

Scotland's Special Connection

Force K6: The World War II British Indian Regiment who found its way to Scotland

The Royal Indian Army Service Corps (RIASC) called Force K6 were stationed in the Highlands of Scotland during World War II between June 1942 to December 1943 across Ballater, Lairg, Dornoch, Glenfeshie, Kincaig, Nairn, Muir of Ord and Golspie. They were an all Muslim regiment from pre-partition India.

Serving on the Western Front and evacuated from Dunkirk, approximately 1800 soldiers worked their way up to Scotland where they were supplying the defensive pillboxes and training for special mountain warfare.

They built a special connection with the local community, building friendships and trust. They shared Indian food and stories of home and are fondly remembered even today. There are 13 of them which remain buried in the Scottish Highlands and serve as a permanent reminder of the sacrifices of South Asians to protect Britain.

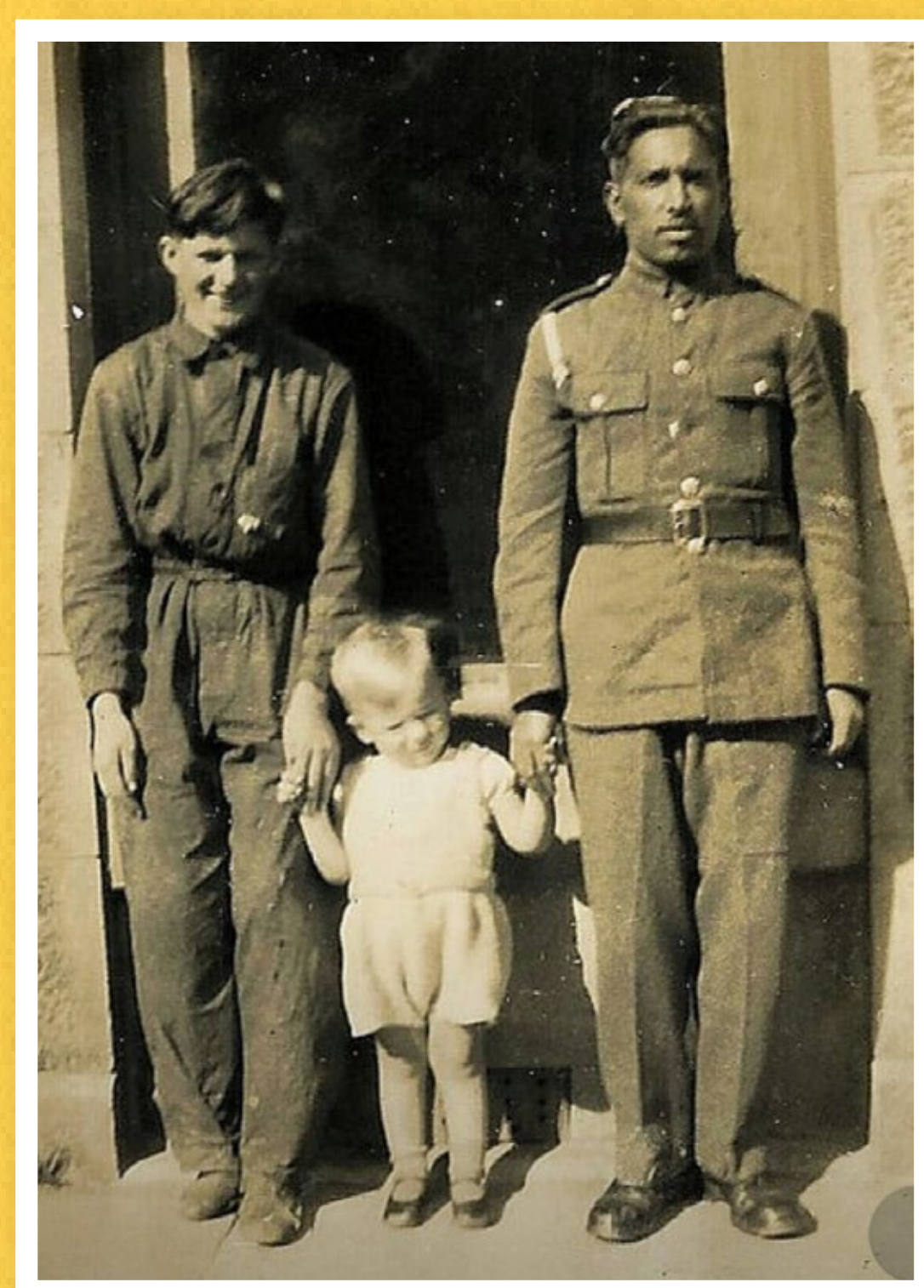


Tea, Chapattis and Friendships

Soldiers of Force K6 would often be invited to the homes of local people for tea. They would spend time with the families and play with the children. The Indian soldiers would often make fresh chapattis and share them with the families and children. Locals thought of them as very exotic with their turbans and the fragrant smells coming from their cooking.

