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# *The King's Regiment*



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MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

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OSPREY PUBLISHING LIMITED

Published in 1973 by  
Osprey Publishing Ltd, P.O. Box 25,  
707 Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire  
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ISBN 0 85045 120 5

Printed in Great Britain by  
Jarrold & Sons Ltd, Norwich

## Princess Anne's Regiment

Monmouth's attempt in the summer of 1685 to overthrow James II ended in disaster, and his defeat at Sedgemoor was overshadowed by the savage treatment of his supporters at the 'Bloody Assize'. Paradoxically, however, the ease with which the rebellion was crushed in a little over three weeks led the King on to the path that ended in his exile.

James had increased the Army by twenty regiments. Of these one, armed with fusils and used to escort artillery, became the Royal Fusiliers, while the next in seniority was Princess Anne of Denmark's Regiment, later numbered 8th of Foot, and now the King's Regiment. The date was 20 June 1685 and the command was given to Robert, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, a courtier whose family had for many generations served the Crown. Lord Ferrers himself raised a company in Hertfordshire while Lt.-Col. John Beaumont, a veteran of the Civil War, recruited around Derby. The tenth company was recruited in six days in London by John Innis, who was appointed Major, and the Regiment finally assembled at Hounslow. Here, on the King's orders, a large military camp had been established and the Regiment, wearing the Stuart colours with yellow facings to their red coats, was twice reviewed by the King. Later a grenadier company was raised in York by Sir John Reresby, Member of Parliament for that city. Meanwhile James Fitz James, the King's natural son by Arabella Churchill, had been appointed Colonel of the Regiment. Aged seventeen he had already distinguished himself fighting the Turks at the siege of Buda. In 1687 he was created Duke of Berwick and given command of the

important fortress of Portsmouth, where the Regiment now joined the garrison.

For some time the King had pursued a policy of filling both civil and military offices with Catholics, and in Ireland his lord lieutenant, the Earl of Tyrconnel, had already dismissed well over 4,000 Protestant soldiers including many officers. Now the temper of the English regiments was to be tested. On an inspection of Lord Lichfield's Regiment (the 12th Foot) the soldiers were told they must sign a pledge to carry out the royal policy of indulgence or be discharged. All but two officers and a handful of privates immediately



**Officer, Princess Anne's  
Regiment, 1686.**  
(National Army Museum)

grounded their arms. The King was utterly non-plussed but eventually countermanded the order, adding, 'Another time I shall not do you the honour to consult you.'

It fell to the lot of Princess Anne's Regiment to be chosen for the next experiment. Lt.-Col. Beaumont was ordered to enlist some thirty Irish recruits that had arrived in Portsmouth with Col. McEligott's Regiment. This regiment had been serving in the Anglo-Dutch Brigade and, in fact, was paid by Louis XIV. Beaumont and five of his officers took the order as an insult and immediately petitioned the Duke of Berwick, pointing out that their companies had been raised at their own expense for the King's service and there was no shortage of English recruits. Indeed, rather than have strangers forced upon them they would beg leave to resign their commissions. The King was furious. The six officers were arrested, taken to Windsor, court-martialled, and cashiered. This time James had gone too far. The patriotic stand by the 'Portsmouth Captains' caught the imagination of the public, whose sympathy and applause, as expressed in the ballads and portraits of the six officers soon on sale, reflected the feeling of many who had stood by the King at the time of the Rebellion. The new commanding officer now faced a wave of desertions which underlined the feelings of the rank and file. Within weeks, however, news came of the landing of the Prince of Orange and soon King James was on his way to exile. On 31 December 1688, less than four months after his arrest, Beaumont was appointed Colonel of the Regiment. A 'publique advertisement in the *Gazel*' recalling absentees was published the same day and Beaumont had already taken other steps to fill the ranks in contacting Sir John Reresby, who writes in his *Memoirs*: 'I sent to Sheffield and Rotherham to make new recruits, and in two days' time, only by sending my servants, I raised near 60 young men without beat of drum and choosing the most likely sent them with an officer to the quarter at Southampton.' Col. Walton, the Army's historian of this period, wrote in 1894: 'It may be reasonably asserted that to the conduct of King James's Standing Army as citizens we are indebted for the political and religious freedom enjoyed in so superlative a degree by our country at this present moment.'

Within six months the Regiment was sent to Ireland. Officially, as Walton records, the Regiment was in fair shape: 'Beaumont's, 8th, Major very assiduous but the Lieutenant Colonel neglects the Regiment; pretty well clothed', which was a good report compared with many other regiments. In reality the men were suffering terrible privations. Nothing had been provided. Food was at famine prices and no one had been paid for months. In the fortified camp at Dundalk there were neither hospital nor medicines, and men died by the score. When the campaign was continued the following year Princess Anne's Regiment mustered barely 500 men. At the siege of Cork (September 1690) the Regiment landed from open boats in the face of the enemy. The assault was led by the Earl of Marlborough, the man destined to command Queen Anne's armies in the long and bitter War of the Spanish Succession.

## *First Battle Honours*

Between 1701 and 1714 the Regiment, which after Anne's accession was entitled the Queen's Regiment, served continuously on the Continent. Under their Colonel, James Richmond Webb, it fought with distinction in Marlborough's eight campaigns in the Low Countries. Webb was one of Marlborough's most trusted officers, and his professional ability and outstanding bravery brought early advancement and high command.

Of the many battles in which the Regiment took part that of Oudenarde stands out, not only as an illustration of the brilliance of Marlborough as a tactical innovator but also because the decisive blow was made by the infantry and not by the cavalry.

In 1708 the French made a tremendous effort to recover the Netherlands. Ghent and Bruges fell into their lap through treachery, and 85,000 men were advancing on Oudenarde. The French commanders, Burgundy and Vendôme, convinced that Marlborough would hold back to cover Brussels, saw no need for haste. Marlborough, however, reacted with speed and determination. Having arranged for Prince Eugène to send reinforcements, he led 80,000 men rapidly south-



**The Battle of Blenheim, 1704. (National Army Museum)**

west, and after covering 50 miles in forty-eight hours, reached a point only 15 miles from Oudenarde, thereby cutting Vendôme's direct communications with France. Before dawn on 11 July Lord Cadogan marched on Oudenarde with a strong advance guard of all arms. While pontoon bridges were being laid across the Scheldt below the town, the French could be seen leisurely crossing the river some six miles downstream, quite oblivious of the presence of the Allied troops. By noon Cadogan's force had crossed and were covering the bridges, but it was another hour before their presence was discovered by the French. At this moment a large body of Allied cavalry could be seen galloping towards the bridges and the French plans to launch their own cavalry against Cadogan were cancelled. Four Swiss battalions in the little village of Eyne and a reserve brigade to their rear were thus left unsupported. Cadogan immediately advanced to the attack. The 8th had the place of honour on the right of the leading brigade. Taylor in *The Wars of Marlborough* describes what followed. 'With bayonets fixed and firelocks shouldered they moved proudly forward, as if to enter some citadel already fallen.' The charge was delivered at pistol range and with a great shout the British stormed the village. The action was hand to hand and very brief. The Swiss, famous for their tenacity and courage, broke. Three battalions laid down their arms and the fourth, attempting to fall back, was cut off by Cadogan's Hanoverian cavalry. The reserve battalions fled in panic and the Hanoverian squadrons drove the French cavalry from the plain.

The French infantry now advanced into the enclosed uplands above Oudenarde, and no less

than twelve battalions were launched against the Prussian infantry holding the little village of Groenewald. Soon the whole of Cadogan's infantry were committed. All depended on their holding out until Marlborough's main body could arrive, and again the 8th held the place of honour on the right flank. Twice they were thrown back and twice they recovered their positions. Precious minutes had been gained and, as the French with loud shouts of 'Vive le Roi!' again surged forward, twenty fresh battalions under the Earl of Argyle at last reached the scene of action. By dusk Marlborough's infantry were fighting on a front of 4,500 yards, but a Dutch contingent had slipped round the French right flank and charged into their rear. In the growing darkness there was incredible panic and confusion. Slowly the Allied regiments closed in, until the volleys of Cadogan's right and those of the Dutch crossed. The French defeat was crippling; in addition to the loss of 6,000 killed and wounded and 9,000 prisoners the number of deserters probably brought their total casualties to 20,000. The Allied losses were about 3,000.

The Allies now advanced into France with Eugène's army besieging the great fortress of



**The Battle of Oudenarde, 1708 - the final assault. (National Army Museum)**

Lille while Marlborough provided the covering force. Soon all depended on speeding up the delivery of ammunition and other supplies for the siege. Ostend was opened as a base port and a large supply column was made ready. The French, however, had assembled 22,000 men under Gen. LaMotte at Bruges with orders to intercept and destroy the convoy at all costs. Marlborough immediately despatched Maj.-Gen. Webb with twelve battalions, and Cadogan followed with some squadrons of cavalry to supplement the escort. The situation was critical. If the convoy were lost the siege would have to be abandoned. Hard marching brought Webb's battalions to the little hamlet of Wynendael. Here in the woods flanking a defile leading up from the plain, Webb, only too conscious of his inferior numbers, posted each battalion as it arrived in concealed positions. LaMotte's leading column, a mixed force of 12,000 men with nineteen guns, hesitated to enter the trap and for three hours the French artillery fired into the woods with little effect. By late afternoon LaMotte decided to wait no longer for the remainder of his force and gave the order to attack. Three times the French advanced, intent on settling the matter with the bayonet and sabre, and three times they were thrown back in confusion by volley upon volley that cut into the flanks of their proud ranks. One observer, as Taylor records, reported how the Allied infantry 'went out by platoons, and made a continual fire upon the enemy, in as good order as if they had been exercising'. Within two hours LaMotte's whole force was in retreat, having lost close on 3,000 men. Cadogan had to be restrained by Webb from charging their rearguard as, although the convoy had been saved, there were still many long miles before it would reach Lille. The Allied losses were 130 killed and 800 wounded. For his part in this remarkable action Webb was again promoted and received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament. The following year at the Battle of Malplaquet Webb was seriously wounded and the commanding officer of the 8th, Louis de Ramsey, was killed and eight other officers were wounded. Queen Anne ordered medals to be struck to commemorate each of Marlborough's great victories, but it was not until 1882 that another great Queen ordered Blenheim, Ramillies,

Oudenarde and Malplaquet, together with Dettingen, to be borne on the colours of the King's Regiment.

Between 1745 and 1759 the Colonel of the Regiment was Edward Wolfe, who had commanded the 44th with distinction in the West Indies and under King George II rose to the rank of Lieutenant-General. In the battles of Falkirk and Culloden and in the Netherlands at Roucoux and Lauffeld, where they fought overwhelming odds, 'Wolfe's boys' more than maintained the reputation the Regiment had won under the great Duke of Marlborough. In 1751 the title 'The King's Regiment' became 'Eighth (The King's Regiment)'.

## *The West Indies*

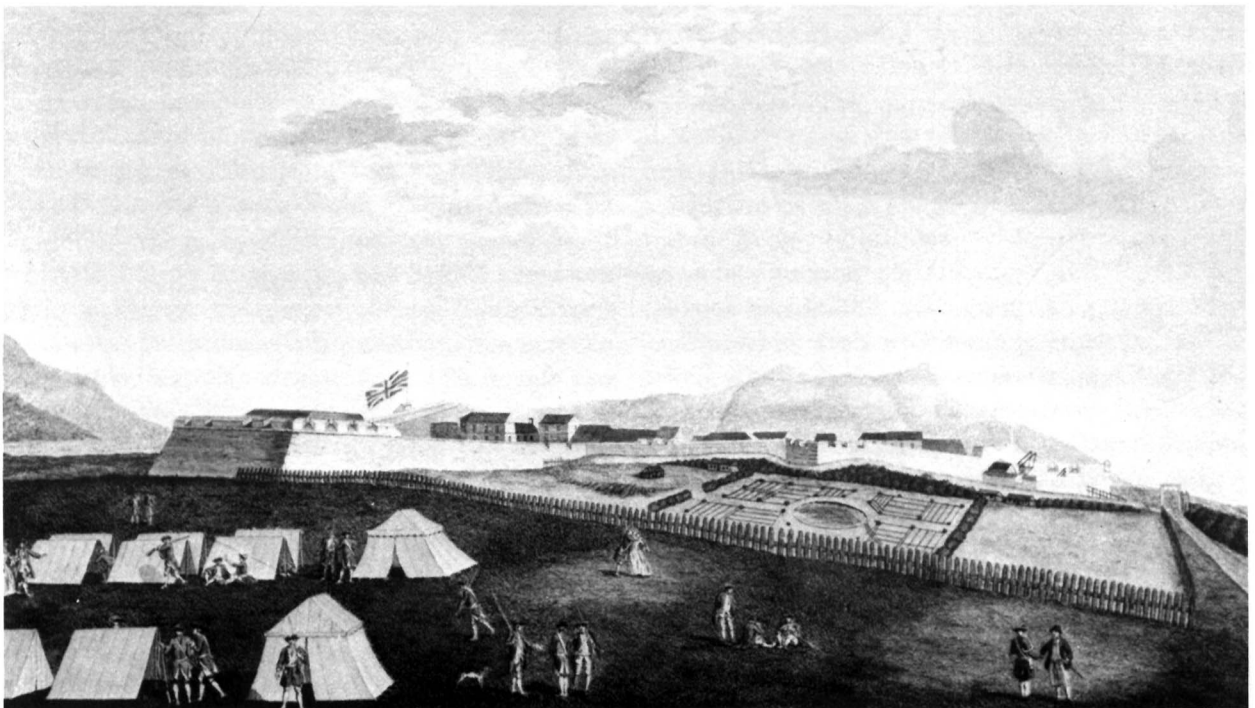
The outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756 brought William Pitt to power and an expansion of the Army by twenty-five battalions. Some, including the 2/8th, were second battalions of existing regiments. Of the first seventy years of its existence the King's Regiment had served more than fifty-four overseas. On 21 April 1758 the 2/8th became a separate regiment numbered the 63rd Foot. Col. David Watson, an expert on fortifications, was given command, but only weeks later joined an expedition to St-Malo. Much responsibility thus fell on Lt.-Col. Peter Desbrisay, and Maj. John Trollope. Desbrisay had survived no less than thirteen wounds at the Battle of Roucoux, where Trollope, then a captain in the King's, had also been wounded. The remaining officers down to the rank of ensign (with a single exception) were transferred from the King's. By September the 63rd were under orders for 'immediate foreign service' and on 13 November sailed for the West Indies.

