

A brief history of

‘The Sherwood Foresters’

Notts & Derbys Regiment

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The Sherwood Foresters

(NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND DERBYSHIRE REGIMENTS).

REGIMENTAL BADGE.

The United Red and White Rose.

BATTLE HONOURS BORNE ON THE COLOURS.

"LOUISBURG," "ROLEIA," "VIMIERA," "TALAVERA," "BUSACO," "FUENTES D'ONOR,"
 "CIUDAD RODRIGO," "BADAJOZ," "SALAMANCA," "VITTORIA," "PYRENEES,"
 "NIVELLE," "ORTHEZ," "TOULOUSE," "PENINSULA," "AVA," "SOUTH AFRICA,"
 1846-7, "ALMA," "INKERMAN," "SEVASTOPOL," "CENTRAL INDIA," "ABYSSINIA,"
 "EGYPT, 1882," "TIHRAH," "SOUTH AFRICA, 1899-1902."

UNIFORM—SCARLET.

FACINGS—WHITE.

Depôt Headquarters—DERBY.

MILITIA.

3rd Battalion { (1st Derby Militia) }	Derby.
{ (2nd Derby Militia) }	
4th Battalion (Royal Sherwood Foresters' Militia)	Newark.

VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS.

1st Derby.	1st Nottinghamshire	Nottingham.
2nd Chesterfield.	4th	Newark.

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BATTLE MONUMENT BORN OF THE COLOURS

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THE DERBYSHIRE REGIMENT.

THE regiment by which the counties of Nottingham and Derby are represented in the ranks of His Majesty's Army is composed of two battalions, formerly the 45th and 95th Regiments of Foot. In 1881 these two corps were united under the title of the Sherwood Foresters, or Derbyshire Regiment.

The 45th Regiment, now the 1st Battalion, was raised in the year 1741, and the 95th, now the 2nd Battalion, in 1823. The first of the important events in the history of the former battalion was its participation in the conquest of Canada; and at the capture of the French naval arsenal at Louisburg, in 1758, its good service and gallantry earned for the regiment the first inscription on its colours. Although not present as a whole, the battalion was represented by a detachment in the famous battle before Quebec in the following year, when, under the immortal Wolfe, the British troops overthrew the sovereignty of France in North America. To a certain extent France revenged herself some 20 years later by helping the American colonies to gain their independence. In this unfortunate conflict the Sherwood Foresters, in common with the other regiments of the British Army, carried out the orders entrusted to them with a spirit and gallantry that added much to their reputation.

More congenial service awaited them in the West Indies, and for many years they were busy fighting the French for the possession of these valuable islands, finding, however, the climate more dangerous than the enemy.

In 1807, a stern experience fell to the lot of the regiment at the attack on Buenos Ayres, in South America. The English had, the year before, been obliged to relinquish the city in consequence of a general rising against them, and a large force under General Whitelock, including the 1st Battalion of the regiment, was sent to retake it. The city was entered at various points by the British troops, but every house had been made a fortress, and the farther our soldiers went the more terrible became the fusilade from every window and roof, whole battalions were cut off, and some, terribly reduced in numbers, were captured by the Spaniards. Other British regiments, however, were more fortunate, and the Sherwood Foresters, in particular, successfully seized the building to which they were directed, and prepared themselves to hold it against all comers. This, with other partial successes, enabled the British General to negotiate on equal terms with the Spanish Governor, and all prisoners were accordingly restored, and our troops left the city with the honours of war.

The following year, however, was to see the regiment enrolled in the ranks of those gallant troops who, in the course of the Peninsular War, defeated again and again the finest troops and ablest Marshals of the French Empire. In the opening battle of the war, that at Roleia, the battalion took a prominent part in the movement which dislodged the enemy, while at the battle of Vimiera, which followed, it was close in pursuit of the defeated French. In the desperate and protracted battle of Talavera, the battalion gained the honourable nickname of "The Old Stubborns," for its gallant conduct at a critical moment. With their usual impetuosity of attack, the French had flung themselves in masses upon an advanced post of our troops before they could be supported or withdrawn. Had our troops been driven in headlong confusion back upon Wellington's order of battle, the French

might fairly have expected to have broken the British asunder, and so gained their object. That they did not do so was owing to the firmness of the Sherwood Foresters, who, thoroughly trained in the art of war, opposed, with the utmost firmness and courage, the troops of the enemy. Taking advantage of the wooded nature of the country, they made such a defence, as they slowly retreated, as effectually prevented the enemy from profiting by his attack. Wellington, in describing the battle in his official bulletin, said: "Upon this occasion the steadiness and discipline of the 45th Regiment were conspicuous."

