



FIRST CITY – THE FIGHTING GRAHAMS

(Source: First City)

Officially Established on 7th October 1875 and Gazetted on the 18th November 1875.

(Unofficially - established as the Albany Levy on the 4th October 1822, the forerunner of Graham's Town Volunteers- 8th January 1835)

The Grahamstown and Albany men were the earliest volunteers under the old British system; having formed the Albany Levy on the 4th October 1822.

First City is the Senior Highland Regiment in South Africa and the fourth oldest Infantry regiment in the country and its roots come from the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles and the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown who were amalgamated on the 1st July 1913 to form the 4th Infantry (First Eastern Rifles). They remained as such until 1924 when they became 4th Infantry (First City) and then in 1932 they became simply FIRST CITY and remain so to this day.

The Queenstown Volunteer Rifles were formed on the 20th April 1860 in Queenstown and the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown were formed on the 7th October 1875 in Grahamstown. This was not a disbandment but an amalgamation of these two units. The Queenstown Volunteer Rifles were also known as the Queenstown Rifle Volunteers or the Longhill Volunteer Rifles.

The Queenstown Volunteer Rifles and the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown first took to the field during the 9th Frontier War 1877-1878 for which the First City Volunteers were awarded the Battle honour "GAIKA GCALEKA 1877-78" and the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles the Battle Honour "TEMBULAND". In 1879 the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles served in the war of Morosi's Mountain and was awarded the Battle Honour "MOROSI'S" (South Africa 1879). In the Basuto War of 1880-1881 two contingents of the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown served in the HQ Column and received the Battle Honour "BASUTOLAND 1880-81" During the Langeberg Campaign of 1896-97 the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles and the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown fought in Bechuanaland against the Batlapin; the two Regiments formed part of Bechuanaland Field Force and were both awarded the Battle Honour "BECHUANALAND 1896-97".

Both the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles and the First City Volunteers of Grahamstown were mobilised in 1899 for service during the Anglo Boer war as Mounted Infantry and for their sterling work received the following Battle Honour: "SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1902". On the first Colour of the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles the following Battle Honours appear: Tembuland, Morosi's, Bechuanaland and South Africa 1899-1902, On the first Colour of the First City Volunteers the following Battle Honours appear that are not on our new Colour: Ntaba'ndoda, Mafeteng, Kalabani, Lerothodi's Village, Tweefontein, Bolaka, Witte Kopjes, Mathabi, Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill.

The Regiment can claim the most decorations awarded in one battle to a South African Regiment, this during the Anglo-Boer war.

With the amalgamation of the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles and the First City Volunteers and due to the Queenstown Volunteer Rifles being the senior Regiment it was decided that A company of First City would always be made up of men from Queenstown.

During the Great War 1914-1918 the Regiment served in the German South West African Campaign (1914-15) as the 4th Infantry (First Eastern Rifles) and received the Battle Honour "SOUTH WEST AFRICA 1914-15". Many members later joined the SA Infantry and fought in Europe & East Africa.

"EXPECTO"

In April 1928, First City was allied to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment, a British Regiment now known as the Royal Anglian Regiment with which it still has close ties.

In 1924 the Regiment became 4th Infantry (First City) and then in 1932 became just First City. In 1935 First City became a Highland Regiment.

During the Second World War the Regiment mobilised on the 20th September 1940 and was involved in the Madagascar Campaign alongside The Pretoria Regiment and the Pretoria Highlanders and received the Battle Honour "MADAGASCAR 1942". On their return to South Africa they were amalgamated with the Cape Town Highlanders and one Company from Southern Rhodesia and became known as the First City/Cape Town Highlanders and served with the 6th South African Armoured Division throughout the Italian Campaign with great distinction and received the following 10 Battle Honours: "ITALY 1944-45", "CASINO 11", "CHIUSI", "FLORENCE", "THE GREVE", "GOTHIC LINE", "MONTE STANCO", "MONTE PEZZA", "SOLE/CAPRARA", "PO VALLEY" – On the 29th January 2004 First City and Cape Town Highlanders were awarded the Battle Honour "PALIANO" for service during the Italian Campaign.

The regiment was reformed in January 1946 as First City.

In 1954 First City was amalgamated with The Kaffrarian Rifles the East London regiment as the First City/The Kaffrarian Rifles; this amalgamation lasted until 1956.

Freedom of Entry to the City of Grahamstown was conferred on First City on the 4th September 1962

Freedom of Entry to the City of Queenstown was conferred on First City on the 25th January 1964.

On the 31st January 1977 First City was mobilised for duty in South West Africa on the Angolan border and for the next 9 years was actively involved in Border Duties. On the 29th January 2004 First City was awarded the Battle honour "SOUTH WEST AFRICA / ANGOLA 1976-89".

In 1983 saw the country moving into a period of great unrest thus the Regiment was mobilised again this time for internal Unrest Operations covering the period 1983 to 1993. Since 1994 the Regiment has loyally served the SANDF and the New South Africa.

In 2004 it was decided by the Infantry Formation to rebuild the Regiment as the strength had dwindled due to the fact that conscription had ended during 1994 and interest in the military was at a low. The Regimental Headquarter staff had during the last few years managed to keep the daily functions of the Regiment operating. From 2004 to date the Regiment has been rebuilt to over 1000 members with a Training Wing that has trained nearly 2000 members on the ATR/ACR Conversion Courses as well as sending troops to Madimbo for Border control.

From 2007 until 2012, First City sent troops on UN and AU Missions to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, In 2008 First City was the first Reserve Force Regiment to send a complete company to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and sent another full company to the Sudan in 2010.