The force (in sixty transports escorted by eight ships of the line) was under the command of Maj.-Gen. Peregrine Hopson, an officer of fifty-five years' service, whose health was unfortunately failing. After fifty-one days at sea the expedition reached Barbados and joined up with Commodore More and his squadron. The orders were to seize the French-occupied islands of Martinique

and Guadeloupe. When the fleet sailed for Martinique on 13 January 1759 the number of sick from 'fever, flux, scurvy and smallpox' was already 1,500. A landing near Fort Royal was effected, but the French were in such strength and the forests so impenetrable that the attempt was abandoned and the expedition sailed on to Guadeloupe, the richest of the Sugar Isles and home of the French privateers. On 23 January the naval guns opened fire on Basse-Terre, the principal town of Guadeloupe proper. In the words of Fortescue in *The History of the British Army*, 'In a few hours the town, crammed with the sugar and rum of the past harvest, was burning fiercely.' By nightfall the French batteries had been silenced. When the British troops landed the following day they found the town in ruins and the elaborate entrenchments abandoned. The garrison, however, now held an impregnable position in the neighbouring mountains. For over a month Hopson's force, which was under constant harassing attacks, remained inactive, while Commodore More battered into surrender Fort Louis on Grand Terre near by, the smaller of the two islands. At the end of February Hopson died and Maj.-Gen. Barrington took over com-

mand. He reported (as Fortescue records): losses by enemy action, 202; sick already sent to Antigua, 600, plus '1,649 sick which I propose sending to Fort Louis'. Undeterred by these losses, Barrington acted quickly. The 63rd, with 500 reinforcements, was left to hold Basse-Terre and the remainder of the force (under 2,000 all ranks) was moved to Fort Louis, from whence seaborne attacks were made on the isolated settlements. In six weeks the French, driven into the mountains and cut off from supplies, capitulated.

Meanwhile, the 63rd had lost both Desbrisay and Trollope in an accidental explosion in the upper bastion of Fort Royal. Desbrisay had been reconnoitring the enemy with a telescope when some gun cartridges were ignited by the wadding of a 24-pounder. Five officers and five men were killed or wounded, but the French attack, one of many, was beaten off. In June Barrington sailed for England but the 63rd remained as part of the garrison on Guadeloupe. Four years later, by the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Guadeloupe, Martinique and several other islands were handed back to the French and the 63rd sailed for Grenada under the command of the senior



**View of Fort Royal, Guadeloupe, after its capture in 1759.**  
(National Army Museum)



captain. Its strength was reduced to 423 all ranks.

The King's themselves were also involved in the West Indies. The Grenadier and Light Companies formed part of a force under Gen. Grey that recaptured Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1794. The following year the whole Regiment sailed for the West Indies. Owing to storms only four companies arrived to assist in the capture of St Lucia and the suppression of a rebellion in Grenada. Later in 1809 both the 8th and 63rd, from Nova Scotia and Barbados respectively, took part in yet another assault on Martinique and this battle honour is the first shared by both regiments. The 63rd remained in the West Indies for nearly twelve years and, in a well-organized nine-day campaign with light casualties, won a further battle honour, 'Guadeloupe 1810'. While losses from enemy action were negligible, disease and the dreaded fever took a heavy toll. In 1815, for instance, the Regiment was at half strength and still had to find no less than ten detachments on other islands. When the Regiment sailed for England in 1819 it left behind the scattered graves of nearly 1,500 officers and men. Of the first sixty-two years of its separate existence the 63rd had served fifty-five overseas, of which thirty-one had been spent in North America and the West Indies.

## *The New World*

In the American War of Independence, while the 63rd was serving under Gen. Clinton at Bunkers Hill and at the capture of New York and Charleston, the King's were stationed in Canada. They had been there since 1768 and, some time before the outbreak of war in 1775, had moved up country to guard the little settlements, cut out from the forest, around the shores of the Great Lakes. Elsewhere there were so few troops that Montreal had to be abandoned and Quebec was besieged. The following spring British ships broke through the ice to reach Quebec with reinforcements, and at the same time detachments of the King's started to move down from the Upper Lakes to take a hand in attacking the invaders. Capt. George

Forster commanded a blockhouse at Oswegatchie with sixty men. Downstream on the St Lawrence was Fort Cedars, set on a narrow promontory within a mile of the cascade above Montreal and held by 400 Americans. After dark on 17 May Forster landed at Point-du-Diable, six miles from Fort Cedars. His force consisted of two officers and thirty-eight men of the King's, some Canadian volunteers and about 200 Indians. Early the following day some of the Indians slipped away towards the Falls and were just too late to ambush part of the garrison returning with supplies. Meanwhile, Forster led the rest of his force quietly through the forest and, surprise having been lost, called on the garrison to surrender. Maj. Butterfield, the American commander, attempted to lay down conditions, but Forster fortified his position and attacked at first light on 19 May. By noon Butterfield and 390 of the garrison were prisoners of war. The following day a relief party from Montreal was ambushed and yet more prisoners were crowded into the blockhouse. Leaving a few men on guard, Forster now set off to attack the blockhouse at Vaudreuil. At this point the redoubtable Col. Arnold, commanding the garrison at Montreal, decided to intervene. Having embarked 700 men, he himself led the flotilla of boats upstream. Forster selected his ground with great care. On three points of land stretching into the river he posted in turn, an Indian contingent, his own thirty men, and a mixed party of Canadians and Indians. Toiling upstream the Americans attempted to close the shore at each point, but the slow-moving boats were all too easy targets for the marksmen firing from concealed positions on the river bank. Disparity in numbers counted for little under such conditions and each attempt to land was driven off with heavy casualties. It is perhaps appropriate to remark here on the gallantry of the smallest of Forster's detachments, the single platoon of the King's, who opposed the landing of this large force so successfully that the latter finally 'retreated to St Ann's island dispirited and exhausted'.

Twenty-three years later, while Wellington was winning his early victories in the Spanish Peninsula, the King's returned to North America and, when war broke out in 1812, was again sent to hold the frontier posts around Lakes Erie and Ontario.



**The Battle of Alexandria, 1801. Pte. Lutz delivering the captured French Standard to Gen. Abercromby. (National Army Museum)**

The campaign lasted two years and the British and Canadian troops were seriously outnumbered. In a successful raid, across the frozen St Lawrence and in deep snow, Capt. Eustace's company captured two stands of colours for the loss of one sergeant killed and thirteen men wounded. In the defence of York (Toronto), however, the two King's companies lost half their strength and at Fort George, where the garrison was outnumbered ten to one, five King's companies lost six officers and 196 other ranks. Much of the fighting took place around the Niagara Peninsula and the gallant conduct of the King's detachment under Maj. Evans and Capt. Campbell at Lundy's Lane, close by the Falls themselves, was publicly acknowledged in Lt.-Gen. Drummond's dispatches. Only six other British line regiments share with the King's the battle honour 'Niagara'. Mention must be made here also of the 2/8th (embodied 1804-15). Six companies served in North America for over five years and their march from Fredericton, in New Brunswick, to Quebec, a distance of close on 400 miles, in March 1814 won high compliments from Sir George Prevost, the Commander-in-Chief. 'This long and painful winter march through regions of snow and ice, exposed to violent storms, and during the most intense frost, was accomplished with little loss.'

## *The Queen's Own, 96th of Foot*

From the beginning of the Seven Years War, right through to 1815, there were constant demands for more and more troops to serve overseas. Over these sixty years no less than four regiments numbered '96th' were raised and dispatched to overseas stations, as far apart as India and the West Indies. Then, when the crisis seemed to have passed, their fate was to be 'reduced', shipped home, and disbanded. We are, however, concerned here with yet another regiment that in its closing years was numbered '96th' and bequeathed its battle honours to the last British regiment to bear this number. When Brig. Charles Stuart captured Minorca in 1798 he found among the prisoners over a thousand Swiss who had been captured in Italy and sold to the Spaniards for two dollars a head. With a leavening of English officers, these Swiss were formed into a regiment to fight once more against the French and two years later, as the Minorca Regiment, they accompanied Gen. Abercromby's expedition to Egypt.



**Capt. Thomas Abbot, 96th Regiment, from a miniature dated 1836. (National Army Museum)**

The decisive Battle of Alexandria took place on the narrow peninsula three miles east of the city. The French attack opened before dawn on 21 March 1801 with a demonstration by the Dromedary Corps against the left of the British line alongside the canal. The Minorca Regiment was part of a reserve brigade commanded by Brig. Stuart. At the first sound of shots the Regiment stood to and was about to move off when heavy firing was heard from the direction of the old Roman fort on the seaward flank. Col. Wilson, the chronicler of these events, tells how Maj.-Gen. John Moore, who had been visiting the pickets, shouted, 'this is the real attack', and galloped off, followed by Stuart's brigade at the best pace it could make in the sand. In the dark two French divisions had crept up to the ruined fort, which was now under attack on three sides and obscured in a pall of smoke. The Minorca Regiment was only just in time to fill a gap between the fort and the Guards Brigade on a ridge near by. It was in this shallow valley that the French dragoons made a last desperate charge. The Swiss, 'opening out to let them pass, poured a shattering fire upon them

as they galloped by, and intercepting them as readily when they tried to reform, practically destroyed them.' Shortly beforehand a standard captured by the 42nd had been recovered by a French officer, whereupon Private Antony Lutz rushed forward into the mêlée, shot the officer and seized the standard. At this moment the French dragoons charged. Lutz, however, threw himself on the ground and minutes later emerged through the smoke carrying the trophy and driving before him a dismounted dragoon whom he had made prisoner. Col. Wilson writes, 'To Gen. Stuart's movement the army was much indebted, as it certainly decided the action.' But for being unable to write in English Lutz would have been promoted immediately to sergeant. As it was, he received a gratuity and a life pension of £20 per annum. He was presented with a finely-worked miniature of the trophy to wear on his uniform and an order was issued that a 'valuable badge' should be instituted for those of his comrades who had 'distinguished themselves by acts of valour or by personal instances of meritorious service'.

On the Regiment's arrival in England it was honoured with the title, 'The Queen's German Regiment', and brought into the line as the 97th. Between 1808 and 1811 the Regiment served with distinction under Wellington in the Peninsular Army, but the casualties were such that it had to be sent to England to re-form. Here a further honour awaited the survivors. They now proudly wore the blue facings of a Royal Regiment and as 'The Queen's Own' served in Canada on the Niagara frontier alongside the King's. Shortly



**Cross-belt plate 96th Regiment, worn between 1824 and 1855. (National Army Museum)**

before the Regiment was disbanded in 1818, the 96th was taken out of the line and The Queen's Own took over their number. Only five years later regiments numbered 94 to 99 were re-formed. Maj.-Gen. Joseph Fuller was appointed Colonel of the 96th and John Herries Lieutenant-Colonel. The date was January 1824 and the Regiment formed at Salford Barracks, Manchester. In June it embarked for Nova Scotia. Exactly fifty years later Queen Victoria 'was graciously pleased to permit' the distinction won by The Queen's Own Regiment – the Sphinx with the words 'Egypt' and 'Peninsula' – to be borne on the Regimental Colour of the new 96th Foot, soon destined to be linked with the 63rd to form the Manchester Regiment.

## *New Zealand*

For nearly thirty-nine years, from Waterloo to the Crimean War, the British Army saw little fighting, but its resources were stretched to the limit. Three-quarters of the Army was spread in penny packets over huge areas of Britain's overseas possessions. During this period the 8th and 63rd served overseas for a total of thirty-two and twenty-nine years respectively, and in the first thirty years after being re-formed the 96th spent twenty-seven years overseas. Between 1841 and 1849, when the Regiment went to India, the 96th was stationed in New South Wales. The transfer of 36 officers and 830 other ranks from England took two years, as it was made in twenty-six separate vessels on which the soldiers provided guards for convicts being deported to Australia. On arrival the men were largely employed on police work, and in April 1843 the Regiment was finding no less than twenty-two detachments spread from Adelaide to Perth and including Norfolk Island, way out in the Pacific, and Van Diemen's Land. The previous autumn one company had been sent to New Zealand to reinforce the original garrison, which was only eighty strong.

Trade in firearms to the Maori by foreign adventurers had been going on for some time and with the tribes constantly at war among themselves 'the chiefs would promise almost anything



**Lieut. J. H. B. de Harris, the King's Regiment, in full dress, c. 1855. (National Army Museum)**

in return for firearms and ammunition'. Indeed, large tracks of land had been bought by some English traders for a few muskets and barrels of powder. Under Maori law, however, any contract for the sale of land needed the assent of each and every member of the tribe. The inevitable disputes over land contracts soon brought the settlers and tribes into open conflict. In June 1843 fighting broke out at Wairau. The half company of the 96th sent down to Wellington did not return to Auckland for nearly three years. Meanwhile in July, Lt.-Col. Hulme, with a company of the 96th and a detachment of the 90th with two guns, arrived from Australia and relieved the original garrison who were due for India. Trouble with Heke, a chief living on the Bay of Islands, had been brewing for some time. In March 1845 Heke attacked the township of Russell while the small garrison of the 96th was engaged in digging entrenchments. The British losses at 36 were relatively high and as the whole settlement was evacuated by sea the Maori claimed a complete victory.

A strong contingent of the 58th had, however, just sailed from Sydney and on 30 April a

composite force of four companies under Lt.-Col. Hulme landed in the Bay of Islands. Their objective was the fort, or *pa*, at Okaihau occupied by Heke and Kawiti, another rebel chief, which was some ten miles inland. No transport could be found and the expedition was twice turned back by torrential rain, which ruined the five days' rations and reserve ammunition being carried in the men's haversacks. On the eighth day, however, the columns reached their objective. A friendly chief had warned Hulme of the strength of the fort – three rows of stockading, each of tree trunks a foot in diameter, protected the defenders from all but heavy artillery, while the interior was honeycombed with traverse trenches and dugouts. Furthermore, the Maori possessed a number of good American rifles. The situation was hopeless, Hulme had no artillery, and rockets proved useless as the roofs of the huts had been covered with green flax. Hulme now decided to retire, but at this moment an attack was launched from the forest by Kawiti's men, while Heke's warriors sallied out from the fort. Three times the waves of Maori swept forward right up to the bayonets of their opponents and then suddenly they were gone, slipping away into the thick undergrowth. The Maori had suffered considerable casualties, but the British losses amounted to 52 and the wounded had to be carried back over miles of waterlogged ground. Heke slipped away to build a stronger *pa* in an even more inaccessible position, while Hulme reported that without transport and artillery his failure had been inevitable. The First

Maori War dragged on for more than two years and was ended only by the use of heavy mortars and guns. As more reinforcements arrived, the companies of the 96th were eventually relieved and in January 1847 returned to Hobart Town in Van Diemen's Land. After two more years in Australia and a tour in India the Regiment returned to England in 1855, some nine months after the 63rd had left for the Crimea.

