

TRADITION IN THE BRITISH ARMY.

One of the first things taught to a recruit in the British Army is the history of his own particular Regiment. The purpose is plain. Just as a civilian takes a pride in the achievements of his own local football team so is the soldier taught 'esprit de corps' and 'pride of regiment'.

The regimental spirit is fostered and I have known of many 'ding-dong' battles both wordy and otherwise which have arisen from this rivalry between men of different units. Every true British Soldier thinks his own Regiment is the finest and best in the whole British Army and will not hear it spoken of lightly - God help the man who does so in his hearing.

The Regiment to which I have the honour to belong, "The Border Regiment", was formed in 1702 and was known as the 34th of Foot until 1881 when regts. were given names according to the Counties and districts from which they were recruited.

This regiment has fought in many campaigns in every part of the world - the Peninsular War - the war with America - in China - India - South Africa - and in the Low Countries. Its battle honours are numerous and include - Fontenoy, Arroyo dos Molinos, Alma, Inkerman, Sevastapol, Lucknow, Relief of Ladysmith, etc, and of course many others gained during the Great War of 1914 - 1918 when the number of battalions rose to fourteen. Normally there are four battalions - the 1st and 2nd are Regular Bns. and the 4th and 5th are Territorial Bns.

The word "China" (and the Dragon) on our buttons originates from a Chinese Standard captured by a subaltern during the war with China in 1841. This standard is "laid up" in the parish church of Kendal, Westmoreland. The laurel wreath incorporated in our badge was given to commemorate Fontenoy when the regt. acted as rearguard to the withdrawal of the British Force. At the battle of Arroyo dos Molinos the 34th captured over 1000 prisoners including the 34th French Regt. complete with Drum Major, Drums and Staff. This is commemorated every year on 28th Oct. when the Colours are trooped and drummer boys take part dressed in the uniform of the period.

The 34th came out of the battle wearing in their shakos, red and white 'pom-poms' of the 34th French Regt. and to this day behind our badge we wear a small piece of red and white cloth to commemorate this victory.

One of our regimental customs is that we drink the Loyal Toast in mess, sitting; a privilege granted to us by one of the kings when travelling with the regt. on one of the old wooden ships. When the officers rose to toast the King an officer's head came into contact with the wooden rafters or beams and the King graciously gave permission for the toast to be honoured without rising. At one time the Regt. was attached to the Navy and to this day we wear the two "snotty" buttons on the cuff of our patrol jackets, similar to those worn by the midshipmen of the Royal Navy.

The Regimental march is that well-known Cumberland song "John Peel" - a tune known all over the world. Of course John Peel was born and lived all his life in Caldbeck in the County of Cumberland.

From the foregoing the reader will gather a slight idea of the customs and traditions behind my Regiment. Similar traditions are treasured by most other British Regts. and are most jealously guarded.

To the men of the 24 Auck Bn. I would say "You too have behind you the glorious traditions built up by your fathers and relatives 25 years ago in the Great War. When will the word "Anzac" ever be forgotten while the British tongue is spoken? See to it that you too carry on these traditions in the war we are waging today. From what I have seen of you, they are in worthy hands.

In conclusion, may I wish you "God Speed", and good luck, and may the day be not far distant when you will return to little old New Zealand, and the old folks at home.

The above article was written specially for "SERIAL WAVES" by Major Christopher, of the Border Regiment. We much appreciate his action.
