

# About 1/6th Battalion, Royal Scots, 1914-1916

## Introduction

Somewhat jokingly, it is said that the first of the English army's infantry regiments is so old that it served as a bodyguard for the Roman governor of Palestine, Pontius Pilate.

This article can be read in the context of the Senussi Uprising, and as background information for the units that participated in the suppression of the Senussi Uprising in 1915-16.

- 4th Bn. Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles) [1](#)) 5th Bn.
- Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles) 6th Bn. Royal
- Scots 7th Bn. Royal
- Scots 8th Bn. Royal
- Scots 9th (Highlanders)
- Bn. Royal Scots 10th (Cyclist) Bn.
- Royal Scots.

## Royal Scots, Territorial Force, 1914

In 1914 the regiment consisted of the 1st and 2nd line battalions and the 3rd reserve battalion; a further 7 volunteer battalions existed as part of the Territorial Force.

The volunteer battalions were still organized according to the older organization of the army, with 8 companies; only early in 1915 was the organization changed to the new model, with 4 companies.



*5th Bn. Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles), 1914.*

From a postcard seen for sale on the Internet.

Immediately before the outbreak of war, the battalions had just finished the summer's 14-day training camp.

Although the units were not at full strength, they were as ready as they could be in peacetime.

The photograph may have been taken during the summer camp stay.



*Officers from 9th (Highlanders), Bn. Royal Scots, ca. 1914.*

From a postcard seen for sale on the Internet.

The 9th Battalion was the regiment's only kilt-clad unit, a tradition dating back to 1900, when the battalion was recruited from Highlanders in Edinburgh.

During the war, the seven battalions were tripled, but of the 2nd and 3rd orders, only the 2/10th Bn. was sent to the front. For the various battalions, see Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment) (The Long, Long Trail).

## 1/6th Bn. Royal Scots

During 1914, the 6th Battalion handed over two companies to the 4th Battalion and one to the 8th Battalion, which - together with supplements from other units - thereby came to full strength. As a consequence, some time passed before the 6th Battalion itself was ready.



*Regimental Badge*

*Royal Scots*

*(Lothian Regiment). 2) —*

## 6th Bn. Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment) - Historical Summary

1867: 3rd Edinburgh (City) Rifle Volunteer Corps  
1880: 2nd Edinburgh (City) Rifle Volunteer Corps

1888: 4th Volunteer Battalion, Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment) 1908: 6th Battalion, Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment), Territorial Force 1915: 1/6th Battalion, Royal Scots on creation of 2/6th Battalion in March 1915 1916: Amalgamated with 1 /5th Bn. Royal Scots as 5th/6th Battalion, Royal Scots 1920: 6th Battalion, Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment), Territorial Army 1921: 226 (City of Edinburgh) Battery (Howitzer), 57th (Lowland) Medium Brigade, Royal Garrison Artillery 3 )

