



## The History of The Royal Regiment of Scotland

1900-Today



Our Regiments and their soldiers fought with distinction in all the campaigns of the 20th and early 21st Century.

### Boer War (1899 - 1902)

All our Regiments fought in the Boer War, including many militia and volunteer battalions. Paardeberg and South Africa 1899 - 1902 are among our battle honours.

### World War I (1914 - 1918)

In the First World War over 300,000 soldiers served in the regular, territorial and service battalions of our Regiments. Of these, over 100,000 were killed or wounded. The battalions saw active service in every theatre of the Great War and our soldiers were awarded 44 Victoria Crosses for outstanding gallantry. The Battle of Loos in Sep 1915 is note worthy. Battalions from all of our Regiments fought alongside each other with great distinction at this bloody battle.



Gordon Highlanders - 1914

### Winston Churchill

Lieutenant Colonel Winston Churchill commanded **6th Bn Royal Scots Fusiliers** in 1915. The Scots soon warmed to the dour Englishman when he ordered dry socks for sentries who had been standing in the rain. His section of the front at Ploegsteert became one of the most aggressive. While in command, Lieutenant Colonel Churchill personally made 36 forays across no man's land. On giving up command, he followed Haig's instruction and returned to the House of Commons to secure the one thing most needed: conscription. Sir Winston Churchill was later to remark:

'Although an Englishman, it was in Scotland I found the three best things in my life: my wife, my constituency and my Regiment.'

### Robert McBeath VC

On 20th November 1917 west of Cambrai, France, a nest of enemy machine guns in the northern outskirts of a village opened fire both on Lance Corporal McBeath's battalion, **1st/5th Seaforth Highlanders**, and on the unit to his right. At this time his company was in attack and approaching the final objective. The advance was checked and heavy casualties resulted. When a Lewis gun was called for to deal with these machine guns, Lance Corporal McBeath volunteered for the duty and immediately moved off alone with a Lewis gun and revolver. He found, however, several other hostile machine guns in action and, with assistance of a tank, attacked them and drove the gunners to ground in a deep dugout. Lance Corporal McBeath regardless of danger, rushed in after them, shot an enemy who opposed him on the steps, and drove the remainder out of

the dug-out, capturing 3 officers and 30 men. There were five machine guns mounted around the dug-out and by putting them out of action he cleared the way for the advance of both units. The conduct of Lance Corporal McBeath throughout three days of severe fighting was beyond all praise.

## World War II (1939 - 1945)

In the Second World War, our battalions served with the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940, and in the Far East in 1942. Again our territorial battalions served with distinction and many additional battalions were raised and served throughout all the theatres of the war. Great success was achieved in the North Africa campaign, in Sicily and Italy, in the invasion of North West Europe followed by the long advance into Germany, and in the liberation of Burma.

### Dennis Donnini VC



Dennis Donnini VC - the youngest winner of the VC during World War II

During **4th/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers** assault of a German position in Holland in January 1945, Fusilier Dennis Donnini's platoon came under concentrated fire and he was wounded. After recovering consciousness he charged down 30 yards of open road and threw a grenade into the nearest window. With the survivors of his platoon he closely pursued the fleeing enemy. Within close range of enemy trenches and under intense fire Fusilier Donnini rescued a wounded comrade then returned to the open firing a Bren gun. He was wounded a second time but recovered and went on firing until a grenade he was carrying was hit and exploded killing him. During this action, fought at point

blank range, the determination and magnificent courage of Fusilier Donnini enabled his platoon to capture the position accounting for 30 Germans and 2 machine guns. Dennis Donnini, aged 19 years, was the youngest winner of the VC during World War II.

## Post World War II

In the years after 1945, our Regiments fought in Korea, took part in peacekeeping and anti-terrorist operations in Kenya, Malaya, Borneo, Aden, Cyprus, Germany, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo. No campaign saw more sustained service than the troubles in Northern Ireland (1969 - 2007). Our Regiments lost 50 soldiers killed during this long campaign in support of the civil authorities.

