

The Royals at the Battle of the Medway

In 1666 the Regiment was recalled from France, landing at Rye, Sussex it marched to Chatham. At this period the British Navy had been left unmanned, and the defenses of such an important arsenal as Chatham had been allowed to fall into disrepair, almost devoid of stores. In June the Dutch fleet appeared at the mouth of the Thames. An appeal for help was sent by the Governor of Sheerness, and a company of Douglas's Regiment was dispatched. It manned the weak defenses, but the batteries were so ill placed that the ships could pour a fierce fire inside them; and any shot which fell short sent showers of shingle into the faces of the defenders. The post was eventually abandoned, and the Dutch passed on up the river. They had, however, been delayed twenty-four hours by the gallant defence.

On the 13th the Dutch prepared for a further move up the Medway. At Upnor three great battleships *Royal Oak*, *Royal James* and *Loyal London* had been sunk, but only rested on the river bottom. Captain Douglas and a party from Douglas's had been sent for duty on board the *Royal Oak*. The Dutch launched two fireships against the *Royal Oak*. Against such an attack Douglas's men were powerless. In the smoke and confusion the crew and the others leapt for the boats, but Captain Douglas himself refused to leave, though begged to do so by his men. "It shall never be told that a Douglas quitted his post without orders," were the last words of the brave man, for he was never seen again, but perished in the flames on the ship he was sent to defend. A brave and noble sentiment, which applied equally to his family name and the name of his Regiment." *The Thistle January 1928*.



The Victoria Cross



In January 1856 Queen Victoria's new award for 'exceptional gallantry by individuals in the face of the enemy', the Victoria Cross, was made from the bronze of Russian guns captured after the siege of Sebastopol 1855.

Private Joseph Prosser VC, 2nd Battalion

"On the 16th June, 1855, when on duty in the trenches before Sebastopol, by pursuing and apprehending (while exposed to two cross fires) a soldier of the 88th, in the act of deserting the enemy.



On the 11th August, 1855, before Sebastopol, by leaving the utmost advanced Trench and carrying in a soldier of the 95th Regt, who lay severely wounded and unable to move. This gallant and humane act was performed under very heavy fire from the enemy."

Lance-Corporal W Angus VC, 8th Battalion

"For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Givency, on the 12th June 1915, in voluntarily leaving his trench under very heavy bomb and rifle fire, and rescuing a wounded officer who was lying within a few yards of the enemy's position. Lance-Corporal Angus had no chance whatever of escaping the enemy's fire when undertaking this very gallant action, and in effecting the rescue he sustained forty wounds from bombs, some of them being very serious."



Regimental history 'Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard' by Robert H Paterson is now £25 (cash only) from the Provost Marshal's House (adjacent to museum).



Royal Scots Museum

Moments in Time



June

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| 2 | 1953 | Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. |
| 5 | 1953 | 1 st Battalion sail for Korea. |
| 6 | 1761 1944 | Dominica captured – 2 nd Battalion. D-Day invasion of Normandy by 1 million Allied troops to liberate Western Europe from German occupation - 8 th Battalion. |
| 7 | 1762 | 1 st Battalion lands at Havannah to capture it from Spanish possession. Casualties from landing through to August 13 number 34 killed, 81 wounded and 12 died of disease. Of 11,576 soldiers landing on 7 June only 2,067 were fit for duty by Oct. Peace was made with Spain in 1763 and Havannah handed back to the Spanish and the Battalion ordered home. The Battle Honour 'Havannah' was awarded in 1909. |
| 9 | 1636 | Siege of Saverne, near Strasbourg. |
| 11 | 1702 | The Royals check a French advance in Nijmegen. |
| 15 | 1803 | Campaign against the French at St Lucia. |
| 16 | 1815 1855 | Quatre Bras – 3 rd Battalion. Attack on the fortress of Sebastopol – 1 st and 2 nd Battalions. During the Crimean War The Royals lost 61 men with 235 wounded. However disease killed more. For every ten officers killed in action, six died from disease. For the ordinary soldier it was reversed – for every ten who died in action or as a result of their wounds, no less than sixty died of disease. Private Joseph Prosser was awarded the first Victoria Cross gained by a member of the Regiment. |
| 18 | 1801 1815 | Egypt – engaged against Napoleon at the Pyramids, Cairo taken. Honour of Sphinx on the colours awarded by King George III. Battle of Waterloo – 3 rd Battalion. |
| 19 | 1794 | Corsica – 2 nd Battalion during French Revolutionary Wars. |
| 20 | 1813 | Battle of Sodus, Canada – 1 st Battalion. |
| 21 | 1813 | Battle of Vittoria – 3 rd Battalion. This victory gave Wellington his baton of Field-Marshal. With 80,000 men opposed to 62,000 French, casualties amounted to more than 4,000, the French 6,000. The Royals lost 8 men with 103 wounded. |
| 22 | 1803 | Capture of St Lucia – 2 nd Battalion won the Battle Honour recapturing the fort to hand back to the French under terms of the Treaty of Amiens. 9 men dead, 47 wounded. |
| 26 | 1944 | Normandy – 8 th Battalion lose 16 men with 92 wounded, 2 missing at Norrey-en-Beddin. Losses were so great that the area became known as the 'Scottish Corridor'. |
| 27 | 1710 1737 | Capture of Douai, during The War of Spanish succession. General the Hon James St Clair appointed Colonel of the Regiment. |
| 28 | 1915 | Attack on Achi Baba, Dardanelles – 4 th , 5 th and 7 th Battalions. These three Battalions lost 881 men dead or wounded on this day. |
| 28 | 1919 | 12 th Service Battalion disbanded. |



