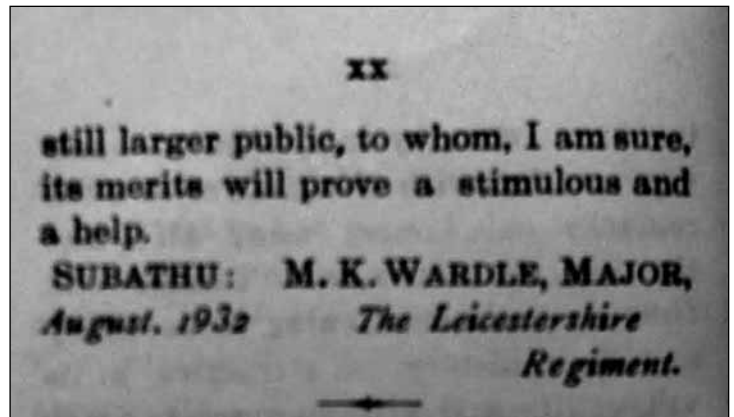


# 'I am that Toad'

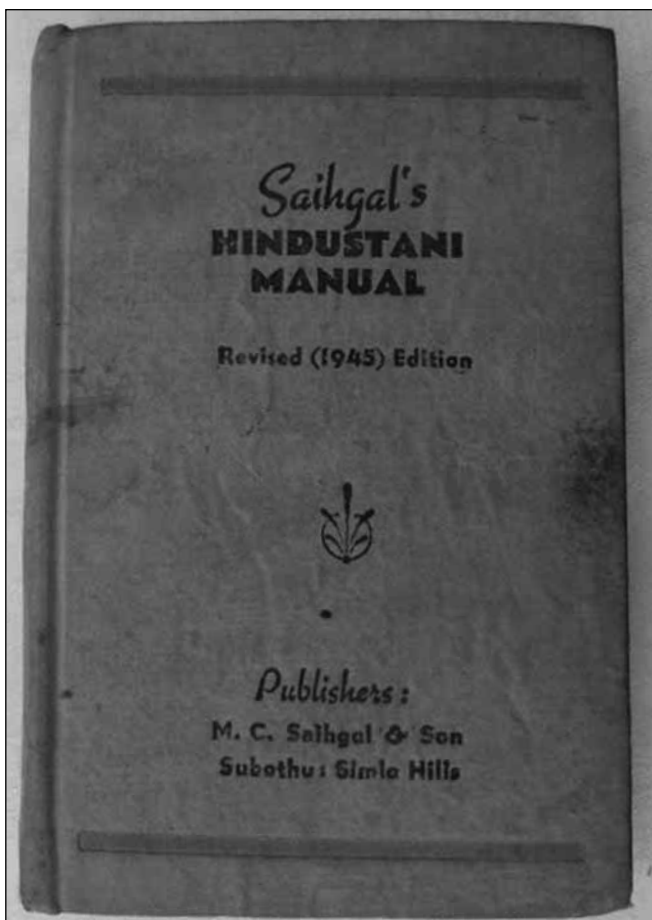
## Serendipity, Subathu and The Tigers: A brief record of Colonel Mark Kingsley Wardle

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'Serendipity' might not seem to have much application in military affairs, but it can pollinate ideas as the author of this article found whilst browsing in an antiquarian bookshop in Clarendon Park, Leicester. The owner of the business asked me 'Is this of any interest?' and passed me a small brown cloth-bound book. It was entitled *Saihgal's Hindustani Manual Revised (1945) Edition*, published by M. C. Saihgal & Son, Subathu: Simla Hills, and printed at the Karmyogi Press in Allahabad. (1) My initial response was 'not really', but as I continued to browse the pages, I was mystified and intrigued by the Preface which consisted of five pages written and signed off by M. K. Wardle, Major, the Leicestershire Regiment, Subathu, August 1932. Why had a British Army Officer written the Preface to a Hindustani Grammar? The book had found a home.



