pegu Yoma towards the **Sittang River** further East. To execute the required flushing Operation, 'Kit-Col' was formed constituting the following components:-

- (a) 4/2 GR. (b) Squadron Tanks of 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoon Guards.
- (c) Artillery Battery ex 9 Field Regiment. (d) Section Engineers.

'B' Company supported with tanks, led the advance on **8<sup>th</sup> May** towards the first objective of **Ondaw**, 25 kms to the Southeast. After clearing opposition enroute 'D' Company took over the advance and reached 3 kms short of **Tanbington** by nightfall.





Gurkhas clearing jungle

*[Photo: Imperial War Museum]*

CENTRAL BURMA

Tank support

*[Photo: Imperial War Museum]*



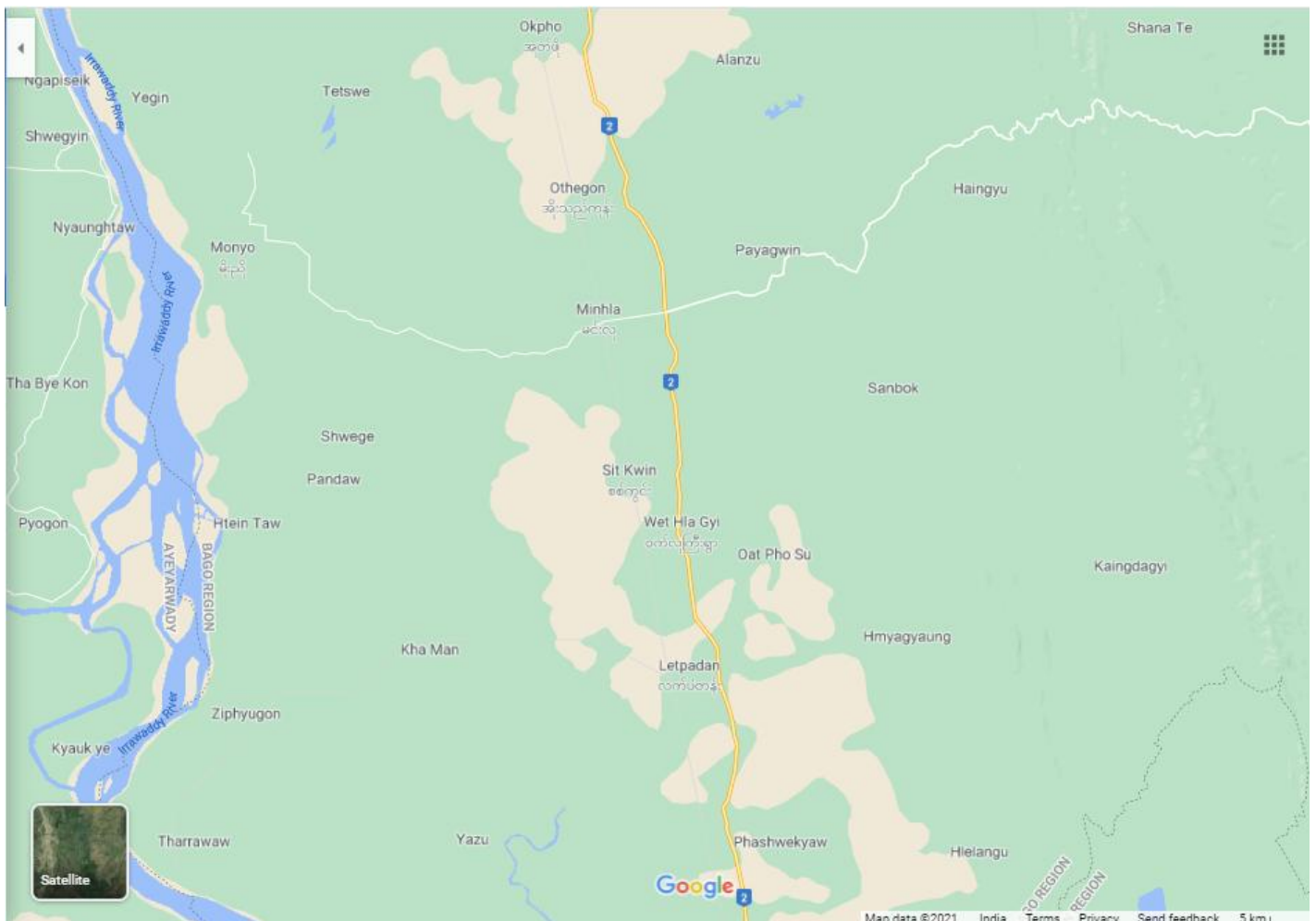
On **10 May 1945**, Tanbington was successfully captured following evacuation by the Japs. On **11 May** 'A' Company advanced into **Ondaw** supported by tanks, and captured intact an MT Park of the retreating Japs. On this route the Japs had laid

