

## DURBAN LIGHT INFANTRY

(Source: Ladysmith Municipality Heritage Commemorative Brochure – 2 July 2011)

The Regiment was formed on the 24th May 1854 and gazetted on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1855. In 1859 it became the Durban Rifle Guard and the Royal Durban Rifles in 1873. In 1889 it merged with the Maritzburg Rifles and became the Natal Royal Rifles (Left Half Battalion) and in 1895 it became the Durban Light Infantry. In 1912 the unit became known as the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry (Durban Light Infantry). In 1935 the Regiment was awarded 'Royal' status and became known as the Royal Durban Light Infantry, which it retained until Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd led South Africa out of the Commonwealth in 1961.

The DLI has seen a great deal of active service. During the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 the Regiment was mobilised on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1899 and initially deployed at Colenso where a Company was tasked with the construction of Fort Molyneux overlooking the Langverwacht Spruit and C Company established Fort Wylie on the north bank of the Tugela River. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1899, C Company of the DLI accompanied the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on a reconnaissance of the railway line from Estcourt and were engaged at Frere, resulting in the capture of Winston Churchill (then a newspaper correspondent). The DLI participated in the battle of Willo Grande on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1899 and was then used in a supportive role while based in Mooi River and Estcourt.

During the 1906 Poll Tax ('Bhambatha') Rebellion, the DLI was deployed in several regions for the duration of the campaign and were present at the decisive Battle of Mome Gorge on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1906.

At the commencement of WW1, there were so many volunteers that two Battalions were formed. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion moved to the Northern Cape and saw action against the Germans and rebel Boers in the Upington area, after which the men journeyed by sea to German South-West Africa., forming part of the Northern Division under General Louis Botha. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was responsible for maintaining the lines of communication. On return to Natal, most of the men volunteered once again and formed the core of the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Regiment in German East Africa.

In 1922, the DLI was called up to help quell the Rand Revolt; they were involved in a great deal of fighting and suffered several casualties.

During the Second World War, the Royal Durban Light Infantry once again provided two battalions. The 1<sup>st</sup> battalion served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> South African Infantry Brigade in North Africa while the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion was part of the 4<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Brigade which formed part of the ill fated Tobruk garrison. The RDLI saw active service throughout North Africa and Italy.

More recently, the Regiment has been deployed in a peace keeping role in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Durban Light Infantry was affiliated to the Rifle Brigade in Great Britain in 1926, now "The Rifles". The Durban Light Infantry was awarded Freedom of Entry to Durban on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1954 and that of Ladysmith on 2 July 2011.