*Major M. K. Wardle's sign off of the preface to the 1945 edition of Saihgal's Hindustani Manual.*



*Saihgal's Hindustani Manual, revised (1945) edition.*

The Leicestershire Regiment had a long connection with India, having been formed in 1688 by Colonel Solomon Richards. By 1713 it was assigned the seniority of the 17th Infantry Regiment, and in 1751 it became the 17th Regiment of Foot. The Regiment's history in India commenced when they were posted there in 1804, remaining until 1823 and fighting in several engagements: Bundelkund 1807, The Sutlej 1808, Nepal 1813, and Nagpore 1817. In 1825 King George IV awarded the Regiment the badge of the Royal Tiger superscribed "Hindoostan", as a lasting testimony to what the British government at the time considered the Regiment's exemplary conduct in India from 1804 to 1823. The Regiment returned to India in 1836, being awarded Battle Honours which include Ghuznee (1839), Khelat (1839), Afghanistan (1839), Ali Masjid (1878), and Afghanistan (1878).

By 1881 when the Regiment was renamed 'The Leicestershire Regiment', it comprised two Regular battalions, one Volunteer and one Militia battalion, and had its headquarters at Glen Parva Barracks, South Wigston, Leicestershire. Both the 1st and 2nd Battalions were in India in the 1880s and served there at various times until 1947. Granted the 'Royal' prefix in 1946, the Regiment was amalgamated with The Royal Anglian Regiment in 1964. The Royal Tiger, the last visible vestige of the 17th Regiment of Foot, remains now only on the uniform buttons of the Royal Anglian Regiment, and the Royal Leicestershire Regiment's heritage is carried forward in B

(Leicestershire) Company 2nd Battalion, and No 2 (Leicestershire and Lincolnshire) Company 3rd Battalion, of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Mark Kingsley Wardle was born on 17th February 1888 in Bishops Auckland, Co. Durham, and was initially appointed 2nd Lieutenant in the 4th (Militia) Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry. On 13th October 1909 he was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant into the 2nd Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment (Army Service number 512) and promoted to Lieutenant on 25th October 1911.

The Regimental History records that on the outbreak of World War I, Lieutenant M. K. Wardle was in India, and left Karachi in September 1914 with nine other officers and 417 men and arrived in Marseilles on 12th October 1914. He fought with his Regiment during World War I, being wounded three times. He was awarded the Military Cross in 1917, the Distinguished Service Order (for conspicuous gallantry) and a Mention in Despatches in 1918.

#### D.S.O. FOR "TIGERS" OFFICER

In a supplement to the "London Gazette", it was announced that Capt. Mark Wardle Kingsley, M.C. Leicestershire Rgt., has been awarded the D.S.O. for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. By a daring reconnaissance during a withdrawal he located the exact extent of a gap between our troops, and ascertained the position, strength and movement of the enemy. His report was of the utmost value to the brigade commander and to the High Command. All through the operations he displayed great courage and ent[h]usiasm.

The Green Tiger, 1918, p.174.

Promoted Captain on 13th February 1915 he also served on the General Staff between June 1916 and July 1917. After the war, he was a Staff Captain in the Home Forces from 15th October 1919 to 31st January 1920.

It is at this point that a glimmer of light appears to shine on the puzzle of the Hindustani Manual's preface. Wardle was posted to The French Military School, Ecole Speciale Militaire at St Cyr Morbihan, Brittany, as an Instructor in English and remained here from 2nd November 1920 to 30th September 1923, and in June 1921 had qualified as a French Interpreter 2nd class. Clearly Captain Wardle had an aptitude for languages.

He was appointed Adjutant of the City of London Regiment TA from 11th November 1924 until 15th August 1928, and promoted to Major in the Leicestershire Regiment the following day. Wardle at some time prior to 1929 joined the

1st Battalion of his Regiment and was at Sabathu in August 1932 where he made the acquaintance of Moolchand Saigal, a Munshi (2), at the School of Instruction for Officers, Sabathu.

This is also probably where Wardle wrote *Foundations of Soldiering: a new study of regimental soldiering in the British Army*, a book of 181 pages which was to be published by Gale & Polden, Aldershot.

The School of Instruction for Officers was formed in 1917 as a result of a suggestion from The War Office to the Commander-in-Chief India. (3) The school's purpose was to train 150 young officers as Company Commanders once they had been with British Regiments in India for at least three months. Each course would last two months and the cost was to be borne by the Imperial Government. Fifty Reserve Officers would also attend but only for one month. All officers attending the course were to be armed and equipped as 'private soldiers'.

