



Gordon Highlanders music stand banner.

Gordon Highlanders  
"Fighting Piper" of  
the Napoleonic Wars  
by King & Country  
Ltd.



# Aye, the Gordons Are Coming!

The Toy Soldier Museum's James H. Hillestad highlights one of the British Army's most famous regiments

**TEXT** JAMES H. HILLESTAD **PHOTOS:** JAMES H. HILLESTAD AND TS&MF ARCHIVES

In 1794, Scotland's Duke of Gordon raised a Highland regiment. He was assisted by his beautiful Duchess, from whose lips recruits are said to have taken their shilling's enlistment bonus — with a kiss.

It was originally designated as the British Army's 100th Regiment. The number was later changed to the 92nd and the unit became known as the Gordon Highlanders.

They sported a new tartan. It was designed for them based on the Government tartan as worn by the Black Watch. The Gordon tartan incorporated a distinctive yellow stripe.

The exploits of the Gordon Highlanders have made them a favorite subject of many toy soldier and model figure makers through the years.

## NAPOLEONIC WARS

The Gordons distinguished them-

selves in Holland (1799), followed by service against French Gen. Napoleon Bonaparte's army in Egypt (1800).

From there, the Gordons served under Lt. Gen. Sir John Moore on the Iberian Peninsula. At the Battle of Corunna in Spain Jan. 16, 1809, the Gordons fought a famous rearguard action, which culminated in the defeat of the French.

Moore was killed during the battle. The wearing of black buttons on Gordons' spats is said to have been a tribute to the memory of the famous commander.

The 92nd played a celebrated part in the Napoleonic Wars' Battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo in 1815. As immortalized in Stanley Berkeley's 1898 painting, "Gordons and Greys to the Front," the Gordons reportedly shouted "Scotland Forever!" and grabbed the stirrup leathers of

the Royal Scots Greys' horses as the heavy cavalry charged advancing French infantry columns at Waterloo.

## WOUNDED PIPER PLAYS ON

A stag's head and the motto "By-dand" ("Steadfast") was adopted as the crest of the regiment in 1872.

The Gordons fought in the Egyptian wars and in the unsuccessful Nile Expedition to rescue Gen. Charles Gordon from being besieged by Mahdists in Khartoum. In recognition of the Highlanders' valor, the regiment was granted the addition of "1884" to the campaign honour wording "Egypt 1882" already on its colours.

Eleven years later, this time in British India, the Gordons were part of the Chitral Expedition. It was organized to march to the relief of a British detachment holding the



The Gordons in action at Waterloo by Charles C. Stadden.



Old Britains hollow-cast Gordon Highlanders.



Gordon Highlanders by Imperial Productions of New Zealand.



W. Britain's "Forward Gordons" set No. 2 depicts a Highlander charging with a Scots Greys trumpeter at Waterloo.

Chitral Fort, which was besieged by insurgent tribesmen.

In 1897, the North-West Frontier of India was again in revolt, triggering the Tirah Campaign to secure the key Khyber Pass. Afridi tribesmen occupied the Dargai Heights, a seemingly impregnable natural feature commanding a British force's line of advance in what is now Pakistan.

The 92nd was sent forward Oct. 20 with the words: "The general says this hill must be taken at all costs and the Gordon Highlanders will take it!"

To the skirl of bagpipes, within 40 minutes Gordons and Gurkhas stormed and captured a position which had held an entire brigade at bay for several hours.

Though wounded in both ankles, Piper George Findlater of the Gordons struggled to a sitting position and continued to play until the hill was taken by the assault troops.



"Piper — 92nd (Gordon Highlanders) Regiment 1809-1815" from the glossy "Redcoats Classic Collection" by W. Britain.



Officer of the Gordon Highlanders by Greenwood & Ball.



Marching Gordon of the Second Anglo-Boer War by Trophy Miniatures of Wales Ltd.



WWII Gordon Highlanders officer saluting by King & Country Ltd.



Crimean War period 92nd Regiment dirk with cairngorm quartz inlay on the silver pommel.



Circa 1990 Gordons drum major's baldric with battle honours and miniature drumsticks.

Findlater was one of the recipients of four Victoria Crosses awarded for the action.

#### 20TH-CENTURY WARS

In 1899, the 1st Battalion of the Gordons arrived in South Africa. After the Second Anglo-Boer War came to an end, the regiment was authorized to bear on its colours "South Africa 1899-1902."

During World War I, the Gordons suffered total casualties of 1,000 officers and 28,000 rank and file, of which 9,000 men were killed. The regiment saw action in every theater of operations during the course of World War II.

The Gordons were amalgamated with the Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons) to form The Highlanders in 1994. Six years later another Army restructuring made that unit the 4th Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Whatever changes and amalgamations have taken place, the spirit of the Gordons has remained unaltered: "Ninety Twa, No' Deid Yet!" ■



#### ABOUT THE WRITER

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum in Cresco, Pa., USA. In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that the writer's wife, Carol, is a Gordon.



Despite being shot in both ankles, Piper George Findlater of the Gordons struggled to a sitting position to keep playing during the storming of the Dargai Heights in 1897. Figures by Caberfeidh Miniatures of Scotland.