

***The Forlorn Hope**

Troops selected to lead the assault on a fortress were dubbed the 'Forlorn Hope' because of the limited chances of surviving. Notwithstanding the prospect of death or dreadful wounds, many soldiers consider it an honour to be selected for that task.

Col Robert Paterson from Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard.

At San Sebastian after two breaches in the wall had been reported practicable, the Royals dashed up out of the trenches towards the gap. Major Peter Fraser, gallantly encouraging his brave men, was killed. The cannon of the fortress thundered in front, the French poured down volleys of musketry and grenades, shells and stones darkened the air, yet onward went the Royal Scots with valour and intrepidity. But the defence had not been destroyed, success proved impossible, and the stormers were ordered to retire. Divisional orders stated, "The Royal Regiment proved by the numbers left in the breach, that it would have been carried had they not been opposed by real obstacles, which no human prowess could overcome."

On 29 August 17 Royals "despite almost certainty of hideously violent death", ran forward from their trenches, shouting and crying in an effort to persuade the French that a major assault was being mounted in the hope that they would explode the mine beneath them. All were lost.

The third and final assault was carried by the forlorn hope of the fire-eating, perfervid Scots, with whom to take a thing in hand was finally to accomplish it. Nothing exceeded the bravery and steadiness of the troops. Undismayed by bursting mines and the fierce opposition, the Scots pressed forward and carried the coverlain: troops crowded into the town in every direction". San Sebastian was won and Sir Thomas Graham wrote; "our ultimate success depended upon the repeated attacks made by the Royal Scots". The Royals lost 531 officers and men - half their entire number. *C Lowe, Naval & Army Illustrated Feb 1897.*

***Sir John Moryllion Wilson and the Indians**

This painting depicts an episode in the Chippewa campaign during the American War of 1812. Captain John Wilson was wounded seven times and left for dead on the battlefield, where a native armed with a knife then attacked him. Wilson killed him and was after suckled and kept alive by an Indian woman before being taken prisoner. Exchanged in 1815 he



was described as '28 years of age, dark of eyes and hair, 6 feet 2 inch, slim with a square visage, light complexion with wounds to the left hip.' The painting depicts Niagara Falls and a nearby church - in reality the falls are miles north of the battlefield and there was no church.

One of the more colourful officers in the Regiment's history he was born in 1783, joined the Royal Navy in 1798, was wounded thrice and rendered totally deaf and invalided out in 1803. He joined the the army a year later and as Captain with the 3rd Battalion he was wounded twice as he led the assault on Flushing in Walcheren in 1809.

In 1810 he was brought before a court martial by using language "subversive to discipline, and disrespectful to the character" of his commanding officer. Though acquitted of conduct unbecoming to the character of a gentleman he was sentenced to be publicly reprimanded. He served in the Peninsular War and in North America. He rose to Lieutenant Colonel, was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath and Knight of the Royal Hanoverian Order. He was adjutant at the Royal Hospital Chelsea when he died in 1868, aged 85. During his 70 year career he was wounded 13 times and carried two musket balls in his body to his death. *Col R S B Watson from The Thistle Nov 1981.*



