

**TRANSVAAL SCOTTISH**  
(Source: Transvaal Scottish)



The Regiment was founded by Lieutenant Colonel the Marquis of Tullibardine in June 1902 as the Transvaal Scottish Volunteers. The new unit wore his family tartan and took the form of an oversize battalion with companies in a number of major Transvaal towns.

A detachment first saw service in Natal in the Zulu Rebellion of 1906. "C" company of the Natal Rangers was recruited from men of the Transvaal Scottish Volunteers. Today the Transvaal Scottish carry the battle honour "Natal 1906."

In 1914 during the strike-related violence and sabotage that preceded the outbreak of World War I the Regiment once again saw action suffering one casualty.

The Transvaal Scottish took part in the invasion of German South West Africa in late 1914 with a second battalion (2<sup>nd</sup> Transvaal Scottish) being raised for the campaign. In pursuit of retreating German forces 1<sup>st</sup> Transvaal Scottish made some incredible marches in difficult conditions, including one march of 72km in 36 hours. The most serious encounter was at Trekkoppies when 2<sup>nd</sup> Transvaal Scottish were attacked by superior German forces and suffered their first casualties of the war with 2 killed and 13 wounded. After the conquest of German South West Africa the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was disbanded.

Among new units raised for service in the war in Europe was the 4<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Regiment – also known as the SA Scottish. This was a kilted unit wearing the Murray of Atholl tartan and two companies were drawn from members of the Transvaal Scottish.

After a brief campaign in North Africa against a Turkish-inspired Arab attempt to invade Egypt, the SA Scottish were sent to France. It was here that their names became indelibly written in the annals of history as a result of the terrible battle of Delville Wood. In just five days from July 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> the total casualties numbered 513... an amazing 74 percent of those who had gone into action. Over the month of July as a whole the South African Scottish suffered 868 casualties. Delville Wood was not taken until August 25<sup>th</sup>.

After Delville Wood the shattered SA Scottish were reformed and served on the Western front, in particular at Vimy Ridge, the Somme, the Third Battle of Ypres, Marrieres Wood and Messines Ridge.

Other members of the Transvaal Scottish saw service in the Scottish company of the 9<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry in German East Africa (now Tanzania).

After the conclusion of hostilities at the end of World War I members of the Regiment returned home and after demobilisation, continued with their civilian lives.

It wasn't long however before the Transvaal Scottish were, as in the 1914 Rebellion, called upon to help maintain law and order during the violent strike action of the 1922 Rand Revolt.

Sadly a number of Jocks who had survived the horrors of trench warfare during World War I were to die at the hands of their own countrymen. In one encounter near Dunswart 12 members of the Transvaal Scottish, including a field officer, were killed. By the end of the revolt another 5 had lost their lives and 60 had been wounded.

In 1936 in the lead-up to World War II the second battalion was reformed and at the outset of the war a third was also raised.

The Regiment saw action at El Wak in North-east Africa, the first encounter by South African troops in the campaign to take Ethiopia from the Italians.

In North Africa the 2<sup>nd</sup> Transvaal Scottish, together with two battalions formed from members of the South African Police, served in the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Brigade. With the brigade, members of the Regiment saw much action and fought with distinction at Sollum, Gazala, Halfaya and Acroma Keep. At Bardia, Sollum and Halfaya both German and Italian troops were forced to surrender to the Brigade.

At the collapse of Tobruk in June 1942 many Jocks were taken prisoner of war.

In total 69 gallantry decorations and mentions in despatches were awarded to men of the third battalion (Transvaal Scottish and 14<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance) in the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Brigade.

At Sidi Rezegh men of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Transvaal Scottish also fought with great gallantry and suffered very heavy casualties. This battle, and those involved, are today still remembered with honour at an annual parade.

Over two hundred men from all three battalions of the Transvaal Scottish were killed in action or died of wounds during World War II, with an almost equal number being wounded. (Sadly, approximately the same number of men from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion died in that one afternoon of fighting at Sidi Rezegh as were killed in each of the two other battalions throughout the whole duration of the war.)

After the war all three battalions were reconstituted with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion converting to artillery as the 7<sup>th</sup> Medium Regiment (3TS). This unit was disbanded at the end of 1959 with many members transferring back to the Transvaal Scottish.

Earlier in 1953 the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions had also been amalgamated but in 1971 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Transvaal Scottish was once again revived.

Peacetime soldering for members of the regiment ended abruptly with the withdrawal of the Portuguese from Angola in 1975. The following year the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Transvaal Scottish was deployed in southern Angola. Later in the same year the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion deployed to the Caprivi area of South West Africa.

In 1983 a member of the Regiment, Company Sergeant Major Trevor Wright, distinguished himself in battle and for his valour was later awarded the Honorus Crux. Involvement in the operational area of South West Africa for members of both battalions of the Regiment lasted until 1989 and during this time three members lost their lives.

During the mid-1980s the 2<sup>nd</sup> Transvaal Scottish became the first Citizen Force unit to deploy on the northern Transvaal borders with Botswana and Zimbabwe.

With the conclusion of peace in South West Africa the focus of attention of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Transvaal Scottish turned to peace keeping operations within the borders of the country.

The Regiment's last major service of the old Republic era was to provide troops for, and remain on standby throughout, the country's first multi-racial elections in April 1994.

In 1995 a 44-strong Transvaal Scottish party visited the battle fields of the Somme in France; their former Colonel in Chief, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother; their allied regiment The Black Watch; as well as the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atholl at Blair Castle in Scotland. In the touring party was Bruce Murray, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. Transvaal Scottish lieutenant, who is now the Marquis of Tullibardine. He was joined by his brother, Corporal Lord Murray. A reciprocal visit by the Atholl Highlanders in 1997 saw the touring party visiting their Clan Chief and 'colonel-proprietor', the 11<sup>th</sup> Duke of Atholl, who is normally resident in South Africa.

During 1997 as a result of the rationalisation measures within the South African National Defence Force the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions of the Regiment were once more amalgamated.

With the Millennium dawning, a regimental colour party took part in a parade in London to celebrate the one hundredth birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Sadly members of the Regiment were back in London not too many months later to take part in the funeral procession of their former Colonel in Chief.

In 2002 the Regiment celebrated 100 years of service with a colour parade at King Edwards School in Parktown, Johannesburg.

Difficulties in obtaining the normal level of funding to carry on peacetime activities of recruitment and training saw a decline in the activities of the Regiment in the years immediately following 2002. This state of affairs however failed to deter the core leader group of the Regiment who showed typical 'Jock' tenacity and perseverance and pushed through during these difficult times. This perseverance is now once again bearing fruit.

Under the guidance of the current Commanding Officer of the Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Don Smythe JCD, the Regiment has in recent years overcome a number of obstacles and is again fulfilling an active role within the South African National Defence Force. The Red Hackle, worn for over 70 years by soldiers of the Transvaal Scottish, is once again regaining its place of prominence on parades as well as on active service duties.

Since 2007 members of the Regiment have taken an active part in United Nations peace keeping operations in the Central African countries of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

2010 saw the deployment of "A" company of the Transvaal Scottish with a United Nations peace keeping force in Sudan, while "B" Company filled the role vacated by the South African Police Service and deployed in defence of the country's borders.

Building on the hard work and success of the past few years the Regiment is currently in the processes of raising and training "C" Company.