### Korea (1950 - 1953)

In 1950 war broke out in Korea and among the first troops to go were **1st Bn the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders** and the **1st Bn the Kings Own Scottish Borderers**. The **1st Bn Black Watch** sailed for Korea in 1952. All forces experienced severe fighting, in grim conditions. Casualties were high: more than 150 officers and men from our Regiments were killed.

## William Speakman VC

Private Speakman, originally a **Black Watch soldier**, was attached to the **1st Bn Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders** to serve in Korea. He subsequently transferred to the **1st Bn the Kings Own Scottish Borderers** also in Korea. In November 1951, his section was holding the left flank of his company's position and suffering serious casualties. The British positions were being over-run by thousands of Chinese. On his own initiative, Private Speakman, collected a pile of grenades, and led six others as they carried out a series of charges. These charges had the effect of breaking up several of the enemy attacks, causing them heavy casualties. Even after he was wounded by shrapnel, he continued to lead charge after charge. The battle went on for six hours and when they ran out of ammunition they threw rocks and stones, in fact, anything they could lay their hands on. In all, he led 15 counter-charges, delaying the enemy long enough to allow for his company's safe withdrawal. His decoration was highly acclaimed in Britain and the first VC to be awarded by Queen Elizabeth II. Bill Speakman, however, was a modest man who preferred to concentrate on his military career rather than court the attention the medal inevitably brought. He later served in Malaya (with the SAS) Borneo and Radfan. At the time of writing he is still alive.



William Speakman VC - the first soldier to receive a VC from Queen Elizabeth II

## Middle East (1991 - present day)

**1 RS, 1 KOSB, 1 RHF, 1 QOHldrs** and individuals from all our Regiments served in the 1st Gulf War in 1991. 2003 saw the Scottish Regiments return to the Middle East. **1 BW** took part in the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 as part of 7th Armoured Brigade (the Desert Rats); and **1 RS, 1 KOSB, 1 RHF, 1 HLDRS** and **1 A and SH** all served with distinction in Iraq between 2003 and 2006.

## Shaun Jardine CGC

Rapid reaction force commander Cpl Jardine and his team were engaged by two enemy positions near the Al Uzayr security base in Iraq's southern province of Maysan in 2003. Cpl Jardine was serving with **1 KOSB**. During a period of intense and accurate Iraqi machine gun fire Cpl Jardine ordered the remainder of his team to provide covering fire while he assaulted the first of three enemy positions single handedly killing two of the enemy and capturing their weapons. He then engaged and suppressed the second enemy position while calling his men to join him. The third enemy position was engaged but the remaining gunmen fled. Cpl Jardine's quick thinking and total disregard for his own safety helped prevent casualties among his own team and other flanking units. His heroic actions earned him the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (Britain's highest award for gallantry after the Victoria Cross). The citation for his award praised his courage and inspirational leadership.



Armoured Infantry Operations in Iraq

### **Amalgamations, Mergers and Formation Day - 28th March 2006**

Post World War II, the Army reorganized and restructured on a number of occasions to meet the political requirements of the day. In 1948 - 1950 all our Regiments were reduced to one single battalion each. In 1959 - 1961 four of our battalions amalgamated to form two single battalion Regiments: the **Royal Highland Fusiliers** and the **Queen's Own Highlanders**. At this time our Regiments were grouped together into the Scottish Division. **The Queen's Own Highlanders** amalgamated again, this time with the **Gordon Highlanders** in 1994 to form the **Highlanders (Seaforths, Gordons and Camerons)**. In memory of this, Highlanders Day is celebrated each year and private soldiers in **4 SCOTS** hold the title Highlander.

As part of the British Army's restructuring for future operations, the **Royal Regiment of Scotland** was formed on 28th March 2006 by merging our six Regiments into one. **The Royal Scots and Kings Own Scottish Borderers** amalgamated on August 2006 to form the 1st Battalion and the remaining four Regiments provided the 2nd to 5th Battalions of our Regiment, retaining the antecedent names in the Battalions full titles. The 6th and 7th Battalions were formed from the two Scottish Division Territorial Army battalions based in Scotland.

Proud of our heritage and structured for the 21st Century, the Regiment continues to serve Queen and Country. At the time of writing, all of our battalions are either on or preparing for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.