The Royal Scots
Museum
Moments in Time



July

1	2016 1916	Overnight Vigil in the Scottish National War Memorial for those who died at the Battle of the Somme – 2 nd , 8 th , 9 th , 11 th , 12 th , 13 th , 15 th , 16 th and 17 th Battalions. The 16 th Battalion crossed the line with a strength of 810 all ranks and by 3 July just this one battalion had 472 casualties. By the end of the campaign this figure was to reach 3662 across all Battalions with 605 men killed in action.
	1888	1 st Battalion ordered to Zululand where a "100 picked men" went to the Eastern Border "to demonstrate the power of the White Queen's soldiers" 1922 <i>Thistle</i> p29.
	1690	Frederick, Duke of Schomberg, Colonel of the Regiment, killed at Battle of the Boyne
	1881	New army reorganisation renamed The 1 st Foot as The Lothian Regiment (Royal Scots) with The Edinburgh Light Infantry Militia becoming the 3 rd Battalion. Tartan trews were also adopted at this time.
2	1946 1704	Brigadier N R Crockatt becomes Colonel of the Regiment. Battle of Schellenberg, the Royals suffered in the face of one French and two Bavarian battalions, but after receiving reinforcements they stormed and recaptured Donawerth. 1 st & 2 nd Battalions lost 118 men with 300 wounded.
	2011	The Colours were presented to The (new) Royal Regiment of Scotland. The old Royal Scots Colours were marched off parade before Her Majesty The Queen for the very last time.
4	1712	Siege of Quesnoi, France – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions.
5	1685 1814	Battle of Sedgemoor – the Earl of Dumbarton's Regiment was the only Royal Corps using matchlocks on this day. Battle of Chippewa, North American War of 1812. Five companies of the Battalion advanced across the small creek to assault the American Line of grey coated soldiers (the usual blue cloth had been unavailable); this well-disciplined force held against the British which sustained heavy losses. This was the first occasion in the War of 1812 where an American military force had defeated a larger British regular force. To commemorate this victory the cadets at the US Military Academy at West Point to this day wear grey uniforms. The Royals lost 78 men with 154 wounded. *See <i>Sir J M Wilson</i>
8	1636	Sir John Hepburn, the first Colonel of the Regiment and <i>Maréchal de Camp</i> killed at the Siege of Saverne.
11	1708 1877	Battle of Oudenarde, Flanders – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions, Earl of Orkney's Regiment. General Henry Phipps Raymond becomes Colonel of the Regiment.
14	1916	Longueval, 1 st Battle of the Somme – 2 nd , 11 th and 12 th Battalions.



The Royal Scots Museum

museum@theroyalscots.co.uk Scottish Charity No SCO05163

18	1705	Capture of Neer Hesperen, Holland – Earl of Orkney's Regiment.
19	1693	Battle of Neer Landen, –a victorious battle for 4 Battalions against 4 Brigades – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions.
20	1911	Presentation of new Colours to the 2 nd Battalion at Holyrood Palace by His Majesty King George V.
21	1971	Freedom of Musselburgh given to The Royals Scots.
22	1940	Colonel J H Mackenzie becomes Colonel of the Regiment.
24	1813	Battle of Fort San Sebastian – The Royals led this first assault – 'The Forlorn Hope*', an assault against an impregnable defence began before dawn but things went wrong and troops were under fire from both friend and foe. Commanding Officer Major Fraser and 86 Royals were killed, with 244 Royals injured.
25	1758 1814	Capture of Louisburg, Cape Breton Island – 2 nd Battalion Battle of Lundy's Lane during the War of 1812 –the British, including 7 companies of The Royals had a numerical advantage. The main part of the battle was fought in pitch darkness with some confusion. At daybreak both sides realised that they had recovered a gun from the opposition, thinking at the time they had recovered one of their own. 16 men were killed, 115 wounded and 41 taken prisoner*. It was the performance on this day, which earned the Battle Honour of Niagara. The War of 1812 was concluded in early 1815 and the 1 st Battalion returned to Portsmouth on 17 and 18 July that year.
26	1952	Regimental Monument unveiled by HRH Princess Mary in Princes Street Gardens
28	1634	Siege of La Motte by <i>Le Régiment d'Hebron</i>
29	1919	13 th Service Battalion disbanded.
30	1762	Capture of the Morro Fort, Cuba – 2 nd Battalion
31	1917	Passchendaele Offensive launched – also known as the 3 rd Battle of Ypres – 8 th , 9 th and 13 th Battalions

Life and death of Sir John Hepburn

"The best soldier in Christendom,

And consequently in the world."

