

## The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)



Motto: **Nemo me impune lacessit** (*No One Provokes Me With Impunity*)

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 SCOTS) is an infantry battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland. The regiment was created as part of the Childers Reforms in 1881, when the 42nd (Royal Highland) Regiment of Foot (The Black Watch) was amalgamated with the 73rd (Perthshire) Regiment of Foot. It was known as The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) from 1881 to 1931 and The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) from 1931 to 2006. Part of the Scottish Division for administrative purposes from 1967, it was the senior Highland regiment. It has been part of the Scottish, Welsh and Irish Division for administrative purposes from 2017.

The source of the regiment's name is uncertain. In 1725, following the Jacobite rebellion of 1715, General George Wade was authorised by George I to form six "watch" companies to patrol the Highlands of Scotland, three from Clan Campbell, one from Clan Fraser of Lovat, one from Clan Munro and one from Clan Grant. These were to be "employed in disarming the Highlanders, preventing depredations, bringing criminals to justice, and hindering rebels and attainted persons from inhabiting that part of the kingdom." The force was known in Gaelic as Am Freiceadan Dubh, "the dark" or "black watch".

This epithet may have come from the uniform plaids of dark tartan with which the companies were provided. Other theories have been put forward; for instance, that the name referred to the "black hearts" of the pro-government militia who had sided with the "enemies of true Highland spirit", or that it came from their original duty in policing the Highlands, namely preventing "blackmail" (Highlanders demanding extortion payments to spare cattle herds).

### History

The regiment was created as part of the Childers Reforms in 1881, when the 42nd (Royal Highland) Regiment of Foot (The Black Watch) was amalgamated with the 73rd (Perthshire) Regiment of Foot to form two battalions of the newly named Black Watch (Royal Highlanders). The 42nd became the 1st Battalion, and the 73rd became the 2nd Battalion.

The 1st Battalion saw action at the Battle of Tel el-Kebir in September 1882 during the Anglo-Egyptian War. It was in combat again at the First and Second Battles of El Teb in February 1884, the Battle of Abu Klea in January 1885 and the Battle of Kirbegan in February 1885 during the Mahdist War. They were stationed in India from 1896, but was sent to South Africa for service during the Second Boer War. After the war ended in June 1902 with the Peace of Vereeniging, 630 officers and men left Cape Town on the SS Michigan in late September 1902, arriving at Southampton in late October, when they were posted to Edinburgh.

The 2nd Battalion was posted to South Africa in October 1899, following the outbreak of the Second Boer War. The battalion suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Magersfontein in December 1899.

After the end of the war, about 730 officers and men left Point Natal for British India on the SS Ionian in October 1902, where after arrival in Bombay it was stationed in Sialkot in Umballa in Punjab.

In 1908, the Volunteers and Militia were reorganised nationally, with the former becoming the Territorial Force and the latter the Special Reserve; the regiment now had one Reserve and five Territorial battalions.

## **First World War**

### **Regular Army**

The 1st Battalion landed at Le Havre as part of the 1st Brigade in the 1st Division in August 1914 for service on the Western Front. It saw action during the Retreat from Mons in August 1914, the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914 and the First Battle of the Aisne later in September 1914; it also took part in the advance to the Hindenburg Line in September 1918.

The 2nd Battalion landed at Marseille as part of the Bareilly Brigade in the 7th (Meerut) Division in October 1914 for service on the Western Front.[14] It took part in the defence of Givenchy in December 1915 and then moved to Mesopotamia later that month and saw action during the siege of Kut in Spring 1916, the fall of Baghdad in March 1917 and the Battle of Istabulat in April 1917. It transferred to Palestine in January 1918 and took part in the Battle of Megiddo in September 1918.

### **Territorial Force**

The 1/4th (City of Dundee) Battalion landed at Le Havre as part of the Bareilly Brigade in the 7th (Meerut) Division March 1915 for service on the Western Front and, following heavy losses at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 and the Battle of Festubert in May 1915, amalgamated with 2nd Battalion in September 1915. The 1/5th (Angus and Dundee) Battalion landed at Le Havre as part of the 24th Brigade in the 8th Division for service on the Western Front. It also saw action at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 and the Battle of Festubert in May 1915. The 1/6th (Perthshire) Battalion and the 1/7th (Fife) Battalion landed at Boulogne-sur-Mer as part of the 153rd Brigade in the 51st (Highland) Division in May 1915 for service on the Western Front. They saw action at the Battle of the Ancre Heights in October 1916.