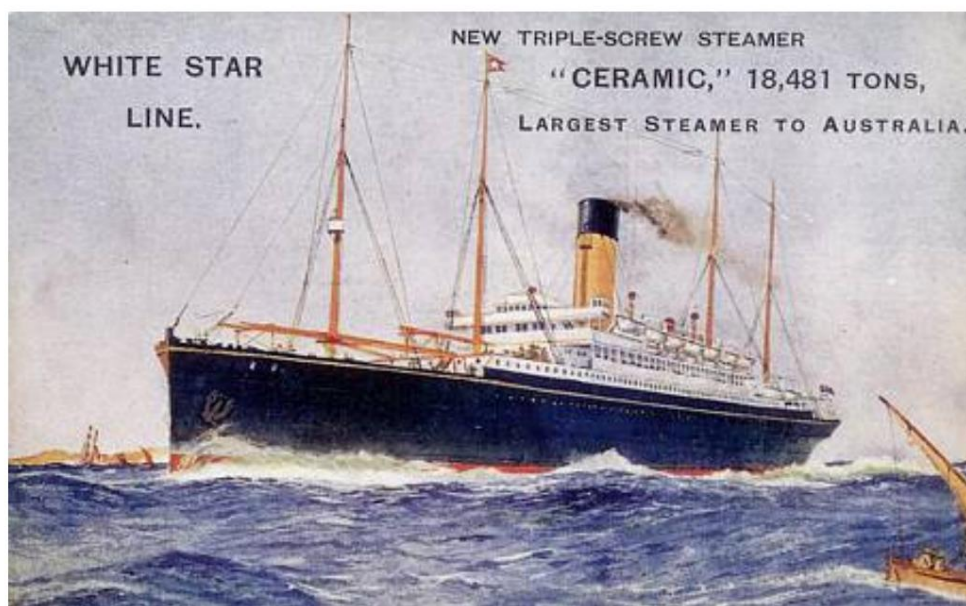


*The Royal Scots, c. 1914.*

From a contemporary postcard, reproduced from Source 5.

On 6 February 1915 there were sufficient manpower to establish a battalion for overseas service (1/6th) and a depot battalion (2/6th).

Lieutenant-Colonel AO Jenney was now given command of the battalion, the previous commander, Lieutenant-Colonel TE Turnbull, who had been in charge of the build-up, commanding a battalion of The Rifle Brigade.



*S/S CERAMIC.*

From White Star Line (Simplon Postcards).

On 4 September 1915 the battalion left Edinburgh, bound for Egypt.

The battalion was disembarked from Devonport, on board troop transport ship S/S CERAMIC belonging to

White Star Line). [4](#)

The voyage went without problems and they arrived in Alexandria on 14 September 1915.



*Officers of 6th Battalion, The Royal Scots.*

From Source 4.

The photograph was taken before Lt Col AO Jenney assumed command, the officer in the center (2nd row) being Lt Col TE Turnbull.

## Egypt

### **Battalion**

### **Brigade/Division**

1/4th Bn. Royal Scots 156th Brigade, 52nd Division

1/5th Bn. Royal Scots 88th Brigade, 29th Division

1/7th Bn. Royal Scots 156th Brigade, 52nd Division

Three other Territorial Force battalions had already made short stays in Egypt en route to Gallipoli, from which they returned, greatly reduced, in January 1916.



Soldiers of the 4th Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles), Territorial Force, May 1915, immediately before departure for Gallipoli.

From Gallipoli (Glesga Pals), where the soldiers are also identified.

1/7th Bn. The Royal Scots were involved in one of the worst railway accidents in British history when the troop transport train carrying A and D Company was involved in a collision with four other trains on 22 May 1915, at Quintinshill near Gretna Green 5). The accident cost the battalion a loss of 214 men.