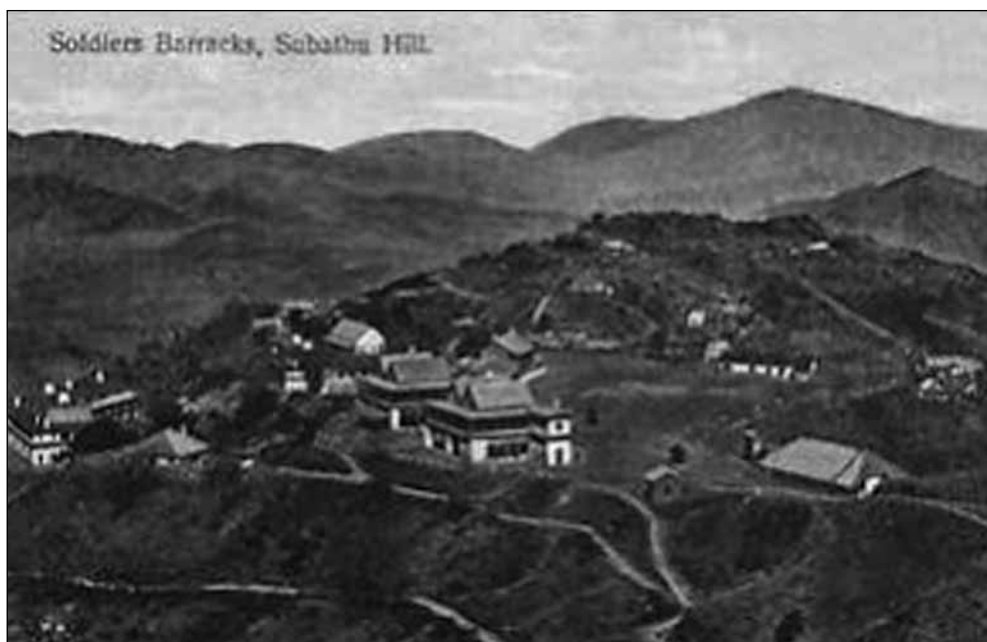
The mess arrangements were similar to those of a regimental mess with an additional grant of 750 Rupees as an initial foundation for book purchases towards a library and the stationery to be purchased at '150 Rs per mensem'. During the summer, the school would be at Sabathu near to Simla, relocating to Amballa 160 miles to the south in winter. The School Commandant would be an Indian Army Officer of 'appropriate rank'

*Saihgals Hindustani Manual* has several pages of laudatory comments, five of which are from British Officers in the Army Educational Corps and one from the Secretary to The Board of Examiners in Languages, Lt. Col. C. A. Boyle. In

The School Commandant had an establishment of staff of:

- 2 X Company Commanders
- Adjutant
- 6 X Platoon Commanders
- 9 X Sergeant Instructors
- Quarter Master Sergeant
- Physical Training Instructor
- Religious Education Instructor
- Corporal, 2 X Privates
- 2 X Clerks
- 2 X Buglers
- 14 X Bhisties (water carriers)
- 6 X Sweepers
- 6 X Latrine Sweepers, and Bildar (night soil).

There was also a Regimental Munshi at the School.



Early twentieth century postcard titled 'Soldiers Barracks, Sabathu Hill'.

the Preface, Wardle queries whether he is the most competent person to write it but believes that he has one qualification that *may commend itself to the reader*. He has *worked at the language* using an edition of the book as his proof copy and has first-hand knowledge of how *it will strike, not the expert but the student who will work with it*. He continues:

*The toad beneath the harrow knows more about its own difficulties than does the farmer that 'larns it to be a toad': I am that toad: but for some years I had to teach a language to foreign cadets so that I have also some familiarity with the teacher's requirements. (4)*

Wardle also makes a plea for all British Other Ranks and Officers to learn Hindustani, ... *and that a special obligation is upon all Englishmen who live in India to achieve an understanding of the ... language. (5)*

Major Wardle's affinity for languages included Hindustani and Urdu, in addition to an empathy for soldiers studying the language and a desire for all military personnel to reach a good standard of vocabulary and grammar. An article in the 1929 Regimental Journal provides a further clue about his

aptitude with languages – 'the gift of tongues', as the Journal points out.