Sir John Hepburn was born around 1598-1600, the second son of George Hepburn of Athelstaneford, East Lothian. His military career began under Sir Andrew Gray in 1620 in the service of Bohemia. He next served the Dutch and then entered Swedish service in 1625, under King Gustavus Adolphus. In 1633 he offered himself to Louis XIII of France and, under a warrant issued under the authority of King Charles I at Whitehall on 28 March, raised a Scottish Regiment, later named '*Le Régiment d'Hebron*' in the service of the French King. The warrant of 1633 precedes the formation date of any other British regiment and as such, Sir John could be called the founder of The British Army.

Promotion to *Maréchal de Camp* in 1634 gave him command of the infantry element of the army, whilst remaining in command of his own regiment. Sir John was killed during the third assault on Saverne, in Lorraine, on 8 July 1636: "Having decided to examine the principal breach Hepburn, with his usual coolness, went too near, just at the moment when the batteries from the city and the fortress were firing on the trenches with great intensity. It was

then that a bullet, fired either by chance or by some musketeer whose attention had been attracted by Hepburn's bright armour, struck the brave John in the neck; he fell from his horse and was at once picked up and taken away by his staunch Scots, a troop of which had rushed to his help. His fall was the signal of a fourth assault. Crying for vengeance a strong column of Scottish and French soldiers, under the orders of the Viscount of Turenne, although exposed to a terrible fire, crossed the moat, scaled the breach and although his right arm was broken, gloriously penetrated into the town." *From James Grant's 'Memoirs and Adventures of Sir John Hepburn 1851'.*

"Sir John was buried in the Cathedral of Toul where years later Louis XIII erected a splendid monument 25 feet high and 18 feet wide, of white stone with statues and figures of the same, flanked by 32 shields. The Colonel is represented armed, booted and spurred, wearing a belt from which hangs a sword passing over and along the thigh, his left hand resting on the hilt, his right hand placed upon his helmet, the latter resting upon a stone. On the other side the sword is hanging, the scabbard being of black velvet, mounted in steel and behind it are his spurs. The sword is of gilded copper." From a translation of *The Count E Fourier de Bacourt*. Of the epitaph "The best soldier in Christendom, and consequently in the world" nothing remains as it was destroyed by "the vandals of the Revolution" according to *Monsieur G Clanché*.

When the grave was opened in 1888 they found... "The skeleton well preserved; that of a man of great stature, some fair hairs still remaining attached to the head, all the teeth still visible..." *M Guillaume from the Regimental Journal The Thistle 1923.*

"The Best Soldier", a novel about Sir John's life, is a vivid depiction of his life, written by a member of the Hepburn family, Dr Elizabeth Scott.

"...suddenly the cannon started. Not his cannon, theirs.

Bucquoy had opened hostilities. He could see a few puffs of smoke from the centre of Frederick's line which must mean that his side were responding. The flash and roar of the cannon opposite was terrifying. He felt, more than heard his men begin to shuffle uneasily. "Stand firm men. It's just noise."

Then there was a roar and whine and a whole file of musketeers beside them disappeared in a spatter of blood and the screaming started. Another roaring whine and a ball ploughed past him into his men, splintering pikes and arms and bodies as if they were matchwood.

"Andy Douglas has lost his heid." The rising hysterical scream came from behind him.

His Sergeant turned and his bellow drowned the screams for a minute. "It'll no happen to you if you stand firm, Jock Kerr. It disna' happen twice the same place."

For some reason this seemed to quell what was clearly about to be a stampede, but looking back, Hepburn caught his breath at the bloody sight where Douglas's headless body lay askew. Great blood vessels had pumped blood in every direction as he fell and the front rank looked as if they had been at a pig killing. "Beat, "Stand Fast" drummer!" Hepburn, thankful his white face was hidden in his casque, stood frozen to the spot, only just able to get the words out."

Elizabeth's book is available from amazon.co.uk.