### **New Armies**

The 9th (Service) Battalion landed at Boulogne-sur-Mer as part of the 44th Brigade in the 15th (Scottish) Division in July 1915 for service on the Western Front. It suffered over 700 wounded or killed-in-action at the Battle of Loos in September 1915 and then suffered heavy losses again at the Second Battle of the Somme in November 1916. It moved to Salonika in November 1915 and took part in operations in the Balkans in 1916.

A number of authors state that the regiment was given the nickname "Ladies from Hell" ("Die Damen aus der Hölle") by German troops, allegedly on account of their kilts and fighting qualities.

## **Second World War**

### **Regular Army**

The 1st Battalion landed in France in September 1939 as part of the 12th Brigade in the 4th Infantry Division for service with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The battalion later transferred to the 153rd Brigade of the 51st (Highland) Division and was captured at St Valery-en-Caux during the Battle of France. It was reformed from reserve units of the 9th (Highland) Infantry Division in August 1940 and moved to North Africa in August 1942 where it fought at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942 and then continued to fight in the Tunisian Campaign before it took part in the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. It also took part in the Normandy landings in June 1944, the Battle for

Caen later that month and the Battle of the Falaise Pocket in August 1944. It later saw action at the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945, Battle of the Reichswald in February 1945 and the crossing of the Rhine in March 1945.

The 2nd Battalion was serving in Palestine from where it was sent to East Africa in August 1940 and saw action during the Italian conquest of British Somaliland. It was sent to Crete, as part of the 14th Brigade in the 8th Division, and took part in the Battle of Heraklion in May 1941. It moved to North Africa in October 1941 and took part in the break out from Tobruk in November 1941.

### *Territorial Army*

The 4th Battalion landed in France in January 1940 as part of the 153rd Brigade in the 51st (Highland) Division for service with the BEF and then took part in the Dunkirk evacuation in June 1940. From July 1940 to April 1943 the battalion was stationed in Gibraltar. The battalion remained in the United Kingdom for the rest of the war.

The 5th Battalion landed in North Africa as part of the 153rd Brigade in the 51st (Highland) Division and fought at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. It also took part in the Normandy landings, while attached to the 3rd Parachute Brigade, in June 1944 and saw action at the Battle for Caen followed by the Battle of Bréville later that month. It saw combat again at the Battle of the Falaise Pocket in August 1944 and the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945.

The 6th Battalion landed in France in January 1940 as part of the 154th Brigade in the 51st (Highland) Division for service with the BEF. The battalion exchanged places with the 1st Battalion and became part of the 12th Brigade of the 4th Division and then took part in the Dunkirk evacuation in June 1940. It moved to North Africa in the spring of 1943 for service in the final stages of the Tunisian Campaign and then on to the Italian Front in February 1944 where it took part in the Battle of Monte Cassino in the spring of 1944. The battalion later fought on the Gothic Line before being sent to Greece in late 1944, where it remained for the rest of the war.

The 7th Battalion landed in North Africa as part of the 154th Brigade in the 51st (Highland) Division and fought at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. It also took part in the Normandy landings in June 1944, the Battle for Caen later that month and the Battle of the Falaise Pocket in August 1944. It later saw action at the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945. The 7th Battalion was also one of the first battalions to cross the river Rhine during Operation Plunder on the 23 March 1945.

### *After the War*

#### *Late 1940s*

The 2nd Battalion was deployed to India in 1945 and arrived at Cherat Cantonment, thirty-four miles from Peshawar, on 15 August 1947, when India and Pakistan became independent. On 26 February 1948 the battalion became the last British Army unit to leave Pakistan, boarding a transport ship at Karachi, after a formal parade through the streets with the salute taken by the Prime Minister Jinnah.

#### *1950s to 1970s*

The regiment won honours after the Second Battle of the Hook in November 1952 during the Korean War. The regiment helped to suppress the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya in 1953 and to suppress the actions of EOKA during intercommunal violence in Cyprus in the late 1950s.

During the state funeral of John F. Kennedy in November 1963, nine bagpipers from the regiment were invited to travel to the United States and participate in the funeral procession from the White

House to the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. They performed The Brown Haired Maiden, The Badge of Scotland, The 51st Highland Division, and The Barren Rocks of Aden.

The Black Watch served in Northern Ireland during the Troubles as part of Operation Banner. The regiment was frequently a major target of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). A lance corporal serving with the regiment was shot by a sniper in East Belfast in November 1971 and a young private serving with the regiment was killed while on foot patrol in Dungannon, County Tyrone, by a remote control device in July 1978.

