

# FAMOUS STAND OF THE OLD 93rd AT BALACLAVA

## Plan to Celebrate Centenary of Thin Red Line

### COLOURS IN DUNROBIN CASTLE

A CORRESPONDENT who read with interest the recent report in the "Northern Times" that it was proposed to celebrate, at Stirling Castle, the centenary of the "Thin Red Line"—the famous stand by the 93rd (Sutherland Highlanders) at the battle of Balacava — claims Stirling does have a connection with the regiment.

Sir David Robertson, M.P., who had taken up the matter with the War Office, thought Stirling had no connection with the old 93rd and that Edinburgh, the Capital, or, better still, a venue in Sutherland—e.g., Dunrobin Castle—might be a better choice.

While our correspondent feels the Dunrobin Castle suggestion is excellent, he states that in 1843, on their return from Canada, the regiment "proceeded to Stirling Castle, detachments being sent to Perth and Dundee."

#### FORMED IN 1800

Quoting from historical records from 1800 to 1870 our correspondent gives a summarised history of the gallant old 93rd which should interest readers of the "Northern Times."

The 93rd were formed in 1800. In June, 1875, the third Duke of Sutherland was elected a life member of the mess of the regiment, and in 1871 the colours which had been carried with such glory in many a hard fought battle were handed to the Duke for safe keeping in Dunrobin Castle, on which occasion new colours were presented by the Duchess. The Duke of Sutherland had a sincere and warm attachment for the 93rd Highlanders, who enrolled 600 brave men of the Sutherland Clan when it was formed in 1800.

It was said of the regiment that the men, who were mostly actuated by genuine religious principle, conducted themselves in so sedate and orderly a fashion that 12 or even 15 months were known to elapse without a single court-martial being assembled for the trial of any of the men.

#### CHURCH OF THEIR OWN

But the most remarkable proof of the intensity and genuineness of the religious feeling in the regiment, as well as of its love of all that was peculiar to their native land, remains to be told.

There being no divine service in the garrison, except the customary one of reading prayers to the troops on parade, these Sutherland men, in addition to their stated meetings for reading the Bible and for prayer, in 1808 formed a church among themselves, appointed elders and other office-bearers, engaged and paid a stipend to a minister of the Church of Scotland, and had divine service regularly performed according to the forms of the Presbyterian Church.

This establishment had an excellent effect, not only on its immediate members, who numbered hundreds, but also upon those who made no pretence of being guided by religious principle.

#### FRUGALITY

Such men were not likely to forget the claims of relationship and benevolence, and, indeed, such was their frugality that in addition to their contributing to the support of their minister and to the charitable funds formed in the regiment, the men were in the habit of lodging in a trusted officer's hands savings amounting to from £5 to £50, until an opportunity occurred of forwarding the money to their relatives at home. On one occasion in particular, £500 was remitted to Sutherland, exclusive of many minor sums sent home through the post office.

This, perhaps the most Highland of Highland regiments, was raised in 1800, letters of service having been granted for that purpose to Major-General Wemyss of Wemyss who had previously raised the Sutherland Fencibles, many of the men from which joined the new regiment.

The strength at first fixed upon was 800 men, which number was in a short time raised, 460 being obtained from Sutherland, and the remainder from Ross-shire and the adjoining counties.

#### "ONE LARGE FAMILY"

The regiment was, however, soon augmented to 1000 men, with officers in proportion; and in 1811 it numbered 1049 officers and men, of whom 1014 were Highlanders and Lowlanders, 17 Irish, and 18 English.

A body of 600 men marched without a single absentee to Inverness, where the regiment was inspected by Major-General Leith Hay in August, 1800.

The non-commissioned officers and men were the children of respectable people, and the officers were mostly well-known gentlemen connected with Ross and Sutherland. Indeed, the regiment might be regarded as one large family, and a healthy rivalry—and stimulus to the best behaviour—

was introduced by classifying the different companies according to parishes.