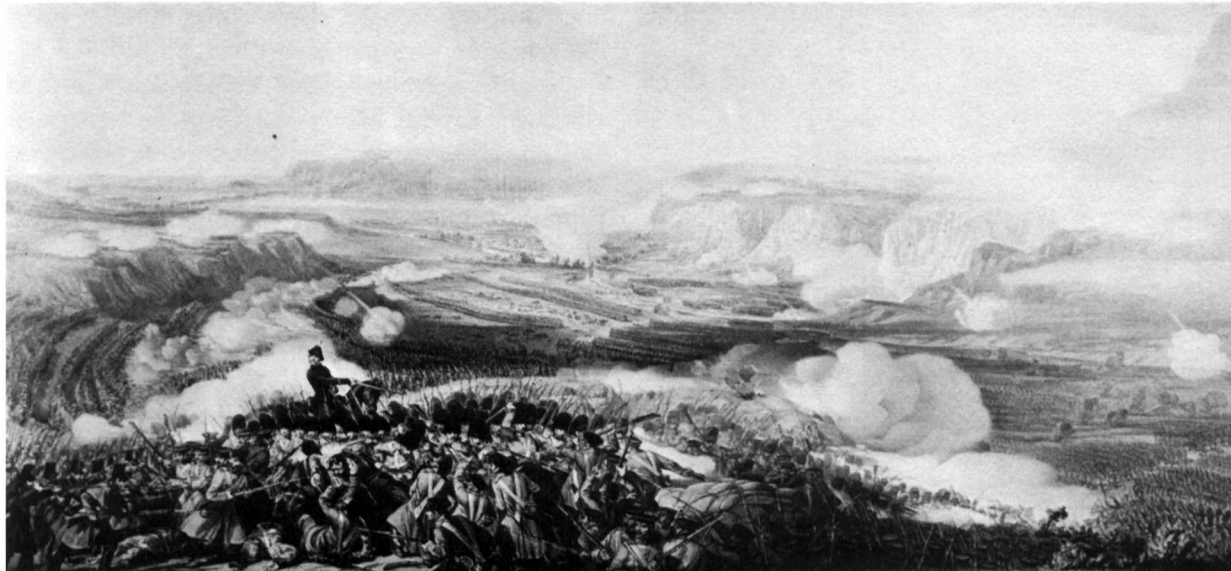
## *The Crimea*

When the 63rd paraded at Phoenix Park in Dublin in May 1854 to receive new colours from Mrs Swyny, the wife of the commanding officer, it was seriously below strength, having twice been called on for volunteers for other regiments under orders for the East. In *The Invasion of the Crimea*, Kinglake indeed remarks that the Regiment, given less than six weeks' warning to join the expeditionary force, 'owed a great proportion of its numerical strength to lads newly and hastily recruited in the city of Dublin, who, until they moved down to the port for embarkation, had never executed so much as even one march'. At the Alma, the 4th Division was in reserve and the 63rd reached the battlefield only after thirteen hours' forced marching. Later, when the Russians advanced on Balaklava, Sir John Cathcart's division was marched out of the trenches before Sevastopol towards the threatened flank but saw no action. Much has been written of the hardships suffered during the first winter in the Crimea, but already during these early weeks of the campaign the spread of cholera, combined with the exhausting trench duty, was taking an alarming toll. Medical and commissariat arrangements were practically non-existent and the first issue of tents was only twenty-one for the whole battalion.

On Sunday 5 November the trench reliefs had as usual taken place before dawn. Rain had fallen for more than sixteen hours and now a heavy mist filled the valleys and hung like a shroud over the long ridge occupied by the divisional camps and ending at Mount Inkerman. Here about 6.00 a.m. the pickets of the 2nd Division came under fire and for the next seven hours the fate of the



**The trenches before Sevastopol on a winter's night 1854. (National Army Museum)**

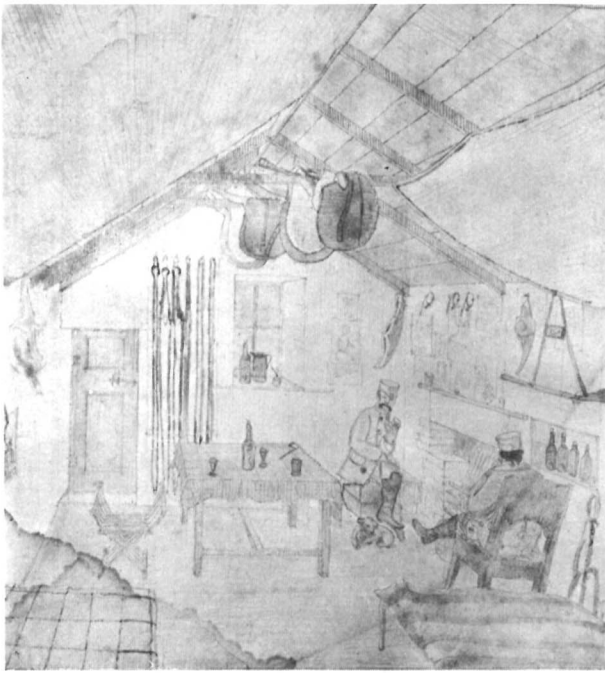


**The battlefield of Inkerman, a view from near Sandbag Battery, November 1854. (National Army Museum)**

Allied armies was in the balance. Mount Inkerman, occupied by one weak division, was about to be attacked by 40,000 Russian infantry with 135 guns while the Russian field army, 22,000 strong, stood by to administer the *coup de grâce*. Through the mist, with the ever-increasing sounds of battle ahead, parties from the near-by camps, from the Guards Brigade and the Light Division hurried up the rough track towards Home Ridge. Here the men of the 2nd Division were fighting for every foot of the crest line. Each party, often a single officer or sergeant with a handful of men was fed into the picket line by Gen. Penyfather. The latter's orders, couched in typically picturesque language, pointed only one way, straight over the crest towards the grey masses of Russian infantry struggling up through the scrub-filled gullies. About 8.00 a.m. reinforcements from the 4th Division began to arrive. Wet through and half famished, many of the men had come straight from the trenches. Of these 2,200 welcome reinforcements, the 63rd and the 21st marching together totalled nearly 900. Many units were thrown into the fight as they arrived at Home Ridge, others led by Gen. Cathcart made a costly and abortive counter-attack towards the Sandbag Battery.

The 466 men of the 63rd, however, and a wing of the 21st, came into line on the near flank of Home Ridge just as Gen. Scimonoff's columns

debouched from the Careenage Ravine. 'Let's see what metal the 63rd are made of!' roared Gen. Penyfather. The answer was a volley, a cheer and a charge, and the two regiments drove the enemy back down the slope until they themselves were halted by the Russian batteries on Shell Hill. But the main Russian attack was developing with fresh troops under Gen. Pavlov advancing up from the Quarry Ravine. Although a French battalion was now in action on Home Ridge the situation was critical and the moment had come for desperate action – an immediate counter-attack against almost overwhelming odds. The two regiments swept forward diagonally across the battlefield and, striking the Post Road, fought on to reach the Barrier, a wall of heaped stones about 500 yards north of the camp, which had been built as a shelter for the main picket. Col. Swyny of the 63rd and Ensign Clutterbuck, carrying the Queen's Colour, had already been killed, and Ensign Twysden with the Regimental Colour lay mortally wounded. For over four hours the fighting continued, with the Barrier remaining the most advanced position to hold out against the Russian columns. Faced with the destructive and accurate fire of two siege-guns that had been hauled up from the gun park, and with the arrival of French reinforcements, the Russians finally withdrew. Their losses totalled about 12,000. Only just over



**The House that Bowles built - Sevastapol. A sketch by Capt. V. H. Bowles, 63rd Regiment, dated 18 December, 1855. (National Army Museum)**

8,000 British troops were engaged on Mount Inkerman and of these 2,500 were killed or wounded. The French casualties were a thousand less. In the 4th Division all the brigadiers and four of the regimental commanders were killed or wounded. The 63rd, one of the strongest contingents to reach the battlefield, lost ten officers and over 100 men. The Colours were brought out by Clr.-Sgt Brophy and Sgt Roberts. Sgt-Maj. Marson was shortly afterwards promoted Ensign without purchase and Brophy was among the seventeen recipients of the Silver Medal for Distinguished Conduct in the Field awarded after the battle.

Frederick Vieth, a young Canadian who joined the following autumn, recalls (in his *Recollections*) that he was a lieutenant after only five months' service, an indication of the casualties suffered during the prolonged siege operations. He arrived in the Crimea just before the abortive attack on the Redan and with justifiable pride records that at the seabourne raid on Kinburn (on the Dnieper Estuary) he was carrying the Queen's Colour and 'jumped into the water and wading on shore drove the end of the staff into the sand . . . [it] was the first British flag on the soil of Russia proper'. When the armistice was signed, of the 63rd who had

landed in the Crimea two years previously there remained only eight officers and forty-five men. Among those who received decorations from our allies was Private McGowan, who at the Barrier had displayed exceptional gallantry in clearing a breastwork single-handed. He received both the Legion of Honour and the French war medal, being the only private of the Regiment to receive two foreign awards.

## *The Indian Mutiny*

Both battalions of the 8th left Quebec for England in 1815 and on its arrival the 2nd Battalion was disbanded. In April 1846 the Regiment sailed for India. Of the intervening thirty-one years, twenty-four had been spent overseas and the Regiment now faced a tour in India that was to last fourteen years. The half-yearly inspection reports were invariably favourable: for instance, in 1853 the 8th Foot was reported as 'perfectly satisfactory in all respects . . . in admirable order, in every particular', and the Commander-in-Chief noted 'the very creditable fact' that Ensign Bayly had passed his examinations in no less than five native languages. This was the year, incidentally, that Lt. Ingleby shot an exceptionally large tiger weighing 452 lb.

The following year the Regiment marched up into Bengal. The distance from Deesa to Agra was 463 miles. According to Cannon's *Historical*



**Reinforcements arriving for the siege of Delhi, 1857. From a drawing by Capt. Atkinson. (National Army Museum)**

*Record of the Regiment*, 'The transit of baggage . . . without calling for assistance from the native states, [was] highly creditable to Lt.-Col. Hartley and the commissariat arrangements of the Regiment.' 'Discipline and interior economy [was] almost faultless' and His Excellency (of the Bengal Presidency) was gratified to observe 'that during a period of upwards of seven months there are recorded only 60 cases of minor punishments.' When the electric telegraph carried the news of the outbreak of the mutiny at Meerut (10 May 1858) to Jullundur, Lt.-Col. Hartley immediately sent a strong detachment to relieve the native troops guarding Fort Pillour and the adjacent pontoon bridge over the River Sutlej. His initiative forestalled by a few hours the sepoys' plans to seize the fort. In Jullundur itself the native regiments seemed under control, but a number of his own officers were on leave and many of the families had left for the hill-stations. Mrs Keith Young, wife of the Judge Advocate-General at Simla, records how she and Mrs Greathed were left under the protection of the Raja of Joonug when their husbands were recalled on 21 May. Shortly afterwards (7 June) the sepoys at Jullundur mutinied. Foiled in an attempt to rush the gun lines, they then marched off to Delhi, one of the centres of the uprising.

The British commanders throughout India faced considerable difficulties. Only in the Punjab were there sufficient European troops even to contemplate offensive operations, and many of the British regiments had to be hurriedly recalled from the hill-stations. Under peacetime conditions there were administrative difficulties that proved almost disastrous: no military transport, no field medical supplies and in the Punjab after the fall of Delhi, where 3,000 barrels of powder had passed intact into the hands of the mutineers, practically no ammunition. For 'carriages' and supplies of all kinds the Army was entirely dependent on regimental contractors. Furthermore, many troops were required to secure the long and tenuous lines of communication.

When in mid-June the 8th was ordered to join the hastily-assembled force besieging Delhi, the Regiment marched off with 22 officers and

349 other ranks. Already 429 officers and men were committed to guarding vital points. From the Ridge outside Delhi Col. Young wrote to his wife: 'The 8th I understand, are coming up on camels so I dare say the attack will not be very long delayed', and (on 28 June): 'Greathed came in this morning with his regiment; four guns and a large convoy of stores. . . . Hartley was also with the corps; he is full of ardour but I fear a hard day's work on a hot sunny day will go far to quench it.' The besieging force now mustered some 4,800 men with forty-four guns. In the city were about 9,000 native troops and a further 20,000 armed insurgents, well supplied with artillery and almost unlimited ammunition. Within days Col. Hartley was invalided back to Umballa and his successor, Lt.-Col. Longfield, was given command of a brigade. Greathed now assumed command of the Regiment and Cannon records that one of his first orders was for the white drill uniform to be dyed khaki or mud colour 'as used by the Sikhs, [an] example soon followed by other regiments'. Determined to demonstrate their military ardour, each body of mutineers reaching Delhi led a sortie against the camp on the Ridge and the besieging force was under almost daily attack.

During July the Regiment lost 3 officers and 77 men killed and wounded and sustained another 50 losses from cholera. By the end of August half the battalion was on the sick list. Meanwhile large reinforcements under Brig. Nicholson had arrived, with twenty-five siege-



**The siege of Delhi. Storming the Delhi Gate. Showing the ramparts along which the King's advanced. (National Army Museum)**



guns drawn by elephants. With the convoy came the detachments from Jullundur and Pillour, bringing the regimental strength of the 8th up to 14 officers and 308 other ranks. Within ten days the walls had been breached in three places and the assault was ordered for 14 September. On the left, close to the Jumna River, the 8th led the assault on the Water Bastion breach, supported by the 2nd Bengal Fusiliers and the 4th Sikhs. Capt. Baynes led the storming party and gives his account in full. 'Off we went at a trot up the glacis, the distance was about 150 yards. It was now broad daylight. I looked at the wall and saw it crammed with sepoys. The wall in perfect order except just at the breach which was twelve feet wide. I hope I may never see again a carnage like that which followed.' At the edge of the ditch Baynes looked round to find that only three out of the eighteen ladders were still being carried forward and at this moment he was knocked insensible. When he recovered consciousness the fire from the walls had ceased. Staggering into the bastion he found only Clr.-Sgt Walker and 25 out of his original party of 4 officers and 75 other ranks. Mistaking their direction in the smoke and storm of fire, the supports had rushed a breach near by that had been considered impregnable, but their losses had been very serious. The 8th was down to 190 all ranks and the total casualties among the various columns amounted to 66 officers and over 1,100 other ranks. Greathed now led the survivors of the Regiment along the ramparts and down into the city at the Kabul Gate. The fighting in the narrow streets and from house to house continued for six days. Then



**Peiwar Kotal, the view from the Afghan gun positions looking down into the Kurram Valley. (National Army Museum)**

resistance crumbled – the old King and thousands of his followers had slipped away.

Four days later the 8th marched out of Delhi as part of a flying column commanded by Brig. Greathed, with the task of relieving the isolated garrison at Agra and thence moving on to Cawnpore. On 10 October the column reached Agra, having fought three sharp actions and covered the last forty-four miles in twenty-eight hours. As the Regiment marched across the bridge over the Jumna in their ragged khaki uniforms a lady, quoted by Cannon, remarked: 'Those dreadful looking men must be Afghans.' It was fortunate that these 'worn sun-dried skeletons' were seasoned disciplined troops, for within a couple of hours the column, while setting up camp south of the fort, was suddenly attacked by 6,000 mutineers. Greathed, galloping back from visiting the fort, quickly organized a counter-attack, during which his cavalry squadrons captured twelve guns. The rebels broke and the pursuit was kept up for several hours.

