**1846** The First Anglo-Sikh War ended. Maharajah Duleep Singh remained as ruler of Punjab but his kingdom lost land and his government was now controlled by the British. The Sikh Regiments of Ferozepore (later known as the 14th King George's Own Ferozepore Sikhs) and Loodhiana (later the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs) were recruited by the British from the former soldiers of the Sikh Khalsa Army.

**1848-49** A Sikh rebellion in Punjab lead to the Second Anglo-Sikh War in which the Sikhs were defeated a second time by the British. The British took over Duleep Singh’s kingdom. The British hunted down Sikh holy men called Akalis (‘Immortals’) who could stir up trouble against their rule and could prove to be dangerous military leaders as well. One British officer watched the surrender of the Sikh army in 1849. He saw one old Sikh cavalryman (horseman) draw “his sword, kneel down, kiss it and then with tears in his eyes laid it gently on the pile (*of weapons*) as if it had been an infant and walked mournfully away”.

**1850** To pay for the costs of the recent war, the British sold off the property of the old Sikh government but gave Duleep Singh’s greatest treasure, the Koh-i-noor diamond, to Queen Victoria. Many Mazbi Sikhs (formerly village sweepers who were also scavengers, and therefore considered at the bottom of the Indian caste or class system) now had no jobs as soldiers because the old Sikh army had been disbanded. Some of them became highway thieves and robbers and were labelled as a criminal tribe by the British. However the British employed some as labourers to help construct their roads.

**1851** Regulations were published requiring Sikh recruits to Britain's Indian Army regiments to go through the same Sikh initiation ceremonies that had been used when joining the old Khalsa Army. One of the key requirements was that they had to agree not to cut their hair. They still took an oath to be faithful to their religion but instead of Duleep Singh they swore to be faithful to Queen Victoria instead. The British paid a Sikh to read out from and care for a copy of the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. It was saluted by British officers when it was moved around and wherever possible Sikh soldiers were given the day off during Sikh religious festivals. A tent was erected wherever the regiments were sent to be used as a gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) where the scripture was kept.

**1852** Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert, had the Koh-i-noor diamond cut in Amsterdam so that it could be set in a brooch for her. It was reduced in weight by over 40%.

**1854** Maharaja Duleep Singh arrived in Britain to be educated as an English gentleman and was befriended by Queen Victoria and the royal family. He had only just become a Christian. Sikhs were recruited amongst others by Captain Thomas Rattray who formed the Bengal Military Police Battalion at Lahore in Punjab. It later became known as the 45th Rattray's Sikhs.

**1856** When recruiting in Punjab a tall bearded Sikh of about 35 approached Captain Rattray after he had been passed over three times. In a private meeting the Sikh pointed to three scars on his body saying “These are ones (*wounds*) received at Ferozeshah and Mudki (*battles of the First Anglo-Sikh War*) fighting against you! I was faithful to my salt then (*faithful to the Sikh government who had paid him*). Do you think I would be false to you now? Take me and you will never regret it.” This Sikh recruit afterwards served the British loyally and bravely as he said he would.

**1857-58** Muslim and Hindu sepoys (soldiers) in Northern India mutinied against British rule (with support from some Indian rulers). Those Sikhs who were loyal to the British, including some small Sikh kingdoms who had kept their independence, helped to fight against the Sepoy Uprising (Indian Mutiny). Hodson's Horse, an irregular cavalry regiment, and the 34th Sikh Pioneers were founded. The British were desperate to recruit trustworthy Indian soldiers. They allowed Mazbi Sikhs to join the Pioneers who were trained to build roads, canals, bridges and tunnels but unlike ordinary workers could defend themselves when attacked. One party of Sikh Pioneers acted as a guard for a wagon train of ammunition and treasure which was over a mile long. They fought off the rebels like experienced soldiers. After this the Mazbi Sikhs were no longer treated as a criminal class and recruited as soldiers.

A further infantry regiment of Sikhs was recruited at the end of 1857. Its commanding officer declared: “I begin to like the men the more I see of them. They have plenty of spirit and although very uncouth (*wild*) at present are very willing and above all things pleased at being made soldiers - a dignity (*doing a job they could be proud of*) few of them have enjoyed (*few of them had done*) since Ranjit Singh’s days (*the time of the old Sikh ruler of the Punjab*).”

The British now saw Sikhs as more reliable soldiers than either Hindus or Muslims who had rebelled against their rule. Becoming soldiers in British Indian regiments gave back pride to some Sikhs and good pay to send home to their families who often lived in poor villages.

