

George Hepburn, Colonel of the Regiment 1636-37

The nephew of Sir John Hepburn, founder of the Regiment, succeeded his uncle in the Colonelcy when he was less than twenty years old. He was wounded when leading his regiment in an attack on the breach at Damvilliers, in Lorraine, on 16 October 1637, and subsequently died.

Lord James Douglas, Colonel of the Regiment 1637-1645

Born in 1617, the third son of the Marquis of Douglas he became Colonel of Hepburn's Regiment in 1637, which then was named Douglas's Regiment. He was killed whilst commanding a flying column between Douai and Arras in October 1655.

"Always in the field, he never for one moment left the command of his soldiers and in all the expeditions in which he took part we will find his name coupled with acts of bravery or heroism. He seemed to have been noticeable as much by his courage as by his ability and humanity; he had the friendship of Gustavus-Adolphus, of his brothers-at-arms, of soldiers and well as officers, and his presence in the ranks spread confidence to the brave Scottish soldiers who fought under his orders.

His death gave cause to universal sorrow both in the whole of the army and at the Court of France.

His baton of Field-Marshal, his sword, his helmet and his spurs were placed upon his coffin and his remains were carried, with all military honours, to Toul, the nearest city in French Lorraine."

His body was interred in the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.
G Clanche from The Thistle of April 1924

From the Naval and Military Gazette of 1853

"October 7 – 1st Battalion, Crimea. Landed and bivouacked in the plain near Salt Lake on September 14th, a fearful night of rain and storm; army horses lost getting ashore, those of the field officers were swamped.

Colonel Bell lost everything but his charger who swam ashore, and the Colonel might have been seen the following day in the field at the head of his Regiment riding on a blanket, instead of a saddle, which was lost in the surf.

To see the officers of the corps on the morning of the 15th in their once scarlet uniforms and gold epaulettes after this frightful night, one would think they are just not adapted to service!"

Egmont-op-Zee – 2nd October 1799

In a fresh attempt to wrest Holland from the French, Sir Ralph Abercromby was despatched to the Low Countries at the head of a division to co-operate with the Russians. By September 20 the British forces had been brought up to a total of 30,000 men headed by the Duke of York.

After an indecisive action on September 19, the Duke of York attacked the French on October 2 at Egmont-op-Zee, inflicting on them a severe defeat. The brunt of the fighting fell on the Forth and Sixth Brigades, under Sir John Moore and Lord Cavan, Sir Ralph Abercromby being present and exercising supreme command.

Our losses were very heavy, amounting to no less than 1,348 of all ranks killed and wounded. The casualty lists show that 7 officers of The Royal Scots were wounded with 7 men killed and 65 wounded.

From 'Battle Honours of The British Army by C B Norman 1911 and 'Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard'



The Royal Scots Museum

Moments in Time



October

1 st	1669	The Regiment (Dumbarton's) reviewed by Charles II
	1914	15 th Service Battalion formed
2 nd	1799	Battle of Egmont-op-Zee in Holland, against the French – 2 nd Battalion
5 th	1860	Peking entered after fighting at the Taku Forts at the mouth of the River Peiho
7 th	1813	3 rd Battalion cross Bidassoa River into France
13 th - 23 rd	1917	1 st Battle of Passchendaele – 15 th and 16 th Battalions
15 th	1918	Corporal R E Elcock MM awarded the Victoria Cross
16 th	1637	George Hepburn, Colonel of the Regiment killed in action at Chatillon
18 th	1918	Sir Edward Altham became Colonel of the Regiment. He was once on parade for The Princess Royal, dressed "in his flat hat and uniform and leading the march past. It was a very windy day and the Colour was blowing upwards and so forth. We were just approaching the saluting dais when a gust of wind blew his hat off onto the ground in front of him. <i>I will never forget his reaction. On the left foot his sword went up, on the right foot it stuck into his hat, on the left he picked it up. On the right he put it back on his head in time to give 'Eyes Right!' as he went past the saluting dais!" Major General Bill Campbell</i>
20 th	1709	Capture of Mons – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions
21 st	1645	Lord James Douglas, Colonel of the Regiment, killed in action near Arras whilst commanding a flying column between Douai and Arras.
22 nd	1918	Lieutenant D S McGregor awarded the Victoria Cross – 6 th Battalion
23 rd	1702	Storming of Liege – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions which ended Malborough's campaign of 1702 - "the infantry was equipped with the flintlock musket and the socket bayonet. That innovation raised the rate of fire from one round every three or four minutes to two rounds per minute. The former five or six rank formation was reduced to three – the 'standers', 'stoopers' and 'kneelers' – enabling a battalion to double its earlier frontage. Each private now carried his powder in a wooden container and twenty-four musket balls strung together across his chest. ... a well drilled company ... could fire a volley every ten seconds and maintain that rate of fire for ten minutes."
27 th	1680	Final defeat of the Moors at Tangier – Dumbarton's Regiment. The Royals had the heaviest casualty list with 4 officers and 36 other ranks killed, 15 officers and 100 soldiers wounded. Tangier was evacuated in 1684. The Regiment's first battle honour 'Tangier' was not awarded until 1920, two and a half centuries after the event!
26 – 4Nov	1917	2 nd Battle of Passchendaele – 17 th Battalion
31 st	1835	The officers' barracks at Barbados, tenanted by the Regiment, was lifted up and thrown down in a hurricane.