In 2008 First City received the trophy for the Best Infantry Reserve Force Regiment which it retained in 2009. In 2007 First City joined the airborne family in the Air Assault role.

The Regiment celebrates its 137th Anniversary in November 2012.

"EXPECTO"

Regimental Title: First City is never called First City Regiment but just “First City” and when spoken about is referred to as “The ”First City.

Regimental March: Bonnie Dundee

Regimental Headquarters: Drill Hall, Hill Street, Grahamstown.

The Regimental Drill Hall was built in 1866 as a Theatre and was first known as the Albany Hall, then in the 1880's was bought by the Regiment and was known as the Albany Volunteer Drill Hall - the admin area was added on about this time and since 1904 it has been known as the First City Drill Hall.

The Motto: “Expecto” to be prepared at all times.

Regimental tartan: Graham of Montrose (Blue Graham)

Dress: First City wears Highland dress

The kilt - Graham of Montrose and full highland regalia are worn as ceremonial dress and the Duke of Montrose's Crest in silver on a Graham tartan backing is worn as the headdress badge, the Albany Leopard perched on a branch in gold is worn on the collar and this badge is used as the Regimental Symbol/Insignia on all letterheads etc.

The Highland/Scottish Connection to First City:

The Queenstown Volunteer Rifles raised a Highland company in 1903 and this company was active until 1913. The Highland company wore a full Highland uniform the badge was the Cross of St Andrew with a stags head above a crown and a scroll with the regiments motto - semper paratus, this was worn on a Glengarry and their collar dogs were Tigers, the same as the Gordon Highlanders collar badges, this company also wore the Gordon Kilt and had a Pipe Band.

The First City Volunteers of Grahamstown raised a Highland company in 1905 with a Pipe band and wore the Montrose kilt this Highland company was absorbed into the amalgamated regiment in 1913 this company wore the badge of the Rising Phoenix out of the flames this badge taken from the Coat-of-Arms of the Grahams of Fintry. After the amalgamation individual members carried on wearing the Montrose kilt/trews right up until 1935, in 1935 Officers and Warrant Officers adopted the Graham trews and one company was kilted and all unit members had a silk piece of Montrose tartan behind the regimental badge, with a pale red hackle. The Regiment was formed into a fully kilted Highland Regiment in 1939.

There were two other Highland connections to First City when First City was married up to: the Cape Town Highlanders who wore the Gordon Kilt (Gordon Highlanders) and The Kaffrarian Rifles, F Squadron now The Buffalo Volunteer Rifles who wore the Mackenzie Kilt (Seaforth Highlanders).

205th (Scottish) Field Hospital, RAMC (Volunteers) - 1967. A British unit that also wears the Graham tartan is the 205 (Scottish) Field Hospital, RAMC (Volunteers) who wear the Graham of Montrose tartan as the cap badge backing.

First City is the only military unit in the world to wear the Graham tartan as a full military uniform.

“EXPECTO”

Allied regiments:

1. Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, later the 3rd East Anglian Regiment now known as the Royal Anglian Regiment - "the Beds and Herts". In April 1928, First City was allied to the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment; a British regiment unfortunately the original affiliation ended in 1961 when South Africa became a republic and broke away from the Commonwealth. First City has renewed the old ties with their old allied Regiment officially from 1994 when South Africa rejoined the Commonwealth.
2. Prince Albert Volunteers of Saskatoon of Canada
3. 16th Battalion, Australian Military Forces, Kalgoorlie

School Cadet Detachment affiliated:

1. Queens College Cadet Detachment number 3. First affiliated to the QVR in 1877, then officially affiliated to First City after WW2, wear the Montrose tartan - kilt and wear the First City badges. They have the freedom of the City of Queenstown 1983 and carry their own Colour. They award the First City Sword of Honour annually to the best Student Officer. Still very active.
2. St Andrew's College Cadet Detachment number 4. Affiliated to First City in 1878 wear the Montrose tartan - kilt and wear the First City badges, has a full pipe band that have their own badge. Every year the First City Sword of Honour is presented to the best Student Officer and the Mace of Honour is presented to the best Bandsman. This is done at the yearly parade and is presented by the CO of First City assisted by his RSM. Still very active.
3. Graeme College Cadet Detachment number 6. Affiliated to the FCV in 1880, and then only formally affiliated to the First City in 1928. They wear the First City badge on the Montrose tartan backing. This was when Graeme College was still Victoria High School. Sadly they are not active as a Cadet Detachment any more.
4. Kings Wood College Cadet Detachment number 32. Founded around about 1894 by Captain E.G. Gane the Head Master, later Lt Col E.G. Gane OC of the First City. They wore the uniform of a Scarlet Tunic with Gold Braid and navy blue trousers with a white pith helmet. Sadly they are not active as a Cadet Detachment any more.

The Colour: The Regiment has had eight Colours' during its long history:

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| 1. | 1876 | Regimental Colour | Grahamstown Volunteer Horse Artillery (FCV Art Coy) |
| 2. | 1904 | King's Colour | First City Volunteers of Grahamstown |
| 3. | 1904 | King's Colour | Queenstown Rifle Volunteers |
| 4. | 1905 | Regimental Colour | First City Volunteers of Grahamstown |
| 5. | 1905 | Regimental Colour | Queenstown Rifle Volunteers |
| 6. | 1965 | Regimental Colour | First City (burned in the Drill Hall fire) |
| 7. | 1969 | Regimental Colour | First City |
| 8. | 1989 | National Colour | First City |

“EXPECTO”