

Kish Naoroji

Karesat Ardeshir Dadebhai Naoroji, otherwise known as 'Kish', was born in Cutch, India in 1893. His grandfather was Sir Dababhoy Naoroji, the first Indian M.P. in Britain and founder of the Indian National Congress.

Kish's privileged background allowed him to study at the best schools in India, and on to Cambridge in 1912.

When the war broke out Kish was 21. He enlisted into the Universities and Public Schools Brigade, expecting to become an officer.

"We only understood afterwards that there was a confidential circular about not taking Indians in the combatant ranks."

Recruitment

"A tough Cockney Sergeant asked what my religion was. When I said Parsi, he asked me what the hell that was and said there was no such blinking religion. When I insisted, he produced a Bible and asked me if I was prepared to swear on that book. I replied that I would swear on any book he liked. He promptly put me down as Roman Catholic."

Training

"Our first camp was in horseboxes at Kempton Park Race Course, where the proportion was one horse to twenty-two men as half a platoon occupied each stable. Even while we were there, there was a race meeting and we had to vacate the stables and go into small tents."

Trenches

"There was at least a foot or two of water in the trenches and we had to stand in them for seventy-two hours at a stretch."

Kish received a gunshot wound to his wrist on 2 July 1916. Two days later he was re-posted, just in time for the Battle of the Somme.

"We were the first troops to reach the German front lines; in other words, the whole of the regiment in front had been wiped out and I had eight men left out of the forty-eight."

Promotion

Kish progressed in rank from Lance Corporal to Sergeant. He later described the toughness of the soldiers under his command:

"When I was a Lance-Corporal, in my little section of nine men, I had at least three men who had 'done time' for burglary, theft, rioting etc. But they were wonderful fellows. I had misplaced my mess tin which I

had used for about eight or nine months. I immediately thought of my old squad and asked them if they had seen any missing mess tin. They said they hadn't, but knew where it was . . . in less than ten minutes they were back with four brand new mess tins. They picked the best one out and said it was mine!"

He was then wounded again and deemed 'unfit for service' afterwards for the duration of the war, travelling back to Britain and becoming one of the pioneer Indian officers of the Indian Army, much like his friend A.A. Rudra.

In his later life, Kish had an illustrious career at Tata Industries, internationally representing the Indian multi-conglomerate business.