mines, and two tanks and a jeep got disabled. 'B' Company thereafter cleared Tanbingon village by nightfall and seized two 'Samurai' swords of Japanese officers. 'Kitcol' was called back on the night of 12 May to be deployed in the area West of **Okpo**, as the emphasis changed to spreading out **20 Infantry Division** and prevent the retreat and escape of the Japs from the **Arakan** area as well as from **East of the Irrawady**, to the other side of the **Pegu Yoma**.

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The Monsoon rains broke over this region on **18 May**. On **21 May**, a Squadron of armoured cars of **11 Cav** (PAVO) were also placed under command of the Unit. A Fighting Patrol consisting of 'B' Company and Other Elements sent to **Tanbingon & Ondaw** areas on **01-03 June** discovered that the area had been reoccupied by about 400 Japs.

Col Kitson immediately planned a full-fledged operation to clear the Japs and reoccupy **Tanbingon-Ondaw** Area. He ordered 'D' Company to **Teinhmyok** which



**Note:** Present name of Tanbingon could be **Sanbok** and similarly that of Ondah could be **Oat Pho Su**.

was to the Northwest of Tanbingon, in order to provide protection to the Field Battery which was also moved there to provide artillery fire support. The rest of the

Battalion moved and concentrated 3 kms to the South of Tanbingon by 6 June 1945. 'A' Company under **Major Brian Davies** moved to the North of Tanbingon during the night of 6/7 June to be in position to launch a dawn attack. 'B' Company under **Major Peter Collins** moved by a detour to take up 'Block' positions to the East of Tanbingon, in order to prevent any escape of the Japs from Tanbingon towards the Pegu Yoma.

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Major Collins detached **No. 4 Platoon** under **Subedar Sher Bahadur Rana**, and tasked them to adopt a separate route and close on to the Village, and lay an 'Ambush' at a suitable spot on the main Track leading out to its East. With the rest of the Company, he then continued to proceed towards the Village in the darkness of the early morning hours. After establishing contact with the Japs twice during the cautious approach movement of 600 yards after reaching the area to the East of Tanbingon, Subedar Sher Bahadur fell back and established his 'Block'.

Major Collin's column on reaching about 1.5 kms to the South of the Village in the darkness, stumbled upon a Protective Patrol of the Enemy and a fierce firefight started involving **No. 6 Platoon**. After about an hour, sound was heard of a stream of lorries approaching the site from the road coming from **Ondaw** direction. Major Collins immediately directed **No. 5 Platoon** to reverse direction and redeploy to meet this new threat. He also called for artillery fire onto the Jap column which had rushed from **Ondaw**, and this had good effect. He later radioed to the Bn Tac HQ that he was disengaging and moving to a covered location having jungle to the West of the Village. **No. 6 Platoon** successfully disengaged and moved, followed by **No. 5 Platoon**. As the last Section was breaking contact and moving under **Major Collin's** supervision, he unfortunately got hit by a machine gun burst and fell dead. **Subedar Jagan Bahadur** of No. 5 Platoon thereafter took charge of 'B' Company, and he successfully moved them in the breaking dawn, to the intended 'Hide' location to the West of Tanbingon Village.