### *Hong Kong Handover Ceremony*

The Black Watch was the last British military unit to leave Hong Kong in 1997, and it played a prominent role in the handover ceremony.

### *2000s*

During the 2003 Iraq War, the Black Watch fought during Operation Telic in the initial attack on Basra, and during its deployment, the unit suffered a single fatality. The following year, the Black Watch was dispatched to Iraq again, as part of 4 (Armoured) Brigade. On 12 August, a soldier from the regiment was killed as a result of an improvised explosive device (IED). In October, the Black Watch was at the centre of political controversy after the United States Army requested British forces to be moved further north, outside of the British-controlled Multi-National Division (South East), to replace forces temporarily redeployed for the Second Battle of Fallujah. Despite objections in Parliament, the deployment went ahead. Based at Camp Dogwood, located between Fallujah and Karbala, in an area later dubbed the "Triangle of Death", the Black Watch came under sustained insurgent attack from mortars and rockets. On 29 October, during the journey to their new base, a Black Watch soldier was killed in a road accident. On 4 November, three soldiers and an interpreter were killed by a car bomb at a check point, and on 8 November, another soldier was killed: the high-profile nature of the deployment caused a magnification of these events back home in Britain.

Under a plan devised by Lieutenant General Alistair Irwin and approved by General Sir Mike Jackson, on 16 December 2004, it was announced that the Black Watch was to join with five other Scottish regiments – the Royal Scots, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Royal Highland Fusiliers, The Highlanders and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders – to form the Royal Regiment of Scotland, a single regiment consisting of five regular and two territorial battalions. The measure, which reflected recruiting difficulties and the inefficiencies inherent in maintaining a number of relatively small separate units, took place on 28 March 2006.

In July 2007 the battalion moved from Palace Barracks in Belfast to Fort George.

On 24 June 2009, it was reported that elements of the battalion numbering about 350 troops carried out one of the largest air assault operations of the NATO troops in Afghanistan, named Operation Panther's Claw, by deploying into and attacking a Taliban stronghold located near Bābājī (باباجی), north of Lashkar Gah. The operation commenced on 19 June just before midnight. After a number of combat engagements with the insurgents, the soldiers of the battalion secured three main crossing points: the Lui Mandey Wadi crossing, the Nahr-e-Burgha canal and the Shamalan canal] Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Cartwright, Commanding Officer of The Black Watch battalion, was reported saying that this operation established a firm foothold in what was the last remaining Taliban area controlled in the southern Helmand Province. The location of the Taliban force in the area had allowed it to conduct attacks on the A01 highway, a major national route connecting Kandahar and Herat. During 22 June, troops of the battalion also "found 1.3 tonnes of poppy seed and a number of improvised

explosive devices and anti-personnel mines before they could be laid." Analysis by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation revealed the haul to be of mung beans, not poppy seed.

Following the Army 2020 Refine, the battalion will remain at Fort George until 2023 when it will move to another barracks in Scotland. Following the refine, the battalion was equipped with the Foxhound light mechanised vehicle. The battalion was also moved under the command of the 51st Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Scotland.

### Regimental museum

The Battalion Headquarters and regimental museum are located at Balhousie Castle in Perth.

### Uniform and traditions

The Black Watch's primary recruiting areas are in Fife, Dundee, Angus and Perth and Kinross. The battalion is permitted to retain its most famous distinction, the red hackle on the Tam o'Shanter.

### Notable members

The following are notable individuals who served with the regiment:

Alfred Anderson, Scotland's last surviving World War I veteran (d. 2005)

Bernard Fergusson, Baron Ballantrae, the last British-born Governor-General of New Zealand

Jim Baxter, Scottish footballer

Fergus Bowes-Lyon, older brother of Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Duncan Campbell, Scots nobleman and British Army officer

Iain Cuthbertson, actor

Harold Davis, Scottish former professional football player

Henry Davie, Liberal Member of Parliament for Haddington

Adam Ferguson, Scottish philosopher, social scientist and historian

Al Foreman, British lightweight boxing champion, assigned as a non-combat drummer boy at the end of WWI at age 14, very brief service. Later received Distinguished Flying Cross with Royal Air Force in WWII.

