

**A RECORD OF THE SERVICES OF
THE FIFTY-FIRST (SECOND WEST
YORK), THE "KING'S OWN
LIGHT INFANTRY" REGIMENT**

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A Record of the Services of the Fifty-First (Second West York), The "King's Own Light Infantry"
Regiment by W. Wheeler

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W. WHEATER

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A RECORD
OF THE
SERVICES OF THE FIFTY-FIRST
(SECOND WEST YORK,
THE
"KING'S OWN LIGHT INFANTRY" REGIMENT.

WITH A LIST OF OFFICERS FROM 1755 TO 1870.

BY W. WHEATER,

"The Regiment has not forgot that it shared in the glories of Minden."

GENERAL MURRAY, *See p. 36.*

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
1870.

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PREFACE.

This Record, a great portion of which first appeared in the "*United Service Magazine*," is reprinted at the request of the Officers of the "King's Own Light Infantry." It was first compiled as a patriotic offering to the bravery of a regiment, whose career, during the long period of its existence, has been very distinguished. It was commenced, and has been continued as a labour of love, and as such has received, especially from those who voluntarily offered to assist the Compiler in a task that was far less light than pleasant, an amount of attention which the Compiler hopes will render it, on the whole, worthy of the corps whose actions it professes to describe. In thanking the officers of the regiment for their kind assistance, the Compiler may be permitted, especially, to mention Lieutenant A. S. Wynne, the Adjutant, who, notwithstanding the arduous duties of his office, has always given the Compiler every assistance that

he has sought at his hands, and his demands upon that gentleman's time and labour have been many. For the roll of officers, the Compiler has to thank Mr. H. S. Smith of Headingley, near Leeds, but for whose knowledge and excellent Military Library, it would have been impossible to obtain all the details that are here printed.

W. W.

LEEDS,
June 30, 1870.

RECORD OF THE SERVICES
OF
THE 51ST (SECOND WEST YORK)
OR THE
KING'S OWN LIGHT INFANTRY REGIMENT.

At the close of the year 1755 England's military reputation had suffered a degradation which caused considerable alarm throughout the country. The fear of invasion seized many minds already violently perturbed, and not a little disgusted at the defeat Braddock had recently suffered at the hands of the French and Indians in America, where an additional war of portentous magnitude was expected to break out and engage every effort both of the colony and mother-country in an exhausting strife. Moreover, Ireland was mutinous, and so with a new French war impending, and its domestic troubles seriously increasing, the government was not slow to recognise the difficulty and danger of the situation, and the necessity for vast military preparations, as well at once to settle the public mind as to avert the possibility of further calamities. Ten new regiments were ordered to be raised. As soon as the order for their embodiment was issued, some of the leading noblemen and gentlemen at once associated themselves with the

movement. Taking the regiments under their protection, they largely increased the bounty offered by government, and personally assisted in obtaining the requisite number of good recruits in the shortest period. The regiment whose history is here recorded, was given to Colonel Robert Napier, its head-quarters being established at Exeter, where the staff at first appears to have been organised.

In December, 1755, the King directed his warrant for raising the regiment to the Marquis of Rockingham, and Sir George Savile, Bart,* M.P. for Yorkshire. As soon as the preliminary arrangements had been completed, these potent nobles transferred the staff to Yorkshire, their native county, and at once commenced to carry out their patriotic measures. Having received the cordial assistance of the neighbouring gentry, a public meeting was called in Leeds on Tuesday the 16th March, 1756, when all who attended, pledged themselves to use every exertion in providing His Majesty with a regiment, which in point of numbers and character of men should be worthy of the county. The *Public Advertiser* of March 24, says of the meeting, "Great zeal and spirit was shown by all on the occasion, and such numbers of men have already been enlisted, that it is not doubted

* Sir George Savile, of Thornhill, F.R.S., V.P. of the Society of Arts, M.P. for Yorkshire, and Colonel of the 1st West York Militia was the last baronet of his line. He died unmarried at Brompton, 9th January, 1784, in his 58th year. The "Gentleman's Magazine" calls him "a man universally lamented by every lover of his country, who possessed, though he lived in these degenerate days, when patriotism is made the pretence of every desperate political adventurer to obtain power, that genuine flame of the *amor patriæ* which was only known in better times." He is buried in Thornhill Church.

that the regiment will be full in a short time. Very great advantage is found from the gentlemen in the county personally assisting the recruiting parties; and it was the general sense of all present that the continuing such methods would be the most effectual means of attaining the intended purpose of speedily completing the regiment."

At this period, the anger of Yorkshiremen was loudly expressed against the enemies of England, whom they eagerly wished to punish. The sheriff and grand jury assured His Majesty that if it should be thought proper to put arms into the hands of his subjects, they would be the first to use them in the chastisement of his foes; and the poor, but not less earnest, men whose acts alone could proclaim their intentions, and the patriotism which actuated them, gave themselves in thousands to preserve the peace and prosperity of their beloved land. Besides filling the ranks of several other service-worn regiments, on this occasion the West Riding gave to His Majesty within a month a corps of 830 men, who from the very first attracted attention as "a fine body of effective volunteers." "Yorkshire," continues the *Public Advertiser*, "has on many occasions shown its zeal for His Majesty and our happy constitution, and this remarkable instance of public spirit is not to be wondered at when we consider what a noble example there is at the head of that county."

The regiment was raised to serve for three years, or during the war, and as an encouragement "to the respectable yeomanry and tenantry of the West Riding," it was held out that the regiment would remain stationary in Yorkshire, and that the war might be

over in two years, but the longest period they would have to serve would certainly at the utmost not exceed three years. At the period of its first embodiment, it was numbered the 53rd, Pepperell's and Shirley's being respectively the 50th and 51st; but as these regiments were reduced in 1756 for misbehaviour in America, under the new numbering resulting from the reductions, Napier's regiment became the 51st.

Colonel Napier, who at the time of his appointment to this regiment was Adjutant-General, had served in the 2nd or "Queen's" regiment, and in selecting a uniform for the new corps chose the facings of his old regiment, viz., sea green; officers, plain frocks and full uniform laced and looped, lapels with broad gold lace, the same as the Guards wore at that time. The hat was the gold laced, triangular hat, known as the "Cumberland Cock," being that adopted by H.R.H. William, Duke of Cumberland, the commander-in-chief.

The officers and non-commissioned officers had been taken from the two youngest companies of the 13th, 15th, and 37th regiments. The battalion was divided into ten companies; namely, a grenadier company and nine battalion companies. The field-officers and captains first appointed were Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Buck, from the 37th regiment, Major Noel Furye from captain in Pulteney's (13th), Captains Hildebrand Oakes from the 23rd, Robert Montgomery from the 15th, John Blair, Nehemiah Donellan, William Martin, John Walker and William Bailie from the 13th, and Captain-Lieutenant Baldwin from Berkeley's. Captain Bailie who commanded the grenadiers was also the paymaster. The colonel and field-officers had companies.