Col Kitson ordered 'A' Company under Major Davies to start their Attack at **5.30 AM** from the North of Tanbingon, supported by artillery fire. 'A' Company soon captured the Northern part of Tanbingon Village including a **70 mm Infantry Field Gun**. They met heavy resistance as they thrust towards the Southeast side of the Village and could not make further progress after **7 AM**. Thereafter 'D' Company which had been moved in from **Teinhmyok**, attacked the Japs from the West side of the Village after a concentrated artillery bombardment, and overran the remaining

Jap Positions by **9 AM**. Fierce Attacks by detached Japanese Parties continued thereafter, which were put down effectively by both these Companies. At 1400 hours, 'B' Company were ordered to fall back into Tanbington Village and they arrived before dark carrying their wounded. A coordinated defensive perimeter was adopted around the Village before nightfall, and 'Jitter Parties' were driven off. The entire surrounding area was searched thoroughly on **8<sup>th</sup> June** morning, and the count was the Unit had suffered **7 x OR killed** and **11 x OR wounded**, besides the death of Major Collins whose dead body was recovered and given a field burial. Dead bodies of **76 Japs** were also recovered. Many wounded Japs had been evacuated from Tanbington area. Capt **Reddick**, the Transport Officer was promoted and given command of 'B' Company.

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The Battalion undertook 'Recce in Force' towards **Ondaw** to the South of Tanbington during 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> June. At 10.40 hours on **11 June**, a set-piece attack onto Ondaw from the North and East was launched using 'C' & 'D' Companies, after putting down a heavy artillery concentration. Ondaw was thereafter cleared of the Japs. On 11 June, orders were received for 4/2 GR to fall back to its past location of **Thayetpinzeik**, West of **Okpo**, leaving 'C' Company detached as a Blocking Force at **Teinhmyok**. On getting reports again of sizeable presence of Japs, the Unit reoccupied **Tanbington** for the third time on **17 June**. While serving under 100 Infantry Brigade, the last clash with the Japs occurred on **25<sup>th</sup> June**, to the East of **Ondaw**. Thereafter, **1/1 GR** relieved 4/2<sup>nd</sup> GR in the Tanbington Area on **27 June**. The Unit was ferried in MT to **Tharrawady** Town, which was 53 kms further South. Exactly three months after the Campaign had started with the first encounter with the Japs at **Kyaukse**, the Unit's operational role in Burma ended. The Unit had eliminated over **225 Japs** whose dead bodies were recovered, and advanced over **480 kms** against unceasing Opposition. The Unit lost **1 Field Officer** and **20 x OR** as **killed**, and suffered **65 x All Ranks** as **injured**. It was proudly bestowed the **Battle Honour "TANBINGTON"** and **Theatre Honour "BURMA"**. This providently helped it in *not getting disbanded after WW II* even though it was a War Raising, and only 1/2<sup>nd</sup> & 2/2<sup>nd</sup> GR were retained by the British after Independence!

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At Tharawady, Major **PH Sparks**, Major **TM Wimbush** and Capt **TAT Birley** came to the Unit to replace Major **Brian Davies**, Major **N Lockey**, MC and Major **GA Reddick**

CENTRAL BURMA

Jap prisoners

[Photo: Imperial War Museum]



who were on deputation from the British Army, and were therefore repatriated. Subedar **Balesor Rana** of the same Unit took over as Subedar Major from **Subedar Major & Hon. Lt Sire Rana** who proceeded on retirement. In July, the Unit was able to send a Leave Party of 100 x OR. Col Kitson also went on leave in India. News of the Japs agreeing to Capitulation on August 11, was celebrated in the JCOs Mess. **Lt Gen Francis Toker** of the Regiment, paid a visit to the Unit on **23 August** and congratulated All Ranks on their fine performance. The Roll of Decorated Persons of 4/2 GR in Burma, were as follows:-