It may be of interest to relate that in 1813 a second battalion was added to the regiment. It was formed at Inverness, and was destined to join the army under the Duke of Wellington in France, but owing to the peace of 1814 this destination was changed to North America. The battalion was embarked and landed in Newfoundland, where it was stationed for 16 months, and then returned to Europe in 1815.

#### UNEVENTFUL

The history of the regiment is comparatively uneventful up to the time of the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny.

Once more the war trumpet sounded, calling the nations of Europe to take sides and do battle with each other. The Sutherland Highlanders were destined to take their own share in the struggle, being one of the first Highland regiments selected to go east. In the Indian Mutiny the Sutherland Highlanders had a magnificent opportunity of showing what sort of stuff they were made of. How gloriously they came out of their trial will be seen from the sequel.

In the Crimea, in common with many other regiments, it suffered severely from sickness, cholera here first making its appearance. The 93rd had a taste of the hardships and privations it was destined to undergo. It passed the first night, a very tempestuous one, without shelter of any kind.

#### SIR COLIN CAMPBELL

The 93rd, along with the 42nd and 79th, formed the Highland Brigade, under Sir Colin Campbell, which, with the Guards, constituted the First Division under the Duke of Cambridge. Near the small stream, Boolganak, the first brush with the enemy occurred, the 93rd, with the rest of the army, advancing towards the river Alma.

The battle began. The Highland regiments, led by the gallant and much beloved Sir Colin, pushed into and across the river, the water in many cases coming up to the men's waists.

The hill was steep, and the fire from the battery in front of the enemy's battalions very severe. Yet the Highlanders continued to advance, though several gaps in their ranks showed that the enemy was doing its work. Having nearly gained the summit of the heights, the regiment opened a brisk fire on the battalion immediately in front, accompanied by a hearty Highland cheer as it still advanced.

#### ENEMY'S LOSSES

The enemy fell back in great confusion, suffering fearfully from the destructive volleys of the newly-ried Minie. After a halt to bury the dead and look after the wounded the army continued its march in the direction of Sebastopol, and reaching Balacava it bivouacked for the night.

The 93rd was first posted before the village of Kadikoi, at the entrance of the gorge leading to Balacava, partly to protect the position. Sir Colin Campbell was sent down by Lord Raglan to assume command of the troops in Balacava. He immediately ordered a force of 331 officers and men of the 93rd, under Major Charles Henry Gordon, to proceed to the heights eastward of Balacava to assist in entrenching and strengthening the position there already occupied by the Marines.

#### BRAVE HIGHLANDERS

Later, in obedience to an order previously received, Major Gordon and his detachment proceeded to join Lt.-Col. Ainslie in the plain. The capture

of No. 1 redoubt was speedily followed by the capture of Nos. 2 and 3. Of an action witnessed by a correspondent it is written—"The enemy in one grand line charged in towards Balacava. The ground lies beneath their horses' feet. With breathless suspense everyone waits the bursting of the wave upon the line of Gaelic rock, but ere they came within 200 yards, another deadly volley flashes from the levelled rifles, and carries terror into the enemy. They wheel about, open lines right and left, and fly back faster than they came. Brave Highlanders."

"But events thicken, the Highlanders and their splendid front are forgotten but the 93rd never altered their formation to receive that tide of horsemen. 'No,' said Sir Colin Campbell, 'I did not think it worth while to form them even four deep.' The ordinary British line, two deep, was quite sufficient to repel the attacks of these Muscovite cavaliers."

#### "DISTINGUISHED REGIMENT"

Sir Colin Campbell in his despatch drew Lord Raglan's special attention to the gallantry and eagerness of the 93rd under Lt.-Col. Ainslie, and Lord Raglan in his despatch to the Duke of Newcastle spoke in high terms of "that distinguished regiment."

Heavy duties in entrenching the position at Balacava, with the weather beginning to break, found the clothes of the men in tatters, and the accommodation afforded by the tents miserably insufficient. The climax came when the ever-memorable hurricane swept every kind of shelter off the ground, tore the tents to rags, leaving the poor soldiers completely exposed to its violence. With the arrival of good weather, however, the health of the regiment, which had some 100 men on the sick list, began to improve.

(To be continued).