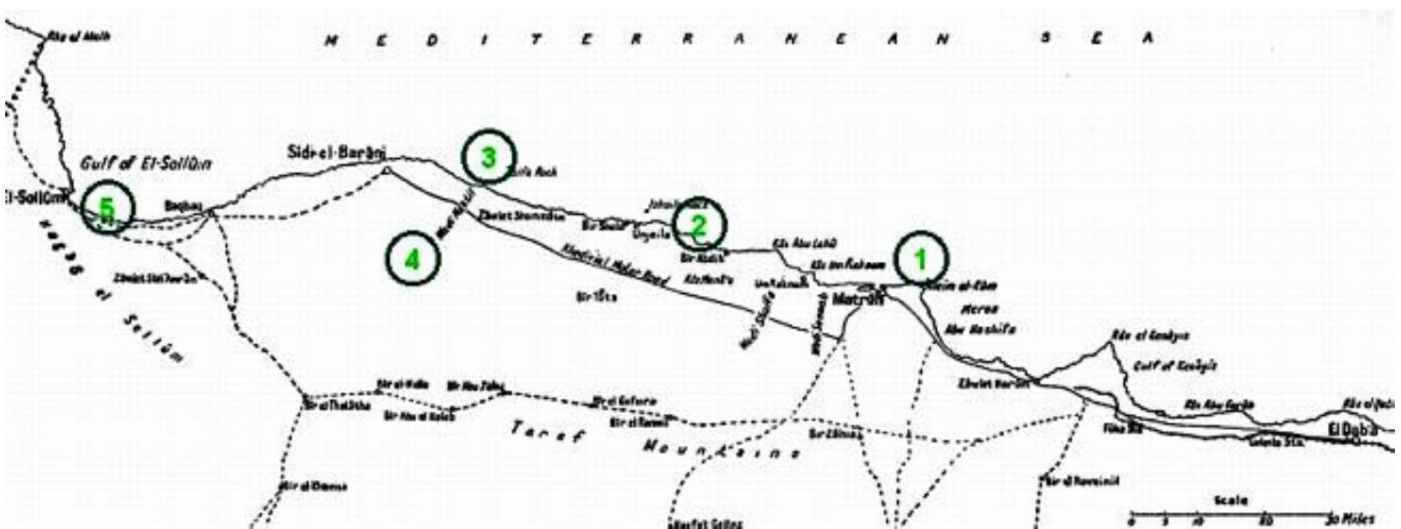
### The Composite Infantry Brigade

As discussed in my article The Senussi Uprising, in November 1915 the 6th Battalion became part of the composite infantry brigade that formed part of the Western Frontier Force.

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The brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Sir George Bingham, Earl of Lucan 6). \_\_

The battalion (*Lieutenant-Colonel AO Jenney*) took part sporadically in skirmishes with the Senussi west of Mersa Matruh, but spent most of the time as part of the garrison at Mersa Matruh (Map 1, Item 1) and later Sollum (Map 1, Item 5).



Map 1: The Senussi Campaign, 1915-1916.

From Source 4.

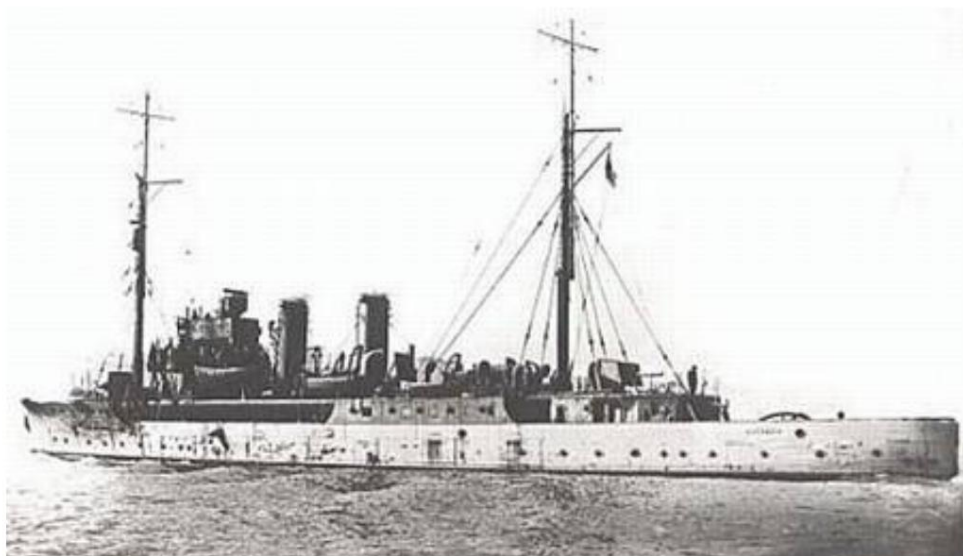
Time Skirmish Companies		Assignment	loss - Officers	loss - Crew
13 December 1915	Wadi Senab	C and D and machine gun division	Reinforcement, flank protection	3 injured 3 dead and 14 injured
23 January 1916	Halazine A and B	Reserve/Counterattack	None	1 dead and 5 injured

These battles are discussed in more detail in my article [Senussi uprising](#).

The battalion was part of Brigadier General Lukin's force that inflicted the decisive defeat on the Senussi at the Battle of Agagiya on 26 February 1916 (Map 1, Point 4).

One half of the battalion was left at Unjeila (Map 1, Point 2) to guard the lines of communication to the rear, while the other half (350 men, commanded by Major Adams) advanced towards Sidi Barrani.

The force sets up camp at Wadi Maktil (Map 1, Point 3) and here the two companies from the 6th Battalion are left to guard the camp, while i.a. 1st South African Infantry Brigade [7](#)) were given the offensive tasks.



*HMS VERONICA.*

From Clyde Build Ships (Clydesite).