1. Major Peter R Collins (Posthumous) ('B' Coy) - MC (Tanbington - 7 June 1945)
2. CHM Dhan Bahadur Gurung ('A' Coy) - IDSM (Yawthit - 6 April 1945)
3. Subedar Sher Bahadur Rana ('B' Coy) - IDSM (Myingun - 20 April 1945)
4. Naik Khim Lal Pun ('A' Coy) - IDSM (Innetkon - 21 April 1945)
5. Jemadar Lal Bahadur Pun ('D' Coy) - IDSM (Minhla - 22 April 1945)
6. Lt Col JA Kitson (CO) - OBE (Magyigan - 27 April 1945)
7. L/Naik Bhagat Bahadur Pun ('B' Coy) - IDSM (Alanzu - 8 May 1945)
8. Subedar Jagan Bahadur Gurung ('B' Coy) - IDSM (Tanbington - 12 May 1945)
9. Naik Ram Bahadur Thapa ('D' Coy) - IDSM (Tawtanigon - 19 May 1945)
10. Jemadar Jagandhoj Thapa ('B' Coy) - IDSM (Satpok Forest - 23 May 1945)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 11. Naik Piru Pun ('B' Coy)              | - | IDSM (Tamangyi - 24 May 1945)           |
| 12. Rifleman Hari Lal Pun ('B' Coy)      | - | IDSM (Tanbingon - 7 June 1945)          |
| 13. Naik Kishan Bahadur Gurung ('B' Coy) | - | IDSM (Posth.) (Tanbingon - 7 June 1945) |
| 14. Major Brian Davies ('A' Coy)         | - | OBE (Tanbingon - 7 June 1945)           |
| 15. Major M Cotter ('C' Coy)             | - | OBE (Ondaw - 11 June 1945)              |
| 16. Lt Col JA Kitson (CO)                | - | DSO (Tanbingon/Ondaw : 07-11 June 1945) |
| 17. Capt P Simpson (QM)                  | - | MBE (for services in Burma)             |

On 4<sup>th</sup> September news was received that the Unit had to proceed to French Indo-China as part of 20 Infantry Division, to retake control after the Japanese surrender. 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Group was flown to **Saigon** in Vietnam within a week, while the Unit as part of the rest of the Division proceeded by sea on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1945. The roll of officers who served with the Unit on this new foreign assignment were:-

- |                             |   |                        |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1. Lt Col JA Kitson DSO,OBE | - | CO                     |
| 2. Maj FMCP Cobb            | - | 2IC                    |
| 3. Capt Brookes             | - | Adjutant               |
| 4. Major PH Sparks          | - | 'A' Company            |
| 5. Major GH Reddick         | - | 'B' Company            |
| 6. Major CR Theed           | - | 'C' Company            |
| 7. Major TM Wimbush         | - | 'D' Company            |
| 8. Capt P Simpson           | - | QM                     |
| 9. Capt TAT Birley          | - | MTO & HQ Company       |
| 10. Capt RA Sparks          | - | Mortar Platoon         |
| 11. Capt Hadshar            | - | Administration Company |
| 12. Lt R Bishop             | - | IO & Signals Officer   |

