

REGIMENTAL REMEMBRANCES
BY
MAJOR ANDREW PENNY KOYLI & LI

I am honoured and somewhat humbled to have been given this role as I am one of the youngest officers in the Regiment, but I know my father, who was commissioned into the Regiment nearly 110 years ago, would have been proud, if not equally amazed to see me standing here.

It is 50 years since the Regiment was disbanded. But this is a family Regiment. In 1968, four grandsons of officers in the Regiment were serving with it; 19 pairs of fathers and sons, one or other of which was alive; not to mention brothers, uncles and nephews. I have not been able to establish figures for soldiers, but I do know of at least one fifth generation soldier. It is those links that have kept the Regimental Spirit going and enabled us to erect this wonderful tribute to the Regiment.

Doncaster was chosen as the location, because our connections have been long and extensive. The first record of the Regiment in Doncaster is on 20th April 1756, at that stage we were still being formed. Subsequently the Regular battalions visited often, and I remind you that the 3rd Militia Battalion was raised here, both 4th Battalions had representation here, both 5th Battalions were almost entirely made up of men from Doncaster, and part of the 6th Battalion in WW1 were raised here. The 5th Battalion's connections were so strong that their colours were handed over to Doncaster Council for safe-keeping for the duration of WW1. That connection has continued with 5LI, 7LI, 8LI, KOYY(LI) and now is carried on by 8 RIFLES.

But to go back to 1756, since then the Regiment has served with distinction - at Minden, where the tradition of wearing roses was established, and it is wonderful to see so many being worn here today; in the Peninsula under Wellington, and of course at Waterloo, where we were the only Light Infantry troops to be deployed in that role. Afghanistan and Burma followed, as did South Africa.

From our numbers we can be proud of Sir John Moore; Ensign Dyas who served heroically at Badajoz; Sir Benjamin D'urban who gave his name to the South African city of that name; Sir Ralph Darling who gave his name to vast tracts of land and a river in Australia, and Sir William Roy who was a founder of the Ordnance Survey.

In the WW1 there were 26 battalions and 10 in WW2

Our motto Cede Nullis "Yield to None", is reflected in the 20th century engagements, no more poignantly than at Le Cateau, in Norway and in the Burma Campaign. It is astonishing to think that the 2nd Battalion suffered 600 casualties, that is Killed, MIA, wounded or taken prisoner at Le Cateau in August 1914, and that in 1941 the same battalion's casualties in the Burma campaign were even greater. After that experience, the Commander of the Burma Division said "The KOYLI were splendid throughout and were always a tonic to me when I visited them – their sense of humour never deserted them", that sense of humour has always been a hallmark of the Regiment.

The individual gallantry is reflected on the side of the plinth which records the name of the Victoria Cross winners. Our Battle Honours are on the other sides, they remind us, of where doughty, feisty and brave Yorkshiremen fought for their country and many gave their lives. The plinth also lists the operational deployments, where many of us who are here today, served – Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Malaysia and Aden.

This memorial is here to remind us of all who served in the KOYLI, from 1755 until 1968. For those of us who have subscribed to it, it is our tribute to all our former colleagues. It exemplifies the phrase that was on the Regimental Association Membership card “Once KOYLI, always KOYLI”. We are all proud to have served in this Regiment. Although the KOYLI no longer exists as a formed unit, we do exist as a family and in spirit and always will do so in the memories of those who served with or alongside us.

I can say no more other than to quote Sir John Moore “I have been exceedingly lucky. I got into one of the best regiments in the service.”

I am sure we all agree.