Wardle was stationed in Mooltan by 1933, and at Jubbulpore in 1935. In 1936, he left India for a posting as Second in Command of the 2nd Battalion at Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of the Leicestershire Regiment in 1937 with the Battalion then in Aldershot. Wardle was present at the Grand Hotel Leicester for the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the 17th Regiment of Foot, and a caricature cartoon by 'Mel' of the Officers and guests at the dinner is in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

In August 1938 Wardle was sent to Palestine as the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment, and Military Commander of Acre sub-district. On 8th May 1940 he retired on half pay and fully retired from the Regiment on 8th November 1940. He was then given a Staff Appointment in the North of England as Colonel in the Home Guard. He was granted the Honorary rank of Colonel on 10th June 1945, when aged 57 years.

All subalterns and a few more-senior officers are studying "Urdu" (it would be a mistake to suggest great keenness), with a view to complying with a Brigade Order, which says that all subaltern officers must pass the British Officers' Colloquial Urdu Test. Major Wardle (whom we heartily congratulate on his success), after working hard for a few weeks, went to Jubbulpore and demonstrated to the examiners how Urdu *should* be spoken. He passed, of course. But, then, Major Wardle has the gift of tongues.

Major Wardle's 'gift of tongues' is noted in the Regimental Journal of 1929.

He married Isla Mary Wilder of Stansted Park, Sussex in 1917 and they had two sons and a daughter Susan who was born in Kasuli in 1932. His elder son Michael Mark Wardle born in 1917 was also commissioned into The Leicestershire Regiment.

Colonel Mark Kingsley Wardle died at Woking, Surrey in 1977, aged 89 years. His medals and decorations are not held in The Royal Leicestershire Regimental Museum and their whereabouts are unknown.

India's Independence in 1947 and the Partition of India and Pakistan made the necessity of a Hindustani Grammar for British military personnel gradually superfluous. Editions were still being published, however, up to 1955. During operations in Iraq in 2006 the British Army was keen to train troops in the Arabic language and cultural issues in order to improve trust and avoid misunderstanding and confusion. Major Wardle's advice in the Language Manual of 1932 still had relevance seventy years on.

#### References and Notes:

1. *Saijgal's Hindustani Manual* was a well-known language course book for British Officers during The British Raj. First published in 1917, it passed through many editions until Independence. Its primary aim was to enable Officers to pass the required language examinations, and to encourage Officers and Other Ranks to be able to communicate with the Indian soldiers (sepoys) and population.
2. Munshi. The term munshi or moonshee derives from the Arabic word for writer, reader or secretary, and came to be used also to describe a teacher (*i.e.* of languages).
3. The British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections IOR/L/MIL/7/18381 1917-1919. Correspondence in this file suggests that the School of Instruction for Officers was formed and commenced in 1917 without the knowledge of the India Office, Whitehall. A letter dated 22nd May 1917 from Lt. Gen. H. Cox advises that the Secretary of State for India had not been informed of the School's formation but had no wish to prevent its continuance. Images of the School



Mark Kingsley Wardle. (Reproduced by courtesy of The Royal Leicestershire Regiment.)

at Sabathu & Ambala, 1917-1919, can be found at: [gillww1.wordpress.com](http://gillww1.wordpress.com)

4. The expression or proverbial phrase 'The Toad Beneath the Harrow' can be traced back to the thirteenth century to describe a 'sufferer'. Rudyard Kipling used the phrase in his poem *Pagett M P* (1886).
5. The disinclination of some British Officers to fully learn the language, or empathise with the culture of the Indian sepoy and to ignore their professional grievances, created a fertile ground for the seeds of insurrection.

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- The Royal Leicestershire Regiment web site Have you a Tiger in your Family <http://www.royalleicestershireregiment.org.uk/have-you-a-tiger/record/61279/>
- Families in British India Society.
- Colonel (retired) Michael Goldschmidt formerly The Royal Anglian Regiment.
- Clarendon Books, Leicester.