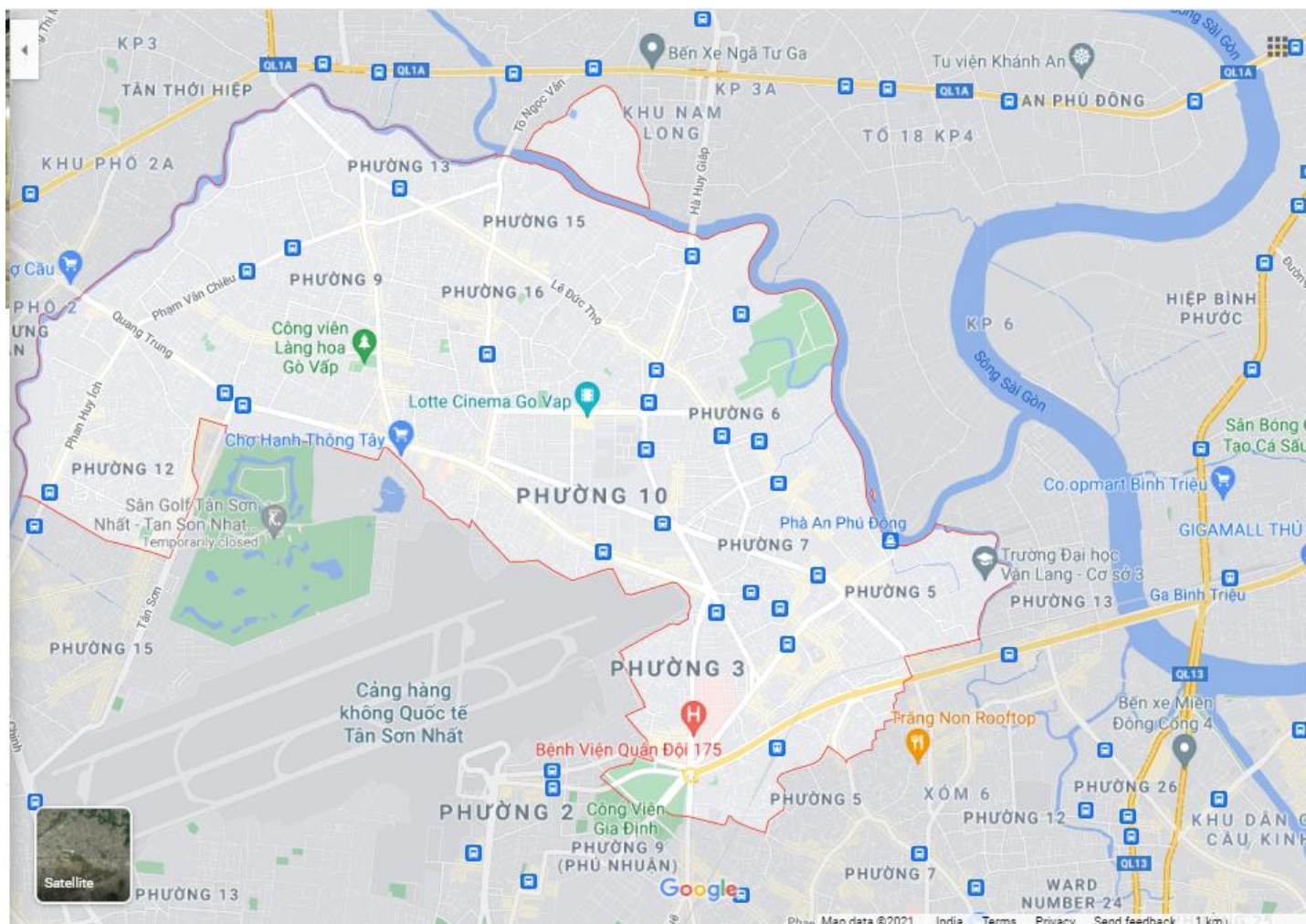
### 4/2<sup>nd</sup> GR's TENURE IN INDOCHINA

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The Unit embarked on **HMTS *Circassia*** at Rangoon on **2<sup>nd</sup> October 1945** and reached **Saigon** on **10 October** as part of Indian **32 Infantry Brigade**. Its other Units were 3/8 GR, 1/1 GR & 9/14 PUNJAB. The Area allotted to 20 Indian Infantry Division was upto the **16<sup>th</sup> Parallel**. The first Allied Troops to arrive in Saigon was a British Battalion of Paratroopers, who were dropped there on 15 August 1945. They were well received. However by mid September when 80 Indian Infantry Brigade arrived, the Colonial French Administration officials who had been freed from Internment, carried out a *coup de tat* and seized back power from the locally set up



