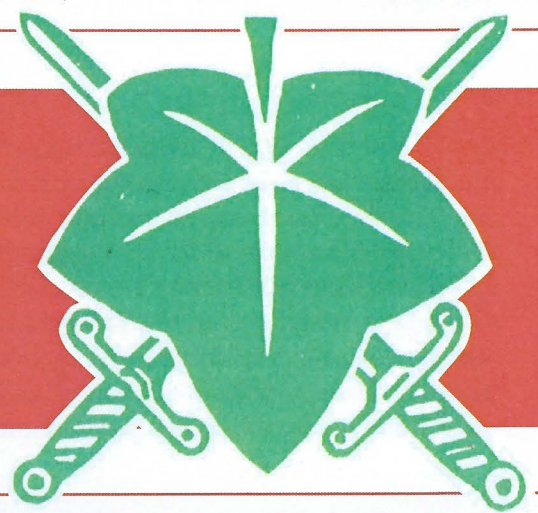


THE FORMATION SIGN



JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY

ALSO FORGOTTEN?



Published by the 12th Army in 1945 this commemorative certificate provides an interesting record of the formation signs worn by that Army's soldiers.

Formed by the redesignation of HQ XXXIII Indian Corps, the new 12th Army assumed responsibility for operations in Burma on 28th May 1945 after HQ 14th Army – the original "Forgotten Army" - returned to India to prepare for the liberation of Malaya. The 12th's original formations included IV Corps with 5th, 17th and 19th Indian Divisions, 7th and 20th Indian Divisions, 82nd West African Division and 268th Indian Infantry Brigade.

The Army's operations between May and August 1945 were demanding as the remaining Japanese, trapped in two small pockets, starving and plagued with disease, fought fierce, sporadic engagements in their efforts to escape. A temporary ceasefire on 28th August 1945 ended their resistance before, as the certificate notes, "The whole of the Japanese armed forces surrendered to Twelfth Army 13 Sept 1945".

The badges shown are displayed somewhat strangely, both columns starting with Lines of Communication (LoC) rather than fighting formations. The left which begins with 505th LoC Area then has 5th Indian Division, 19th Indian Division, 7th Indian Division, 22nd East African Brigade and 2nd British Infantry Division. The right which begins with the sign of HQ, Lines of Communication, South East Asia Command (later South Burma District), then has the badges of 17th Indian Division, 82nd West African Division and 20th Indian Division. The next sign must be that of 255th Indian Tank

Brigade, a design originally worn by 44th Indian Armoured Division but retained by the Brigade after the division was broken up in April 1944. Whilst the 44th's badge was circular with a white background, that of 255th Brigade was triangular with its charging bull set on the blue ground shown. The last sign on the right belongs to the Lushai Brigade designed by Major GA Harwood-Barnes of the 14th Punjab Regiment,

at its centre the head of a native bullock or Mitthen, the skull of which was venerated in a small shrine in every Lushai tribal village. The bottom sign, first worn in Britain in late 1940, is the charging elephant of IV Corps which had arrived in India in spring 1942. The same badge was worn by 64th (London) Medium Regiment, RA, a pre-war Territorial regiment which, having served in Britain as part of IV Corps, arrived in Egypt in January 1941. In May the following year, five months before cloth badges were authorised in the theatre, Middle East General Routine Order 567 granted the 64th permission to wear its former Corps sign as a regimental badge.