In the battle of Busaco, won by the British army against superior numbers, again did the Sherwood Foresters distinguish themselves. The army commanded by Wellington had been posted by him in a favourable position among the hills, which, to a certain extent, neutralised the odds against him. The enemy, however, fought with no little gallantry and perseverance, and one of their columns at one period of the day had actually attained the top of a ridge from which they might break the British line. Their triumph was, however, short lived. The 1st Battalion of the regiment, with its brave comrades, now the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers, and a Portuguese Regiment, sprang fiercely at the head of the enemy's column with the bayonet, a few moments of wavering, and then order was lost, and pell mell down the hill went the French, nor did our gallant fellows leave them until not a man remained on the hill's side from top to bottom, save those who had fallen or were prisoners. "I assure you that I never witnessed a more gallant charge than that made by the 88th, 45th, and 8th Portuguese Regiment on the enemy's division, which had reached the ridge of the sierra," so wrote the hero of a hundred fights to the Secretary of State.

Space will not permit a detailed account of the doings

of the Sherwood Foresters in all the battles and sieges of the Peninsula War, but wherever dauntless daring was required the men of the old 45th were ever ready to head a storming party with the same fearless spirit as that which earned them the nickname of the "Old Stubborns." At Badajoz, a 45th jacket was displayed in place of the British flag, as a sign of the conquest of the castle and a testimony to the regiment's participation in the victory. At Fuentes d'Onor, Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca, and the crowning victory of Vittoria, in the dreadful struggles amongst the Pyrenees, in the passage of the Nive and the Nivelle, at Orthes and Toulouse, the regiment obtained, and firmly cemented, a fame for gallantry and good conduct which placed it in the front rank of Wellington's stout veterans.

After the final overthrow of Napoleon at Waterloo, many years elapsed ere the regiment was again required for active service against an enemy, but in various quarters of the globe it performed sterling service in the protection of British interests and possessions.

The 2nd Battalion, the old 95th Regiment, was formed in 1823, but its qualities in the field were not tested until it had existed for 10 years, when it proceeded to Cephalonia, to act against some revolted Greeks. How well the 10 years of training had fitted the regiment for an emergency may be judged from the expression of the High Commissioner's thanks "for the exemplary steadiness, patience and humanity, as well as gallantry, displayed by them during a very arduous and trying service."

The 1st Battalion was, in 1846-47, engaged in South Africa in protecting our colonists against the Kaffirs, a duty which called for much endurance on the part of the troops ere the nimble-footed savages could be taught that distance could not save them from the consequences of their barbarous raids on the farms and homesteads of the colony. Service

in Burmah followed for the battalion, where, amid very different surroundings, they performed equally excellent work against the Burmese, and established British authority in that quarter of the globe on a more satisfactory basis.

In 1854, stern and desperate service fell to the lot of the 2nd Battalion during the Crimean Campaign. Eager to win laurels for their hitherto practically untried regiment, the soldiers of the 95th climbed the fatal hillsides of the Alma with a gallant impetuosity which would not be denied, although their first battle honour cost the battalion, in killed and wounded, no less than 18 officers and 188 N.C.O. and men. Again was that dauntless courage shown on the memorable 5th of November, when the grey Russian masses crept through the fog at Inkerman, only to be hurled back to Sevastopol, after six hours' desperate fighting, by one-sixth their number of British troops. When the roll was called after the battle, no less than 143 officers and men of the regiment were found to have been either killed or wounded. In addition to these severe losses, the men suffered from the terrible severity of the climate, and scarcely 100 could be mustered fit for duty out of 1,000 who had left England. This, however, in no way prevented the gallant corps from furnishing in its turn the usual quota of officers and men for outpost and trench duty, and, worthy companions of the "Old Stubborns," the men of the 2nd Battalion nobly earned the honours of the Crimean War for their colours.