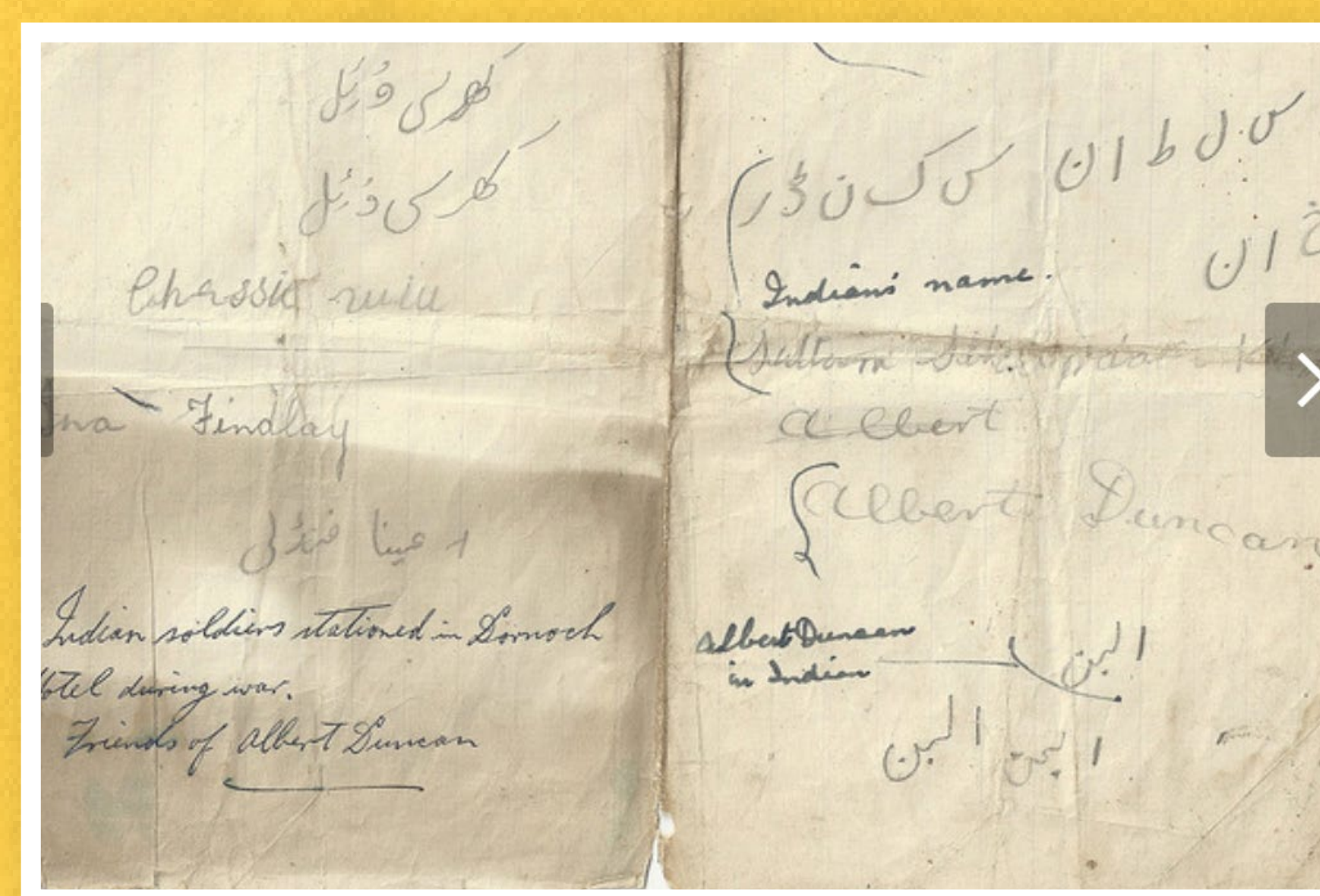
As a child, Frances Webster from Ballater recalls, “*they were friendly and would come to our house...*” and recollects watching them washing their clothes in the burn near Glenmuick House in Ballater.

Sergeant Khan RIASC holding a wooden toy horse belonging to Sheila (R) and Brenda Bideau (L), two refugee girls from occupied Guernsey Island, staying with their aunts at Birnam Cottage, Ballater, 1944. © Miss J. L. Legge, Ballater



Albert Duncan (L) in Dornoch c.1943. © Alasdair Will

Whilst stationed near Dornoch Hotel they made friends with locals such as Albert Duncan and his sister Chrissie Will, who would teach them how to write their names in English and in turn the soldiers taught them how to write their names in the Urdu language.



Handwritten note by the soldiers of their and their friends names in Urdu and English, Dornoch, c. 1943. © Alasdair Will

An extract of a letter sent to Lt. Col Hills, the commanding officer of Force K6, from Lairg school teacher Iby Fraser reads:

“Lairg is bleak and deserted now that they are gone, and the empty stables are a mute reminder of the happy faces and busy figures that were ever seen there. The children have lost their “good companions” from whom they were never separated during the months of the Indian’s sojourn in Lairg, and the great majority of firesides have an empty chair tonight”

Indian troops in Lairg on the road to the old golf course with a young Joan Leed, 1942/43. Photograph © Lairg Local History Society



An Indian officer below Lairg Hotel, 1942/43. Photograph © Lairg Local History Society



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