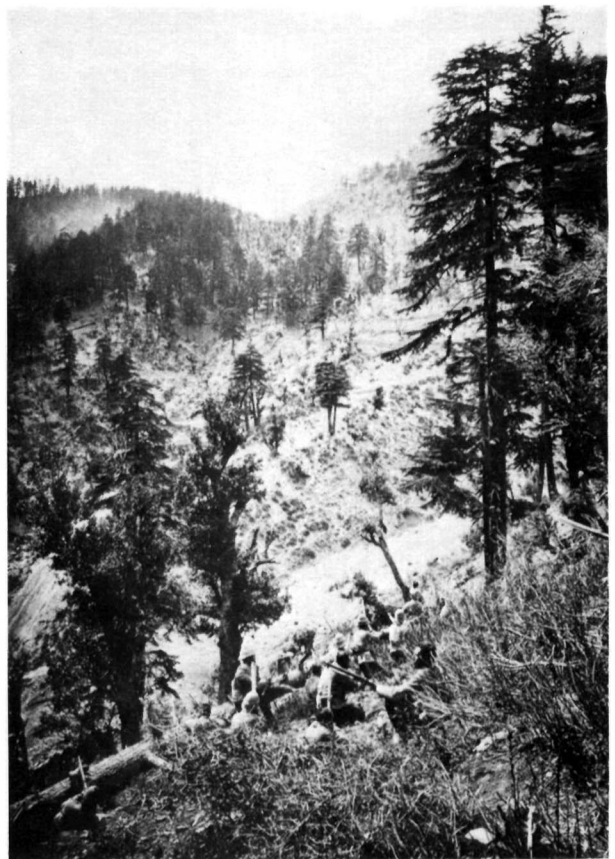
Active operations, including the Relief of Lucknow, went on for a further eighteen months. The Regiment was almost continuously in the field, fighting at least a dozen actions and making many forced marches of up to twenty miles a day. Greathed's brigade major was John Bannatyre and a recently discovered document, dated 'Cawnpore 5 Dec 1857' (at present in the Sandhurst Library), includes the following order: 'The distinguishing colour of the 3rd Brigade for Baggage Flags will be "kakee". Officers Commanding Regiments will be good enough to see that flags are immediately provided for all baggage, dhoolies, etc., and broad bands bearing the number of the Regiment for all Elephants and Camels.' Brig. Greathed, Col. Longfield, and Capt. Hinde all received the C.B.; Bannatyre, six times mentioned in dispatches, and Hinde, were promoted into the newly-formed 2nd Battalion. The first commanding officer of the 2/8th was Thomas Maitland Wilson who had served twenty-five years in the 96th and later became Colonel of the 63rd. For a number of years the 2/8th was kept on garrison duties in Ireland, the Mediterranean, and at home. Then in 1877 it was sent to India. On the march up to Rawalpindi the two battalions met and camped alongside each other. Having

handed over their transport and 'camp equipage', the 1/8th continued down to Bombay to embark for England.

## *Afghanistan*

In the middle of 1878 a Russian mission persuaded the Emir of Afghanistan to turn against the British government. Negotiations broke down on 20 November, and the following day Maj.-Gen. Roberts led a force of over 5,000 men with thirteen guns across the Kuram River into Afghanistan. Their immediate task was to occupy the Kuram Valley at the head of which was the Peiwar Kotal massif dominating the direct route to Kabul. The only British infantry available were the 2/8th and a wing of the 72nd Highlanders. Three weeks previously Roberts had ridden out to see the Regiment marching in to Kohat and was horrified to see the long line of doolies and ambulance carts. Not properly acclimatized, many of the young soldiers were suffering from fever and the intense heat of an unusually sticky autumn. Consequently, when operations started, two officers and 244 other ranks had to be left behind. After four days' marching the column reached Kuram, 21 miles from Peiwar Kotal. Here the Regiment was again reduced by 120 weak or sick men who were left to garrison the base camp. Only seven days' supplies now accompanied the force, and baggage scales were severely reduced. One small tent had to suffice for three officers, and one mule was allowed for two officers' baggage, but the number of camp-followers still amounted to nearly 3,000.

The Kuram Valley, except for the terraced orchards around the few impoverished villages, is a stony waste enclosed by high and densely wooded mountains. Across its head lies a spur of the great Sufed Koh range. Leading up to the crossing-point at Peiwar Kotal (8,600 ft) was a rough, narrow, steep track dominated by even higher peaks (of up to 9,400 ft) covered by dense forest. The only alternative route, a couple of miles to the east, and barely passable by troops with guns, was by the Spin Gawai or White Cow



**Peiwar Kotal, the frontal attack, December 1878. (National Army Museum)**

Pass. Three of the Emir's regiments with eighteen guns and several thousand tribesmen occupied a four-mile front covering Peiwar Kotal.

Roberts's force set up camp in the valley, 2,000 ft below and two miles distant, on 29 November. The General took pains to reconnoitre as if for a frontal attack, but secretly planned to lead the bulk of his force in a night march over the Spin Gawai, so as to outflank the Afghans' main position. No orders were issued until after dark and the troops were not detailed until the camp-followers were clear of the lines. The night was freezing cold and there was no moon. Two hours later the assault columns marched silently from camp, leaving their tents standing and fires burning brightly. Soon the troops were scrambling up the narrow, rock-strewn river-bed that led to the Spin Gawai Kotal. Shortly before dawn the 5th Gurkhas rushed the breastwork of felled trees blocking the pass itself. Within minutes, guns in the valley below opened up on Peiwar Kotal and the 2/8th



**Siege of Ladysmith, the view towards Caesar's Camp and Wagon Hill, 1900. (*Illustrated London News*)**

and the 5th Punjabis began a holding attack straight up the valley, moving in skirmishing order from ridge to ridge. By noon part of the turning force, supported by additional guns carried on up by elephants, had started to outflank the enemy's main position.

After Brig. Cobb was wounded, Col. Barry Drew of the 8th commanded the attack up the valley. Sending the 5th Punjabis to move in close support of the flank attack, he led the five weak companies of the 8th to within 800 yards of the batteries on Peiwar Kotal, and although the Afghan artillerymen continued to serve their guns with great gallantry for a considerable time, the guns were at last silenced by the withering fire of the Martini-Henry rifles. Shortly afterwards the Afghans, realizing that their rear was threatened, began to pull out and were soon in full retreat. Leading his men forward across two deep ravines and up the final steep ascent, Col. Drew was the first man on to the Peiwar Kotal. Less than a hundred men were lost in both assaults. Seventeen enemy guns were captured and, from the large quantity of ammunition and stores stacked in the position, it was obvious that the Afghans had expected to hold the pass all winter. This task in fact now fell to the four companies of the 8th. The Regiment's first job was to construct log huts, as the cold at night was intense. Later there was up to five feet of snow to contend with. The men's health, however, was excellent and in the two worst winter months only four men died of pneumonia. The Regiment served with the Kuram Field Force for another twenty-three months before returning to India, and later took part in the

Third Burmese War. The long overseas tour finally ended in 1892.

Gen. Roberts's victory at Kandahar, following the famous march from Kabul of 325 miles in twenty-two days, dramatically ended the war. Towards the end of August 1880 a second column had left Quetta to advance on Kandahar, and when the battle took place the 63rd were only two forced marches away. The 63rd in fact garrisoned the city until the following April and remained on the frontier until the end of 1881. In August 1880 the Regiment, after twelve years in India, was suddenly ordered to Egypt where an expedition under Gen. Wolseley was about to land. The Regiment reached Ismailia on 4 September and took over the defence of the town. The complete rout of the Egyptian Army at Tell-el-Kebir occurred ten days later, and within a month the Regiment, due to embark for the United Kingdom, moved by rail to Alexandria. Here the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, formerly the 96th, was guarding the Khedive's palace and it was at Ras-el-tin that the two battalions met for the first time. Under the Cardwell Reforms the title of the 8th was changed to The King's (Liverpool Regiment). Understandably the old traditional numbers remained entrenched as part of the regimental lore of both Regiments.

## *South Africa*

When war broke out in South Africa in 1899, the British Army for the first time in over forty years fought a European (and particularly intelligent) enemy. The Boers, fine marksmen who were born to the saddle and had an intimate knowledge of the terrain, quickly gained a tactical ascendancy. In the end over 450,000 British and Colonial troops were needed to subjugate their adversaries, who from first to last had less than 90,000 armed men fighting in their cause.

Just before war broke out, the 1st Manchesters under Lt.-Col. Curran reached Durban from Gibraltar, as part of a force assembling under Sir George White for the protection of Natal. The 1st King's, after more than six years overseas in the West Indies and Nova Scotia, had already been

stationed in South Africa for nearly two years, and in Ladysmith itself for over a month. Marching up to Ladysmith in intense heat with dust- and rain-storms, the Manchesters were suddenly ordered forward by rail. The journey overnight in bitter cold was made in open cattle-trucks. Next day while the camp was being pitched news came that war had been declared. Joining a brigade commanded by Col. Ian Hamilton, the Manchesters soon saw action. Boers, advancing from the Orange Free State under Gen. Koch, captured the railway station at Elandslaagte, only twelve miles from Ladysmith, and cut communications with the hard-pressed garrison of the mining town of Dundee to the north.

Early on 21 October, Gen. French made a reconnaissance in force and cavalry patrols actually reached the railway station, but his 7-pounder guns were outranged and he withdrew to the Modder Spruit Halt and called for reinforcements. More cavalry and several 15-pounder batteries were quickly on the move and sixteen companies of infantry, crowded in the inevitable cattle-trucks and led by a company of Manchesters in an armoured train, set off by rail. In the ensuing battle the Manchesters and Gordons were sent to outflank the Boers' main position. Drenched to the skin by a sudden rain-squall, with thunder and lightning crackling and crashing overhead, they debouched on to an open plateau traversed by a strong wire fence. The Boers had the range exactly – 1,200 yards. The Manchesters were leading and officers with wire-cutters ran forward to cut the fence, but many men crowding together in the gaps were hit and the two regiments became much intermixed. On the left, the Devons, sheltering on the line of a donga, engaged the Boers by volley fire, and the flank attack now went forward by section rushes. Within an hour the line reached the foot of the kopjes held by the Boers, just as they were momentarily blotted from view by a torrential shower. Hamilton ordered the charge to be sounded and against bitter short-range fire the crest was carried with the bayonet.

It was now nearly dark and many Boers were already in retreat. Close to their laager a white flag fluttered momentarily and the cease-fire was sounded. Suddenly from below the crest old Gen. Koch leapt forward, followed by fifty Boers in a

violent counter-attack. For several minutes all was confusion and the Gordons suffered heavily before this attack was beaten off, but Koch lay mortally wounded and many Boers were killed in a cavalry charge that swept in from the flank. Elandslaagte was a hollow victory. Fearing an attack on his base, Roberts withdrew and the troops at Dundee, slipping away by night, eventually reached Ladysmith by a cross-country route. At Rietfontein Farm (on 24 October) close by the Modder Spruit the King's helped to cover this retreat. A week later the Boers had a 94-pounder 'Long Tom' in position and Ladysmith was virtually surrounded. In a counter-attack, using his whole force, Gen. White lost nearly 1,300 men, of whom 950 were taken prisoner. Three days later the Boer long-range artillery started their bombardment – the siege of Ladysmith had begun.

The siege lasted four months. Within the perimeter were 13,700 troops, 7,000 civilians and 11,000 animals to be fed. Outside, the Boers, confident of success, mustered 27,000 men. Having lost control of the high ground to the north, Gen. White was forced back to an inner defence line, 14 miles in circumference, which had no depth and was overlooked at many points. In the northern sector where the King's were posted, and into which the Boer guns could fire at will, there were two lines of sangars or breastworks. They were connected by covered ways and had enormous stone traverses capable of resisting any shell-fire. The ground was very rocky and the exhausting construction work went on all night. Each night patrols went out and before dawn the mounted infantry company rode forward to reconnoitre, while advance pickets stayed out all day in front of the outpost line. Col. Evans's comments are quoted by Cannon: 'During the latter part of the siege the men . . . who worked uninterruptedly throughout and were never for a single night off outpost duty were feeling the strain of the constant duty. Many men fainted from fatigue and weakness on the works but there was never a complaint.'

To the south, overlooking the town by 600 feet and at a distance of only 3,000 yards, the defences were based on a broad ridge  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles long. At the eastern end was Caesar's Camp, a long flat-topped hill held by the Manchesters. At the other end was

Wagon Hill held by detachments of the King's Royal Rifles and Imperial Light Horse. Shortly before 3.00 a.m. on 6 January the posts on Wagon Hill were attacked and almost overrun. A few minutes earlier a party of Manchesters, engaged in building a new gun emplacement, had returned to their bivouacs. Within minutes the whole battalion was under arms. Part of the reserve battalion (the Gordons), waiting to haul the heavy naval gun into position, were immediately drawn into the struggle on Wagon Hill, but the remainder of the sector seemed quiet. Suddenly at 3.45 a.m. the left-hand picket of the Manchesters was swept by a volley at short range and practically annihilated. Here the Boers were in considerable strength but supports had already moved into the picket line and this attempt to gain a hold on the plateau was halted. By dawn, however, Hamilton, commanding the sector, had committed every man he had. From as far off as Observation Hill, four miles away, Gen. White ordered forward every available man. Both at Wagon Hill and Caesar's Camp the crest line had to be cleared with the bayonet and the point-blank fire from the Boers' Mauser rifles brought heavy losses. All day the struggle lasted. Then in the failing light the Boers slipped away. Since before noon no less than eleven companies of Gordons and the Rifle Brigade, together with the mounted infantry company of the King's, had fought side by side with the Manchesters on Caesar's Camp. During the battle the British expenditure of small-arms ammunition was over 125,000 rounds, yet the Boer casualties (about 200) were less than half those suffered by the defence. On this day the Manchesters lost 6 officers and 68 men killed or wounded. Two privates, J. Pitts and R. Scott, who for fifteen hours held a sangar only yards from the post first captured by the Boers, were awarded the Victoria Cross.

Later in the year the King's and Manchesters marched north with Redvers Buller to help clear the eastern Transvaal. The mounted infantry companies of both Regiments were part of the 8th Brigade which included the King's. As the column was nearing Belfast, the advance guard, attempting to occupy a ridge, became seriously involved. The Boers, strongly entrenched, stood their ground. In this action at Van Wyk's Vlei two N.C.O.s of the King's Mounted Infantry Com-



**Liverpool Scottish machine-gun section, 1914. (Regimental Museum, Liverpool)**

pany won the Victoria Cross: Cpl Knight, who covered the withdrawal of the company and brought back two wounded men, one of whom he carried for nearly two miles, and Sgt Hampton who, in spite of being twice wounded, held an important position against heavy odds and finally extricated his small party to safety. Two days later a bivouac area around Geluk Farm was chosen which, in fact, was only a mile and a half from strongly held Boer positions. The King's, as advance guard, were detailed to cover the outpost line and moved on to a rocky ridge overlooking the farm. This turned out to be a wide plateau with the Boer entrenchments covering the far crest. The leading company, moving too far ahead, became isolated and two other companies were sent to cover the flank. These latter suddenly found themselves within 500 yards of the Boer trenches and pinned to the ground by withering fire. Owing to a roaring wind which swept the plateau, not a sound of this firing reached the remainder of the battalion and the situation became desperate. Private William Heaton, sent back with an urgent message for ammunition and reinforcements, succeeded in reaching the battalion headquarters, but neither reinforcements nor the men sent forward with ammunition managed to reach their comrades. Heaton, however, succeeded in getting through and, having delivered messages from the Colonel, rejoined the firing line. The survivors were eventually extricated after dark and Heaton's remarkable courage earned him the award of the Victoria Cross.