Stewart Granger, actor

J. B. S. Haldane, British-born geneticist and evolutionary biologist

Karl Leyser, German-born medieval historian and Oxford professor

Christopher Logue, English poet

Fulton Mackay, Scottish actor

Gillean Maclaine, the 25th hereditary Chief of Clan Maclaine of Lochbuie

Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales, Australia from 1810 to 1821

Robert Munro, the original Black Watch commander, Colonel Sir Robert Munro

John Murray, theologian

Brian Nelson, Northern Irish loyalist

Eric Newby, English travel author

Simon Ramsay, Conservative politician and colonial governor

Neil Ritchie, British Army officer during the Second World War

William Rose, screenwriter

Bertie Snowball, golfer

Rory Stewart, Scottish diplomat, Harvard professor and Conservative MP

Frederick Tait, Scottish soldier and amateur golfer

Peter Walls Lt General of Rhodesia Army

Arthur Wauchope, British soldier and colonial administrator

Archibald Wavell, British field marshal during the Second World War



## Recipients of the Victoria Cross

The following Black Watch servicemen were awarded the Victoria Cross:

Francis Farquharson, Indian Mutiny Lucknow, 9 March 1858  
John Simpson, Indian Mutiny Fort Ruhya, 15 April 1858  
Alexander Thompson, Indian Mutiny Fort Ruhya, 15 April 1858  
James Davis, Indian Mutiny Fort Ruhya, 15 April 1858  
Edward Spence, Indian Mutiny Fort Ruhya, 15 April 1858  
William Gardner, Indian Mutiny Bareilly, 5 May 1858  
Walter Cook, Indian Mutiny Sissaya Ghat, 15 January 1859  
Duncan Millar, Indian Mutiny Sissaya Ghat, 15 January 1859  
Samuel McGaw, Ashanti War Amoafu, 31 January 1874  
Thomas Edwards, Egyptian Campaigns Tamaai, 13 March 1884  
John Ripley, First World War Rue du Bois, 9 May 1915  
David Finlay, First World War Rue du Bois, 9 May 1915  
Charles Melvin, First World War Istabulat, 21 April 1917  
Lewis Evans, First World War Zonnebeke, 4 October 1917  
Bill Speakman, Korean War, 4 November 1951

## Battle honours

The battle honours consist of the combined battle honours of the 42nd Regiment and the 73rd Regiment, together with: Guadaloupe 17591, Martinique 17621, Havannah<sup>1</sup>, North America 1763–64, Mysore<sup>5</sup>, Busaco<sup>3</sup>, Salamanca<sup>4</sup>, South Africa 1846–476, 1851-2-36 Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt 1882 '84, Kirbekan, Nile 1884–85, Paardeberg, South Africa 1899–1902

**The Great War [25 battalions]:** Retreat from Mons, Marne 1914 '18, Aisne 1914, La Bassée 1914, Ypres 1914 '17 '18, Langemarck 1914, Gheluvelt, Nonne Bosschen, Givenchy 1914, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Festubert 1915, Loos, Somme 1916 '18, Albert 1916, Bazentin, Delville Wood, Pozières, Flers-Courcellette, Morval, Thiepval, Le Transloy, Ancre Heights, Ancre 1916, Arras 1917 '18, Vimy 1917, Scarpe 1917 '18, Arleux, Pilckem, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Poelcappelle, Passchendaele, Cambrai 1917 '18, St Quentin, Bapaume 1918, Rosières, Lys, Estaires, Messines 1918, Hazebrouck, Kemmel, Béthune, Scherpenberg, Soissonnais-Ourcq, Tardenois, Drocourt-Quéant, Hindenburg Line, Épéhy, St Quentin Canal, Beaurevoir, Courtrai, Selle, Sambre, France and Flanders 1914–18, Doiran 1917, Macedonia 1915–18, Egypt 1916, Gaza, Jerusalem, Tell'Asur, Megiddo, Sharon, Damascus, Palestine 1917–18, Tigris 1916, Kut al Amara 1917, Baghdad, Mesopotamia 1915–17

