



The Mercian Regiment's traditions and customs

Some traditions and customs from earlier regiments were carried forward into the Mercian Regiment when it formed in 2007. All our soldiers and officers must observe these traditions and customs.

Some battalions within the Regiment may have other traditions and customs, but these usually only apply within the battalion. But Commanding Officers have the right to order their battalion to observe the traditions and customs of other battalions in the Regiment.

This information is broken down into

- Oak leaves in the presence of royalty
- Ever sworded 29th
- Scarlet coatee jacket from the flag pole on Badajoz Day
- Cousins Colours to the Sergeants' Mess
- Colours carried by a private soldier

Oak leaves in the presence of royalty

The tradition of wearing oak leaves in the presence of royalty probably started after the Battle of Dettingen in 1743, during the War of the Austrian Succession. This was the last battle in which a British king (King George II) commanded his armies in battle.

The story is that when King George II was cut off from his army and in danger of capture, soldiers from what was to become the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment formed a square around an oak tree and protected the King.

To honour their bravery, the King snapped a twig from the tree and commanded it become the Regiment's badge.

The Regiment has worn the acorn and oakleaf badge for many years. In 1921 the badge was added to the Regimental Colour, and in 1933 King George V confirmed the tradition.

Oakleaves must be worn by those on parade or during a visit by a member of the British Royal Family who can use the title Her/His Majesty and His/Her Royal Highness. People watching a parade can wear the oakleaf if they wish.

By tradition, 2 leaves from the large European oak are worn behind the hat badge. But if a badge is not worn (for example on a helmet or bush hat) then oak leaves should not be worn. The oak leaves are usually made of plastic and are available from the Mercian Regiment's Headquarters on repayment.

The tradition was carried forward into the Mercian Regiment on the collar badge and on the Regimental Colour and drums.

Ever Sworded 29th

This tradition dates back to Canada in 1743 when the 29th Foot (who later became the Worcestershire Regiment) were warned their camp would be attacked by Native American Indians. As a result, the officers wore their swords to dinner (usually called mess) and used them to beat off the attack when it came.

Until 1850, swords were worn by all officers in the Regiment's mess to remember the 1743 event.

Since 1850, only the orderly officer and field officer/captain of the week must wear their sword in the officers' mess.

The tradition was only carried forward into the 2 Mercian battalion, but when in the mess, all the Regiment's officers and Warrant Officer 1s must wear their Sam Browne belt with the sword frog permanently fitted.

Scarlet coatee jacket from the flag pole on Badajoz Day

On 6 April 1812, the 45th Foot (whom later became the 1st Battalion, the Sherwood Foresters) took part in the attack on the fort of Badajoz in Spain. Lieutenant James Macpherson led a successful attack on the central tower but realised he did not have a British Flag to fly to signify it had fallen. He therefore removed his scarlet jacket and hoisted that instead of a flag.

This tradition was carried forward into the 2 Mercian battalion, who still raise a scarlet jacket from their Regimental flagpole on Badajoz Day. To honour the event, a scarlet jacket is also flown at the Regimental Headquarters Outstation at Nottingham, at Nottingham Castle and by Derby City Council.

Cousins

In 1846, the 10th (Lincolnshire) and 29th (Worcestershire) Regiments of Foot fought a successful battle together at Sobraon against the Sikhs. To remember the event:

- members of the 2 regiments (now called the 1 Royal Anglian and 2 Mercian) became honorary members of each other's messes, and
- their adjutants referred to each other as 'My Dear Cousin' in written communications.

The tradition was only carried forward into the 2 Mercian battalion when the Regiment was formed in 2007.

Colours To The Sergeants Mess

For more information, see Regimental Days.

Colours Carried By A Private Soldier

For more information, see Regimental Days.