Following hard on the Crimean War came the Indian Mutiny, and although the 2nd Battalion did not arrive in India in time to share in the more brilliant achievements of the year 1857, yet it was called upon for service as perilous and trying in the 16 months of marching and fighting with the Central Indian Field Force. During that time it traversed nearly 3,000 miles, and was engaged with the enemy 14 times, often

under climatic conditions which wrought more havoc even than the enemy.

The Abyssinian Campaign gave the 1st Battalion an opportunity of proving the continued existence of that spirit of martial ardour which it had so signally manifested in the battles of the Peninsula War, and the incident cannot be better described than by quoting the words of Lord Malmesbury in the House of Lords: "The march of the 45th is one of the most extraordinary on record. Having been detained in the rear, and being anxious to come as soon as possible to the front, they marched 300 miles in 24 days, and accomplished 70 miles in four days, over a pass 10,000 feet high." It is gratifying to know that the gallant corps was in time to take part in the assault and capture of Magdala.

The 2nd Battalion defended Alexandria during the campaign in Egypt in 1882, and although but little fighting fell to its lot, the duty it had to perform in mounting guard day and night, and the trying nature of the country, fully and satisfactorily tested the good qualities of the regiment.

Six years later the same battalion won additional credit in the Sikkim Expedition. The men of the regiment, in addition to many fatiguing marches over difficult country, had to hold an advanced position at Gnathong, which was twice attacked by superior numbers of the Thibetans, who, on both occasions, were completely repulsed. At the conclusion of the expedition, the General who commanded the force highly commended the battalion, "not only for its good fighting qualities, but also for its high state of discipline, and the good tone which existed throughout all ranks," while Lord Roberts also expressed his satisfaction at "the most favourable reports received of the battalion, and that it was cheerful under hardships, always ready for work, and very well conducted."

On the 19th September, 1897, the 2nd Battalion was ordered

to take the field with the Tirah Expedition against the tribesmen in the mountains and passes on the North-West Frontier of India, and showed conspicuous gallantry in the memorable action at Dargai, where it had 1 officer and 11 N.C.O. and men killed and wounded. Lieutenant H. S. Pennell won the Victoria Cross by his gallant endeavours to save Captain Smith who was killed, and Sergeant Keeling and Private Spick received the Medal for Distinguished Conduct. The battalion was subsequently engaged in the attack of the Sampagha and Arhanga passes; the destruction of the fortified towers of the Aka Khel Afridis in the Warren Valley, and the action of Karumna in the Khyber Pass. The trying marches, extreme cold, unhealthy valleys, and heavy duty were a severe strain upon the health of the men during this campaign, and the total casualties of the battalion amounted to 3 officers and 21 N.C.O. and men killed or died of wounds, disease, &c.; and 1 officer, and 33 N.C.O. and men wounded.

On the outbreak of the Boer War the 1st Battalion left Malta on the 21st November, 1899, under the command of Colonel Smith-Dorrien, D.S.O., and landed at East London, South Africa, on the 15th December, 1899, when it proceeded by train to join the 3rd Division about 10 days after the disaster at Stormberg. It took part in many reconnaissances in that district and was present at the action at Bethulie Bridge, where Lieutenant Popham gained his D.S.O. by cutting the wires connecting the dynamite charges which had been prepared to blow up the bridge.

The battalion then joined General Bruce Hamilton's force on the 29th April, 1900, being part of the Eastern Column under General Ian Hamilton, and took part in the actions of Welkdon, Zand River, Johannesburg and Diamond Hill, and the occupations of the towns of Winberg, Kroonstad, Lindley and Pretoria.

It marched 400 miles in 45 days, including 10 days' halt, and was engaged with the enemy 28 times. At Diamond

Hill it lost 5 men killed and 2 officers and 19 men wounded.

On the return of the battalion to Pretoria it was ordered to trek south across the Vaal River in the direction of Bethlehem, and joined Colonel Broadwood's and General Fitzroy Hart's Column in the pursuit of De Wet, and performed many arduous marches on this service.