After only a year at home the 2nd Manchesters were mobilized as part of the 8th Division and

reached Port Elizabeth in April 1900. Within ten days the battalion was in action 400 miles away in the south-east part of the Orange Free State. Here the Boer hit-and-run tactics kept the columns busy and before this phase was over the battalion had marched over 2,600 miles and fought many engagements against their elusive foe. In 1900 both the King's and the Manchesters were chosen to raise two additional line battalions, of which only the 3rd Manchesters served abroad. By 1906 all four battalions had been reduced. Both militia battalions of the King's Regiment, however, served for short periods in South Africa guarding the lines of communication. Towards the end of the war this dull and tedious task of manning hundreds of blockhouses absorbed practically every infantry battalion in the country. Active operations, indeed, demanded more and more mounted infantry and many men volunteered to serve in composite companies. The record of the King's in providing nearly four complete mounted infantry companies and two additional machine-gun sections was outstanding.

## *The Great War*

The years 1914–18 involved Britain in continental warfare on a scale hitherto undreamt of. The Regular Army, having learnt some unpalatable lessons in the Boer War, was well trained, particularly in musketry, but it was small, 'a rapier among scythes'. The Western Front dominated all strategy. Soon there was stalemate, followed by siege conditions and terrible battles of attrition. In the narrow ribbon of trenches stretching from Switzerland to the North Sea hundreds of thousands of men fought and died. Almost from the start the need was seen to increase the size of the British Army and particularly to provide more infantry.

The response from the citizens of Lancashire was immediate and, indeed, outstanding. The 1st King's and 2nd Manchesters were part of the British Expeditionary Force and landed at Le Havre on 13 and 16 August respectively. The 1st Manchesters was in India and soon on its way to France with the Indian Corps, while 2nd King's



**17th King's on Parade, Belton Park, Grantham, June 1915.  
(Regimental Museum, Liverpool)**

was retained at Peshawar guarding the North-West Frontier. The 3rd and 4th (Special Reserve) Battalions and the whole of the Territorial Force were also called up immediately. Both Regiments mobilized six territorial battalions. The 8th and 10th King's were the Liverpool Irish and Liverpool Scottish respectively. The Manchesters' T.A. battalions were brigaded in the 42nd (East Lancs) Division and the King's were part of the 55th (West Lancs) Division. At the end of August the original T.A. battalions were duplicated. The six second-line battalions of the King's went to 57th (West Lancs) Division and the new Manchesters' battalions joined the 66th (East Lancs) Division. In November a third-line Territorial Force was authorized. The Territorial Force was thus raised to three times its original size.

Meanwhile the call had gone out for 100,000 volunteers for the first of Kitchener's New Armies. In Lancashire Lord Derby earned himself the name of 'England's best recruiting sergeant'. Before August was ended he had launched a scheme for recruiting complete battalions of men who followed the same civilian occupation. The first of these battalions was raised in a single hour at St George's Hall and Liverpool's four 'City' battalions of the King's Regiment were formed into a complete brigade. Two brigades of Manchesters (16th–23rd battalions) joined the newly formed 30th Division which took for its divisional badge Lord Derby's family crest. The 23rd Manchesters was one of the original three 'Bantam' battalions which later formed the nucleus of the 35th Division whose sign was a bantam cock. In all over ninety battalions (including home service

and dock battalions) were raised for the two Regiments and of these no less than twenty-six King's and twenty-seven Manchester battalions served overseas, mostly on the Western Front. On the Somme in 1916 fourteen King's and ten Manchester battalions were committed, and in the autumn battles of 1918, despite appalling casualties that had forced the amalgamation of many units, there were fourteen King's and twelve Manchester battalions in the final advance to victory. But the war had spread to many fronts, on which the two regiments were again fully represented. Of the hundreds of actions in which the King's and the Manchesters took part, and the countless acts of gallantry, only a few can find a place in this brief account. Let each speak for all who served during these four long and terrible years.

## *The Western Front*

In the opening phase of the Battle of Mons the Germans, advancing in mass formation, were 'shot flat' and an attack by four divisions failed to cross the canal. Against the Mons salient to the east the Germans, however, made progress and in the afternoon of 23 August the troops of 5th Division on the canal were forced to fall back to the line of the River Hainin, where the 2nd Manchesters were entrenched. The battalion's two machine-guns, firing on the wrecked canal bridge, did considerable execution. Late that night the brigade was again ordered to withdraw, and the following morning the battalion found itself fighting a rearguard action. Orders to both British corps to withdraw (which initially failed to reach the Manchesters) had gone out soon after midnight. The retreat had begun. Up to this moment the 1st King's had been entrenching a position near Givry, south of the salient, unaware that the French on this flank had been defeated and that the whole of the British Expeditionary Force was in danger of being cut off. Now they were fighting alongside the Manchesters holding open the route to the south. Twelve days later the battalion reached Chaumes. Since leaving the railhead on 21 August the King's had marched 236

miles in sixteen days with only one day's respite. The two corps had withdrawn side by side, but soon after the retreat started Smith-Dorrien saw that neither corps would escape unless his troops made a stand at Le Cateau. The 14th Brigade held a crucial sector on the right flank of the ridge. The Germans attacked in strength on the morning of 26 August and a desperate fight continued with mounting fury for six hours. The British field-guns, firing over open sights, suffered terribly and the Manchesters, in Brigade Reserve, were sent forward in a last desperate attempt to hold the line. The ridge was swept by a storm of fire, but somehow the line was reinforced. The cost was heavy. In the next four or five hours the Manchesters lost 14 officers and 339 men. When the inevitable withdrawal took place overnight, the battalion mustered less than 350 all ranks. After crossing the River Aisne the King's also had a chance to hit back, putting in a counter-attack at Villers-Cotterets that saved two field-batteries from being overrun. Day after day, under a merciless sun, often without food or water and dog-tired, the men marched on, some with swollen and bleeding feet bound up with puttees. The retreat ended on 5 September. The following day both Regiments were marching back towards the Marne.

The positions overlooking the Aisne, to which the Germans withdrew, were of great natural strength and the Allies faced stalemate and their first taste of trench warfare. An attempt was made to work round the open flank and the B.E.F. was redeployed between Béthune and Ypres, but the Germans had the same idea and had already launched two fresh armies in the 'race for the sea'. The clash came on 20 October. In holding Givenchy, the 2nd Manchesters had over 200 casualties and the same night took over a new line at Festubert. The 1st Manchesters had just arrived from India; for several days, and for the first time for thirty-two years, the two regular battalions of the Regiment were alongside each other.

On 29 October the Germans made a desperate attempt to break the British line. In front of Festubert the forward trenches were shelled for several hours and the Germans, advancing in overwhelming strength, swept over the centre



**2/7th Manchesters on the Menin Road, December 1917.  
(Imperial War Museum)**

trenches of the Manchesters' line to within ten yards of the support line. Fighting continued at close quarters for several hours and two attempts to capture the lost ground failed. In the afternoon, 2nd Lt Leach and Sgt Hogan crept up a communication trench and fighting from traverse to traverse gradually drove the Germans back, killing eight and capturing sixteen survivors who were pinned in the last bay. Both were subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

Many miles further north, close to Ypres itself, the pressure of the German advance had been mounting from the start of the offensive. On 24 October, the 1st King's took over hastily-dug trenches just north of Polygon Wood. In this area, later so notorious and of such evil repute, the battalion spent the next thirty days. Only minutes after the takeover Col Bannatyne was ordered to attack the village of Molenaarelstock, some 800 yards distant, as part of an attack by several brigades. The Germans were well prepared. Every building had been loopholed and many contained concealed machine-guns. On the right the attack was halted by machine-gun fire, but two companies reached the straggling village and drove the Germans from house to house. Snipers seemed to be everywhere and casualties mounted. Col Bannatyne fell to a

sniper's bullet and the Adjutant was wounded bringing forward the reserve. The command now fell to Maj. Stephenson. Several charges failed to clear a nest of machine-guns on the far side of the village and the King's dug in. Unfortunately the position chosen in the darkness was overlooked from the next ridge. The Colonel's death was a great loss to the battalion. He was a man of exceptional personal courage and his family had served in the Regiment for generations. After four days' fighting the village had been cleared and two heavy counter-attacks beaten off and the battalion was relieved.

The following day, however, the Germans struck at Gheluvelt down the Menin road, and for eighteen days the King's, now at half strength, held the southern edge of Polygon Wood. There were no reserves, only some 450 riflemen in shallow two-man 'holes' on a front of 1,400 yards. In places the German saps were only 80 yards away. On 10 November and throughout the night the shelling was very heavy. The following morning at 7.00 a.m., when it was still pitch-dark, a sudden shout brought an immediate reaction from the tired and overstrained men and rapid fire broke out all along the edge of the wood, described by Wyrall as 'an almost continuous sheet of flame which continued for about 15



minutes'. Shortly before dawn there was another alarm. Again the King's men, trained in the 'mad minute', opened rapid fire. In the growing light, however, what had seemed like a line of men advancing was seen to be 'a continuous wall of dead and wounded some 25-70 yards away, stretching right along the edge of the wood'. Within the week the King's were relieved; the attack by the Prussian Guards had, as by a miracle, been halted. Winter had now set in, with rain turning to snow and water rising daily in the filthy, muddy holes that were the only cover. In the seventy-five days that had passed since the opening of the Battle of Mons, the battalion had lost 33 officers and 814 N.C.O.s and men.

In November, the Indian Corps, holding the sector around Festubert, was driven back and the 1st Manchesters was called on to recapture the village of Givenchy and the trenches beyond. In hand-to-hand fighting, which lasted until after dark, the village was eventually cleared. Before dawn the following day the attack was resumed. The advancing Manchesters, however, found themselves shown up by the blaze of two haystacks that had caught fire and were met by a storm of shells and well-aimed small-arms fire. The struggle continued for nearly eight hours.

Twice the Germans counter-attacked and were driven back. Then by a splendid rush the original trenches were reoccupied. Soon afterwards, however, the Germans attacked in even greater strength and began to work round the flanks. Withdrawal was now inevitable. The Manchesters had suffered nearly 250 casualties and were utterly spent. 'The retirement was conducted with the greatest steadiness', but was achieved only after furious hand-to-hand fighting. Reinforcements, however, were beginning to arrive and a most critical situation had been averted. Congratulating the battalion in person, Gen. Willcocks, the corps commander, is reported by Wylly as saying: 'By your gallant conduct in holding on [at Givenchy] you rendered greater service than you probably realized.' A few days later the commanding officer, Col Strickland, was given command of the brigade.

## *The Vineyard*

The East Lancashire Division sailed for Egypt only eight weeks after the outbreak of war and was the first T.A. division to proceed overseas.



**Party of King's men halted for a meal near Ypres, 1917.  
(Imperial War Museum)**



1



3



2

- 1 Musketeer, Princess Anne of Denmark's Regiment, 1685
- 2 Grenadier, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1751
- 3 Grenadier, 63rd Regiment, 1768

- 1 Officer, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1792
- 2 Private, Line Company, 63rd Regiment, 1792
- 3 Officer, 96th Queen's Own (Royal) Regiment, 1816



1



2



3



1

- 1 Officer, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1840
- 2 Private, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1857
- 3 Sergeant, 96th Regiment of Foot, 1875



2



3

- 1 Officer, The Manchester Regiment, 1890s
- 2 Officer, The Manchester Regiment, Ladysmith, 1899
- 3 Private, The King's (Liverpool Regiment), France, 1916



- 1 Lance-Corporal, The Manchester Regiment, France, 1917
- 2 Officer, The King's (Liverpool Regiment), France, 1917
- 3 C.Q.M.S. The Manchester Regiment, Western Desert, 1936



- 
- 1 Private, The Manchester Regiment, Italy, 1944  
2 Private, The King's Regiment, Burma, 1943  
3 Private, The Manchester Regiment, North-West Europe, 1944



1

- 1 Private, The Manchester Regiment, Malaya, 1952
- 2 Private, The King's Regiment, Korea, 1952
- 3 Officer, The King's Regiment (Manchester and Liverpool), Berlin, 1964



2



3



- 1 Sergeant, mess kit, The King's Regiment, 1972
- 2 Drummer, full dress, The King's Regiment, 1972
- 3 Corporal, battle order, The King's Regiment, 1972



I



2



3

The following May it landed at Gallipoli, close to 'Lancashire Landing', near Helles. The situation was critical and Allied casualties already exceeded 380,000 men. The division immediately took over the British sector while the 10th Manchesters was temporarily split up as reinforcements for 29th Division. Conditions in the beachhead, for it was nothing else, were extremely difficult. Except in the lee of the cliffs the whole area was dominated by Achi Baba, and the only approach to the front line not under the direct fire of the Turkish artillery and machine-guns was up the bed of one of the three nullahs, or streams. Snipers took a daily toll.

A general attack was planned for 4 June and preparations were doggedly pressed forward, advance trenches were dug and bombing-parties trained in using 'jampot' bombs. With few guns and inadequate supplies of ammunition, the four-hour barrage failed to cut the wire in many places. As for the home-made bombs, there were only 225 for the whole division. The Manchester (127th) Brigade led the attack straight towards Krithia village which was covered by four lines of trenches. At noon, with a rush and straight into the smoke and bank of yellow fog thrown up by the bombardment, went the first waves of Manchesters, to be met by devastating rifle and machine-gun fire. The nearest trench line was captured within five minutes, the second thirty minutes later. During the afternoon the 6th Manchesters broke clear through the fourth line to within half a mile of Krithia. Elsewhere, however, the attack had been checked and on the right thrown back. Hunter-Weston, the corps commander, sent his reserves to help the French and the remnants of the Royal Naval Division on this flank. It was a fatal decision. The French would not renew the attack. Rhodes James writes: 'The Lancashire Territorials, without reinforcements, and uncomfortably isolated, were obliged to withdraw and consolidate new positions some 500 yards in front of those they had left at noon.' In the 42nd Division the losses were very great. Of 770 men of the 6th Manchesters, only 160 answered roll-call that night. Every officer of the 8th battalion was killed or wounded and one of the companies mustered only eighteen men. The Turks, so near to defeat, counter-attacked again and again, and the area

around a small vineyard, close to the Krithia nullah, was the scene of bitter fighting. It was here, in early August, that an offensive was mounted to divert the Turkish reserves away from the Suvla Bay landing.

The attack on 6 August was made by the 5th and 7th Manchesters, and the following day the remainder of the division was thrown in, but the Turks themselves had massed for an attack. Only a few square yards of the vineyard were captured and these changed hands three times in the next few days. On the first day the three brigades lost 3,500 officers and men. In a corner of the vineyard, on two successive nights, 'A' Company, 3th Manchesters, commanded by Lt Forshaw, beat off repeated counter-attacks by swarms of Turks who converged from three directions. Forshaw, who had led the bombing attacks throughout, even throwing back the enemy's bombs before they exploded, had at one point led a charge to recapture a barricade, shooting three Turks with his revolver. Forshaw's award of the Victoria Cross was the first won by the division, and men of his company won two M.C.s and two D.C.M.s. On 13 August the division was pulled out into reserve, having been in the firing line for three months without relief.



