



The Black Watch at Fort Ticonderoga

On 8 July 1758, two hundred fifty one years ago, the Black Watch outfought their English comrades in an attempt to wrest Fort Carillon, later Ticonderoga, from the occupying French garrison. The battle was one of many between the French and English as they tried to establish dominance in North America.

The conflict was variously known as the French and Indian War, the Seven Year War (although it extended over nine years from 1754 to 1773), and the War of Conquest.

The Black Watch Highland regiment was formed in 1729 when six companies of highlanders were organized as independent companies whose duties included “enforcement of the disarming act, to overawe the disaffected, and watch their motions, and to check depredations.” The independent Highland companies were distinguished from the British regulars by their uniforms. The regulars

wore the well known scarlet coat, waistcoat, and breeches that resulted in several nicknames, including the common “Red Coat” that became popular in histories of the American Revolutionary War. (For more information see the related article on the uniform.) The Highland independent companies wore a dark tar-



Honor guard at the Black Watch Memorial Cairn, Fort Ticonderoga, June 2009. Photograph: Bill Budde

tan containing black, green, and blue colors. The color differences resulted in the regular British units commonly called *Saighearn Dearg* or Red Soldiers and the independent Highlanders called *Am Freiceadan Dubh* or Black Watch.

In 1739 it was decided to add four more companies to the original six that were raised in 1729, bringing the strength up to 1,000 men, equal to a full regiment of the line. The regiment was the first Highland regiment in the British army. Originally intended to serve in the Highlands the regiment was eventually slatted for overseas duty. This resulted in a mutiny by some that felt or were encouraged to feel the deployment was unfair. When it was put down and stability returned the regiment served in several countries. In 1749 the regimental number was changed to the 42nd by which it was known from that point forward.

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The Early Uniform of the Black Watch

The early uniform of the Black Watch was designed to identify the independent companies from the regular army. It was also, no doubt, designed to inspire some unit cohesiveness since they served in Scotland.

The uniform of the regular British soldier consisted of a coat, waistcoat and breeches of scarlet. The independent Black Watch companies wore a tartan with black, green and blue colors predominating in lieu of the usual scarlet trousers. The jacket and waistcoat of the soldier was described as scarlet “with buff facings and white lace.” In Gaelic

the uniforms were identified as *Saighdearn Dearg* or Red Soldier and *Am Freiceadan Dubh* or the Black Watch.

The use of the tartan plaid by the independent companies was as much practical as symbolic. The kilt consisted of twelve yards of material worn plaited around the waist. The upper part of the plaid served several purposes. Attached to the left shoulder the plaid could be repositioned to cover both shoulders or used to protect their weapon depending on the weather and duty. The plaid also served as a blanket at night.

In practice, two types of kilts were worn. The great or belted kilt was worn on more formal occasions such as reviews and duties calling for full dress. The belt worn with the kilt could carry pistols or the dirk as needed. When not on duty or in barracks the so-called little kilt or *philibeg* was worn. This was accompanied by a bonnet of blue bordered with checkered squares of white, red and green. The checked pattern may hark back to the *fees cheque* found in the various lines of the Stewarts.

Date: 07/11/2009

Time: 12 noon

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(Rt. 114)
Turn right onto Lonesome Pine Rd.
(sign is across the street on left)
This becomes Rawson Rd.
Turn left into first driveway at #18
Rawson Rd.*

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In preparation for defending and eventually gaining control of North America from the French the regiment sailed for New York in March 1756 and arrived in June. The troops were first sent to Nova Scotia as part of a plan to capture the fort at Louisburg, but returned to New York to join the attack on French held Fort Carillon at the southern end of Lake Champlain.

The English attack on Fort Carillon was commanded by General Abercrombie. A well manned but poorly conceived and carried out assault took place on 8 July 1758. Based in part on poor intelligence the British forces, including regulars, colonial militia and Native Indians, made a frontal assault on a strong, well defended French line. While the intelligence report minimized the degree of completion and readiness of the defenses, the French had actually prepared breast works that were eight feet high and protected in the front by *abattis*, a line of defense made up of felled trees arranged so that the branches pointed toward the approaching army. The branches were then sharpened, presenting a formidable, dangerous maze for the approaching army.

Assuming it was not necessary to use their canon in the assault the British did little to prepare the breast works for the coming assault by their troops. Nor did the British feel it was necessary to prepare scaling equipment for the assault, a decision that would prove deadly for attackers.

When the order to attack was given the Highlanders were held in reserve but soon broke for the fighting. Using their broadswords to cut their way through the *abattis* the soldiers finally reached the French breast works. Without scaling ladders the Scots were forced to stand on each other's shoulders or to use their broad swords to carve out holes in the face of the breastworks. Those few that did make it to the top of the breast works were soon repulsed, shot or bayoneted by the defending French.

Abercrombie called retreat after four hours of heated attacks by the British, but the Highlanders did not break off the as-

sault until the third order to retreat was given. At the end of the battle the Highlanders suffered 647 killed or wounded for a casualty rate of 64.7 percent. Out of an initial strength of 1,000 men eight officers, nine sergeants, and 297 men were killed while seventeen officers, ten sergeants, and 306 men were wounded. The fact that so many were reported as wounded was not to say they were lucky enough to survive their injuries. Garneau stated that "Scarcely any of the wounded Highlanders ever recovered and even those sent home as invalids; their sores cankered, owing to the broken glass, ragged bits of metal, etc. used by the Canadians instead of shot." The health of the soldiers may have been weakened by reports that many suffered from scurvy which make healing difficult.

The Black Watch was known by different names up to 1758: the Black Watch (1667 through 1739), by the name of the colonels that commanded it from 1739 to 1749 (Earl of Crawford, Lord Semphill, and Lord John Murray), and from 1749 through 1758 as the 42 Regiment of Foot or the Highland Regiment. In 1758, before reports of their valor returned to England, the designation was changed to the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment of Foot. Although some report the regiment was first known as the 43rd Highland Regiment of Foot, Richards raises the question of whether or not this was an official designation.

The regiment was one of three Highland regiments that fought in North America between 1754 and 1773, the other two being the 77th Regiment of Foot, also known as Montgomery's Highlanders, and the 78th Regiment of Foot or Fraser's Highlanders.

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Muskets of the Crown: [http://](http://musketsofthecrown.homestead.com/42nd.html)

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Consider a Bequest

Estate planning is a subject that is sometimes difficult to address. On one hand it can cause us to feel uneasy as we contemplate our mortality, and on another it presents us with sometimes difficult decisions about how best to share our estate.

A 2008 Australian report on bequests found that charitable bequests in wills are the exception rather than the rule in estate planning. The report also noted that most bequests are the result of personal experience. The person had benefited from an organization, been a member of, or held similar values or beliefs as the organization they make the bequest recipient.

The basic bequest is a general statement as simple as "I give, devise, and bequest 20% of my estate, after taxes and debts have been satisfied, to The Scots' Charitable Society of Boston, a [501(3)©] nonprofit organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." While the wording may vary the intent and outcome is the same: you contribute a lasting legacy that will support the good work of the society into the future. It is always a good idea to consult with the recipient if you would like to leave a bequest for a specific purpose.

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