

NATAL CARBINEERS

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

Natal Carbineers traces its routes to 1854 but was raised on 15 January 1855 and gazetted on 13 March of that year.

In 1913, the Regiment's two 'wings' became known as the First and Second Mounted Rifles (Natal Carbineers) and in 1934 they re-assumed the name 1st and 2nd Natal Carbineers. The following year, they became the Royal Natal Carbineers.

Since its inception, the Natal Carbineers has participated in every campaign in KwaZulu-Natal. Their baptism of fire came during the Langalibalele Rebellion in 1873 where they suffered their first casualties in action in the Drakensberg and during the Anglo-Zulu War, the Carbineers suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Isandlwana on the 22nd January 1879.

During the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, the Regiment – less one squadron – served throughout the 118 day Siege of Ladysmith and was heavily engaged on several occasions. The remaining squadron served with General Sir Redvers Buller VC during his attempts to relieve Ladysmith and was amongst the first troops to enter Ladysmith on 28 February 1900. At the end of the Natal Campaign, no fewer than 127 members of the Regiment joined the Natal Volunteer Composite Regiment for service outside of the Colony of Natal.

During the 1906 Poll Tax ('Bhambatha') Rebellion, the Regiment was mobilised once again and participated in several theatres of the campaign, including the decisive Battle of Mome Gorge on the 10th June 1906.

When WW1 commenced, both Regiments were mobilised on the 8th August 1914 and served throughout the German South-West African campaign and participated with distinction in the Battle of Gibeon on the 27th April 1915. They then advanced on Windhoek. At the conclusion of the German South-West African campaign, many members of the Natal Carbineers served throughout the rest of the War with British units.

With the outbreak of WW2, the Natal Carbineers rallied to the call to arms. The 1st Regiment was attached to the First Brigade, serving in Abyssinia and North Africa and Italy. One of the members, Sergeant Quentin Smythe, was awarded the Victoria Cross. The 2nd Regiment formed the 6th Recce Regiment SA Tank Corps and fought with distinction in Egypt.

When Prime Minister, Dr H.F. Verwoerd took South Africa out of the Commonwealth, the regiment lost the Royal title and became the Natal Carbineers.

The Regiment has been deployed in several African trouble spots in a peace keeping role and has served inter alia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

The Regiment is affiliated to the 6th Dragoon Guards and its motto is 'Pro Patria' ('For the Fatherland'). It is headquartered in Pietermaritzburg and has the Freedom of Entry in Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Dundee, Estcourt, Mooi River and Matatiele.