**1/5th King's in the trenches near Givenchy, March 1918. The third officer from the left is the battalion's medical officer. (Imperial War Museum)**

## *A Bloody Slogging Match*

By March 1915 all six T.A. battalions of the King's in 55th Division had been sent to France as reinforcement units and the Division was not reformed until early in 1916. In May 1915, in the Battle of Festubert the, 5th and 7th King's were alongside the 1st Battalion in 6 Brigade. In a night attack 7th King's reached the German second line, but in daylight German machine-guns, holding out on the flanks, dominated the flat, waterlogged ground between the original front lines. The fight continued for four days and in abortive attacks against a fortified farmstead, known as Cour de Avoue, both the 1st and 5th Battalions suffered very heavily. At one point 4th King's (from the Lahore Division) was alongside the other battalions, but finally the 6th Brigade was pulled out. At Festubert in five days the Regiment suffered 1,450 casualties and gained its first V.C. of the war. This was awarded to L/Cpl J. Tombs, who on four separate occasions on 16 May, utterly regardless of his own safety, crawled out into the fire-swept no-man's-land to bring in severely wounded men.

The Battle of the Somme in 1916 lasted for over 140 days. It was planned as an Allied offensive which should end the war. It became a 'bloody slogging match', a terrible battle of attrition. It started with lines of infantry advancing in the open and being mown down by machine-gun fire. It saw the birth of the tank in battle. It resulted in an Allied advance of 7 miles on a 20-mile front and the loss (on both sides) of 1,200,000 casualties. There were eleven major battles. In six of these King's and Manchester battalions attacked side by side, as at Delville Wood and Guillemont; in addition the King's can proudly claim Ginchy, Morval and the Ancre and the Manchesters Thiepval and the Ancre Heights as battle honours. On the ridge overlooking the British sector north of the River Somme was the village of Guillemont. It was strongly fortified with large, deep dugouts and an intricate network of tunnels, which gave

shelter from the barrage and rapid access to vital strongpoints. Unfortunately this extensive underground system was only discovered too late.

In an attack on 30 July by the 30th Division, New Army battalions of the King's and Manchesters advanced in thick fog and reached the outskirts of the village. Here they were caught on uncut wire by machine-guns in concealed strongpoints; the 18th Manchesters captured a number of prisoners in the German front line, but now came under cross-fire, and the 16th and 17th Manchesters met the same fate. On the right, the 17th and 20th King's reached the road leading out of the village and part of the 19th Kings' fought their way into an orchard on its outskirts. Communications had virtually broken down. Visual signalling was impossible and German shelling had cut the cables; only a few pigeons got back. C.S.M. G. Evans, 18th Manchesters, who was awarded the V.C. for his gallant services as a runner, came back under fire, delivered his message and then, although wounded, rejoined his company. That evening, however, when consolidation was ordered, only 300 yards opposite the village had been gained at terrible cost. The next day, 55th Division took over and attacked early on 8 August through a heavy German barrage. In the dawn mist-, dust- and smoke-covered battlefield, 5th King's made some ground and the Liverpool Irish, with 1st King's (from 2nd Division) alongside, fought their way into the village, only to be cut off and crushed by counter-attacks. Col Goff, commanding the 1st Battalion, was killed and the battalion reduced to 180 all



**The Liverpool Irish entering Lille, October 1918. (Imperial War Museum)**

ranks. Fighting continued around a quarry for over thirty-six hours but only one or two of the Liverpool Irish got back safely. The remaining survivors were marched next day up the slope in full view of their comrades, on the other side of the valley, powerless to help them.

On 9 August the Liverpool Scottish and 7th King's attacked, but the barrage had failed to cut the wire. The price was heavy casualties and another bitter failure. The Liverpool Scottish went forward five times before the survivors were brought out by a subaltern, 2nd Lt G. D. Morton. That night the Medical Officer of the Liverpool Scottish, Capt. Chavasse, brought in twenty badly wounded men from within yards of the German trenches, and when all the officers had been hit, helped to rally the firing line. A bar to the V.C. won by this gallant and devoted officer at the Battle of Guillemont was awarded posthumously a year later under almost identical circumstances. Eventually Guillemont, now a pile of rubble, was taken by the 20th Division, with 12th King's covering the road to Ginchy. For two days and nights Sgt D. Jones, with a handful of men, two Lewis guns and neither food nor water, beat off repeated counter-attacks. He was subsequently awarded the V.C., but was killed in action a month later.

On the Western Front the bitter struggle continued for two long years and in practically every major battle the King's and Manchesters were fighting side by side, as at Ypres and Arras, the Scarpe and Cambrai, the Somme and the Hindenburg Line in 1918. Elsewhere yet more honours

were being won at Kut and Baghdad, with Allenby at Megiddo, on the Piave in northern Italy and in Macedonia, and even further afield at Archangel and in Afghanistan. This summary would be incomplete without paying tribute also to all those not already mentioned who were awarded the Victoria Cross.:

Cpl I. Smith, 1 Manch., nr Ypres, 26.iv.15  
 Pte G. Stringer, 1 Manch., Mesopotamia, 8.iii.16  
 2nd Lt E. F. Baxter, 1/8 King's, nr Blainville, 17/18.iv.16  
 Pte A. H. Proctor, 1/5 King's, nr Ficheux, 4.vi.16  
 Capt. O. A. Reid, 2 King's att. N. Lancs, Mesopotamia, 8/10.iii.17  
 Sgt H. Coverdale, 11 Manch., nr Poelcapelle, 4.x.17  
 Pte W. Mills, 1/10 Manch., Givenchy, 10/11.xii.17  
 Lt-Col W. Elstob D.S.O. M.C., 16 Manch., Manchester Redoubt, nr St-Quentin, 21.iii.18  
 Pte J. T. Counter, 1 King's, nr Boisieux, 16.iv.18  
 Pte A. Wilkinson, 1/5 Manch., Marou, 20.x.18  
 2nd Lt J. Kirk, 10 Manch. att. 2nd Bn, nr Ors, 4.xi.18  
 Capt. G. S. Henderson, D.S.O. M.C., 2 Manch., Hillah, Mesopotamia, 24.vii.20

## *The Twenty Years' Armistice*

### KING'S

#### *1st Bn*

(thirteen years overseas)

1919-26 Channel Isles, Ireland, Aldershot.

1927-39 Sudan, Egypt, India and N.W. Frontier.

#### *2nd Bn*

(nine years overseas)

1919-26 Afghanistan, Sudan, Hong Kong, India, Iraq.

1927-39 Home stations, Gibraltar (1938).

### MANCHESTERS

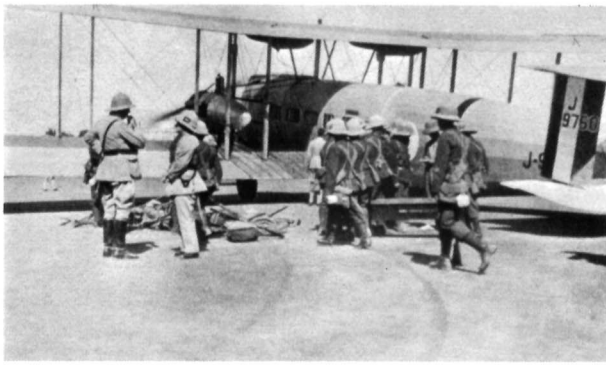
#### *1st Bn*

(twelve years overseas)

1919-26 Palestine, Ireland, Channel Isles, Germany.



**Pack transport of 2nd Manchesters, Trimulgherry, 1930. (Photo: Lt.-Col. Woolsey)**



**1st King's emplaning at Heliopolis for Cyprus, 1931. (Regimental Museum, Liverpool)**

1927–39 Home stations, West Indies, Egypt, Palestine, Singapore.

### *2nd Bn*

(fourteen years overseas)

1919–26 Ireland, Mesopotamia, India, Burma.

1927–39 Burma, India, Sudan, home stations (1934).

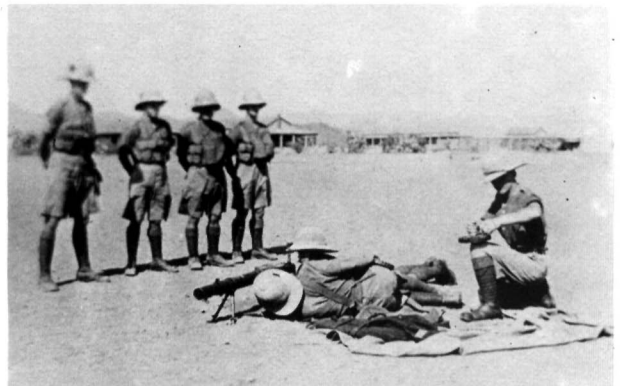
H.M. King George V became Colonel-in-Chief of the King's in 1926 and of the Manchesters in 1929. The first meeting of the regular battalions of the King's since 1861 was in Malta in 1927, and the Regiment celebrated its 250th anniversary in 1935. The following year the two regular battalions of the Manchesters converted to machine-gun battalions. At the A.R.A. Meeting at Bisley in 1933 the 1st Battalion 'swept the board', winning seven major trophies. The Army Rifle Championship and three other individual competitions were won by Lt C. L. Archdale, who later commanded the 2nd Manchesters in Burma.

A growing realization of the threat of aerial bombardment and the development of armoured forces resulted, in the 1930s, in hesitant steps to reorganize the Territorial Army. In 1936, 6 King's converted to anti-aircraft and the following year the 6/7th Manchesters followed suit and the 10th Manchesters converted to the Royal Armoured Corps. In 1938, the 6th, 7th and 2/9th Manchesters, the Liverpool Irish (8th King's), and 9th King's were all re-formed, while 7th King's converted to the Royal Armoured Corps in 1939. Thus at the outbreak of war there were three King's T.A. battalions (including the original 5th battalion) and the Manchesters

embodied their 5th, 8th and 9th battalions as well as the three newly-formed second-line battalions. After the fall of France five additional King's battalions, numbered 10–15, were formed, as well as home defence and training units. Of these new battalions only the 13th King's served right through the war, the remainder being converted to the Royal Armoured Corps, light anti-aircraft, or were used to provide infantry reinforcements. On returning from Dunkirk, the 5th Manchesters converted to the Royal Armoured Corps (but finished up as infantry) and the 2/9th Battalion became anti-tank gunners in 1941. So 'the age of oil' had become the age of specialists, but in the end the trained infantryman, whether rifleman or machine-gunner, remained the most valuable specialist of all.

## *The Second World War*

Manstein's Yellow Plan, involving ninety-one divisions, was launched on 10 May 1940 north of the Siegfried Line. Ten days later German tanks reached the English Channel at Abbeville, cutting off the Allied forces that had advanced into Belgium. Lured forward to the line of the River Dyle, the B.E.F. was already pulling back to the River Scheldt, where the 2nd Manchesters, the machine-gun battalion of 2nd Division, was heavily engaged. Away to the south, 9th Manchesters were in the thick of the fighting around Arras, which was virtually surrounded and later



**Lewis-gun squad, 2nd Manchesters at Gibeit in the Sudan, 1933. (Photo: Lt-Col Woolsey)**

abandoned. The B.E.F. was now fighting on two fronts, but the main threat was of encirclement from the south. The 2nd Division was now switched across the narrowing corridor and sent to hold a 15-mile sector along the La Bassée Canal, close to the old battlefields of Festubert and Givenchy. Refugees blocking every main road, strafing from the air, and a shortage of maps, considerably hindered the move (on 24–25 May), and meanwhile the Germans had a bridgehead over the canal at St-Venant and held crossings as far east as Béthune, where German tanks were already massing. The difficulties of co-ordinating the defence were appalling. The ground was flat and under observation from across the canal and the weary infantry, thinly spread, were unable to check the numerous infiltrations that foretold the imminence of a major attack. On 27 May four German divisions, three of them armoured, preceded by dive-bombers and a sharp artillery bombardment, attacked the 2nd Division's sector.

The stand by 'D' Company, who were supporting the Royal Norfolks around the Bois de Paquéant, is only one example of the manner in which the Manchesters on that day fought to the end. By late afternoon 13th Platoon, down to two guns under the command of Sgt W. Graves, was completely outflanked but still firing at almost point-blank range. The six survivors of the platoon successfully beat off attack after attack until the position was finally crushed by shell-fire. That night the remnants of the 2nd Division, reduced to less than one-third of its strength,



**Private 1st Manchesters using rangefinder during training in Singapore, October 1941. (Imperial War Museum)**

assembled on the line of the Lys Canal. At Epenette, Capt. Jack Churchill, with a handful of 'D' Company and elements from four other regiments, some eighty men with two machine-guns and two anti-tank guns, had successfully fought off every attack throughout the day. In the late evening the Germans, however, eventually broke into the village and the defenders were forced to withdraw. In paying tribute to Capt. Churchill's leadership, the brigade war diary omits to mention that during the withdrawal he and Lt Holt recovered an abandoned 25-pounder gun, complete with Quod and limber, and brought it back across the bridge at Estaires. The decision to evacuate the B.E.F. had, however, already been taken on 26 May. The stand of the 2nd Division in fact enabled both I and II Corps to reach the perimeter at Dunkirk, and none should forget the sacrifices that were made and the gallantry of those who fought at La Bassée against overwhelming odds.

## *Singapore*

The Japanese captured Malaya and Singapore itself in seventy days, but the battle was lost years before it started. The fact that the Japanese achieved air supremacy in a matter of days, and that not a single tank was available to the defence, again demonstrated the suicidal weakness of peacetime policies and the disastrous imbalance of the Allied force, attempting to hold a jungle-covered peninsula with a thousand



**Machine-gun section, 1st Manchesters, in the Western Desert, 1936. (Photo: Lt-Col Woolsey)**



**Building beach defences, Singapore Island, December 1941. (Imperial War Museum)**

miles of coastline and an imagined 'fortress' on a flat island divided from the mainland by an insignificant strip of water. In 1937 Gen. Dobbie had predicted the Japanese sweep south from a landing in the Gulf of Siam. Four years later this possibility was hardly discussed at the conference held in September 1941 by Duff Cooper. Nine months previously, however, hand-picked and experienced Japanese divisions were rehearsing their assault role for the capture of Singapore base, a prize of immense value.

The 1st Manchesters reached Singapore in October 1938 on the ebb-tide of the Munich crisis. After many months of mobile operations in Palestine, as a machine-gun battalion their new role was beach defence. Their sector stretched for nine miles on the eastern side of the island from Singlap Drain to beyond the boom at Changi. To cover the numerous beaches the four companies were in line, manning a series of pill-boxes, each with two Vickers guns, a searchlight and an anti-tank rifle manned by an N.C.O. and eight men. One platoon from each company was in close support and the total number of Vickers guns was 104. On the outbreak of war there were manning exercises, but little could be done on the beach defences as they were on private property, and it was not until July 1940 that coolies and contractors started clearing fields of fire and erecting wire fences on the beaches themselves. Meanwhile every position had been developed

and wired in, and thousands of coconut stumps dug in to form anti-tank obstacles. A tremendous effort went to making anti-boat obstacles, made of bamboo-pole structures which had to be dug in at night when the tide was at its lowest. It was an immense task and in the battalion's sector only three miles had been completed when the Japanese invaded the island itself on 8 February 1942.