The Royal Scots Museum

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Passchendaele 1917

The 15th and 16th Battalions, who had acquitted themselves so well at Hargicourt earlier, were not spared the slaughter and misery of Passchendaele. They moved forward under shellfire, to positions in the front line just north of Poelcapelle on the night of 20/21 October. The following morning both Commanding Officers were gassed whilst conducting a reconnaissance. On 22 October 34 Division mounted another attack. The 15th and 16th were both leading battalions within their brigade and due to advance on a two-company front. The final objective was a line running from Gravel Farm to Six Roads Cross Roads, just to the east of the Forest of Houthulst. The attack was doomed from the start. The waterlogged countryside made movement in accordance with a strict timetable impossible.

Savage German shelling compounded that problem and steadily reduced the number of attackers even before they had formed up. As if these setbacks were not enough, our own barrage had not been properly planned and despite some last-minute adjustment to starting positions, the Battalions suffered casualties from their own shell fire. One forward company of the 15th reached its initial objective but the other was all but annihilated during its initial advance and moving forward was impossible. Within a few hours the 15th Battalion had lost seven officers and 228 soldiers. The 16th received a similar fate. Having suffered severe enemy shelling before the attack it had to move forward in a single wave. Almost immediately men were forced to seek refuge in the mud to escape devastating machine gun fire. When relieved the 16th battalion consisted of 4 men and 130 soldiers. *"We lost 20 officers and 400 men in this shambles in conditions almost indescribable for their sheer misery and despair."* Lt Johnston.

The picture above shows Lieutenant Colonel Sir George McCrae raising the 16th Battalion in George Street, Edinburgh, December, 1914



Immediately the troops advanced at zero they were subject to intense enfilade machine-gun fire from Hill 66 on the right flank. Lieut McGregor fearlessly went forward into the open to locate the enemy guns, and having done so, realised that it was impossible to get his guns carried forward either by pack or by hand without great delay, as the ground was absolutely bare and swept by a hail of bullets.

Ordering the teams to follow by a more covered route, he went to the limber, got on to it, and, lying flat, told the driver to leave cover and gallop forward. This the driver did, galloping down about six hundred yards of absolutely open road under the heaviest machine-gun fire into cover beyond.

The driver, horses and limber were all hit, but Lt McGregor succeeded in getting the guns into action, effectively engaging the enemy, subduing their fire and enabling the advance to be resumed. With the utmost gallantry he continued to expose himself in order to direct and control the fire of his guns, until about an hour later, this very gallant officer was killed whilst observing

fire effect for the Trench Mortar Battery. His great gallantry and supreme devotion to duty were the admiration of all ranks, and especially the officers and men of the 1st Border Regiment, who witnessed this extraordinary action." His parents received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 15 February 1919.

Corporal R E Elcock MM VC 11th Battalion

"For most conspicuous bravery and initiative, south-east of Cappell St Catherine on 15th October 1918, when in charge of a Lewis gun team. Entirely on his own initiative, Cpl Elcock rushed his gun up to within ten yards of enemy guns, which were causing heavy casualties and holding up the advance. He put both guns out of action, captured five prisoners and undoubtedly saved the whole attack from being held up. Later, near the River Lys, this NCO again attacked an enemy machine-gun and captured the crew. His behaviour throughout the day was absolutely fearless."

He had joined the South Staffordshire Regiment in France on 28 June 1915, just after his 16th birthday. When it was discovered he was underage he was sent home and discharged. He re-enlisted into The Royal Scots on his 18th birthday in June 1917. Before the age of 19 he had won the Military Medal and been promoted to Corporal. After the war he worked in India and Burma. He enlisted in the Indian Army at the outbreak of the Second World War in the rank of major, but unfortunately became ill and never recovered before he could be posted overseas. His grandson Christopher Owens served with the 1st Battalion in the gulf war in 1991.



The Victoria Cross

Lieutenant D S McGregor VC 6th Battalion

Born in Edinburgh on 16 October 1895, he was commissioned into the 6th Battalion in 1915. He served on the Somme before volunteering for machine-gun work. After training he was posted to the 29th Battalion of the Machine-Gun Corps with whom he was serving when he won his Victoria Cross for "most conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty near Hoogmolen on 22 October 1918, when in command of machine guns attached to the right flank platoon of the assaulting battalion..."