**1858** The British Government assumed direct rule of India from the East India Company. British Christian missionaries tried to convert Sikhs in Punjab to their religion. There were a few successes, mainly amongst the Mazbi Sikhs in the military.

**1860** Sikh cavalrymen in the British Indian Army were part of a joint Anglo-French force sent to fight in China during the Second-Opium War. A new law in British India stopped ordinary Indians from carrying weapons. This improved law and order and encouraged Sikhs who traditionally carried weapons to enter the army as a way of carrying on doing so.

**1867-68** Sikh troops were sent to fight in Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia) in Africa as part of a British Expeditionary Force.

**1873** Four Sikh boys from fairly wealthy families living in Amritsar, a major Sikh city, announced they intended to become Christians as a result of contact with Christian missionaries. This sparked a new religious movement among Sikhs to try and prevent any more converts to Christianity.

**1874** A European-style clock tower was built by the British in the grounds of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. It was taller than the temple itself and criticised by many European visitors.

**1876** Queen Victoria’s eldest son, Edward, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), visited the Golden Temple during his tour of India.

**1877** The British considered selling off the Golden Temple at an auction. This was called off after a special kind of lightening called “ball lightening” appeared in the temple which many Sikhs saw as a miraculous warning.

**1878-80** Sikh troops were sent to Afghanistan during the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Sikh cavalrymen formed part of a British and Indian army that set off from Malta in the Mediterranean Sea to take control of Cyprus as part of a secret agreement with the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire.

**1882** Sikh troops were sent to fight the Anglo-Egyptian War.

**1884** Sikh troops were sent to protect the construction of a railway at Suakin, an African Sudanese port on the Red Sea.

**1887** Two regiments called the 35th Sikhs and 36th Sikhs were founded. Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler of the Punjab, plotted to overthrow British rule in India and regain his lost kingdom with the aid of Russia and other Indian princes. British officers were sure of their Sikh soldiers’ loyalty but one Christian missionary reported that “In the bazaar (*market*) a few days ago three Sikh soldiers said to our preachers ‘When Duleep Singh comes we shall cut off your heads’.” The British prevented Duleep Singh returning to India and the plot came to nothing.

**1893** Maharaja Duleep Singh died in a Paris hotel. He was buried in Elveden Church in Norfolk near the English country estate where he lived during his exile from India.

**1897** 21 Sikh soldiers of the 36th Sikhs were killed in the Battle of Saragarhi defending their isolated post on the North-West frontier of India against 7,000 Afghan tribesmen. The soldiers were awarded medals by the British and their bravery was praised by British MPs in the House of Commons in London. It helped to prove what was called the ‘Martial Races theory’. This said that the best and most trustworthy Indian soldiers should be recruited from the most warlike peoples of Northern India like the Sikhs who were supposed to be braver and tougher than other Indians.

**1900** Sikh troops were sent to China as part of an international fighting force, including soldiers from Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Britain and the United States. This force fought against the Chinese ‘Boxer Rebellion’.

**1901** The 47th Sikhs regiment were founded.

**1905** The Prince and Princess of Wales (later King George V and Queen Mary) visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar during their tour of India.

**1907** A new medal for bravery called the Indian Distinguished Service Medal was introduced for Indian soldiers.

**1908** The Canadian government stopped most Indians (including Sikhs from Punjab) settling in Canada (then part of the British Empire), where many had made new homes recently and tried to persuade Indians already living there to leave. **This made Sikhs in** **Canada very angry**. They appealed to the British government to stop the ban and to improve the way Indians in Canada were treated but the British refused. This turned some Sikhs in Canada against the British and they started campaigning for Indian independence.

**1911** Indian soldiers were made eligible for the Victoria Cross.

**1914** A ship called the Komagatu Moru left Calcutta in India carrying 354 Indians from Punjab (mostly Sikhs) to Canada demanding the right to settle there. It was returned to Calcutta in September where the passengers were arrested by the British. A riot followed in which some passengers and policemen were killed. This spread anti-British feeling among some Sikhs in Punjab and North America. Sikhs who formed part of the British Indian Army rushed to fight the Germans on the Western Front in France and Belgium were the first to arrive at the French port of Marseilles in the autumn.

**1915** Lt. John Smyth, a British officer commanding Sikh soldiers on the Western Front, asked for Sikh volunteers to accompany him carrying a load of bombs across land criss-crossed by German fire. His mission succeeded but all eight of the Sikh volunteers were either killed or seriously wounded. Smyth was awarded a Victoria Cross, one Sikh was given the Indian Order of Merit and the other nine Sikhs the Indian Distinguished Service Medal. Smyth said afterwards that he felt that the Sikhs had not received enough recognition for the part they played.