In April 1916, the battalion is sent to Sollum, initially A and B companies, transported on board 5 trawlers, escorted by HMS VERONICA [8](#)). The rest of the battalion followed within a few days.

In Sollum, the battalion participated in the expansion of the city's defenses and the construction of roads.

### To the Western Front

After the suppression of the Senussi uprising, battalions were sent to France and it arrived in Marseilles on 8 May 1916. Analogous to 2/7th and 2/8th Bn. Middlesex Regiment [9](#)) was now quarantined, as there was a risk that the soldiers were infected with typhus - a case had been detected on the way from Egypt.

On 15 June 1916 the battalion was merged with 1/5th Bn. Royal Scots who had suffered heavy losses during the fighting at Gallipoli. It was not possible to obtain sufficient recruits from Edinburgh to maintain both battalions and the now amalgamated battalions served for the remainder of the war as the 5th/6th Battalion Royal Scots.

## Sources

1. *His Majesty's Territorial Army - A descriptive account of the yeomanry, artillery, engineers and infantry with the army service and medical corps, comprising the 'King's Imperial Army of the Second Line'* by Walter Richards, Virtue & Co., London (ca. 1911).
2. *The Territorial Battalions - A Pictorial History 1859-1985* by Ray Westlake, Spelmount Limited, Tunbridge Wells, Kent 1986, ISBN 0-946771-68-5.
3. *The Royal Scots, 1914-1919* by Major John Erwing, Oliver and Boyd, London 1925.
4. *The British Army of August 1914 - An illustrated directory* by Ray Westlake, Spelmount Limited, Tunbridge Wells, Kent 2005, ISBN 1-86227-207-7.
5. *History of the Great War, Military Operations Egypt & Palestine, Volume I, From the outbreak of war with Germany to June 1917* by Lieutenant General Sir George Macmunn and Captain Cyril Falls, HSMO, London 1927.
6. Sir John Maxwell's Egypt Despatch (The Long, Long Trail).

## Postscript - Brigadier General Sir George Bingham

Before Sir George Bingham was formally appointed temporary Brigadier-General on 27 May 1916, he held the unknown to me rank of *Vice-Colonel* (London Gazette 26 May 1916). This may be a rank designation used among reserve officers, to which category Sir George belonged. In connection with the awarding of *the Order of the Nile, 3rd Class*, to Sir George by the Sultan of Egypt, the rank is mentioned as *Colonel* and belonging to *the Reserve of Officers* (London Gazette 9 March 1917).

From 17 August 1917, Sir George served as Lieutenant Colonel of the City of London Motor Volunteer Corps, and here it is stated that the regimental affiliation was originally the London Regiment (London Gazette 31 August 1917). *The City of London Motor Volunteer Corps* was one of several volunteer reserve units in England that, among other things, transported returning soldiers.

From 1922 to 1946 Sir George was Honorary Colonel of *the 5th (City of London) Bn., London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade)* and perhaps this was his parent unit. (London Rifle Brigade (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth). On 11 November 1919 Sir George retired from the army, with the right to continue his rank as colonel (London Gazette 11 November 1919).

Per Finsted

## Notes:

- 1) The peacetime uniform for the 4th and 5th Bn. The Royal Scots (Queen's Edinburgh Rifles) are reproduced in my article Uniforms - Territorial Army, circa 1911.
- 2) From *Regimental Badges* by TJ Edwards, Gale & Polden Limited, 1951.
- 3) See further in 6th Battalion, The Royal Scots, 1859-1961 (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth).
- 4) Details of the ship appear from S/S Ceramic, White Star Line (Norway Heritage). See also White Star Line (Wikipedia).

- 5) See Quintinshill rail crash (Wikipedia); 1/7th Battalion of the Royal Scots, and Britain's Worst Rail Disaster (Forrestdale Research); Carnage beyond belief on UK's rails (Scotsman.com).
- 6) George Charles Bingham, 5th Earl of Lucan (1860-1949) (Wikipedia). See also Postscript.
- 7) See my article About the 1st South African Infantry Brigade, 1915-1916.
- 8) The vessel is a minesweeper of the Acacia class, a subclass of the Flower Class type (Wikipedia).
- 9) See my article On the 2/7th and 2/8th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, 1914-1916.