By that date Gen. Percival had lost one-third of his total force and of the 85,000 servicemen concentrated on the island a high proportion were base personnel or non-combatants. The last fighter aircraft had been withdrawn and the naval base evacuated. Despite Gen. Dobbie's predictions, orders to construct defences on the north shore of Singapore Island were issued only days before the Japanese reached the Straits of Johore. Here 'B' Company of the Manchesters had been moved to support 28th Indian Brigade, holding a five-mile front between the abandoned naval base and the causeway. They were shelled and mortared day and night for a week, but the night before the Japanese attacked they had been sent off to the north-east corner of the island, which was believed to be the danger-point. By the morning of 12 February the Japanese were in control of the northern and western parts of the island to within 9,000 yards of the waterfront of Singapore itself. That afternoon Col Holmes was ordered to withdraw the battalion to a position on the perimeter covering the eastern approaches to Singapore, from Kallang Airport up towards Paya Lebar on the left. Both 'D' and 'B' Companies were now part of James Force and heavily engaged with the 4th Guards Regiment. During the next forty-eight hours both companies were gradually forced back and some positions were overrun. When firing ceased the survivors were holding positions around Kallang, alongside the remainder of the battalion. Battle casualties had been light, but half of those who were made prisoners of war died in captivity. In December 1941 the battalion's strength had been over 1,000 all ranks; only 460 returned at the end of the war and the cruelty and privations that each had suffered beggar description. The full story will never be told. For many to have survived was enough; as La Rochefoucauld has written,

‘Perfect courage means doing unwitnessed what one would be capable of doing before the whole world.’

The role of the fortress in war was further demonstrated by the Allied defence of Gibraltar and Malta, the one intimately linked with the survival of Great Britain after the fall of France and both vital to Allied strategy in the Mediterranean. The 2nd King’s remained part of the Gibraltar garrison until late in 1943 and the 8th Manchesters, rushed from France to Malta in May 1940, served throughout the whole of the siege. Both battalions reached Egypt late in 1943.

## *The Chindits*

Meanwhile early in 1942, the 13th King’s reached India where 1st King’s were still held on internal security duties in Ferozepore. Within months of arrival 13th King’s were chosen to join Wingate’s long-range penetration brigade which was just being formed. The battalion provided a group headquarters and the nucleus of three columns which were commanded by Maj. B. Fergusson, Black Watch, and Majors K. Gilkes and W. A. Scott of the King’s. After six months’ intensive training the Chindit force moved to Imphal, preparatory to crossing the Chindwin with the object of cutting the two railway lines running north from Mandalay. Each column was based on an infantry company and support group, with a platoon of the Burmese Rifles and several specialist sections added – R.A.F., Medical, Signals, and Sabotage. The transport consisted of 15 horses and 100 mules. The average load for everyone was 60 lb with five days’ special light rations, and the force was to be supplied by air-drop. The force totalled 3,000 and there were seven columns, each of over 300 men.

On the map the furthest objective was 150 miles from the Chindwin, but the advance had to be made across the grain of the country through thick jungle and over high, steeply-ridged, densely forested mountains, broken by deep gorges and watercourses and swampy malaria-infested valleys. The Chindwin itself was half a mile wide and the Irrawaddy an even more formidable obstacle

which moreover was deep in the heart of Japanese-occupied territory. The story of 5 Column, commanded by Maj. (now Sir Bernard) Fergusson, which had the task of destroying the railway line in the Bonchaung Gorge has been told in *Beyond the Chindwin*. In his introduction to Bernard Fergusson’s book, Lord Wavell pays tribute to the men of the 13th King’s: ‘Not specially picked daredevils . . . but mostly men of an ordinary line battalion, sent originally to India for garrison duty. Yet as a tale of toughness and good comradeship in adversity their story will be hard to beat.’

After the railway to Myitkyina had been cut the whole force crossed the Irrawaddy but found itself much constricted, both by the numerous river lines and by the unexpected strength of the Japanese. With almost no room to manoeuvre and increasing difficulties of air supply, owing to the vigilance of the enemy, the decision was eventually taken to withdraw. A large supply-drop was ordered for 25 March, near a village on the bank of the River Shweli, but the Japanese spotted the preparations and took up strong positions near the village. An attack was put in by two of the King’s columns (7 and 8) which, although it failed to drive the Japanese back, enabled the supply-drop to be completed. Two days later the columns dispersed and started to march back. By mid-June the last party of gaunt, bearded, emaciated men had reached India. Of the force that had left four months earlier, 1,182 returned and many had marched as much as 1,500 miles. Maj. Gilkes with



**The crossing of the Irrawaddy, the Battalion Order Group, 2nd Manchesters, February 1945. (Photo: Lt-Col King-Clark)**



7 Column had marched in the other direction, through the enemy lines into China, from whence they were flown back by the U.S. Air Force to India. It is fashionable to decry the value of private armies, but much was learnt from the first Wingate expedition and the experience gained in jungle warfare and air-supply was later to prove invaluable; but, most important, the Japanese were jolted out of their purely defensive strategy in Burma and were led towards policies that later brought them disaster.

In March of the following year Wingate's Chindits returned, this time a force of six brigades (twenty-four battalions, each providing two columns) which would all be air-supplied and, with one exception, flown in. The task was to attack in rear the Japanese resisting Stilwell's Chinese-American Army driving down from the north on Myitkyina. The 1st King's, taking the place of the 13th Battalion in 77th Indian Brigade, was chosen for the most critical part of the whole operation. The two columns under Lt-Col Scott and Maj. Gaitley respectively in fifty-four gliders were to seize two clearings (named 'Piccadilly' and 'Broadway') and help engineers prepare landing-strips for the Dakotas flying in the remaining columns. At the last minute 'Piccadilly' was seen to have been obstructed, so on the evening of 5 March 1944 the tugs and gliders all took off for 'Broadway'. Of the thirty-four gliders that reached the clearing, many crashed on landing as aerial photographs had not shown up deep ruts hidden by undergrowth. Forty men were killed and the overall strength of the assault troops seriously reduced. Fortunately the landing was unopposed and the first Dakota was able to touch down on the evening of 6 March and the strip was completed by midnight. Lt-Col Scott received an immediate award of the D.S.O. and both Lord Mountbatten and Gen. Wingate sent their congratulations to the Regiment on their fine performance.

As operations progressed to harass the Japanese and cut their communications, the King's became increasingly involved with the protection and reinforcement of the various strongholds, found necessary to provide bases for the large number of Chindit columns. Detachments were constantly on the move and both at 'Broadway' and at

'Blackpool', another strongpoint, the King's were instrumental in beating off heavy Japanese attacks. Stilwell's advance on Myitkyina and Mogaung, however, met with fierce Japanese resistance and 77th Brigade was ordered to attack the latter place from the south. Only an improvised company, commanded by Capt. Morrow was available. The fighting lasted for three weeks before the town was taken, by which time the company was reduced to a platoon. One attack in which King's men figured prominently was carried out with such gallantry that it earned the special praise of Brig. Calvert, commanding the brigade, on whose recommendation one D.C.M. and two M.M.s were awarded to members of the detachment. After the capture of Myitkyina towards the end of July, all the Chindit columns were withdrawn and flown back to India. By this date the effective strength of 77th Brigade was under 350 all ranks. For four months the battalion had successfully fought the Japanese on their own ground. Casualties had been heavy, but on this occasion sick and wounded men could be evacuated by air and many later rejoined their regiments.

## *Kohima to Mandalay*

Early in 1942 the 2nd Manchesters arrived in India. Training for jungle and mountain warfare was followed by combined operations exercises as the 2nd Division had become the assault division. In March 1944, only twenty-four hours after the King's landed at 'Broadway', the Japanese launched their own offensive, 'The March on Delhi'. Their immediate objectives were the Allied bases at Imphal and Kohima. For three months Imphal held out against all attacks, but further north the battle for Kohima proved to be the turning-point of the whole campaign in Burma. When the Japanese 31st Division made a surprise advance across the Chindwin only a scratch force was available for the defence of Kohima. The siege in early April was 'an epic to rival Lucknow or Hazebrouck'. The 2nd Division was rushed by sea, land and air 2,200 miles from the Deccan. Only three companies of Manchesters were available. On 11 April, 'B' Company was in action near



**Company headquarters during the advance to Mandalay, March 1945. (Lt-Col King-Clark)**

Zubza some ten miles from Kohima four days before the battalion's concentration could be completed. Just over a week later the garrison was relieved, but apart from Garrison Hill itself the Japanese held Kohima ridge and the hills to the north to beyond Naga village. Only the complete defeat of Gen. Sato's division would open the pass and road to Imphal. The pass itself is set between formidable tree-covered mountains with precipitous slopes and dense subtropical forests at the lower altitudes. May brings the monsoon rain, the heaviest in the world, and giant mosquitoes and myriads of other insects bring disease to man and beast alike. It was across these 'hellish jungle mountains' that two outflanking brigade columns now set off. A machine-gun platoon of the Manchesters, 'a tough magnificent body of men', as one officer records in his diary (quoted by Swinson), marched with each column; the rest of the battalion under the command of Maj. King-Clark covering the gun line, dug in on Lone Tree Hill within a hundred yards of a Japanese outpost. Soon the rains began; streams became torrents and tracks rivers of mud. To carry the Vickers guns and heavy equipment through the jungle was a herculean task.

By about 5 May the flank brigades had fought their way into the Naga village and on to the southern end of Kohima ridge but here, as in the centre around Garrison Hill, only a precarious toe-hold had been won at heavy cost. In one attack by the Royal Norfolks two platoons overran their objective and were in danger of annihilation but, as Arthur Swinson writes: 'Fortunately some of the Manchesters were available with their medium machine-guns and they put down such a volume of fire that rescue operations were able to go ahead.' The Manchesters, in fact, had already earned a considerable reputation for the accuracy of their close-support fire in attack and the speed with which they consolidated on the objective. Additional troops of the 7th Indian Division now arrived. In the rain and mud the attacks continued against ferocious Japanese resistance, and the Manchesters were involved in bitter fighting around Garrison Hill.

Towards the end of the month, the 4/1st Gurkhas, under their young commanding officer, Derek Horsford (who later became Colonel of the King's), had a brilliant success through infiltrating the Japanese positions on Hunter's Hill. Sato's troops were beginning to crack. No supplies or

ammunition had reached them since the operation began. Few other troops could have fought on under such conditions. The battle had lasted for sixty-four days and now they were beaten. By 22 June elements of the 2nd Division reached Imphal and a month later the Japanese XV Army was in retreat. Before the Japanese surrender came the Manchesters had added four more battle honours: Penwe, Shwebo, Myinmu Bridgehead and the Irrawaddy. Particular mention must also be made of 'D' Company, which for two years supported 29th Brigade in the Arakan and the Chinese armies in the long drive south, from the Myitkyina area to within a few miles of Mandalay. In Burma the task of Fourteenth Army was over. Its triumph against every adversity has a dramatic quality all its own, and the men who recaptured Burma have a special place in the history of our times.

## *Italy*

In March 1944, the 2nd King's joined the 4th Division in Italy, and the 8th Manchesters landed at Naples with the 10th Indian Division. Four months later 9th Manchesters became the machine-gun battalion of 46th Division. It was the King's, however, that was immediately involved in Alexander's dramatic spring offensive *DIADEM*. For four months the Germans had held Monte Cassino against every attack. To the north were great mountains; to the south the Liri Valley, overlooked by the monastery itself. Across the mouth of the valley, ran the River Rapido. Earlier the 36th (Texan) Division, attempting to cross near St Angelo, had been thrown back with ghastly loss. Now the Polish Corps was to attack the monastery, while four complete corps, concentrated with great secrecy, would be launched into the valley to reach the Via Castellina and the road to Rome. The 4th Division had the unenviable task of attacking just north of St Angelo under the lee of Monte Cassino itself. The King's were the leading battalion of the left-hand brigade and at this point the river was sixty feet wide, about six feet deep, and flowing at seven knots. Both banks had been heavily mined and the German defences on the far side, reinforced with steel and

concrete, were strongly wired in and cleverly concealed in hedgerows and hummocks to a considerable depth.

At 23.00 hours on 11 May, on the Eighth Army front, over 1,000 guns opened counter-battery fire. Forty-five minutes later the barrage would start and the assault boats would be launched. Unfortunately the King's were late in getting the boats to the launching-point and the moment the barrage started the Germans brought down defensive fire with everything they had. Many boats were holed before they could be launched and others sunk in the swift-flowing river. Both sides were using smoke, but the Germans had canisters with trip-wires dug into the river bank. The assault troops were soon enveloped in dense clouds of black smoke into which the German mortars and machine-guns fired with devastating effect. For two and a half days the remnants of the King's fought on without rations or water and with ammunition running out. By the night of 13 May, the first Bailey bridge was completed, a mile upstream. Within twenty-four hours the Germans, outflanked at St Angelo, started pulling back and the survivors of the King's were withdrawn into reserve. Shortly before these orders were received, an attack led by Maj. Touhy reached one of the battalion's objectives. But for his inspired leadership the bridgehead itself might not have been held.

After the fall of Rome, the 2nd King's took part in the attack on the Trasimene Line, capturing the village of Gioiella. East of the lake, attacking up the valley of the Tiber was the 8th Manchesters with the 10th Indian Division. The next German stop line was on the River Arno, where 2nd King's captured Tuori against strong resistance. It was about this time that Cpl Horsfield of the Manchesters, an explosives expert serving with the S.A.S. at Derna, gave his life attempting to put out a fire in an ammunition store. Kenneth Horsfield's self-sacrifice, through persistent efforts to save his trapped comrades, earned the posthumous award of the George Cross. At the end of August the whole of Eighth Army was switched to the Adriatic Front with the object of breaking through along the narrow coastal plain into the Romagna. By mid-September both the 2nd King's and the 9th Manchesters

were fighting on the Rimini Line and as the battle moved on the weather broke. By early November, with the rivers in spate and mud everywhere, operations were almost halted. While the 10th Indian Division advanced into the mountains, 46th Division was fighting in the foothills and six further battle honours were won by the Manchesters. At the capture of Forli the 2nd King's and the 9th Manchesters again fought side by side. Casualties had been heavy and both divisions were due for relief. By early December, however, the King's were in action in Athens, where civil war had broken out. The 46th Division was also sent to Greece, but not before the crossing of the River Lamone, where the 9th Manchesters helped to hold the bridgeheads against a violent counter-attack which was repulsed with great skill and determination. In Italy the Allies, fighting battles of constraint and attrition, faced endless river-crossings and formidable mountain strongholds defended by a courageous and determined enemy. A recent tribute (*The Italian Campaign 1943-45*) to those who fought in this campaign comments, 'There were no glittering prizes . . . only the knowledge of having played a vital part in the final victory.'