## Go Vap Precinct, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

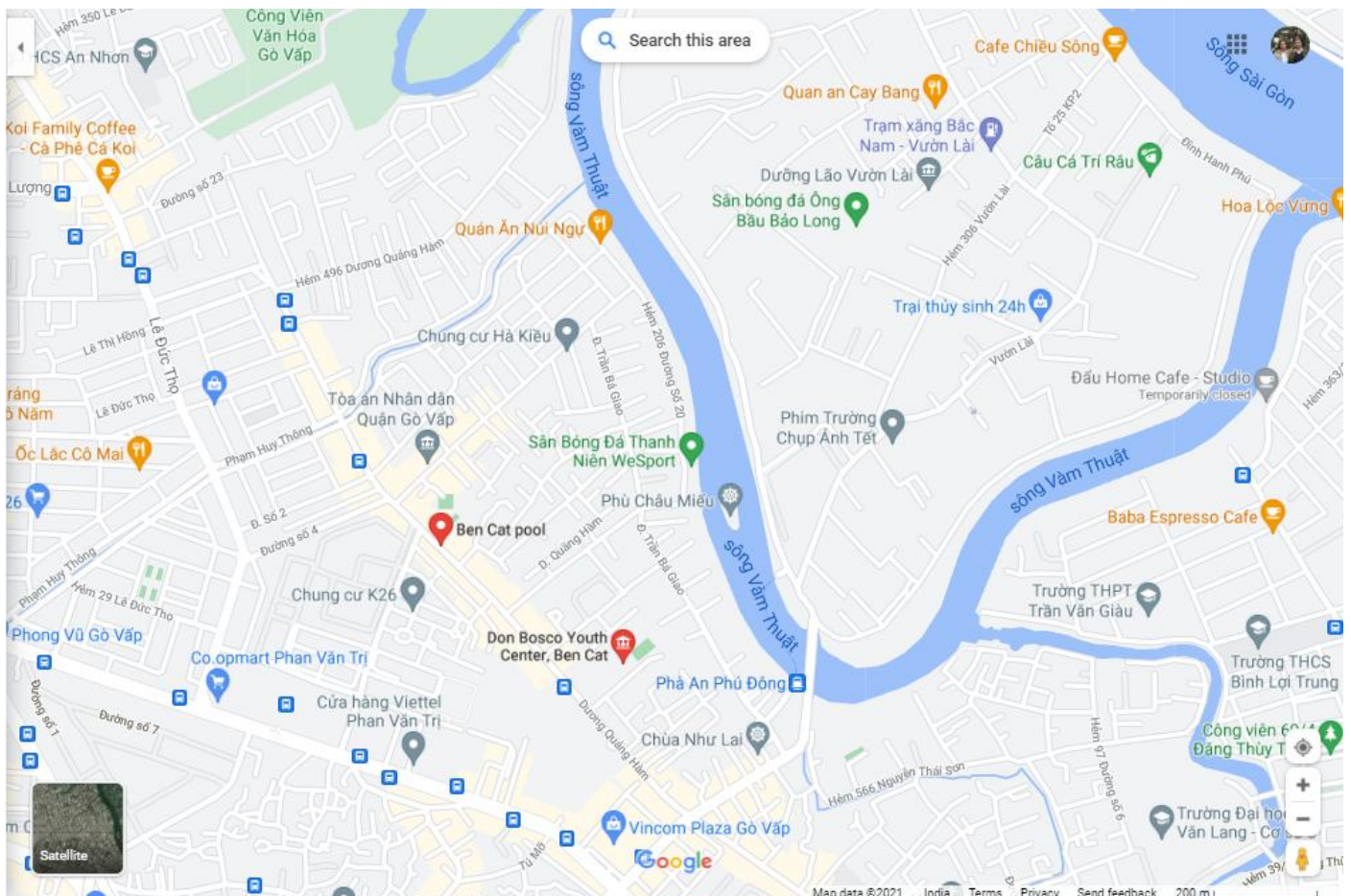


Annamite Govt. From 10 October onwards, 20 Infantry Division was involved in fighting the armed Vietnamese Groupings (Viet Minh & Annamite Youth Movement), and even freely employed the surrendered Japanese Troops as their 'auxiliaries' **with arms!** Initially the Unit helped clear the northern **Go Vap & Ben Cat** precincts of Saigon, of local resistance. The Battalion HQ was located in the sprawling residence in Saigon of Mr **Phat An**, who was the uncle of the last Empress of Annam. **River Cho** was the Northern boundary of the Unit's Deployment Area.