It subsequently joined Colonel Dixon's column, and while serving with it took a conspicuous part in the severe engagement at Vlakkfontein on the 29th May, 1901. Covering their approach by a veldt fire, 500 mounted Boers dashed out of the smoke on to the rear guard of the column and obtained possession of its two guns. The escort of the guns was a company of the Sherwood Foresters, and though its ranks had been broken by the fierce onslaught, the men fought gallantly against tremendous odds until the rest of the battalion with the Scottish Borderers came to the rescue, when the guns were recaptured and the Boers swept off the field, leaving 41 of their dead on the ground. 24 N.C.O. and men of the regiment were killed, and 4 officers and 57 N.C.O. and men were wounded.

Again at Moedwill, the regiment still further enhanced its fighting reputation in the action of the 30th September, 1901. Colonel Kekewich's column, with which the battalion was then serving, was attacked at daybreak in its bivouac by Delarey and a large force of Boers. In the suddenness of the attack the outposts were driven in and the Boers secured a position from which their fire searched the whole camp, and men and horses dropped fast. But the Sherwood Foresters had been in this kind of affair before, and undismayed by the situation, they led the way in a gallant counter attack on the Boers. By six o'clock in the morning Delarey's burghers had had enough, and galloped off completely repulsed. "There were few actions," says Sir Conan Doyle, "more creditable to the troops engaged." The regiment lost 1 officer and 20 N.C.O.

and men killed and 3 officers and 39 N.C.O. and men wounded. Sergeant Chambers, by his very successful defence of a small post, won the Medal for Distinguished Conduct in this action. After this and until the end of the war, the battalion held the blockhouse line from Magato to Naauport.

Much good service was also performed by the mounted infantry of the regiment, who saw service in every part of the scene of war. During the campaign the total number of casualties amounted to 12 officers and 259 N.C.O. and men, and the battalion marched 2,200 miles. When speaking at Welbeck, Lord Kitchener referred to the Sherwood Foresters as "one of the battalions in whom I most trusted."

Among the Militia battalions which volunteered for the war, none were so seriously engaged as the 4th Battalion of the regiment, and the gallant fight it made against hopeless odds at Roodeval will always be a proud recollection. Its casualties during the campaign were 3 officers, 42 N.C.O. and men killed or died of wounds, disease, &c., and 3 officers, 62 N.C.O. and men wounded, and it received a deservedly great reception on its return from the inhabitants of Nottingham and Newark.

The representatives of the volunteer battalion of the regiment who went to the front also earned much praise for the spirit in which they shared the dangers and hardships of their regular comrades.

The following soldiers of the regiment have won special distinctions for acts of courage on the field of battle :—

The Victoria Cross.

Indian Mutiny, 1857.—Private B. McQuirt.

[Perak Expedition, 1876.—Captain Channer.

Afghan War, 1879.—Colonel O'Moore Creagh.

At Dargai, Tirah Campaign, 1897.—Lieutenant H. S. Pennell.
Wakkerstroom, South African Campaign, 1899–1902.—
Corporal H. Beet.

Moedwill, South African Campaign, 1899–1902.—Private W.
Bees.

The Medal for Distinguished Conduct.

Crimean Campaign, 1854–5.—Quartermaster-Sergeant M.
McGucken; Colour-Sergeant T. Welton; Corporals W. Bish,
M. Harrison, S. Hunter, G. Seymour; Privates W. Ahern, T.
Grimason, F. Kelling, P. Kenny, J. Mercer, M. Urell, D. Shea,
P. Burke, P. Murphy, C. Rose.

Egyptian Campaign, 1882.—Private J. Wilson.

Tirah Campaign (North-West Frontier of India) 1897.—
Colour-Sergeant J. Keeling; Private J. Spick.

South African Campaign, 1899–1902.—Sergeants-Major H. G.
Crummey, H. Taylor; Quartermaster-Sergeant W. J. Roberts;
Company Sergeant-Major A. Ewin; Colour-Sergeants W.
Harwood, C. D. Randall, C. Walker; Sergeants G. Dexter, C.
Chambers, J. Dames, J. Gilham, W. Seaton, A. Avenall;
Lance-Sergeant W. Dowson; Corporal J. Brierly; Privates
H. Alton, A. Bullons, J. Cunningham, C. O. Hickenbottom,
R. Isaacs, A. Smith, E. Marriott.

GOD SAVE THE KING.