**The Second World War:** Defence of Arras, Ypres-Comines Canal, Dunkirk 1940, Somme 1940, St. Valery-en-Caux, Saar, Breville, Odon, Fontenay le Pesnil, Defence of Rauray, Caen, Falaise, Falaise Road, La Vie Crossing, Le Havre, Lower Maas, Venlo Pocket, Ourthe, Rhineland, Reichswald, Goch, Rhine, North-West Europe 1940 '44–45, Barkasan, British Somaliland 1940, Tobruk 1941, Tobruk Sortie, El Alamein, Advance on Tripoli, Medenine, Zemlet el Lebene, Mareth, Akarit, Wadi Akarit East, Djebel Roumana, Medjez Plain, Si Mediene, Tunis, North Africa 1941–43, Landing in Sicily, Vizzini, Sferro, Gerbini, Adrano, Sferro Hills, Sicily 1943, Cassino II, Liri Valley, Advance to Florence, Monte Scalari, Casa Fortis, Rimini Line, Casa Fabbri Ridge, Savio Bridgehead, Italy 1944–45, Athens, Greece 1944–45, Crete, Heraklion, Middle East 1941, Chindits 1944, Burma 1944 The Hook 1952, Korea 1952–53; Al Basrah, Iraq 2003; Second Battle of Fallujah, Iraq 2004

1. awarded 1909 for services of 42nd Regiment.
2. awarded 1914 for services of 42nd Regiment.
3. awarded 1910 for service of 42nd Regiment.
4. awarded 1951 for service of 42nd Regiment.
5. awarded 1889 for service of 73rd Regiment.
6. awarded 1882 for service of 73rd Regiment.

## Colonels-in-Chief

1912: Field-Marshal His Majesty King George V

1937: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

2003: Lieutenant-General His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, KG, KT, GCB, AK, QSO, ADC

## Regimental Colonels

The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) 1881–1888 (1st Battalion): Gen. Sir Duncan Alexander Cameron, GCB (ex 42nd Foot)

1881–1885 (2nd Battalion): Gen. Sir Henry Robert Ferguson-Davie, Bt. (ex 73rd Foot)

1888–1907 (1st Battalion): Gen. Sir Robert Rollo, KCB

1907–1914: Lt-Gen. Sir John Chetham McLeod, GCB

1914–1929: Gen. Sir John Grenfell Maxwell, GCB, KCMG, CVO, DSO

1929–1940: Gen. Sir Archibald Rice Cameron, GBE, KCB, CMG

The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) (1935) 1940–1946: Gen. Sir Arthur Grenfell Wauchope, GCB, GCMG, CIE, DSO

1946–1950: F.M. Sir Archibald Wavell, 1st Earl Wavell, GCB, GCSI, GCIE, CMG, MC

1950–1952: Gen. Sir Neil Methuen Ritchie, GBE, KCB, DSO, MC

1952–1960: Maj-Gen. Neil McMicking, CB, CBE, DSO, MC

1960–1964: Maj-Gen. Robert Keith Arbuthnott, 15th Viscount of Arbuthnott, CB, CBE, DSO, MC

1964–1969: Brig. Henry Conyers Baker-Baker, DSO, MBE

1969–1976: Brig. Rt. Hon. Bernard Edward Fergusson, Baron Ballantrae, KT, GCMG, GCVO, DSO, OBE

1976–1981: Brig. John Cassels Montieth, CBE, MC, JP

1981–1992: Maj-Gen. Andrew Linton Watson, CB

1992–2003: Brig. Garry Charles Barnett, OBE, ADC

2003–2006: Lt-Gen. Sir Alistair Stuart Hastings Irwin, KCB, CBE

2006: Regiment amalgamated with the Royal Scots, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Royal Highland Fusiliers, The Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordons and Camerons) and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders – to form the Royal Regiment of Scotland

## Alliances

The battalion has the following alliances:

The Black Watch tartan. Australia – Australia – The Royal Queensland Regiment

Australia – Australia – The Royal New South Wales Regiment

Canada – Canada – The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada

Canada – Canada – 42nd Field Artillery Regiment (Lanark and Renfrew Scottish), RCA

Canada – Canada – The Prince Edward Island Regiment (RCAC)

New Zealand – New Zealand – The New Zealand Scottish

South Africa – South Africa – Transvaal Scottish Regiment

Sri Lanka - Sri Lanka - Gemunu Watch

Royal Navy – HMS Montrose

Before and after the Second World War, the Australian Militia, later renamed the Citizen Military Forces (CMF), included the 30th Battalion, New South Wales Scottish Regiment. This unit was affiliated with the Black Watch.

Canada (from 1862) has its own Black Watch, being raised as the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Militia, being renamed by 1914 as the 5th Regiment (Royal Highlanders of Canada). It adopted its

current title, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, prior to the Second World War, and saw action in both world wars.

### **Anecdotes**

When wearing the kilt, it is customary for troops to "go regimental" or "military practice", wearing no underwear. In 1997, a Black Watch soldier received wide press exposure because of windy conditions during a military ceremony in Hong Kong.