Quatre Bras – an eye witness account of the battle before Waterloo

“About half past one o’clock, on the 16th, the battalion was taken from its place in the centre of the 5th Division by a movement to its own left, by order of Sir Thomas Picton, and instantly by command of that lamented officer brought into action by a charge upon the enemy; it succeeded beyond our most sanguine expectations in routing this column, who afterwards formed under the protection of their cavalry, and then commenced a most galling fire upon us which we returned with the utmost steadiness and precision. The battalion was brought into action under the most trying circumstances imaginable, and continued so for a long time; but they never for one moment lost sight of that character which upon former trials they had so well earned and maintained. The ground through which they moved was planted with corn that took the tallest men up to the shoulders; and the enemy by this, and the advantage of the rising ground, threw in volley after volley of grape and musketry, which did astonishing execution.

“After being engaged for some time in a line, the battalion as formed into a square to resist the enemy’s cavalry, who were then advancing in great force; and I have the pride of stating, that though charged six or seven times by an infinite superiority of numbers, the French cavalry never for an instant made the slightest impression upon the square of The Royal Scots.

“The high encomiums give to this battalion on the morning of the 17th by the General Officers of Brigade and Division, for its conduct of the 16th, have made me feel very proud of being a Royal Scot”.



Records of The Royal Scots by J C Leask and H M McCance 1915

The Battle of Waterloo

Napoleon, worn down by the successive campaigns waged against him in Europe and in Spain, had at last abdicated, and was relegated to honourable exile in the Island of Elba. In the spring of 1815 he violated his engagements and returned to France, where the majority of his soldiery flocked to his standard. The Allies mobilized and prepared for war. Austria and Russia advanced from the east whilst Prussia and Great Britain pushed forward from the north. On June 16 Napoleon attacked the Prussians at Ligny and Wellington’s troops at Quatre Bras.

“The Prussians were undoubtedly worsted and there was doubtful action at Quatre Bras. The Allies fell back and it was agreed that a further stand should be made at Waterloo. Blucher failed to arrive on the field as anticipated and for four long hours the British army withstood the onset of the whole of Napoleon’s forces. Then, early in the afternoon, the effect of the Prussian advance on the left began to be felt, and the divisions of the Allies came successively into action. By sundown the battle was won, the French in retreat and Napoleon’s sun had set for ever.”

The Royals lost 26 men with 192 wounded at Quatre Bras on 16 June with a further 15 deaths and 128 wounded at Waterloo on June 18. *Norman’s Battle Honours of the British Army.*

Can you find the 3rd Battalion Colours from the battle of Waterloo in the Museum?

At the first Scottish Military Tattoo, held in Scotland, Edinburgh in October 1926, B and C Companies of the 1st Battalion re-enacted an incident from the Battle of Waterloo, based on an extract from our own Regimental History:

“Ensign Kennedy was carrying a colour in advance of the Battalion and was shot in the arm, but continued to advance. He was again shot, but this time killed or mortally wounded. A sergeant attempted to take the colour from him, but could not disengage his grip, so he threw the body over his shoulder, chiefly through the chivalrous action of the offer commanding the French Battalion opposed to the Royals, who ordered his men not to fire on the sergeant and his burden.”

Lieut. Mackenzie-Kennedy, who commanded The Royal Scots represented by C Company, is the great-grand-nephew of the Ensign Kennedy who carried the Colour of the 3rd Battalion at Waterloo.

Perhaps the hardest part in the incident fell upon CSM



Langford, in representing the “gallant sergeant”; he had to carry rather a heavy body, together with an enormous Colour, over about thirty yards of rough ground. One night of the performance the weight of his burden caused him to lose his bearings, and it was only raucous directions, shouted from the ranks of the Royals, that saved

Ensign Kennedy’s corpse from being dumped in the five-shilling corner.

The French battalion was very well represented by B Company, who made an imposing spectacle dressed in the uniforms of Napoleon’s famous “Old Guard.” *The Thistle 1927.* The first official performance of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo took place in 1950 – see <http://www.edintattoo.co.uk/> Can you find Ensign Kennedy in the Museum?

The honour of bearing the word “Waterloo” on its colours was conferred on the 3rd Battalion of The Royal Scots. Every officer and man present at the battles on the 16th and 18th of June, 1815, also received a silver medal, to be worn on the left breast, attached by a crimson and blue riband, and the soldiers had the privilege of reckoning two years’ service towards additional pay and pension on discharge. The Royals were also awarded 4 Order of the Bath for the Peninsula War and 3 Order of the Bath for Waterloo.



Can you see any Waterloo medals in the museum?

St Lucia 1803

The 2nd Battalion embarked at Portsmouth on 9th and 10th May, arriving at Barbados on 15th June. On 20th they proceeded to St Lucia. The 1st Division, consisting of The Royals and two field pieces, landed on the island in the afternoon of the 21st of June, under the orders of Brigadier-General Brereton. The other corps followed. The French outposts were driven in, and the town of Castries taken possession of. On the following morning, before daylight, The Royals and 64th Regiment advanced to attack the strong post of Morne Fortunée by storm. The Royals led the assault in gallant style: the redoubt was carried with fixed bayonets, and the enemy immediately surrendered. Captain Johnstone, who had already been wounded in Holland and in Egypt, owing to his lameness from the last-mentioned wound, was carried at the head of the Light company and literally thrown into the fort, which he was the second man to enter. In 1812 he exchanged into the 71st and with them was present at Waterloo.