Major FMPC Cobb proceeded on a Staff assignment at the end of October and Major **PH Sparks** became the 2IC.

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In November the French 9<sup>th</sup> French Division arrived as 'Occupation Troops', but the French Governor General **Admiral d' Argenlieu** dispatched the bulk of it to re-occupy Cambodia. Though 20 Infantry Division's primary role was to take the surrender, disarm and repatriate the Jap Troops in Southern Vietnam: the French delayed this process to ensure the consolidation of their colonial rule. On 15-16 December 1945, 32 Infantry Brigade was employed to clear the adjacent **Hanh Phu**



### **Ben Cat** Precinct & **Hanh Phu** Peninsula, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Peninsula further in the North of Vietnamese resistance fighters, who held this area in strength. By the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, the decision had been taken to pull out 20 Infantry Division completely from Vietnam in a month's time, and complete the repatriation of all Japanese nationals. The Unit suffered **4 x OR killed** and **10 x OR injured** during this tenure of duty at the hands of the Viet Minh/Annamite Resistance Movement 'freedom fighters'. 4/2<sup>nd</sup> GR killed over **80** armed Vietnamese locals during the course of pacifying its area of responsibility. This *thankless and unpleasant duty* ended on 25 December 1945, after which it embarked on **SS Aronda** on **27 December** and reached the next Occupational Duty Station of **Jesselton Bay** in **North Borneo** on 31 December 1945, to relieve 2/32 Australian Infantry.

### **NORTH BORNEO TENURE OF 4/2<sup>nd</sup> GR**

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**Jesselton Force** consisted of 4/2 GR, Workshop Company, Detachment of Engineers, Section Hospital, Supply Section and Miscellaneous welfare workers. It was located in the present day **Kota Kinabalu** which is an idyllic holiday-spot in **Sabah** State of Malaysia. The main responsibility of the Unit was to look after the interned 10,000 odd Japanese soldiers and civilians. They were dying at the rate of

nearly 200 per month due to acute malnutrition and diseases. The Unit took energetic measures to ameliorate their conditions and were able to ensure their repatriation by April 1946. The Unit thereafter shifted to **Labuan** Island, another idyllic tourist spot where it relieved 3/8 GR in **April** end. After repatriating the Japanese PWs held there, its role finished towards the end of May 1946. The Unit to its surprise observed that the behaviour and attitude of the Japanese was extremely cooperative, obedient and uncomplaining, despite their hardships.

During February and March, three Company-level expeditions from the Unit under Major Sparks ('A'), Major Wimbush ('D'), and Capt Brehaut ('B' & 'C') climbed the imposing 13,100' high imposing **Mount Kinabalu** in the Borneo jungles. The April 1947 issue of the USI Journal published the detailed account of the First Expedition.

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The turnover of officers also ensued. Col JA Kitson proceeded on furlough to England after temporarily handing over command to **Major ML Cruickshank**, MC who came from **1/2 GR**. He was a veteran of the North African Campaign & the bitter fighting in Italy. Major PH Sparks, Capt Gay, Capt RA Sparks and Capt P Simpson also left the Battalion. On 26 May 1946 the Unit embarked on **SS Dunera** and reached Mainland India at Madras on **8 June 1946**, where it celebrated its **First Battle Honour Day**. The Unit received orders to proceed to **Danapur** Cantt, near Patna. In **July**, the Unit had the honour of royally hosting its famed 'Maili' Sister-Battalion **2/2 GR** which was transiting through Danapur, which had been lost during the Fall of Singapore, and after the War got merged with the War Raising **3/2 GR** which was part of the original Chindits Brigade, and had won a VC in Burma. Towards the end of **September 1946**, 4/2 GR was shifted to **Barackpore** Cantt in Calcutta. In October 1946, due to the heightened 'communal situation' in Bengal Province, a Composite Force under Major Wimbush was sent to **Comilla** to restore order there. It remained committed there for three months and arrived back just before Christmas. The rest of the Unit also got committed to the **Kidderpore** area of Calcutta City.