## *Normandy and Victory in the West*

The beach organization for OVERLORD was based on experience gained during the Sicily landings, the largest amphibious assault in the whole war. On D-Day itself 75,000 men, 6,000 vehicles and 4,000 tons of stores were landed on the British sector in Normandy. On two of the five beaches the Beach Group was built around King's battalions. For a year, the 5th and 8th King's had been specially trained for this role that was vital to the whole campaign. The two commanding officers, Lt-Cols Board and Humphrey, found themselves commanding also many specialist units concerned with the whole complex problem of clearing and unloading on to an open beach, the formation of dumps and development of beach exits, together with traffic control, the



**Vickers gun firing on German positions in the factory area of Antwerp. This photo was taken by Lt-Col Harington (now Lt-Gen. Sir Charles Harington), Cheshire Regiment, who commanded 1st Manchesters from April to September 1944**

salvage of vehicles and opening of field dressing stations. The two battalions not only had to mop up enemy resistance in their area, but provide trained manpower to work with the specialist units. Elements of the 5th Battalion landed on 'Sword' beach with the 3rd British Division; of the 8th Battalion, on 'Juno' with the 3rd Canadian Division. Mopping up near-by strongpoints continued for two days and the casualties on 6 June included Col Board. At the end of June, 'Sword' beach was closed down owing to persistent heavy shelling, but all this time the unloading had continued for eighteen hours a day. By the end of July, ports and base areas were fully operational and the task of the King's was over. Many men were drafted as reinforcements and the 8th King's was broken up. Only the 5th King's was kept in being for guard duties and operations around Dunkirk and finally as 'T' Force. This had the special task of seizing and safeguarding important installations, papers and even persons as soon as enemy country had been entered. When the 6th Guards Brigade entered Kiel on 8 May 1945, two King's companies had already taken over a number of valuable installations together with the cruiser *Hipper* two days previously.

After the fall of Singapore, the 1st Manchesters was re-formed in England from the 6th Battalion and, as the machine-gun battalion of 53rd (Welsh) Division, landed at Arromanches on 26 June 1944, during the battle for the Odon Bridgehead. The 7th Manchesters, the machine-gun battalion of



**Manchesters on a training exercise in the Jordan Valley, March 1942. (Imperial War Museum)**

52nd (Lowland) Division, landed much later, as the division, originally trained for snow and mountain warfare and later for airborne and combined operations, was held back in reserve. These two divisions played a major part in six out of the eight great battles that opened with the capture of Caen and carried 21st Army Group to the very heart of Germany. The two Manchester battalions in fact added a further twenty battle honours to those awarded to the Regiment. The machine-gun companies were normally allotted to the infantry brigades, and the first occasion when the whole fire power of the 1st Manchesters was used in a single operation was shortly before the Battle of Falaise, in support of a raid by the Royal Welch Fusiliers on Mont Pinçon. Some indication of the scale of this kind of harassing fire can be gauged from the fact that, two nights later, 338,000 rounds of machine-gun ammunition and 5,700 4.2-inch mortar bombs were fired in support of patrols probing a suspected German withdrawal.

After the German defeat at Falaise, the Allies swept forward into Belgium and during the Battle of Arnhem the 1st Manchesters was involved in confused and fierce fighting around Turnhout on the western side of the corridor. To open Antwerp was now vital and the 7th Manchesters was soon in the thick of the fight for the causeway on Walcheren. Whether in conditions of flood, snow and ice, or deep mud, the guns were kept in action. In one counter-attack in the

Ardennes the guns and mortars of the 1st Battalion were the only supporting weapons available, having been manhandled through deep snow. In the last few months of the war the two battalions were often side by side, as during the Battle of the Rhineland when the 7th relieved the 1st Battalion. This phase opened with the assault of the Reichwald Forest defences. The preliminary bombardment lasted for 4½ hours, during which the 1st Manchesters, together with every available tank, anti-tank and light anti-aircraft gun kept the German positions to the front and flank under heavy and prolonged fire. This 'pepperpot' fire support was co-ordinated by Lt-Col Crozier who had been second in command when the battalion was re-formed.

After the crossing of the Rhine there was more hard fighting, but the end was in sight. Both battalions were engaged at Bremen, which fell on 26 April 1945, and the 1st Battalion reached Hamburg on 4 May

Brig. Barclay, one of the brigade commanders and author of *The History of the 53rd Division*, has paid tribute to the machine-gunner as 'the backroom boy of the fire plan', whose weapon in certain circumstances, as in 1914-18, 'was the most deadly of all'. Of the achievements of the four 'specialist' infantry battalions, whose progress we have followed on the Normandy beaches and through the long months of fighting that led into the heart of Germany, the Regiment can indeed be proud.



**The thrust to the Gothic Line, 8th Manchesters in the town of Soci, September 1944. (Imperial War Museum)**

# *The White Horse and Fleur-de-Lis*

Soon after the war ended came the inevitable cutting back of the Regular Army and in 1948 both regiments were reduced to a single battalion. Sent to Malaya in 1951, the Manchesters spent three years in successful operations against the Communist guerillas, while in 1952 the King's were in the front line in Korea. The following May this battalion played a distinguished part in the Battle of the Hook. This battle honour, together with 'Korea 1952-3', is now borne on the Regimental Colour. During these turbulent postwar years, a diminishing number of regular

battalions were kept almost continuously abroad and the full story is told in Gregory Blaxland's *The Regiments Depart*. Here, away from the context of policies and politicians, our postscript records the uniting of the White Horse and the Fleur-de-Lis. In 1958 the amalgamation of the King's and the Manchester Regiment took place and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother (Colonel-in-Chief, the Manchester Regiment since 1947) graciously consented to remain Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment.

Our story has been that of a Regiment that has existed for very nearly three centuries; of the gallant deeds of the men of the 8th, 63rd and 96th and their successors; of great expansion and sacrifices in times of national emergency; of links forged by common traditions and cemented by comradeship.

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# The Plates

*A1 Musketeer, Princess Anne of Denmark's Regiment, 1685*

The Stuart colours are brought out in the yellow facings to the red coat. Note also the yellow ribbon on the felt hat, knee-breeches and shoes. Each cuff has four large buttons, and the flap pockets two smaller ones. The wooden cartridge-cases also hang down the back to make twelve in all. Note the canvas ball-bag and polished wooden powder flask hanging below the right arm.

*A2 Grenadier, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1751*

The royal blue facings were authorized in 1751, and a wavy blue strip on the white lace has been replaced by a yellow edging. The top of the waist-coat is worn unbuttoned. The motto 'Nec Aspera Terrent' appears on the cap, the back of which is red. The wearing of the White Horse badge dates from 1716, being granted by George I, the first Hanoverian king of Great Britain.

*A3 Grenadier, 63rd Regiment, 1768*

The facings authorized were dark green with white lace. The grenadier cap is mitre-shaped but covered in bearskin. On the back of the cap is a circular red cloth patch bearing a white grenade and '63'. The front plate is black metal embellished in white. The coat buttons are cast pewter with '63' on an eight-pointed star. The musket is the 1746-pattern Long Land Musket.

*B1 Officer, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1792*

On the front facings of the coat there are ten gold loops and four on each cuff. Note also the red piping on the collar. All buttons are gilt, in the centre the White Horse, with the Crown above and '8' below, surrounded by the Garter. The gaiters button at the top with six bone buttons. The cross-belt plate is gilt, bearing the Garter and Crown within the centre, the White Horse in silver.

*B2 Private, Line Company, 63rd Regiment, 1792*

The dark green regimental facings on the coat from the collar to waist are 3 inches wide, with

ten white loops. The buttons are white metal embossed (same design as A3). The white duck trousers button on the outside of the knee with four white bone buttons (also used on gaiters). The brass cross-belt plate has '63' within the Garter and Crown.

*B3 Officer, 96th Queen's Own (Royal) Regiment, 1816*

The blue facings and silver lace were authorized when the Regiment received its new title during the Peninsular War. The capture of the 'Invincibles' standard is commemorated on the buttons, cross-belt and chaco plate, on all of which appears a Sphinx with a French flag over the left shoulder. The chaco plate is silver, mounted on gold lace with a crimson line.

*C1 Officer, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1840*

This plate is based on a contemporary engraving of Capt. E. H. Greathed. The coatee is double-breasted and has two rows of nine gilt regimental buttons. The loops of gold lace are all square-ended. The cross-belt plate is of gilt. In the centre is the White Horse in silver against a red velvet background, surrounded by the Garter and Crown also in silver. The sword has a slightly curved 32-inch blade and the grip is fish-skin bound with brass wire.

*C2 Private, Eighth or The King's Regiment, 1857*

During the Indian Mutiny the King's was one of the first regiments to use khaki dye. This soldier wears a cotton shirt and duck trousers and a cover (with voluminous flap) over his Killmanoch cap. He carries the minimum of equipment and a



Issuing kit in Korea, 1952. (Regimental Museum, Liverpool)

water-bottle on a leather strap. The rifle is the Enfield 1853 pattern and the pocket on the cross-belt holds percussion caps.

*C3 Sergeant, 96th Regiment of Foot, 1875*

The regimental number '96' appears on the chaco plate, belt buckle and shoulder-straps. The yellow facings date from 1824. The wearing of the 'Sphinx with Egypt' dates from 1874 when the battle honours of the 96th (Queen's Own) were added to the Regimental Colour. The rifle is the Martini-Henry, 1871 pattern.

*D1 Officer, The Manchester Regiment, 1890s*

White facings are now common to English infantry regiments. The silver Fleur-de-Lis badge on the forage-cap shows that this officer is serving with the 1st Battalion. The cap badge in other orders of dress (after 1881) was the arms of the city of Manchester. The wearing of the 'Fleur-de-Lis' by the 63rd dates from the earliest day of the Regiment and the capture of French standards at Guadeloupe and elsewhere in the West Indies.

*D2 Officer, The Manchester Regiment, Ladysmith 1899*

This officer wears a khaki drill tunic and breeches and strapped leggings. The canvas haversack and water-bottle are slung under the Sam Browne belt. The revolver is a .45 Webley. The Manchesters insisted on wearing the Fleur-de-Lis on the helmet in addition to the regulation red flash with title, worn on the left side. The collar of the tunic is 1½ inches high and only the breast pockets have buttons.



**Battalion exercise, Korea, 1953, showing the front and back view of a 'parka'. (Regimental Museum, Liverpool)**

*D3 Private, The King's (Liverpool Regiment), France 1916*

This King's man wears only the equipment needed to carry his bayonet, ammunition and entrenching tool. The gas mask is worn slung. All badges and titles were removed before going into the front line. His rifle is protected by a canvas cover and he carries iron screw-pickets for constructing a barbed-wire fence.

*E1 Lance-Corporal, The Manchester Regiment, France 1917*

This lance-corporal wears 'fighting order'. His gas-mask is in the 'ready' position and worn over his equipment. Note the distinctive outlines of the metal canister alongside the compartment holding the face-mask. A heavy pair of wire-cutters hangs from his belt. The loose-fitting leather jerkin is lined with rough woollen material and can be buttoned to the neck.

*E2 Officer, The King's (Liverpool Regiment), France 1917*

This officer has just returned from a trench raid. He wears a soldier's tunic and issue puttees. All he took on the raid was his revolver and ammunition, a gas mask and prismatic compass, slung on a narrow strap. The thick cord breeches and heavy woollen sweater give some protection against the cold. The whistle lanyard is worn in an unorthodox but practical manner.

*E3 C.Q.M.S. The Manchester Regiment, Western Desert, 1936*

This is the dress worn during winter months – serge tunic and khaki-drill shorts. The collar badges and shoulder-titles are brass, but all the buckles on the web equipment have been painted a dull finish. The green hose-tops are the same dark green colour as the regimental facings of the 63rd. The bayonet scabbard has a khaki cloth cover.

*F1 Private, The Manchester Regiment, Italy 1944*

This soldier is cleaning one of the battalion's Vickers guns. He wears a beret, with the Fleur-de-Lis badge on the left side, a khaki-drill shirt, and a woollen jersey with battle-dress trousers. Several



men would be engaged in cleaning the gun and every part is carefully oiled before reassembly. Note the canvas cover on the water-jacket.

*F2 Private, The King's Regiment, Burma 1943*

This 'Chindit' wears a flannel shirt dyed green and denim trousers. His felt jungle hat originally had a pugaree of a lighter colour. Extra pouches have been sewn on to the sides of his pack. Below the pack is a bed-roll with a proofed canvas ground-sheet and mosquito net. The bren-gun is ready for instant action.

*F3 Private, The Manchester Regiment, North-West Europe 1944*

This shows one of the two 'spare numbers' of a machine-gun team of the 1st Battalion in the winter of 1944. He is carrying two boxes of .303 ammunition (called 'liners'); each containing a belt of 250 rounds. A pickaxe is fitted to the back of his pack. Note the regimental title and divisional flash of the 53rd Division. When manhandling the gun across country, the gun itself and the tripod are each a full load. The No. 3 of the team carries the aiming post, condenser can, an ammunition box and a shovel.

*G1 Private, The Manchester Regiment, Malaya 1952*

He wears a cellular shirt and battle-dress trousers of drill material. His jungle boots have composition soles and canvas uppers that fit high over the ankle. The band round the jungle hat has slots to take camouflage. Below the pack is strapped a rubber-proofed poncho, rolled round a nylon

hammock. On the back of the belt are pouches holding a water-bottle and mess tin.

*G2 Private, The King's Regiment, Korea 1952*

This King's man is resting in a dugout while off duty. He wears a knitted Balaclava cap-comforter, flannel shirt and thick jersey which laces up at the neck. His trousers are of heavy cotton material treated to resist water. His steel helmet is kept close by, together with his rifle and equipment which would be within reach.

*G3 Officer, The King's Regiment (Manchester and Liverpool), Berlin 1964*

This officer is dressed in shirt-sleeve duty order. The cap badge is that of the Lancastrian Brigade, since replaced by the new regimental badge. The blue-grey shirt is a regimental distinction and the shoulder-badge and King's titles are brass. The regimental-pattern stable belt is green webbed canvas  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide, with a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch maroon centre stripe woven in.

*H1 Sergeant, mess kit, The King's Regiment, 1972*

The plain scarlet jacket is worn with a deep green waistcoat. The collar badges have a deep green backing, showing  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch border. The regimental side-cap is worn straight on the head and is maroon with a deep green inlet top and piping to the front and rear folds. The regimental cap badge (worn on the left side) is also backed with deep green cloth.

*H2 Drummer, full dress, The King's Regiment, 1972*

The scarlet jacket is the 1913 infantry pattern with royal blue facings and regimental buttons. The white braid (with red crowns) is sewn on the front and rear sleeve seams, round the collar, down the back seams to the tail and on the centre back seam from waist to collar. The helmet plate is gilt with the regimental badge in the centre.

*H3 Corporal, battle order, The King's Regiment 1972*

This order of dress is as for fighting order, with the addition of rear pouches and cape. The equipment is the 1958 pattern. The web anklets are cleaned with black shoe polish. Note the scrim on the steel helmet to complete the camouflage effect. The corporal's personal weapon in this instance is a Stirling machine-gun.



**A three-inch mortar in action in Korea, 1953. (Regimental Museum, Liverpool)**

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# Men-at-Arms Series

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