

THE LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT

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

The Imperial Light Horse was raised in Johannesburg for service in the Anglo-Boer War on 21st September 1899. It was named the Imperial Light Horse with the approval of Queen Victoria.

The first commander of the Regiment (consisting of 444 officers and men, chosen from 5,000 volunteers) was Colonel James Scott-Chisholme, who led the unit at its first engagement, the Battle of Elandsplaagte on the 21st of October 1899. During this battle Colonel Scott-Chisholme was killed while leading his men.

The Regiment subsequently saw service during the 118 day Siege of Ladysmith, at Colenso (15th December 1899), Spioenkop (24th January 1900) and the Battle of the Thukela Heights (12th to 28th February 1900). The ILH were the first to enter Mafeking on the night of 16/17 May 1900, followed up by the joint relief columns the following morning. In late 1900 a second battalion – the 2nd Imperial Light Horse – was formed under Maj Duncan Mackenzie. Both Regiments then went on to fight in the ZAR and the OFS until the end of the war. In December 1902 the Regiment was reorganized at Johannesburg as two Wings in the volunteer Transvaal Army (Transvaal Volunteers), but in 1904 the left Wing was separated and redesignated the Western Rifles.

A Squadron from the ILH served with the Transvaal Mounted Rifles in 1906 during the 1906 Poll Tax ('Bhambatha') Rebellion in Natal and Zululand. The next action the Regiment took part in was the First Rand Revolt in 1913.

During the First World War, the Regiment took part in the German South-West Africa Campaign as the 5th Mounted Rifles. Individual members served in the German East Africa Campaign, in Egypt, Palestine and France. During the Second Rand Revolt of 1922, the Regiment was again mobilized to assist the South African Police and fought in the Battle of Ellis Park.

At the outbreak of World War II the 1st ILH was brought up to strength and the 2nd ILH reformed. The 1st ILH sailed from Durban to Egypt on 10 April 1941, as advance guard of the South African 2nd Infantry Division with the 2nd ILH prominent in 4/6 AC. They played a crucial and heroic role in North Africa and in Italy.

In 1962 the Regiment was renamed the Light Horse Regiment.

The Regiment went on to serve the South African Defence Force as an armoured car Regiment. In 1975, when the unit's strength reached about 2000, a decision was taken to split the Regiment into 1 Light Horse Regiment and 2 Light Horse Regiment. Both Regiments took part in the South African Border War in Northern South-West Africa and Angola and were also deployed in South Africa's townships in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

After the first fully democratic South African elections in 1994, the LHR were reformed into a single Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment – The Light Horse Regiment – in March 1997.

The Regimental device for both headdress and collar dogs are a set of crossed flags mounted on lances. The flags are those of the Republic of South Africa and the Regiment.

LHR was awarded the Freedom of Ladysmith in recognition of its role in the 118 day Siege and Relief of the town plus that of Mafeking and Johannesburg in 1959, a fitting silver anniversary gift.

The Regiment is equipped with the Rooikat armoured car.