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The Regimental Biennial Conference was last held in Dehra Dun in October 1946 attended by **Col HFC Armstrong** (Centre Comdt), **Lt Col Walton** (Deputy Comdt), **Lt Col Richardson** (1/2 GR), **Lt Col Evans** (2/2 GR), **Lt Col Kitson** (4/2 GR) and **Lt Col Ryan** (5/2 GR). **Lt Gen Francis Toker**, Col Comdt of the Regiment had become the

Eastern Army Commander. The modalities of the important issue of (i) Merging the **8 GR** Regimental Centre which had to move out of **Abbotabad**, NWFP, with the existing 2 GR Regimental Centre at Dehradun (ii) Disbandment of the War Raisings, was discussed.

In March 1947, after the announcement of creation of the Independent Dominions of India & Pakistan on 15 August 1947 was announced by the last Viceroy Admiral Louis Mountbatten, the choice was given to all British officers of the Regiment to get repatriated back to England. Thereafter from August 1947, **only two British officers would remain with each Battalion** and **two British officers with the Regimental Centre**. In the *laissez aller* atmosphere that prevailed amidst all the rumours about what would be the fate of the 'most loyal' Gorkha Brigade, the Signal came from Army HQs on **8 August 1947** that after negotiations between Britain, Nepal and India, it was agreed that the **first two Battalions** of **2 GR, 6 GR, 7 GR & 10 GR** would become part of the British Army. *The main consideration was that their Units were serving outside India.* The Regiments of **1 GR, 3 GR, 4 GR, 5 GR, 8 GR & 9 GR** would continue to be part of the Indian Army after Independence. **All "War Raising Battalions" of the GR Regiments which would go to the British Army, and have not been disbanded, would be absorbed into the Indian Army.**

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In August 1947, **4/2 GR** had been shifted to **Fort William, Calcutta** to replace the British Unit there, which was moved back to England. The Eastern Army Commander being from 2 GR necessarily helped! In October 1947, Army HQs Adjutant General Branch issued the formal letter allotting 4/2 GR to the Indian Army. The first Indian Officer to report to this Unit on 16 November 1947 was an ex CHM of 8 GR, who had cleared selection as an Officer and subsequently been trained at OTA. On **5<sup>th</sup> December 1947**, **Lt Col NK Chatterji** who was CO of **17 BALUCH** (now 1 SSG of Pak Army) came over to take command of 4/2 GR as its first Indian CO. **Major Butchard & Capt Mcsphoran** were the last British officers to serve with 4/2 GR, and they duly left India in December 1947. They were given a touching 'send-off' by All Ranks. The Unit finally got affiliated with **8 GR**, as its **5<sup>th</sup> Battalion** on **8 February 1948**.

It goes to the credit of **Col HFC Armstrong**, who was the Centre Comdt 2 GR Regimental Centre in 1946/47 and **ex CO of the Unit**, who ensured that 4/2 GR does not get disbanded along with the other War Raising **5/2 GR** in January 1947.

[Most of these personnel along with those of **3/8 GR** were later inducted into **6/8 GR**, which got raised on **4 Feb 1948**, when the Kashmir Ops had started.] The Col of the Regiment **Lt Gen Francis Toker** who had become the Eastern Army Commander also helped. He was the **4 Corps Commander** during the closing stages of the Burma Campaign, and was witness to the fine performance of the Battalion in the War. **Lt Col JA Kitson** who was recovering his health in England and therefore could not be in India during the momentous change of the Baton, sent the following message along with his congratulatory letter to Lt Col NK Chatterji:-

*..... So has passed from the Service and Protection of Great Britain as happy and loyal a body of men as ever served the King. To the New India, there has been presented a Battalion fashioned in our proud and historic tradition. To you I say, treat them fairly, treat them honestly, learn to love them as we who are gone loved them, and you too may well say, as we can always proudly say .....*

**“They have repaid Us!”**