

NATAL MOUNTED RIFLES

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

The Natal Mounted Rifles traces its history back to 1854 when it was known as the Royal D'Urban Rangers. The Corps was a mounted unit and the men were armed with swords and rifles while their task was the protection of the citizens of what was then D'Urban (named after Sir Benjamin D'Urban).

As the town increased in size, no fewer than seven Natal Militia were incorporated into what became known as the Natal Mounted Rifles. The Regiment has served KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa with pride and has participated in every major conflict since the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The Regiment's baptism of fire in that war was at Nyezane on the 22nd January 1879.

The NMR served throughout the 118 day Siege of Ladysmith and participated in the action on Wagon Hill on the 6th January 1900. After the Natal Campaign had ended, members of the NMR joined the Volunteer Composite Regiment and were amongst the first Colonial volunteers to serve beyond the borders of the Colony of Natal. These men then served with General Sir Leslie Rundle's Eighth Division in the Orange Free State until October 1900.

During the 1906 Poll tax ('Bhambatha') Rebellion, the NMR participated in several theatres of operation and was present at the decisive Battle of Mome Gorge on the 10th June 1906.

At the outbreak of WW1, the regiment became the 3rd Mounted Rifles

and was attached to the 8th Mounted Brigade with the Central Force in the German South West African Campaign.

The NMR remained mounted until 1934 when the Union Defence Force was 'modernised' and the regiment became mechanised infantry. During WW2, the Regiment was mobilised again – on the 3rd June 1940 – and posted to the 2nd South African Infantry Brigade for service in Abyssinia and North Africa. Some of the men were retrained and served in armoured cars and light tanks in a reconnaissance role. In 1934 the NMR was amalgamated with the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, SA Tank Corps and was equipped with the legendary Stuart and Honey tanks. In 1944, the Regiment was amalgamated with the South African Air Force Armoured Car Battalion for service in the Italian Campaign. Later that year, the Regiment resumed the role of infantry in the Apennines, leaving the drivers only in a tank role and in 1945 they joined the 13th Brigade as Infantry. The men of the NMR were awarded an impressive number of medals, decorations and awards, including no fewer than two MBEs, one DSO, one DCM, 9 Military Crosses and 18 Military Medals!

After WW2, the NMR resumed peace time activities and the Regiment was equipped with Mk 1V Marmon Herrington and Ferret armoured cars. In 1968, the NMR was re-equipped and converted into a tank regiment once again – this time with the British Centurion Main Battle tank. This tank has since been upgraded to the Regiment's formidable 'Olifant 1A MBT tank.

The NMR was deployed to the South West Africa / Namibia operational

area on numerous occasions and the Regiment was amongst the last to be withdrawn from Angola during that conflict.

Since the 1994 Democratic Elections, the NMR has undergone several training exercises and continues to recruit members into its ranks. It boasts a Regimental Pipe Band and is affiliated to the 3rd King's Own Hussars. The Regiment's motto is 'Rough But Ready'.

